ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: REFASHIONING THE LEGACIES OF LAMPIÃO, CHE GUEVARA, AND BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS IN LITERATURE AND FILM

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This dissertation focuses on the refashioning of complex legacies of prominent, yet controversial, figures in Latin America in both literature and film: the contemporary Brazilian bandit Lampião, the twentieth-century revolutionary Che Guevara, and the colonial era priest and polemicist Bartolomé de Las Casas. I argue that, like storytelling and collective/social memory, history is a continuing narrative that serves specific ends (Hayden White) and is framed by ideological perspectives (Walter Benjamin). Furthermore, by expanding upon Stephen Greenblatt's concept of Renaissance self-fashioning, I introduce the idea of refashioning—when societies reimagine history, generally apart from or in contrast to dominant narratives—as a postmodern phenomenon of remaking the other.

An analysis of the textual origins of the legacies reveals the constraints that genre (*cordel*, diary, and historical essay) imposed on the writing of their lives. Furthermore, these same texts are reshaped as the film directors adapt the written texts to fit the confines of film and the expectations of the audience. In this manner, we observe how both history and genre become malleable as the individuals' legacies are rendered anew cinematically. Specifically, in the Brazilian *sertão*, popular lyrical *cordel* pamphlets

merge oral and written traditions, as well as "official" and "popular" history and lore to mythologize the bandit Lampião and refashion the outlaw's legacy in largely positive terms. This legacy, which is developed in the verses of *cordel* chapbooks, undergirds Glauber Rocha's film *Antônio das Mortes* (1969) both stylistically and ideologically.

Che Guevara's travel "diaries," which are constructed within the conventions of the travel diary and autobiography, reveal that Che, unlike Lampião, very much shaped his own revolutionary image. Walter Salles' film *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) relies heavily on Che's diaries, yet the director weaves a modern interpretation of historical events in the life of this now-iconic revolutionary, and the result is a "filmed diary" that ultimately becomes part of the "official" (auto)biography of Guevara's life.

Finally, the sixteenth-century friar Bartolomé de Las Casas provides another example of a man who actively shapes his image via writing. His *Historia de las Indias* and *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* craft an image of the priest within the context of the conquest of the New World and reveal the controversial nature of his philosophical stance as one who fought for indigenous rights, albeit from the top down. The politics of historicity are played out in Icíar Bollaín's film *También la lluvia* (2010), as the director incorporates Las Casas' texts into a fictional film script that frames the friar in contemporary terms and situates his legacy in human rights activism for indigenous peoples. Thus, I conclude that these texts and films compose additional nuanced accounts of the three historical figures' legacies: the texts and the filmic representations uncover the complex relationships between "legitimate" or "official" histories and the refashioning of these individuals in popular memory.

REFASHIONING THE LEGACIES OF LAMPIÃO, CHE GUEVARA, AND BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS IN LITERATURE AND FILM

by

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Dedication

For Joice.

Acknowledgements

When I began the PhD program at the University of Maryland, I framed and hung on my wall a piece of parchment-like paper on which I had printed the words "Insert PhD here... soon. You can do it!" That frame has hung to the right of my office desk for some four-and-a-half years now, and I see it everyday—it reminds me of the end goal. Though the end is in sight, and shortly I hope to replace that piece of paper with a diploma that bears my name, honestly, I'm not sure to what extent this accomplishment is my own, for I owe it just as much to my family, friends, and mentors' support and encouragement as I do to my own hard work.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for this opportunity to learn, grow, and meet such wonderful people. I have always hoped and prayed that my work would be a testament to his faithfulness and grace than a crown of personal achievement.

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Thanks, also, to my parents for their love and sacrifice. They are my role models, and I love and owe so much to them.

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These are the “highlights,” as it were, and there so many others who deserve a mention here, of which I will name my 2010 “cohort”—Chris, Doug, and Ann—by name, not to mention all my friends and colleagues in the program at Maryland.

A final word of thanks to the subjects of my study, for they led me down paths previously unknown and, in the process, taught me a lot about humanity and the human spirit.

In the Bible, it is said that “scales” fell off Saul’s eyes a few days after his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, and I suspect something very similar has happened to me these past years—I’ll never see things the same way again.

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Introduction

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
William Faulkner
Requiem for a Nun

They say that time heals all wounds, as if the simple act of moving, temporally speaking, farther away from a moment in time engages some sort of magical photoshopping process that blurs and distorts how we perceive the past in general, much less moments of more or less significance. Yet few would argue that time alone is responsible for changes in how we view events that now reside in the annals of history. To be sure, it is almost always time in conjunction with other factors that bring about these alterations. Another saying that has found its way into common speech suggests that being ignorant of the past, of history, dooms us to repeat our ancestors' mistakes. Here we see an opposing logic at work: time does not heal wounds, but rather it opens them up again and again. It also reminds us that history is not something that is relegated to the past to be forgotten; it is ever-present and ever affecting the present. Like the above epigraph from Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* states, the past is not even past, much less dead and gone. To the contrary, it is preserved in our memory in diverse and even very different forms.

In relation to the second saying, one more implication becomes apparent: in it, history is defined, essentially, as a cycle of archetypical human behavior that is destined to be repeated as an endless cycle of abuses upon the self and the other. In this light, rather than an infinite forward-moving line or causal chain of events, history looks more like a spiral of overlapping tropes—like a never-ending "slinky" moving down the stairs

of time that lead to a bottomless pit—that are manifested over and over with only slight variations from generation to generation. Only awareness of this fact—that history imposes itself upon the present and the future as a re-iteration of itself—activates the possibility of a future that is more than mere repetition of the past. This consciousness, then, only reinforces what we already know: that history, of course, is more than the combination of time and events. History involves our knowledge and awareness of its existence as such. When the human factor, our awareness of it, is involved, history becomes more than a series of repeated archetypes that happens to us as passive participants, but rather we are able to move and shape our existence as agents of our world. Indeed, on the one hand, when we, as agents, are aware of history we are able to shape our own destiny and avoid the pitfalls of the past. On the other hand, this form of agency, our awareness of history means that we view it through ideologically framed lenses: we not only begin to shape our future, but also we shape our past to suit those same ideological needs.

Perhaps if time were the ultimate benign "healer" that it supposedly is, it would not be necessary to delve into questions about how historical "realities" become flexible and even contradictory as they are used according to specific ends. But it is not a healer; it is, instead, the theatre in which history plays out, and we are the audience that attempts to make sense of what is going on before us, both in terms of what happened *before* our time and what is happening *before* our eyes. It is the question of these two "befores" that interests me, for one refers to the past—what happened before me—while the other refers to the "present"—what is happening now, before me. The two are distinct, though

connected; they both mutually influence each other. The past has shaped the present, while the present shapes how we perceive the past and conceive of the future.

The central preoccupation of my dissertation is precisely one of perception, which is to say that I am concerned with perceptions of specific historical figures. This dissertation investigates the refashioning of three historical figures of Latin America in literature and film: Virgulino Ferreira da Silva (more commonly known as the Brazilian *cangaceiro* bandit Lampião), Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and friar Bartolomé de Las Casas. Even during their lives, and since their deaths, these individuals' legacies have undergone and are still in a process of refashioning, of evolving and being remade. As controversial figures, conflicting viewpoints abound in relation to how they are remembered; even so, each of the three polemical historical personages has been able to move beyond his polarizing personal legacies to be seen, in large part, in a more positive light. By considering work by Walter Benjamin and Hayden White to inform my perspective of how history, because it is political, allows for the existence of competing and alternate versions of the same history, I argue that the legacies—and filmic representations—of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas are rooted in texts either written by or about them. I assert that because these refashioned legacies exist parallel and in contrast to "official" histories of these individuals, the political nature of history has a unifying effect by which we observe the formation of communities—of a demos—that seek to lay claim to their own histories outside of traditional processes of legitimization. In this manner, then, I employ a critical approach to collective or social memory in order to show the role that communities and critics have in this process and, ultimately, in the formation and refashioning of the legacies of these three individuals. In short, my dissertation traces the

way that the legacies of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas are refashioned by written texts from different genres—popular pamphlets or chapbooks, diary, and historiography, respectively—, which then become the basis for filmic representations of these individuals. I make the case that an understanding of the political nature of history uncovers the struggle between competing interpretations of these Latin American figures as more than one of historical correctness, but rather of one channels of legitimization and of collective memory. As such, the refashioning of these three iconoclasts resists official histories and, thus, empowers those who participate in the creation of these resignified figures.

Finally, I also realize that two of the three individuals (Che and Las Casas) belong to that category of historical figures about which seemingly everything has already been said and done. Even Lampião, though relatively "unknown" outside of Brazil and/or certain academic circles, has been the subject of numerous studies and biographies that make it difficult to find new, fertile soil in which to cultivate original research. I, nevertheless, contend that despite the abundance of attention that they have all received, my own investigation offers a fresh perspective. We all know that these men were/are controversial figures who, even today, provoke heated debate as to what their legacy should be: in general terms, should they be viewed in a positive or negative light? My dissertation, however, provides a necessary critical intervention in that it does not get "bogged down" in this debate. Instead, I am concerned with how these two antithetical legacies can co-exist and the textual bases for fairly recent—and positive—representations of these individuals and/or their legacy.

Walter Benjamin, Hayden White, and the Politics of History

It goes without saying that the refashioning of historical figures develops within and alongside particular historical contexts, and so it becomes necessary to not only define what history is but also describe why and how it influences the way in which the legacies of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas are perceived and represented. In Walter Benjamin's widely read "Theses on the Philosophy of History," the critic makes the case that traditional modes of viewing history are not a-political or even objective, but rather are constructed by and for the benefit of a specific people: the ruling classes. At the beginning of the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin describes a chess playing robot or machine that can best any human. In reality, it is a ruse: a series of mirrors hide an expert, a human chess player who guides the robot-puppet. Benjamin's philosophy, then, proposes a view of historicism—or the "causal connection between various moments in history" (263)—as smoke and mirrors, so to speak: a farce. The supposed automaton, the self-regulating entity of history is in fact controlled by human hands. And so, history in and of itself, rather than objective and autonomous, is actually formed and shaped by a cycle of so-called victors who subsequently become the ruling class(es): "And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. ... Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate" ("Theses" 256). The attempt to create a chain of causality (a history), in effect, serves to justify the victors' rise to power.

Benjamin proposes that history is not a neatly organized, causal chain of events. In fact, there seems to be no real "order" or organization in Benjamin's view of history,

for he states that it is "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage" ("Theses" 257). The articulation of a catastrophic history, then, is not a task of finding order among the chaos, of untangling a chain of events. Instead, the historian attempts to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" ("Theses" 255). On the other hand, Benjamin notes that while the historian, in grasping this fleeting memory, may succeed in "fanning the spark of hope in the past" ("Theses" 255), there also exists the danger that "*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" ("Theses" 255 original emphasis). Here we encounter the imperative of Benjamin's historical paradigm: more than a critique of historicism or historical materialism, Benjamin's theses and philosophy of history point to a "redemption" of history whereby it is recuperated in its entirety ("Thesis" 254-55). And in the tradition of Jewish mysticism, Benjamin believes that it will be a Messiah figure that will perform this task. In this way, we might say that Benjamin views the Messiah as the ultimate historiographer, the one who is finally able to recover all of history. The Messiah-as-historian stands in stark contrast to the manipulators of history (like historicism) that will use history and even historical figures to affirm their right to power. That is why, like the chess robot, it is important that historicism also maintain the illusion of reality, of objectivity, for it is the victors who write the "official" history, and this victory is achieved via one group's ideological and even physical conquering of another. By framing historicism's task in terms of winning and losing—victory/conquest and defeat/conquered—, Benjamin also brings to light that history is a struggle, for where there are conquerors, there are also the conquered, two groups that, while they dialectically oppose one another, both exist because of and in relation to each other.

Furthermore, the conquered not only "lie prostrate" before the conquerors, but also they must also suffer the censure and/or erasure that a one-sided historical record necessarily implies; the history of the conquered is suppressed as the victor's history is legitimized. And as such, the conquered's oppression (by the conquerors and now by the historical record) extends beyond the present and into the indefinite future. Thus, for Benjamin, the present (which is a present oppression) as well as the past (which is either in a state of catastrophe or is manipulated to serve the purposes of the victors) looks towards a redemptive or Messianic future that will allow humankind to "receive... the fullness of its past" ("Theses" 255) rather than the partial history of the conqueror. Benjamin correctly points out that for Marx, the oppressed proletarian masses are the "depository of historical knowledge" ("Theses" 260), for they bear the scars of history upon their burdened back, just as they are their own liberator as they work and rebel. For Benjamin, then, history is politicized and appears as a continual conflict between domination and redemption, oppression and liberation. The new conquerors must not only topple the present ones, but they must also perform an erasing of the now-conquered people's history. And so, history comes to be a succession of conquests and erasures, and it becomes apparent that the limited history of the conquerors is not a mere forgetting by the conquered; rather, it is a violent suppression of the Other in which all that is not "conqueror" is wiped away and replaced. It is worthwhile to reiterate that, for Benjamin, "*even the dead*"—and their memory/how we remember them—"will not be safe" ("Theses" 255 original emphasis). Clearly, Benjamin's take on history implies that it is something that can be suppressed and even taken away by force. In other words, history may exist outside and/or beyond the people whose history it is, per se, and as such takes

on the character of an object that can be (dis)possessed. Thus, the conquering, oppression, and ultimately objectifying of a people (making them to be an object rather than a subject) would also mean a suppression of their history, for if the community now has become an object, they are no long able to "possess" their history, which is also an object to be possessed: an object cannot own things, other objects. To this end, Paul Connerton comments, in *How Societies Remember*, "All totalitarianisms behave in this way; the mental enslavement of the subjects of a totalitarian regime begins when their memories are take away. When a large power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting" (14).

History, though, in many ways is but the memory of things past, and while an oppressor may attempt to "re-write" or even erase the history of the oppressed, we would not go so far as to say that the people's memory has been re-written or erased. In this aspect we see a principle difference between history and the memories upon which it is based. Whereas history, for Benjamin, is outside of the individual or community, for James Fentress and Chris Wickham, memory is an inalienable part of the individual and/or community. Thus, Benjamin's political view contrasts with what Fentress and Wickham affirm in describing personal memory as "indissolubly ours; they form a part of us" (5). To be sure, it is difficult to consider history and memory as separate entities since history so often relies on memory. Referring again to Benjamin, though, we are able to observe the clear process of legitimization that takes place with regards to history; "official" history belongs to the dominant while the history of the marginalized is relegated to the realm of myth or lore or is subject to erasure. What is more, since history—like the chess machine—is veiled in an (false) air of veracity or objectivity,

Fentress and Wickham note that, "[i]n and of itself, memory is simply subjective" (7). Understandably, then, in comparison to the supposedly objective field of history, memory as such is oftentimes considered unreliable. However, memory may also undergo a process of legitimization by which it, too, takes on an air of objectivity (even though it remains rather subjective), that is to say that it comes to be perceived as unbiased and true. When memory is articulated and recorded, it becomes text, and as text, it bears the façade of objectivity upon which history relies: "Treating memory as ... analogous to a text captures the sense in which memory, too, is a container of possibly objective information" (Fentress and Wickham 5).

The problem that arises in dealing with memory on the textual level is that it requires conformity to channels of legitimization that are traditionally associated with Western literacy. Even recently, in modern, media-saturated times, the written text still holds a place of privilege. And so, unless one is able to articulate memory as text, it is at the very least not "useful," or is, in more extreme cases, highly dubious. Seen in this light, the privileging of texts over forms of orality that are common in preliterate cultures represents a means of imperialistic impositions. We need only to consider Spanish reactions to Incan forms of literacy to understand the threat of alternative forms of expressions of cultural literacy. Frank Salomon notes that prior to Columbus' arrival in the Americas, "most South Americans expressed thought about descent, time, and change in innumerable mnemonic practices, which, without resembling writing, were taken as legible remembrances" (20). These practices included dances and costume use in addition to the creation of objects (codices, *khipus*, pictograms, religious idols, ceramics, etc.). And though it was not uncommon for Spanish conquistadors to consult indigenous

records, scribes, or historians, their interest was in the historical narrative[1] itself rather than the medium. As a result, as Galen Brokaw notes, the Spanish destroyed many indigenous "texts" after they had transcribed or recorded the information (115 n.6). As American Indian and Spanish cultures clashed, the mode(s) of literacy most valued by the European mind began to replace indigenous forms as the Spanish asserted their power as the conquering people. Such texts fell victim to the erasure of history that is possible in Benjamin's perspective.

That history can be "erased" or overwritten brings to mind Hayden White's view, in *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, of history in terms of a poetic or literary act. In fact, White classifies his "formalist" approach to history in light of "genres" of historiography that utilize certain tropes—metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony—in order to "[provide] the basis for a distinctive linguistic protocol by which to prefigure the historical field and on the basis of which specific strategies of historical interpretation can be employed for 'explaining' it" (xi). Not surprisingly, though many of the initial reviews of White's *Metahistory* were by historians, the ideas that White puts forth in his volume have crossed disciplinary lines. According to Richard T. Vann, eventually, historians moved away from White and literary scholars, for example, gravitated to his work (148). Wulf Kansteiner clarifies the trend in noting that "[h]istorians, especially intellectual historians, occasionally praised White's case studies of nineteenth-century historiography and philosophy of history but in general they firmly rejected his methodology because of its relativist stance" (278). In

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[1] Salomon also notes that even these acts of "preserving" history did not necessarily mean strict adherance to the historical account. He states, "In all cases, the dubious translating process and the intense though often hidden political agenda of postinvasion historiography require cautious reading" (23).

other words, historians criticize White's assertion that a single, objective history does not exist, but rather that history is relative or subjective, is framed by ideologies, and is shaped by a guiding narrative.

Despite such critiques of White's work, the interest of literary scholars in White is understandable, for White argues that historiography is, in short, a narrative that has been carefully crafted by the historian who chooses the events of a central "plot" the he or she attempts to relate and thus narrates them in accordance with certain ideologies or "set[s] of prescriptions for taking a position in the present world of social praxis and acting up on it" (*Metahistory* 22). White refers to this arranging of history into a coherent narrative as emplotment. In *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, White again takes up the relationship between narrative and history, and he points out that narrative gives history the false air of objectivity, and as such the narrative quality of historiography functions as a legitimizing agent: "[T]his value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (24). Like Benjamin's (deliberately) partial history of the victors, White's view likewise sees history as incomplete and biased. Thus, historians can (and must) produce texts that are "alternative, and seemingly mutually exclusive, conceptions both of the same segments of the historical process and of the tasks of historical thinking" (*Metahistory* 4). In effect, White points out that a historian may choose to narrate history in different manners or account for different events and perspectives, as well as go about the historiographical task with differing purposes. White's affirmation of the existence of multiple (if not infinite) modes of conceptualizing

and cataloging the past—which is to say, writing history—has, then, given rise to the criticism that his approach is, again, highly relative. Specifically as it relates to the nineteenth century, for example, White states that we observe "radically different conceptions of what 'the historical work' *should* consist of'" (*Metahistory* 4 original emphasis).

For White, the task of recording history is a process that begins with the selection and compiling of specific events—according to a motivating ideology—that will comprise the historical account (*Metahistory* 5). Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, notes that "[w]ithin that viewpoint [of emplotment], history becomes one among many types of narratives with no particular distinction except for its pretense of truth" (6). This process also involves the organizing of these chosen events into a logical, fluid narrative, which is, in short a "*transformation of chronicle into story*" (White *Metahistory* 5 original emphasis), which is why Trouillot refers to it as constructivism, for we contruct a story out of the past. The arranging of chronological events into a narrative, then, supposes other actions by the historian. Just as the inclusion of certain dates and events reveals or at least hints at the historian's ideological framework (Why choose these events instead of others?), the historian's hand is present in the explanations and/or interpretation of the significance of these inclusions (*Metahistory* 6-7). White develops his idea of emplotment in asserting that there exists a certain story or plot that the historian wishes to narrate, and this story guides the historical narrative from the selection of the events to their interpretation: "Providing the 'meaning' of a story by identifying the *kind of story* that has been told is called explanation by emplotment ... Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events

fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind [tragedy, comedy, romance, and satire]" (*Metahistory* 7). The resulting historical account, then, is a story that is designed to serve specific narrative archetypes (*Metahistory* 7-8), and in this manner multiple histories that are motivated by differing ideologies and which utilize or appeal to differing archetypes are possible.

Nevertheless, White has been criticized for attributing to the historian-narrator the act of linking or connecting (meaningfully) events that were already connected in history. Maurice Mendelbaum argues precisely along these lines in stating, "Therefore, unless there is absolutely no basis for the claim that historical narratives *do* represent past structures and processes, and serve as icons which represent relationships that actually obtained, much of their structure ... is not attributable to the narrator but is already present within the elements with which he has chosen to deal" (45 original emphasis). Where White tends to read or find a much heavier ideological guiding hand in the historiographical work, Mendelbaum, then, puts forth that certain relationships are not made by the historian-narrator but by history itself, that within history there is already a central plot, so to speak. It is important to consider what Mendelbaum's argument is suggesting, in addition to a lessening effect of the historian-narrator's level of involvement with the emplotment of history: if history already contains a narrative that is, more or less, self explanatory, then the historian's job is much more straightforward, and there is no room for differences in the historical record.

Mendelbaum's assertion that history has already created certain relationships between events is most certainly valid; however, it runs the risk of, once again, attributing to (a particular) history the monolithic status as the one, true "plot" that was

set forth by history itself. Again we would arrive at the question, "Whose history?"—certainly not that of the marginalized other. While for White there can be various iterations of history simultaneously, Benjamin's view of history as struggle (for power or freedom) leaves little room of the (co)existence of any history that could be considered an alternative to the dominating one; the mere presence of another, alternate history calls into question the authority and legitimacy of the victor's history. Nevertheless, both perspectives overlap in their conceptualization of history as text. History for Benjamin is not only written by the present and future victors, but also history is overwritten as new "official" ones emerge. In this sense, Benjaminian history could also be described in terms of a palimpsest in which the existing (historical) record is scratched off and removed from the page only to be overwritten by another, new history. If Benjamin presents us with a palimpsest, White, on the other hand, offers a library of history in which multiple tomes exist, side by side, on the same "shelf" of a given historical reality.

For both Benjamin and White the historian occupies the central role of the maker or shaper of history. The conqueror acts as historian by writing his own history, one that denies the conquered's history, or specific individuals write simultaneously differing histories differing that privilege certain events in a master narrative and, as such, serve personal ideologies. In effect, in both cases we observe a partial history, a process of picking and choosing performed by a privileged few, by those who partake of legitimizing processes which usually involve the glorification of the so-called historical text. Inevitably, then, those histories or discourses that fall outside of (yet within a given culture) traditional forms of legitimization are excluded.

We might also consider history, then, as a linguistic space in which the politics of the dominating/dominated are played out. The struggle for this locus of enunciation sees the writing of official histories of the dominating classes as the history of the dominated is erased. And so, only one official history may exist at a time, and the existence of one history means the demise of all others. Thus, a particular history must appear to be universal and universally true and thereby eliminate the possibility of other histories; in this manner, it is a non-politicized history because it purports that there is no challenge to its claim to ultimate accuracy and legitimacy. Therefore, the simple linguistic act of speaking or articulating another history is a political act that calls into question the legitimacy of history.

Indeed, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. offers a poignant example of the linguistic act as political when he explains in *The Signifying Monkey* that black slaves in the United States resisted by resignifying the discourse of slave owner. In effect, slaves would "signify" or transform the meaning of negative terms by appropriating them and then giving them a clandestine meaning that was positive only for those who understood the hidden meaning. The slaves' linguistic play, argues Gates, is part of a theoretical lineage (Gates' theory, that is) of African American literature founded upon two trickster figures. The unique manner in which the slave population would transform and resignify the oppressive discourses of the slave owners would not only undermine the dominant hegemony and, consequently, allow for moments of freedom of speech, but also it provided a way to recover their own history and culture via obscure allusions and double entendres. This play on language called "signifyin(g)," as Gates spells the term, emerges as a strategic resistance to and within their oppressive circumstances:

> Some black genius or a community of witty and sensitive speakers emptied the signifier "signification" of its received concepts and filled this empty signifier with their own concepts. By doing so, by supplanting the received, standard English concept associated by (white) convention with this particular signifier, they (un)wittingly disrupted the nature of the sign=*signified/signifier* equation itself (46 original emphasis).

Unlike the Messianic beliefs of Benjamin, the disruption of the conqueror's discourse caused by signifyin(g) does not recover a "fullness" of history, though speakers are able to recover some of it. The transformation of dominant discourses and the subsequent recuperation of at least part of the history that is erased in the "writing" of history by the conqueror, that is the slave owners, constitutes an attempt to find a space (linguistic in this case) where the dominator (and the dominant discourse) does not exist, a liberated space. For Gates, this space is linguistic as it is "activated" through signifyin(g).

We might also view history as a series of narratives that do or do not overlap. They may be quite similar just as they may be contradictory. Such a view, in a way, recognizes the incomplete nature of the task of historiography as well as the ideological influence of the historian in the historical work. In this manner, history is shown to be similar to—if not the same as—narrative, for it is determined by a specific "plot" structure that appeals to certain archetypes. Indeed, the relationship between narrative and history is more complex still, for not only can history be conceived as an attempt to form a fluid narrative, but also the principles of storytelling present a means by which we can understand and account for the transformation of historical "reality."

Refashioning History: Storytelling, (Collective) Memory, and the Sign

It is worthwhile to remember that fact that both Benjamin and White offer a view of history that is informed and influenced by text or the linguistic: I have given the examples of a palimpsest and narrative. Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller," however, poses the question of what happens when the linguistic is insufficient to narrate or to give account: can history exist if we are unable to narrate it? The essay confronts the dilemma of a decline (and disappearance) of experience and describes the problem in terms that remind us of his position regarding history: "It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences" (83). The inability to narrate, to tell a story, reminds us of the position of the dominated who cannot tell their history, for it has been erased.

Indeed, storytelling is not a one-way street as the nomenclature suggests—the story is not simply told by one to another. To be sure, stories are circulated and exchanged, for storytelling is, at its heart, a communal act of sharing, just as it is, likewise, the act of sharing with the community. While it is true that one person is telling the story, the experience of the narrative is shared by the community: "Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn" (Benjamin "Storyteller" 84). It is worthwhile to note the emphasis Benjamin gives to the act of oral communication that takes place: the experience, the story goes from mouth to mouth. In effect, and in contrast to the importance of the text to the historian, storytelling is concerned primarily with a speech act.

A central development in the decline of storytelling, for Benjamin, is the rise of the novel. As a communal act storytelling stands opposed to the novel which is more or

less solitary: "What differentiates the novel ... is that it neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it. This distinguishes it from storytelling in particular. The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to the tale. The novelist has isolated himself" ("Storyteller" 87). The isolation that Benjamin speaks of here is not one of being disengaged from the world or the reader; instead, the novelist's isolation, according to Benjamin, is more akin to alienation. While the storyteller makes the narrative his or her own, the novelist, for Benjamin, makes the story the reader's, thereby disassociating him/herself from the story. Of course, storytelling as I discuss it here cannot exist in isolation; there must be a storyteller and an audience. Also, storytelling grows and adapts to the needs and contexts of the audience, and each new narrator has the freedom, the poetic license to imbue the story with his or her own personality. If history represents a privileging of the text as part of a legitimizing process that homogenizes and excludes alternate versions, storytelling prizes the verbal sharing and (re)telling and extemporaneous evolution of the narrative.

There is no doubt that a key element in the craft of storytelling is the ability to remember the story to be told. Indeed, what is most important is the ability of the story to survive, to be passed on. However, unlike history, storytelling is not concerned with whether or not one's memory is completely reliable, that is to say that one does not have to remember the exact words of the story as first told by another. In fact, it is preferable that a storyteller not simply regurgitate the words of another storyteller as such but rather relate the narrative to personal experience, give it a personal touch. For it is in the ability of a storyteller to relate the narrative to his or her own life experience, and that of the

listener(s), that the story will find fertile ground in another future storyteller to remember and then adapt the story for future listeners:

> There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later. (Benjamin "Storyteller" 91)

In a sense, then, we arrive at another difference between the storyteller and the novelist: the novelist "fills out" the narrative structure, the plot, with details about the characters ("psychological shading," in Benjamin's words), while the storyteller includes details from his or her own life and experiences.

Benjamin goes on to state that relaxation or boredom gives way to experience-having; it drives us to do something to quell our boredom. As a result, then, these experiences then make their way into the stories being told. Paradoxically, though, when there is distraction (or when we are "experience-having"), one is not willing to stop and listen to stories: "[T]he activities that are intimately associated with boredom ... are already extinct in the cities and are declining in the country as well. With this the gift for listening is lost and the community of listeners disappears" ("Storyteller" 91). Boredom or a state of relaxation is, for Benjamin, necessary to storytelling not only because it finds the individual in a disposition to listen to stories, but also because it also means that the listener will be more attentive, which means it is more likely that the story will be

remembered: "The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory" ("Storyteller" 91). Of course, the listener's remembering is also dependent upon his or her desire to do so, as Benjamin later points out ("Storyteller" 97).

I have said that Benjamin's view of history also implies an erasure of other non-legitimized histories, an active exclusion of certain information the leads to the loss of personal history. Thus, forgetting is also part of the process of remembering, for memories are the moments that have *not* been forgotten, and as a result they form the collectivity that comprises our memory. In a way, remembering certain things is also choosing to not remember others: "[Memory] is not a passive receptacle, but instead a process of active restructuring, in which elements may be retained, reordered, or *suppressed*" (Fentress and Wickham 40 emphasis added). In storytelling, therefore, the personal "loss" that takes place in self-forgetting is not an erasure of identity, but rather an incorporation into the community, into the realm of the shared story. The remembering involved in storytelling clearly goes beyond rote memorization and, as a result, hints at further implications relating to culture, history, and even identity. Understandably, then, Karen E. Till notes, "As a process and a way of knowing, memory raises questions about the complex interactions between individuals, psyches, social entities and cultures" (326). As a part of (a culture's) memory, the story, then, comes to form not only the community's history, but also its identity since it involves and includes "pieces" of the personal narratives of previous storytellers and listeners. We might even say that storytelling, in a way, acts as a Lacanian "mirror" by which communities can arrive at an understanding and recognition of their own selfhood in the story. Similarly,

Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* discusses the possibility of spaces where communities can work together to express and define their own idea of themselves:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (2)

Storytelling, like Bhabha's "in-between" spaces, provides a mode by which individuals may partake, collaborate, and expand their own understandings of self through both difference and sameness.

Beyond the realm of communicating or learning about history, in the context of memory as an epistemology or even as a source of anthropological or ethnographic information, the way in which a people or culture "remembers" can itself provide much insight. But, of course, memory is not entirely reliable, for memories can also be altered or adapted when they are articulated—we may embellish or even leave out details as we tailor the recounting of the memory to the context. Nevertheless, the reliability of a memory is not always of the most import, as Till also affirms, "scholars today are examining why and how individuals recall the past; how individuals relate to collectivities in constituting memory, history and identity; how time works individually and socially; and what role the psyche plays in these processes" (331).

To be sure, the links between memory and the social aspect—and the relation to storytelling and history—help us to bring a theoretical consideration of refashioning into focus. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that while the idea of collective memory (or social memory as Fentress and Wickham prefer) is rather widely known, it is not without its critics. Indeed, Maurice Halbwachs is credited with having given us the term collective memory, and he frames the concept as a paradoxical fusion of individuals and groups: "While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember ... [and] individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them. ... [E]ach memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory" (142). In a way, then, the group and the individual are separate yet one, to the point that it is difficult to concretely affirm that any "personal" memory is not the product of interaction with some group. In light of this, then, Halbwachs asserts that "we vibrate in unison, ignorant of the real source of the vibrations ... We are unaware that we are but an echo" (140). In other words, we have thoughts, ideas, and memories that are not (entirely) our own, but rather have been collected as we live and experience life in community with others. Even so, each person offers a distinct perspective that adds to the fullness of the collective memory. This also means that a memory is not only "collective" (as part of) but also connected to a particular group, and "[b]y definition it does not exceed the boundaries of this group" (Halbwachs 143). Thus, notes Nicolas Russell, "Halbwachs' collective memory is closely related to group identity" (800). Nevertheless, Halbwachs notes, "[t]he memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it" (144), which is why collective memory—unlike history—merges past and present rather than viewing

them as separate, autonomous entities, so to speak. Interestingly, Halbwachs also asserts that another chief difference between collective memory and history is that there can be many memories and only one history. What he is not saying, however, is that only one true history exists; instead he explains that there must always be "one" history—a history of a people or a country—that is based on events and facts. There is, in effect, no synthesis of other histories (145).

Halbwach's dichotomy—collective memory and history—seems to hint at what I have already discussed regarding legitimate/official and non-legitimized/unofficial histories, and I argue collective memory can constitute history for those who form part of the community who remembers. Susan A. Crane also recognizes the implications of Halbwachs' work and states in "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory" that collective memory, then, stands "outside the historical profession and ... has stimulated the creation of divisions between types of memory ... [and presents] the suggestion that another venue of memory and identity transmission has operated simultaneously and competitively with history" (1372). Crane, however, undoes the division between collective memory and history by pointing out that while collective memory preserves some experiences or memories, it also leaves out others and "sustain[s] the loss of other memories" (1383). While this is indeed problematic, it is not unique to (collective) memory; history, too, is plagued by the issue of never being able to say or record enough, much less "all" there is to say or record. Peter Burke continues along a similar line of thought in taking a stance he admittedly calls historical relativism and, in turn, states that "we have access to the past (like the present) only via the categories and schemata ... of our own culture" (189). In other words, Burke affirms that

history and memory go hand in hand and are subject to the same pitfalls of subjective, ideological shaping or (re)fashioning. If for Halbwachs a collective memory could continue to evolve and shape (and be shaped by) the group whose memory it is, and history is supposedly objective, for Burke both are subjective. And this view is readily apparent in his article's title, "History as Social Memory." Like in my reading of Benjamin, we must once again confront the issue of the objectivity of history.

Another critic problematizes some of Halbwachs' claims. In Nicolas Russell's "Collecive Memory before and after Halbwachs" we see early on that not all of Halbwachs' assertions hold completely true. Russell makes the valid point that Halbwachs was not entirely correct in stating that society was not used to thinking about memory as a group or shared phenomenon. Russell affirms that, very early in Western civilization, the idea of a "collective" memory existed, even if we did not have the luxury of Halbwachs' nomenclature—which is to say, the phrase "collective memory"—to describe it (792). Furthermore, as Russell notes, the wide reach of collective memory has also contributed, in effect, to its own non-specificity. That is to say that it is "understood and defined in many different ways" (792).

On the issue of how individuals (or groups) remember, it is of interest to note that how memory is expressed bears close resemblance to storytelling. To be sure, Fentress and Wickhman define their concept of social memory based on this principle of expressing: "Social memory, then, is articulated memory. Articulation does not always imply articulation in speech" (47). Indeed, their chapter deals with "social memory in the form of narrative" (47). More specifically, Fentress and Wickham describe the process by which storytellers were able to "improvise" epic narratives like *Beowolf* and *La*

chanson de Roland by relying on a mental database of stock phrases and structures that were constantly used and reused to fill in gaps, to stall, or to emphasize (46). Interestingly, while the poet is supposedly free to "invent" the lines as he or she goes along, these patent, existing phrases and sayings also served to guide the storyteller, for the audience was not only very familiar with the narrative itself but also with many of the common phrases or memorable lines, and so the audience anticipated and even expected certain plot elements and turns of phrases as they listened: "A twelfth-century audience would probably have regarded the story [of Roland] as true, and would have accepted any narration as correct so long as it kept to the outline of the story as they remembered it ... The audience ... would have expected these [elements of *La chanson de Roland*] to be included in any narration as well" (Fentress and Wickham 55-56). For Fentress and Wickham, then, the audience listening to the epics of old had an influence on the way the storyteller "remembered" and communicated the details of the narrative, which is why the authors state quite plainly that because of *Roland*'s oral tradition, "[i]n this sense, the poem refers to a collective memory" (55). We might also look at Benjamin's concept of storytelling in the same light, as an iteration of social memory in which the narrator and the audience partake to articulate and evolve the narration.

Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that Fentress and Wickham affirm that narratives in the oral tradition were not exactly the same each time a story was told, neither were they expected to be. The most important element(s), of course, had to be there and in a certain way or style, but there was also quite a bit of room for flexibility and creativity. What is more, considering the nature of oral traditions and their flexibility, the idea of an original, "true" text was highly unlikely, which meant that there

was no real, tangible and static standard to which one would compare a storytelling experience:

> [U]ntil the poem had be written down, no one would have known for sure whether a particular recital was a verbatim repetition of an earlier one or not. ... Without the control of a written text, it is difficult, in the event of doubt, to establish what the 'original' was. There is only memory to go on. Literacy helps create the idea of a written text as a copy, in written form, of speech. It is this idea of written text that provides us with our particular notion of the original and authoritative point of reference (Fentress and Wickham 44).

And so, until a story is written, it is subject to the inevitable process of evolving as it is passed from storyteller to audience over and over. Only when the narrative is recorded in writing is an "authoritative" text established; up until that moment, however, each iteration of the story is as valid and as authoritative as the next. Just as Benjamin states that, when a novel is written, the novelist is "isolated" because the story becomes the reader's, when oral "texts" are written down and "legitimized," the written text has the effect of paralyzing the story as such, just this way. Consequently, the story that once was of and from a community, ever adapting, now exists immutably and outside of the community: the story no longer belongs to the storyteller(s). Paradoxically, though, Benjamin notes that, inevitably, the legitimizing process of writing the (his)story down relies on the oral account: "And among those who have written down the tales, it is the ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers" ("Storyteller" 84). At the same time that writing attempts to legitimize by

simultaneous moving away from orality and fixing a definitive version on paper, it is also dependent on the stories that it ultimately undermines.

Doubtless, Benjamin's politically informed view of history refers almost certainly to a literate culture that records history as written text—a culture that has an authoritative written history by which to compare, and ultimately negate, other perspectives. Indeed, enforcing a single, "official" historical paradigm only seems possible in light of the culture's ability to establish said history as authoritative, and this is done through the legitimizing process of writing. On the other hand, like White's proposition of multiple histories existing side by side, in preliterate cultures there could exist multiple versions of the same story, each of which takes into consideration the specific context of its telling: the storyteller, the audience, and the audience's expectation, for instance. The resulting oral "text," then, is one that carries meaning for the culture in which it is articulated because it is comprised of language and narrative elements that are extremely familiar to and directed toward that specific culture or audience.

The familiarity with the story and with the phrases used to tell it aided immensely in remembering a longer narrative when the time came for a storyteller to recount it. Additionally, oral narratives undoubtedly underwent a process of simplification that removed extraneous and non-essential (or non-expected) information. Fentress and Wickham state that while social memory is often more elaborate or has a "higher level of articulation" than personal or individual memory, images that are shared by a community must also be highly generalized: "Images can be transmitted socially only if they are conventionalized and simplified: conventionalized, because the image has to be meaningful for an entire group; simplified, because in order to be generally meaningful

and capable of transmission, the complexity of the image must be reduced as far as possible" (47-48). The same holds true not only for images, but also for narrative, for "[a]s ideas held collectively in social memory, the characters and images of a remembered narrative tend to simplification and conventionalization" (Fentress and Wickham 58). This process of simplification and conventionalization of memories and of narratives—both of which, of course, I refer to here as taking place on the social level—reflects a type of filtering that occurs within the community as the memory/story is being articulated and digested, one that bends the memory or narrative to the will or needs of the community:

> In this way, the process of change during the transmission of social memory is equally a process of conceptualization. Unless a society possesses means to freeze the memory of the past, the natural tendency of social memory is to suppress what is not meaningful or intuitively satisfying in the collective memories of the past, and interpolate or substitute what seems more appropriate or more in keeping with their particular conception of the world. (Fentress and Wickham 58-59)

Social memory, as such, like storytelling, becomes a product of community interaction. And if the community filters out[2] information that is not meaningful, it also maintains or even adds to that which is meaningful or relevant to bring about another memory or narrative that represents the collective conception of that particular community.

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[2] It is worthwhile to mention two similar phenomena in Psychology known as leveling and sharpening where, when recounting stories or experiences, an individual unconsciously omits certain details ("leveling" out the narration) and/or enhances or sharpens others.

We must also not forget that in oral or preliterate societies, narrative or storytelling was more than a pastime: it was a principle means of communicating history and even identity. In this sense, the "accuracy" of a story being told was not only a question of fidelity to the narrative, but also one of historical importance since the story was history, and history was told as a story. The close and overlapping ties between history and narrative, could then, oftentimes, also produce a confusion between the two by which the story, even if historically inaccurate, could become historical truth. In the case of Roland, for example, Fentress and Wickham note that the epic poem became a central vehicle by which the public learned history. In effect, the authors note, "[w]hat the twelfth-century French knew about Charlemagne, they knew in large part in relation to their memory of the story of Roland" (58). If literature or narrative constitutes the main foundation of a community's perspective of history, then, it is not out of the question that, as the narrative evolves and is adapted across the endless retellings, history, too, is impacted as a result. That is to say, if changes take place in or to the narrative that forms the basis for how a group views or understands history, then the group's understanding of history will also be affected. And in today's society of interconnectedness that was, perhaps, previously unimaginable, the ability to shape narratives (or for a narrative to take on a new shape) is amplified.[3]

Without a doubt, then, the intermingling of story and history—two words that coincidentally share the same root—is quite a common occurrence. Fentress and

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[3] While the Internet has provided a place for humanity's central narrative to be preserved in unprecedented detail, it has also brought about a vehicle by which narratives can travel, largely uninhibited, faster than ever before. Indeed, a defining characteristic of being Internet saavy is not trusting what is before our eyes: a photograph could be altered, an email could be a phishing scheme, and an article could be false.

Wickham speak to the difficulties of ethnohistorians who attempt to construct histories of oral-based or preliterate cultures. Even though incredibly detailed accounts of history may be readily recited, there are frequently other versions of the same history that may have been influenced by surrounding communities. The authors offer the following example:

> A group's oral tradition may affirm ... that there was a king, having a certain name, and coming from a certain place, who ruled 500 years ago. Without the sort of evidence that can place this tradition in perspective, the historian has no way of knowing whether the tradition is genuine, stemming from a real event, or merely a legend; nor of knowing whether the figures referred to in the tradition are real or mythical ... The historian, in short does not know what the tradition refers to. (77)

What we observe here is a distinction that is made not only between history and legend or real/mythical, but also between official/non-official "texts." The authors correctly point out that, primarily, it is a "question of authority" (77) that is prevalent in pre-literate groups.

Even so, without the "authority" of an "official" written history, the differences and discrepancies between seemingly conflicting accounts speak to the contextual peculiarities of the communities. That is to say, that by looking at where accounts overlap and where they diverge, we can also come to understand more about the culture itself, as this "reveals what the group's feelings and beliefs are, rather than what the past itself was. Ignoring this distinction can lead to disastrous results" (Fentress and Wickham 78). This distinction of the "true past" and the past seen through the eyes of a

particular community is of the utmost importance, as my present study is concerned with not only the existence of these distinctions, but also with how they come to inform representations of three historical figures in Latin America. Like the distinction between true past/subjective past, these figures have undergone a shift in the way they are perceived. To that end, it is appropriate to make a similar distinction in the way we refer to Lampião, Che, and Las Casas: who they (really) were, and how they are viewed now. But even this task becomes difficult if we recognize that our knowledge of these historical figures has been affected by the ideological constructs of the societies and historians who have recorded and given account of their lives.

As is apparent, the distinction between real or true past/legend is also a temporal distinction, one that my then/now view of the aforementioned historical figures also maintains. In effect, it seems that as we move away from a specific point in time in the past, the lens of history becomes increasingly blurred. Fentress and Wickham point out that, naturally, as time continues, societies, cultures, historical contexts change. And these changes also affect the way a culture views, interprets, or perhaps remembers history, for again the narrative will become simplified as non-meaningful information is filtered out: "Where meaning is related to context, the memory of meanings will tend to be lost as the context changes" (Fentress and Wickham 68). This view, of course, seems to reflect Hegel's criticism of what he calls reflective history, a model in which the historical account is affected, if not contaminated, by the distance of time and the lens of other socio-historical contexts.

Hegel's reflective history can be categorized into four iterations: universal, pragmatical, critical, and abstract. Universal history attempts to do precisely what its

name implies: give a universal account of the world. However, Hegel is quick to mention that because of the scope of the task and the distance from these events, the historian must make vast omissions from the text, and what is included or not is often attributable to the historian's own *spirit* (geist), or cultural frame of reference: "A history which aspires to traverse long periods of time ... must indeed forego the attempt to give individual representations of the past as it actually existed. It must foreshorten its pictures by abstractions" (48). Pragmatical history "takes the occurrence out of the category of the Past and makes it virtually Present" (48) through comparison or offering a type of moral lesson. Here, too, the *spirit* plays a role, for the historian must make history bend to the needs of a different culture. Critical historicism attempts to achieve veracity or arrive at the truth of history by conducting "a criticism of historical narratives and an investigation of their truth and credibility" (50). Even so, Hegel notes, the historian is often confronted with gaps that must be filled with "subjective fancies in the place of historical data" (50). Finally, Hegel describes an abstract method that focuses on very specific, though generalized, aspects of history like the history of art or law. Here, the German philosopher warns that the choice to focus on one area already reflects certain preoccupations, and so the historian must be honest about them:

> Such branches of national life stand in close relation to the entire complex of a people's annals; and the question of chief importance in relation to our subject is, whether the connection of the whole is exhibited in its truth and reality, or referred to merely external relations. In the latter case, these important phenomena ... appear as purely accidental national peculiarities. (51)

In short, the historian must go beyond a simple timeline of events and explain contexts and causes.

Hegel's concern with giving account of the context is consistent with his underlying apprehension about the *spirit*'s, or cultural framework, effect on the historical account. His view of the influence of the *spirit* over the historian becomes abundantly clear: if the historian allows the *spirit* to guide him or her, the historical account will cater only to the needs of that specific people's *spirit*. The history that is written, then, will be incomplete. He concludes his summary of the reflective model of history thusly:

> It must be remarked that, when Reflective History has advanced to the adoption of general points of view, if the position taken is a true one, these are found to constitute—not a merely external thread, a superficial series—but are the inward guiding soul of the occurrences and actions that occupy a nation's annals. For, like soul-conductor Mercury, the Idea is, in truth, the leader of people and of the World; and Spirit, the rational and necessitated will of that conductor, is and has been the director of the events of the World's History. (51)

For Hegel, then, approaching history philosophically, or by stripping oneself of these external (and internal) influences, is preferable, for it is what "distiguishes us from the brutes ... [i]n sensation, cognition and intellection" (51). The problem, however, is that even if a historian were able to achieve such a difficult task, cultures and communities most certain cannot do so—history is almost always seen through their own contextualized perspectives. Fentress and Wickham echo Hegel's perspective in stating that events are often remembered "because of their power to legitimize the present, and

tend to be interpreted in ways that very closely parallel (often competing) present conceptions of the world" (88).

We understand, then, that not only storytelling and memory, but also history is subject to the Hegelian *spirit* or the cultural perspectives of a people and time. As such, history is shown to be far from objective, for as cultures and times change, so too can their views of history. Fentress and Wickham describe the process as one of evolution by which the articulating of the narrative of history progressively incorporates its own interpretations and meanings into the account:

> [T]he process of transmission and diffusion of oral tradition is itself historical. It is historical, moreover, regardless of whether the information it contains consists of kernels of true fact, or merely folk motifs. Accompanying the process of transmission of oral tradition is a process of reinterpretation. Every time a tradition is articulated, it must be given a meaning appropriate to the context, or to the genre, in which it is articulated. This necessity to reinterpret often lies behind changes within the tradition itself. These changes may be small in scale, or they may be large-scale recontextualizations of the entire tradition. Whatever the case, the process of reinterpretation reflects real changes in external circumstances as well. (85-86).

These changes indicate an almost inherent subjectivity in not only oral traditions, but also collective endeavors in general, such as the construction of a history. Thus, Hegel's ideal view of the historian's task as, essentially, free of the influence of the *spirit* and the possibility of historical objectivity—Hegel's philosophical history—is a difficult one.

To be sure, Randal Johnson points out that the struggle between objectivity and subjectivity is at the heart of French critic Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field* (3-4). Like Hegel, Bourdieu acknowledges a socio-cultural system that is "a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The habitus is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or second nature" (Johnson 5). The habitus, like Hegel's spirit, "inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated" (Johnson 5). Whereas for Hegel the historian must actively avoid the influence of the spirit in his or her work, Bourdieu recognizes that the habitus plays an active role in cultural production insomuch as it represents a link of commonality among agents. The habitus, however, might more appropriately be seen as the result of Bourdieu's notion of the *field*, that is "a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force independent of those of politics and the economy" (Johnson 6). In other words, the habitus, or the impulse that guides the practices of agents, is often related to the agents' field. Because a given field depends on the agents who comprise it, the concept "represented an attempt to apply what Bourdieu ... calls a *relational* mode of thought to cultural production" (Johnson 6). In Bourdieu's approach, we see hints of what I have discussed with relation to Benjamin, where the storytelling act is highly communal or relational and belongs to the particular community out of which it arises. Indeed, such a view of cultural production explains how a complex series of agents and collectively held beliefs contribute to the "basis of the functioning of the field of production and circulation of cultural commodities" (Bourdieu 76). Because, then, the field is comprised of a network or a relation of agents and structures, changes in these agents or structures

also change the field. Furthermore, as the field changes, so, too can the habitus, or the disposition of the agents to act a certain way.

I must note that Bourdieu refers largely to the economics of art and the production of culture, but even so, his concepts prove to be relevant to my discussion of the way in which narratives are legitimized and officialized to become the dominant discourse. Indeed, Bourdieu places "art" squarely in the realm of this agreement between agents, in a field embroiled in struggles for power and legitimacy: "Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work" (37). Here, again, the symbolic aspect of art is associated with its "value," monetary or otherwise. The "value" of the work (and the fact that it is even considered art at all) represents a symbolic agreement between a collectivity of agents that is conspicuously absent or hidden behind the symbolic idea of "value." In fact, we might even go a step further in considering the idea of the story(teller) as a "product" of a particular field of agents who, through the process of listening and remembering, create a field or narrative culture that symbolically legitimizes both the story and its teller as art and/or history.

In a way, in discussing the push and pull of a field and the processes of legitimization, we have come full circle to Benjaminian politics of history. Here I use the term politics as Jacques Rancière does in his "Ten Theses on Politics," which appears in the volume *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.* Rather than equating politics with a quest for power, the French critic situates it within a relationship, a duality involving a

political subject: "If there is something 'proper' to politics, it consists entirely in this relationship, which is not a relationship between subjects, but between two contradictory terms that define a subject. Politics disappears the moment this knot between subject and a relation is undone" (28-29). For Rancière, politics is relational because the political act is the rejection of the dichotomy that supposes the inherent nature of ruler/ruled, superior/inferior. Politics, then, is the questioning of these classifications as such, and because the *demos*, the people, constitute the only class of individual not inherently superior (either by birth or via wealth accumulation) in Aristotle's ruling classes, the *demos* is necessarily a political subject: "The people (*demos*) exists only as a rupture with the logic of *arkhè*, a rupture with the logic of commencement/commandment" (*Dissensus* 33). In this sense of rupturing with the logic of inferior/superior I approach the term "politics," for through Benjamin's assertion of the domination of an official history, we might also look to the emergence of non-official histories as a political act, one that rejects the idea of being born into a certain rendering of the world. Here, too, then this rupture with history reveals the people, the *demos*, whose history emerges with them, and as such, the political act is also a unifying one that simultaneously signals the surfacing of a collectivity of agents, of political subjects. The impulse to rupture the logic of the *arkhè* of an official history is the habitus of the *demos*, and in this way, their history becomes their field, their structuring structure.

By considering history in this light, as a field, or as a structure that is specific to a particular group of individuals, and one that also shapes these individuals' dispositions, perspectives, and actions, then it becomes possible to also consider history through the seemingly contradictory lenses of Benjamin and White at the same time. For while

Benjamin seems to describe a model of official history that necessarily precludes the possibility of other histories, White, of course, argues more or less the opposite: that history is varied and non-specific. We might say, then, that history is democratic in that it is the field of a demos at the same time that it is also that people's collective, articulated experience.

When history moves away from the realm of the monolithic and legitimate—sustaining the logic of the *arkhè*—it also moves toward the realm of the collective or social, and it begins to resemble pre-literate storytelling and social memory. As I have previously explained, in storytelling and memories, the social aspect bears a number of implications. First, the non-written-down story or memory is not subject to official, traditionally Western modes of legitimization—particularly written, textual comparison or analysis. Second, then, the legitimacy of the story or memory is a result of a process of agreement by which the articulated narrative must meet and comply with certain expectations and values held by the group, and so the story or memory is a result of a particular collective habitus. These expectations are determined by specificities that define the group, which Bourdieu calls fields. Third, whatever does not meet with expectations is essentially weeded out and forgotten. Fourth, because of the existence of different groups of fields, these people's expectations or dispositions can and will produce alternate versions of the "same" phenomenon when articulate, be it a story or memory.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of a story or a memory as merely a narrative or articulation of thought-experiences, as if they were unconnected to the socio-historical identity of a people. Indeed, as has been shown, in oral traditions, in pre-

literate societies, history was narrative, and narrative was history. In this way, then, we see the convergence of not only story and history, but also, we see that both of these move into the realm of remembering, of memory. For in relating the tale, the individual is remembering or calling to mind the memory of a people's history, from his or her own perspective and through his or her own eyes. At this point, at the intersection of history with story/memory, history, too, takes on the characteristics that I just mentioned in relation to story/memory: non-written history resists traditional modes of legitimization and is subject only to a collective bargaining process that privileges the group's expectations and values, and in this manner, the group "writes" its own history, one that can/will differ from other groups'. I must add, however, that one further implication seems to be particular to this collective view of history (as opposed to storytelling and social memory): the political aspect of such a view of history arises the moment we recognize the possibility of multiple histories. History simultaneously comes into existence and takes on a political nature the moment it is articulated. It must be stated, though, that just because the articulating of a version of history can be a political act, it does not mean that it was intended to be so. The existence of this alternate history is political, regardless of the group's intentions.

Again, history often intends to offer, as Hegel points out, a universal account, and as such props itself up as unique (there is no other history but this history), objective, unequivocal, and complete. History masquerades as reality, when it is far from it. It "sells" itself as whole, when it is, rather, full of holes. We believe history to be objective when it is actually rather subjective. Narratives and memories do not, on the other hand, pretend to present reality as such. Stories may reflect or comment on reality, but they do

not (or rarely do they) attempt to present themselves as a complete reality. Similarly, memories are understood to comprise only part of a possible reality.

By viewing history in terms of storytelling and social memory, we highlight its communal nature. History is the result of a process of bargaining among individuals of a like context and impulse—from the same field and with similar habiti—which is why any historical account necessarily reflects, to a certain extent, the values of a particular group. Because the group pares the historical narrative down to the essentially interesting or "valuable" (those things that are able to reflect the group's values), history—like memory—is just as much a series of inclusions as it is a series of exclusions. History is subject to revisions and evolution, and changes in time and context reveal that history is not, in fact, static, but is actually quite malleable. And it is in a constant phase of being "written" and "re-written," fashioned and refashioned

Refashioning the Lives of Latin American Historical Figures

Having discussed the way that history, storytelling, and memory interwine to form flexible narratives that function as depositories of the past, I must define a key term in my analysis of Lampião, Che Guevara, and Bartolomé de Las Casas: refashioning. While the word is used rather often, rarely is it actually defined, as many critics simply employ the term synonymously with the concepts of remaking or reimagining. Indeed, the word calls to mind these very ideas, yet simplifying the phenomenon of refashioning in such a manner overlooks the way in which something or someone may be refashioned. That is to say, that when ideas, or people in this case, are refashioned, it does not happen spontaneously and without context. As I have argued up to this point, history, memory,

and storytelling involve complex social and ideological implications and influences. And neither is refashioning isolated from such cultural products.

Indeed, Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* offers a useful point of reference in bringing up the idea of refashioning. His use of the word "fashioning" to describe this process is convenient, as it not only makes use of the same root word as refashioning, but also it gives us a point of reference by which we can compare and contrast his conception of fashioning with the way I deal with refashioning. In short, he argues that "in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2). Though Greenblatt finds traces of self-fashioning throughout history, he locates his idea of self-fashioning in the sixteenth-century use of the term "fashion" "designating the forming of a self" (2). Fashioning, as Greenblatt conceives of it, is not restricted to literature or to "life": "It invariably crosses the boundaires between the creation of literary character, the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves" (3). Nevertheless, while (self)fashioning seems to be a rather open-ended process, Greenblatt clarifies that it is guided, it has a referent (religion, military life, the royal court) that is also in conflict with something alien outside the self, and so "self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien" (9). Thus, an individual actively makes or designs the self in relation to a point of reference outside of the self. It is both a fashioning of the self and by the self.

It would be only natural to assume that given Greenblatt's concept above, refashioning would be, quite simply, another fashioning of the self, a subsequent self-

fashioning, so to speak. In reality, though, to limit refashioning to a second fashioning would be to limit Greenblatt's term to the initial processes of identity formation, as if self-fashioning only takes place once, and everything after that is refashioning. Undoubtably, one can fashion the self over and over. Refashioning, then, is not another fashioning or self-fashioning; it is not re-(self)fashioning. Refashioning, as I use the term herein, is not a fashioning of the self by the self. Whereas self-fashioning is an individual's own process of recreating the self, refashioning is an after-the-fact remaking of an individual by another. Both are a matter of perception, but while self-fashioning is one's own perception of the self, refashioning is shaped by the perception of another/an other rather than oneself.

Like self-fashioning, however, refashioning recognizes the power of society's influence on the individual. As I have previously discussed, history, storytelling, and memory are all products of the society in which they are created at the same time that they give meaning to that same society. Refashioning, then, is the process by which society is able to transform these same constructs by appropriating the dominant narrative(s) and resignifying it/them according to group-specific ideologies. Furthermore, refashioning is not a one-time process; it is continual as society's memory of the past evolves and changes and, as a result, influences the way society views itself and the past alike. In this way, Benjamin's political view of history may be seen as the contemporary established order's refashioning of a nation or people's past.

To summarize, refashioning is the process of remaking or reimagining the way we view someone or something. Because society is continually changing, refashioning is never quite complete(d). Additionally, as White argues that multiple histories can exist at

the same time, it is possible for someone or something to be refashioning a number of different ways at the same time. Thus, while I argue for a specific form of refashioning here, there may—and likely do—exist other refashioned perspectives of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas. Unlike self-fashioning, though, refashioning as I define it is not a process that one can "do" to onself—one, or one's legacy, is refashioned by others. Furthermore, like storytelling or collective memory, refashioning is the result of group negotiations and meaning-making, and it is also imbued with the ideologies of these groups, which is why refashioning ultimately can be said to serve purposes that reflect the ideological aims of the community that engages in the refashioning.

Film, History, and Ideology: The Mind's Eye on Screen

I have given considerable attention to approaching history and memory through a communal perspective, and I have also, in large part, privileged the linguistic sign as a principle component of history as it—history—is organized into a narrative (either written or spoken) that mirrors ideological preoccupations of certain individuals or groups. And this is appropriate, as my dissertation makes a case for the specific literary bases of understandings of the legacies of Lampião in the Brazilian *cordel*, Che in his diaries, and Las Casas in colonial literary genres known as *historias* and *relaciones*.[4] I also trace the representation of these legacies in film, a genre that, although it relies on spoken and even written language for dialogue and other purposes, communicates largely by way of visual images. In the same manner that—as I have argued—storytelling in oral traditions takes part in the task of preserving and propagating history, film, too,

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[4] In the coming chapters I give more detailed attention to these specific genres of literature as they relate to the individuals I study.

participates in and contributes to history in that it oftentimes relies on existing historical accounts as a foundation for its own narrative, which subsequently becomes another historical "text" in the "story" of a given history. And so, film, too, is revealed to be both a product affected by and imbued with the same ideological structuring that guides "traditional" modes of historiography. It is also necessary, then, to consider the ways in which film, as a medium of communicating and as a historical document, also contribute to the creation and propagation of these individual's legacies.

The first thesis of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* begins by describing our modern culture, one in which an abundance of images comes to replace the original: "The whole of life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (12 original emphasis). Representation for Debord is, in short, a distancing from reality via spectacle, a sort of vicarious reality that plays out before our eyes: we do not participate in reality as actors but rather we participate in the spectacle (of representation) as spectators. Debord further argues that, consequently, the proliferation of representation has ruptured the "former unity of life" (12). Thus, spectacle for Debord is not only what me might traditionally consider to be a spectacle—a play, a film, an event, for example. Indeed, Debord's definition is more broad and designates as spectacle anything that alienates us from society, from other humans, and causes us to accept a representation of reality rather than reality itself; this, consequently, turns us into spectators. In this manner, then, not only "entertainment" in general is a spectacle, but consumerism/materialism could be labeled as specatacle as well.

Furthermore, spectacle, or representation instead of reality, imposes a false unity and thus becomes "society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification ... [and] the unity it imposes is merely the official language of generalized separation" (12). The result is that "reality unfolds in a new generality as a pseudo-world apart" that is "[a]pprehended in a *partial* way" (12 original emphasis). Finally, Debord asserts that "the spectacle is both the outcome and goal of the dominant mode of production" (13). In summary, Debord lays out a chain of causality whereby spectacle has brought about a break and separation with reality that, in turns, brings about a new, false reality that is but a representation of the former, "real" reality, as if we had entered back into Plato's cave to watch the shadows pass by. A major characteristic of this "representative" reality is that it is incomplete or can only be perceived in incompleteness. We might even say that Debord sees our break with reality via spectacle's interference in the same manner that Benjamin perceives a break with (or an incapability of) storytelling due to a traumatic silencing and/or a lack of experience-having.

Undoubtedly, we see in Debord's opening theses (and indeed throughout the rest of his work) a logic at work that runs parallel to what I have already described with relation to history, storytelling, memory, and politics. Debord sees modern society's fetish with spectacle as a false unification, a false wholeness that, because it *represents* reality, passes for and thus ultimately becomes our reality: a reality based on representation.[5] Spectacle—which Debord defines rather broadly as including everything from "news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment"

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[5] His take on representation as reality speaks to what Roland Barthes argues when he writes that "*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (*Mythologies* 121 original emphasis).

(13)—, works as an avatar for reality in that it presents the incomplete as the complete, the rupture of unity as unity itself; it offers a distorted reality. And as I have argued in regards to history, spectacle is ideologically, and thus even politically, charged: "For what the spectacle expresses is the total practice of one particular economic and social formation; it is, so to speak, that formation's *agenda*" (15 original emphasis).

Debord's concept of spectacle, of a world of the appearance of reality, causes us once again to consider Walter Benjamin, specifically his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Writing a few decades before Debord, Benjamin essentially argues what might be the initial stages of a society of spectacle wherein industrialization has had a profound effect on art by making possible mass reproduction of said works. Where Debord points to a world of shaped appearance that causes human alienation, Benjamin brings to light the separation that is present between the original work of art and its massification, which is also its commoditization. Benjamin reminds, "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" ("Work of Art" 220). Both Debord and Benjamin, then, are concerned precisely with the question of authenticity: Debord, the authenticity of reality, and Benjamin, the authenticity of art, which is to say the "aura."

In a way, we might view Debord's "spectacle" as the human iteration of Benjamin's loss of the aura; just as humans are alienated from reality (in Debord), art is alienated from its aura (in Benjamin). Along these same lines, we can point to history's inability to be universal and complete; it can never "say" everything there is to say, much less do so with utter objectivity. And storytelling may suffer from a lack of storytellers, who in turn suffer from a lack of experiences due to trauma. To an extent, it also is

possible to view a sort of "chain" or even hierarchy of alienation or isolation that begins with storytelling, moves to the realm of the written word, and passes on to the world of visual art before finally bringing about the alienation of the individual through spectacle. With caution I approach the possible relationships or levels of dialogue that may exist among these critics in such a manner, but I do so to offer a rationale by which I might also demonstrate the interconnectivity of history, narrative, text, image, and humanity's intervention (with)in them. And that intervention, whether intentional or not, is one that impresses ideology upon the "product" of that intervention: history, storytelling, or visual art, to name only the main aspects I have dealt with so far. As Bourdieu has noted, the field and the habitus provide an agent's framework and motivation for perceiving and (inter)acting with the world around him or her. And so, in other words, we might ask if it is possible to separate human ideology from human creative activity, or perhaps any activity. W. J. T. Mitchell, in *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, makes his stance quite clear: "In this formulation [of defining ideology], there would be no such thing as a position outside ideology; even the most 'demystified' critic of ideology would have to admit that he occupies some position of value and interest" (4).

Film, or watching a film, gives us the sense that we are seeing all there is to see, but in reality, we are only seeing what is meant for us to see. In the background, or behind the camera lens, exist cast and crew, machinery, cables, microphones, and (in a "period" film), anachronistic elements that do not belong to the epoch the film purports to represent. Films truly and literally *frame* our *view* of what is happening on screen. To be sure, the same limitations that, as I have herein argued, affect history as a genre that attempts but is never able to present a universal account also come into play when we

deal with film. How much more so when we discuss film as historical "document" or a document of historical interest? Film's capacity for historical documentation and representation is a topic of debate that has existed for at least a few decades, and Robert A. Rosenstone, for example, discusses the "exhilarating and disturbing experience" (1173) of his intervention, as a historian, into the realm of film. Rosenstone describes his central preoccupation when it comes to film as a historical document:

> [N]o matter how serious or honest the filmmakers, and no matter how deeply committed they are to rendering the subject faithfully, the history that finally appears on the screen can never fully satisfy the historian as historian ... Inevitably, something happens on the way from the page to the screen that changes the meaning of the past as it is understood by those of us who work in words. (1173)

Rosenstone's concern sounds, quite frankly, familiar: something is lost or skewed when we record history *this* way. The author, though, clearly sees the problem as one particular to visual media, and not one of "words" or the literary. But as I have pointed out repeatedly, the concern of many historians, even prior to the advent of motion pictures, has been precisely the question of giving an honest, accurate, and complete account of history. Indeed, film does provide another vehicle by which history can be recorded or "observed," but it does not necessarily change the task of the historian. Nevertheless, film may present this same issue (or these same issues) in a novel way, and Rosenstone seems to recognize this as he clarifies his original "disturbance": "The most serious problems the historian has with the past on the screen arise out of the nature and demands of the visual medium itself" (1173). In relation to specific film adaptations of

his own works, Rosenstone finds film as a means of telling history to be lacking because it "compresses the past to a closed world by telling a single, linear story with, essentially, a single interpretation ... [which] denies historical alternatives, does away with complexities of motivation or causation, and banishes all subtlety from the world of history" (1174). While it is not necessarily the case that all films present a fluid narrative, particularly more postmodern ones, if we look closely we see that Rosenstone's issue is not necessarily with film, per se, as a means of historicizing, but rather with the way it tends to narrativize history: for Rosenstone, film is a poor "storyteller" or narrator when it comes to history, for it does not tell "the sort of stories [historians] have to tell" (1175). Film must leave out details; it does not (generally) engage in critical interaction with other historians. It is worth noting that Rosenstone's critical dialogue admits, like in White, the possibilities of multiple histories, as Rosenstone views this dialogue of debate and rebuttal as a central value of the task of the historian. The (im)possibility of critical engagement is precisely the issue at hand for Rosenstone: film is too direct and as a result tends toward oversimplification. But is this not, in a way, the problem with history/historiography in general, that it does not tell the whole tale, that the central narrative is the product of a guiding hand, which itself is guided by a motivating ideology?

Interestingly, though Rosenstone takes issue with the poor narrating potential of film, he does not reject the idea of history as story, which is why he can, as he continues on in the article, posit the possibility of an adequate means of telling "historical stories on film and not lose our professional or intellectual souls" (1175). For Rosenstone, such a filmic history, though admittedly unknown to him, would "be like the challenge of

written history to the oral tradition" (1184). In the same volume of *The American Historical Review* that Rosenstone's article appears, Hayden White responds to Rosenstone's inquiry by coining a term that helps to illustrate the jump that Rosenstone postulates: from "historio*graphy* ... the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse" to "historio*photy* ... the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1193). For White, the challenge of historiophoty is not only its ability to "adequately convey the complex, qualified, and critical dimensions of historical thinking about events" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1193), but also that a "visual" history cannot be "read" in the same manner in which we read historiography, even though "[a]ll too often, historians treat photographic, cinematic, and video data as if they could be read in the same way as a written document" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1193).

That White makes a distinction between reading written texts and visual texts is important. Indeed, as both Rosenstone and White state in their respective articles, writing is perhaps more suited for conveying certain information while film is a more appropriate choice for other types of information. Without a doubt, White is correct in pointing to the fact that "we are inclined to use visual images as a complement of our written discourse, rather than as components of a discourse in its own right, by means of which we might be able to say something different from and other than what we can say in verbal form" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1194). There are occasions, then, when a written history would pale in comparison to a filmic or visual history, and vice versa. Not only this, but as Rosenstone mentions, the visual is often used to complement the written, and so may visual histories complement written ones. While written history may provide a

wealth of details that a film cannot offer (and the other way around as well), it nonetheless—as I have already mentioned—is the result of a process of ideological shaping. White likewise affirms that in writing history one inevitably must condense, must choose to omit details:

> No history, visual or verbal, 'mirrors' all or even the greater part of the events or scenes of which it purports to be an account ... Every written history is a product of processes of condensation, displacement, symbolization, and qualification exactly like those used in the production of a filmed representation. It is only the medium that differs, not the way in which messages are produced. ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1194).

Thus, White affirms that written or filmed accounts are equally products of the historian(s) that produced them, and so a filmic history may indeed produce a representation of history that is "as analytical and realistic as any written account" ("Historiography and Historiophoty" 1196).

The question that is up for discussion here is not if film can tell us anything useful or of "value" about history, nor is it a matter of if we can learn history through visual means. Instead, we again confront the issue of legitimacy: can film (ever) be considered a legitimate historical "text"? Of course, not all film is designed to function as a historical text; then again, not all written texts that have served as historical referents were created as historiography.[6] Nevertheless, Rosenstone seems to agree, though less

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[6] To be sure, this is certainly the case with a number of the texts I use to establish the textual foundations of refashioning of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas in the coming

emphatically than White, that historio*photy* can indeed communicate history on the same level as historio*graphy*. That the comparison exists, however, evidences the privileging of the written word as the standard by which historical accounts are measured to be valid or not. Given the prominence of the tradition of writing history, this is not surprising. As a channel of legitimization, writing exercises such great power and influence that it becomes—has become—monolithic in its claim to legitimate knowledge creation.

Nevertheless, in the same way that White does not dichotomize or simplify histories as necessarily and only true or false, but rather as differing versions that coexist simultaneously, Roland Barthes, at the same time that he recognizes the separateness of image and text, also finds in the press image[7] a way to reconcile their difference:

> [T]he structure of the [press] photograph is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure, namely the text—title, caption or article—accompanying every press photograph. The totality of the information is thus carried by two different structures ... These two structures are co-operative but ... remain separate from one another. (*Image, Music, Text* 16)

Barthes' view harkens back to the idea that image and text are complementary, as Mitchell puts forth in *Iconology*. Together image/text can provide a rounder, more complete "picture" or understanding. Jacques Rancière takes a similar stance in *The Future of the Image*, but rather than placing the image and the text alongside one another,

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chapters: many of the texts were not written as historiography, per se, but we have, nonetheless, found them to be "useful" historical documents.

[7] Barthes focuses specifically on the press image—that is, captioned photographs that accompany newspaper articles. However, despite the press image's centrality to Barthes' argument, other examples exist where text and image are combined in a similar way: advertisements, picture books, and (more recently) Internet "memes," to name a few.

he finds the image in the text, and the text in the image—that is to say, the visible in the text and the sayable in the image—by disassociating each from their traditional "roles" of either saying or representing in what he calls the sentence-image:

> By [the sentence-image] I understand something different from the combination of a verbal sequence and a visual form. The power of the sentence-image can be expressed in sentences from a novel, but also in forms of theatrical representation or cinematic montage or the relationship between the said and unsaid in a photograph. The sentence is not the sayable and the image is not the visible. By sentence-image I intend the combination of two functions that are to be defined aesthetically—that is, by the way in which they undo the representative relationship between text and image. The text's part in the representative schema was the conceptual linking of actions, while the image's was the supplement of presence that imparted flesh and substance to it. The sentence-image overturns this logic. The sentence-function is still that of linking. But the sentence now links in as much as it is what gives flesh. (45-46)

Rancière's concept of the sentence-image attempts to find a middle ground between the traditional dichotomy of image/text. Indeed, it is, in a number of ways, a very postmodern approach to not only avoid dichotomies but also to find a paradoxical unification of what are, apparently, polar opposites. Similarly, Linda Hutcheon, in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, affirms that postmodernism avoids such a dichotomy by "not ... choosing sides, but by living out the contradiction of giving in to both urges" (x). In this way, Hutcheon's postmodernism, like Rancière's sentence image, is conveniently

and paradoxically located between, and within, the realm of Benjamin and White because, for Hutcheon, "[t]here is no dialectic in the postmodern ... [but rather a] deliberate refusal to resolve contradictions" (x). In Hutcheon's understanding of the postmodern, like in Rancière's sentence-image and Barthes' separated-yet-joined nature of the press photograph (which echoes what Mitchell argues), we find an avoidance of dialectical relationships or dichotomies.

However, in this "refusal to resolve contradictions" we find the influence of the structures ("master narratives") that guide and give meaning to what we do and how we interpret the world around us—or in Bourdieu's words, the field that is the basis for our habitus. Thus, in dealing with historiography and historiophoty alike, it is necessary to recognize the ideological structures that form the foundation of the work. Even though film communicates primarily via images, it is subject to similar limitations as text, for it, too, is incapable of saying or showing all there is to be said of depicted. Furthermore, in the same way that Rancière proposes the sentence-image as a "measurement" that avoids habitual characterizations that place text and image on opposite poles, film crosses boundaries: it is of course visual, but it is also textual and even musical. No doubt, there is much more "going on" in film than what is merely seen, and an understanding of the representations of legacies that are represented in film necessitate an understanding of the nature of film—like Barthes' press image—as a complementary genre where multiple "texts" converge to make or create meaning at the same time that they also reflect certain ideological paradigms that shape the meaning-making process. As a medium, then, film is highly adept at crossing boundaries and borrowing from other genres, which is exactly what happens in each of the films that I analyze: the filmic representations of Lampião,

Che, and Las Casas find their roots in written texts of literature and history to form a postmodern paradox that participates in the refashioning of the legacy of each.

Moving toward Refashioning: Literary Foundations and Filmic Representations

I have argued for a rather postmodern perspective of history, one that allows for multiple perspectives of the historical figures I deal with in this dissertation. Yet we may be tempted to assert—contrary to Hegel's belief in the limitations of the historian's distance from "history"—that history's unique ability to bring events into focus comes as a result of time having passed and the historian's distance from those events; this would be to attribute only a passive or even imminent quality to history as merely an objective forward motion that, by virtue of that motion, creates history as it moves continually towards the future—a variant on the phrase "se hace el camino al andar," "se hace la historia con el andar del tiempo." History, though, is not objective, nor is it a simple byproduct of the passage of time; as has been previously argued, history is actively shaped. Like Benjamin's angel of history, the forward motion of time does not bring clarity, but rather catastrophe—the confluence of time upon time into a never-ending pile of the "stuff" of history. And looking back, like the angel, only reveals the catastrophic mess at our feet as we are, regardless, carried forward with our back toward the future.

While I have attempted to explain how history can evolve or be transformed, the question remains as to why this happens in a particular context. Again, individuals and groups shape history to suit their own needs, and my dissertation will look specifically at how the legacies of three specific individuals have been refashioned and, consequently, seem to oppose or be in conflict with "official" histories. We can observe, then, a

process of interaction between the historical personages (and their legacies) and the people who reshape and redeploy these individuals in a symbolic manner. Indeed, the resignification that results in the creation of a refashioned legacy is also a collective, though not always conscious task. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* reminds us that "nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (4). A nation is an imagined construct because its members will never meet each other, yet they share a common idea of who or what they are. Anderson states, "[A nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6).

Like the idea of a nation, the refashioning of a controversial historical figure stems from a collective "image" of whom a figure is and what he or she represents, and this image becomes a cultural artifact as it represents those values that a community holds in common, even though (or even if) the members of that community or field do not know most of the other members. Furthermore, it is possible for these individuals to mean different things to different groups, to the point that they may become part of the national(istic) or statist discourse at the same time that they oppose it. In short, their lives and legacies encompass and empitomize the paradoxical relationship of Hutcheon's postmodern. Lampião, for example, was indeed a ruthless bandit—if not mercenary for the rich cattle barons—who terrorized the Brazilian backlands. Che, though idealized through propagandistic rhetoric, was, nevertheless, a violent revolutionary who, in many ways, was out of touch with the "people" he said he fought for and with. What is more, the Spanish friar Las Casas was, at one point, a participant in the *conquistas* who owned

slaves, maintained strategic relationships with the Spanish élite, and was viewed by a number of his contemporaries as a meddling idealist. Still, he fought for decades in favor of indigenous rights, took advantage of his friendships to lobby for better conditions in the Americas, and, viewed as the father of human rights, is a major influence in liberation movements today. Lampião, Che, and Las Casas were all individuals who in many ways themselves were oppressors, today have no shortage of apologists. Through the analysis of literary texts and a theoretical consideration of the genres (and the genres' conventions) particular to each figure—the lyrical folk poetry of Brazilian *cordel* literature (Lampião), the diary of travel (Che), and the *historia* and the *relación* (Las Casas)—I uncover the contextual circumstances upon which the filmic representations of the three legendary figures are based. In contemporary film, I will examine the image of the three persons created by three acclaimed filmmakers from Spain and Latin America[8] in light of their understanding of these notable figures in three films: *Antônio das Mortes*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*, and *También la lluvia*, respectively.

Chapter one examines the literary genre of the *cordel* and the bandit figure Lampião. The chapter begins with a biographical sketch of the bandit that situates him as a polemical figure whose refashioned or transformed legacy is promoted in *literatura de cordel*, a genre which, in turn, informs the filmic work of Glauber Rocha. Unlike the other subjects of study in this dissertation, Lampião did not leave a vast corpus of writings by which we can study his thought processes (though he did write letters, many of them—even if we still had them—were written to threaten or extort the recipient and,

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[8] Brazilian director Glauber Rocha relies heavily on cordel literature and the legacy of Lampião in *Antônio das Mortes*; Brazilian director Walter Salles adapts Che and Alberto Granado's diaries for film in *The Motorcycle Diaries*; and Spanish director Icíar Bollaín references Las Casas' own writing in her portrayal of the friar in *También la lluvia*.

as such, do not contain much real reflection by the bandit). Even so, the Brazilian figures heavily in the genre of pamphlets or chapbooks called the *cordel*. By building on biographical information and his literary representation in *cordel* literature, then, I will offer an analysis of Lampião and his legacy in film as seen in *Antônio das Mortes*.[9] I argue that the *cordel* is a means by which the peoples of the Northeastern Brazilian *sertão* reimagine the life and legacy of Lampião the bandit king. This refashioned legacy of the outlaw, then, has persisted into even recent works and representations of Lampião and has ultimately come to be the popularly accepted view of him. The Glauber Rocha film, *Antônio das Mortes*, participates in the process of refashioning of Lampião by presenting the character Coirana as an ideal, symbolic Lampião and the protagonist Antônio as a mirror of the transformation of the bandit's legacy.

Chapter two, with a theoretical exploration of the travel diary genre, is devoted to the Argentine/Cuban revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. A widely known individual at the time of his death, he was also a polarizing figure. As an avid writer, orator, and diary-keeper, Che has left much in the way of texts for consideration. And his legacy in death has been greatly shaped by these texts, particularly his diaries, even if one of the most significant influences on Che's posthumous legacy has been the photograph called "Guerrillero heroico" taken by Alberto Korda. This image, and references to the image (such as green military fatigues or a red star), can be seen all over the world as a symbol of rebellion or simply as fashion. Another "image" of Che, however, has also seen its fair share of influence: the diaries he wrote at as a young man. Though first published

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[9] The original and complete title of the film is *O Dragão da Maldade contra o santo Guerreiro*, but it is most commonly known as *Antônio das Mortes*, which is also the name of the film's main character.

some forty years after they were written, and almost three decades after Che's death, they have had a deep impact on contemporary perceptions of the Argentine revolutionary. As a genre, diary is a highly effective vehicle in refashioning because it is generally autobiographical in nature and, furthermore, since, as I discuss in the chapter, it is seen to be highly authentic due to the (sometimes erroneous) understanding that the diarist writes spontaneously and does not return to edit the text at a later time. In this way, then, the diaries have become foundational artifacts in the refashioning of Che Guevara that takes place in the the film *The Motorcycle Diaries*, which portrays a proto-revolutionary Ernesto Guevara as he transforms from carefree traveler to revolutionary humanist. The film not only relies heavily on "diaries"[10] written by Guevara himself and his companion Alberto Granada (*Notas de viaje* and *Con el Che por Sudamérica*, respectively), but also mimics the genre of diary in order to create a filmic autobiographical text that frames Che, not as the *guerrillero heroico*, but as the ideal political subject in light of his revolutionary transformation during his travels in 1952.

Chapter three focuses on the figure of Bartolomé de Las Casas. The friar who participated in and then eventually campaigned against the enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the Americas has frequently been the subject of debate beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Though some view Las Casas as the father of human rights, others view him as an instigator, hypocrite, and even defamer. While he certainly confronted widespread unpopularity and even enmity during his life, his legacy now is much

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[10] It is important to note that Che's text, in particular, has not always been considered a "true" diary. Indeed, it might be more appropriately classified as travel literature or a travel journal, but, again, the symbolic weight of the term appears to be at the heart of the insistence on referring to Che's writing during his 1952 journey as diaries. Alberto Granado's text, on the other hand, conforms much more to the conventions of diary, which I discuss at length in chapter three.

different. We might even say that his legacy has been handed down to us via polemical writings of his that are now considered part of the corpus of Latin American colonial literature: his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* and *Historia de las Indias*, specifically. In these texts, Las Casas tells the history/story of Latin America and the Spanish conquest from two different perspectives, employing two different genres, the *relación* and the *historia*. Indeed, readings of these texts constitute a major factor in how we view the Spanish priest. In fact, in the film *También la lluvia*, which borrows heavily from these textual legacies, Las Casas' life and work as a priest who opposed Spanish abuse of indigenous rights is framed alongside the social unrest that occurred over access to water in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba in 2000. The motion picture follows a film crew as they attempt to complete a movie about the first years of the discovery and conquest of the Americas, one that is ultimately interrupted by the instability of the water crisis. The would-be film about Las Casas and the crew's discussion of their role in what seems to be a rather propagandistic plot serves as to contextualize a modern day reading of not only the Spanish friar but also of human rights.

As is clear at this point, my chapters reflect a thematic organization as opposed to a chronological ordering according to when the individuals lived. The reason for this is primarly that Lampião is the most obvious example of a legacy that was refashioned by others, whereas Che and Las Casas had a more active role in shaping their respective legacies. What is more, a chronological organization, once again, assumes the all-encompassing authority of (linear) historical ordering. Nevertheless, it is still possible to point to a chronological ordering, which would take into account when the film for each

figure was released, and in this case, Lampião would come first (1969), Che second (2004), and Las Casas third (2010).

Literature vs. Film or Literature and Film?

It would be difficult to argue that the text, in and of itself, holds the same weight today—in a media-saturated society—that it did in the past. And while the written text certainly has its place of privilege as a formal channel of legitimacy/legitimization, the image, the visual proliferates and pervades modern society. Like Barthes' press photograph, we are a society of text *and* image: both shape and are shaped by the way we perceive the world. While some might question the logic of engaging in both textual and filmic analysis in my dissertation, I would like to point out the underlying supposition of such a position: that film and literature are separate. In other words, image or a series of images is not the same as the written word, or a series of written words. Though there is no doubt that film and written texts (so-called literature) are distinct, they are no longer as widely divided as they once were. As we have come to widen our definition of what a text is (thanks in great part to post structuralism) narrower has this "gap" become in terms of one only studying film or literature. Just as Rancière's sentence-image and Hutcheon's concept of the postmodern avoid dialectical categorizations, a multifaceted approach is required to adequately analyze individuals whose legacies have crossed disciplinary lines. Thus, as a hybrid genre, rather than "purely" text or image, film—and particularly the films I analyze—encompasses orality, the written text, and image; film's ability to create a synthesis of text/speech and image parallels the postmodern paradox that is also present in each of these historical figures' controversial, competing legacies.

What is more, WJT Mitchell's *Iconology* can again be of some use here. Mitchell develops a reading of the image that does not separate it from the sign, or text. Indeed, in his introduction, he states that he desires to study the '"logos" ... of 'icons'" (1). In fact, he points out its place as part of the progression or development of writing: from thing, to picture, to pictogram, to ideogram, to graphic representation or phonetic sign (26-27). He also points out that they operate similarly, oftentimes the sign of a concrete object. Like in Saussure, where the sign is comprised of two parts—the signified and the signifier—in Mitchell, the image and text are unified: Icon-ology. Mitchell's goal is not to argue that text and image are entirely the same or synonymous, but rather that they function in similar manners, particularly as ideological structures, as the product of specific people in a specific time and place in history. Indeed, he notes that the way we see—how we absorb, interact with, and interpret the world around us—, our vision, is "a product of experience and acculturation" (38), and as such, he argues for a "rigorous relativism that regards knowledge as a social product, a matter of dialogue between different versions of the world" (38). In effect, Mitchell's relativism, like White's, is an attempt to widen our critical gaze by recognizing the plurality of narratives and contexts that shape our what and how we know.

To that end, as I move forward with my analysis of three major figures in Latin American history, I, too, employ a rigorously relativist lens by which I read texts about and by these individuals as ideologically charged social products that are created within specific socio-historical contexts. What is more, such a perspective allows us to avoid getting bogged down in the matter of the correctness of these individuals' highly controversial legacies and, instead, paves the way for a more rounded understanding of

how these legacies have been co-opted and transformed as part of the process of refashioning. And literature constitutes a major component in that process. In the case of Lampião, the *cordel*'s influence is considerable and constitutes a refashioning that begins in literature and continues on in film. On the other hand, with regards to Che and Las Casas we see a distinct self-fashioning (as opposed to refashioning) in the way these two individuals wrote about themselves, for in their respective texts they intentionally shape their own image by exploiting the conventions of literary genres (diary, *relación*, and *historia*). And if the ideologically shaped literary texts form the basis for the refashioning of their legacies that we see depicted in film, the films they influence offer us a way to literally "see" these ideologies play out right before our eyes.

Chapter I

Refashioning Banditry: Lampião, the *Cordel*, and Glauber Rocha's *Antônio das Mortes*[11]

"Dans la relation de sa vie, discerner ce qui est le fruit de la narration du cangaceiro lui-même, de l'imagination d'un poète de *cordel*, d'un journaliste ou d'un écrivain, ce que a été réellement vécu et ce que l'on raconte, ce que Lampião a dit ou écrit, ce que les cangaceiros on dit que Lampião aurait dit, est illusoire. Au contraire, c'est la multiplicité de ces éléments qui fait Lampião."
Élise Grunspan-Jasmin
Lampião, vies et morts d'un bandit brésilien

When federal police forces encircled the *cangaceiro* bandits'[12] camp in Angicos, in the state of Sergipe, Brazil in late July 1938, there was no way to know that the bandit phenomenon that had defied authorities for decades would, for all intents and purposes, all but disappear in a few years' time. A firefight broke out the morning of July 28, 1938, and those caught in the fatal crossfire included the most famous *cangaceiro* of them all—

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[11] Many of the quotes taken from the pamphlets I cite in this chapter, in addition to the dialogue in the film, contain archaic language and spellings, in addition to structures that are, strictly speaking, not grammatically correct. Instead of indicating or correcting the many non-standard spellings or structures, I have simply decided to include citations as they appear in the text(s) or film(s).

[12] In the Brazilian Northeast, two major bandit-related phenomena occurred. The *jagunços* were initially hired men or mercenaries who worked as enforcers or protectors for the coronels, the plantation or landowners. Later on, however, *jagunço* would become a broad term to refer to bandits or outlaws, as in João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande sertão: veredas*, and was even applied to the inhabitants of the religious community in Canudos, who are depicted in Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*. The Academia Brasileira da Literatura de Cordel, in their *Dicionário Brasileiro de Literatura de Cordel*, clarifies that "a palavra [jagunço] passou a ter outro significado: *valentão*, *capanga*, *bandoleiro*, *cangaceiro*, *guarda-costas* de políticos, fazendeiros, senhores de engeho" (74 original emphasis). A second group, the *cangaceiros*, who would at times be referred to as *jagunços*, are more "bandits proper," as it were, though they did frequently work alongside and for coronels. The *cangaceiro* bandits are an extremely common theme in *cordel* literature (which I will discuss in more detail later on) and have even come to be viewed quite romantically, despite their less than exemplary behavior.

Lampião, the "hurricane lamp"[13]—and his wife, Maria "Bonita" Déia,[14] the "beautiful one." But neither Lampião's lightning-fast pistol nor Maria's beauty could save them, not just from death, but also from becoming part of the spoils of war. For in addition to the money, trinkets, guns, hats, and sundry souvenirs that the victorious police officers collected as they surveyed and scrounged around the bandits' campsite, they also took iron-clad, incontrovertible proof of the death of a bandit king whom some believe could not be killed. Not long after the successful raid on the bandit camp, police official João Bezerra and his men left the scene with eleven decapitated heads, those of Lampião, Maria Bonita, and nine other bandits, which they displayed with pride as they passed through nearby towns, until the heads were ordered to be sent ahead for examination at the Bahian capital of Salvador. The poet Antônio Alves da Silva writes about these gruesome spectacles and the attention they received as they were paraded through towns and cities on their way to the capital of the state of Bahia:

> As cabeças dos bandidos
> Desceram pra Salvador,
> Passando pelas cidades

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[13] The *nome-de-guerre* Lampião literally means lantern or lamp. It belongs to the bandit Virgulino Ferreira da Silva about whom legends says that he was so quick on the trigger of his guns that it was as if a constant light or bolts of lightning were flying out of his gun barrel. Augustus Young writes, "Virgulino earned the name Lampion ... because he was reputed to shoot so fast that his gun shed continuous light – like a hurricane lamp" (4). Nevertheless, the poet Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante attributes the nickname to another feat of gun slinging: "No disparo de um fósforo / Numa noite de verão / Ele atirou em um vulto / Que estatalou-se no chão, / Por este feito atrevido / Recebeu ele o apelido / Conhecido LAMPIÃO" (*Lampião, o terror* 5). It must also be noted that there are a number of different spellings of his name. I have chosen to use the modern spelling "Lampião," but previously, it was spelled "Lampeão." Furthermore, there is even an English language "translation," which is rendered "Lampion."

[14] Although Lampião's legacy has taken its own trajectory, it has also been intertwined with that of Maria Bonita, who oftentimes appears alongside the bandit in pamphlets. Furthermore, in local fairs of the Northeast, knick-knack dolls or figurines of the two of them together are quite popular.

> Do longínquo interior –
> Era enorme o vai-e-vem
> Do povo, vendo-as no trem,
> Numa expressão de horror. (4)

Though it was inconceivable for some,[15] particularly the superstitious backlanders, that the bandit king had truly died, this time his death was no rumor or tall tale spun by propagandists. What is more, it seems that with the death of Lampião, the government (local and federal alike) had finally resolved its bandit problem, for by 1940, according to biographer Billy Jaynes Chandler, when Corisco—the former second-in-command to Lampião—was also killed, "large numbers of cangaceiros were in the custody of the

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[15] An extremely famous *cordel* pamphlet by José Pacheco, *Debate de Lampião com São Pedro* (this pamphlet is also called *A chegada de Lampião no céu*, which then creates the idea of a relationship between one of the most famous *cordel* pamphlets ever written—also by Pacheco—*A chegada de Lampião no inferno*), begins by bringing up the conspiracy theory that Lampião had not actually died: "Para me certificar / Da morte de Lampião / Arrumei o matulão / Andei para me acabar / Não escapou-me um lugar / Do Brasil ao estrangeiro / Percorri o mundo inteiro / Procurando a realeza / Até que tive a certeza / Da morte do cangaceiro" (1). Even with the heads as proof, though, one *cordel* poet writes that "[t]em pessoa que afirmava / Na sua superstição / Que, mesmo sem ter cabeça, / Tinha visto o Lampião ... Vagando como um fantasma / Pelas plagas do sertão" (Alves da Silva 5).

But *cordel* writers and superstitious backlanders were not the only ones who wondered if Lampião could really be killed or if, when his death was confirmed, it was the "true" Lampião who had been slain in Angicos. The *Jornal do Brasil* features a "nota" in their publication only two days after the bandit's death. This note urges "precaução" when getting too excited about the passing of the cangaceiro: "É possivel que o Lampeão que foi morto agora por um oficial da força alagoana—tantas vezes tem sido anunciada e desmentida a morte do celebre cangaceiro—não seja o verdadeiro Lampeão. ... Se eu faço essas reservas e esses comentarios com precaução é que já escrevi nestes ultimos dez anos, nada menos de umas quatro cronicas sobre a noticia da morte de Lampeão" (Costallat). Thus, because of numerous false reports of Lampião's death during his lifetime, the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *O Globo* took extra care when reporting about the death of Lampião. The periodical assures their readers that not only had they received word from a source of theirs on the scene of his death, but also they received confirmation via telegraph, in addition to the proof of his decapitated head (*O Globo*, morning edition, 29 July 1938).

authorities" (238), either through capture or voluntary surrender, and the end of the plague of bandits in Northeastern Brazil was nigh.

Though the *cangaceiros* as a social phenomenon moved ever increasingly towards extinction in the wake of Lampião's death, the myth and legacy of the king of the *cangaceiros* himself followed a very distinct trend toward popularity, to the point that he is oftentimes considered a symbol or hero even; indeed, only two days after his death, one newspaper posits that, at that time, it was possible that the only thing that was known about Brazil in other "civilized" countries was Lampião himself: "É possível que, em muita capital estrangeira, que se acredita culta e sábia, o nome do Brasil só seja conhecido através do facinora" (Leão). Clearly, then, at the time of his death, Lampião had already achieved a status that extended beyond the northeast region. Though many factors play a part in how Lampião's legacy was able to overcome not only his marginal status before the law, but also the bandit's own horrific deeds, we may easily point to epic, lyrical pamphlets of *cordel* literature that were extremely popular in the Brazilian Northeast—the same region where Lampião and his crew often operated. Even from very early on in his "professional" career as a bandit, Lampião was a constant theme whose fame and legend grew with each new publication of these pamphlets or chapbooks. And so, by the time Lampião's head was finally taken out of museum exhibitions and laid to rest in a cemetery in 1969, more than three decades after his death, the outlaw from the state of Pernambuco had already solidified his status as a key figure in Brazilian history, not only in the Northeast region but also in the nation as a whole.

Coincidentally, 1969 also marks another important moment in the legacy of Lampião, for in the same year that his head is buried in the outskirts of Salvador da

Bahia, the preeminent Brazilian director Glauber Rocha premiered his latest film, *Antônio das Mortes*,[16] the sequel to one of his most notable films, the 1964 work *Deus e o Diabo na terra do Sol*. Rocha, who was born in the northeastern state of Bahia in 1939, the year after the bandit's death,[17] and spent his adolescence in the same city where Lampião's head was on display for over thirty years, maintained close ties to the region where he was born. Sylvia Nemer states that Rocha was a "cineasta que nunca abandonou sua condição sertaneja" (72). It is no surprise, then, that factors such as banditry, *cordel* literature, and the legacy of Lampião turn up in his films, particularly in *Antônio das Mortes*. A popular and critically-acclaimed film by the Cinema Novo director Glauber Rocha, and the one that is the primary concern of my analysis of Lampião in film, *Antônio das Mortes* offers a continuation of the legacy of Lampião that is firmly rooted in the *cordel* literature. Unlike other films that were released around the same time, specifically the feature *Lampião: o rei do cangaço*, Rocha chooses not to visually portray Lampião as a character on the screen to be played by an actor. Instead, the legacy of the *cangaceiro* serves as the contextual backdrop for the film as well as the logic that gives meaning to the film's symbolism.

In this chapter, I trace the development of Lampião's legacy in the *cordel* and the influence of the *cordel*-inspired legacy in Rocha's film. I delve in depth into the life and legacy of Lampião, the "bandit king" (in the words of Billy Jaynes Chandler) in order to

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[16] The original title is *O Dragão da Maldade contra o santo Guerreiro*, but it is most commonly referred to by the short title listed above.

[17] The prolific *cordelista* Raimundo Santa Helena describes the historical setting of Rocha's birth in his pamphlet *Glauber*: "GLAUBER ROCHA nasceu lá na Bahia / Na cidade Vitória da Conquista – / Trint' e nove um ano belicista. / Mês de março, quatorze, ironia: / Em setembro a Guerra explodia, / Lampião há uns meses enterrado, / Cordelista Cuíca revoltado / Com desmandos do grupo ditador" (2).

paint a portrait of who Lampião was, historically speaking, by looking at his biography and his relationship to the people of Northeast Brazil. Second, through a consideration of *cordel* literature in general and its tendency to mythologize, I argue that the *cordel* effectively transforms the legacy of Lampião from the outlaw "terror of the Northeast" (as Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante refers to him in one of his famous *cordels*) to a larger-than-life (and even supernatural) hero-figure who fights for the people and stands as a regional symbol that represents the ideal *sertão*-dweller, and at times, even a touchstone of Brazilian culture. Finally, I analyze the film *Antônio das Mortes* in the light of the refashioning that Lampião's legacy has undergone, and argue that the character Coirana represents the idealistic representations of Lampião while the protagonist Antônio's personal transformation mirrors the bandit's legacy as a symbol of justice.

Historical Context and Biography of Lampião

Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, better known as Lampião, was born in 1897,[18] during the waning years of a century that had brought enormous change and challenges (which will be specified in the coming pages) to the Brazilian nation, people, and landscape. A bandit from the poorer Northeastern region of Brazil, Lampião evokes a divided response among those who view him as a ruthless and violent figure who mostly terrorized but sometimes protected peasants in the backlands of Northeast Brazil, and those who see him as a figure who now lives on in popular chapbooks, as a hero who, in the words of Joseph A. Page, "acquired a reputation roughly equivalent to that of Robin Hood and his

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[18] The issue of Lampião's birthdate is the cause of some debate. Élise Grunspan-Jasmin summarizes some of the theories surrounding the bandit's birth nicely in *Lampião: vies et morts d'un bandit brésilien* (29-31).

band" (188). Despite a rather typical childhood for the epoch and region, and an adolescence during which he enjoyed a bit of local popularity as a skilled cowboy, Lampião's life transformed with his decision to join the *cangaceiro* bandits in order to avenge his father who was killed as a result of land feuds. From there he rose through the ranks of banditry until he died in a hail of gunfire in 1938, only weeks after his 41st birthday. Considering Lampião's life in light of his quest to avenge his father's death is useful, and, to be sure, many bandits tell of being forced to become outlaws because of their circumstances or to seek out vengeance. Just as Lampião can be viewed in terms of causality—the cause of his father's murder and the effect of his becoming a bandit to avenge his father—, the rise of *cangaceiro* bandits can be as well. A complex, connected chain of events leads up to the appearance of the *cangaceiro* around the turn of the twentieth century, and a series of key moments in the life of Lampião would lead him down the path toward banditry.

The Rise of the Cangaço[19]

Early on in the nineteenth century, Brazil found itself in a precarious position when Napoleon's 1808 invasion of the Iberian Peninsula causes the Portuguese crown to flee Portugal and seek refuge within the borders of one of its colonies, a colony whose economy had, by that time, come to be a very important cog in the Portuguese imperial system. Brazil's economic strength had been growing as it profited from a trade partnership with Britain, to the point that by the time the Portuguese Royal Family evacuated to Rio de Janeiro, according to Edwin Williamson, "[i]t was generally

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[19] The term *cangaço* refers to the trade of the *cangaceiro* bandit.

recognized in Portugal that Brazil was the engine of the imperial economy. ... [Portugal] was herself in chronic deficit with her largest colony" (208). Portuguese prince João VI's actions managed to stall the inevitable scenario that was already playing out in the Spanish-American colonies: Napoleon had unseated the Spanish throne and, as a result, caused Spain's Latin American colonies to question the legitimacy of the motherland's rule (Williamson 210). As such, the Hispanic colonies in Latin America began to move increasingly towards independence from the Peninsula. The Portuguese royal family's transference to and installation in Rio de Janeiro, however, brought the royals closer to home and had a somewhat opposite effect from what was occurring in neighboring colonies in that it strengthened relations between the colony and the crown. Nevertheless, the royal presence in Brazil also brought about the realization that Brazil was fully capable of governing itself. The royal family returns to the Portugal in 1821, except for prince Pedro, who became, one year later, emporor of Brazil, Pedro I.[20]

The sovereign empire that is established under Dom Pedro I, however. By the end of the century, the monarchy that was established under Pedro I is replaced by the First Republic in 1889. Around the same time as the establishment of the First Republic, the almost four-hundred-year-old institution of slavery is abolished in 1888. Although the end of slavery was in itself the resolution of an oppressive and destructive institution, it also brought about a number of complications, for many of the freed slaves were forced "to work the plantations for miserable wages. Other ex-slaves moved to the cities to live in abject poverty as an exploited service class" (Williamson 253). Without a doubt, the

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[20] The prince's famous "grito" or cry of independence is now immortalized in the Brazilian National Anthem: "Ouviram do Ipiranga as margens plácidas / De um povo heroico o brado retumbante, / E o sol da Liberdade, em raios fúlgidos, / Brilhou no céu da Pátria nesse instante."

end of the nineteenth century was a period of great difficulty in Brazilian national history, and the various complications that such changes implied were magnified in the backlands of Northeast Brazil, where the unforgiving *sertão*[21] was plagued by yet another severe drought that seemed to bring a people known for their tough, indomitable spirit to a breaking point. The scorching sun and the almost endless number of days without sufficient rain kill crops, cattle, and people alike. One *cordel* poet, Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva, writes about the desperation in such times, proclaiming, "Senhor Deus / ... por que o nosso nordeste / de tanto clamor não sai? ... Criança ... cede à fome, à sede ... e morre / no mais horrendo clamor" (*A Seca* 2). Yet, in spite of these conditions of mass suffering, a few coronels[22] continue to exercise their dominion over the commoners. Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* paints a picture of the hardship the Northeastern region endured—and fought against—towards the turn of the century as he portrays the War of Canudos in this now classic volume.[23] Da Cunha lists no less than ten major drought cycles from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries (25) and even refers to the region as the "terras flageladas do Norte" (27). Chandler, likewise, mentions another eight major droughts between 1888 and 1919, and he describes their effect thusly: "The worst of these [droughts] caused practical evacuations of the ranching country as refugees fled

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[21] The *sertão* refers to the harsh interior of the country, a region that, despite its arid climate, was very highly dependent upon cattle and agriculture.

[22] Coronels are owners of large plantations who oftentimes exploit their workers. Chandler provides an informative summary of how large *latifundia* land holdings eventually brought about the "successor" of the land baron, the coronel (9-11). Of these coronels or "political bosses," as they are framed in his work, Chandler states that "while land ownership ceased to be as monolithic as it was in the epoch of the conquest, latifundia nonetheless persisted as a main determining factor in the patterns of backlands society. ... [T]he society continued to be dominated by the relatively few who possessed large amounts of land" (11).

[23] The same text, and the events at Canudos, would come to inspire Mario Vargas Llosa to pen his *La guerra del fin del mundo*.

from hunger and starvation. ... Such migrations ... contributed to the breakdown of social control exercised by the landlords over the peasants ... Banditry generally flourished during severe droughts" (15).

It is in the midst of this time of great change, and great oppression—both by nature and by fellow man—that (in)famous bandits arise, at least one of which will later become a romanticized symbol of resistance. Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that it is during such times of instability and uncertainty that bandits spring up: "Banditry as a mass phenomenon ... occurred only where power was unstable, absent, or had broken down. Those were the situations when banditry became epidemic" (16). Despite the fact that the bandits known as *cangaceiros* are, in reality, often mercenaries for the oppressive coronels, in modern times, they have come to be perceived by some as heroes of the people. Adriana Cordeiro Azevedo also notes that their emergence grows out of the pressure-cooker of the Northeast hardship at the end of the nineteenth century (27). Or, as Chandler puts it, "It appears that the rise of the cangaço was linked intimately to this state of social disorganization" (15) in which the families feuds are common, the police are corrupt, outlaws roam and pillage the backland towns, and coronels live well despite widespread poverty. It is no surprise, then, that a major draw of the *cangaceiro* lifestyle was the idea—not necessarily the reality—of not having to answer to an authority figure: "L'une des caractéristiques du cangaceiro était l'absence de patron. Il agissait au sein d'une bande et n'était jamais subordonné à un chef ou à un patron extérieur à sa bande, ce qui a fasciné bon nombre d'auteurs qui ont vu en lui l'archétype de l'homme libre" (Grunspan-Jasmin *Lampião* 13). The appeal of the *cangaceiro* as a symbol of a life of

freedom prefigures the mythical heights to which Lampião would rise as one of the most widely known, if not admired, *cangaceiro* bandits.

If the nineteenth century brought about continual change in Brazil in the political realm in the lives of the people who struggled to survive, then the twentieth century saw technology alter the landscape of the vast *sertão*. Young writes that, in the years before Lampião would become "bandit king," "the backlands of Bahia and Pernambuco underwent dramatic changes – new roads, railways, telegraphs, schools, and a thriving import network from coastal towns. The interior was no longer completely lost in the sand dunes of time" (1). Essentially, Young continues, the increasing interconnectedness of the country created a scenario where coronels were amassing more wealth and even contracted privatized armies or mercenaries to protect their earnings and plantations (Young 1). Not to mention that the new technologies allowed for more rapid information flow, a factor that directly influences the legend of Lampião as not only a hero of the people, but also a hero of the Northeast's ubiquitous *cordel* pamphlet literature. The industrialization and "progress" of the country juxtaposed against the backdrop of an exploited working class, however, was not unique to the Northeast region of Brazil. Indeed, Todd A. Diacon explains that in the Southern Brazilian state of Paraná, similar railroad ventures brought about a "mysterious prophet known as José Maria ... [who] preached the evils of the Brazilian Republic" and eventually rallied "over 15,000 peasant rebels" to his cause (488). José Maria, in a sense, can be seen as rather representative of popular sentiment towards the railroads in rural regions where capitalistic ventures contributed to political, agricultural, and economic shifts that met with resistance from the peasantry (Williamson 412).

In addition to banditry, another notable social phenomenon crops up during these times of distress: movements of religious fanaticism also found fertile soil in such conditions. In the Northeast, two individuals stand out: Antônio Conselheiro (1830-1897)—the leader of the religious colony at Canudos who would come to be seen, by some, as an outlaw—and Padre Cícero (1844-1934), a figure who often appears alongside with Lampião in the *cordel*. If Conselheiro lives on most notably in the work by da Cunha, then Cícero's life and ministry belong to the realm of pamphlets, where his devotees now tell, retell, and even add to his story. Candace Slater affirms that the Padre, who reportedly turned sacramental bread into blood, attracted a large number of followers toward the end of the nineteenth century ("Messianism" 117). Of those who looked to Cícero for spiritual guidance, Lampião continually appears both in history and in the *cordel*. In reality, Lampião's ties with Padre Cícero are at times unclear, yet they have been expounded upon and even exaggerated in *cordel* literature. Slater points out that while some pamphlets could be said to prefer one or the other (Lampião or Cícero), "[o]ther *folhetos*, however, portray more of a partnership between the outlaw and the priest" ("Messianism" 123). And while a historical record concerning Lampião certainly does exist, it is the folk history of Lampião, as told through the lens of the popular poets in *cordel* literature, that has propelled the tale of a *cangaceiro* bandit into Brazilian Northeastern mythology.

A Brief Biography of the Bandit Lampião

Virgulino Ferreira da Silva was born into the hard and toiling life of the *sertão* in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil on July 7th, 1897. In what perhaps could be seen as a

foreshadowing of his own death at the hands of government forces, Virgulino was born during the final days of Antônio Conselheiro's religious colony in Canudos (in the state of Bahia), only months before the city would fall at the hands of federal troops. Virgulino was able to receive some education via private tutor (Chandler 22), and his introduction to the written word would eventually be put into use later on in his life as he frequently read news reports about himself and his exploits. Virgulino's education came as a result of his father's business, who owned a small plot of land and, in addition to cattle and small crops, reared donkeys for hire: "It was the heyday of donkey transport, and Virgulino's childhood was modestly comfortable" (Young 8). Despite their somewhat favorable circumstances, a land dispute and corrupted officials brought the murder of Virgulino's father, which drove the would-be bandit to the *cangaceiros*. Indeed, vengeance for his father's murder would prove to be a significant motivating force throughout the rest Virgulino's life (Young 9). To be sure, most *cordel* biographies on Lampião also point to this exact moment when Virgulino "becomes" Lampião.

During the early years of his life, Virgulino was in charge of tending to the cattle, sheep, and goats. His time spent corralling and protecting the herds prepared him for his days roaming the *sertão* as a *cangaceiro*. Interestingly, Virgulino was such an accomplished cowboy that he even found success as one of the most popular participants in the local rodeo circuits (Chandler 23). These seemingly carefree days, though, were not to last. The Ferreira family suspected the hired hand of a well connected, neighboring ranch owner of theft and trespassing; however, the rancher, José Saturnino, took offense and responded in kind by accusing the Ferreiras of theft. Tempers would flare as both parties sought to defend their honor, and December of 1916 saw Virgulino's

first taste of banditry when a skirmish broke out between the families. Other versions of the story, particularly *cordel* versions, are much more specific in exactly what happened between the families. Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva, in his longer *cordel* biography, *Lampião: o capitão do cangaço*, states that it was a case of destruction of property that brought tempers to a boil between these formerly friendly families: "Até que um dia chuvoso / José achou pendurado / no pescoço de uma rês / por Virgulino amassado / chocalho de Saturnino / quebrado, inutilizado" (5). In any case, the Ferreira family was forced to move (this would not be the last time) to avoid any further violence (or retaliation). Even with the move to a new town, a chance meeting with their old rivals one day brought tensions to a boil, and eventually the Ferreira sons would not leave home without their pistols. They began to dress more and more like bandits of the time, and their reputations began to match their dress. Virgulino and his brothers' appearance and their carrying guns frightened those in town, and soon enough their reputation saw them accused (wrongly, perhaps) of robbery in conjunction with the well known Pereira bandits. Whether or not this is true is largely irrelevant, for the ensuing shoot-out that took place when the Ferreira boys entered town one day (they were fired upon without warning) essentially forced them to move yet again.

The move to the county of Água Branca did not change their fate, just as it did not help soften their hatred for the Saturnino family. While living there, Virgulino and some of his brothers raided Saturnino properties on a number of occasions. Because the police naturally suspected the Ferreira boys, not just the family's house, but also that of their relatives were searched and ransacked. Yet again, a confrontation in town—a misunderstanding saw Virgulino's younger brother, João, arrested while trying to buy

medicine for a newborn nephew—forced the family to flee. But as the family rested at a nearby farm on their way out of town, the brothers returned to seek revenge. By the time this vengeful raid happens, Virgulino seems to have already acquired his nickname, Lampião. Chandler notes, "Lampião's achievement of fame [as evidenced by his nickname] was not without cost. This particular step toward fame [when returning to raid the town while his family fled] seems to have led directly to his father's death" (33). Just over a week after the raid, the police surrounded the farm where Lampião's family had stopped. While Lampião and his older brothers were en route to the property, the police had already reached the ranch, owned by the Fragoso family, where the Ferreiras were staying temporarily. The officials opened fire on the house and killed José, Lampião's father, as well as the owner of the ranch.[24]

Once again, it is the death of his father that is often cited as the main reason why Lampião entered the life of the *cangaço* as a *cangaceiro* bandit. Even so, it seems that he was already well on his way to becoming an outlaw, if he was not already considered one by the police for having been accused of theft, trespassing, possession of a firearm, and aiding and abetting fugitives (not to mention breaking them out of jail). His father's death, then, apparently marks the point that Lampião abandons any pretense of being a regular, upstanding citizen. Chandler dwells on the factors that led to Lampião's banditry, and offers a picture that, rather than point to a single moment in the bandit's life, attempts to contextualize Virgulino's continual and increasing movement toward becoming Lampião:

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[24] Much of the early life of Virgulino/Lampião that I present here is summarized from the account in Chandler's brief biographical sketch (22-33)

> Maybe, then, it was Virgulino's strength, courage, daring, and quite possible, a dash of perversity, combined with ever-increasing frustration, that propelled him, that led him to take the paths that worsened his family's condition, and that in the end, when others might have held back still, led him across the line into outlawry. Perhaps it was that combination of character and circumstance that turned the brave and brash Virgulino into the terrible Lampião. (35)

Without a doubt, Chandler's comment is appropriate in its aversion to simplifying or reducing the trajectory of Virgulino's life to one event. Nevertheless, even if his banditry is more than a reaction to his father's murder, Lampião's "career," as it were, in the *cangaço* would be more expressly motivated by his desire for revenge, to avenge his father's death. And so anyone who could be linked to the murder, no matter how vaguely, would become his enemy; thus, police in general and (distant) relatives of rival families, in particular, comprised the first and foremost targets of his wrath.

The Rise of the Bandit King

Soon after his father's death, Lampião and some of his brothers joined up with a local group of bandits, the Pereira gang. Indeed, this was the same gang that they were accused of riding with before, but on this occasion it was actually true. Under the command of Sebastião Pereira, Lampião rose through the ranks and learned the importance of *coiteiros*[25] or local allies and informants. Some were friends of the bandits or their families, while others were bribed. Regardless, the information they provided, as

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[25] Ironically, it would be a trusted coiteiro that would ultimately sell out Lampião and his gang in Angicos, where he dies in an ambush.

well as their protection and supplies, would play a considerable part over Lampião's career. Within a year, in 1922, Lampião would take over in place of Pereira as the leader of the gang, and it was not long before Lampião's reputation would grow as his name started appearing regularly in the papers.

First in his previous home county of Água Branca, and then in Espírito Santo, the bandits raided the towns and then evaded the police. Chandler notes, though, that Lampião's early exploits were largely motivated by or connected to his quest for vengeance. Later on, however, this would not be the case: "[Lampião] normally did not choose his victims at random. This facet gave his early career a rationality that set it apart from that of the common criminal. Unfortunately, [this] ... was to be partly obscured in later years by the blood of victims of unusually vicious and irrational crimes" (Chandler 40). Without a doubt, Lampião's desire to avenge his father is rather quickly overshadowed as he strays farther from such aims. He soon comes to extort money from privileged landowners as a "tax" (Chandler 47) and even "performed services for his highly placed friends, attacking, for example, a ranch of one of their enemies or killing someone they wanted dead" (Chandler 46). While Lampião might have entered into the *cangaço* for personal reasons, his brand of banditry moved increasingly away from such ends over time. Truly, if Lampião was not viewed a common criminal at the beginning of his career, it became difficult to maintain this position after long; much of the decade and a half he spent as a *cangaceiro* leader would fall far outside his initial quest for revenge.[26]

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[26] When Lampião's brother Levino was killed, the bandit responded with fury. However, instead of attacking the police, he took his wrath out on local peasants. Chandler notes, "[Lampião] came out of seclusion in early September with a frenzy of activity and acts of

From the time that Lampião "officially" entered into the *cangaço* in 1921 until his death in 1938, the bandit roamed much of the interior of the Brazilian Northeast with as many as a hundred people under his command. His exploits filled the pages of the newspapers and magazines, and they inspired a documentary about the gang. It was his raid on a baroness' estate in Água Branca that first put Lampião in the regional spotlight, but what happened in Queimadas is perhaps among Lampião's most notable acts. Chandler states, "Lampião's visit to [Queimadas] ... form[s] one of the most talked about episodes in his career" (125), for we clearly see why Lampião is so capable of inspiring terror and admiration. Upon entering the town, they disabled telecommunications services and took control of the railroad, actions they regularly performed when invading a town. Their surprise arrival in the town allowed them to capture and imprison the town's soldiers at the same time that they freed those in the local jail. He continued his tradition of taxing the wealthy of the city, and though his men helped themselves to whatever they wanted in the stores, Lampião offered to pay the costs incurred by his gang. What is more, they even organized a dance and movie showing. And on the way out of town, Lampião borrowed a mule that he was sure to return to its owner the same day. All in all, it was a peculiar episode that was largely peaceful if not light-hearted, excepting, of course, the close-range execution of seven prisoners by shooting, for the simple reason of being *macacos*[27] (Chandler 126-128).

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almost inexplicable cruelty, also part of a pattern that increasingly was to characterize his behavior" (59).

[27] In Portuguese, "macaco" means monkey, but it is a common slang word that the cangaceiros used to refer scornfully to the police. In English, an animal metaphor—the term "pig"—is also used to speak negatively of law enforcement.

The happenings in Queimadas seem to exemplify quite well the two personas, so to speak, of Lampião—the benevolent Robin Hood figure and the cruelly violent murderer. Just as his exploits in Queimadas reveal two seemingly conflicting sides of Lampião, it also offers insight into how a vicious bandit could also be viewed as a hero of the people. Young, for example, paints a picture in which, despite the violence he did, at times, perpetrate upon them (which, of course, was enough cause for fear and strife any time the bandit was near),[28] the peasant classes also saw Lampião in light of what they themselves could not do—tip the scales of justices, if not quite in favor of the poor, at the very least, away from the wealthy coronels:

> [Lampião] ruled the backlands by claiming pay-offs from the bosses, largely leaving share-croppers, cowboys and drifters in peace. His reputation as the Brazilian Robin Hood was enhanced by the humiliation he inflicted on the feudal overlords and lackeys. The poor appreciated the rough justice of torturing and killing arrogant Coronels and police. One cannot blame the underclasses in a corrupt system for revelling [*sic*] in vicarious violence" (11).

Without a doubt, Lampião was not only a violent bandit, just as he was not wholly a Robin Hood figure. Both aspects have been modified over time as history is gradually and continually placed alongside of myth. And so, to categorically state that he was one or the other is to tell only an incomplete version of the story. Indeed, one must speak of Lampião's violence in conjunction with his benevolence: "Lampião, then, was capable of an occasional act of mercy, but such actions were not broadly representative of the

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[28] Chandler states plainly, "It was no wonder that people all over the backlands trembled at the news that Lampião had arrived in their vicinity" (204).

pattern of his behavior. Many another man died at his hands, also begging that he be spared to rear his children" (Chandler 202). Such a situation is described in João Martins de Athayde's *cordel*, *Lampeão em Vila Béla*: "Então o bandido fez / de uma forma muito honrosa / pois dizem que Lampeão é uma cobra manhosa / porem tem bom coração / porque nessa ocasão / fez uma ação generosa" (4). Even though, as Chandler states, "it is clear that fear of him was widespread and deeply felt" (204), even during his lifetime the idea that Lampião was also a type of popular hero in the tradition of Robin Hood was not uncommon (Chandler 204). And this did not stop with the bandit's death. Grunspan-Jasmin notes that Lampião's influence transcends the backlands culture and timeperiod of the *cangaceiro*: "Alors que jusque-là Lampião était considéré comme le produit d'une société archaïque, il devenait ... un acteur de l'histoire sociale du Nordeste et un héros de la lutte paysanne" (*Lampião* 274). To be sure, the fact that Lampião was betrayed by one of his own coiteiros and was ambushed adds, in a way, to his myth by framing him as a martyr rather than a fugitive who finally got what he deserved: "After Lampião's death, the tradition [of making Lampião out to be a Robin-Hood] continued to evolve, and, in recent years, such characterizations of him have become more common. But the fundamental question of whether or not there was any substance to the tradition has remained unanswered" (Chandler 205).

This evolving—and growing—myth concerning Lampião, as I have stated before, begins during his lifetime, for Lampião rose to prominence as his exploits appeared often in the daily newspapers, which frequently included updates or "últimas notícias" about the bandit. Chandler states quite matter-of-factly, "For an outlaw, Lampião led an unusually public life ... He was interviewed, frequently photographed, and even appeared

in a movie" (197). Indeed, Lampião was aware of the fact that he was becoming a public figure, and this seemed to suit the bandit quite well, for "[h]e loved posing for photographs, even for home movies" (Young 4). Furthermore, the fact that Lampião could read meant that he could actively keep tabs on what was reported about him and his gang's actions. In fact, he took particular interest in doing so: "The bandit leader liked newspapers, especially those which reported his exploits" (Chandler 175). One *cordel* poets echoes Chandler's comment when he writes, "O capitão vaidoso / de quando em quando pedia / jornal que falasse dele / por todo lugar que ia / sobretudo os que tivessem / a sua fotografia" (Ferreira da Silva *Lampião* 23). And, one might even say that the bandit king himself was involved in the refashioning (or self-fashioning) process, as Grunspan-Jasmin notes:

> Relater la vie de Lampião c'est donc avant tout observer comment se construit une histoire individuelle dans laquelle réel, symbolique et imaginaire se mélent, où Lampião devient lui-même complice de la construction de son propre personnage et de sa légende, la fragilité du témoignage offrant des perspectives d'interprétation d'une richesse infinie. (*Lampião* 23)

The legend that was created around Lampião, and in which the bandit himself seemed to participate even, eventually rose to supernatural heights, to the point that it was believed that he had supernatural abilities that protected him and his gang (Young 11). And so, as early as 1923—only two years after officially joining the *cangaceiros* and more than a decade before his death—, *cordels* were already being written about him (Chandler 197). Grunspan-Jasmin lists at least ten *cordels* written during his lifetime (*Lampião* 282). By

1930 his legend had reached the United States by way of a news report in the *New York Times* and had also inspired a film called *Lampeão, Fera do Nordeste* (Chandler 199). By 1936, the appeal of Lampião had grown to such heights that Benjamin Abrahão, a filmmaker, travelled to the *cangaceiro* camp to film a documentary about the bandits' daily life (Grunspan-Jasmin *Lampião* 113). Of this film that resulted from this encounter, Young points out Lampião's interest in the camera, in his image: "Lampion alone knows how to play the camera. He stands out, the commander-in-chief, isolated from his underlings" (5). All in all, these diverse and numerous media in which Lampião appears created a public persona of Lampião, one that "reveal[s] a good deal of what the large public thought of the bandit as well as approximations of what he was in reality" (Chandler 200). Here Chandler makes the same distinction that I do, a distinction between the historical man, and the myth.

The bandit's fame and the commercialization of his image were not the only factors in the creation of a larger-than-life Lampião figure. Again, *cangaceiros* in general represented a freedom, not unlike the cowboy in the Wild West, that the common *sertanejo*—a dweller of the *sertão*—could not and did not generally have in their dependence upon Coronels for work and sustenance (Nemer 49). As the central, most recognizable, and last great figure of *cangaceiro* bandits, Lampião functions as a single, universal symbol that sums up what the *cangaço* represented in its resistance and rebellion against social norms of the epoch. Grunspan-Jasmin notes that the photographs and documentary film of Lampião, produced by Benjamin Abrahão, not only caused a "sensation," but also a public relations nightmare for the local and federal governments: "Publiées dans la presse, les photographies de Lampião et de ses cangaceiros

constituaiente une véritable provocation et elles ont été certainement perçues par les autorités policières et gouvernementales comme un défi. Défi auquel il fallait riposter" (*Lampião* 117). The photos and film showed a side of the bandit that went contrary to the "official" narrative that the police troops were "winning" against the bandits, that the bandits were on their heels; indeed, it was a testimony to "l'impuissance des forces de l'ordre et de la toute-puissance de Lampião" (Grunspan-Jasmin *Lampião* 117). It comes as no surprise, then, that Abrahão's footage was confiscated by police shortly after Abrahão left the *cangaceiro* camp. Not too long after this, Abrahão was killed in 1938. It was not until 1957 that the film was found and then partly salvaged, as much of it had deteriorated to the point of being unusable (Grunspan-Jasmin *Lampião* 115 n.2). Even so, and despite the two decades that had passed since Abrahão's footage had been made to disappear, Lampião's persona had already entered into the Brazilian pantheon of larger-than-life figures.

And it was not the then-budding (in 1930s Brazil, that is) technology of cinema that had helped concretize his legacy, but rather the simple *cordel* pamphlet. Of course, the newspapers played a large part in his growing public image, but the *cordel* really and truly solidified his place and status in the popular imaginary: "No entanto, o cangaceiro só passou a existir como herói a partir do momento em que encontrou alguém para glorificá-lo, transmitir seus feitos, cantá-lo. Esse papel coube ao poeta de cordel" (Nemer 50). While the *cangaço* is a common theme of *cordel* literature, Lampião is its most famous *cangaceiro*. In a way, the history of the *cangaço* bandit's way of life is tied up with and preserved alongside the telling, retelling, and even the inventing of adventures about the life of Lampião. Such is the link between the pamphlets and the bandit that

Carlos Coimbra's film *Lampião: o rei do cangaço* begins by showing a *cordel* vendor singing the story of Lampião. The image of the salesman singing dissolves into a landscape, and it is understood the film is based on the *cordel*—that is, the film about the bandit is actually based on the *cordel* tradition. Lampião, then, can be seen, in a sense, as the metonymic legacy of the *cangaceiro* bandits: his name is synonymous with the *cangaço*, and speaking of the *cangaço* is to bring up Lampião.

Lampião's life and legacy in the *cordel* go beyond his ties to the backlands bandits in the Brazilian Northeast. Even though Lampião led a life of such violence that it could be cause enough for the bandit to be viewed as quite a negative figure, the *cangaceiro* bandit, and his comrades, are oftentimes viewed in a much friendlier light. Chandler notes in *The Bandit King* that the *cangaceiro* outlaws frequently justified their actions and attempted to put a positive "spin" on things by emphasizing their own hard life:

> Cangaceiros also asserted their distinctiveness in their avowed reasons for becoming bandits. They fell outside the law, many of them said, only because of the necessity of avenging wrongs done to them or their families. In a society in which injustice was rife, such explanations often met considerable sympathy. ... Nonetheless, the view that the cangaço was an understandable—though deplorable—reaction to the poverty and lack of justice in the northeastern backlands served to set the bandits apart from ordinary outlaws in the popular mind. (5)

As Chandler aptly points out in this passage, the *cangaceiro* was not considered to be a run-of-the-mill criminal; he was, in reality, a reactionary figure who oftentimes sought

justice through vengeance. This is the case with Lampião, who joins the *cangaceiros* to avenge his father, and Manoel D'Almeida Filho's *Os cabras de Lampião* echoes this sentiment: "Desde quando começaram / Os bandidos mais famosos / Que por várias injustiças / Tornaram-se criminosos" (3). Lampião, then, is easily viewed in a similar light: as a product of the times and as a man who decided to rise up against an unjust social order in which the few oppressed the many and corrupted those who would be protectors of the people. Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante's *cordel*, *Lampião não era tão cão como se pinta*, exemplifies quite nicely the way in which *cangaceiros* were justified for their decision to become bandits. Of Lampião, Coelho Cavalcante writes that "depois de injuriado / E também injustiçado / Tornou-se homem felino" (3). Hobsbawm's postulation, then, becomes relevant: bandits arise to meet a need for stability in times of institutional instability or change (7-10), and so in unstable times, bandits are often "forgiven" their sins, for they were forced down the wrong path by an unjust society. While this might be said of many bandits, Hobsbawm specifically states that the "noble robber begins his career of outlawry not by crime, but as the victim of injustice, or through being persecuted by the authorities for some act which they, but not the custom of his people consider as criminal" (47). Indeed, Élise Grunspan-Jasmin also affirms that *cangaceiro* bandits were, or at least were seen as individuals in search of vengeance or justice: "La majorité des auteurs s'accordent à voir dans le cangaço une forme de banditisme d'honneur. L'entrée dans le cangaço ... correspondait généralement à la nécessité de venger un affront, de réparer une injustice, et par là même de reconquérir son honneur ou celui de sa famille" (*Lampião* 12). The importance of the "first cause" that starts Lampião down the road to banditry, as I have already noted, is not only brought up

time and time again, but it is also somewhat unclear. Though some attribute it to name calling (each family accused the other of stealing), others place the moment squarely upon the broken cowbell incident. That *cordel* poets rehash this event in over and again in their works is of interest, for it is more than a matter of historical correctness. Indeed, the cause of Lampião's life outside the law must be justifiable in order to reasonably present a defense of the bandit and his actions. Indeed, José Costa Leite's *cordel*—*Lampião em Mossoró*—is a prime example of the importance of Lampião being the victim of injustice: "Por ter sido injustiçado / Ele entrou no cangaço" (1). Considering the historical circumstances and the fact that some residents of the backlands sought freedom through banditry or religious fanaticism, it is possible that a very public figure like Lampião was able to transcend his misdeeds to represent the righteous vengeance of the bandits.

The Origins and (Revisionist) History of the Cordel

Despite his notoriety and the many news reports about the escapades upon which he and his fellow *cangaceiros* embarked, and apart from the interviews or occasional photo that would show up in the newspaper, Lampião did not leave much in the way of philosophical reflection with regards to his *raison d'être*. But that has not stopped the pens of *cordel* poets from writing. Almost habitually, the *cordel* places the controversial *cangaceiro* leader in the realm of the fantastic and heroic, which is not surprising, considering that Eric Hobsbawm sees as an almost universal tendency to mythologize such scofflaw figures. Hobsbawm states that he notes "that exactly the same stories and myths were told about certain types of bandits as bringers of justice and social

redistributors all over Europe; indeed, as became increasingly clear, all over the globe" (ix). Just as Hobsbawm draws similarities between bandits, immediately after Lampião's death, one periodical, the *Jornal do Brasil*, postulates that the folkloric legacy of the bandit would only continue to grow as it enters the national imaginary. In fact, the publication accurately "predicts" that the bandit would live on as a major component, a heroic narrative "cycle" even, in the annals of Brazilian history and literature: "Esse folclore é enorme. É certo que, nas tradições poeticas do Brasil, ha de existir, de ora avante, o ciclo de 'Lampeão', que se revestirá de uma importancia tão grande que a que têm, nas literaturas européias, o ciclo de Carlos Magno, o de Cid, o do Rei Artur, o de tantos heróis e o de tantos bandidos, de que a lenda se apossou" (Leão). These legends, as the newspaper calls them, have come about in diverse circumstances and via diverse media, but in Brazil, as it pertains to the bandit Lampião, the *cordel* literature has played a central role in the propagation of the Lampião "cycle." To be sure, in the days after Lampião's death, the *Jornal do Brasil* recognizes the power of *cordel* when it states that "poetas rusticas daquela parte do Brasil (provavelmente alguns terão pertencido ao sequito do bandido; outros, que não terão sido sequazes déle, te-lo-ão admirado á distancia) já teceram verdadeiros romances em torno do celerado" (Leão). We see clearly that during his lifetime the *cordel* had already begun to be used as a tool for creating and expanding the myth of Lampião, one in which a violent bandit is transformed into a friend of the people whom he had terrorized. Interestingly, the article discards the possibility that anyone other than fellow bandits or friends of the bandit king could write such grand stories about him. Understandably, then, the same article from the *Jornal do Brasil* seems resigned to the fact that while contemporaries of Lampião may view and

judge him according to his terrible acts, "o tempo se encarregará ... de modificar essas impressões. Dia virá em que algum Walter Scott brasileiro tome a figura de 'Lampeão' como assunto de um romance ... Esse aspecto, porém só póde ser previsto ou anunciado por um estudioso da sociologia" (Leão). In many ways, the article in Rio de Janeiro's *Jornal do Brasil* proved quite correct in its evaluation of the life and legacy of the bandit. Its one point of "error," perhaps, is that sociology may not be the only appropriate means to understand how the bandit became a legendary figure: indeed, *cordel* literature provides us with ample evidence of Lampião's evolution.

In a few words,[29] the *cordel* is a type of popular lyrical pamphlet that is commonly associated with the Northeastern region[30] of Brazil. The *cordel* derives its name from the cord or the string on which vendors would hang the chapbooks, and in its heyday, one could find various kiosks that would use a clothespin to hang bestselling *cordel* pamphlets from a cord suspended between two posts. Nowadays, however, it is much more common to see kiosks selling DVDs or CDs in a very similar fashion, with

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[29] Mark Curran's succinct explanation of the *cordel* is one of the more direct and clear accounts: "A literatura de cordel é uma poesia folclórica e popular com raízes no Nordeste do Brasil. Consiste, basicamente, em longos poemas narrativos, chamados 'romances' ou 'histórias', impressos em folhetins ou panfletos de 32 ou, raramente, 64 páginas, que falam de amores, sofrimentos ou aventuras, num discurso heróico de ficção" (*História* 17).

[30] Slater affirms this fact in stating, "Both poet-singers and a type of *literatura de cordel* in *quadras* could once be found in the extreme south of Brazil. The *folheto* as we know it, however, is intimately associate with the Northeast, especially the states of Paraíba, Pernambuco, Ceará, and Rio Grande do Norte. Although cities have played an indispensable role in the *folheto*'s success, it is first and foremost an expression of the interior" (*Stories* 18). Nevertheless, the *cordel*'s success did reach other larger cities to the South of Brazil and even into Brasília. Umberto Peregrino states, "Numerosa e expressiva é a presença de poetas populares no Rio de Janeiro" (Peregrino 95) and that "a poesia de Cordel e a poesia dos violeiros e repentistas têm ali [em São Paulo] presença numerosa e expressivamente atuante" (Peregrino 103). Still, the genre is most often associated with the Northeast.

the most popular titles on a rack or even hung from a sling made from elastic string that would occupy the prime space just at the passerby's eye level.

The *cordel*, however, is more than just a pamphlet. Umberto Peregrino lays out four main characteristics of these texts: "apresentação em folhetos típicos; conteúdo de garantido interesse popular; comercialização sob forma peculiar (mercados e feiras, predominantemente sob pregão oral); baixo preço de venda" (13). These qualities, as Peregrino does admit, are indeed quite general and could encompass much more than just Brazilian *cordel* literature. However (and Peregrino does not include this in his preliminary description of the *cordel*), the *cordel* is often considered to be a lyrical genre, one of poetry, and the lyrical aspect is, in a sense, an imperative when speaking of the *cordel*, especially when we consider the genre's history. To be sure, Page highlights this aspect when he defines the *cordel* as "the narrative folk poetry" (448) of the Northeast. According to Candice Slater, orality and lyricism have much to do with the *cordel*'s past: "Among the most important [sources of the cordel] are oral balladry, the European as well as more specifically Portuguese chapbook ..., and the Brazilian improvised verse dialogues or contests (*desafios* or *pelejas*)" (*Stories* 3 original emphasis). Technically, stylistically, and structurally speaking, these are the main forebears in the *cordel*'s formation and ultimate appearance in the late nineteenth century; we notice that ballads and verse are chief determiners in this regard, while the chapbook gives us the format of the *cordel* as a pamphlet or booklet. In fact, Nemer devotes much of her analysis of Rocha's films to the way in which they (and their soundtracks) reflect the oral tradition of the *cordel*.

Without a doubt, the *cordel*, although it has certainly undergone a major decline[31] since the mid twentieth century, has not disappeared entirely. If the *cordel* used to be a daily fixture in the lives of many Northeast (and beyond) Brazilians, as common—and as informative—as a newspaper, today it evokes feelings of nostalgia and has become more of an object of study than of everyday life: "De fato, ao mesmo tempo que [o cordel] sofre sufocadora crise ... é objeto das preocupações ativas de estudiosos ... e adquire simpático prestígio nos meios culturais em geral" (Peregrino 25). The pamphlets, nevertheless, have found a way to live on, and such is the thrust of Nemer's *Glauber Rocha e a literatura de cordel*, that the *cordel* played a major role in acclaimed films by

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[31] Peregrino attributes this decline to a number of factors, but chief among them is the fact that technology brought about other forms of electronic communication that made the *cordel* obsolete: "Ora, a poesia popular escrita, tendo suas fontes mais autênticas e fecundas localizadas nas cidades sertanejas, sofre diretamente o esvaziamento humano que elas sofrem de um lado e as transformações que recebem de outro, sobretudo quanto à invasão da comunicação eletrônica em que o transistor assume papel revolucionário. E assim vieram desaparecendo gradativamente as antigas folhetarias" (45). This hypothesis is also held by Candice Slater in *Stories on a String* as she places the *cordel* alongside a general "decline of the written word in favor of the spoken word [which] has affected *folheto* production and sales" (35). Joseph A. Page also highlights the "more serious charge ... that the *telenovela* is destroying the ways Brazil's lower classes express themselves ... [as] there has been a marked decline in creative activities such as the production of *cordel* literature" (448). Ultimately, Page, too, concludes that "[t]he inexorable process of modernization and the population shift from the countryside to the city probably bear a much greater responsibility [than soap operas]" (449). Furthermore, Peregrino's question that begins the chapter following the previous quotation asks an important question and also demonstrates that, as Peregrino is writing in 1984, the *cordel* has already arrived at what one might call a crisis point: "Vai sobreviver o Cordel? Essa a questão" (57). The answer today is somewhat in line with the great threat to the *cordel*, what Peregrino calls "desfiguração" (64), but not in the negative sense that the author employs it. The *cordel* today "looks" different than it did in years past, insomuch as many *cordels* are far more accessible via digital collections than in print and with the rise of video *cordels*, but (and I will deal with this in more detail) it has not brought about the extinction of which Peregrino speaks as being the "mais triste" (64). Instead it has allowed much wider access to the genre and its "canonical" works, although it must be admitted that these represent only a very small percentage of the corpus of *cordel* literature.

director Glauber Rocha. Even in the 21st century, new *cordel* stories are being written, and the same tropes of *cordel* past are being updated to fit an ever-changing world full of technology as in Marcelo Soares' *A volta do cangaceiro Lampião via Internet* in 2001.

As far as the formal aspect of the genre is concerned, a lyrical pamphlet, these stories are often written as poems in *sextilhas* with a fairly standard rhyming structure, ABCBDB (Slater *Stories* 10), and are of rather modest length.[32] This, however, was not always the case, and one poet, Moreira de Acopiara, writes about the innovation of the sextilha in the *cordel* as a major step forward:

> SEXTILHA é este estilo
> Que você está lendo agora:
> Seis versos de sete sílabas,
> E foi enorme a melhora,
> Pois cada estrofe assim vibra
> De maneira mais sonora.
>
> Cada verso é uma linha,
> Como você vê aqui.
> Os versos dois, quatro e seis,
> Esses rimam entre si,
> Mas os ímpares não rimam,
> Isso, cedo eu aprendi. (qtd. in Ferreira da Silva *Vertentes* 47)

Moreira de Acopiara makes special note of the "sound" or the "maneira mais sonora" of the sextilha, which is an important development in the *cordel*, for these booklets were often written, printed, and even sold in the town markets or fairs by the author(s)[33] who

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[32] The Academia Brasileira de Literatura de Cordel has published the basic guidelines for writing a *cordel* on their website. They list the sextilha, the setilha, the oitava, and the décima among the possible variations of the *cordel*. The Academia also states that verses tend to contain between four and seven syllables per line (*Academia Brasileira*).

[33] Slater devotes a section to explaining the economics of intellectual property in *Stories*. In short, she mentions that while there were a good number of those who wrote, printed, and distributed their stories by themselves—"most poets are vendors or publishers" (25)—, many other poets who did not have access to a press or the means to distribute

read them aloud as a marketing strategy. Considering that the consumer was, oftentimes, the general working class population who lived in a region where droughts often plagued and hindered the two major economic motors—agriculture and livestock—the vendors needed more than an affordable price: they needed to appeal to their clientele. And so, the *cordel* not only had to "sound" good, but it also had to be interesting. As such, in broad terms, the stories tended to deal with legends and fantasy in its early stages, but soon enough current and historical events and figures increasingly became the topic of the poet's pen—and *cordel* authors did not hesitate to exaggerate and even alter the facts to make a more palatable story and, thus, drive up sales. The combination of these factors could, and did, bring about some success(ful) stories. In instances of extremely popular pamphlets, the distribution could reach the tens of thousands, if not into the hundreds of thousands (Slater *Stories* 24).

Again, the attractive marketing of the *cordel* plays a central role in their success and legacy, for as the name "cordel" indicates, it is difficult—perhaps impossible—to disassociate the commercial aspect (it being sold on a cord) from the textual/literary component when considering the *cordel*. To this day, most *cordels* are still sold as part of a hanging display; however, another important part of the sales experience has, by and large, been fallen by the wayside. If Moreira de Acopiara mentions the sound of the pamphlets it is because it was, for a long time, a tremendously important part of the *cordel*. A *cordel* vendor, sometimes the author him/herself but almost always a specialist in improvising rhymes, would read or summarize the stories aloud to an ever-increasing crowd of onlookers. At times the vendor would read directly from the *cordel* and stop

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their works were often forced to sell their work—and its rights—to a printer or reach an agreement to "work on credit" (26).

suddenly in a "cliffhanger" fashion, and at others, he would improvise verses to attract buyers. This reader or improviser, known as the *repentista*, would not only market the pamphlets, but they would also add to the *cordel* experience by offering their own interpretation on the story in their dramatic readings. And so, in addition to the poetic content of these "stories on a string," as Candace Slater refers to the *cordel* in her important work of the same name, an integral component of the *cordel* experience was the *repentista*—the improvising poet—who would create and recite poems "on the fly," as it were.

But the *repentista* was certainly not the only one who would read the stories aloud—for those who could not read would often sit and listen to the tales as interpreted by others, usually family members or friends, who had bought the pamphlet. In fact, the opening of the film *Lampião: o rei do Cangaço* takes place in the middle of an open-air market with a *repentista* singing in front of a *cordel* stand. Even though, nowadays, live readings or improvisational rhymes by *repentistas* are more novelty acts than marketing strategy, the *cordel* was and still is very much a genre that was to be heard or read aloud. Candice Slater gets to the heart of the issue in stating, "In short, literacy, while desirable, is not necessary within the *cordel* tradition ... Although a rise in the national literacy rate means that more people can now read *folhetos*, many still prefer to oral experience ... [and] a sizable percentage continues to read the story aloud even when they are alone (*Stories* 35). In the same way that we cannot, really, separate the literary from the commercial aspect of the *cordel*, the genre also places the written and oral traditions inextricably together, side-by-side.

The *cordel* does more than simply merge text and speech, the written and oral traditions; it places reality alongside fiction as the pamphlets transformed elements of history[34] and even current events by mingling fantasy or the stuff of distant legends—King Arthur's court, for example—with that of everyday life. Mark Curran notes that the *cordel* has become a means of recording popular and national history in that "o cordel se revela como a 'história não-oficial' do século XX, narrada pelos poetas do Nordeste" (*História* 34). This "unofficial" *cordel* history of Brazil, of course, includes much more than what we would expect to see in a history book. Indeed, topics of religion, folklore, African and/or indigenous stories and lore, *pelejas*/debates, fairy tales, heroes/villains, news reports, and literature—among many others—are often common sources to fill out the pages of a pamphlet (Slater *Stories* 3). More specifically even, the *cordel* had a considerable hand in expanding the appeal of Lampião, for during his life and continuing on after his death, Lampião was a constant topic of pamphlets. The *corpus* of *cordel* works surrounding the life and legacy of Lampião is extremely vast and covers a seemingly endless range of topics that, more often than not, take liberal poetic license as far as historical correctness is concerned.

What is more, it was not uncommon for *cordel* poets to adapt literature into pamphlet form, just as *cordel* booklets that draw from the most noteworthy news stories of the day are numerous. Considering that it is largely a Northeastern genre and that Lampião is a distinctly Northeastern figure, it is not surprising that Lampião (who was born, lived, and died in the Northeast) figures heavily in the Brazilian *cordel* literature, to

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[34] Historical pamphlets of all types exist, from Brazilian to world history. Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva, for example, has written dozens of pamphlets related to history or notable historical figures. Indeed, the *cordel* has been used widely as a vehicle of historiography.

the point that "[a] maior parte dos estudiosos da literatura de cordel é unânime em afirmar que, entre as décadas de 1930-1950, Getúlio Vargas e Lampião foram os heróis mais exaltados nas narrativas populares" (Nemer 34). Chandler echoes the fact that the *cordel* had a tendency to not only recycle current events in the news, but to adapt them to their liking. He states that the *cordel* was "caracteristically based on contemporary events, [but] the stories show ample evidence of the use of the author's imagination in both style and content" (197). Finally, in addition to myths/legends, history, literature, and current events, another popular theme of the *cordel* is the story with a moral. Many are the examples in which the *cordel* deals with situations that attempt to communicate some moral lesson, and among these, one of the most popular was *A moça que bateu na mãe e virou cachorra* by Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante, a *folheto* that sold in excess of 400,000 copies (Slater *Stories* 24). And so, in a sense, the *cordel* was fantasy, news, and history all at once.

Despite its wide-ranging influences and topics, the *cordel* was not without common characteristics. As I have already mentioned, the pamphlets were often written in verse according to a *sextilha* pattern and following the ABCBDB rhyming scheme. They were also, as was pointed out in Curran's *História do Brasil em Cordel*, a fairly standard length of eight pages, though sometimes longer poems of thirty-two or even sixty-four sheets would appear. In this sense, the *cordel* could very well be considered its own genre of poetry, for just as a sonnet follows a specific set of "guidelines," as it were, *cordel* poets, too, maintained uniformity in rhyme and meter. To be sure, Candice Slater's *Stories on a String* devotes significant attention to fleshing out the parameters of the poetic meter of the *cordel*, as well as its major plot devices and structures. Even more

in depth, though, is Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva's detailing of the metres in cordel in his *Vertentes e evolução da literatura de cordel*, where he lists and gives examples for a number of different metres used in the *cordel* including the parcela, sextilha, setilha, quadrão, martelo agalopado, and galope à beira-mar.

Interestingly, though, the *cordel*'s aesthetic experience was not only dictated by the structure of its verse. To be sure, a major element that the *cordel* is known for are the woodcut images that adorn the pamphlets' covers. Though later on the woodcuts would be replaced by more elaborate drawings and paintings that depicted the poem's content, the woodcut was the principle mode of cover design during much of the *cordel*'s history. In fact, in much more recent times, with the advent of the internet and the popularity of youtube video content, the woodcut style that is so heavily associated with the *cordel* has also been transformed in the digital age, as animators bring these images to life. Now, videos are made that put the *cordel* stories into motion by using animations and text in woodcut style.[35] Truly, the woodcut style has come to signify more than the *cordel* tradition; in a sense it evokes the idea of "Northeast-ness." In fact, in 2012 José Queiroz successfully campaigned for mayor of the city of Caruaru in the Northeast state of Pernambuco, thanks in part to a video that, using woodcut style animation, told the story of Queiroz's life in *cordel* form. The charming video, "A história de Zé Queiroz," plays on this very idea that the *cordel*, depicted as a woodcut animation, symbolizes the Northeast, which in turn makes "Zé Quieroz" a more authentic and "electable" candidate (Di Segni). In this way, then, the woodcut, which is metonymic for the *cordel*, becomes

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[35] A brief youtube search for "cordel" will yield over 45,000 results. A number of the most relevant results are videos of "cordel animado," in which a story is told as a *cordel*, with woodcut style animations. Many other videos are educational in nature and discuss the history and genre of the *cordel*.

symbolic of "Northeast-ness." Similarly, for example, Chandler notes that "cangaceiros of various bands tacitly declared themselves to be a group or subculture by adopting a peculiar form of dress" (5). So the bandit is not only a rebellious counter culture in deed, but also in dress—a part of their practical, daily life. Their up-turned hats and ornate decorations left a lasting impression, and without a doubt, the *cangaceiro* garb is easily recognizable today. One might even say that a *cangaceiro* who is not dressed like one is not really a *cangaceiro*.

Despite its variances, the *cordel* is a highly codified genre that at least on some level has been able to move beyond the linguistic and into the realm of cultural signification. The *cordel*'s ability and tendency to draw from diverse sources and influences is what allows it to appeal to so many at the same time that it can be recognized as a distinctly regional phenomenon. Likewise, even though its appeal and reach cast a wide net, it is fitting that the *cordel* is known primarily as a Northeastern genre, and as such it is not a surprise that the 2011 *novela* or soap opera *Cordel Encantado*[36] was set in Northeast Brazil. This association of the *cordel* with the northeastern region, as Slater explains, is a result of historical phenomena that are contextually relevant almost exclusively in that part of the country:

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[36] The extremely popular Brazilian *telenovela* series *Cordel encantado*, which was created by Duca Rachid and Thelma Guedes and aired from April 11 to September 23, 2011, tells the story of a European princess who grew up in the Brazilian sertão and who later falls in love with the son of a cangaceiro leader. The series made wide use of the woodcut style graphics, and one of the theme songs, called "Candeeiro encantado," speaks of social problems in Brazil while extolling the legacy of Lampião (a "candeeiro encantado" is a genie/magical lamp, and so the song plays on the idea that Lampião—which can also mean a regular lamp or oil lamp—is Brasil's magical lamp that will illuminate the country).

> Historical factors not only help explain the rise of the Brazilian *literatura de cordel* but furnish a number of recurrent themes. Specific bandits, messianic leaders, and political figures crop up regularly in its pages. Those droughts that still periodically ravage the interior often provide the backdrop for tragedy or adventure. (Slater *Stories* 18 original emphasis)

Slater's claim here holds true: history—both national and regional—and the *cordel* go hand in hand. Furthermore, the themes that most preoccupied *cordel* poets during the genre's early years were highly related to their socio-historical, and geographical, circumstances. Themes of drought, hunger, and bandits were part of life in the northeast in a way that, in urban cultural centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, was only accessible through news reports and even *cordel* stories. These tropes, then, cement the bond between northeast/*cordel*. Umberto Peregrino puts it another way: "a avaliação da poesia popular ..., na sua essência, só será possível a partir do conhecimento do homem nordestino .... [A] vida lúdica do sertanejo confunde-se com a vida estética. A alegria do sertanejo traduz-se no versejar e no cantar. E mesmo as dificuldades, até as tragédias, são motivo de inspiração alegre" (37).

Specifically, considering that farming and cattle herding have been a staple of life in the region since colonial times, Peregrino's affirmation that animals figure heavily in the *cordel* functions beyond the thematic level and becomes linked with cultural and historical realities: "Outro aspecto singular da poesia dos poetas populares é o zoomorfismo ... Esse zoomorfismo resulta da intimidade doméstica e do trabalho do homem com os animais" (Peregrino 38). Within this history of crops and cattle, however, we also see the political factors that contribute to the rise (around the same time

period) of banditry. The large plots of land that agriculture and livestock require meant that a few privileged landowners controlled much of the economy and, as a result, the labor of the region. The division[37] of the vast *sertão* into large plantations, however, meant that much of the population in the Northeast was landless and had to work for a privileged few, known as coronels. The workers would frequently sign their plight or "the virtues of the more privileged cowman ... both poet and public [for the cordel] would come from this landless tenant class" (Slater *Stories* 20). But as populations increased and technological advances began connecting cities and plantations, the ability to establish *feiras*, fairs or markets, finally caught up with the need, and as some profited from the increased interconnectedness of the region, printing presses eventually followed (Slater *Stories* 20). It was at this time, towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, that the songs sung by the landless workers found another form of expression and distribution: pamphlets sold at local *feiras*. The appearance of these printed materials provided a welcome diversion and escape from the difficult toil of daily life in the *sertão*. It is no wonder, then, that the *cordel* makes a habit of "tweaking," as it were, the narratives that it appropriates, oftentimes adapting its basic elements to fit within a Northeastern context or, as Slater argues, within a structure that underlies *cordel* literature (*Stories* 59). Or, in Nemer's words, "o cordel é um texto que atualiza um mito

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[37] Though there did exist a large number of small properties owned by subsistence farmers, which as Slater notes came about when federal land grants were put on hold in the mid-nineteenth century (*Stories* 20), many of the large ranchers were, nonetheless, the result of previous federal land grants. Page affirms, "Landholding patterns, especially in the Northeast, concentrated ownership in the hands of relatively few people. Each proprietor was a patriarch who ruled over his domain with absolute authority" (62). Even so, Slater continues, "landless ambulatory workers ... represented the largest as well as the poorest segment of the backlands population" (*Stories* 20), and it is from this marginalized, landless group that the idyllic longing for a better life (usually in the form of owning land) would manifest itself first in song and then later as *cordel* pamphlets.

transmitido por textos anteriores" (45). The *cordel*, as I have already noted, would come to play a significant role in the daily life of sertanejos up until the mid-twentieth century when new technologies, infrastructure, and means of communication began to alter the Northeast way of life.

The Cordel and the Refashioning of Lampião

The *literatura de cordel* is fundamental in the refashioning of Lampião's legacy and has done much to preserve and expand the immense status of Lampião well beyond his spatial, situational, and temporal context. Still, it would be difficult to pin down any single reason for the *cordel*'s tendency to appropriate narratives—specifically that of Lampião's life and legacy—and then transform them into myths.[38] To be sure, the *cordel* provides a medium by which myths are easily created and propagated, for Slater states plainly that "[t]here is no doubt that the *folheto* presents an idealized, and for that reason distorted, vision of reality. Nevertheless, in less direct ways the *folheto* also draws on poets' and buyers' experiences" (*Stories* xiv). To begin with—and I have mentioned this before—the *cordel*, in general, makes a habit of freely adapting stories, especially if the original does not comply with *cordel* tropes or values: "One can discern a tendency within the *cordel* tradition to 'correct' certain stories which do not fit the customary pattern" (Slater *Stories* 59 original emphasis). And so, like a storyteller who adapts the narrative to meet expectations, *cordel* poets might easily replace characters with more

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[38] It is worth noting that I refer to myths much in the way that Barthes does in *Mythologies*, which is to say that myths are a controlled, if not manipulated narrative that is incomplete because it only tells one side of the story.

regionally appropriate avatars or alter certain details to make the pamphlet more attractive to local buyers.

For the *cordel* poet, the source for the story was not immutable, but quite the contrary: *cordel* poets and their readership (or listenership) expected alterations, not only as part of the poetic license but also a good business strategy. The *cordel*'s penchant for and tendency to view story and history alike as flexible, malleable, and ultimately subject to the will of the poet reflects the same logic of adaptation that takes place in oral traditions: while there are expectations of certain "canonical" or essential elements of a story, the storyteller—in this case the *cordel* poet or even the *repentista*—had license to tweak the story to his or her liking and to add his or her own "style" into the narrative. As Benjamin puts forth in "The Storyteller," both memory and improvisation are involved in storytelling. Likewise, the *cordel* "remembers" the (hi)stories played out on its pages at the same time that it causes them to evolve and even expand. Furthermore, we also find that storytelling and the *cordel* must both meet audience expectations. While a listener might be eager to hear certain plot elements or personal interjections, the *cordel* reader (or the listener even) would likewise anticipate the presence of typical *cordel* tropes, characteristics, and plot elements.

The link between *cordel* and storytelling (and orality) runs deeper: as a genre that descends from and is created and consumed by the peasant classes, the *cordel* constitutes a distinctly popular text that is heavily influenced by oral tradition at the same time that it is itself a written text. The result, then, is that this blend of orality and writing not only makes possible the refashioning process but also comes to be its own channel of legitimization. As I have discussed in detail in the introductory chapter, the nature of

orality and storytelling overlap as historical modes or "texts" in that both history and storytelling involve a process of choosing details or plot elements to include or leave out. This is, essentially, the basis of White's concept of emplotment, which in turn resembles what Hegel states with regard to both pragmatical history (which attempts to make history pragmatic for contemporary readers and, as such, must consider the needs of the reader) and abstract history (where the historian only recounts those moments specifically relevant to a certain field or area of study). In the same vein, as a literary product to be consumed by the buyer/reader, the *cordel* must consider its audience or market, and so *cordel* poets (and the publishers or printers of the pamphlets) who want to earn a living must create a product with "value." We will remember that Bourdieu considers value through the lens of monetary value (what art is bought/sold for) and artistic or intrinsic value as art—a work takes on value because it is recognized as being art. Both of these aspects of value mutually impact one another, and so the artistic value will affect the monetary value, and vice versa. Since it is only after decades of existence that the *cordel* as a genre gains or takes on value in the artistic sense, *cordel* poets were frequently concerned or preoccupied with the monetary aspect: would the story sell? Mark Curran notes that "muitos dos poetas principais do cordel brasileiro eram e ainda são conscientes da tarefa nada fácil de agradar ás massas, ao povo leitor. Muitos admitiam que se não agradecessem com seus versos, tampouco iriam vender os livrinhos. E se não vendessem bem, teriam, por força, de 'sair do ramo'" ("A literatura" 575). Even in recent years, *cordel* poets attempt to capitalize on sensationalism as a way to sell pamphlets. The 2010 case of a high-profile soccer goalie who murdered his girlfriend captivated the public's attention for a number of months as the details slowly emerged. Naturally, the story

made its way into at least two *cordels* by the end of the year. The attention that the case received in the *cordel* then made headlines in the press as the story came full circle.

Of course, the adaptation of narratives in the *cordel* goes beyond accommodating stories to the regional imaginary or to the demands of the market. One factor might reside precisely in the fact that the society in which the *cordel* emerges is characterized by hardship and inequality. Nineteenth-century Brazil was a time in which, as has been previously stated, there existed a rather large gap between the rich landowners, and the poorest demographics that frequently were the hired labor on the *sertão* plantations. Those who suffered the harsh climate to work for these *coronels* earned only meager wages, while those who had small plots of land had to endure numerous droughts that threatened to, and often did, destroy the fruits of their labors. The *cordel* comes into being among such pessimistic conditions, and so one might argue that that it becomes an escapist genre through which the laborers can experience, despite their own circumstances, the idealistic and fantastic worlds that the pamphlets create on their pages.

Much more than a means of escaping reality, though, the *cordel* serves as tool of empowerment. The *cordel* makes a habit of appropriating diverse sources and transforming them into mythical narratives and thus empowers the poorer classes who indeed produced and were, at the same time, the target audience of the pamphlets. While it certainly provided a means for escape from reality for its readers (and listeners), the *cordel* also offered a way for them to question social constructs and values. The mythologizing process is also one of resignification, whereby the writer can adapt the narrative to his/her liking. Just as the African slaves in the Southern states of the United States transform the negative and oppressive discourse of their masters into songs or

phrases with double meanings (Gates 46-47), the *cordel* could be viewed as a tool of resistance and/or empowerment for the underprivileged classes who opposed oppressive social hierarchies by literally (re)writing history. Page plainly describes the political landscape for peasants in Brazil of the early twentieth century:

> Peasants who journeyed into the vast interior of Brazil and settled on unoccupied land experience a host of legal and bureaucratic difficulties when they attempted to establish ownership. ... Wealthy individuals with political connections could easily manipulate the judicial system and assert claims back up by local police or by their own private gunman. Lower-class settlers had scant hope of prevailing in these unequal contests. (183)

These same peasants who found themselves at the mercy of a compromised system stacked against them were also the ones who created and consumed *cordel* pamphlets. What is more, the high rates of illiteracy had effects beyond the need for a family member to read the stories aloud; Page notes that "illiterates were not permitted to vote" (184). Essentially, then, a large number of backlanders found themselves in a situation where hardship, social factors, and corruption all combined to silence a large portion of the peasant population. The *cordel*, on the other hand, acted as a means of expression amidst the silence: a medium that told the people's story told by the people from the people's perspective.

As I have previously argued, in a Benjaminian understanding of the politics involved in writing and recording history, the dominant classes often have the last say—if not the only say—in what becomes, ultimately, official history. Certainly, in the

Northeast, where the peasant classes were subject to the oppressive coronels in addition to the oppressive natural environment of the *sertão*, the *cordel* provided a voice by which the people, via the poet, could recover and tell their own (hi)story. Ronaldo Cagiano finds in the *cordel* poet's pen a vicarious voice of the oppressed peasants of Northeast Brazil:

> É ali, no coração das dificuldades e dos tormentos, onde a religião e os mitos se entrechocam, onde o homem simples leva na bagagem todo um olhar e percepção distintos da vida do povo, que o cantador popular vai buscar matéria e circunstância para confecção de sua composição poética ... Misturando o lírico ao social, fundindo o sentimento à crítica política, interpretando as dores e delícias da exitência pacata e agreste do caboclo, os poetas cordelistas expressam, ... lembram as velhas cantigas medievais e tocam coração dos que ouvem com sua retórica simples mas povoada de evidências do mundo que o cerca. ... E falam de verdades que os dicionários e as filosofias jamais conseguem espelhar. (15-16)

Cagiano attributes to the *cordel*, via the *cordel* poet, the distinct characteristic of speaking on behalf of the people. The *cordel* is born in the difficulties and torments, amidst mysticism, and it reflects the common man's perspective on this life. In the same way that the presence of differing historical accounts politicizes history, the *cordel* provides a means of expressing, remembering, and ultimately saying what official channels of knowledge—dictionaries and philosophies—are incapable of communicating. Cagiano is correct, then, in pointing to the *cordel* as a space where social issues are brought to light through poetry; it is a vehicle of "confection" where poetry restores unto the people the

capacity to engage in the political conversation that, until that moment, was reserved only for the ruling classes—namely coronels, politicians, and their cronies.

Like Cagiano, Mark Curran sees the *cordel* poet as a "voz do povo." On one hand, Curran states, because *cordel* authors generally come from and write about the *sertão* and the sertanejo lifestyle they speak to, about, and even for the region that exists, at best, near the margins of the cultural and political powers of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and (since its establishment in 1960) Brasília. Curran also points out that, to a certain extent, many *cordel* writers saw themselves as poets by vocation: "Mas, os mais conhecidos do velho cordel tinham em comum a crença de que, para escrever poesia, era necessário ter o dom do verso, e isso veio normalmente do berço. Distinguiam entre a *arte* de escrever versos ... e o *talento* ou *inspiração* do poeta. Portanto eles ficavam conscientes de seu lugar, seu papel especial como 'poeta do povo'" ("A literatura" 574 original emphasis). The feeling of an almost vocational "calling" to be a *cordel* poet also brought about a sense of responsibility. Consequently, Curran affirms, as the *cordel* poet and *cordel* literature garnered more respect and increasingly became objects of study in academia, "o moderno poeta de cordel chegava a não só acreditar no seu 'papel de poeta,' mas a propagá-lo em entrevistas e declarações à imprensa, até o ponto de convencer-se a si mesmo de que era um verdadeiro representante das massas, uma voz do povo, e responsável" ("A literatura" 574-75). Symbolically or otherwise, the *cordel* poet came to occupy a role of some level of prominence (though not necessarily fame, per se) in the Northeast. Just as a storyteller was a central source of information, the *cordel* poet represented a touchtone that linked the common person to the literature, mythology, history, and even current events. Furthermore, the *cordel* draws from the flexibility and

the experiential aspects of storytelling and orality while it benefits from the air of legitimacy that the written word provides. Thus, the poet became, almost quite literally, the voice of the people as they read his/her stories aloud in the markets or at home.

If the *cordel* poet is, in fact, the voice of the people who tells the (hi)story of the people, the *cordel* also represents a political genre in the way that it stands in contrast to official state or national discourses. Curran notes that just because the *cordel* represents a politicized literature as it tells the history of a people whose history has been oppressed or suppressed, the *cordel* poet did not, necessarily, write with political motivations: "[O] poeta geralmente via o mundo de um ponto de vista 'folclórico,' isto é, de uma cosmovisão incluindo a luta do Bem e do Mal ...: não era, ainda, 'politizado.' Era, na terminologia atual, da classe dominada, mas, não via o mundo de uma perspectiva conscientizada" ("A literatura" 574). Curran goes on to say that while the poet most certainly did recognize the hardships of daily life in the Northeast, and even though he or she might have specifically pointed the finger of blame at the wealthy or the dominant classes, the poets "não se expressavam em termos de uma luta concreta de classe" ("A literatura" 574). Again, what makes (or made) the *cordel* political was not an author's intention to produce political literature, per se, but rather the fact that the literature itself tells a story other than that of the dominating classes. Nevertheless, the *cordel* and its poets were not afraid to enter openly into the political realm and add their two cents. Curran also traces the trajectory of *cordel* pamphlets during "the demise of the twenty-one year military dictatorship called *Revolução* by its supporters right up to early 1985 ... [His] focus is on the events themselves and how the folk-popular poets depicted them in

their *jornal do povo*, 'the newspaper of the masses,' that is, the booklets in verse of the *literatura de cordel*" ("The Brazilian" 29 original emphasis).

If the *cordel* is the newspaper or even literature of the people, and the poet is the voice of the people, then thanks to the *cordel*, the *cangaceiro*—Lampião specifically—occupies the role of a distinctly Northeastern figure. There is no doubt that bandits were both loved and hated at the same time, but it is difficult to grasp just how the *cordel* might have played a role in Romanticizing and mythologizing the *cangaceiro* bandit in general, much less the "terrible" Lampião. Indeed, Grunspan-Jasmin notes that in addition to cultural values, social conditions in the region served to soften the hearts of the people who were oftentimes the bandits' victims. Paradoxically, then, these same conditions that oppress the peasant classes also give rise to the bandit as (anti)hero:

> Pour le peuple du *sertão*, le *cangaceiro* est avant tout victime du destin, capable d'exercer une violence sans limite, mais homme d'honneur avant tout. Par la voix des poèts populaires, il est, de son vivant même, l'archètype du héros. Dans une région où le sens de l'honneur et la vaillance sont les vertus suprêmes et où la justice est généralement au service des puissants, l'entrée d'un individu dans le *cangaco* est souvent la seule solution. ("La geste" 177-78 original emphasis).

Here again we encounter the same rhetoric of honor, justice, and vengeance as a motive for becoming a bandit. Indeed, Lampião himself played up this same justifying narrative when interviewed (Grunspan-Jasmin "La geste" 184). No doubt banditry was a more complex issue than that of right vs. wrong, criminal vs. upstanding citizen. Bandits themselves were often viewed in light of the struggle for survival in the *sertão*. Page

states, "There were have-nots who rebelled against their lot, most commonly by forming or joining outlaw bands and waging open war against the people who oppressed them. These bandit backlanders employed a counterviolence that was no less implacable than what they themselves had been made to suffer" (233-234). Eventually, the *cordel* would crystallize Lampião's explanation of his life of crime in numerous pamphlets, though the justification of his criminal acts could only go so far. It would take a virtual public relations campaign to change his image from "terror" to "hero." Grunspan-Jasmin catalogs in detail the transformation that takes place after Lampião meets Padre Cícero and is asked to be fight as a captain against the "Coluna Prestes," another gang of outlaws.[39] Grunspan-Jasmin states, "C'est à partir de 1926, lors de son 'incorporation' aux bataillons patriotiques en lutte contre la Colonne Prestes, que le personnage de Lampião devient familier au grand public à travers les photographies publiées dans la presse et une interview qu'il accorde au journal *O Ceará*" ("La geste" 187). The meeting between the bandit and the priest would become a major moment in *cordel* folklore, and it seems that the newspapers of the time saw his move to a "legitimate" military career in

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[39] Chandler goes into detail about the Prestes Column, which "was an aftermath of the successful military uprising in São Paulo in July, 1924" (61). By 1926, federal troops had still not put an end to the remnant of this attempted coup, and eventually, Floro Bartolomeu decided to, in effect, fight fire with fire and "involve Lampião in the plans" (Chandler 62) to squash the Prestes contingent. Bartolomeu's idea brought about one of the most famous encounters in *cordel* literature, between Padre Cícero of Juazeiro and Lampião wherein "the priest asked ... to write out in the name of the Government of the Republic of the United States of Brazil a document commissioning Lampião as a captain in the Patriotic Battalions" (Chandler 71). Even though Lampião and his "troops" would receive supplies as part of their new, legitimate career path, Padre Cícero was heavily criticized for his association with the bandit king and began to distance himself from Lampião. As a result, Lampião abandoned what seemed to be a genuine attempt to leave the outlaw life: "[W]hatever chance the patriarch had of further encouraging the bandit's aspirations for an honorable life was lost by his closing the door on another visit. Lampião, according to reports, was infuriated by Padre Cícero's refusal ... [and] resumed his usual activites" (Chandler 74).

a positive light ("La geste" 187-92). At this point in Lampião's life, his legacy has already become rather complex. Though it is certainly the case that he has terrorized the towns and people of the Northeast, he has seemingly made a concerted effort to leave the life of crime. In such moments, it is clear how conflicting and even sensational accounts or perspectives can easily crop up, especially when these (hi)stories are being told by poets who are motivated to sell products and/or offer, as the "voz do povo," further justification for the actions of their fellow backlanders.

Another element that comes into play when considering the *cordel*'s power and potential for refashioning is the strong tradition of religious mysticism of the Northeast. As a genre that relies heavily on sources that are of mystic or fantastic nature, Cagiano, as I have already noted above, finds the space "onde a religião e os mitos se entrechocam" (15) to be part of the rich heritage of the Northeast from which *cordel* poets draw their inspiration. Additionally, Slater reminds us that the religious *folhetos* that are part of the *cordel*'s genealogy were penned by monks and friars who "adapted them [and] drew on a wide range of sources including myths, chronicles, saints' legends, animal fables" (*Stories* 13), and many other influences such as "Afro-Brazilian and native sources" (*Stories* 16). In addition to its indigenous heritage, the Brazilian Northeast was one of the primary locations where African slaves were brought into the Portuguese colony. As the region's sugar production increased, so did the need for cheap labor, for, as Joseph Page notes, "[t]he importation of slaves from Africa, therefore, became indispensable if the colony was going to take root and prosper" (Page 61). Despite Portuguese efforts to promote the Christian faith, many indigenous and African religious practices were preserved outright or in a way that blended rituals from distinct religious traditions: "For

the past four hundred years the African religions interacted with the Roman Catholicism of the Portuguese and the animist beliefs of the native Indians ... and they have become a rich mosaic of ritual and creed" (Page 355). Like the hybrid dance-fighting style of *capoeira*, the Christian religion in the Northeast—indeed in the other parts of the country as well—underwent an alchemic process by which mystic elements were infused into it: "The mysticism brought to Brazil by Portuguese settlers took on a life of its own, especially as it shaped religious beliefs in the backlands of the Northeast" (Page 322). What is more, if we consider the oral traditions of the African and Indigenous religions, as well as the fantastic tales contained in the hagiographical accounts in Catholicism, the fact that storytelling—that is, the *cordel*—among these populations is filled with myths and mythologizing should not come as a surprise. These elements of mysticism and superstition that are common among the lower classes, perhaps, are reflected in the *cordel*'s frequent use of fantastic and mythical elements. It is worth mentioning again that (until the pamphlets became the object of academic study) the *cordel* was widely produced and consumed by these same underprivileged classes (Page 449).

Portrayals of Lampião in the Cordel

Regardless of what the ultimate reason is for why the pamphlets in Northeast Brazil have a tendency to mythologize historical figures and create parallel "hagiographies" of the poets' heroes, there remains no doubt that the *cordel* profoundly impacted the figure of Lampião in that it mythologized his life and actions and, as such,

transformed him from a violent and oppressive bandit into a popular hero.[40] Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva notes in his *Lampião: o capitão do cangaço* that he intends to show "a face nobre, humana / e até caritativa de Lampião" (3). Not only is this true with Lampião, for Rosilene Alves de Melo also reminds us that the *cordel* had a similar effect on the priest-friend that the bandit very much admired and respected. To be sure, the representations of the priest, Padre Cícero, offer room for study: "Os primeiros estudos sobre a literatura de cordel em Juazeiro do Norte se voltaram para a análise dos inúmeros folhetos escritos sobre a figura controversa de Padre Cícero. ... Estes [estudos] se ancoram nas narrativas que remetem à biografia do líder religioso para problematizar as representações elaboradas pelos poetas" (19). Just as studies on Padre Cícero have, at one point, concentrated on how he is portrayed in the *cordel*, Lampião's representation in the pamphlets also provide interesting findings, specifically that poets often overlook or excuse negative aspects or actions that would taint the bandit's reputation. Thus, Lampião undergoes a process of refashioning in the literature that would eventually eclipse his less savory behavior. While it is true that contemporary newspapers reported on Lampião and his exploits rather frequently—and Lampião was truly concerned with his public image—it was the *cordel* that ended up, in truth, shaping how Lampião was

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[40] The idea of a hero is not as straightforward as it might seem at first consideration. From war heroes, to deities, and now to Hollywood or even rock stars, heroes and our conceptualization of them have evolved and do evolve and vary according to cultures and socio-historical contexts. Without a doubt, it is worth mentioning Thomas Carlyle's lectures on the topic that appear in book form in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*. Also of note is Max Weber's work on what he sees as a universal trait that causes certain individuals to stand out as deserving of admiration. His *On Charisma and Institution Building* puts for that charisma, an intangible trait that appeals to heroes' admirers, is that *je ne sais quoi* that sets heroes apart. More specific to my present study, Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw's edition *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America* offers an interesting look into why some individuals obtain "hero" status in Latin America.

and is viewed, even as he plundered the backlands that would come to sing his praises: "As the only kind of literature with which most backlanders were acquainted, the [cordel] booklets played a role in the formation of an image of Lampião that magnified his feats and contributed to the legend that he was becoming even years before his death" (Chandler 198). One poet sums up the way the *cordel* has come to function as more than entertainment, how it even takes part in a process of historical documentation: "Este poema que fala / de cangaço e de sertão / é, apenas, à cultura / uma contribuição / um documentário vivo / da vida de Lampião" (Ferreira da Silva *Lampião* 3). More specifically, by examining the representations of Lampião in various *cordel* pamphlets, it becomes clear that the genre clearly shaped how Lampião has come to be viewed. That shaped and refashioned image of the bandit also comes to bear in my analysis of Glauber Rocha's treatment of Lampião in *Antônio das Mortes*.

In the first place, the *cordel* portrays Lampião not according to historical reality, but more in line with an idealistic conception of the social bandit. The concept of the social bandit is elaborated in Eric Hobsbawm's *Bandits*.[41] In short, social banditry is a means of viewing bandits not as mere criminals, but as rebels who stand opposite of and resist against their oppressive realities as "a form of individual or minority rebellion within peasant societies" (Hobsbawm 19). Chandler summarizes the idea when he delves into the question of whether or not Lampião was a true social bandit: "Social bandits are peasant outlaws whom the people regard as heroes rather than common criminals. They are seen as champions of justice or, at least, justified in their actions" (241). It must be noted that the concept social bandit, as Chandler rightly points out, has much to do with

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[41] Hobsbawm originally presented his idea ten years earlier as part of a chapter for the edition of *Primitive Rebels* (Hobsbawm ix, Chandler 240).

how the individual is viewed by the people, even if popular perception is skewed (241), and so the critic's treatment of Lampião focuses on if the bandit was, in reality (as opposed to being one in the eyes of later generations), a social bandit. This is why Chandler poses the "need for dealing with banditry on two levels: reality and legend" (242). Such a division between a "real" and "legendary" Lampião is precisely how this present dissertation analyzes the bandit by considering historical circumstances and the *cordel* as a genre, and then observing the treatment of the bandit in both the *cordel* and in film.

In placing Lampião's life and mytical legacy side by side, one cannot but wonder how he ever came to be viewed as anything other than a ruthless killer. Hobsbawm poses a similar, more generalized question: "So how does the social element in banditry, which champions the weak against the strong, the poor against the rich, the seekers for justice against the rule of the unjust, fit into the political history of banditry, which makes bandits men of power, who are logically drawn into the universe of power?" (18). It is important to note that social banditry usually takes place in a pre- (or transitioning into) capitalist/industrial society. As these societies move increasingly towards an industrial/capitalistic state, the conditions for banditry, as it were, become less likely; in other words, "'modernization' ... deprives any kind of banditry, including the social" (Hobsbawm 22). Typically, then, such communities have marked class divisions that find certain classes or individuals in power and in possession of wealth, while the majority lives as a poor peasantry. Thus, the would-be social bandit must come from within this context—as opposed to invading from without—or he/she will be viewed as a common criminal or raider (Hobsbawm 20-21). Considering, then, that the bandits come

from within a culture of instability, where peasants "are shackled by the double chains of lordship and labour" (Hobsbawm 34), they come to be viewed—oftentimes in spite of their actions—as someone fighting for the people because, being (oftentimes) from the same peasant classes, the bandit comes to embody the shared values of these same peoples. In rural, Northeast Brazil, then, the harsh climate and society required a certain degree of fortitude of the *sertão* dwellers that also comes to be the measuring stick of a person, particularly a man. Thus, it is not surprising that in a *cordel* about another famous bandit, Antônio Silvino (the predecessor of Lampião), José Bernardo da Silva indicates (if not laments) that in the *sertão*, the tough-guy figure is often what merits attention and admiration: "porque onde fui criado / o povo não aprecia / o homen civilisado / Ali se aprecia muito / um cantador, um vaqueiro / um amansador de poldro / que seja bem catingueiro / um homem que mata onças / ou então um cangaceiro" (3). The courage or even "manliness" of the *cangaceiro*, since it is such a trait that is highly valued in that society, helps to overcome their less laudable deeds: "A violência – associada à coragem, à disposição de lutar contra as injustiças – constitui o elemento de identificação do sertanejo com a figura do cangaceiro, que, dessa forma, começa a assumir o estatuto de herói" (Nemer 50).

When a trait that carries much social value begins to define an individual, in spite of any of his/her other characteristics, a partial erasing or covering up takes place. That is, certain highly desirable characteristics overshadow undesirable ones, such as violence. Eventually, these few aspects that have covered up others begin to masquerade as the whole, rather than the part. If there are partial narratives controlled by dominating classes or the established order, the refashioning process we see taking place here is one

that attempts to resist the established order by replacing his "criminal" deeds—keeping in mind that they are criminal according to an established order governed by the rule of law—with the heroic actions he is credited or associated with, both in life and after his death in literature and film. Thus, paradoxically, some[42] social bandits' "terror actually forms part of their public image. They are heroes not in spite of the fear and horror their actions inspire, but in some ways because of them. They are not so much men who right wrongs, but avengers" (Hobsbawm 63). Lampião, and other avenger-bandits, do not set out to change society, necessarily, but they do come to be viewed as forces of retribution that pay evil with evil. Though they may cause more suffering along the way, they are pardoned for these actions because they balance the system. And so, because they come from the peasant classes, they are, regardless, embraced as a champion by these same people—even if they bring only vengeance and not lasting change.

The idea of Lampião as a symbol of resistance and social justice becomes so powerful that it is utilized to give voice to a group that had experienced marginalization in Brazil under the dictatorship. In the 1970s, decades after his death and far to the south in Rio de Janeiro, a publishing house is founded with the name "Lampião, Editora de Livros, Revistas e Jornais." In April 1978, Lampião House publishes its first and "experimental" issue of the subversive literary journal *Lampião da Esquina*. The journal's distribution is restricted because it is a "jornal homosexual" ("Saindo do Gueto" 2). The name of the journal not only refers to the bandit, but it also plays on his name: the journal hopes to be a light to the gay community and to other marginalized groups, a "lampião da esquina," a light on the street corner. Indeed, the title of the letter from the

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[42] Here Hobsbawm is describing the branch of social bandits who are known as avengers. Lampião is counted among this fringe group of social bandits.

editor in the first issue hints at their aim to emerge from marginalization: "Saindo do Gueto." The journal even makes use of the iconography of the bandit in their logo: a *cangaceiro* hat above Lampião's easily reconizable round glasses, which are resting upon his nose. The two round lenses and the nose to call to mind the image of phallus and testicles, and firmly situate the journal within the context of the legacy of Lampião's struggle against the establishment. Additionally, considering that, from time to time, there has been speculation as to whether he was himself homosexual or bisexual, the publication seems to look to Lampião as a symbol of a man free of prejudices, and one with whom it finds common ground. Thus, we see that the bandit king's appeal as a social bandit or as a figure of resistance expanded far beyond the *sertão* and its cultural climate; in fact, it reached at least as far as the margins of the former Brazilian capital of Rio de Janeiro.

Secondly, Lampião not only appears in the *cordel* as a bringer of justice, but he is also depicted as a figure that lives on as both an example to follow and an icon of the *sertão*. For example, in *A chegada de Lampião no Inferno* and *O debate de Lampião com São Pedro* (also known as *A chegada de Lampião no céu*), the *cordel* poet José Pacheco situates the bandit in the realm of the eternal to dialogue and to duel with Satan and St. Peter, respectively. The poetic dual, the *peleja* between characters is a common trope in *cordel*, and Lampião aptly defends himself before both gatekeepers, both in word and in battle. In *A chegada de Lampião no inferno*, after successfully convincing a young minion to speak with Satan on his behalf, Lampião must then defend himself in battle against all the forces of hell—and he walks away without a scratch.

Indeed, the bandit appears time and time again as someone who lives on beyond his death, and as such, he is frequently invoked as an exemplary life and even as symbolic of the *sertão* itself. In Pacheco's extremely popular *A chegada de Lampião no inferno*, we see Lampião as an eternal sertanejo: "no inferno não ficou / no céu também não entrou / por certo está no sertão" (8). Indeed, this "saint's" final resting place is in the backlands, the land of the *cangaceiro* and the *cordel*: the *sertão*. In a way, these lines almost sound like a saint's hagiographical requiem, but rather than a wax icon on display in a cathedral, instead of passing through the pearly gates, Lampião is preserved and propagated in the *cordel*.

Also in *A Chegada de Lampião no inferno*, we find the *cangaceiro* king arriving at the gates of the underworld where he must knock and ask permission to enter. When the "moleque" or boy that is guarding the gate finally agrees to tell Satan that Lampião wants to enter hell, Satan replies, "Não senhor ... / vá dizer que vá embora / só me chega gente ruim" (3). It would seem that Satan does not consider Lampião to be "bad" or "ruim" enough to enter into his dominion, which would imply that Lampião should see entrance to heaven instead. In fact, Satan recognizes that despite the *cangaceiro*'s status as an outlaw and bandit, Lampião is of a more reputable type that would, ironically, only "corrupt" his lair: "Lampião é um bandido / ladrão da honestidade / só vem desmoralizar / a nossa propriedade" (4). Despite what would seem to be an indication that Lampião is destined for an appearance before St. Peter, the poet Pacheco warns us that, even though he is not welcome in hell, the *cangaceiro* did not go to heaven. Indeed, this saint's final resting place is in the backlands, the land of the *cangaceiro* and the *cordel*: the *sertão* (8).

This scene when Lampião defends himself at the gates of hell is recounted briefly in *O encontro de Lampião com o Padre Cícero no céu* by Minelvino Francisco Silva. But after the poet reminds us what happens in Pacheco's *cordel*, he speaks of how Lampião returned to the *sertão* as a ghost. When Lampião realizes he is indeed dead—in this story, he himself also thought he could not be killed—he goes to heaven to ask Padre Cícero for forgiveness before God. Eventually, the bandit is allowed in heaven (despite what Pacheco asserts at the end of his pamphlet) because he was humble enough to ask forgiveness because he "[m]atou pra mais do pedido" (5). Lampião falls on his knees and cries out to Padre Cícero, asking for his help to get into heaven: "Lampião banhado em prantos / Nos seus pés se ajoelhou / Meu padrinho Padre Cícero / Agora me arrependi" (6). The story ends with God forgiving Lampião in a moment that is taken and adapted from a Biblical passage: "Se ninguém te acusou / Eu não acuso também" (7).[43] The poet ends the story by reminding the reader of the virtues of living a life of religious piety, and so Lampião's example—even though the author admits it is "uma imaginação" (8)—serves as one to follow for the readers.

Finally, the Brazilian bandit is made to be a regional and even a national figure. Lampião's treatment in the *cordel* seems to reflect the attention he received in life. Indeed, he is portrayed as a local or regional figure—a true sertanejo. Just as the bandit's reputation eventually spread throughout the entire country, and even beyond, so do the *cordel* poets contrive meetings between other famous persons or archetypes from around the world. He fights or debates with other national figures and, as such, represents as a

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[43] In the Biblical text, Jesus responds to a woman who was guilty of adultery, "[W]here are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? ... Neither do I condemn thee" (*The Holy Bible*: King James Version, John 8.10-11).

symbol of Brazilianness; in a sense, Lampião defends Brazil before other countries' national symbols. Gonçalo Ferreira da Silva plainly states as much in his *Lampião: o capitão do cangaço*: "Qual o homem mais famoso / da nossa grande nação? / Vargas não nos é estranho / porém sem comparação / internacionalmente / é sem dúvida o Lampião" (4). In another *cordel*, the bandit is referred to as the Bonaparte of the *sertão* (Coelho Cavalcante *ABC* 6). There are plenty of other examples where Lampião encounters famous individuals or symbols from around the world; he debates with Confuscious, Kung-fu, an American tourist, and Adam and Eve, to name only a few. The *cordel* poets place Lampião alongside a number of other individuals, and the bandit manages to hold his own. As a sertanejo, as a Brazilian, then, the bandit formidably represents the region and, to a certain extent, the country before other nations.

Lampião in Film: Antônio das Mortes

The years after Lampião's death in 1938 were not only productive insomuch as *cordel* poets transformed and expounded upon the widespread and even supernatural-like reputation of the *cangaceiro* hero, but his cinematic legacy as well bears witness to how quickly and how deeply the bandit was able to implant himself—or his image—in the sertanejo imaginary and endear himself to the peasant's heart. The widely praised cinema novo director and critic Glauber Rocha (1939-1981) makes ample use of the legend and legacy of Lampião and the *cangaço* without ever actually depicting the bandit in his pair of related films, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* and *Antônio das Mortes*. As I have already mentioned, Lampião is not physically portrayed or represented in either work, but his influence undergirds the entirety of these two films. As many critics have

noted, there is more than a casual or fortuitous relationship between Rocha's two films and the *cordel*. Sylvia Nemer in particular does an exceptional job of tracing the multiple intersections between the *cordel* and the films, while Adriana Azevedo traces the Lampião's influence in *Deus e o Diabo*. Nemer explains that films about the *cangaço*, what Glauber Rocha calls the *nordestern*, have come to define their own space as a genre in Brazilian cinema (19). Films relating to Lampião date back the 30s, when Benjamin Abraão filmed a documentary in Lampião and the other *cangaceiros*' camp in the *sertão*, an event that Hobsbawm recognizes as the first time that a major bandit was captured on film as such (163). Considering that Lampião was always interested in photography and was a particularly eager subject of Abrahão's documentary, indeed it seems that Lampião and his story are easily translated to film, and there has been no shortage of films about or tied to the *cangaceiro*. During the 1950s-70s, at least eight movies were released that mention Lampião in the title (*Internet Movie Database*).

The film that precedes *Antônio das Mortes* (both in chronology and in the plot arch that charts the life of Antônio), *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*,[44] has received its fair share of critical attention. Nemer affirms, for instance, that the film "é uma espécie de cordel filmado" (24), and the same could be argued for *Antônio das Mortes*. Such is how the critic sets out to study Rocha's two films, by establishing a reading of the *cordel* and its tropes, mechanisms, and style and showing how the films reflect and make use of them. Azevedo, on the other hand, finds traces of mysticism and messianism as an operative force in the *sertão* (71). Despite the title of Azevedo's book (*Cordel, Lampião*

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[44] The English language title, *Black God, White Devil*, more clearly refers to the two leader figures that Manoel follows in the film, the Afro-Brazilian cult leader Sebastião, and the cangaceiro Corisco, whose nickname was in fact the White Devil.

e Cinema na Terra do Sol), surprisingly, a treatment of Lampião in the film is only minimally present in her analysis. From the depiction of the *sertão* and the *cangaço*, to its use of the *cordel* tradition, the approximations to the film are varied.

The 1964 film by Rocha—*Deus e o Diabo*—features a main character whom both Azevedo and Nemer see as an "everyman", as it were, of the Brazilian *sertão*. The movie is displayed in black and white and at times even appears over exposed. The sunlight of the *sertão* nearly blinds the camera and the whiteout effect unsettles the viewer. Just as the binary construct of good and evil are evoked in the title, the black and white composition constitutes another set of opposites. Indeed, this theme of contrasting poles is present throughout the film as the main character Manoel vacillates between hope and disenchantment, between a life of religious devotion and one of banditry. In a sense, the duality reflects the very opposing viewpoints of how Lampião's legacy survives today: as a violent murderer or a man, if not hero of the people.

Deus e o Diabo, however, ends quite paradoxically: the final "heir" of Lampião's legacy is killed. Manoel, who was Corisco's protégé, flees, perhaps, toward the hope of another leader figure to follow. Five years later, Rocha's return to the story of a *jagunço* (or mercenary) whose speciality is killing *cangaceiro* bandits, presents us with a much different experience. If *Deus e o Diabo*'s monochromatic filming reflects the fact that Antônio himself saw the world as black and white—bad vs. good, *cangaceiros* vs. himself—the color-filled screenplay that is *Antônio das Mortes* foreshadows the fact that the overly simplified way in which the "matador de cangaceiros" views the world is no longer possible. This is a result of a number of factors, primarily that he undergoes a change throughout the film as he begins to realize that *cangaceiros* are not *all* bad.

Secondly, and the film seems to hint at this in the final scene as it fades to black, the world has also become more complex, as foreign multinationals pose a much greater threat to his (and the Brazilian) way of life than the *cangaceiro* does/did. Likewise, *Antônio das Mortes* not only uses color to present a more complex—that is, non-binary—way of perceiving the world, but it also seems to put forth a less polarizing (and polarized) view of Lampião. In the same way that, as I mentioned in my introduction, Barthes, Rancière, and Hutcheon seek to find a way around the over-simplification of dichotomies, the *cordel* "complicates" Lampião's legacy through a process of refashioning, and the film, too, deconstructs traditional, binary interpretations of right and wrong. Terence Carlson delves more deeply into the manner in which the film is able to adequately encompass the subtleties of Brazilian folklore: "The real triumph of *Antônio das Mortes* is realized in the ways by which Rocha amalgamates myth, mysticism, and reality into a filmic whole that is both epic and lyrical. Each character ... represents a synthesis of actual or fictional people, ideas, movements, or mythical/mystical elements" (170). Rocha, then, achieves an "integration of apparent opposite" (Carlson 170) that reflects the non-resolution of postmodernism in Hutcheon, and this is quite visible in the way the Antônio's black-and-white perspective regarding *cangaceiro* bandits (to which he steadfastly holds in *Deus e o diabo*) is shattered (in full technicolor in *Antônio das Mortes*) by his close contact with the bandit's "gang" of followers.

The film also merges image and text in its re-rendering of *cordel* tropes as film in general, but from the beginning Rocha offers a concrete example of what Barthes sees as the complementary relationship of the written and the visual. Although Rocha does not present us with a press photograph, the format is similar: a captioned image whereby the

image "says" beyond the sayable of the text, and the text helps "visualize" beyond the visible of the image. *Antônio das Mortes* begins by displaying a triptych that depicts St. George's slaying of the dragon. Then, a brief text[45]—in French—scrolls vertically in front of the painting. The paragraphs succinctly inform the viewer about *cangaceiro* bandits, Lampião ("[l]e plus célebre de tous les cangaceiros"), St. George ("le saint catholique le plus populaire du Brésil"), and other bulleted notes about Brazilian culture. These "factoids" for a French audience[46] function well beyond the level of communicating the necessary information to understand the film, for they immediately construct a framework for the film that is designed to guide the viewer towards a certain reading of the work and the invisible figure—for he never appears in the film proper—upon which it is founded: Lampião. Indeed, the film presents the Brazilian bandit in a way that is entirely congruent with contemporary representations of Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, the man who would be Lampião, in the Northeastern lyrical pamphlets of the *cordel* literature. In these popular[47] pamphlets, Lampião is regularly depicted in a larger-than-life manner and is often described as having a "good heart"[48] or "not as bad as they

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[45] Part of the text reads thusly: "Les 'cagaceiros', bandits mystiques ont disparu du Nord-Est du Brésil, en 1940. Le plus célèbre de tous les cangaceiros fut: Lampião qui a mené une lutte de 25 ans contre le gouvernement. ... Aujourd'hui des temps en temps surgissent des bandes de cangaceiros qui essaient de retrouver la légende de Lampião."
[46] The film was entered in and won best director at the Cannes Film Festival that year.
[47] Again, they are popular not only because they were written, published, and consumed by the general public but also because they were widely read.
[48] This phrase—"bom coração"—appears often in the *cordels* that speak of Lampião. This is not surprising considering the *cordel*'s tendency to glorify the bandit, in addition to the fact that the word "coração" is a convenient rhyme with both "Lampião" and "sertão." Some of the notable examples include *Lampião, rei dos cangaceiros* by Alexandre José Felipe Cavalcanti d'Albuquerque Soboia Dilla; *O sertão pro Lampião* by Esmeralda Batista; *Lampião não era tão cão como se pinta* by Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante; and *Lampeão em Vila Béla* by João Martins de Athayde.

say."[49] At times, his symbolism reaches to heights beyond that of merely a notable or a heroic figure by depicting the bandit as almost a divine figure who epitomizes *sertão*-ness, or backland-ness.

Rocha's *Antônio das Mortes* appears in 1969, during what might be considered the latter part of the heyday—or the beginning of the final decline—of Brazilian *cordel* literature.[50] By this time, the numerous stories about endless topics entertained readers—and listeners—well beyond the initial markets in the backlands (the *sertão*) of the Northeast. Some of the most popular and enduring of these pamphlets deal with none other than the bandit Lampião; for nearly two decades, from the 1930s to the 50s, Lampião's popularity in the *cordel* was only matched by the Brazilian politician Getúlio Vargas (Nemer 34). Furthermore, Nemer notes that the *nordestern* film—which deals

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[49] Though many *cordel* pamphlets take up the cause of defending or making apology for the bandit, one title in particular is, probably, sufficient to sum up the goal of a large body of work surrounding Lampião: *Lampião não era tão cão como se pinta*, by Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante. In fact, Coelho Cavalcanti begins the work by stating that he changed his opinion about the bandit, which is why he is writing in defense of Lampião (1).

[50] Building off of what I have previously mentioned with regards to the decline of the *cordel*, Candice Slater indicates in her *Stories on a String* that the industrialization of the Northeast region that started to really change the sertão or backlands landscape in the latter half of the 20th century also altered the look of the *cordel* market. And so, the *cordel* suffers a decline from which it has never really recovered (*Stories* 22, 32-33). After this, though, the popularity of not only the individual works, but the entire genre as well, steadily drops off. It is important, though, to note that Rosilene Alves de Melo also points to another major issue in conjunction with modernization: inflation. The rising costs of printing and distributing pamphlets, when combined with the devaluation of the national currency, forced the closing of some formidable *cordel* publishers: "A crise que abateu sobre a economia do país, por sua vez, contribuiu para diminuir o poder da compra dos trabalhadores assalariados, principal público desse gênero literário ... A partir da década de sessenta, importantes editoras do setor fecharam suas portas" (147). Now, television has seemingly replaced the *cordel*, and the limited demand for these pamphlets is the result of scholarly research or collecting. Thus, the *cordel* belongs more to the realm of nostalgia and the cultural patrimony of the Northeast than to the world where *cordel* poets can make a living by writing and publishing their tales.

with *cangaceiros*—begins more or less during this time, in 1952 with Lima Barreto's *O cangaceiro* (19). Clearly, *Antônio das Mortes* (and its predecessor, *Deus e o Diabo na terra do Sol*) responds to the demand, whether deliberately or not, for all things *cangaceiro* that the *cordel* had helped to foster.

If by the late sixties in Brazil the *cangaceiro*, and specifically Lampião, were viewed with curiosity and even admiration, this was not entirely the case some three decades earlier, when the bandits' presence often brought violence and chaos. For in the thirty-one years that pass between Lampião's death in 1938 and the release of *Antônio das Mortes*, a shift seems to take place in the popular imaginary concerning Lampião and his *cangaceiro* comrades. The film's opening text frames this change quite nicely by, essentially, priming or instructing viewers on how to "approach" these figures:

> Les 'cagaceiros', bandits mystiques, ont disparu du Nord-Est du Brésil, en 1940. Le plus célèbre de tous les cangaceiros fut: Lampião qui a mené une lutte de 25 ans contre le gouvernement. ... Aujourd'hui des temps en temps surgissent des bandes de cangaceiros qui essaient de retrouver la légende de Lampião.

With these words superimposed over the image of St. George slaying a dragon, Rocha reveals to us, more or less, the common ideological bend of the time—if not his own—with regards to the bandit and the *cangaceiros*. Simply put, both in the *cordel* and in the film, Lampião is a "celebrated" member of the "mystical" bandits of Brazil.

What is more, he is portrayed as a revolutionary type of figure whose brand of banditry was highly politically motivated, for the text asserts that he fought *against the*

government for more than two decades,[51] and his legend—and legacy—is now the basis for future outlaw-rebels. Without a doubt, Lampião's mention is meant to parallel the allusion to the "warrior-saint" St. George, a theme that comes up often and is symbolically portrayed by more than one character in the film (Carlson 172). This warrior-saint symbol is essentially the view that is presented in the *cordel*, particularly when Satan himself remarks in Pacheco's *A Chegada de Lampião no inferno* that Lampião is an honest thief. Pacheco's lines echo the sentiment in Rocha's film that Lampião is a "good" bandit, too good for hell in fact. And so a fight ensues—a shootout accompanied by a verbal battle of wits known as the *peleja*.

To be sure, such representations, both in the film and in the *cordel*, however, are rather far from the historical reality concerning the bandit Lampião. Chandler, in his biography of Lampião, examines whether or not the Brazilian outlaw was indeed a "social bandit" in the tradition of Hobsbawm—that is, if Lampião was a revolutionary figure who set out to protest against an unjust society. In short, Chandler affirms that, despite the fact that *cangaceiro* bandits come about, partly, as a result of injustice in their respective societies, it is unlikely that they, and more specifically Lampião, were motivated by such ends: "[I]t is questionable whether such criminality—almost totally, and usually altogether, divorced from any conscious desire for meaningful change in society—was a form of social protest" (245-46). In the same manner that one of St.

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[51] Sylvia Nemer's brief summary of who Lampião was offers a nice point of comparison and contrast: "Lampião – bandido célebre que, durante quase 20 anos, desafiou as forças da polícia, assegurando sua dominação sobre uma vasta zona do território nacional e sua população" (17). We do well to notice here that Nemer, too, uses the term "celebrated" but her description of his actions is more carefully worded that Rocha's, and as such is, perhaps, a bit less ideologically charged: Lampião, for Nemer, challenged police forces. Finally, rather than invoking a mythical legacy of resistance, like Rocha, Nemer's Lampião is a man who came to dominate both the land and its inhabitants.

George's most recognized and fanciful feats—the episode involving the killing of a dragon—seems to have been, according to Alban Butler, a rather late addition to his hagiography that came about in the twelfth century, hundreds of years after his death (120), Lampião's good-guy persona seems to be largely an after-the-fact (that is, posthumous) construction that overshadows or attempts to justify the less laudable deeds (supposedly[52]) committed by the bandit. In other words, the way Lampião was—a ruthless bandit who murdered, raped, and at times worked as a mercenary for the "evil" land-owning coronels—is not the way he was viewed by the time Rocha's *Antônio das Mortes* is produced, and it is not the way he is viewed today. And the *cordel* had a role in that shift, for according to Nemer, "[n]a poesia popular, a coragem para enfrentar a injustiça é vista como um aspecto positivo que reabilita o cangaceiro dos seus crimes" (47). The *cordel*, then, has not only helped shape the way we view Lampião in general, but also it has had a direct influence in Rocha's film(s).

Lampião the Social Bandit

Glauber Rocha's filmic treatment of the *sertão* and one of its most recognized figures seems, perhaps, an obscure or strange choice, if we remember that less than a decade prior Brazil had moved its capital city to Brasília. Indeed, as the country's gaze focused more and more on urban centers of culture, Rocha's choice to situate his two-part series within the context of the Brazilian backlands appears to present a risk in terms of

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[52] No shortage of *cordel* booklets bring up the fact that bandits oftentimes acted in the name of Lampião, thus sullying his name. That is, they would pretend to be Lampião to take advantage of his (in)famous reputation and scare victims into submission. One writer, José Cavalcanti e Ferreira Dila, published an account of such "false" Lampiãos in his pamphlet *Nem tudo foi Lampião*, which translates roughly as "it wasn't always Lampião."

how it would be received by viewers and critics. Of course, if we consider Rocha's upbringing in Bahia (specifically Salvador) and his connection to the Northeast, the choice is not so surprising. Furthermore, as a preeminent director in Cinema Novo, Rocha and his film reflect the movement's ethos in dealing with themes of inequality by deliberately opposing more mainstream filmmaking in order to create revolutionary films that would transform their viewers. Nemer notes that "Cinema Novo foi um movimento de resistência cultural e política, de resistência ao colonialismo e às suas formas de expressão ... A originalidade de Glauber Rocha em relação a outros diretores que se dedicaram a retratar o Nordeste está no modo de o cineasta apropriar-se de elementos da cultura popular, traduzindo-os para a linguagem cinematográfica" (72). The appropriating of cultural artifacts harkens back to Rocha's Brazilian avant-garde forebears of the 1920s and 1930s who began the *antropofagia* movement to appropriate culture by "eating" it, and by digesting and producing a different result of "things" swallowed.

Rocha's personal view of Lampião is not entirely clear in the films *Deus e o Diabo* and *Antônio das Mortes*, yet the legacy of the bandit shines as brightly as the lightning that shot out from his gun barrel. In *Deus e o Diabo*, Lampião's second in command, Corisco, is of the last of the *cangaceiros*, and he makes it his mission to rebuild his "king's" dominion. Corisco, as the successor of Lampião, is portrayed as an obsessed and volatile figure that forces the protagonist, Manoel, to commit horrible acts

to prove his mettle. In the end, Antônio das Mortes, the *matador de cangaceiros*[53] guns down Corisco and seemingly puts and end to the would-be bandit lineage of Lampião.

Antônio das Mortes appears yet again before Rocha's camera's lens in the film whose title's shortened form bears his name, *Antônio das Mortes*. While *Deus e o Diabo* is set right after the death of Lampião, Maria Bonita, and other *cangaceiros*, *Antônio das Mortes* takes place quite some time after Antônio has killed Corisco at the end of *Deus e o Diabo*. In the film, Antônio, the matador de *cangaceiros*, comes out of retirement and returns to the mercenary life after learning that some *cangaceiros* have cropped up in a remote town in the state of Bahia. These *cangaceiros*, however, are not the mere bandit-types that Antônio is used to fighting. Instead, Coirana, the leader of the *cangaceiro* group, seems to have taken up the *cangaceiro* life and garb in order to fight injustice; and he does so in the name of Lampião. The first time Coirana speaks in the film, he addresses the camera, and the viewer, directly, in a monologue that immediately distinguishes his view of the *cangaço* from Corisco's in *Deus e o Diabo*. For if Corisco seemed obsessed with causing fear and chaos, Coirana sees the office of the *cangaceiro* as one who strives for social justice:

> Eu vim aparecido. Não tenho família nem nome. Eu vim tagendo o vento pra espantar os últimos dias da fome Eu trago comigo o povo desse sertão brasileiro e boto de novo na testa um chapéu de cangaceiro. Quero ver aparecer os homens dessa cidades, o orgulho e a riqueza do dragão da

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[53] The nickname means "cangaceiro killer" and serves, initially at least, as a clear way to characterize Antônio. While in *Deus e o Diabo*, Antônio's nickname foreshadows precisely what happens at the end of the film, in *Antônio das Mortes*, the nickname takes on an ironic meaning as the protagonist comes to regret having killed the noble cangaceiro Coirana.

> maldade. Hoje, eu vou embora, mas um dia eu vou voltar. E nesse dia, sem piedade, nenhuma pedra vai restar. Porque a vingança tem duas cruz. A cruz do ódio e a cruz do amor. Três vez reze padre-nosso, Lampião Nosso Senhor!

Coirana's monologue, which Nemer immediately recognizes as a type of performance related to the *cordel repentistas* (155), is full of biblical, apocalyptic and christological imagery that speaks to the fact that he views the *cangaceiro* not as a bandit but as a redeemer or savior—which is why he takes up the *cangaceiro* hat. What is more, Coirana clearly sees Lampião as a redeemer figure in whose name and legacy he now takes up arms.

Nemer notes the importance of Lampião in the film in stating, "Repetido inúmeras vezes durante as primeiras cenas do filme, o nome de Lampião reforça o sentido não oficial da manifestação dirigida por Coirana e, mais que isso, estreita os laços de pertencimento do povo com o seu passado" (157). Clearly, Coirana views both Lampião and the *cangaço* not as a life of crime, but rather as a way to fight injustice. Furthermore, Horácio, the blind and oppressive coronel who states very early on in the film that he is outraged by demands for agrarian reform, recognizes Coirana as a different type of bandit. In attempting to discredit Coirana's influence, he states, "Pelo que ouvi dizer, esse cangaceiro é puro teatro." Yet even Antônio appears to sense that this run-in will not be another run-of-the-mill *cangaceiro* hunt: "Eu vou atender o seu pedido doutor. ... Acho que vou fazer uma viagem." In the film, just as is common in the *cordel* tradition, the *cangaceiro* lifestyle is frequently justified and explained in light of an unjust society. In this case, Coirana does more than find a link to the past in his fight

against the unjust coronel; he evokes the growing and changing legacy of the Lampião of the *cordel*.

One of the first ways that Lampião is presented in the film is, like in the pamphlets, as a social bandit. In other words, rather than a common criminal, Lampião is remembered as a man on a mission, so to speak—a man who had an *ethos*, that was driven to banditry by his circumstances, and ultimately fought against an unjust and unstable society. To be sure, Lampião's association with St. George, the warrior-saint, sets the tone for what will be a presentation of the *cangaceiro a la* Lampião, but it is Coirana's monologue that directly links the bandit in the film with the bandit of the *cordel*. When Coirana mentions "fome," hunger or famine, in his discourse, the use of the word is not coincidental or flippant. Director Glauber Rocha views "fome" as a fundamental force in Brazilian society, and by extension, Brazilian cinema. In his 1965 article—four years before *Antônio das Mortes* is released—, "Uma estética da fome," Rocha asserts that "[a] fome latina, por isto, não é somente um sintoma alarmante: é o nervo de sua própria sociedade. Aí reside a trágica originalidade do Cinema Novo ... nossa originalidade é nossa fome" (54). Rocha is sure to point out that hunger also brings out violence, for "o comportamento exato de um faminto é a violência, e a violência de um faminto não é primitivismo" (56). Similarly, Coirana's violence is in reaction to the hunger of the Brazilian people, both on a literal and figurative level, as the Brazilian people, as it is problematized in the film, struggle to survive in the harsh and drought-prone backlands and, on a larger scale, adapt to a modernizing world without being overrun by imperialistic multinational corporations. Lampião, then, represents the Brazilian peasant's solution to the "fome": return to their past and invoke the "help" of a

revolutionary figure, which is, very generally, the idea behind a social bandit in Hobsbawm. As a mercenary hired to quell Coirana and, in a sense, Lampião, Antônio das Mortes, on the other hand, becomes largely representative of a disinterested government's solution: hire outside help. Thus, Antônio's words—"Lampião era meu espelho"—ring true: if Lampião represents the social bandit on the side of the people, Antônio is his reflection or his opposite, that is, the paid mercenary who fights on behalf of the oppressors against the people.

The "viagem" that Antônio takes, however, is one that will see him transition from mercenary to social bandit. He eventually takes Coirana's place as one who will fight injustice. In "Uma estética da fome," Rocha also states that "fome" is "uma vergonha nacional" (55) because "nossa maior miséria é que esta fome, sendo sentida, não é compreendida" (54). When the hunger is understood, though, a transformative and revolutionary event takes place:

> *Do Cinema Novo: uma estética da violência*, antes de ser primitiva, é revolucionária, eis aí o ponto inicial para que o colonizador compreenda a existência do colonizado: somente conscientizando sua possibilidade única, *a violência*, o colonizador pode compreender, pelo horror, a força da cultura que ele explora. Enquanto não ergue as armas, o colonizado é um escravo. (56 original emphasis)

What Rocha describes here runs parallel to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's view of conscientization. Only when the oppression is pointed out and made visible is the cycle of oppression able to be broken (Freire 27). Clearly, this is the motivation for Antônio in the film, for when he mortally wounds Coirana and then witnesses his last breath, the

matador de *cangaceiros* undergoes a complete ideological transformation. If in *Deus e o Diabo* Antônio das Mortes is the one who brings an end to Lampião's legacy, in the sequel/spin-off bearing his own name, the matador de *cangaceiros* redeems himself and the bandit line by fighting against the coronel. Like Lampião, Antônio responds to an unjust situation by becoming an outlaw. In fact, the final battle scene in which Antônio guns down countless members of *jagunço* henchmen who work for the coronel, Antônio's lightning-fast shooting and dead-aim accuracy can only but remind the viewer of the bandit whose *nom de guerre* came from the continuous light that his fast gun threw off.

Perhaps the most appropriate scene to demonstrate Antônio's transformation from mercenary to revolutionary in the tradition of Lampião is when Antônio and Dona Santa witness Coirana's death. Though Antônio wounds Coirana very early in the film, it is not until almost an hour later that he actually perishes. His slow and painful death, seemingly accompanied by a delirium, reminds us of Antônio's equally long process of change. We know that despite his hate for *cangaceiros*, Antônio and Lampião shared a mutual respect for each other; he recounts nostalgically the time when Lampião told Corisco not to kill Antônio, stating, "Esse não, esse é cabra macho. Inimigo, porém, decente." Such encounters as this help to reveal the reality of hunger and violence that Antônio, as a puppet of the oppressors, cannot see. But it is not until Antônio is "confronted with the violence," as Rocha puts it, that he becomes aware of the oppression and changes sides and his ways. This final straw, his confrontation with hunger-driven violence, comes as Coirana expires, and Antônio realizes he did not kill a mere criminal, but a revolutionary, in other words, a social bandit.

The scene comes only minutes after Antônio rejects Dr. Matos' plan to kill the coronel for personal gain (love and money). Antônio states, "Há muito tempo que estou procurando un lugar para ficar. Agora, vou ficar do lado de lá. ... Eu já estou entendendo quens são os inimigo." Antônio has begun to realize that rather than a man on a righteous cause—ridding the world of *cangaceiro* bandits—he is a pawn in the perpetual struggle for institutional power. Of course, Dr. Matos dies when his plan comes to light and things start to go wrong, and immediately following his agonizing stabbing death, the film cuts to a delusional and dying Coirana.

Rocha positions Coirana, on his side, to the right of the screen, on a small outcropping of a cave embedded on a cliff face; the camera looks down on him. On the left, one can see the dry landscape and village below. Under Coirana is a path of pooled blood that indicates that he has either dragged himself to that spot or that he has been there so long that the blood has begun to run down the cave floor. At first, the camera seems to be capturing the private final moments of Coirana's life, but just after his last breath, the camera cuts to a two-shot close up of the Dona Santa and Antônio, who are standing there, where the camera is, watching Coirana die. This two-shot becomes important, as we come to realize that the lens did not merely serve as a means to allow the viewer to peek in on Coirana's last moments, but rather, we were seeing his death from the same perspective as Antônio and the Santa, if not through their eyes. As such, the way the death scene is filmed takes on new significance: the shot replicates the gaze of Antônio. He stands above the corpse, looking down in compassion for the *cangaceiro*, rather than in hate for him. Louis Giannetti notes that "[h]igh angles tend to make people look powerless. The higher the angle, the more it tends to imply fatality" (14). This is

exactly the case in this scene, for Coirana's death scene contrasts drastically with Corisco's death in *Deus e o Diabo,* where Antônio is portrayed from a low angle that places Corisco on eye level as the *cangaceiro* dies. The result is that "[t]he figure looms threateningly over the spectator, who is made to feel insecure and dominated" (Giannetti 17). Rather than a sympathetic gaze, looking down on a suffering Coirana, Antônio and Corisco stand off, face to face, as equals. And when Antônio fires multiple rounds into his body, the spectator is meant to feel intimidated by the matador de *cangaceiros*.

Conversely, in Coirana's case, the camera not only looks down on Coirana in sympathy, but since the backlands are also visible below, the camera, and Antônio as well, look down on the *sertão* in a similar manner that becomes more of a birds-eye view. Giannetti notes that "people photographed [in the birds-eye view] seem antlike and insignificant" (15), and this is truly the case in the *sertão* below: the people of this backland town are merely insignificant ants under the tyrannical tenure of the coronel. Thus, Coirana, and now Antônio, exist to restore the humanity of the people in the *sertão* below, to liberate them from the oppression of the coronels. Doubtless, Coirana's presence is what dominates the scene, but the view of the *sertão* on the left allows the viewer to imagine the last thing that Coirana's eyes saw before going dark and thus see it just as sympathetically, if not Romantically: the *sertão*. Coirana gazes off into the distance as he sings these words: "Lá vem Corisco e Lampião, chapéu de couro e fuzil na mão." These lyrics[54] are his final words, and the *sertão* and the "vision" of Lampião and Corisco are the last things he sees.

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[54] These words that Coirana sings are a slight variation of a song that appeared on the album "Cantigas de Lampião," released in 1957, and which features the singing of one of Lampião's famous bandits, Volta Seca. The album is a biography, of sorts, for each song

When the camera cuts to reveal Antônio and the Santa looking on, Antônio confirms his transformation: "Dona Santa. Esse cabra agora é meu. Deixa eu enterrar ele bem no fundo do sertão." Without much difficulty we connect Antônio's use of the word "cabra" as a reference to his long-passed encounter with Lampião—"Esse é cabra macho"—and come to realize that just as Coirana took up the name and legacy of Lampião, and even for the cause to "espantar a fome dos últimos dias," Antônio likewise knows he must fight. What is more, Antônio recognizes the importance of the *sertão* as a sort of *cangaceiro* heaven, for we will remember that in Pacheco's *cordel*, *A chegada de Lampião no inferno*, "no inferno [Lampião] não ficou / no céu também não entrou / por certo está no sertão." Similarly, if Lampião is eternally in the *sertão*, and that is where Coirana will be laid to rest, the end of the film, which shows Antônio walking into the endless backlands, Antônio's destiny also lies in the *sertão*. Antônio's transformation is complete in this symbolic assimilation into the backlands, for he is finally able to see his role as part of the oppressive system and change. Lampião's words from years before stay with the matador de *cangaceiro*. He carries Lampião's respect for decency with him through the years, and so when he confronts the violence of hunger that Coirana represents, he is finally able to see his role as part of the oppressive system. It is the death scene that contrasts Antônio's gaze—observing death—with Coirana's—who sees

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begins with a short narration. Then, Volta Seca sings acapella, and is joined by a professional *forró* band. In the song referenced in the film, the original lyrics speak of Sabino and Lampião, not Corisco, but other than this small change, the words are the same: "E lá vem Sabino mais Lampeão, Chapéu de couro e fuzil na mão." The album also includes other common folk songs, and a rendition of "Mulher rendeira," the song that was so often song by Lampião's band to the point that it might even be considered their theme song.

eternal life in the *sertão*—that changes the mercenary to a *cangaceiro* in the Lampião tradition.

Lampião as Example and Icon

Lampião not only shows up in *Antônio das Mortes* in the form of a social bandit, but he is also presented as an iconic sertanejo and an example to follow. As I have mentioned previously, Coirana's last words draw a link between himself and Lampião that suggests that the former saw himself as an heir of Lampião. Terence Carlson also confirms this link in stating, "Coirana represents *all cangaceiros* and especially Lampião" (171). From there, Antônio comes to almost literally see the error of his ways, and as he looks upon the dying/dead Coirana, he commits himself to the cause of social banditry. Though in the film, the *jagunço*'s (or mercenary) transformation appears to happen rather quickly, we know that Antônio almost became a *cangaceiro* early on in his career and that he and Lampião always maintained a mutual respect. It becomes clear, then, that Antônio's decision to "convert" to the *cangaceiros* is not sudden, but rather was years in the making. Interestingly, if we are to believe that Antônio did kill Corisco in 1940 and that he has been in retirement for a number of years since, then his transformation would occur concomitantly with Lampião's own rise and refashioning in the *cordel*. Like Coirana, then, Antônio sees Lampião as an example to follow.

Antônio's transition from *jagunço* to *cangaceiro* is perhaps the most central example of how Lampião is presented as the exemplary sertanejo. Because Antônio is a man for hire, he is also a man who does not have a purpose of his own. He does not have his own will, for he must do the bidding of those who have paid him. Therefore, when he

finally eradicates the *cangaceiros*, he immediately becomes an anachronism and is forced into retirement. It becomes clear that Antônio's existence and sense of purpose is linked to the *cangaço*, but this link is not how the jangunço originally conceived of it: it is in his return to active duty that he realizes that "by killing Coirana, he kills a part of himself" (Carlson 173). Not only does Coirana's death mean that Antônio no longer has employment, but also, he is killing "the *cangaceiro* he could have been in the past had his political conversion occurred sooner" (Carlson 173). Antônio, then, is left without a reason for being and is now without any other impediments[55] to joining the cause of the *cangaceiros* embodied by Lampião.

At one point in the film, Antônio wanders into the desolate *sertão* outside of the city where he meets Dona Santa. There, he asks her forgiveness and expresses his desire to change his ways. He begins by explaining that he thought that the *cangaceiros* were finished when he had killed Corisco, and since then, it has been his curiosity, rather than the money of powerful coronels, that compels him to go seek out any remaining bandits. He has visited ten churches; however, there is no patron saint for him, and so we come to believe that his change is truly genuine. Though he has no saint, Dona Santa (a convenient name, to say the least) will fill that void, but only when Antônio is able to follow the example of the most famous *cangaceiro* of them all.

In Lampião's visits to heaven to speak with San Pedro or even with Padre Cícero, the topics of forgiveness and repentance come up often. In Coelho Cavalcante's version, a debate takes place over whether or not the bandit may be allowed to enter into heaven.

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[55] Antônio states that his pride caused him to decline Lampião's invitation to join the cangaço. Now, however, he no longer has any cangaceiros to fight, and his pride is overcome by his own remorse and the injustice he sees around him.

The Virgin Mary intercedes on Lampião's behalf, stating, "Lampeão de fato foi / Barbaro cruel assassino / Mas os crimes praticados / Por seu coração ferino / Escrito no seu caderno / Doze anos de inferno / Chegou hoje o seu término" (*A Chegada* 8). Jesus then adds in defense of Lampião, "Porem tem que Lampeão / Arrepender-se notório / Ir até o 'purgatório' / Alcançar a Salvação" (*A Chegada* 9). Repentence, once again, is the requirement in Minelvino Francisco Silva's *cordel*, when Lampião asks for forgiveness from Padre Cícero: "Agora me arrependi" (6). These requests for forgiveness are almost always accompanied by a reiteration that Lampião was forced into his life of crime. Just as in the *cordel* Lampião must ask forgiveness and justify himself, Antônio must recall his past crimes and seek absolution from the Santa: "Eu não quero mais matar ... [M]e perdoa Dona Santa." Forgiveness comes at a price, though (as the end of the film will show): he must walk the Earth earning it.

The scene begins with a long shot of Antônio, who is barely visible within the harsh *sertão* landscape that is full of thorny cacti and trees that are complete devoid of foliage. Antônio is entirely dwarfed by the massive *sertão*. He walks slowly forward, toward the camera and the Santa. The walk is a long one that is broken up by only a single cut that briefly shows the Santa resting, and then the camera returns to Antônio—it is almost as if she is watching and waiting for him. In this way, the camera puts the spectator in the place of Dona Santa, watching Antônio approach, just as it will later on in the film as Coirana dies while Antônio and Dona Santa look on. The dialogue that takes place between the two is very much reminiscent of the negotiations that take place when Lampião attempts to gain access into heaven/hell in the various *cordel* narratives.

Only later on does Antônio realize that Lampião is his mirror, and so this scene that is replete with *cordel* tropes is also mirrored at the end of the film when Antônio kills coronel Horácio. The film ends with Antônio walking off towards the horizon, presumably beginning his quest for forgiveness. This final scene, which depicts the ex-*jagunço* walking on the shoulder of the highway, towards an increasingly urban and commercialized society filled with fast-moving vehicles and the logo of the multinational oil company Shell, is a mirror image of the scene when Antônio asks forgiveness. Rather than walking toward the camera, toward the spectator's gaze, he walks away from the camera and the spectator in search of forgiveness.

Lampião as National Symbol

That *Antônio das Mortes* presents Lampião as a national symbol is apparent from the earliest scenes of the movie. Particularly telling is one of the opening scenes when the "professor" is found reciting important dates in Brazilian history. On a desolate, cobblestone street under the hot sun of the *sertão*, the educator quizzes his students about important dates in the history of Brazil: "Em que ano foi descoberto o Brasil?"; "A independência do Brasil, em que ano foi?"; "Os escravos, em que ano foi?"; "A República em que ano foi?"; "E Lampião em que ano morreu?" The children respond in chorus to each of the questions. While the first four dates are the typical pieces of knowledge that every student is expected to know, the final question, which asks about the year of Lampião's death, is clearly non standard curriculum, and indeed, the scene serves to frame much of the rhetoric of the film. It is important that the "professor" holds his "class" in the middle of the street. The initial impression is there is no designated

school building in which to have class, but this hypothesis is rather quickly laid to rest when, a few moments later, teenage students from what appears to be the high school marching band provide the soundtrack for a public demonstration. The question remains, then, as to why the history lesson is being held outside—and the answer is precisely in the content of the lesson. As has already been noted, most of the teacher's "quiz" covers what would be considered to be standard or normal curriculum. However, that the lesson ends with the date of Lampião's death seems to indicate that the bandit is the culmination of Brazilian history. Furthermore, this non-standard inclusion in the history lesson, then, reflects the non-standard environment in which the class takes place: rather than a traditional history class with the "normal" curriculum in a regular classroom, this is a people's history that is taught where the people are—in the street. The fact that Rocha places Lampião's death alongside of some of the major moments in Brazilian history indicates the emphasis on the bandit as a national symbol.

Soon after the "professor's" history lesson, the bandit leader Coirana and his "gang" of *cangaceiros* and religious fanatics gather in the city where he invokes the name of "Lampião, nosso senhor!" in a lyrical monologue that almost mimics *cordel* meter. Immediately following his declaration of homage to Lampião, Rocha further cements the idea of Lampião as a national symbol by cutting to a marching band parade where demonstrators display an unfurled patriotic banner that reads "Independência ou morte" in yellow letters on a green background. At the time of the film, 1969, Lampião (and the *cangaço*) had been dead some three decades, and his relatives were fighting for the right to bury the decapitated head, which was ultimately laid to rest in a cemetery in Salvador

da Bahia that same year (Chandler 239). It is also during this time that the military dictatorship in Brazil was in power under the general Artur da Costa e Silva.

While the film does not go into any overtly anti-government rhetoric, the figure of Lampião is clearly used as an avatar for the fight for freedom in what Carlson calls the "aesthetic and political aspects of Rocha's work" (170). As has already been noted, the film synthesizes cultural elements in a symbolic manner that results in a "[c]haracterization [that] is very complex" (Carlson 170). And so, at times, both Coirana and Antônio can stand for different versions of Lampião. Likewise, the struggle against a blind local coronel's oppressive ways can also be read as a national struggle: "Suddenly the social/political struggle is seen as something that goes beyond the village of Milagres, the *sertão*, and landowner-peasant disputes to that which is a greater menace to Brazil. Rocha refuses merely to reiterate the age-old agrarian injustices ... and instead redefines the direction of the political struggle" (Carlson 174). Essentially, then, Rocha manages to extrapolate the local conflict in the film to a national scale by which the local hero—Lampião vis-a-vis Coirana and Antônio—comes to be a national symbol.

What is more, as Carlson notes, Rocha "redefines the direction of the political struggle." Here, too, we see the logic of avoidance or evasion that undergirds Hutcheon, Barthes, and Rancière, for example. Rocha sidesteps the typical and simple narrative of the noble peasant's struggle and thus avoids the issue of how Lampião, too, contributed to peasants' suffering. Instead, he makes Antônio, and the viewer, confront the other face to face, quite literally, for Coirana's monologue is comprised of a medium shot that shows only the face and shoulders of him and the characters in the frame: the Santa, Coirana, and the beato. At the same time that Rocha brings the viewer closer to the

characters on screen, which causes the viewer to almost participate in the film, however, he also incorporates distance and alienation as a way to frames his politics. Rocha's "searching" camera (Carlson 175) that makes use of "exaggerated space" (Carlson 175) not only conveys a sense of lostness within the vastness of the *sertão*, but it also serves as a way that "Rocha is addressing us, his spectators ... [for] he only calls attention to the fact that we are viewing a film and makes us cognizant of our 'role' in the narrative" (Carlson 176). Like Rancière's sentence-image unites the sayable and the visual, Rocha's Cinema Novo opts for a paradoxical union between alienating or distancing the viewer and bringing her/him close to the point of participating in the film.

Rocha also creates a paradox of distance/proximity between the presence and absence of Lampião throughout the film. Again, while Lampião is never physically portrayed in the picture, there is no doubt that he is everywhere throughout the film as Coirana both embodies and looks to an idealized version of the bandit king. As an embodied Lampião, Coirana represents a revised history of what happened when Lampião died; rather than the end of the *cangaço*, Coirana's death is a new beginning that finds Antônio as the next heir of Lampião's legacy. As Antônio walks toward the horizon at the end of the film, a horizon dominated by the logos (symbols) of multinational corporations, we understand that he carries the national symbol of Lampião with him. Now, Antônio, the "matador de cangaceiros," steps from the local backlands dominated by Horácio, the oppressive coronel, to the modern world where industry and multinationals rule. Just as the memory of Lampião provides the foundation for the recuperation and solidification of the backlands identity—via the "professor's" history lesson and Antônio's "conversion"—the heir of Lampião promises to carry that same

spirit of the *sertão* (and Brazil) to a globalized world run by companies like Shell Oil, whose logo stands out in the background. Lampião, then, is the local and, ultimately, national symbol that is physically absent in the film but is, nevertheless, continually present throughout.

Conclusion

Lampião's campaign of banditry in the Brazilian Northeast *sertão* grabbed its fair share of headlines for nearly two decades. The outlaw and his gang extorted and murdered fellow sertanejos, laid siege to towns, stole property, and brought about a state of crisis and terror in the Northeast that eventually required state and federal intervention. Nonetheless, his life of daring criminal feats that defied all authority captivated a country and inspired a supernatural aura that surrounded him even in his death. And while the ambush in Angicos led many to surmise that the *cangaceiro* bandits had finally been vanquished for good, even more so when Lampião's second command, Corisco, was killed two years later, this was not the case. Although for all intents and purposes bandits—in practice—had largely been eradicated, the legacy and myth of the outlaw who was born as Virgulino Ferreira da Silva only continued to grow over the years.

One of the major factors in the almost constant upward trajectory of the legend of Lampião has been, undoubtedly, the popular *cordel* pamphlets. As a genre that relies on both the oral and written traditions, the *cordel* not only exhibits characteristics of storytelling in that it permits the authors a certain amount of poetic license by which these popular scribes may adapt and expand their stories, but also as a poetic text that is written by and for the underserved classes of the *sertão*, it is a genuinely popular

literature that also acts as its own channel of legitimization. Additionally, the *cordel*'s paradoxically hybrid nature means it is able to accommodate the complexities of the peoples who create and consume it. As such, the genre draws from the social context and the religious and mystic tradition to, in the end, provide an empowering medium of expression, a "voz do povo." These elements in the *cordel* all play a part in how Lampião's legacy has been able to not only transcend and survive, but also be refashioned as a symbol on both the local and national levels. In the *cordel*, Lampião often appears as a social bandit, a bringer of justice; he also frequently reprises the role of the exemplary *sertanejo*.

There is no doubt that, from a moral perspective, it is difficult to defend, per se, a historical figure like Lampião: a thief, murderer, and rapist, among many other criminal qualifications. However, the processes that we see take place in the *cordel* have brought about a refashioning by which Lampião may serve as a symbol for *sertão*-ness, or, to an extent, Brazilian-ness. In this way, then, the *cordel* serves as an alternative history that competes with dominant, "official" discourses of governmental authorities of the time. In the end, *cordel* poets and readers alike, in spite of Lampião's reputation, have been able to craft and recuperate a historical perspective of the marginalized (geographically and otherwise) peoples of the Northeast backlands. This is carried into the filmic narrative that Rocha provides in *Antônio das Mortes*, where not only orality, text, and image are masterfully brought together, but also where genre boundaries are crossed as the film evokes the *cordel* heritage and tradition to the point of becoming a "filmed *cordel*," as Nemer has stated. Just as film in general reflects the postmodern paradox, in *Antônio das Mortes* we encounter the paradox of Lampião's physical absence/symbolic presence as

Rocha weaves an ideologically charged narrative of how to “read” or “see” Brazilian culture.

Chapter II

Refashioning the Revolutionary: Che's *Notas de viaje* and Walter Salles' *The Motorcycle Diaries* as (auto)Biography of a Revolutionary Turn

> "[T]he broad outlines of Havana's public position [in the wake of Che's death] are generally predictable. Guevara will be eulogized as the model revolutionary who met a heroic death. His exemplary conduct will be contrasted to the do-nothing, cowardly theorizing of the old line communist parties and other 'pseudo-revolutionaries' in Latin America and elsewhere. ... Blame for Guevara's death will be attributed to the usual villains—US imperialism, the Green Berets, the CIA ... A call will no doubt be made for new 'Che's' to pick up the banner of the fallen leader and optimistic predictions will be made as to the inevitability of the final triumph."
>
> Thomas L. Hughes
> "Guevara's Death—The Meaning for Latin America"

In the days after Che Guevara's death in 1967, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Thomas L. Hughes was asked to summarize the life and legacy of the Argentine who had not only helped Fidel Castro rise to power in Cuba but had also begun to capture the attention of admirers around the world. Hughes' memo, entitled "Guevara's Death—The Meaning for Latin America," rings eerily prophetic. Indeed, it seems that Hughes was not alone in his estimation of the revolutionary's future legacy, for Che's corpse was buried in an unmarked grave. However, in 1997, the year of the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in La Higuera, Bolivia, the partial skeletal remains of the Argentine-Cuban revolutionary were located, exhumed, and eventually transported to Santa Clara, Cuba. To be sure, the discovery, as it were, of Che's final resting place was no simple task, for Che's captors and executioners, having been trained and aided by United States special forces, took great care in not only suppressing the man, but also his possible legacy by hiding his body. And so, a

somewhat mutilated cadaver—he had been shot multiple times, and his hands had been removed for identification purposes—was laid rather unceremoniously and clandestinely to rest. His missing body, however, would not diminish Che's ability to inspire, for an article in *The Economist* written less than a week after Che's death observes that "Guevara has died with his reputation in tact" and that "Che Guevara's name is already being classed with that of the Liberator, Simon Bolivar" ("Death of Che" par. 4). Indeed these words would prove efficacious, as Che's post-mortem legacy was seemingly not hindered in the least by the lack of a body for thirty years. In 1998, Richard Harris notes that "Che continues to be the 'herald' of a Latin American revolution that is the more necessary the more impossible it seems. His spirit lives on in the minds of people all over the world, and his revolutionary myth has grown" ("Reflections" 31). A few years later, in a book review of a new edition of Guevara's *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Marc Becker asks (in a very tongue-in-cheek manner), "Has the Che cult really reached the proportions where not only a new edition, but a new *translation*, of one of his relatively minor works is necessary?" (123). To be sure, in 2007, a full forty years after his death, columnist George Galloway shows us just how "alive" Che is when he asserts that Guevara "is the face of global rebellion" (par. 1) and that he should be considered an icon. Indeed, the writer's words sound like he is writing about a religious figure rather than a revolutionary: "Che's time is not past – it is coming" (Galloway par. 21).

As with his death, Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna was born amidst controversy. Jon Lee Anderson[56] notes that his upper-middle-class parents, both from

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[56] Though Anderson is a journalist (as opposed to an academic, as it were), his biography on Guevara is generally respected. Richard Harris states that "Anderson's work stands out in providing an excellent account of the historical contexts in which the different

respected families, had married in a flurry to conceal a pregnancy and to finance their get-rich-quick scheme of investing in *mate*[57] plantations; and to cover up the real reason for the wedding, they had to alter the birth date of their first child, whom they named after the father: Ernesto (3-6). Despite what might have been a comfortable childhood, the combination of misfortune—another business investment was completely lost due to fire—and Che's severe asthma made the first years of his life somewhat unstable, as they traveled between cities and favorable climates in order to control his coughing (Anderson 11-13). Eventually, though, the family would end up in Córdoba, where Ernesto would meet and befriend Alberto Granado, his future companion on the famous motorcycle trip through Latin America (Anderson 27). Second only to the ubiquitous "Guerrillero heroico" photo taken by Alberto Korda in 1960, perhaps the two friends' transformational trip on two wheels is what has come to symbolize the spirit or idea of Che. Certainly that is what Walter Salles seems to suggest in his film based on their travels, *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Nevertheless, according to Paulo Drinot, in his introduction for the volume *Che's Travels: The Making of a Revolutionary in 1950s Latin America* notes that, despite the importance of this time in Che's life (his travels in 1952 and 1953), and despite the popularity of Salles' film, "surprisingly scholarship has largely ignored not only this period in Guevara's life but also the entire crucial decade for Latin America" (2).

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phases of Che's life must be understood if one wants to gain a true understanding of his role in history" ("Reflections" 20-21). Ultimately, Anderson's research led him to discover the location of Guevara's remains in Vallegrande, Bolivia.

[57] The herb that is used to make a popular Argentine tea of the same name. This drink is often considered to be a national symbol, and the large quantities consumed by Argentines can make the cultivation of the *mate* plant a lucrative venture for some.

Though polemical, Che, his ideas, and his legacy have, without a doubt, expanded far beyond the small Bolivian village where he died, and even beyond the Caribbean Island where his remains now rest enshrined in a mausoleum, where his personal effects are displayed as artifacts of a larger-than-life figure, and where his words—"Hasta la victoria siempre"—and likeness keep watch over the Plaza de la Revolución. Indeed, as Drinot notes, "Ernesto 'Che' Guevara has come to represent the history of twentieth-century Latin America in a way that no other historical figure has done" (1). Of course, many revere him as the most exemplary revolutionary of the socialist cause, a sort of patron saint of revolution, while for many others his is a legacy of violence, oppression, and futility. Still others, nevertheless, are not quite sure exactly who Che was or what his legacy consists of, and yet the silhouetted likeness of this man on their t-shirt appeals to them. Michael Casey's treatment of Che's legacy offers a look at how the revolutionary and his ideals, via the massively famous Korda photograph, have been appropriated, extrapolated, and exploited to the point of contributing to the worldwide capitalist market that the *guerrillero* so vehemently opposed. For Casey, then, the Korda photograph, and its various (re)incarnations on t-shirts, posters, etc., is, in the end, Che's legacy. Perhaps, then, the signifier "Che" evokes today a different version of the signified individual, Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, than it used to during and immediately following his life. For in a way, the Che that we now "know" is simpler at the same time that he is more complex than the Che that rose to worldwide recognition during a decade-long period during the mid fifties and sixties: representations of Che nowadays tend to present a homogenized version of a decidedly multifaceted individual, one whose ideas could even be viewed as contradictory. Nevertheless, these same representations also add to the

historical progression of an image and legacy surrounding a figure that does not fail to fascinate, even though nearly five decades have passed since his death.

In this chapter, I trace the life and ideas of Che Guevara to uncover and analyze in what ways he and his image have undergone a process of refashioning. More specifically, I delve into the biography of the Argentine/Cuban revolutionary in order to construct an historical accounting of his life and actions. Additionally, by considering his diaries—specifically his famous and widely read *Notas de viaje*—I use Che's own words and thoughts to demonstrate how the Argentine constructed a view of himself that ultimately informs the way he is remembered and portrayed in film. Concomitantly, it will be necessary to consider from a theoretical perspective the genre of the diary, travel literature, and the shaping of one's own image in autobiographical texts. Finally, I analyze scenes from the film *The Motorcycle Diaries* and compare and contrast them with Che's *Notas de viaje*—and other diaries and information that were referenced for filming—to demonstrate how Che's representation in the film has refashioned the legacy of the revolutionary.

From Ernesto to Che: Early Life and Travels

Misiones, Argentina is the setting for a number of Horacio Quiroga's short stories. Most notable, perhaps, is his "El hombre muerto," in which a man who spends his life in the drudgery of cultivating bananas suddenly slips and falls upon his own machete when walking toward a field to lay down and take his daily nap in the grass. The few pages that comprise Quiroga's story—one that gives away the ending in the title, even—chronicle the last moments of a man who tried to dominate and fence in nature

with blade and barbwire. The story ends as the man finally takes his nap—one from which he will not awake. Scholars routinely point to Quiroga's life as a central means of understanding his work; "El hombre muerto" is no different. Quiroga moved to Misiones, from Uruguay, to become a pioneer, to tame the land. A life that was filled with loss, tragedy would again find him in this remote region of Argentina. Misiones claimed the life of "El hombre muerto" just as it would claim the life of Quiroga's first wife. And yet, this harsh topography would be the destination of a pair middle-class newlyweds and their recently born son, Ernesto, the boy who would be Che.

The future parents had moved to the "remote jungle backwater of Misiones" (Anderson 3) a short time after their hasty marriage, and it was not by any stretch of the imagination a proper honeymoon. The couple had used the wife's, Celia, inheritance money—obtained against the will of other family members whose hands were forced due to the elopement—to buy property and build a plantation within the denseness of the Argentine jungle, a landscape that, as Jon Lee Anderson describes it, reminds one of a Quiroga story:

> [They] bought two hundred hectares ... of jungle along the banks of the Río Paraná. On a bluff overlooking the coffee-colored water and the dense green forest of the Paraguayan shore, they erected a roomy wooden house on stilts, with an outdoor kitchen and outhouse. They were a long way from the comforts of Buenos Aires, but Guevara Lynch was enraptured ... [H]e looked into the jungle around him, and he saw the future. (8)

Yet despite its remoteness and its difficult terrain, Misiones was a "convenient" getaway for Ernesto Guevara Lynch and Celia de la Serna. First, the groom, Ernesto, had a taste for business ventures that had seen him invest in yachts, and now he had his sights set on capitalizing on what must have been seen as a sure-fire money maker: *mate* production. Like Quiroga, in a way, Ernesto spotted an opportunity in Misiones: he saw the low-priced land there as an opportunity to cash in on a national pastime. Second, a move to Misiones was necessary considering their respected lineages,[58] for a pregnancy out of wedlock would have caused quite a scandal.[59] Seven months after their marriage, in the Spring of 1928,[60] Celia and her husband would travel over a thousand kilometers to Rosario to give birth—it was not until a month after the child's birth that the birth certificate would be issued, effectively covering up the real birth date of May 14, 1928. This would not be the only delay in the Guevara's stay at Rosario—perhaps the cause or perhaps a mere foreshadowing of the breathing difficulties he would suffer throughout most of his life, the newborn child would come down with a bout of pneumonia, and the family of three was forced to stay away from their plantation a little longer (Anderson 8-9).

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[58] Ernesto "was the great-grandson of one of South America's richest men [as well as] Spanish and Irish nobility" (Anderson 4), and Celia "was a true Argentine blue blood of undiluted Spanish noble lineage" (Anderson 4).

[59] It is also worth noting that Quiroga, like the Guevaras, moved to Misiones as a way to escape his past: the Uruguayan was involved in a firearm accident that killed his friend, and he moved to Misiones shortly after being acquitted of wrongdoing.

[60] Jon Lee Anderson begins his extensive biography of Che with the issue of the revolutionary's real birth date. Che's birth certificate shows he was born June 14, 1928, when in reality the date was actually May 14. To be sure, Che's parents deliberately "fudged" the date of birth in order to cover up the true nature of their wedding. Celia Guevara, however, would come out and admit this fact much later on.

As it would turn out, young Ernesto's pneumonia would only be the first of many occasions when the family—and eventually Che himself—would be at the mercy of the fragile boy's health, which, according to Jorge G. Castañeda,[61] his father would blame on a swim in the cold river alongside a careless Celia (27). Before long, little Ernesto had developed a severe case of chronic asthma that was agitated further by allergies and humidity. And so, the Guevara family eventually left Misiones for Buenos Aires, and not long after that—with two more children in tow—, they left the capital city for Córdoba as Ernesto was entering his fifth year (Anderson 11-13). The town near Córdoba where the family finally settled, Alta Gracia, offered near perfect conditions for the oldest boy, which meant that his asthma flared up less and, as a result, became more or less manageable. Later on in life, Che's struggle with his own body would become a recurring topic. He would try to push himself farther than his lungs would allow, first as a highly competitive rugby and soccer player, then later on his lengthy travels (which often required that he and his companion[s] find shelter in less than desirable conditions), and finally in his guerrilla campaigns, specifically in Cuba, the Congo, and Bolivia. Even so, the family had found a solution in maintaining a diet that eliminated foods that triggered allergic reactions, ensuring bed rest, and even frequenting the local club swimming pool (Anderson 17-18). In fact, Ernesto's swimming abilities would eventually become the stuff of legend when, during his famous trip with Alberto Granado, he swims across a river while visiting a leper colony.

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[61] Kenneth Maxwell states that Castañeda's biography could be read in tandem with Anderson's because, "while [Castañeda's] book lacks the journalistic flair and hard legwork so evident in Anderson's account, he does often provide more context and much more comprehensive explicit documentation. ... Anderson and Castañeda in this way complement each other, and both books deserve to be read sequentially" (168).

It was also during their time in Alta Gracia that, according to Castañeda, we observe the foreshadowing of a trait that would come to characterize Che's adult life, "[el] peregrinaje perpetuo" (30). The family moved between houses at least five times between 1933 and 1941. Castañeda also posits that it was here that Che's mother, Celia, would invest intellectually in the boy who, according to Ernesto Sr., almost died because of her carelessness: "La simbiosis entre Celia y su hijo, que nutriría la correspondencia ... se estrena en esos lánguidos años de Alta Gracia, cuando Ernesto aprende, en el regazo de su madre, a leer y a escribir" (30). Without a doubt, Celia would have a significant influence in her son's intellectual pursuits, for ideologically speaking, besides the books that Che voraciously consumed during his studies or in his travels, Che was marked most profoundly by two individuals: first his mother, Celia, and later Fidel Castro. Castañeda affirms as much in stating about Celia, "Esta mujer excepcional fue sin duda la figura afectvia e intelectual más importante en la vida de su primogénito, por lo menos hasta el encuentro de éste con Fidel Castro en México en 1955" (24). Indeed, the corpus of Che's writing is filled out by a significant number of letters written to family members, primarily his mother. One might even say that, in addition to physical DNA, Ernesto inherited his mother's intellectual and political makeup as well. Her progressive ideals, learned in turn from the sister who raised her, would be passed on to her son: "[P]ronto el ambiente librepensador, radical o francamente de izquierda del hogar de su hermana la transformaría [a Celia] en un personaje aparte: feminista, socialista, anticlerical" (Castañeda 24). One might say, then, that young Ernesto's asthma directly influenced his revolutionary ideals later on, for it was because of his breathing difficulties that he had to be home-schooled until he was almost nine years old. Additionally, on the occasions

when Ernesto was suffering from an attack, he was prescribed a strict regimen of bed rest that the boy often made more bearable by reading and playing chess (Anderson 16-18).

The family's move to Córdoba took place during World War II and in the midst of a political battle in Argentina that split the political landscape along similar lines, right and left, Axis and Allies. Even in these formative years, Ernesto's level of political interest was high and tended to favor political action more than political reflection (Anderson 28-34). In addition to an increasing awareness of politics, Ernesto began devouring more and more books that were not purely "literary," as it were. In fact, he even began keeping (and updating) highly detailed notebooks on political and philosophical concepts, among many other topics. Anderson states, "His first handwritten notebook, 165 pages in length, was ordered alphabetically, and carefully indexed by page number, topic, and author ... This notebook was only the first in a series of seven that he continued to work on over the next ten years" (38). Ernesto's habit of note taking and chronicling would later manifest itself in his detailed notebooks and diaries that, in addition to providing valuable biographical details about his thoughts and life, also find Che commenting on society.

In 1950, Ernesto set out on what would be a precursor to his famous trip through the American continent. He had modified a bicycle by mounting a small motor on it, and with his improvised, motorized bicycle, he went in search of adventure. Anderson, who also marks this time as the beginning of his journaling, states that "Ernesto's journey broke new ground for him in two activities that were to become lifelong rituals: traveling and writing a diary" (60). Along the way, the twenty-two-year-old would visit the Granado family in Córdoba before visiting Albert himself at a leprosarium. In a way,

these six weeks on the road—covering a few thousand kilometers—provided as much of an "education" as medical school would (and by this time he was entering his fourth year of classes). During this first trip, Ernesto discovered inside himself, and his country, things that were previously unknown; it was not long before plans were in the works for another, more comprehensive journey that he and Alberto would take in early 1952. This second great journey is documented in one of Che's most widely read diaries, which is in turn the topic of Walter Salles' film *The Motorcycle Diaries*. Understandably, it receives detailed attention from both Anderson and Castañeda: Anderson's treatment of the journey is much more anecdotal and, as such, recapitulates in summary what Che already narrates in his diary while Castañeda's approach, however, deals more with the diary itself, the writing process, and with the way in which the trip would change the traveler. Castañeda notes, "[S]u viaje por América del Sur fue una especie de epifanía, tanto en lo personal como en lo político y cultural" (83). The trip in 1952 is almost universally recognized as a turning point in the life of the revolutionary-to-be, and interestingly, besides his time in the leper colony, an often-referenced episode of the diary is his encounter with a Communist couple. In fact, both Anderson and Castañeda quote some of the same lines from Che's diary. Clearly, this episode, in which Che views the couple as "una viva representación del proletariado de cualquier parte del mundo" (*Notas* 73), has come to symbolize (if not evidence) the Argentine traveler's increasing politization, his movement from Ernesto toward Che.

After his lengthy travels with Alberto, Ernesto then returns to school when, in April 1953, he finishes his last exam; now he has the official title that he pretended to have during those months on the road. His experiences with Alberto have shown the

recent graduate a reality of injustice that impacted him profoundly. At the very least, we know that the medical student was conscious of a change that had taken place within him: "Ese vagar sin rumbo por nuestra 'mayúscula América' me ha cambiado más de lo que creí" (*Notas* 27). His mention of "our America" with a capital "A" is not only a clear reference to José Martí—and an echoing of the speech he would give at his own birthday party at the San Pablo leprosarium—but it also demonstrates that, by now, Ernesto has almost fully embraced the political struggle that would define the rest of his life. And so, he himself views the trip as a moment that saw his life divided in two: who he is now (the changed Ernesto), and "el que fui" (*Notas* 27), the person he was before the trip.

If Ernesto/Che, in reflecting on his first travel diary, sees the trip as a major catalyst of personal change, that is, as the experience in which he left his "old self," so to speak, behind, then his journey north through the continent again in 1953 can be viewed as his decision to move toward the future and embrace the new man he is becoming. Indeed, after passing his exams, he never officially returns home to stay. Instead, he travels ever northward and eventually comes to live in Guatemala and Mexico, before embarking for Cuba as part of Fidel Castro's revolutionary forces in November 1956. As further evidence of having left behind his life as a carefree bohemian traveler, he settles down and marries Hilda Gadea Acosta in 1955, a marriage that would last less than four years. Even his subsequent writings bear the mark of the change that Che undergoes: the diary in which he documents his travels in 1953, bearing the tongue-in-cheek title *Otra vez*, is much more politically oriented than his *Notas de viaje* from 1952. Whereas in the latter he mostly relates his experiences and even proudly recounts his picaresque behavior, *Otra vez* is much more serious. In fact, a common trend is his inclusion of his

estimation of the people he meets along the way, and oftentimes, they are judged as "good" people or friends by their intellectual capacity and how closely they align with his revolutionary ideals, which are often the same thing for Che.

Truly, it seems, that Ernesto's return to Buenos Aires after his 1952 travels was meant to be a brief "layover" before he began the final chapter of his life. And every step, every turn of the wheels in his 1953 trip would bring him closer and closer to the consummate moment when his skills as a doctor, his brash and competitive determination, and his politically-charged intellectualism would combine to form the "hombre nuevo," the new man that would become not only a symbol of the Cuban revolution, but also a worldwide symbol of resistance, rebellion, and defiance. In a sense, then, the final twelve years of his life, from when he meets Fidel Castro in 1955 to his death in Bolivia in 1967, can all be summarized as his attempt to live out the ideals that he had been formulating and developing under the tutelage of his mother, during his personal studies, and while on the road in 1950, 1952, and 1953.

Che the Self-Fashioning Revolutionary: Texts of a Man in a Continual State of Becoming

Indeed, the final dozen or so years of Che's life, while vastly significant, are also fairly easily categorized by the armed conflict in which he participates: the Cuban Revolution, his time in the Congo, and finally his fighting and death in Bolivia. These years allow for a detailed glimpse into how Che was able to shape his legacy as a revolutionary through his writing and his interactions with peasants and revolutionaries alike. In addition to the diaries he kept during his travels in 1952 and 1953, Che maintained accounts of his participation in various armed conflicts, and in these texts we

find the highly engineered voice of a man who is continually engaged in the process of what Greenblatt calls self-fashioning. Primarily, from 1955-1959, Che's life utterly revolves around the revolutionary project into which his newly found friend, Fidel Casto, would recruit the Argentine. During these years, Che continues to write and refine his ideas about revolution and the optimal relationship between theory and praxis, ideas and action. Like José Martí, who Che references in the 1952 diary, and who would also feel the need to put theories into practice, Che seeks to provide (if not, himself, be) the tangible example for real revolutionary change. What stands out during these years of the July 26th movement and the Cuban Revolution is Che's gradual ascent from recent acquaintance of the future leader of Cuba, to a major figure in the revolution and eventually the governing and administration of the island country. In reality, while Che had always sympathized with Fidel[62] and the revolutionary effort, it is clear that he had considered little his own role in the coming conflict. After all, Che had entered medicine, presumably, to help others, and yet his increasingly radicalized personal studies had led him to the point where he would have to confront his own state of contradiction—he believed that to really help others, to bring about true change, revolution, particularly armed revolution, was necessary. Che describes in his *Pasajes de la Guerra Revolucionaria* the moment in which his desire to help people as a doctor was paradoxically confronted by his participation in armed combat:

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[62] In his diary of the 1953 trip, he states, "Un acontecimiento político es haber conocido a Fidel Castro, el revolucionario cubano, muchacho joven, inteligente, muy seguro de sí mismo y de extraordinaria audacia; creo que *simpatizamos* mutuamente" (92 emphasis added). Nevertheless, Castañeda also clarifies that, despite the bonds of friendship that grow between the two, Che's decision to finally accompany the Cuban revolutionary takes time, as evidenced by references in letters to plans for travel and study (122).

> Quizá ésa fue la primera vez que tuve planteado prácticamente ante mí el dilema de mi dedicación a la medicina o mi deber de soldado revolucionario. Tenía delante una mochila de medicamentos y una caja de balas, las dos eran mucho peso para transportarlas juntas; tomé la caja de balas, dejando la mochila para cruzar el claro que me separaba de las cañas. (11)

Like the moment when Ernesto writes, almost discovering as he puts pen to paper, that he is no longer who he used to be before his trip with Alberto Granado, such a level of philosophical reflection is common in his diary about the Cuban Revolution. This instance in particular marks another significant moment in his life: when he puts down the medicine and picks up the bullets. In a way, this would be his legacy—the image of Che in military fatigues and the beret with a single star is infinitely more familiar, and more compelling, to us than would be that of Ernesto in a white lab coat. Not long after this moment, Che is forced to confront the cost of his decision as he is wounded and watches as most of his brother in arms fall around him. Even though he clearly decides to move toward the "caja de balas," toward the life of a revolutionary, time and time again, Che is confronted by the reality that he cannot fully leave his past behind him: his medical know-how is constantly needed, and he soon realizes that rather than a doctor *or* a revolutionary, he can be a doctor *and* a revolutionary.

Primary among the many details of the guerrillas' rebellion and eventual victory are certain episodes and anecdotes that have come to frame the way Che is viewed by his own troops and the Cuban people in general. The most notable, perhaps, appears in his diary of the Cuban Revolution. Therein he includes his account of Eutimio Guerra's

betrayal and death in the chapter entitled "Fin de un traidor." This episode[63] is generally included in biographies of Che, seeing as how it is the first time that a traitor is killed by Che. Some, then, refer to Guerra's execution as part of their conclusions about Che, either in moral or psychological judgments of the man. But it is clear that the execution of Eutimio Guerra is important because it sets the standards that Fidel and Che would require of their troops. Just as Fidel Castro would proclaim years later—"[D]entro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada" (14)—Che declares that it is the cause of the revolution that gives him power to act: "[El soldado Guerra] fue ajusticiado por el poder revolucionario debido a su traición" (*Pasajes* 43). The ominous clouds and tropical rain that roll in during Guerra's final moments are a conveniently poetic symbol that gives even more weight to the gravity of the moment. If there was any doubt as to the measure of Che's resolve and commitment to the cause, he dispelled them instantaneously in this moment. One can then assume that in the future, those who were thinking of deserting or betraying the revolutionary forces could only but dwell on what would certainly be their outcome. This, then, is perhaps a strong explanation for why "un desertor en potencia" (*Pasajes* 44) named A. Morán decided to, supposedly, shoot himself in the leg in order to be released on medical reasons rather than desert outright.

Similar stories crop up in Che's biography, especially in relation to his strict enforcement of revolutionary protocol. Yet, his fellow guerrilla fighters respected and

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[63] Anderson states that "Che's narrative is as chilling as it is revealing about his personality. His matter-of-factness in describing the execution, his scientific notations on his bullet's entry and exit wounds, suggest a remarkable detachment from violence" (237). His comments, however, are in relation to a version of the story not contained in *Pasajes*, but "found in Che's private diary" (237). Castañeda, on the other hand, gives little to no attention to the episode except to assert that Che was indeed the one who pulled the trigger.

even admired him deeply. Indeed, the years fighting in the Sierra Maestra and beyond impacted Che's understanding not only of guerilla tactics, but also of propaganda and the power of the media. During the war, Che mentions listening to the radio, and it is thus that he learns of an attempt to assassinate Batista (*Pasajes* 51), and it is in response to the "government-imposed censorship and army disinformation [that] he gave top priority to the rebel army's media projects" (Anderson 300). By early 1958, then, Che and the Revolutionary forces had established a clandestine radio program called "Radio Rebelde," as well as the periodical *El Cubano Libre* with the purpose of "la difusión de nuestras ideas" (Guevara *Pasajes* 217). Not only did the program serve to unify the forces scattered throughout the island, but also, it employed propaganda and misinformation as a way to aid their efforts (Anderson 300); the rebels' radio station even permitted Fidel Castro to conduct an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* (Anderson 322). What is more, reporters were not uncommon in the revolutionary camps; Che reports that their first interview—conducted by *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews—took place in February, just over a month after disembarking from the *Granma*. Clearly both Fidel and Che understood the importance of the press in framing their fight, for Che comments that for the first interview, Fidel made a point to "show" or point out to the reporter the contradictory behavior of Batista (*Pasajes* 42). Later, the Uruguayan Carlos María Gutiérrez would accompany the rebels for a time and thereafter offer a rather positive perspective of the revolutionary leadership. What is more, Che does not stop publishing in journals or newspapers during his time fighting. In July of 1958, for example, he published the "Manifiesto de la Sierra Maestra" (Anderson 265),

only months after the Argentine journalist Jorge Ricardo Masetti broadcast Che internationally over radio (Anderson 309).

Additionally, Che learned the importance of popular support—even if later, in Bolivia, his overestimating or miscalculating the extent of popular support for the revolutionary cause would ultimately lead to his death. And a major way that he planned to win their support—and set them on the course toward revolutionary consciousness—was through education. In trudging through rural Cuba, Che and his troops came face to face with the poor and disenfranchised masses. Anderson describes the condition of the Sierra Maestra in stating that "for the most part the sierra had little gainful employment, virtually no roads or schools, and practically no modern amenities" (220). Furthermore, a large portion of the inhabitants were illiterate, and as such, Che came to view literacy as a central part of the revolutionary experiment that was taking place in Cuba, particularly after the fighting had stopped, for in 1961 he helped launch an impressive, nationwide literacy campaign:

> En materia educativa, si antes de 1959 el 40% de los de seis a catorce años permanecía al margen de la escuela, para 1961 dicho porcentaje había bajado a 20%. La campaña de alfabetización de ese año redujo el índice de analfabetismo de 23% a 3.9%, aunque cifras como éstas siempre dejan algo que desear en cuanto a su veracidad o precisión. En total participaron casi 270 mil maestros, entre ellos más de 120 mil adultos. Para 1965, el porcentaje de la población infantil matriculada en la escuela en Cuba superaba en un 50% al promedio del resto de América Latina, y era superior al de cualquier otro país de la región. (Castañeda 269)

Without a doubt, the Argentine revolutionary saw education as a fundamental issue in the struggle to bring about the "new man." Che expresses the importance of an educated people in his "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba" (a text whose title, when translated in English, often includes a reference to the idea of the "new man"), written approximately five years after the revolutionary forces' victory in Cuba. In this epistolar article, Guevara refers to "un personaje que se repetirá sistemáticamente: la masa" (35). The idea of the "masa," however, is comprised of two main perspectives, the masses of individuals that function "como un manso rebaño" (35) and the educated "masa," the people, that is, a society of "new men" that take up the revolutionary struggle.

Despite efforts to promote education and literacy after the revolution, Che's realization of the importance of education is an idea that, in reality, had already begun to germinate years earlier, as we see in his *Notas de viaje*. But here, in 1952, it is found coming from the mouth of others: "Hablaba [un maestro] de la necesidad de crear escuelas que orienten al individuo … de cambiar todo el sistema actual de enseñanza que … lo devuelve [al individuo] lleno de vergüenzas y rencores" (93); "[El director del museo de Cuzco] nos hablaba … de la necesidad imperiosa de educar al indígena, como primer paso hacia una rehabilitación total … y propender a que los individuos a esta raza pertenecientes se muestren orgullos, mirando su pasado, y no avergonzados, viendo al presente" (113). We can see these two ideas put into practice in Che's revolutionary philosophy, even during the fighting as he attempted to implement them in the Sierra Maestra and beyond. Peter McLaren writes, "As a guerrilla leader in the Sierra Maestra, Che gave literacy classes to his peasant recruits and would occasionally read aloud to them from various sources ... Che built schools in the Las Villas in the Sierra Maestra ...

In Cuba during the revolution, members of Che's 'Descamisados' ... were taught by Che how to read and write" (73). If not to help improve their education and opportunities after the war, Che understood that through reading he might expose students to the texts that had impacted him: "[Che] personally taught Israel Pardo and Joel Iglesias ... how to read and write [and for others] he initiated daily study circles. The study material gradually evolved from Cuban history to military doctrine to politics and Marxism. When Joel had finally learned to read, Che gave him a biography of Lenin" (Anderson 298). Che states at one point that part of his "tarea diaria" (*Pasajes* 33) was to explain complex political, cultural, and even philosophical topics to his troops, and such efforts to help his soldiers began early with Julio Zenón Acosta, who died in the first weeks of the revolution, before Eustibio Guerra's execution (Guevara *Pasajes* 34-37).

Also, having the support of the Cuban people—particularly the peasant classes—helped meet a much more day-to-day necessity. Che states that "íbamos haciendo contacto con campesinos de la zona y estableciendo las bases necesarias para nuestra subsistencia" (*Pasajes* 40). Che even mentions that locals would help them through the difficult terrain as guides who would, with a machete, carve out a path for them to march (*Pasajes* 14). Thus, the rural peasants supported the revolution and its rebels on the most basic, yet essential level: their day-to-day operations and existence. What is more, as Che explains soon after in the same passage, the *campesinos* offered a necessary link between the two separate columns of soldiers whose "vida nómada y clandestina hacía imposible un intercambio entre las dos partes del 26 de Julio" (*Pasajes* 40). From providing support, to sustenance, to information, the troops' collaboration with the people was of utmost importance.

All in all, the military operations of the revolutionary effort last until January 1st, 1959, when Fulgencio Batista abandons his office and flees the country. The following day, Che triumphantly arrives in the capital city of Havana (Anderson 372). The process of going from acquaintance to commander of a column of troops, and ultimately, to the man who would first set foot in the capital was difficult and full of learning experiences for Che. And that learning process would not end with the fighting, for after the Cuban Revolution, Che takes on administrative roles in the revolutionary government of Cuba.

Still, despite the fact that the war had "officially" ended, much of the criticism that surrounds Guevara points to this time, in the months immediately after the war when he serves as the "Chief of the Department of Training of the Revolutionary Armed Forces" and supreme prosecutor at the La Cabaña prison. During the course of a few months, "several hundred people were officially tried and executed by firing squads across Cuba" (Anderson 387), and Che had the direct, final say in many of these individuals' fate. Anderson describes Guevara's duties in stating, "Throughout January [of 1959], suspected war criminals were being captured and brought to La Cabaña daily ... Che ... took his task with a singular determination, and the old walls of the fort rang out nightly with the fusillades of the firing squads" (386). In addition to his position as head of La Cabaña, Che was assigned as the head of the Industrialization Department of the Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria and was later made president of the National Bank (Anderson 437-46). Yet long hours and a disinterest in such affairs found Che growing impatient to resume more hands-on revolutionary work, and he begins to seek out new regions where he can begin to employ his redacted and battle-tested brand of

revolution. Consequently, in the last few years of his life, he becomes involved in two main theatres of revolution: the Congo and Bolivia.

When Che pens his letter/article bearing the title "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba," he does so from the African continent, where he will soon after[64] be engaged in yet another revolutionary struggle. His presence in the Congo had been organized covertly; Che had gone underground after his 1965 speech in Algeria, in which he spoke of the bestiality of imperialism and further aligned himself with revolutionary movements in various African and Asian countries. Under increasing pressure in Cuba, as the United States sought to clamp down on Cuba and its new government, and with relations between Che and the Soviet Union growing increasingly more tense—Guevara was unsympathetic towards what he perceived as the Soviet Union's path toward capitalism and peaceable co-existence with the United States—the Argentine took advantage of the situation to both step out from under the geo-political microscope and test out and even export his theories of revolution. And the Congo provided, so he thought, the ideal circumstances. The Congo, however, would not be Guevara's final resting place as he had believed (Anderson 632); Che left the Congo disillusioned and convinced that the people were not ready for or willing to move toward revolution.

Even his mistaken assessment of the Congo's revolutionary potential did not deter Che from attempting to incite a popular uprising in another country. But because of his actions, his "promise" of sorts of dying on the African field of battle, and the great

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[64] He returns to Cuba first. There he says his goodbyes and departs once again for Congo, which he truly believes will be his place of death. Anderson's account of Guevara's farewells to friends and family is particularly enlightening. He includes excerpts from letters to his family, as well as inscriptions in books that he had left for his close friends (630-637).

possibility that the CIA would be looking for him, in addition to the fact that "Fidel had made public Che's farewell letter ... [n]ow, for reasons of pride alone, Che felt he could not reappear in public" (Anderson 671). As a result, Che was forced go underground, living briefly in the Cuban embassy in Dar-Es-Salaam before being smuggled to Prague, until his final revolutionary experiment would bring about his death in Bolivia. It is during this time in 1966, when he is preparing his memoirs of the Congo[65] (Anderson 672) and his plans for the Bolivia campaign, that other famous images of Che are produced. This time, rather than the stern look of a reflective revolutionary in remembrance, a (shaved) balding and (dyed) gray-haired Che appears in photographs for a forged passport that will allow him to clandestinely enter the South American country. His inconspicuous entry in Bolivia in early November 1966 meant his disguise had worked—in costume he had even been able to eat dinner with his daughters without them recognizing him (Castañeda 425)—and it also meant that Che would never again set foot on either of his two homelands: Argentina or Cuba.

His months in South America from late 1966 until his death on October 9th, 1967 were even more arduous than his time in the Sierra Maestra. The lessons he had learned in Cuba did not seem to translate to his Bolivian context. Whereas on the Caribbean island the revolution was able to continually garner support as it went along, the Bolivia campaign was fraught with false starts and stutter steps. And because many of the soldiers were not Bolivians recruited from the peoples of the countryside—of the twnety-four men in the ranks, nine were Bolivian (Anderson 702)—, support from and the

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[65] His *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria (Congo)*, whose title varies only slightly—the country Congo is added—from the title of his Cuban diary, according to Anderson, makes "the point that for [Che] the Congo was just one more stage in a historic struggle that had as its final goal the 'liberation' of the world's oppressed" (672).

loyalty of the locals was infrequent and at time non-existent. However, Anderson notes that "[i]n the end, [there was] a total of twenty-nine Bolivians" (702 note). Yet, strong-arm tactics by the government found informers among campesinos and disenchanted defectors who were willing to divulge their knowledge of the revolutionaries' whereabouts. Additionally, the revolutionaries' inexperience with and general lack of knowledge of Bolivian geography and terrain made maneuvering difficult—in fact, on one occasion, Che and his troops became lost and wandered around the terrain for nearly fifty days (Anderson 706-707). Indeed, the Bolivian venture turned out just as fruitless, but even more costly, as the attempt to bring his guerrilla revolution to Africa.

Just as in the Congo, the Bolivia campaign was going poorly, particularly lacking popular support for the revolutionary cause. In fact, disclosure as to his location by a peasant brings about Che's death. When Che and his men were finally surrounded, and the Argentine had been incapacitated due to wounds and a mal-functioning weapon, he handed himself over to the Bolivians. Soon after, he was taken to a small schoolhouse in the town of La Higuera. While there, he was interrogated with no real success. Ultimately, though, his execution was ordered by the Bolivian presidential office; instructions demanded that it appear as though Guevara had been killed in battle. Around 1:00 in the afternoon, on October 9th, 1967, Che Guevara died at the hands of a Bolivian soldier named Mario Terán. In the hours that followed, hospital staff prepared the body, officials photographed the body (and themselves with the body) and removed his hands for identification purposes, and curious townspeople streamed in to take souvenirs off the Argentine's cadaver before he was buried in an unmarked grave (Anderson 732-42).

Revolution, Evolution, and Che-volution: the Transforming Legacy of a Revolutionary

The death of Che Guevara was most certainly not the end of him, his ideas, or his legacy. In fact, Che knew that his death was a necessary part of the revolutionary process—whether figurative or literal, one must die in order to make way for the "hombre nuevo." In his writings, he speaks repeatedly of the sacrifice that is necessary as part of the revolutionary struggle (and Che would ultimately sacrifice himself for his cause). Castañeda affirms, "Es inconcebible el impacto emblemático de Ernesto Guevara sin la noción del sacrificio" (20). Guevara, then, is the consummate example of a life that was inevitably headed toward martyrdom. One might even say that his death—even more so since it was orchestrated by multiple governments in a covert and conspiring manner—was a catalyst that would prolong the memory of this polemical figure. To be sure, Gordon H. McCormick states that this is precisely the case: rather than dying as a tyrant, "he died a martyr's death" (63), and combined with the controversy surrounding his remains, the result has been a continual growth of his legacy: "Over the next three decades [after Guevara's death], he would be held up repeatedly as a model of fortitude, self-denial, and heroism, all of which were exemplified by the courage with which he faced his executioners" (63). Castañeda also affirms the importance of Che's death in relation to his memory in stating, "La muerte del Che Guevara dio significado a su vida, y vida a su mito" (477). To be sure, one of the principle reasons why Che's legacy has continued to thrive and evolve since his death has to do, precisely, with his image at death. The author continues, referring more specifically to Che's photo at death, "Las condiciones de su muerte son inseparables de la leyenda que engendraron" (Castañeda 477).

It is important to remember that Che led an active public life. Besides writing articles and letters that were published, he had given interviews[66] as a doctor and as a revolutionary. He also had travelled extensively throughout the Americas, as well as to Russia and the Congo. In fact, Che's public image had grown so large that, at times, when his whereabouts where unknown, rumors circulated to the point that on one occasion Fidel Castro felt compelled to dispel them (Anderson 637). A now-declassified government document summarizes the "mystery" of Che's public life nicely:

> The mystery of Guevara. Argentine-born Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Fidel Castro's righthand man and chief lieutenent in the Sierra Maestra, one-time president of Cuba's National Bank under Castro and later Minister of Industries, mysteriously disappeared in March 1965. Rumor said that he was ill, or that he had been put to death by Castro, or that he was in the Dominican Republic during its civil war or in Vietnam or in the Congo. In October 1965, Castro finally announced that Guevara had renounced his Cuban citizenship and set off to devote his services to the revolutionary cause in other lands. Rumors as to his whereabouts continued, but until recently there was no substantial evidence to prove even that he was alive. (Hughes 1)

Indeed, Che led, at times, a rather public life that not only made him known around the world, but caused the US government to take special interest in his life, ideals, and even

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[66] Though in some of his public appearances we find the passionate and controversial "version" of Che we might expect to see, in others, Che is not the fiery, serious revolutionary persona, but rather a playful and smiling subject. In one interview he gives in Ireland in 1964, he seems highly amused by his last-minute interpreter's difficulties in understanding his Spanish, and the mood of the interview is decidedly lighter than other appearances he makes in the same year.

his whereabouts. Undoubtedly, because he was such a well-known figure, great care was taken in documenting the capture and death of the Argentine.

Contrasting Che's treatment in death with that of the Brazilian bandit, if Lampião's pursuers and eventual killers mutilated his (and the other dead bandits') body, decapitating him in order to obtain the necessary evidence of the bandit's identity, Che's fate after death was somewhat the opposite. Instead of ending up in a mass grave, covered in lime, only to picked at by vultures until a flash flood swept their skeletons away—as is the case with Lampião—, Che's body was transported by helicopter to another town where nurses and forensic examiners would wash him and his wounds, trim his hair and bear, and finally lay him carefully upon a table to photographed, again for identification purposes. In a way, though, Lampião and Che share a common bond: their captors and executioners needed evidence of their victory. In Lampião's case, his head and personal effects were required as proof (or as sourvenirs), while Che's photograph and hand—severed for print verification—were the necessary pieces of evidence. To this day, vastly famous post-mortem photographs exist of each, but Lampião's also includes the decapitated heads of ten other fallen bandits, and the *cangaceiro* king is difficult to pinpoint. The result is that the photograph is more notable for the curiosity it evokes rather than its symbolism. On the other hand, in the death photo(s) of Che, he either appears alone or is the central figure of the snapshot and are highly symbolic. These photos feature a peaceful, Christ-like Che and are the perfect compliment to the Korda image—the guerrillero heroico—and the ideal catalyst to set the refashioning processes in motion.

Of course, post-mortem photography, though now quite uncommon, used to be a common and normal practice. Such photographs frequently pose the subject in a manner in which they appear almost alive, or sleeping. Sometimes the subject will be alone, and at other times, s/he is surrounded by loved ones or props, such as flowers. The photo of Che is highly reminiscent of this genre of photography as his body was prepared and posed to give a certain life-like appearance. If, originally, post-mortem photography provided a final memory of a loved one, Che's image, however, has come to take on a much more mythical status. The photograph in question is rather straightforward in composition and purpose: the black and white image depicts a dead Guevara, laid shirtless on a table in the middle of a whitewashed room. His captors/executioners, in either civilian or military attire, crowd around the body as they look on or gesture toward the cadaver. Almost directly in center, the bearded face of Guevara remains expressionless, though his eyes seem to look past the camera to the photographer's right. To be sure, the evocative photograph does much more than provide objective evidence of the revolutionary's death; it came to take on a symbolic nature that was, perhaps, not originally intended. Castañeda explains this fact in *Compañero*:

> El ejército boliviano cometió su único error de campaña ... Transformó al revolucionario resignado y acorralado ... en la imagen crística de la vida que sigue a la muerte. Sus verdugos le dieron rostro, cuerpo y alma al mito que recorrería el mundo. Quien examine cuidadosamente estas fotos [de los últimos momentos de la vida de Che] podrá comprender cómo el Guevara de la escuelita de La Higuera se transfiguró en el ícono beatificado de Vallegrande. (19)

Clearly, the image that was intended for the simple purpose of offering proof of death actually came to bestow a new, mythical and symbolic life upon the subject of the same photograph. Michael Casey agrees that the seemingly innocuous photo for evidentiary purposes took on much more symbolic power: "[T]he general public, which had not seen a single photograph of Che since his mysterious disappearance in April 1965, was now suddenly shown an image begging for a myth to be built around it. ... They gave it a crucified Che" (186). The symbolism of the moment and the scene of his death was quickly understood. Critic John Berger, in his *The Look of Things*, almost immediately made the connection between Che's post-mortem photograph and two famous paintings in an article comparing the photo of Che's death to Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* and Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (43-44). Indeed, Richard Harris confirms that by the time of his publishing *Death of a Revolutionary: Che Guevara's Last Mission*—which details the circumstances surrounding and leading up to the Bolivian campaign and Che's death—the cult of Che was already alive and well: "Since his death, Che has become a popular hero and a symbol of rebellion on a world-wide scale. In a sense, a cult has developed around his romantic image" (197). Harris' mention of Che's "romantic image" is truly poignant. While not all who were present when he died may have understood his ideals, and even though, certainly, not everyone who invokes the image of Che comprehends the Argentine's ideologies, they can, without a doubt, relate to his image. It is of note that the photos that, in hindsight, appear to have solidified the legacy of Che were not the only photographs taken of the revolutionary. Surprisingly, much less flattering photos of the fallen guerrillero were kept secret—presumably to maintain the ruse that Che was killed in combat (Castañeda 20). And so,

instead of images of a haggard, unkempt Che, the world was given photographs of a dead man who resembled the leader of a major world religion.

Not long after Che's death, though (perhaps only a matter of days even), another image was already making the rounds in Europe—an Italian publishing house was selling posters of a photograph of Che taken the day after the ship Le Coubre had exploded in La Habana's harbor. Before long, Alberto Korda's widely recognized "Guerrillero heroico," though it had already been published multiple times at least as early as 1961 (Casey 88-91), had become "a big pop-culture hit" (Casey 116) as not only the original photograph, but also variations of it, were produced over and over. Now, of course, it is a ubiquitous image that means many things for many different people as it appears on anything from clothing to alcoholic drinks (Casey 29). Indeed, it is ironic that Korda's photograph has become a highly commoditized image of a man who opposed capitalism. Susan Sontag, in *On Photography*, succinctly explains, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" (4). This is precisely what has happened to Che, the person—the world has appropriated him, and (very loosely, I might add) his ideals, via Che, the photographic image (or the photographed subject). Instead of a man who is known for his opposition to capitalist imperialism, we have (in many cases) the image (of a man) that is known worldwide as a result of capitalism, and in this way his legacy has been refashioned.

Casey, in *Che's Afterlife*, unsurprisingly boils down Che's legacy to a single photo—Korda's "Guerrillero heroico"—that did not receive much attention until after its subject's death, but others, too, have followed similar lines to arrive at the legacy of Che Guevara—such is the case of the 2008 documentary *Chevolution*, in which Casey himself

appears and comments on the Korda image in relation to Che's legacy. While some may object to his suggestion that the Korda image is more Che than Che himself is/was, we must not overlook the fact that Casey is certainly not the first to see the value in an image when it comes to Che and his legacy. For all intents and purposes, the "major" parties involved in or concerned with Che's legacy in posterity were all very much preoccupied with this image as well. The secretive burial and the active and deliberate "forgetting" of Che's body demonstrates quite clearly that the Bolivian and US governments knew well the power of image. Concomitantly, when Fidel Castro ordered the retrieval of his comrade's body from the Bolivian countryside in 1997, he did so precisely with the intention of disinterring an image along with a skeleton.

It is also helpful to remember that Che himself was highly concerned with his personal image and legacy—he, no doubt, engaged in a process of self-fashioning. To be sure, John A. Gronbeck-Tedesco states, "One of the unique aspects of Che lore is that Che himself is one of its principal authors. Many of the ways we envision the guerilla revolutionary comes from Guevara's own memoirs, which helped provide the factual basis for his mythological making that became concretized after his death in 1967" (30). Of course, first, as an avid reader and writer, Guevara was acutely aware of the power of words. His diaries, while they maintain the appearance of a faithful and almost spontaneous recounting or recording of the events and thoughts of their writer, this could not be much further from the truth. Che routinely spent large amounts of time editing and revising his diaries. In the case of his Cuban diary, *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria*, we know that after it had been originally published, he went back and edited the published version. When done, he left a note that reads, "El libro de los

pasajes, por si otra vez se quiere editar, corregido y aumentado" (Guevara *Pasajes* 1). It is interesting that he took time to "correct" and "expand" his own diary after its publishing; however, it is not surprising. The 2006 edition of the volume, published by Ocean Press, pointedly indicates the changes from the "original" by highlighting them with bold font. The editors even include photocopies of the pages he corrected, which offer much insight into Che's own process of shaping his image and editorial voice. For example, in the original edition, Che describes his efforts to teach Julio Zenón Acosta to read: "Fue mi primer alumno en la Sierra: estaba haciendo esfuerzos por alfabetizarlo" (Photograph in Guevara *Pasajes*). Here we can appreciate Che's dedication to teaching Acosta—Che uses the transitive verb "alfabetizar" with Acosta ("lo") as the object. The idea, then, is that Che actively taught Acosta to read. In returning to the text, however, he clearly reshapes the account (as the editor does, I have indicated the alterations in bold type): "Fue mi primer alumno en la Sierra: **hacía esfuerzos** por alfabetizar**se**" (Guevara *Pasajes* 34, original emphasis). It becomes apparent that he shifts the emphasis of who was making the "esfuerzos." Again, in the original passage, Che makes the efforts to teach Acosta. Now, however, it is Acosta who makes the efforts under Che's mentorship. The change from "alfabetizarlo" to "alfabetizarse"—from a transitive verb with a direct object, to a reflexive verb with the subject also as the "object" of the action—is significant because it causes the reader to assume that Che's students were highly self-motivated as a result of studying with the Argentine. Even so, in the redacted version, it could appear that Che's benevolence is diminished when he shifts the focus to Acosta's efforts, but the text that follows makes no doubt that Che truly played an integral part in his comrade's education: "[yo] le iba enseñando las primeras letras" (*Pasajes* 34).

Furthermore, in the original, the language could suggest that Che made or even forced Acosta to learn, that Che was making Acosta learn to read, but by placing the emphasis on Acosta's efforts, the language of the edited passage portrays Che as more benign, if not magnanimous in the sense that 1) Che inspires Acosta to want to learn, to teach himself to read, and 2) Acosta wants to learn to read, and Che is kind enough to offer his help.

In addition to having a way with words, Che also had a keen photographic eye. And this, too, comes to bear in how he shapes his own image. Towards the end of his *Notas de viaje*, he hints at his interest in taking photographs; in recounting the episode of when he attempts to take pictures of some poor villagers in Caracas, we read that they are suspicious of him and, despite his insistence, they do not let him photograph them. Instead, they throw rocks at him as he flees—though he does manage to snap at least one illicit photograph (141-42). While photography (taking pictures and having his picture taken) comes up briefly in *Notas de viaje* (which is surprising given the fact that we know he had a camera with him much of the time), it is in *Otra vez* that his love for the craft is more openly expressed. The editor's comment for the first edition of the diary also mentions this fact: "A la pasión por la escritura, de forma permanente, lo acompaña la fotografía, como un complemento vital en sus ansias por profundizar en su entorno" (xii). What is more, from time to time Che muses about the difficulty of finding stable work that also pays well, and so he often puts his camera to good use by seeking employment as a photographer; in 1955, he even documents—by photographing and writing about—the Panamerican games as a correspondent for the *Agencia Latina* (Guevara *Otra vez* 89 n.93). Indeed, from early on in the diary, Guevara gives the reader insight into his

interest in photography when he mentions his visits to photographic exhibitions and how he learned composition techniques from a professional: "Gustavo Torlincheri es un gran artista como fotógrafo. Además de una exposición pública y de sus trabajos particulares tuve oportunidad de ver su manera de trabajar. Una técnica sencilla subordinada íntegramente a una composición metódica da como resultado fotos de notable valor. Con él hicimos un recorrido" (*Otra vez* 17). Not long after this, Che mentions how, when he realized that he had forgotten his camera, he decides to stay behind an extra day to go get it (*Otra vez* 18). He also bemoans the life of the professional photographer who is promised compensation but must wait months for it to come. Indeed, he bounces from giddy when he lands a job as a photographer—"Tengo un puesto de fotógrafo en los parques que veré qué resulta mientras prometen cosas mil" (*Otra vez* 83)—to a saavy realist as he lists the money that is owed to him: "Ahora parece que me pagarán los dos meses que me deben más tres meses de indemnización por despido, más $2,000 por las fotos" (*Otra vez* 89).

It is interesting to see just how much of a photographer's eye he has when he describes his return visit to a famous Peruvian landmark: "Machu-Picchu no defrauda, no sé cuantas veces más podré admirarla, pero esas nubes grises, esos picachos morados y de colores sobre los que resalta el claro de las ruinas grises, es uno de los espectáculos más maravillosos que pueda yo imaginar" (*Otra vez* 21). The manner in which Che observes not only the colors and hues of the landscape, but also the way he contrasts those colors with other elements in his field of vision seems to mimic the action of looking through a camera's viewfinder. More specifically, his words paint a picture like the composition of a possible photograph, a landscape that juxtaposes the sky's monochromatic hue with the

vivid tones of the mountains. However, his perceptive eye is able to locate an element that not only creates a stark contrast of colors, but one that also points out a unifying component: the grey in the massive stone buildings complements, at the same time that it stands out from, the grey in the sky. Clearly, such scenes were particularly attractive to Che, for among the photographs taken by Guevara (and then included in a recent edition of *Otra vez*), many of them are composed similarly. He frames a building or a landscape in the lower half of the image with the sky, almost over-exposed, hovering above. In other photographs, Che captures people rather than landscapes, but the background (if they are standing in a plaza or in front of a building) is, nevertheless, a contrast to the busy crowd or the colors (even in black and white) of their clothing. Furthermore, in photographing indigenous ruins, he preferred to allow the structure to dominate the image. In photos of Chichén-Itzá, Mexico, which are included as part of Guevara's *Otra vez*, the pyramid, temple, or ball field imposes itself upon the viewer as Che captures the grandeur of the ancient artifices.

Che clearly understood the power of the camera to capture and portray the world around him, and his photographic aesthetic even extends to when he is in front of the lens rather than behind. Che gave importance to how he appeared in photographs, and in his *Notas de viaje*, he comments on a photograph that Alberto took of while he (Che) was sick: "Alberto me sacó una foto con mi indumentaria hospitalaria y mi aspecto impresionante, flaco, chupado, con ojos enormes y una barba cuya ridícula conformación no varió mucho en los meses en que me acompañó. Lástima que la fotografía no fuera buena, era un documento de la variación de nuestra manera de vivir" (35). Che's commentary on the image goes far beyond a typical "I look bad in this photo." His eye

moves over the features of his body and studies them. To be sure, he uses the word "documento" in reference to the photo, which sums up well his perspective on photography in general—a means of documenting the world and himself in it; the same amount of care and effort that goes into his diaries (and editing them) can also be found in his photography.

If Alberto Granado's unexpected snapshot found the Argentine subject unprepared and in a shocking state, Che's own pictures of himself, his self-portraits, offer examples of deliberate composition and preparedness. One of his most famous self-portraits is when he is in his disguise as Uruguayan businessman Adolfo Mena González (Anderson 701, McCormick 63), the alias he used to enter Bolivia. In this photograph, Che only barely resembles himself—Guevara has, of course, gone to great lengths to cover up his identity.[67] A self-portrait taken in 1951, that appears in a recent edition of *Notas de viaje*, offers an interesting contrast. In this image, he appears serious and almost contemplative; he is wearing a button-down shirt and tie, with a suit jacket, and he has short, clean-cut hair. But this is his normal attire as a medical student. Interestingly, in the self-portrait of him in a disguise, he is wearing a button-down shirt and sweater—no tie—and stares solemnly, but almost arrogantly, into the mirror as he smokes a lit cigar. Here, too, he has short hair—because he had to cut it as part of the disguise—, but what stands out is that this self-portrait is almost ironic, if not sarcastic; Che is well aware that these clothes no longer constitute his normal attire. Instead, he is amused by his

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[67] Ironically, though, less than a year later, in the image of Che's corpse after his death, great lengths were also taken to make sure that it was abundantly clear that the subject was Guevara.

reflection: a pudgy, balding, middle-aged man stares back at the revolutionary who should be, and soon enough will be, wearing his trademark green fatigues.

Despite their differences, in both images, the unmistakable, deliberate fingerprint of Che is present. These photographs document specific moments in Guevara's life, moments that more or less book-end his career as a revolutionary. And both offer the viewer only what Che wants to show him or her. Similarly, in Che's writing, he actively shapes his own image through carefully crafted ideas. Specifically, in outlining his view of an ideal socialist society, he describes his particularly inventive theme of the new man, much studied by critics.

This concept of the "hombre nuevo" is most clearly laid out in his epistolary essay we know as "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba." To be sure, the concept of the new man is so linked to this particle piece of Guevara's writing that, sometimes, however, it is referred to simply as "El hombre nuevo." Written while in Africa, Che was attempting to carry his brand of revolutionary change to the whole world. Immediately he describes the successful Cuban Revolution—his "model," so to speak, for future revolutionary projects—and states that "[e]n la actitud de nuestros combatientes se vislumbraba al hombre del futuro" ("El socialismo" 35). This future man is precisely the "new" man that he describes throughout the rest of the essay. Indeed the new man is the necessary basis upon which the ideal Communist society is constructed: "Para construir el comunismo, simultáneamente con la base material hay que hacer al hombre nuevo" ("El socialismo" 38). This idea of a new and future "image" of mankind in a communist ideal is, nevertheless, one that is constantly changing and unfinished, for "[s]u imagen no está todavía acabada; no podría estarlo nunca" ("El socialismo" 39). And this is because the

new man is only only a future one himself, but also one who is constantly looking to the future ("El socialismo" 40).

To be sure, the new man for Che is the ultimate ideal to which all must strive if the revolution is to be, in the end, successful. Thus, the new man is one who is highly incorporated into the mass, into society, and in that incorporation he finds his identity ("El socialismo" 38-39). Though in a sense some individuality is lost as the "man" becomes "society," Che insists that this sacrifice—a word he uses repeatedly in the text—of self actually brings about wholeness: "El hombre, en el socialismo, a pesar de su aparente estandardización, es más completo" ("El socialismo" 41). He further asserts that this wholeness or completess is one of the social self rather than the individual self; only this can bring about "su realización plena como criatura humana" ("El socialismo" 41).

Because society, the mass of new men, is the motor for a true socialist revolution, Che views individuality with some suspicion. In this way, Che also envisions that those who have yet to conform to the revolutionary cause will be pressured by his or her peers, will be taught by the "school" of society to incorporate into the social mass:

> La educación prende en las masas y la nueva actitud preconizada tiende a convertirse en hábito; la masa la va haciendo suya y presiona a quienes no se han educado todavía. Esta es la forma indirecta de educar a las masas, tan poderosa como aquella otra.
>
> Pero el proceso es consciente; el individuo recibe continuamente el impacto del nuevo poder social y percibe que no está completamente adecuado a él. Bajo el influjo de la presión que supone la educación indirecta, trata de acomodarse ... Se autoeduca. ("El socialismo" 39)

Here, in this moment of self-teaching, "el hombre nuevo ... va naciendo" ("El socialismo" 39). But before this can happen, there is one major prerequisite: a disconnect with the past. Insomuch as the new man is a project that looks to and takes place in the (continual) future, all links with the past must be cut, for these links contain the germ, the DNA of what existed before the revolution, that is to say the "old man." He states, "Las taras del pasado se trasladan al presente en la concicencia individual y hay que hacer un trabajo continuo para erradicarlas" ("El socialismo" 37). These *taras*, in effect, are the "residuos de una eduación sistemáticamente orientada al aislamiento del individuo" ("El socialismo" 37). We can see, then, why Che insists in cutting ties with the past, for he views it as a threat to a (new) person's incorporation into socialist society. In other words, one is "aislado" from the mass. No wonder Che states that "[l]a nueva sociedad en formación tiene que competir muy directamente con el pasado" ("El socialismo" 37). Guevara's words seem to indicate quite clearly that he understood the power of that past. Once again, it is worthwhile to remember that Benjamin argues that history serves the dominating classes, and Che would likely agree here. Instead, however, of rewriting the past, Che opts to circumvent it entirely and, as such, erase it. In fact, it might be more precise to say that Che actively "forgets" the past by fixing his eyes on the future. Indeed, the new man is a future man not only because we must always work toward such an ideal but also because the new man is one whose eyes forever look forward to the future.

The problem, however, is that the new man, since it is a future one, too, does not exist. Therefore, there is no precedent (even if there were, it would be forgotten with the past) or current example to follow. As a result, Che must become the new man. Che's

constant looking to the future, an ideal future, comes through loud and clear in his words, and to be sure, Phyllis Passariello refers to him as "the future revolutionary" (80). The fact that he writes from Africa is no coincidence; he clandestinely travelled to the Congo to attempt to continue his revolutionary project and inspire others to do so as well. Doubtless, he saw himself as a *vida ejemplar*, an exemplary life, and indeed that is the way he lived his final years, at the very least. In the span of about a decade, Che participates in at least three armed conflicts on three different continents. He believed that by acting, by rebelling, by resisting, he was inspiring others to do he same. And not only did he perceive the revolutionary project to be an ongoing, perpetual struggle, but also he viewed those who would participate in revolution, the people, as a people in a continual ontological state, in a constant becoming. In a way then, his new man comes to symbolize more than just what he hopes the revolutionary subject will "look like," so to speak; his life and legacy are the ultimate example.

While Che certainly did attempt to live out his philosophy of the new man, in "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba" he is quite careful to deflect the attention off of himself directly by employing language that positions himself among the "mass" or the "people" that will become the ideal result of the socialist project: "En la actitud de nuestros combatientes se vislumbraba al hombre del futuro" (35). In other words, rather than blatantly saying, "I am the model of the new man; follow my example," he uses a language of inclusion that focuses on the collectivity, the "us." The use of the possessive pronoun, in the first-person-plural form, in "our combatants" places the Argentine revolutionary squarely among the people, as opposed to on a pedestal. In fact, this particular letter from Africa to Uruguay that we refer to as "El socialismo y el hombre en

Cuba" makes frequent and intentional use of such collective nouns and adjectives, "masa" and "pueblo" being the preferred terms. His focus on the mass, though, does not negate his view of the individual, for the mass is comprised of many individuals, ideally "new" men. By using the plural, he places himself among the *combatientes*, among the people, rather than above them. This is precisely the point that Ileana Rodríguez makes in stating, "The fact that revolutionary writing uses the first person plural, we, obscures the relationship between the masses as people, the members of the party as a group, and the singular narrating subject I, which is masculine, and individual, impersonating them all" (qtd. in Moynagh 166). Furthermore, Maureen Moynagh adds that "Che himself, while writing as member of the revolutionary vanguard, represents himself as one of the *guerrilleros* who is learning to become a properly revolutionary subject" (167 original emphasis). The strategic situating of the writing self as part of a collectivity thus serves to distance himself, and the revolutionary cause, from any particular affiliations (nation, class, party, etc.).

The Motorcycle Diaries *as Chronicle of Che's Revolutionary Transformation*

The same manner in which he strategically props himself up as the example while including himself as part of the common people is reflected in his diary and, by extension, in Walter Salles' film based on the text, *The Motorcycle Diaries*. From the first, Che's 1952 diary was read as a "narrative of transformation," for Vijay Prashad, in a review of an English edition (a year after the first English translation was released), states, "The trip proved to be decisive in Che's life" (2736). Moynagh likewise points out that the diary, *Notas de viaje*, in addition to the diary he wrote in the years following,

Otra vez, "offer ... narratives of transformation of the self accomplished through travel, the crossing of borders, encounters with the Other, as well as, eventually, political engagement in places away from 'home'" (150). These two travel diaries "are inevitably marked by the journey of becoming revolutionary" (Moynagh 150), for while *Notas de viaje*, specifically, is "not about transforming the world, we can nonetheless read [it] in terms of a transformation of the self more proper to the conventions of travel writing" (Moynagh 151).

Moynagh is correct to point to travel writing when discussing Che's diaries. Indeed, looking at the diaries through this lens offers a useful framework for analyzing the texts. Looking at the works vis-a-vis the travel or journey that inspired the writing (or the travel/journey that the writing preserves/remembers/records) reminds us the diaries chronicle not only Che's journey/travels in space as he moves across the American continent, but they also record his journey/travels toward becoming a revolutionary. Carl Thompson, in *Travel Writing*, notes that "[o]ne definition that we can give of travel ... is that it is the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space" (9). In this light, Che's journey toward revolutionary is not entirely unique, for the "point," as it were, of traveling is, in fact, to encounter the other, or otherness, along the way. Despite the fact that Thompson admits that his initial definition of travel itself is "inevitably somewhat reductive" (9), he builds off of it in stating that "all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter [between self and other], and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed" (10). To be sure, *Notas de viaje* is very much the account of Che's encounters (time and again) with the Latin American other. In fact, we might even say that *Notas* is also an encounter with himself

as other, wherein he travels—and finds himself—outside of his middle-class, Argentine point of view. Again, that is why Che is able to write at the beginning of *Notas* that rereading (that is to say, editing) the text is like looking back on who he used to be; from this perspective, he is now the other who is looking back at the traveler.

Clearly, his diary (or diaries even) offers a glimpse into his personal transformation, which is entirely consistent with the genre—generally speaking—of travel literature. Yet, Thompson admits that the genre is not so easily defined:

> [I]t is possible to define 'travel writing' very broadly indeed. As a consequence, and given the range of material that has historically been classified as 'travel writing' or 'voyages and travels', there is probably no neat and all-encompassing definition of the form that one can give. The genre is better understood as a constellation of many different types of writing and/or text ... Thus the boundaries of the travel writing genre are fuzzy. (26)

This is most certainly the case with Che's diaries: they are indeed travel accounts, but they are also considered diaries. Not to mention the fact that present editions include appendices consisting of articles, photographs, maps, timelines, letters, and other materials. Such editions of *Notas de viaje* and *Otra vez*, undoubtedly, exist in the "fuzzy" realms that transcend rigid genre boundaries.

Thompson also makes note of the fact that travel writing is a process that takes place *ex post facto*: "All examples of travel writing are by definition textual artefacts [*sic*], that have been constructed by their writers and publishers ... One cannot simply record the continuous flow of sensory experience that occurs as one travels ... [A] writer

necessarily picks out significant recent events, and organises those events, and his or her reflections on them, into some sort of narrative" (27). This description of the "writing" part of travel writing describes Che's diaries quite well. As I have already stated, Che was a perpetual editor of his own work, and he even re-edited works that had already been published. If we consider his *Notas*, for example, only as diary,[68] he is breaking a fundamental—though unspoken—rule of diary writing: do not go back and change what was written. However, if we consider his text as travel writing, it is entirely consistent to shape the text accordingly, to "commit significant sins of omission" or "sins of commission, and of subtle or not-so-subtle elements of fabrication in the telling of the travel tale" (Thompson 28). In other words, in travel writing it is acceptable and expected even, for the sake of the narrative, to leave things out at the same time that one gives more attention to other details, to the point of telling "white lies," as it were. And the fact that "most episodes are clearly written up retrospectively by the writer, rather than being written on the spot" (Thompson 28) is not an issue. Much to the contrary, for Thompson states, "A degree of fictionality is thus inherent in all travel accounts" (Thompson 28).

It is entirely appropriate to view *Notas de viaje* as travel literature, but as a piece of travel writing, it is of interest that Walter Salles bases his 2004 film on *Notas*. In drawing from a text that is part of a genre that is understood to be part fiction, Salles' bio-pic, in turn, takes part in the fictionalization of the Argentine's life and travels and even adds to it. In this light, Gronbeck-Tedesco notes that *The Motorcycle Diaries* and another film, *Che*, "represent ... the consecration of historical memory" (30). More specifically,

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[68] I will give more attention to *Notas* as diary later on.

if *Notas* is generally seen or read in light of Che's transformation, the film *Motorcycle Diaries* sets out to deliberately present the cross-continental travels of the Argentine pair as the catalyst for Ernesto's becoming Che. Nevertheless, Andrew O'Hehir, in his review of the film, asserts that it "is the story of Che Guevara ... divorced from politics and history, rendered as a young American" (par. 4). He later states that he expects other reviewers will complain that the film "isn't political enough" (par. 6). Of course, Salles' film does not focus on the larger-than-life Che that is the subject of Steven Soderbergh's two-part docu-drama. Instead, the film paints an image of the Argentine revolutionary-to-be in which he is transformed and is on his way to helping others transform in turn. While at the beginning of the movie he is portrayed as a light-hearted, athletic dreamer, by the end of it, he is reflective and serious. He is changed by the concrete reality he has witnessed and experienced, and as such, the film's political appeal is very much subdued, though not absent as, perhaps, O'Hehir suggests. The film, then, presents itself as a chronicle of Ernesto's revolutionary transition into Che, and in this sense, Fernanda Bueno aptly points out that via the film, "Walter Salles builds a new dimension to the myth of Ernesto Che Guevara" (107).

The film, more so than the specific 1952 diary on which it is ostensibly based, openly depicts Che's coming of age, and so it is worthwhile to reiterate that he transforms from a childish dreamer to an impassioned realist, on his way to becoming the romanticized revolutionary. To be sure, the musical track that accompanies the film's opening scenes and credits—and the first song on the sound track, appropriately named "Apertura"—begins with a soft, rhythmic acoustic guitar riff, but by the end of the tune, a gritty and edgy electric guitar dominates the piece. The crescendo of the music

foreshadows the movie's (and Che's) movement, as the protagonist transforms into his revolutionary self. This tune is repeated and expanded in the film and in the soundtrack, and it becomes, in a way, the film's "theme song," so to speak.[69]

As it should, then, the soundtrack adds another layer of complexity to the film. More specifically, it reinforces the film's underlying message. For example, the track "Leyendo en el hospital," when in the film Che reads Mariátegui's *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, features an instrumental track of a guitar playing soft notes with sudden interjections of harsh, heavy chords. The theme of transformation from "bohemian" to "revolutionary" is again present in the juxtaposition of the sounds and the interplay between the low/high intensity of the music. In effect, the song serves as a way to emphasize and confirm Che's continual radicalization, his transition from low to high political intensity. Other notable tracks like the penultimate song, "Revolución caliente," further add to Salles' argument for his nascent-revolutionary representation of Che. More specifically, the song plays in the background as Che and Alberto walk through the streets of Lima, Peru. Since it is in the San Pablo colony in Peru that Che takes his final steps toward become his revolutionary self, the song serves as a foreshadowing of the experiences at San Pablo that will awaken his revolutionary consciousness. Indeed, Alberto Granado gives more attention to this fact in his diary when he states that Dr. Pesce, who was their host in the Peruvian capital city, became their "maestro," their teacher who showed them "que si bien a veces el medio hace al hombre, éste también puede transformar a aquél" (*Con el Che* 150). To be sure, this is the theme of the scenes not only at the San Pablo leper colony but throughout the entire

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[69] Even so, Jorge Drexler's "Al otro lado del río" won the Academy Award for Best Original Song, and it, too, is often considered to be the film's theme.

film as well: that traveling, being in these different environments among different peoples, has changed Ernesto. Indeed, the last song of the soundtrack, Jorge Drexler's "Al otro lado del río," confirms what we already know: like the scene when he swims to the other side of the leprosarium, in life, too, Che has crossed a "river" and will never return. And it is not incorrect for the film to portray him in such a light, for we see traces of both "Ches" in his writing: the idealistic Che who is motivated by his unwavering vision, regardless of the circumstances or cost, and the realist Che whose last words remind his executioner that he is only killing a man (Anderson 739). Salles does not fully reconcile these two personas of Che, which is why O'Hehir notes in his review that we are left with "a big, unanswered question hanging over this movie—the enigma of a charismatic young writer and thinker who picked up a gun ... and Salles' film makes no attempt to resolve it" (par. 11). The film's take on Che, however, is less complex in the sense that it does not try to mesh these two personalities in a single, fluid identity. Rather, the picture depicts a transformation from one to the other.

One of the clearest moments that points to Ernesto's revolutionary progression towards the future Che happens as he and Alberto are forced to walk through the Atacama Desert in Chile. The film notes that the date is 11 March 1952, which means that they have been traveling for a little more than two months. In that time, they have traveled nearly 5,000 km, and their motorcycle, "La poderosa II," has broken down and is beyond repair. The scene begins by showing the duo trudging through the inhospitable terrain; the ground is dry and dusty, and there is little vegetation. Clearly, the journey and their now very uncomfortable circumstances have started to take their toll as the two bicker along the way. Their water supply seems to be getting lower, and to top it all off,

a vehicle does not stop to give them a ride: they try to hail it down but are forced to continue on through the desert on foot.

When their situation seems to be the direst, the camera—now in a far shot that shows the two travelers silhouetted against the rugged terrain—captures the arrival of two other travelers walking toward them. The two pairs of travelers introduce themselves, and the images of twilight on the dusty road cut to a fireside scene in the middle of the night. Che and Alberto have decided to make camp with the couple they met on the desert road, and the four of them, dirty from the walk and cold from the night air, start up a conversation around the glow of the warming flames. The couple tells their newly acquired Argentine friends that they used to own a small plot of land that they had inherited. Even though it was not the best land, it was theirs nonetheless. But they were forced off of their property by land speculators. The woman sarcastically quips, "Y a eso le llaman progreso." They also tell how they had to leave their children to look for work in the mines and that they were at risk of being thrown in jail for being communists. The husband remarks, "Parecen que [las minas] son tan peligrosas que ni siquiera se fijan de qué partido es uno." After telling their story, they ask why Ernesto and Alberto are travelling, if they too are looking for work. At this point, the camera briefly shows the face of Alberto as he looks to Ernesto for an answer. His embarrassment over what he would say is evident in the blank look on his face. The camera then cuts to Ernesto as he musters the words to fill the silence, "Viajamos por viajar." Now the camera cuts to the couple, both faces shown simultaneously, as they look at each other in disbelief. The woman finally speaks up and utters a word of blessing upon their travels, and the camera cuts once more to Alberto's face: the look of embarrassment has now changed to shame.

Ernesto, at this point, hands over his blanket for the woman to warm up with, and perhaps as a gesture of solidarity, while Alberto, likewise, offers a gesture of pity by sharing his maté with them. The scene ends with a close up of the man's face as he stares into the fire, followed by a medium shot of the whole campsite and a final close up of the woman's face as she drinks the maté; over these images Ernesto's voiceover narrates a word of reflection that the images alone do not convey: "Esos ojos tenían una expresión oscura y trágica. Nos contaron de unos compañeros que habían desaparecido en circunstancias misteriosas, y que, al parecer, terminaron en alguna parte al fondo del mar. Esa fue una de las noches más frías de mi vida. Pero conocerlos me hizo sentir más cerca de la especie humana, extraña, tan extraña para mí." The final image in the sequence seems to imitate the first: a close up of the man's stoic face. After this, the medium shot of the campfire is replaced—as we move on to the next scene—by a shot of the couple sitting on a rocky hillside, surrounded by others looking for work.

The desert scene and the campfire scene that immediately follows play an important part in the development of Salles' depiction of Che's transformation to the revolutionary life. The former depicts the Argentine travelers in a lowly and pitiful state. The viewer sympathizes with them as they toil through the unforgiving Chilean landscape. It is worthwhile to note here that Salles uses a series of close ups to film the desert scene. First Salles shows their feet and legs kicking up dust from various angles. Then, the camera pans up from Ernesto's feet, to his torso, and eventually to his head; the camera depicts Ernesto close up, in profile, with the desert and mountains in the background. After cutting to a close up of Ernesto walking toward the camera (as it moves backwards at the same speed), Alberto appears behind his companion, framed in a

medium shot. That is, the close up of Ernesto also offers a medium shot of Alberto at the same time. This is also the shot the shows the emotional struggle of their journey as they begin to bicker and insult each other. Immediately after this, Salles cuts to the long shot where the two meet the Chilean couple.

It is of note that the entirety of the desert scene is shot using close ups of varying degrees—some shots, of course, place the camera closer or farther from the subject than others. There is no long shot to establish that the two have entered a desert or to communicate the vastness of the scene. Much to the contrary, the shots do little to contextualize the characters within their surroundings. Indeed, what is most important is not their remote location—an on-screen caption informs us where they are—but rather their difficult situation. Instead of focusing on the landscape and showing the two figures lost in the midst of an endless desert, the lens stays tight and close to them. The close up, then, has the opposite effect of the long shot: the characters are not lost in the middle of the huge desertscape; what is lost is the desert itself as we focus on the individuals' struggle. The desert, then, is not so much the setting of the scene as it is a symbol of the journey as a whole, its hardships, and Ernesto and Alberto's perseverance. The film, however, is not concerned with merely portraying the difficulties of the journey, for its main argument is the fact that these struggles ultimately bring about a change within the protagonist.

Given their lack of proper transportation, water, and relational harmony, the pair appears to have hit the low point in their journey. It would be understandable for the two to lament their unfortunate circumstances, especially after the truck that could have been their rescue ignores them entirely. Truly, it appears that Ernesto and Alberto have hit

rock bottom. It is in this moment that Salles rounds out the desert scene in order to bring it in line with the film's global narrative. Previously, Salles had focused on the difficulties of the journey by utilizing close ups, which offer the spectator a disproportionate view of reality. That is, the close up causes the immediate, what is in the foreground, to take primacy, as it perceived as closer, larger, and therefore, more important. By contrast, the elements that comprise the background appear distant, smaller, and less important.

Just before the campfire scene, Salles switches to a long shot to frame the travelers at dusk as they futilely attempt to hitch a ride from the passing truck. The scene serves two main purposes: first, filming at sunset establishes that Ernesto and Alberto have been traveling all day. Second, the long shot offers the spectator the proper perspective. Again, such a perspective is distorted by the proximity of the camera in the close up; the miniscule details are aggrandized. Here, though, the distance between the camera and the unlucky pedestrians seems to lessen the disappointment of their misfortune in having to spend the night outdoors and in doing so reminds the viewer of the "big picture," as it were. The "big picture" in this case is not an attempt to minimize the difficulties they have encountered along the way, but to properly situate those difficulties in a larger context, that of the Latin American struggle for justice. This is achieved by capturing both the Argentine pair with the Chilean couple together in the same long shot. This moment, which juxtaposes two pairs of travelers going in opposite directions, who represent two different types of relationships (friendship versus marriage), and who have widely different lives, foreshadows what will be revealed in the campfire scene that follows: that Ernesto and Alberto's trials are only a superficial

suffering. Whereas Ernesto and Alberto have embarked on a voluntary journey of self discovery, a result of their overall fortunate circumstances in life (they have the luxury to travel just to travel), the couple they meet on the desert road are traveling because their lives depend on it.

The campfire scene is the necessary opposite of the desert scene in that it inverts the "suffering" of the desert by comparison with the couple's situation. I say it is necessary because, as previously mentioned, the film attempts to convey the transformative process that led to Che's revolutionary life. Without meeting the Chilean couple, the "struggles" appearing in the foreground of the desert scene—made symbolically larger via the camera's close-up lens—would remain out of focus or out of proportion with the reality that is going on in the background of the Latin American continent. The long shot followed by the campfire reminds us that the Chilean couple not only must endure the same conditions as Ernesto and Alberto—walking through the desert with little water and no hope in sight—but they have also lost all they own and have been persecuted for their political beliefs. What is more, they are unsure of where their next paycheck, their next meal will come from. This is why the woman's question—Why are you traveling?—causes embarrassment; the two come to realize that their suffering is quite trivial. They have the luxury of traveling for fun, and their lives are rather well off. The couple, on the other hand, travels out of necessity: they travel because their life depends on it. In the same way the question about traveling reveals the paradoxical uniting of two opposite pairs of travelers (a married couple and a pair of friends, traveling out of necessity and traveling for fun, lives of poverty and lives of privilege), the pairing of the desert and campfire scenes juxtaposes the circumstances of

each pair of travelers by revealing the contradiction of Ernesto and Alberto's "suffering." In effect, these two scenes constitute a definitive moment of transformation in Ernesto's life. In the same way the protagonists pass from the harsh daytime sun of the desert to the cold of the pitch-black night, the change that takes place within the future Che is day and night.

It is clear that this is a defining moment for Ernesto; the next morning as the foreman of the Chuquicamata mines selects workers for the day, the two travelers watch the spectacle from afar. The scene clearly incenses Ernesto, for he speaks out in anger when asked he is told to leave the mine's property: "¿Usted no se da cuenta que esta gente tiene sed? ¿Por qué no le da un poco de agua?" Alberto is forced to restrain his friend, and as the foreman threatens to arrest them for trespassing, we learn that the owner of the mine is actually a company from the United States, the Anaconda Mining Company. Ernesto's empathy for the couple, along with the company's exploiting of its workers' poverty and lack of opportunities, causes Ernesto's anger to boil over in his first violent expression against oppressive capitalist systems: he curses and throws a stone at the mining company's trucks as they drive away. The scene foreshadows a life that will be increasingly defined by violent struggle. Like the future guerrilla fighter who scavenges supplies and weapons from his defeated enemies, in this scene Ernesto picks up the first object he can find, a stone, and hurls it indignantly: in a moment that foreshadows his future as a guerilla fighter, he uses a product of the mine against the mine owners.

The film provides just enough to extrapolate the analysis that I have just mentioned, but its portrayal of the events take a measure of poetic license in order to

highlight this moment as the moment, perhaps, of Ernesto's revolutionary transformation. In his *Notas de viaje*, Guevara gives a very factually oriented and straightforward account of the events, and so a number of variations stand out almost immediately. While the essential details are more or less the same, some of the more dramatic elements have been altered. In particular, the diary makes little mention of their journey through the desert until after they leave the mines. Two chapter entries after they meet the couple, in "Kilometraje árido," Che describes what could reasonably be the basis for the movie scene:

> Ya sin la caramañola, el problema de internarse a pie en aquel desierto se agravaba mucho, sin embargo desaprensivamente nos internamos en él, dejando atrás la barrera que marca el límite de la ciudad. Nuestro paso fue muy atlético mientras estuvimos al alcance de la mirada de los pobladores del lugar, pero luego, la soledad enorme de los Andes pelados, el sol que caía a plomo sobre nuestras cabezas, el peso de las mochilas mal distribuido y peor sujeto, nos llamaron a la realidad. (*Notas* 77)

In this example, specifically, we can easily observe the process of rewriting the diary in the film in order to highlight or even create drama that translates well onto the screen. Again, the passage above takes placer after Che and Alberto leave the mines, and as such, the logic of the film is not present in the diary. Furthermore, although Che mentions that the terrain was harsh and the path difficult, not to mention their uncomfortable gear, the spirit of the traveler—and not the revolutionary—is what stands out. In spite of the "problem" of penetrating the vast desert on foot, they leave the city limits behind without hesitation as travelers who are unafraid of adventure. They clearly feel proud to display

just how adept travelers they are by walking "athletically" in front of onlookers. The attitude of the passage, once more, is more positive, for it conveys the pride of having overcome the desert as expert travelers; however, the film, in contrast, highlights the difficulties of traveling through the desert on foot only to trivialize them in comparison to the couple's hardships. The result, then, is that the film reorganizes the order of events and shifts the focus of the to establish an argument and symbolism of transformation that would not be as effective if the desert scene were to take place after Ernesto and Alberto leave the mines. What is more, by depicting Alberto and Ernesto as being ashamed of "traveling for traveling's sake" later on, Salles rewrites the spirit of the diary's desert account (they are proud of their ability as travelers) as a key moment in Che's revolutionary progression.

Because the desert scene, then, is represented out of its true chronological position in the diary, other details in the film must be readjusted as well to accommodate the film's narrative. Again, while the film depicts the two in an endless and dramatic walk through the desert, ignored by trucks that passed by, the diary is much more pragmatic: Guevara plainly states that they actually sat around for most of the day until a truck came by and did actually stop to take them to another town, halfway to the mines. These details are interesting because in the film the truck does not stop, and the two meet the Chilean couple on the desert road; however, since the truck actually did offer Ernesto and Alberto a ride, it is in the town, not on the dusty desert road, that they meet the communist couple. And so, if in the film the fact that the truck does not stop seems to add insult to their injury—having trudged through the desert—, in the book the mood is much more lighthearted, if not quixotic: Ernesto and Alberto lounge around in the shade

half talking, half yelling at other until a truck picks them up: "Tumbados bajo la sombra magra de dos postes de luz ... pasamos buena parte del día intercambiando algún grito de poste a poste, hasta que se dibujó en el camino la silueta asmática del camioncito que nos llevó hasta la mitad del recorrido" (*Notas* 72). Furthermore, the film's portrayal of the meeting between the Chilean communist couple is symbolic in that it sets up the comparison/contrast of Che's "hardships" with the couple's—this moment carries immense weight in the filmic representation of the transformation from Ernesto to Che. The diary's account, though, is highly condensed with only a brief reflection on the significance of the moment. Of course, because the diary is a written text rather than a film, the reader is able to glean from Che's subsequent musing on communism and on his tour of the mines that the Chilean couple did have an impact on him. In the diary, the couple's lasting effect on the traveler is evident when Ernesto expounds upon the experience. His description of them, for example, is telling, as he notes that they were "una viva representación del proletariado de cualquier parte del mundo" (*Notas* 72). Che then muses about the nature of communism, that it is the result of a simple, yet deep-seated longing for something better: "'[E]l gusano comunista' ... no era nada más que un natural anhelo de algo mejor, una protesta contra el hambre inveterada traducida en el amor a esa doctrina extraña cuya esencia no prodría nunca comprender, pero cuya traducción: 'pan para el podre' eran palabras que estaban a su alcance ... que llenaban su existencia" (*Notas* 73). Whereas the diary allows Che to drive his point home in a moment of solemn reflection, the film must communicate this fact visually, and so Salles alters the scene where the travelers meet.

The ripple effect continues as details are forced to fit the reality as constructed in the film. Che states that they were sitting around "la luz de una vela con que [se alumbraban]" (*Notas* 72), rather than a campfire, which seems to indicate that they spent the night indoors rather than out. Indeed, Ernesto and Alberto did spend some nights outside around a campfire, but not this particular night. Alberto registers the occasion in his diary on March 12, 1952 and states that he and Ernesto had found a hotel to stay at, and to pass they time, they decided to stroll around the town. It was during their walk around town that they met the Chilean couple, not in the middle of the desert (*Con el Che* 77-78). Finally, the next morning the couple went to the sulfur mines while Ernesto and Alberto continued on to Chuquicamata, where, instead of (as the film shows the pair) watching the foreman choose workers for the day, they were given a tour of the facilities (Granado *Con el Che* 81-83). Clearly, the film's retelling of the meeting between the Chilean couple and the weary travelers is designed to produce an emotional response in the viewer that mimics Che's own response. Rather than depicting Ernesto and Alberto as they really were, "[t]umbados bajo la sombre magra de dos postes de luz ... [pasando] buena parte del día intercambiando algún grito de poste a poste" (*Notas* 72), Salles chooses to represent their arduous struggle through the desert as a symbolic juxtaposition to the Chilean couple's own struggle.

It is also worth noting that this diary entry supplies parts of the film's dialogue and narration; however, just like the scene in the film, some details have been altered.

The voiceover[70] in the film, which offers Che's reflection on the night they spent with the Chilean couple, seems to be extrapolated from the following passage in his *Notas*:

> [L]as facciones contraídas del obrero ponían una nota misteriosa y trágica, [y] en su idioma sencillo y expresivo contaba de sus tres meses de cárcel, de la mujer hambrienta que lo seguía con ejemplar lealtad, de sus hijos, dejados en la casa de un piadoso vecino, de su infructuoso peregrinar en busca de trabajo, de los compañeros misteriosamente desaparecidos, de los que se cuenta que fueron fondeados en el mar ... le dimos una de las nuestras [mantas] ... Fue esa una de las veces en que he pasado más frío, pero también en la que me sentí un poco más hermanado con esta, para mí, extraña especie humana. (72)

The film's text is similar. Rather than mentioning the man's facial features, though, in the film Ernesto focuses on the eyes: "Esos ojos tenían una expresión oscura y trágica." We can clearly see that the writers choose to keep the word "tragic," given the circumstances and the dramatic power of the word. However, they change the word "mysterious" for the nearly synonymous term "dark" or "obscure." This could be attributed to the fact that the writers, unlike Che in his diary, did not want to repeat the word when speaking of the "mysteriously" disappeared friends. Still, the word "oscura" manages to successfully parallel the dark atmosphere of the couple's life and the darkness of the desert that has engulfed them.

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[70] I have already cited this quotation earlier on, and so I will include it here in a footnote, rather than in the text body itself: "Esos ojos tenían una expresión oscura y trágica. Nos contaron de unos compañeros que habían desaparecido en circunstancias misteriosas, y que, al parecer, terminaron en alguna parte al fondo del mar. Esa fue una de las noches más frías de mi vida. Pero conocerlos me hizo sentir más cerca de la especie humana, extraña, tan extraña para mí."

Also, where the diary gives specific details from the couple's life, the film gives priority to the "compañeros que habían desaparecido en circunstancias misteriosas, y que, al parecer, terminaron en alguna parte al fondo del mar." The language of the film is more elaborate, more poetic even. An interesting change in the description of these companions who disappeared is the shift in the use of the root-word "fondo." In the diary, Che uses the verb "fondear" as an adjective in the participle form: they were condemned to the depths. The verb, then, requires a passive voice structure in which the "compañeros" are the objects of the actions of others. They were disappeared, and they were "fondeados en el mar." On the other hand, the film uses "fondo" as a noun to mean, literally, the bottom of the sea. Again, the diary uses passive voice in this case, but the film changes these references to active voice: they "ended up" at the bottom of the sea. The same shift to active voice happens when speaking of the disappearances: the companions had disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Of course, the use of the word "mysterious" is ironic, tongue-in-cheek even. What Che does not need to say is that the circumstances were not mysterious at all; political "disappearances" were a reality of Latin American countries that suffered under oppressive dictatorships during the twentieth century. When speaking of disappearances in reference to political oppression, then, the use of the verb is frequently passive tense: the person was disappeared, rather than the person (had) disappeared. The result is that the passive voice tends to denote a forceful disappearance. Strangely, the film changes both cases of passive voice to active voice, even when the preferred structure is the former. It would be difficult to explain the changes here as anything but stylistic; active voice is generally the preference in "good" writing. Perhaps, then, the writers of the film, in opting to focus

only on the disappearances—rather than relate all the couple's misfortunes—, decided to cast an editorial eye upon Che's writing and "clean it up," so to speak. But it might also be the case that Salles, since he cannot comment on the scene retrospectively (as Che does in the diary), seeks to simplify the language in order to make the political situations of the time more apparent to the viewer. In either case, the fact that the film not only makes use of the diary, but also edits it, serves to reassert the movie's own claims as a separate but equal diary, a film(ed) diary, that is.

A final alteration of this important passage in the diary demonstrates the film's interpretation of the diary: "Esa fue una de las noches más frías de mi vida. Pero conocerlos me hizo sentir más cerca de la especie humana, extraña, tan extraña para mí." Granted, the film's version is more succinct and abstract. In his diary, the night he spent in the company of the couple, "fue una de las veces en que he pasado más frío." While it is clear that the night itself must have been a cold one, the language of the diary specifically focuses on Ernesto's own condition of being cold—perhaps the coldest he has been. The film, however, focuses on the night as being cold: "Esa fue una de las noches más frías de mi vida." While in the diary the focus on Ernesto's state hints at the shivers of empathy for the couple's injustice that he surely must have felt, the film attempts to make this case more explicitly by emphasizing the night as cold. The metaphor of the cold night—as opposed to the person who is cold—drives home the point that he is beginning to see the bleak situation around him. This gradual opening of the eyes—like Freire's conscientization or Che's self-educating new man—is further underscored by the film's rewording of the final line, that knowing the couple made him feel closer to the human species. In the diary, Che does not specifically state that meeting

the couple made him feel closer to the human race, but the film clearly interprets his words as such. That is why Salles is sure to clarify this fact: "pero conocerlos me hizo sentir más cerca de la especie humana." And the film's reordering of the placement of the word "extraña" also indicates as much. In the diary, Ernesto's mention of the "extraña especie humana" could appear to be a judgment; the wording could suggest that the "human species" that he sees in the couple is strange and far-off, unknown to him; and this is indeed the case since he has had a rather "sheltered" lifestyle among the Argentine middle classes, and more recently as a medical student in Buenos Aires. In this way, such an interpretation would certainly highlight Che's own middle-class background in relation to the poverty he witnessed firsthand in his travels as the reason for his finding these "species" of humans to be strange. This mode of reading, however, would do little to further the ideological development of the argument of the transformation of Che throughout the film. Hence the necessity to reword the passage: "extraña, tan extraña para mí." Here, of course, the emphasis is on the strange, the feeling of strangeness that Ernesto feels during this cold, cold night. Rather than a bourgeois judgment, his comment in the film comes across as reflective and pensive, if not profound. In a way, this small difference seems to echo the fact that, rather than distant, Che is close to the human race, that he knows it well, and as such, he rightly identifies it as a strange species that is capable of terrible things, like the oppression that the Chilean couple has had to live through. Such seemingly insignificant changes as the diary is adapted into a film script are highly convenient as they serve to reinforce the logic of the revolutionary evolution of Ernesto to Che. Here, then, we see a Che who is close to and deeply affected by the plight of the oppressed masses, and this concern

continues throughout the film as Che and Alberto sit down on the sidewalk with indigenous women in Cuzco, or when the duo stop on the side of the road to talk about the plight of a laborer whose land was unjustly taken from him. While at first the two are more fixed on traveling or women, as the movie progresses, they gravitate increasingly toward the people of the places they visit rather than the tourist attractions.

Even though Salles offers a view of Che that presents him as the champion of the oppressed classes, he is careful to appeal to North American audiences.[71] To this end, Cristina Venegas astutely notes in "The Man, The Corpse, and the Icon in *Motorcycle Diaries*: Utopia, Pleasure and a New Revolutionary Imagination" that "[t]he film invokes this encompassing view [of a unified Latin America as a means to resist North American imperialism] with Ernesto's journey across countries but imbues its latent political influence with the romanticism of almost any dramatized road trip" (147). Indeed, the leftist, comunist political under- or overtones are quickly tempered by the "road trip" feel and picaresque humor. And this fact is present in some of the changes we see in the adaptation of text to film. For example, it is worth noting again that in his diary, Che calls the couple "obreros chilenos" and refers to them as the "representación del proletariado de cualquier parte del mundo" (*Notas* 72). Although the empathy for the communist couple was not removed from the film (Salles is sure to have the couple clarify that they were arrested for being communists), the fact that Che himself has (at this point in time) communist leanings was indeed censured. Of course, these leftist beliefs help explain why he felt particularly close to the couple and the "especie

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[71] This is particularly evident in the fact that the English subtitles for the film cannot be disabled, not to mention the fact that the film first premiered in the United States' Sundance Film Festival.

humana," but given the North American target audience, the idea of Che's ties to communism at such a young age would be difficult to digest, and it would, arguably, undermine the humanitarian message of the film. The process of censuring that this particular passage has undergone points to the efforts to disassociate Che from his politics, which is, of course, impossible. Nevertheless, the film manages to paint a picture that is highly palatable to North American audiences, at the same time that it resignifies Che's own legacy slightly apart from leftist ideologies.

Another key scene in the film exemplifies the metamorphosis of Che quite well, at the same time that it lays the groundwork for his enduring legacy as the exemplary revolutionary. This scene is one of the most open representations of Ernesto as a transformed and transformative figure. After months of travel, begging and conning their way through South America, they arrive at the Leper Colony of San Pablo. The head doctor gives them a tour of the facility, and as they make their way toward the Southside, where those who are being treated for leprosy are interned, they are offered gloves for protection, even though the doctor explains that their leprosy is not contagious, as they are undergoing treatment. Che, however, asks why they need gloves, if the patients are not contagious, and he is informed that it is the Nuns' policy that all wear gloves. When they dock their boat at the Southside dock to enter the colony, they meet two men who are visibly disfigured by the disease. When they greet each other and Ernesto extends his hand to shake, the men notice he is not wearing gloves and then ask the head doctor if Che understands the Nuns' rules. Che does shake their hands, and he is seen doing so by the Mother Superior, who scolds him. The tour continues, and by the end of their stay at San Pablo, the use of gloves is almost abandoned entirely, and a previously "rebellious"

patient is now happy and no longer withdrawn from the others. Obviously, Salles depicts Che as the benevolent revolutionary who has come to change the status quo and replace it with a new one where doctors do not lord their degrees and health over the ostracized patients, and where religion and hunger are not used as tools of manipulation. Erik Ching, Christina Buckley, and Angélica Lozano-Alonso note that "Che and Granado immediately begin challenging this hierarchy and separation by refusing to wear gloves ... and disobeying rules about separation" (248). The authors also affirm that the Argentines' other actions, like playing soccer, help "[build] a sense of collective identity" (248). In short, by simply drawing attention to the rule as oppressive, he also points out the oppression itself.

Interestingly, though, this important scene does not appear in his diary. Che does describe his boat journey to San Pablo colony, as well as the boredom and the doubt he experiences. And though he does write while at the colony, the passage we now have in *Notas* deals primarily with his birthday party speech. In fact, of the nearly two weeks he stays at San Pablo, this is the only entry that he writes there, an entry that, in reality, appears more egotistical than magnanimous and revolutionary. And, other than a casual soccer match and the details of the party, the time he spent at San Pablo amounts to, essentially, a birthday speech—which is quoted near verbatim in the film—he gave in the passage ironically titled "El día de San Guevara."

Salles' emphasis on the glove scene, however, is not unfounded; Che did write in more detail about his time at San Pablo and other hospitals for leprosy in letters to both his mother and his father. The letter to his mother, written after he left the colony, is available in the Spanish edition that is published as a movie tie-in edition, but not the

letter to his father, which is only available in the English tie-in edition. This is of note because the letter to his father is where we learn of Che not using gloves, even though he writes about the hospital in Lima, days before arriving at San Pablo. The following is the quote in English, as the original Spanish letter is not available in the Spanish language edition: "Their appreciation sprang from the fact that we never wore overalls or gloves, that we shook their hands as we would shake anybody's, that we sat with them, talking about all sorts of things, that we played football with them" (*Motorcycle* 145-146). This passage, and perhaps a comment made by Alberto Granado in the preface to his memoirs about the famous *viaje*[72] are most likely the bases for the scene in the film. The rest of their time there is in an appended text to *Notas* that is an unpublished diary entry available through the Centro de Estudios Che Guevara. These texts, in conjunction with one another, offer much more detail about his time in the Peruvian leper colony than Che's diary alone. And because his diary never mentions the "glove episode," as it were, the movie's use of Granado's diary and appended letters and texts in Che's diary is necessary. Regarding more information about Che's doctoring, at one point, he does state something close that could very well be his personal view of bedside manner, so to speak: "en más de uno se juntaron lágrimas cuando nos agradecían ese poco de vida que les habíamos dado, estrechándoles la mano, aceptando sus regalitos y sentándonos entre ellos a escuchar un partido de fútbol" (*Notas* 152). This comment, however, is not made

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[72] The movie also made use of Granado's diary, and rightly so, for *Mial* goes into much more detail regarding the colony, albeit about the mundane aspects of their time at San Pablo. In the English language, movie tie-in edition of his diary, in reference to wearing gloves at San Pablo, he states, "But nothing was as deeply felt as the meeting with several of the patients afflicted with leprosy who remembered our stay at the leprosarium of San Pablo—and this peaked when the youngest of them ... recalled the moment in which I shook his hand without putting on gloves when we met and said affectionately: 'After you two visited our hospital, people were kinder to us'" (*Travelling* xi).

about their stay at San Pablo, but rather before they arrive at San Pablo, while they are at a Lima hospital for lepers run by the renowned leprologist Dr. Pesce—the same place about which he writes in his letter to his father on June 4th, available in the English language edition.

To be sure, the two travel to San Pablo immediately after leaving Dr. Pesce in Lima, the man who, in the film, urges them to read Mariátegui's *Siete ensayos* (and other essays) as well as anything by César Vallejo. And so it is essential to point to the time spent in Lima, in the film, as the necessary precursor for what will be his final transformation in San Pablo leprosarium. That their time with Dr. Pesce is formative in a revolutionary sense is clear. Che confirms this fact when narrating a letter to his mother in the film, "Lo mejor de Lima, vieja, fue el Dr. Hugo Pesce ... Nos alimentó, nos dio ropa, dinero y algunas buenas ideas." But these details about Pesce and their time in Lima are almost exclusively derived from Alberto's diary in which he describes how close Ernesto and the doctor became; Che ended up referring to the latter as "maestro." Alberto himself notes that Dr. Pesce is "la persona de mayor significación que hemos encontrado en lo que va de recorrido" (*Con el Che* 149). Curiously, though, almost no mention of Pesce is made in Ernesto's own *Notas*. Nevertheless, the film holds on to Granado's account so that, ultimately, it is in Lima, reading in Dr. Pesce's hospital beds that Che seemingly uncovers his revolutionary self that will later become crystallized in San Pablo. The camera offers a medium shot of Ernesto and Alberto reading, while the gritty, original song "Leyendo en el hospital" sets the mood for the scene. The title of Ernesto's book—*Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*—is framed in the center of the screen. The camera cuts to black and white shots of the faces (or the

whole body) of people that the travelers have met along the way. The black and white images seem to suggest that we are peering into the mind of the future revolutionary at a key moment in time. Then the camera cuts back to Ernesto reading. This process of cutting to black and white images of different people (of mostly indigenous working class) and then back to Ernesto is repeated a total of three times, all while the echoing voice of Dr. Pesce discourses about revolution: "Mariátegui ... habla sobre el potencial revolucionario de los indígenas y campesinos ... Y que la revolución no será tal como una copia, sino una creación rica de nuestro pueblo." The encounter with Dr. Pesce is presented as a final precusor to whom Ernesto will become in San Pablo. Just before the Argentines leave Lima, they all say their goodbyes, and Dr. Pesce adds, "[M]e alegra que vayan a San Pablo. Me parece que ahí van a encontrar algo importante. Importante para ustedes."

And so, the last quarter of the film, which is spent at San Pablo, is a depiction of Ernesto's final transformation from Ernesto and his "bohemia sin excusas" (*Notas* 33) to Che with his "narices dilatadas, saboreando el acre olor de pólvora y de sangre ... [con] cuerpo listo a la pelea" (*Notas* 145). The film fuses his experiences in Lima with his time at San Pablo in order to make this particular story arch entirely clear: "The narrative objective of the film is to show that the journey with Alberto Granado was pivotal in giving rise to Che's revolutionary consciousness ... That message is not necessarily obvious in Che's diaries" (Ching, Buckley, and Lozano-Alonso 247). It becomes evident that the film prefers a somewhat revisionist history of Che's experience—at least as far as it is presented in the original diary, without appended texts—that will further serve the ideological agenda that seeks to present Che as such.

The Motorcycle Diaries *as a Filmed Diary*

Walter Salles' film is more than an attempt to create a master narrative about the transformation of Ernesto into Che, just as it is not a mere filmic adaptation of a text or even a period piece that is based on real-life events. Indeed, the film strives to not only bring the diary to life: in reality, the picture attempts to be a sort of filmed diary. In the film, when Ernesto and Alberto arrive at Macchu Picchu, they are shown writing in their diary; specifically, as Ernesto is writing amidst the ruins of the cloud-high city in the Peruvian Andes, a voice over speaks the words that his hand records on paper. Salles meshes the textual and the filmic in order to elevate the film itself beyond the realm of being *just* a motion picture, and this scene is more than just a visual representation (or reproduction) of the writing of the diary; it could be considered meta-diary, for in a way, Salles shapes *The Motorcycle Diaries* to be a diary in and of itself, as another entry in the archives of the (auto)biography of Che Guevara. In the same manner that Guevara would return to his notes and adapt them into a coherent, if not highly manufactured, text, the film is shaped and presented as autobiographical, as a diary in film form.

Salles immediately immerses the viewer in the world of written text in order to establish early on the film's link to the diary and, in that sense, begin to make the case for its own status as diary. The film begins with a fade in, not to an establishing shot or to the bodies of the actors, but rather to a quotation taken directly (though not verbatim) from Guevara's diary: "No es este el relato de hazañas impresionantes ... es un trozo de dos vidas tomadas en un momento en que cursaron juntas un determinado trecho, con identidad de aspiraciones y conjunción de ensueños" (*Notas* 25). No sound accompanies the text, which is displayed in a font that suggests that it was written on a typewriter.

Unlike the cleanly formed letters of the obligatory subtitles—as previously mentioned, there is no option to turn them off—the letters of the words in the quotation appear untidy and almost antiquated. What is more, they are written in a yellowish tone that is only perceptible in contrast to the bright-white subtitles. The effect of the old-style font and the yellowed color is that the text appears to be old, perhaps as old as the date that accompanies the quotation—1952—, as if it were written by Che himself more than fifty years ago. Furthermore, from the outset, this quotation immediately establishes the close link between image and text that the film exploits throughout the entire length of the feature. By including this quotation, as well as other excerpts in the form of narration or even dialogue, the film portrays Che as literally as possible, by taking his thoughts, his words, and putting them in the mouth of an actor who is portraying the author of those same words. What Salles does not make apparent, though,[73] is that the film is much more than a cinematographic potrayal of the diary's contents, as it brings in other biographical information not included in Che's diary. In a sense, we might even say that he recreates, on screen, the "Che" of the diary, rather than recreating the diary itself. That is to say, while Salles offers the viewer a "filmed diary," so to speak, he also goes beyond the text of the diary proper; by drawing from materials and sources outside of the diary in and of itself, Salles seeks to round out the image of Che that we see in the film. Getting at or—almost literally—fleshing out the "Che" of the diary, then, becomes the purpose of the film, even more than recreating the diary on screen.

As a genre, diary has received far less attention that many other types of writing, yet Philippe Lejeune—who is credited for his work in autobiography and for developing

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[73] There is a note in the credits that Granado's diary was referenced as well.

the concept of the autobiographical pact—devoted much of his later life to studying the diary. To be sure, the diary as we know it is a fairly recent phenomenon, though it is not without a long history. For the ancient Romans, a fairly common means of recording of one's daily life was to scratch information onto a wax tablet that could be melted (that is, erased) and reformed into a fresh tablet for the next day's notes. Unfortunately, though, the great majority of this information has been lost because it was destroyed each and every day as the tablets were melted down and made anew (Lejeune *On Diary* 56). Other technologies for recording information have arisen over time, including papyrus and parchment, but they have been, according to Jeremy D. Popkin, "too costly to make a purely private project feasible" (6). By the sixteenth century, however, an important development was already phasing out the practice of note keeping on wax tablets: "Everything changed with the arrival of paper in Europe. ... People usually stress the fact that paper superseded parchment because it was cheaper and easier to use in printing. ... [L]ong before that, paper had killed the tablet. By 1500, tablets had almost completely fallen out of use in Europe" (Lejeune *On Diary* 57). Almost simultaneously, the rise of global market capitalism and the gradual adoption of the modern concept of the clock and calendar keeping, it was possible for merchants to keep detailed and lasting records of their business. In this way, then, "[t]he practice of keeping a *personal* journal emerged in Europe between the late Middle Ages and the eighteenth century, at the same time as the mechanical clock was being developed ... and in conjunction with the appearance of the annual calendar and the datebook" (Lejeune *On Diary* 58 original emphasis). In short, Lejeune argues that a major factor in the development of the diary can be found in the practices that emerged—such as bookkeeping and other forms of "counting and

managing"—as the modern world began to take shape. Another contributing factor are spiritual journals in which devotees recorded their transgressions, which they would later recount as part of confession and correction. In theory, the individual "confessed" to the paper on which he or she wrote, and the idea of having to speak these sins aloud would serve as a deterrent for similar behavior in the future. Lejeune summarizes, "The idea of writing one's sins down in preparation for confession, and to prevent oneself from doing things one would be ashamed to tell people, comes from Saint Anthony (fourth century)" (*On Diary* 63). In a way, then, the spiritual journal gives us the idea of the imagined interlocutor—the confessions one makes to the page will, too, eventually be made to a priest; hence, the page functions like a priest—of the diary embodied by the famous words "Dear diary".

That diary is, in large part, considered to be a type of autobiographical text is rather self-evident. Indeed, it is also based upon other autobiographical acts: confession is the repentant "I's" telling of moral shortcomings, and the bookkeeping practices that also helped bring about the diary as we know it are an account (both in the economic and narrative senses) of the individual's life via a list of business transactions. Despite the ties to autobiography, however, it must be clarified that diary is not "autobiography" in the strict sense of the term that Lejeune himself delineates in "The Autobiographical Pact."[74] And so, it would be appropriate to say that where autobiography recounts one's

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[74] In this text, Lejeune establishes his criteria in his definition of autobiography and clearly states that a journal or a diary could not be considered autobiography (though it could be autobiographical) because it is not entirely retrospective. While the diarist does reflect, because a diary is a "struggle *against* time (pinning down the present...)" (Lejeune *On Diary* 170), it is, perhaps, more future-oriented than retrospective.

life by retrospectively looking back upon it, a diary gives an account of a particular moment in time from within that same moment, or only slightly beyond it.

Lejeune mentions "four distinct functions of the diary. Doubtless there are others, and a real diary fulfills several functions at once. These functions include expression, reflection, memory, and the pleasure of writing" (*On Diary* 194). Regarding diary functioning as memory, Lejeune notes that the diary, when it operates as a place of recorded memories, resists time and the process of forgetting that naturally accompanies it. And so, for Lejeune, diaries "freeze time" (*On Diary* 195). Furthermore, the diary not only fixes certain memories on the page for recall, but it also fixes the diarist there. The writer is frozen in that moment in time to be remembered later on. Lejune argues that writing a diary is something one does for oneself, for an unknown future version of the present self. In re-reading a diary, the future self will recognize the past self, and in a way "[t]he diary is a wager on the future ... a sort of abstract commitment to remain faithful to oneself" (*On Diary* 324). It is also a wager on the future because the act of writing not only leaves behind traces of the self to be recognized by a future self, but also because the act of writing a diary is a sort of confirmation of one's present existence (I am alive because I am able to write) that immediately provides evidence of one's past. Lejeune states, "While I'm writing, I survive. And then, as my body self-destructs, I reconstruct myself in writing by noting this destruction" (*On Diary* 197). Writing means the "I" lives on still, and the "I" is reconstructed by the future, unknown self who returns to the diary in a rereading.

Diaries, then, rely on the fact that the diarist is "close" to the moment being recorded (unlike one who writes an autobiography many years later), and as such they are

often characterized by a certain degree of spontaneity of writing, one that is not overly thought out, that is. The writer records the day's events and other thoughts with little (if any) prior consideration to structure or organization, and as such, diaries (ones that are not destined for publishing) are rarely revisited with the intention to edit them. In this manner, diaries are a type of expression that is firmly rooted in the present: the writer does not look to the future to plan ahead, nor does the diarist reflect on what is written in order to change it. What is written is what will be. Lejeune speaks of an exhibition of diaries wherein "all the notebooks were written in one go, clearly and definitively, with nothing crossed out" (*On Diary* 290). He continues to elaborate on the nature of the diary in general as a text that commands a sense of finality in the words that ultimately make it onto the page:

> [Even] the most obscure diarists say what is on their minds right off the bat, or at least they are wedded to their expression of it. If they add any nuance of changes, they do so by continuing to write, and rarely by going back to erase things. There are several reasons for this. ... Without realizing it, as [diarists] go about their daily lives they are mentally composing the entry they will write 'spontaneously' that evening. These 'mental drafts' leave no trace. ... Even if the result is unconvincing, the diarist forges ahead with what he still has to say ... He would never think of 'reworking' his text and if he does, he'll feel uncomfortably like an imposter leaving visible evidence behind. ... The ideology of spontaneity and the restrictive medium of the notebook (you cannot redo the page)

> make the diary something like a watercolor: retouching is out of the question, so you must get it right the first time. (*On Diary* 290-91)

The description of diary writing in this passage almost hints at a moral underpinning, a pact of diary writing, so to speak: to alter the content in some way, to cross out, change one's mind, to go back and edit are signs of an imposter. The diarist understands that the "picture" s/he paints must be accurate, even to a fault: redaction is not a possibility. Of course, in spite of the belief, the pact even, of veracity, Lejeune also mentions that a diary necessarily leaves things out, that it has more open gaps than it lets on: "The diary is a piece of lacework or a spider web. It is apparently made up of more empty space than filled space" (Lejeune *On Diary* 181). Perhaps, only in this way, in not giving the whole picture, is the diarist able to "edit" the diary during the writing process. Of course, though, Lejeune's remarks concerning the nature of diary concern the use of pen and paper; in recent years, with the advent of the personal computer, the diarist is afforded the possibility to revise without "leaving a trace." Lejeune notes, "The computer reverses this beautiful structure: word processing ... makes it possible to rework a piece indefinitely and undetectably" (*On Diary* 291). Unlike a piece of a paper where a scribbled-out word indicated a change, the computer's delete button quite literally undoes what has been written: there is no evidence proper, no scribble on the page. Nevertheless, even though the diarist is now able to freely revise and edit while writing, the idea of physically going back at a later time to alter the content from a previous entry is still very much against the "pact" of diaries. Lejeune continues, "If my sentence starts off badly ... and I start over—what of it? The only rule that must be followed is that the work has to be done at the time of writing, on the same day, not later. ... To me, the value

of my diary lies in its historicity. ... Cheating would defeat the purpose of the whole undertaking" (*On Diary* 291). Like before, when he states that an edited diary makes the diarist feel like an imposter, the French critic's comments reiterate the "morality" of a diary when he asserts that changing a diary ex-post facto is indeed "cheating."

It is of interest to note the emphasis on not editing one's diary. While it is true that diaries are a supremely personal type of writing, the desire to and the decision not to edit suppose the possibility of a reader. Of course, many (probably most) diaries are never published, and perhaps slightly more are ever read again (by the writer or by others). Even so, the impulse to edit or to redact indicates that the writer believes that someone will, indeed, read the pages being written; the diarist wants to clean up the words or thoughts recorded in haste or in hyperbole. It is not uncommon for a diarist to imagine the future, imagine someone (even him or herself) reading those pages later on, and wonder if the words will bring embarrassment in some way. And so, the urge to temper one's writing, to edit or revise, essentially, responds to the belief that a future reader is not only a possibility but also a probability. What is more, the "moralistic" denial of this impulse, too, affirms the consideration of a future reader: by not editing, the diarist "stays true" to the original text. S/he has not "cheated" and is therefore not an "imposter." The diary, as a result, is thought to be reliable in its faithfulness to the moment of writing, even if it is not entirely reliable insofar as its historical "accuracy" might be concerned.

When considering the moral/ethical aspects that Lejeune ascribes to the act of writing a diary "honestly," it is natural, then, to wonder about the implications of published diaries that have been, most surely, edited. More relevantly, what to make of Che's diaries, texts that have been edited, expanded, published, and at times reedited and

republished as a newer edition? Here, too, Lejeune's *On Diary* can be of assistance. Despite the language used to describe going back and editing one's diary—cheating, imposter—the French critic gives ample treatment to a work that has undergone no small number of changes from the "original" diary text: the *Diary of Anne Frank*. In short, Anne Frank kept a diary during her time in hiding, a diary that she went back and rewrote[75] in hopes that publishing the diary after the war would help her on her way to being a journalist. Sadly, Anne would never see her dream realized, but her father, Otto Frank made sure that the diary was published. In the process, he, too, made a number of editorial decisions about what to keep in the new, edited diary. At times he even overruled the judgment of the diary's author by recovering passages that had been cut by Anne in her rewrite. Without a doubt, modern editions of Anne Frank's diary are oftentimes a bit far from the original text, which is why a critical edition exists wherein the three main versions of the diary (the original, the rewrite, and the one edited by Otto Frank and later published) are placed side by side for comparison.

Even with the numerous changes made to the original, few would say that Anne Frank's diary is the product of cheating or that she was an imposter for rewriting her diary. To be sure, Lejeune himself states, "[The publishing of the diary] is a beautiful story about two true writers: Anne herself, since it was she ... who transformed her diary into a work of art; and her father, Otto Frank, who used the papers that had been saved to complete, respectfully and intelligently, the work that death had cut short" (*On Diary* 238). Lejeune plainly affirms that there are two *true* authors, which is why the diary is

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[75] She quite literally re-copied the diary entries on the one hand. On the other, she made wide sweeping cuts and changes to the content of the first diary as she transcribed its pages into a second "diary" of loose-leaf pages.

able to overcome, in large part, the fact that the text we frequently read is not the original. Even so, the diary "is also liable to make us feel uneasy. When we read a diary, we need to believe that what we are reading is literally what was written on that day" (Lejeune *On Diary* 238). In order to combat these doubts, according to the author, early on, editors made note of the fact that only small portions of the original were cut, and that "except for a few passages[76] of little interest to the audience, the original text is published in full" (qtd. in Lejeune *On Diary* 238). Yet, despite this explanation, some of the diary's readership began to question it: "[B]eginning in the late 1950s, here and there, doubts were also raised, with rumors and then accusations followed by trials: was the diary genuine?" (Lejeune *On Diary* 243).

One cannot help but see the similarities between Anne Frank's diary and the diaries of Ernesto Che Guevara. Recent English and Spanish editions of the diary (published by Ocean press as a movie tie in) include a "Nota a la primera edición" written by Aleida March (the second wife of Che) in which she explains the genesis of the diary that is now called *Notas de viaje*:

> Las *Notas de viaje* ... fueron transcriptas por primera vez por el archivo personal del Che ... Estas *Notas* tienen su origen en el diario que redactara Ernesto [para su viaje] ... Con posterioridad, estas vivencias fueron recreadas por el propio Ernesto en forma de relatos, los que se presentan al lector para ofrecerle un acercamiento más penetrante de la vida del Che. (*Notas* 4)

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[76] Anne Frank had originally omitted passages of a romantic nature. Similarly, Jon Lee Anderson pointed out that Aleida March's transcription of her late husband's diary that would become *Otra vez* "suppressed ... sexually graphic passages" (Moynagh endnote 275).

In effect, Che's diary, or what we refer to as a diary, is based on the notes he jotted down along the way as he travelled with Alberto Granado through the American continent. These notes would later be expanded by Ernesto himself upon returning to Argentina; he would use these notes from the trip to write short narrative accounts to fill out the details of those same notes. Like Anne Frank's published diary—which is an edited and revised text based upon an original diary—, Che's *Notas de viaje* are an expanded version of original notes. The published title of the diary, of course, indicates this fact—*notas* de viaje. However, oftentimes, editions of the book also mention something to the effect of "diarios en/de motocicleta." Nevertheless, the text, in and of itself, bears very little resemblance to a diary, particularly in the format: the entries do not include a date, but rather a title or place name. Thus, the editors include a timetable of dates as part of the preliminary documents that accompany the "notas" that Guevara wrote. Tellingly, the motorcycle "diaries" were first published in 1992 under the simple title *Notas de viaje*, with no subtitle that references a diary, though it is clarified that the text is "tomado de su archivo personal." The text was not officially labeled as a diary, yet by 1993, two different Italian editions had translated *Notas* and had labeled the text quite matter of factly as a diary.[77] The 1993 edition that appeared in Spanish—published in Ecuador—maintained the 1992 designation: *Notas de viaje*. By 1994, translations into French and German had also been published, and unsurprisingly, they took note of the Italian precedent by framing the work as a Latin American diary: *Latinoamericana: journal de voyage* and *Latinoamericana: Tagebuch einer Motorradreise 1951/1952*. In 1995, an

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[77] One volume published *Notas* alongside Granado's diaries in an edition called *Latinoamericana: due diari per un viaggio in motocicletta*, while the other published just *Notas* as *Latinoamericana: un diario per un viaggio in motocicletta*.

English edition was released (which would be reprinted in 1996), and it, too, labeled the text a diary: *The Motorcycle Diaries: A Journey around South America*. By 1997, a Japanese edition had been published, and it too referred to the text as a diary; yet the two editions in Spanish that came onto the market in the same year did not. Although the respective titles strayed from the original *Notas de viaje*, they still did not frame the text as a diary.[78] The first Portuguese edition in 1998 follows the trend of Latin American and Spanish publishers with the title *Viagem pela América*: no reference to a diary here. 1999 saw no new editions, and 2000 brought about reprinting of existing titles. Even eight years later, the work was not considered a diary in Spanish or in Portuguese, as far as the title is concerned. In fact, it seemed as though this might be the new norm, so to speak, as in 2001, a French edition eliminated the reference to a diary in its title and simply referred to it as a voyage on a motorcycle. By 2002, though, Ediciones B of Barcelona had added a subtitle to their edition: *Notas de viaje: diario por la ruta de Latinoamérica de Ernesto Che Guevara*. And in 2003 we see the title of the book appear in Spanish as it is currently known: *Diarios de motocicleta: notas de viaje por América Latina*, published by Planeta, as well as *Notas de viaje: diario en motocicleta*, as published by Ocean.[79] The Portuguese translation will follow a similar pattern in opting for *De moto pela América do sul: diário de viagem*. After this point, most references to the text mention a diary in the title.

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[78] The edition from Spanish chose the title *Viaje por Sudamérica*, while the Argentine edition, published by Planeta, employed a more personal touch in their title: *Mi primer gran viaje: de la Argentina a Venezuela en motocicleta.*

[79] Ocean press also published the official movie tie-in edition in 2004, but they chose to use the title *Diarios de motocicleta: notas de viaje por América Latina*, apparently for the sake of consistency with the film.

It is curious that only in 2002 does the Spanish title of the book first refer to it being a diary, but the motive for this change does not seem random. To begin, if we take the title, in Spanish, at face value, *Notas de viaje* is much more travel writing than it is diary. It is worthwhile to remember that travel writing, unlike diary, is permitted certain "sins of commission/omission" by which the writer may include or leave out details that "help" the narrative, even if it stretches the truth somewhat. Furthermore, rather than the sense of (supposed) immediacy of diary writing, travel writing is understood to take place after the fact, and as such, these texts are understood to be edited, whereas a diary is understood to be the result of an almost free association style of writing whereby the author's thoughts are transcribed, just so, onto the page. *Notas de viaje*, then, could very well fall quite neatly into the genre of travel writing, but the "problem" occurs when—early on in translation and later on in Spanish—the title recasts the text as a diary rather than travel writing.

This shift toward viewing the *Notas* as a diary rather than a piece of travel literature seems to stem from a desire for congruency with Che's other intimate writing. Indeed, other diaries of Che's had been published for over thirty years by the time *Notas de viaje* included the subtitle (or became the main title even) *diarios de motocicleta* in 2002 (his Bolivian diary had been first published within a year of his death and his *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria* was published in 1963). Unlike other diaries or "pasajes," *Notas* does not offer insight into specific, key moments of his life—like the Cuban revolution, for example—, at least not in a way that was of immediate interest to readers of the time. As such, Moynagh notes, "The book ... was ultimately published because of who Ernesto Guevara later became" (151). In effect, *Notas* relies upon the

context outside of itself; Che's life after his travels give meaning to the diary as a "text [that] is most often read biographically as proto-Che" (Moynagh 151). And so, unlike the "how" that the series of "pasajes" diaries provides (How did Che do what he did?), *Notas* gives us the "why": why did Che become what he became? Perhaps it is this fact, that the diary seemed much more autobiography than diary, that publishers in Spanish did not market the text as diary. On the other hand, foreign language translators clearly saw *Notas* as a diary, for within a year of its first publishing in Spanish, translations already included the word "diary" in the title (even when it did not appear in Spanish). Yet even though the work had not been "officially" called a diary by publishers, this does not mean that it was not seen as such even before the word "diary" made its way into the title of the text. We cannot say for sure if the film's view of *Notas* as a diary came to bear on the subsequent Spanish-language, movie tie-in editions of the text itself (it is worth remembering that the 2003-2004 movie tie-in editions in Spanish marked only the second year that the word "diaries" formed part of the title of the book), yet even before the text saw itself as diary, then, it seems that the film viewed itself and the text as part of the genre.

One of the primary ways in which *The Motorcycle Diaries* asserts its own status as diary is by mimicking Che's *Notas de viaje* itself. Salles includes not only excerpts from the diary, but also other elements of the published diary in an effort to create a filmed version of the text. In addition to using a typewriter font throughout to establish a link with the written word, the film also takes a cue from the diary by including the voiceover narration of letters from Ernesto to his mother. The film also takes on a life of

its own by supplementing Che's diary with outside biographical information as well as details from other sources, specifically Alberto Granado's diary of the same journey.

First, Salles employs a familiar diary trope as the film attempts to approach the genre. One of the most characteristic elements of a diary is the recording of the date. As has been previously mentioned, this aspect of the diary is linked with bookkeeping habits, and so by assigning each passage to a specific day/date, the writer establishes a sort of pact of veracity that legitimizes the writing as having occurred on that day and that day alone. Interestingly, the diary *Notas de viaje* does not include the date for many of the passages (except letters that have been included later on). Rather than organize his notes or diary by date, Che separates his entries by place or topic. For example, while the first "entry" is called "Entendámonos" and he even makes a "Paréntesis amoroso," sometimes he simply titles an entry "San Martín de los Andes" or "Por el Camino de los Siete Lagos." And so the editors include a table at the beginning of the edition that clearly indicates the days Che stayed in a given place. The fact that none of the diary entries have a date assigned to them is interesting and important because, in a way, the lack of dates means that Che does not participate in the "pact" of a diary, that it is written on the day mentioned at the top of the page and that the entry has not been touched or retouched since. Much to the contrary, since, as has been previously stated, Che himself edited his diaries heavily. Again, his *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria* underwent a pre and post publication editing, and recent editions indicate the changes made from the first published editions. *Notas de viaje* is no different: after returning from his travels, it is clear that Ernesto revisited his "notes"; he says as much in his prologue when stating that he no longer recognizes himself as the writer of the diary. Without the original

manuscripts, though, it is difficult to know exactly to what extent Ernesto the editor censured or expanded upon Ernesto the traveler's writings. In the editorial prologue, Cintio Vitier comments, "No se busca el acierto [en el diario], sino la fidelidad a la experiencia y la eficacia narrativa" (12). Vitier recognizes here a key aspect of the diary: that while it resembles a diary, it is, in the end, not a traditional diary. Indeed, one might more precisely refer to it as a series of short thematic essays, yet the fact that they represent a chronicle of a single life, and a single moment in that life, causes *Notas* to easily pass as diary.

The main difference, then, is the fact that, because of the use of section titles rather than dates, Che does not engage in the implicit contract of a diary. As Vitier notes, Che is little interested in maintaining the "integrity," so to speak, of a diary by writing on a given day and then leaving it be. Instead, Che clearly views the act of faithfully communicating his experiences as a more important task than upholding the implicit demands of a diary. And so, the result is a text that appears and is purported to be a diary, but in the end it is not fully a diary.

Interestingly, Salles' film comes much closer to maintaining the pact of a diary than *Notas* ever does, and in this we observe the desire to not only draw from the text, but also imitate the genre to which it supposedly belongs. Again, by the time the movie is released, publishers in Spanish have already started referring to the text as a diary, and for this reason it is difficult for a reader (or viewer) to imagine it as anything but a diary. Besides the fact that the film is called *The Motorcycle Diaries*, it is clear that the film treats the text as diary in its adaptation to the big screen. Where the text has titles, for example, the film includes dates and places, which not only serve to help contextualize

the events for the viewer but also establish a link with the traditional form of a diary. The epigraph at the beginning bears Ernesto's name and the year of the journey, 1952, and as such functions like a diary date that will situate the viewer in the proper frame of time. After this moment, while Ernesto and Alberto are sitting in a café discussing the route they will take, they mention twice that they will leave on January 4th. Then, as the café scene ends and Salles shows a busy street corner in Argentina, the location, date, and kilometer (distance traveled so far) appear in the lower right-hand corner in the same yellowed, typewriter font as the epigraph: Buenos Aires, Argentina; 4 de enero de 1952; KM 0. Within moments of the film's start, Salles includes four references to dates that immediately parallel the nature of a diary. The caption that appears in the lower right-hand corner will be a constant reminder of the trajectory of the trip, as well as the fact that we are watching a diary play out on screen. All told, some nineteen narrative titles that resemble diary entry headings appear on the screen and offer a highlight of the most notable moments in the journey. Curiously, the film seems to have taken care to give equal attention to the countries through which the duo travel. Six of the filmic diary headings occur in Argentina, five in Chile, and another six in Perú (two of them are at the San Pablo leper colony). Then, Colombia and Venezuela have one "diary entry" each. Looking at when these diary dates occur gives us a good sense of the pace of the movie, and in reality it moves quite quickly. Expectedly, in the movie, Ernesto and Alberto do not stay in any one place for very long—until they arrive at the San Pablo leprosarium. There, approximately thirty minutes of film are devoted to their time interacting with the patients and staff. It is telling, then, what Salles considers to be the height of the picture by the sheer amount of time spent at the leprosarium; it is in San Pablo that we see the

symbolic final destination (even if it is not their last physical stop) of Ernesto's revolutionary transformation. But because the written diary does not clearly make this argument, the film must piece together its narrative from Ernesto and Alberto's journals. What we have in the film, then, is a sort of hybrid diary that attempts to pass as a part of the highly standardized form of diary (with date headings and a link to the written word via the typewriter font captions) at the same time that it maintains formal proximity to Che's *Notas*: a profoundly reflective series of vignettes that attempt to convey a single narrative of becoming, of leaving behind "el que fui" (*Notas* 26).

Nevertheless, the focus on the difference between the writing traveler subject and the transformed editor of the notes does, in a way, reflect the experience of reading (or rereading) a diary. I have already mentioned how the diarist inscribes an image of him or herself upon the diary. This process looks toward the future with the expectation that the person who will be reading the diary pages will be able to recognize the writer's "portrait" as more or less "faithful." Of course, though, we understand that should the diarist go back and re-read old diary entries, it is likely that s/he will perceive a difference, that the one reading now (in the future, from the diary's perspective) is not the same as the one writing. Again Lejeune provides a useful perspective in stating that when going back to re-read a diary, "[y]ou no longer recognize yourself and you throw out your old skin, a molting. Or you recognize yourself only too well, and it's a little suicide ... But sometimes a dialogue begins ... There is the short-range dialogue, where you squabble with yourself ... you write ironic comments in the margins, or you add footnotes like a scholar" (*On Diary* 325). This is clearly the experience that Che had in reading his *Notas de viaje*, even though he was reading them shortly after having returned

from his travels. His struggle to reconcile the two versions of himself comes through his via explanation in "Entendámonos" and in the symbolic "Acotación al margen" where he sustains a conversation with a trickster. These definitely after-the-fact additions book-end Che's diary and represent his process of re-writing while re-reading. While he fulfills the most basic contract of the diary—to offer a "faithful" depiction of oneself at a specific point in time—he also breaches the contract in editing and commenting on the diary and then presenting these alterations and "acotaciones al margen" as the text itself. By describing his experience as re-reader of his own diary, he involves future readers in the diary process. In the same manner in which Che realizes that he and the diarist (the writer of *Notas*) are no longer one in the same, these self-referential passages that distinctly point out the change that has taken place also serve to frame the text in such a way that the reader will be able to see the change from diarist to re-reader as well. As such, it becomes almost impossible to read the *Notas* as just a diary; because we are to see the text through Che's point of view, we are led to see the difference between the diarist/re-reader, too.

Similarly, the film mimics the diary experience by taking this logic—that of forcing the reader to read the diary through a particular lens—and extrapolating it into the film. Overwhelmingly, the primary perspective is that of the Argentine medical student. However, it is important to recognize that just like the diary, the film also presents a before-and-after Ernesto. The viewer watches as the scenes unfold before his or her eyes, but the narrating voice that comments throughout the film is that of a Che who is reflecting on what is going on. It is not a voice that is speaking from the film's present; instead, it is one that is retrospectively considering the past. Just as Che's *Notas* begins

with a passage that comes after the end of the trip, Alberto's diary begins at the end, with the two going their separate ways in Caracas, Venezuela on July 26, 1952. Indeed, both diaries start with the end to frame the events that will come "before" chronologically but "after" in the text. Returning briefly to the campfire scene in which Ernesto and Alberto converse with the communist couple, the voiceover provided by Ernesto only makes use of the past tense: "Esa fue una de las noches más frías de mi vida. Pero conocerlos me hizo sentir más cerca de la especie humana, extraña, tan extraña para mí." While the use of the preterit aligns nicely with a diary's tendency to list the day's events, the comparison that is made here indicates a distance from the moment that is not characteristic of diary proper. Just like in *Notas*, *The Motorcycle Diaries* guides the viewer to an experience intended to parallel that of a diarist's re-reading. Executive Producer of the film Robert Redford affirms this fact in an interview that is included on the DVD release:

> They [the actors] went through really something to tell their [Ernesto and Alberto's] story, but what they [the actors] went through was exactly what the characters actually went through. So they [the actors] basically followed the path that was absolutely authentic, the actual path that they [Ernesto and Alberto] took on the motorcycle. He [Gael García Bernal] went to all the same places, and you see [these same places], but more importantly is you feel it. And if you feel it, then you're going to feel how Ernesto Guevara was affected by it.

In effect, the film not only reproduces the trip via the diary (and vice versa), but also it recreates the same feeling in the audience that the trip evoked in the travelers and the feeling that is apparent to the reader of the diary.

The fronting of the diarist's perspective is further cemented by the inclusion of Che's letters to his mother. Only seven minutes into the film, just after Ernesto and Alberto say their goodbyes to the Guevara family, the camera cuts to a shot that shows the road from the point of view of the motorcycle or the rider. The perspective is that of speed and open horizons as the fields that flank the camera on either side go rushing by in a blur of green. The shot is accompanied by the music of the track "La partida," (which is a slightly more upbeat reprisal of "Apertura," the slow guitar riff that steadily grows louder and more rhythmic), and as a result the scene inspires excitement and teems with the possibilities and expectations of the open road. Finally, Ernesto's voice begins to narrate a letter to his mother in voice over: "Querida vieja, Buenos Aires quedó atrás. Atrás también quedó la perra vida, la facultad, los exámenes y las disertaciones soporíferas. Antes nosotros se extiende toda América Latina. De ahora en adelante, sólo confiaremos en la Poderosa." The tone in this quotation is markedly unlike the more serious tone of the revolutionary, even though the language seems to prefigure his future rhetoric in which he points to a united Latin America that trusts only in the "power" of the socialist cause. Of course, since he is only beginning the journey (he hasn't encountered the other yet) and since he is writing to his beloved mother, this scene also offers a glimpse of a more sentimental Ernesto at the same time that it foreshadows what is to come. Indeed, his mother will be the recipient of no less than five letters that

Ernesto narrates throughout the film, and each letter finds Ernesto moving inevitably closer to the future that he is destined to encounter.

In this scene, too, the camera places the viewer squarely in the position of the writer(s) of the diary/diaries, Ernesto and Alberto. As the motorcycle passes the camera it is Alberto who is driving (even though we do not see their faces), but only a moment later the camera shows Ernesto as the driver. This may or may not be an error in continuity, but in either case, within a matter of moments, both travelers are shown to have been driving the vehicle. And just as they will take turns riding and driving, their respective diaries will be woven together seamlessly, back and forth, to form a single, fluid narrative of the events of the journey. For example, within moments of leaving, the pair almost wreck into a bus; these details are taken from Alberto's diary just as he relates them (18). However, the next scene, which features Che writing/speaking his letter to his mother is obviously based off of Che's perspective of the trip (even if I have not been able to find concrete record of this specific letter's existence).

In fact, in the film itself, the issue of discerning what is part of the diary and what is not (or what is a letter written to his mother, for example) is cumbersome. For at times in the film it is difficult to determine if the voiceover quotes a passage in *Notas de viaje* or if it is a letter (some of the letters that are narrated in the film do not begin with a traditional greeting or opening). To be sure, some of voiceovers seem to be simple narration or commentary until he addresses his mother at some point, as is the case when they enter into Perú:

> A medida que nos adentramos en la cordillera, encontramos cada vez más indígenas que ni siquiera tienen un techo en lo que fueron sus propias

> tierras. Finalmente, entramos en el Perú, gracias a un camionero medio ciego, Félix. Ah, y me olvidaba, hoy Alberto cumplió los treinta. Pero no en Venezuela como él lo había previsto. Estábamos tan fundidos, vieja, que ni pudimos celebrar.

The voice over here seems to be just another comment extracted from the diary. It is only near the end when he addresses her directly—"Estábamos tan fundidos, vieja"—that we realize that he is actually writing to his mother. The fact that the letters to his mother can be so easily confused as being part of the diary reminds us of the fact that diary is part of a tradition of confession in which the writer assumes the presence of an interlocutor when putting pen to paper. Modern diaries of course employ the more common and informal "dear diary" trope, and in this way, whether a letter to his mother or a page in his notes, in the film, Ernesto is constantly engaged in a dialogue.

What is more, the "confusion" of diary and epistolary genres in the film indicates to what extent the film places the viewer in the position of the Ernesto the writer. Thus, the film does not try to hide what it perceives to be a significant factor in Ernesto's formation: his mother. During his travels, Ernesto writes to his mother, his father, his aunt, and even a female friend. Yet, only letters to his mother are included in the film. As I have previously mentioned, that Celia de la Serna had a major influence on her son's intellectual and political trajectory is largely accepted, and Salles builds even further upon this ideological foundation. For example, in the film, when his father asks Ernesto why he is going away when he only has three exams left in medical school, he calmly and flatly replies, "Eso puede esperar." From there, the camera cuts to a close-up of his mother, whose subdued smile clearly brims with pride. Here, Salles alludes to Che's

mother Celia's role in educating her son. And so, when she witnesses his candor in stating his priority—life experience over studies—it is almost as if she foresees how this trip will change him, that he will return different than how he left. By presenting the Celia de la Serna as the "only" recipient of Ernesto's letters and by alluding to her role in his early learning toward leftist politics, the film parallels the diary's narrative of transformation. The assumption is that Celia is not only proud to see her son's increasing radicalization but also that she has played a role in it. As such, considering the film's argument that the diary is a revolutionary *bildungsroman* and taking into account his mother's centrality in Ernesto's politics, it is not surprising that the diary and the letters overlap to the point of confusion or even confluence. In a way, they are both part of the same story. And so, the letters to his mother are just as much a part of the diary as the core text itself. Hence the reason why, so often, editions of Che's diary include multiple appendices, particularly letters he wrote on the road.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have not set out to justify or take sides in the debate about the man we call Che. Doubtless, it is impossible to simplify or boil down Ernest Guevara's complex legacy into universal and generalizing statements such as "He was good" or "He was bad" or even "He was a hero" or villain. Rather, his legacy is a paradox: he is both loved and hated, and he has (or his legacy has) greatly benefitted from the "imperialistic" forces of global capitalism that he himself fought against. Indeed, Fernanda Bueno asserts that it is impossible to capture what we might call the "Real Che" (108). Nevertheless, from the time that he left Argentine indefinitely in 1953, he seemed

determined to become the solution to the problems that he saw on his travels in 1952. With good reason, the film *The Motorcycle Diaries* repaints the quixotic adventures of two friends as a political coming of age story. The young, carefree Ernesto confronts the oppressive reality to which he was previously oblivious, and the encounter alters his life's trajectory.

The film is much more than a "bio-pic," however. Indeed, it attempts to insert itself into the realm of the autobiographical as Salles creates a sort of filmed diary that participates in the genres of diary and travel writing, not by recreating the diary itself, but rather by recreating the Ernesto of the diary and then having the film function as a diary-like record of the journey. To this end, the textual foundations for the film are abundantly clear from the first, and the film's apparent parody of the written diary (diaries, in fact) garners it a credibility that is a result of what Lejeune has shown to be the inherent pact of diary writing. Furthermore, by passing as diary, the film implicitly suggests that it, too, is a true, spontaneous text that was constructed "in the moment," even though Che's own diaries were never this way, and the film—quite obviously—is not either. In the end, Che's legacy has been projected far beyond the political realm, as his likeness has become a ubiquitous (and somewhat confusing) symbol and as his diary/diaries have been remade for audiences in the United States (Bueno 113). The result is, perhaps, a gradual and continuous watering down or erosion of his more controversial aspects (like his stance on homosexuals or the fact that he ordered the execution of no small number of individuals), which, ironically, has been brought about by the things he so violently opposed: global capitalism, commoditization, and US intervention into Latin American affairs.

Chapter III

Refashioning Bartolomé de Las Casas: The Polemical Priest vs. the Holy Humanist

> "Pensando, pues, y considerando yo muchas veces morosamente los defectos y errores que arriba quedan dichas ... quise ponerme a escribir de las cosas más principales ... por mis ojos he visto hacer y acaecer en estas Indias ... Por manera, que así como no se puede negar ser el sol claro cuando no tienen nubes los cielos a mediodía, por la misma semejanza no puede alguno rehusar con razón de conceder hacerse hoy ... las mismas calamitosas obras que en los tiempos pasados se cometían."
>
> Bartolomé de Las Casas
> *Historia de las Indias* I

Perhaps one of Latin America's most notable figures, Friar Bartolomé de las Casas has come to symbolize much more than the habit that he wore. He was a man who, later in life, was ultimately driven by a single goal, and as a result he earned the title of Protector of the Indians and has come to be known as the father of human rights. Even so, he also feared that, someday, his efforts on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the American continent would be in vain, for time and history could easily wipe away the truth of the "calamitous" acts that the Spanish conquistadors committed against the natives of the "New World." In this above passage, Las Casas makes this fear known in laying out his purpose for writing: so that no one can deny what he has witnessed. Indeed, the priest understands the fickle nature of (hi)story-telling, that it is neither objective nor is it whole or complete. And the numerous tomes, pamphlets, letters, and speeches he wrote and gave make clear the very preoccupation with leaving a body of evidence that was not only extremely clear and direct regarding Spanish abuses in the Americas, but also one that would be difficult to erase. In this regard, without a doubt Las Casas achieved his goal of calling attention to the Indian cause as well as leaving

behind a detailed history of the Spanish activity in the New World through his own politicized lens.

Nevertheless, and despite what many would consider to be a lifetime of noble, selfless humanitarian work, his legacy is not easily or simply summarized. For before he set out on the course that he would follow for the rest of his life—that of attempting to reverse the tide of abuses and human rights violations that plagued the interactions between European *conquistadores* and colonizers and the enslaved and oppressed indigenous and even African peoples—he actually participated in the system that he would eventually condemn. Following the footsteps of his father, a young Las Casas initially embarked for the "newly found" Americas with the same dream as so many others: getting rich. It was not until over a decade after his first arrival on American lands that he would "repent" of his role in the destruction of the peoples of the New World and seek to stop any further harm from coming to them or others. Though a polemical figure during his life and in the half millennium since he originally landed on the shores of the American continent, Las Casas is often held, without a doubt, in high regard as a larger-than-life, admirable, and even heroic figure of the colonial period in Latin America; he stands as an individual who tirelessly fought against the establishment at the same time that he stayed within its confines.

In this chapter, I look at the complex legacy of one of the most recognized figures in Latin American history. Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas' legacy is complex because critics have attempted to frame and reframe his life time and time again. Some see Las Casas as almost saint like, while others view him as the instigator of one of history's greatest and most enduring exaggerations, if not lies, the Spanish Black Legend. Then, of

course, there are others who look to Las Casas as a foundation of certain systems of thought or a symbol or inspiration for social change.[80] The volumes written about this one historical personage are vast and seemingly endless, and new approaches to his life and legacy do not cease to crop up.[81] I do not intend, however, to address the controversy surrounding Las Casas in order to resolve it in any way, for while there exists no real dispute that Las Casas was indeed an important figure in history, there is no lack of texts on both sides of the argument regarding how to view Las Casas, as a savior or a meddler, a saint or a delusional "yellow journalist," so to speak. Though this debate is not new, and it does not promise to end any time soon, it is still part of the Las Casas legacy, and it is, therefore, a necessary part in my treatment of him.

The recent film *También la lluvia* takes up the very issue of the shaping of Las Casas' legacy and how it continues to be refashioned by setting the fictional filming of a docu-drama including the figure of Las Casas against the background of social unrest in Bolivia during the Cochabamba water wars at the turn of the new millennium. Given that tendencies to generalize abound when it comes to Las Casas and his legacy, I will present a brief biographical sketch to contextualize and understand just how contemporaries of the friar viewed him. What is more, I will delve into other central views concerning Las Casas and his posthumous memory. Finally, I will conduct a detailed analysis of the film *También la lluvia* and demonstrate how the motion picture problematizes the legacy of the priest by offering a fictional, filmic hagiography of Las Casas that is ultimately

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[80] Erik Camayd-Freixas, for example, points to Las Casas' effect on the Liberation Theology movements (187).

[81] Work on Las Casas branches beyond biographies or texts that rehash the age-old debate about the friar. The recently published volume by Santa Arias and Eyda Merediz, for example, offers a number of articles that speak to interdisciplinary, pedagogical approaches to Las Casas, his life, and his thought.

interrupted by the reality of the Bolivian water crisis, thus offering a narrative of conversion that presents Las Casas as a flawed champion for human rights in a world of apathetic bystanders.

The Converted Conqueror: Biography of Bartolomé de Las Casas

The Spanish friar Bartolomé de Las Casas lived during an epoch of great learning, discovery, and wonder; world maps were being redrawn and long-held beliefs reconsidered as daring travelers pushed the boundaries of the known world. Las Casas was born in Seville, Spain in 1484,[82] only a few years before Columbus' landing in the Caribbean, and died well into the "conquest" of the Americas. The priest belonged to a family that, while respected, was of little influence or historical interest until his father, Pedro, participated in Columbus' second voyage to the Americas, and not long after, a rather young Bartolomé de Las Casas would follow suit and make his own journey to this island of Española in 1502, for, according to Daniel Castro, "he had been lured by the promise of a better life ... [which] included receiving an encomienda and establishing an agricultural enterprise in the Caribbean" (64). There, according to biographers Henry

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[82] Las Casas' birth year was believed to be 1474 until in 1976 Parish and Weidman found that 1484 was, in fact, his true birth year (*Polemics* 336 n. 4). The difference in the year of his birth, while subtle, is of more than little consequence, for it means that Las Casas' "conversion" to the Indian cause in 1514 happens while he is still a relatively young man of 30 (with a 1484 birth date), rather than the middle-aged man of 40 that he would have been if he were born in 1474. In a sense, this changes the way we look at him, for it means that his change of conviction came in spite of his what one might call youthful ambition, rather than as a result of the contemplation of having reached the fifth decade of one's life. Finally, it places his conversion just after the first third, more or less, of his life, and not toward the middle of it. In other words, having been born in 1474, he would have lived 40 years before spending the latter 50 or so fighting for the Indians. The difference becomes more apparent when we observe that, having been born in 1484, he lives almost twice as long in service (52 years) of the cause than not (30 years).

Raup Wagner and Helen Rand Parish, he eventually made a name for himself and even acquired land, which he worked thanks to indigenous locals in his "care" as an *encomendero*[83] (4-5). During his twenties Las Casas was ordained as a priest,[84] yet his religious duties did not seem to stop him from participating in the conquest of Cuba in 1512 (Wagner and Parish 5-6), albeit as a chaplain. Ramón Menéndez Pidal elaborates on Las Casas' duties in stating, "[Puesto que] no habiendo en toda la isla más clérigo ni fraile que otro en Baracoa, [Las Casas] tenía que predicar al Gobernador Diego Velázquez, y a su segundo, Pánfilo de Narváez, a quien acompañó en las expediciones militares, mitigando cuando podía las crueldades de la guerra" (8-9).[85]

Less than a year before he left for Cuba as part of the expedition led by Diego Velásquez, in December[86] of 1511 another man of the cloth, Antonio de Montesinos, sparked a firestorm by openly condemning Spanish practices in the Americas and, what is more, by refusing to administer sacraments or give confession to offending individuals. The news of Montesinos' bold stance quickly circulated the island and made its way to

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[83] An *encomendero* is the recipient of an *encomienda*. The *encomienda* system "consigned groups of Indians to privileged Spanish colonists; these grantees (*encomenderos*) were entitled to receive labor and tribute in goods from the designated Indians. An ecomienda grant conferred no landed property or juridical jurisdiction" (Adorno *Polemics* 100).

[84] Adorno puts this event at March 3, 1507 (*Polemics* 63), while Wagner and Parish surmise it took place in 1510 (5). Later on, the priest would become a member of the Dominican order.

[85] The critic's words in this passage are essentially a paraphrase of Las Casas' own account in which he states that "no había en toda la isla clérigo ni fraile, después de en el pueblo de Baracoa, donde tenía uno" (*Historia* III, 79, 282).

[86] Menéndez Pidal dates the sermon Montesinos preached at Santo Domingo to November 30th 1511 (3). Wagner and Parish state that it is December 20th of the same year (8), and Lewis Hanke states it took place on "[e]l domingo anterior a la Navidad de 1511" (*Bartolomé: pensador* 19). Finally, Las Casas himself places the sermon on the fourth Sunday of the advent (*Historia*, II, 3, 12), which is, in effect, as Hanke notes, the Sunday before Christmas (which would have been December 21st on the Julian calendar).

the Spanish court. Furthermore, Las Casas mentions that this particular sermon had a major impact on him—and understandably so, since Las Casas would be one of those refused confession. Though Las Casas does not clearly indicate if it was indeed Montesinos who denied him confession, he does state that the discussion he had with the unnamed clergyman—even though he would ultimately be allowed to confess—had a major impact in his "conversion" to the Indian cause: "Así que valióle mucho acordarse de aquella su disputa y aun confesión que tuvo con el religioso, para venir a mejor considerar la ignorancia y peligro en que andaba" (*Historia* III, 79, 283). Nevertheless, the young priest from Seville had not fully come around to side with Montesinos' and other Dominicans' outright and vehement opposition to Spanish abuses and the *encomienda* system. Lewis Hanke describes Las Casas' in-between state as a man of the cloth and yet another participant in the oppression of the natives:

> Fué precisamente contra hombres como Las Casas ... contra quienes Montesinos alzó su voz, y Las Casas fué uno entre los demás colonizadores que contribuyó a resistir el mensaje de Montesinos. Porque él, como los demás no dió ningún paso para cambiar ... y por más de dos años después de los sermones continuó jugando el papel del caballero y eclesiástico acomodado. (*Bartolomé de Las Casas: pensador* 22-23)

Hanke clearly points out the contradiction that Las Casas was living by essentially turning a blind eye toward the reality before him, despite the warnings of other reputable priests.

Perhaps Las Casas' delay in "converting" to the Indian cause stems precisely from the fact that he was able to justify his status as an "eclesiástico acomodado" because he—

in his own estimation—did not actively seek to exploit his workers. However, he also notes that his desire for gold was also quite strong, stronger, perhaps, than his sense of responsibility as a priest. Again, the paradox of being a priest and an *encomendero* comes to bear when, in his *Historia de las Indias*, Las Casas (speaking of himself in the third person)[87] laments his attention to wealth rather than to the souls of the natives he was given by Velázquez as part of his encomienda:[88]

> Diego Velézquez ... diole indios [a Pedro de la Rentería] juntamente con el padre [Las Casas], dando a ambos un buen pueblo y grande, con los cuales el padre comenzó a entender en hacer granjerías y en echar parte dellos en las minas, teniendo harto más cuidado dellas que de dar doctrina a los indios ...; pero en aquella materia tan ciego estaba por aquel tiempo el buen padre ... puesto que en el tratamiento de los indios siempre les fue humano caritativo y pío ...; pero no pasaba esto mucho adelante de lo que tocaba a los cuerpos, que los indios no fuesen mucho en los trabajos

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[87] In writing his history of the Spanish Indies, he takes care to maintain the air of objectivity as a historian, and so he frequently speaks of himself in the third person (though he does occasionally interject with the first person). Interestingly, then, his casual use of the phrase "si no me he olvidado" is an almost Freudian slip out of the formal use of the third person that comes right in the middle of his description of his "conversion" experience (*Historia* III, 79, 282).

[88] While, traditionally, critics sustain that Las Casas was granted an encomienda (rather than a repartimiento), interestingly, Las Casas himself does not seem to make such clear distinction between the terms. In *Historia*, as he is contextualizing his "conversion" narrative, he states that that he had been "enviando indios de su repartimiento a las minas" (III, 79, 282). Though it may have been the case that he sent indigenous workers to the mines, Las Casas is considered to have received an encomienda rather than a repartimiento, as the latter was established after the Cuban excursion.

> afligidos, todo lo concerniente a las ánimas puesto al rincón, y del todo punto por él y por todos olvidado. (III, 32, 124)[89]

Though we cannot be sure if Menéndez Pidal's assertion that Las Casas' "conversion" to the cause of protecting the Indians "no fue de pensamiento reflexivo lento y gradual; fue repentina y además de motivación algo inconsciente" (11), what Las Casas describes in the passage above does seem to indicate that the young priest—he is not even thirty years old at this point—was at the very least conscious of the fact that he should not abuse or overwork those who formed part of his encomienda. Again, though, Las Casas justifies his slack attitude toward his priestly duties and thereby appeased his conscience via his "good" or "fair" treatment of Indian slaves, for not only in the above passage, but also on a number of other occasions, Las Casas reiterates his benign management of the Indians. In one instance, having just stated that he sent Indians to the mines, he adds that he "siempre tuvo respecto a los mantener, cuanto le era posible, y a tratarlos blandamente y a compadecerse de sus miserias" (*Historia*, III, 79, 282). Even so, he does not shy away from admitting that his good treatment does not make up for his engaging in the unjust system, nor does it excuse him, as a priest, of not teaching them Biblical doctrine.

Not long after receiving the encomienda from Velázquez, Las Casas describes the circumstances under which he would experience the defining moment in his life: when he decides to dedicate his life to the cause of the natives. It is during this time in Cuba that

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[89] Las Casas reiterates these same ideas, in similar terms, when he, once again, takes up the narrative of what happened in Cuba in Chapter 79 of the third book (here, too, he uses the third person to refer to himself): "El clérigo Bartolomé de las Casas ... andaba bien ocupado y muy solícito en sus granjerías, como los otros, enviando indios de su repartimiento a las minas, a sacar oro y hacer sementeras, y aprovechándose dellos cuanto más podía, puesto que siempre tuvo respecto a los mantener ... y a tratarlos blandamente ... pero nungún cuidado tuvo ... de acordarse que eran hombres infieles y de la obligación que tenía de darles doctrina" (282).

his conscience would start to ponder his paradoxical situation as conqueror/clergy and the reality of the suffering around him. In his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, he relates a very condensed version of the story of Chief Hatuey who, before being burned alive, exclaimed that he would rather go to hell than be with Spaniards in heaven (92).[90] This particularly dramatic account has been cited many times by biographers and also makes its way into the film *También la lluvia* as one of the few scenes that we actually see of the would-be docu-drama. Additionally, it is while he is in Cuba that Las Casas bears witness to the massacre of helpless victims, which he describes in detail in his *Brevísima*:

> Una vez, saliéndonos a recebir con mantenimientos y regalos ... y llegados allá nos dieron gran cantidad de pescado y pan y comida con todo lo que más pudieron. Súbitamente se les revistió el diablo a los cristianos, y meten a cuchillo en mi presencia (sin motivo ni causa que tuviesen) más de tres mil ánimas ... Allí vide tan grandes crueldades que nunca los vivos tal vieron ni pensaron ver" (92-93).

This account, which is also mentioned in Las Casas' *Historia de las Indias* (III, 29-30), is but one anecdote of the incidents of massacres and other human rights violations that took place while the priest was in Cuba. The story of Hatuey, the Indian chief, as well as an instance where Las Casas himself had assured the natives they would be treated well but were subsequently massacred are also described in this brief chapter. Again, though, despite being "a horrified eyewitness" (Wagner and Parish 6), he still accepted Velázquez's gift of an encomienda for his involvement in the Cuba campaign.

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[90] In *Historia* (III, 21) this event is treated in more length.

Eventually, Las Casas felt the impact of what he witnessed in Cuba under Velázquez, and it seems that the events of that expedition, in addition to other experiences, converged in a moment of reflection as he prepared his Easter sermon in 1514. Las Casas states that he was reviewing his sermons from previous Easter Sundays and that he began to read in the Biblical text of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), chapter 34,[91] verses that speak out against ill-gotten wealth. The lesson he learned is seemingly that his prosperity had been at the expense of the natives and their souls, and so his priestly ministry was in vain. It is worth noting Las Casas' description of what happened is once more narrated in the third person: "El cual [Las Casas], estudiando los sermones que les predicó la pasada Pascua ... comenzó a considerar consigo mismo ... Comenzó, digo, a considerar la miseria y servidumbre que padecían aquellas gentes. Aprovechóle para esto lo que había oído en esta isla Española decir y experimentarlo, que los religiosos de Santo Domingo predicaban" (*Historia* III, 79, 282-283). Las Casas plainly states that it is the conjunction of various experiences from his past that come together to help him see the error of his ways: the suffering he has seen, the sermons he has heard, and the experiences he has had (probably referring, in large part, to Cuba). His mention of the

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[91] Las Casas quotes from chapter 34, verses 21, 23-27 of the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, though there are slight differences between what Las Casas includes in *Historia* and what appears in the Latin Vulgate. Menéndez Pidal takes issue with Las Casas having omitted verse 25 and confusing other verses (11), but the missing verse is actually 22. The explanation for this oversight, perhaps, is due to the fact that1875-1876 edition that Menéndez Pidal is using does not cite the passage at length but rather abruptly breaks the citation after the first few words and adds an "etc." André Saint-Lu states in the prefatory information to the Biblioteca Ayacucho edition (the edition I use in this dissertation) that the 1875-1876 edition is not based on the autograph manuscript but rather on a later one ("Criterio" xlviii). Considering that the edition on which Menéndez Pidal relies does not cite the passage in its entirety, it is impossible to know exactly the source the critic uses to determine this "omission" by Las Casas since Menéndez Pidal's text offers no other citation.

Dominicans is not unexpected either, for according to Daniel Castro, "[t]he Dominican order, under the leadership of Antonio Montesinos and Pedro de Córdoba, led the group of reformers emerging as defenders of indigenous human rights in America ... [and] became the main intercessors between the natives and the Spanish crown" (2). Indeed, Menéndez Pidal asserts that it was the help of the Dominicans, particularly Montesinos' influence, that allowed Las Casas to obtain an audience at the court in the first place: "Montesinos, su inspirador, su guía, le introdujo cerca del Arzobispo, el cual le dio carta de recomendación para el Rey. Ya está Las Casas introducido en la Corte, su principal campo de acción en lo futuro" (14). What is more, the fact that he was reviewing previous sermons is of note, for it seems that the act of digging into the past initiates this process of reflection that brings about his change. Furthermore, that he begins but then leaves his account of the Cuba expedition in the third book of his *Historia*, only to take it back up again more than forty chapters later, shows that he believes this moment to be worth going back to, even after such a long tangent.

After a few days contemplating exactly how he should go about addressing his new convictions personally and publicly, he decides to dive immediately into the controversy, and so his Easter sermon takes a decidedly political course that reminds us of Montesinos' sermon in both vehemence and effect. Las Casas describes how his newfound conviction predominated in the day's sermon: "[T]eniendo él [Las Casas] los indios que tenía, tenía luego la reprobación de sus sermones en la mano, acordó, para libremente condenar los repartimientos o encomiendas como injustas y tiránicas, dejar luego los indios y renunciarlos en manos del gobernador Diego Velázquez" (*Historia* III, 79, 283). After this moment, he jumps headlong into the cause by preaching to and

reproaching *encomenderos* and then by determining to "ir a Castilla y hacer relación al Rey de lo que pasaba, y pedirle con instancia el remedio para obviar a tantos males" (*Historia* III, 80, 286). Here, then, we see the two main thrusts of Las Casas' efforts on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the Americas: preaching and lobbying the ruling classes even more, as high up as the royal personages. Indeed, his most widely read text, the *Brevísima relación*, was originally delivered aloud before the Spanish court—over the course of a few days (Adorno *Polemics* 74-75)—before he illicitly published the treatise ten years after.

And so, immediately after coming to the cause of the natives, Las Casas takes action. These first efforts help to gain insight into the ways that he thought would most likely bring about change: politics and religion. To be sure, Castro notes that "it had become patently clear to Las Casas that the situation of the Indians could only be altered by applying direct pressure on the crown" (66). To a certain extent, this is the case. Las Casas played a significant role in the policies that would provide for protections and rights of the native populations, and Las Casas' efforts on behalf of the Indians are myriad and tireless, even if they also were often frustrated. For example, the New Laws of 1542, drafted the same year he orally delivered what would become the text for *Brevísima relación*, were extremely controversial in the colonies to the point that they were essentially "unenforceable, [which is why] the crown repealed them in 1545-1546" (Adorno *Polemics* 105). Las Casas, in essence, opts to enact change from the top down;[92] truly, his lifelong faith in the rule of law seems unshakeable, even though time and again

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[92] Interestingly, Las Casas' strategy to effect changes is the complete opposite of Che Guevara's: while Che seeks out a revolutionary movement of and with the peasant classes, Las Casas lobbies, to the court, on behalf of the underprivileged and oppressed.

the system lets him down. And thus, despite imperial law, the oppressive society in the colonies does not itself change, but rather forces the laws to change. In fact, early on, shortly after his "conversion" to the cause of the Indians, we see Las Casas' top-down perspective: "[D]espués de denunciar desde el púlpito, como lo hiciera Montesinos, su inhumana explotación y darse cuenta, él también, de que clamaba en el desierto, decidió regresar a España para alertar a las autoridades del máximo nivel" (Saint-Lu "Introducción" 14). Even Las Casas' grand "community scheme," in the words of Wagner and Parish, for a utopian society of villages where Spanish and natives could live peaceably began by lobbying the court and without consulting the Indians he was attempting to save (14-21). His view that change comes about not with the people on a grassroots level but through rule of law is likely a reflection of his heavy background in the Spanish legal tradition, by which he would view the law as the necessary and authoritative means to any and all ends. Of course, there exists some debate about Las Casas' legal qualifications, for while Wagner and Parish's biography of the friar states that Las Casas likely did not have a law degree, a later study was conducted by Helen Rand Parish that "support[s] Las Casas's receipt of two degrees in canon law, a *bachillerato* and a *licenciatura*, at the University of Salmanca" (Adorno *The Intellectual Life* 3).

After the defining moment when he comes to sympathize with the anti-encomendero cause, his life is characterized by his active preaching and traveling back and forth from the Americas to Spain. By September of 1515, Las Casas had already preached a number of times against the encomienda and had begun to develop a plan for a monastery where he and fellow devotees could live in peace among the Indians

(Wagner and Parish 13), and so he and Montesinos left for Spain to appeal to the Spanish court to, in effect, abolish the encomienda outright. As Wagner and Parish note, Las Casas' principle concern, initially, was to bring an end to the encomienda, for he believed that once the Indians were free from Spanish oppression, they would be converted more easily (15). Perhaps Las Casas did not want to see another case like Hatuey where a person rejects the Christian faith because of the very un-Christian actions of the so-called believers. In any case, when Las Casas arrived in Spain towards the end of 1515, he immediately began to make use of any political influence he had to arrange an audience with king Ferdinand, which would be granted on the "víspera de la víspera de la Natividad" (Las Casas *Historia* III, 84, 299). Despite some positive momentum (he was promised another audience), things would take an unfortunate turn with the king's death in mid January of the next year (Wagner and Parish 17-18). To be sure, this would be a pattern throughout the rest of Las Casas' life: just as soon as he would make inroads and progress with one leader or course of action, some event or shakeup would derail those plans. Las Casas comments on this setback that was the king's death at the end of the same chapter in which he describes his high expectations after meeting with the king; he had hoped that since the king had reached old age and was not otherwise occupied with making war, he would lend an ear to Las Casas and the Indian cause. Las Casas again writes about the occasion in the third person:

> Fue grande [el] pesar y angustia [de Las Casas] que de la muerte del Rey recibió, porque por ser el Rey viejo y andar a la muerte muy cercano y de guerras desocupado, nacióle muy gran esperanza de que, averiguada su verdad, las Indias se remediaran. ... [Y] así solía decir el clérigo muchas

> veces, que para remediar las Indias no era menester sino un rey, de viejo, el pie en la huesa, y de guerras desocupado. (*Historia* III, 84, 301)

Although this moment comes as a major blow to Las Casas' plans, he does not lose hope—instead he "recobró nuevo ánimo" (*Historia* III, 84, 301) and pressed on. Indeed, his optimism is evident in the above passage, as we sense a bit of dark humor, even in the middle of the heavy-hearted tone of this particular moment of frustration.

In early 1516, despite the confusion as to who legitimately had power to rule that arose in the aftermath of Ferdinand's death, eventually, Las Casas was able to arrange meetings to discuss his propositions for outlining explicit responsibilities of priests arriving in the Indies and for restructuring living conditions there. This utopian vision that has been called his "community scheme" sought to essentially establish small, nearly autonomous villages of natives near gold deposits and navigable waters, and close to larger Spanish towns and the hospitals in those towns. As Rolena Adorno notes, "these early recommendations anticipate the principles of the abolition of encomienda and Indian slavery and the restoration of the autonomy to the Indian settlements under the new Castilian king" (*Polemics* 73). The ideas that Las Casas lays out in this utopian plan would, in effect, be recycled on other occasions for other ventures, specifically, a plan—albeit one that would end as divisions crop up between the priest and the Hieronymites—to collaborate with the Hieronymites "para lo que habían de poner por obra en remedio de los indios" (Las Casas *Historia* III, 90, 326). At this point, Las Casas, while a priest, is not affiliated with any particular order—though later he would join the Dominican friars—and so his association with the Hieronymites is more out of convenience and commons goals rather than devotion to the Hieronymite principles.

The plan is presented and approved, and about a year after having arrived in Spain, the friar sets sail for the New World once more. Just like in the so-called "community scheme," the Indians would live near, though apart from, the Spanish in autonomous communities—"que cada lugar tenga jurisdicción por sí" (*Historia* III, 88, 315)—, with access to resources and hospitals. Shortly after before leaving Spain, in a letter dated 17th September 1516, Las Casas was given the title of "procurador o protector universal de todos los indios de las Indias, y diéronle salario por ello 100 pesos de oro cada año, que entonces no era poco" (Las Casas *Historia* III, 90, 327). Despite his title, and even though he had a hand in penning the instructions for the Hieronymite clergy, relations with his new partners had already begun to decline. Wagner and Parish state that "agents of the colonies had been busy at court ... they now began to frequent the society of the Hiernonymites and to slander Casas" (29) to the extent that the priest traveled to the New World separately from his Hieronymite brethren.

It is also during the preparations for the ill-fated endeavor with the Hieronymites, in 1516, that Las Casas submits a *memorial* that contains a remark that still causes controversy almost five centuries later. As Las Casas attempted to lighten the burden on the Indians, he "recommended that additional slaves, black and white (that is, fair-skinned Berbers), from the North African coast, who had been acquired in a just war, be imported for specific purposes (mining) and in limited numbers ... to protect the declining Indian population and to increase the crown's coffers" (Adorno *Polemics* 65). However, later on in life—if not rather soon after making such a comment[93]—, he would come to

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[93] Las Casas indicates that after having made this recommendation he came to find out that the captive slaves from Africa were taken under brutal and nefarious means, and so he attempts to justify and explain himself as having been ignorant of what was going on.

regret his endorsement of African slaves: "no fue discreto remedio el que aconsejó que se trajesen negros para que se libertasen los indios, aunque él suponía que eran justamente cautivos" (Las Casas *Historia* III, 129, 474).

It seems that his tug of war with the colonizers and the court, in addition to the stiff opposition that the encomenderos put forth, took its toll; for a number of years during the 1520s Las Casas withdraws from the public eye and into the private and contemplative life of the Dominican order. Then in 1527, after his hiatus with the Dominicans, he begins to write one of his most formidable works (the *Historia de las Indias*), which would not be published until 1875 (Adorno *Polemics* 89), and within a few years he has completely reentered his life of politicking, traveling to and from the Spanish peninsula. After this point, some of his most notable moments occur: in 1542 he appears before the court where he presents his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*[94]—which will be widely translated and read in Europe—and also participates in the formation of the New Laws, which, had they not been revoked shortly thereafter in 1545-1546, would have been the ultimate achievement of his goals: abolishing the encomienda as well as prohibiting taking Indians as slaves. Also, not long after he presents what will become the *Brevísima relación*, Las Casas is named the Bishop of Chiapa, a position he would hold amidst controversy and accusations of ambitious motivations (Wagner and Parish 125) until 1550.[95]

Thus, he states that "después, se halló [Las Casas] arrepiso, juzgándose culpado" (*Historia* III, 129, 474).

[94] The speech originally delivered orally in the Spanish court in 1542 was later published (Adorno "The Intellectual Life" 28) and disseminated as a text that would prepare future ministers in the New World (Arias and Merediz 11).

[95] Though Las Casas apparently did not resign from the position until this year, 1550, he left the New World indefinitely three years prior in 1547 (Wagner and Parish 168).

Perhaps the pinnacle of his political involvement takes place when Las Casas is already over sixty years old. In 1550-1551 Las Casas engages in a series of debates with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda at the Valladolid Council. At stake here was the system that had become central to the colonial (and even imperial) economy and way of life. Since the natives were "conquered" peoples, it was believed that the Spanish could possess (though not technically enslave—the difference slight and perhaps only semantic) and then distribute Indians workers as rewards to Spaniards. Though this series of debates is perhaps the most well know, as early as 1495, only three years after Columbus first landed in Española, discussions arise that question the justness of the practice of Indian slave trade and the encomienda (Adorno *Polemics* 101).[96] In the Council of Valladolid, a number of issues are treated, with the Indians' rational capacity comprising a major component, for if the Indians were not rational beings, they could not, therefore, govern themselves, nor could they accept the gospel (and so it was not ethically wrong for Catholics to enslave them). Rolena Adorno summarizes the main issues of the debate thusly: "After Sepúlveda's and Las Casas's disagreement on the question of the Indians' right to self-governance ..., the second great point of contention between them was the relationship between the waging of war and the preaching of the gospel. The maximum contest in this regard was the Valladolid debates" (*Polemics* 120). When the debates cease, though, not much has changed. And, in reality, the discussion did not even end, for both participants—Las Casas and Sepúlveda—go on to publish manuscripts that respond to each other and further iterate their positions. Nevertheless, these sessions

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[96] Rolena Adorno's chapter "Councilors Warring at the Royal Court," in *Polemics of Possession*, offers a succinct yet informative trajectory of the argument surrounding these practices up to the Valladolid debates.

constitute one of the moments in which the question of the correctness of Spain's actions was most at the forefront of the colonial conversation.

Finally, in 1552 Las Casas publishes his *Brevísima relación*—the written version of a treatise presented before the court a decade prior—, even though the Inquisition had not approved it. But it must also be noted that this was not the only text that Las Casas was working on or even published at the time. Wagner and Parish state that from 1552-53, in total, he "printed the eight tracts in defense of the Indians that would make his name found (or notorious) to the ends of the earth ... The group as a whole represented Casas' major polemical writings of the previous ten years, in handy condensed form" (186). Besides the *Brevísima relación,* the other seven titles that further elaborated on the gruesome happenings of the New World, outlined confession guidelines for priests, and rehashed arguments from the Valladolid debate. Despite these formidable efforts to further the cause, the fact that Las Casas circumvented the formal and official processes set forth by the Inquisition served, as if it were possible, to only augment the controversy surrounding the former Bishop: "Casas's boldness in printing these eight tracts, without any licenses, did not go unchallenged ... [he] was actually denounced to the Inquisition, who prevented the publication of a ninth tract" (Wagner and Parish 187). Wagner and Parish go on to speculate, if not stoke the proverbial fire regarding Las Casas and Sepúlveda, on whether or not is was the priest's adversary at Valladolid who had denounced him. Nevertheless, even in the later years of his life[97] and despite a never-

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[97] Las Casas died on June 20th, 1566.

ending tide of opposition, Las Casas never stopped writing[98] about and fighting for the cause he began to champion in 1514.

The Controversial Legacies of Las Casas

With nearly half a millennium of perspective with which to reflect upon the life of this extraordinary figure, perhaps it would become easier to view the friar Bartolomé de Las Casas through increasingly rose-colored lenses. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny what Lewis Hanke affirms about the continuing debate that comprises the literature concerning Las Casas: "Time has not wrought its usual softening influence, and the memory of Las Casas has been kept fresh by keen and active disputation" (*Bartolomé de Las Casas: Bookman* 84). Of course, Hanke makes this claim in the early 1950s, and just over a decade later, Menéndez Pidal publishes his controversial *El padre Las Casas: su doble personalidad*. While it is true that today the friar is often remembered for his endless campaigning for the rights of natives in the Spanish colonies,[99] Las Casas is not without his detractors,[100] and his life is not without its less memorable moments. And so, a

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[98] Wagner and Parish affirm that Las Casas continued working on *Historia* and *Apologética* at least into the 1560s (195); Adorno, however, states that he probably finished *Historia* by 1559 (*Polemics* 89).

[99] A recent Internet trend seeks to replace Columbus Day in the United States with Bartolomé de Las Casas day.

[100] As I have already alluded to, Ramón Menéndez Pidal's *El Padre Las Casas: su doble personalidad* is one of the more notable arguments for a reconsideration of Las Casas' legacy through the lens of an unimpressive—his major works "no hallaron un editor coetáneo (vi)—, unoriginal—"Todo lo que después hizo Las Casas fue una repetición de las ideas y de la vehemencia de Montesinos" (5)—, and ultimately paranoiac (xiv) man who managed to make a one-sided narrative eventually pass as truth. Menéndez Pidal makes known one of his primary concerns regarding the Lascasian legacy in his introduction: "[*La brevísima*] carece de valor histórico, pues sin ninguna precisión en los datos, está destinado a sostener que los españoles nunca hicieron en América otra cosa que robar, destruir, atormentar y matar millones y millonadas de indios, y este opúsculo

polemical figure in various aspects, the friar's legacy is as complicated and multi-layered as it is noteworthy, which is why Daniel Castro, in his recent volume, echoes Hanke's words in stating, "Rarely has a protagonist in the drama of the colonial encounter become the object of such uninhibited hagiographic adoration or condemnation by his contemporaries and future generations as the crusading Las Casas" (63). Currently, however, the debate over Las Casas seems to have taken on a more tempered tone in that critics praise his efforts at the same time that they recognize his shortcomings, as it has become increasingly difficult to simplify or distill this singular life down to one particular view that seeks to paint him as a hero or villain. Even so, this does not mean that recent scholarship is not without differences of opinion or even novel perspectives on how we might consider the man of the cloth. Again Castro, for example, attempts to situate himself in the complex dialogue surrounding the friar by questioning the religious role of Las Casas; the introduction to his *Another Face of Empire* bears the interrogative title, "Bartolomé de Las Casas: Savior of Indoamerica?" Indeed, Castro seeks to problematize the legacy of the Spaniard by asking questions like whether or not Las Casas was guilty of "ecclesiastic imperialism" (6). That is to say, Las Casas' efforts on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the Americas constitute a form of "pseudo-humanism" (Castro 7) insomuch as the priest did not seek the outright freedom of the Indians, per se. In reality, his steadfast belief in the necessity to proselytize and convert them, in addition to his pragmatic appeals to the Spanish court, indicate a support of the Indian cause that was apparently motivated by and contingent upon imperialistic and spiritual ends, which is to say incorporation into the Spanish empire and acceptance of Christian beliefs: "Wittingly

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con algunos fragmentos de otros folletos, es el *único* fundamento de la fama mundial del Obispo" (vi original emphasis).

or unwittingly, he served the role of an imperial agent at the service of a king who not only tolerated his particular form of dissent but encouraged it because it benefited his august interests" (Castro 76).

Without a doubt, few individuals' lives and work have sparked such a wide-ranging and lasting dialogue as the sixteenth-century Spaniard's. Nevertheless, despite the fact that he is viewed as a founder of international human rights,[101] and even though it is not difficult to admire his perseverance and conviction, the historical figure of Las Casas was not without his fair share of opponents, both during and after his lifetime. As I have already begun to articulate in the brief biographical sketch of this singular personage, for every victory we might also point to a defeat, and for all the reasons to praise Las Casas there are also motives to question his legacy. In the following section, I provide a succinct outline of some of the principle protagonists and arguments, both positive and negative, that have come to inform the controversial[102] legacy of the friar. More specifically, while modern perspectives recognize his strengths and shortcomings, many critics, present and past, have opted for a more one-sided method either for or against the friar, and so I also detail the main points of contention that necessarily comprise and round out a fuller perspective of his controversial legacy, giving specific

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[101] In "From Conquest to Constitutions: Retrieving a Latin American Tradition of the Idea of Human Rights," Paolo G. Carozza "argues for the recognition of a distinct Latin American tradition within the global discourse of human rights" (281). That argument is rooted in the legacy of Las Casas, who "[embodied] the encounter between sixteenth century neoscholasticism and the New World" (289) out of which "the modern idea of human rights" (289) was born. Carozza states that Las Casas "contributed to the idea of human rights in a way that was unique and not simply derivative of Spanish thought. He became the first notable American proponent of the idea of human rights" (291).

[102] I do not use the word "controversial" with a negative connotation. Instead, I simply use it to state the fact that there is controversy or debate surrounding Las Casas and his place in history.

attention to his role in the encomienda and in African slave trade, as well as to the accusations that he is the origin of the unjust portrayal of Spanish activity in the New World via the Black Legend. Finally, I will offer a brief sketch of other critics of Las Casas both during and after his lifetime.

Points of Contention in the Lascasian Legacy

When discussing the legacy of the friar, certain topics or recurring points of contention crop up time and again. Perhaps the most notable issue involving Las Casas, one that, for many, tarnishes his legacy's bright sheen, is his early participation in the encomienda system and then his supposed support of African slavery. In a way, these are two separate issues that are linked and, as a result, grouped categorically under the idea that would represent Las Casas as an oppressive "conquistador."

There is no denying the fact that Las Casas did "participate" in conquests and that he did receive an encomienda grant. As I have already mentioned, Las Casas acknowledges this fact in his *Historia*, even if he does also clarify that he was also kind and reasonable with those in his encomienda. Not to mention that just over a decade after first stepping foot on the New World, Las Casas is "converted" to the cause of the Indians and sets free those Indians in his encomienda. Even so, and in spite of the fact that when Las Casas came to the American continent at the age of eighteen in 1502 he had already taken steps in the religious order by receiving the tonsure (Castro 63), at this point in his life it seems likely that his motivation for making the voyage was more similar to other lay travelers—to find wealth and adventure, for instance—than for the conversion of the native peoples (Castro 63-64). We must also consider other, more

patriotic reasons. Castro, for instance, attributes Las Casas' participation in the conquest both as a military chaplain and encomendero, partly, to the inherited sense of divine nationalism that came with the final "reconquest" of the Moors in Spain, which took place during the year of Las Casas' eighth birthday. The centuries since the Arab invasion in 711 had been a slow, yet fairly continual, process of reclaiming land in the Iberian Peninsula for God and country. This same "reconquest" of Spain mentality would manifest itself in the "conquest" of the Americas: "[T]here was never any doubt among the early colonizers about their moral imperative to bring the 'true faith' to [the Americas], and Las Casas seems to have fully shared these aspirations. The same zeal that fueled the *Reconquista* of Spain from the Moors was transferred to the conquest and settlement of the Americas" (Castro 7).

In many ways, this early "blight" on the legacy of the friar is one of the primary arguments against Las Casas—indeed it is brought up in *También la lluvia*—but it is certainly not the only piece of ammunition for critics who view the body of literature concerning the priest from Seville as willingly naive and tending toward exaggeration. In addition to participation in the encomienda, critics of Las Casas take issue with what they see as Las Casas' endorsement of African slavery. Indeed, it is not long after coming to see the error of his ways as an encomendero that Las Casas commits the mistake that will be scrutinized and brought up even centuries later. Wagner and Parish comment on the matter:

> In place of their lost encomiendas, Casas had suggested that some settlers (and the King, too) might hold slaves ... Many words have been written in attempts to absolve Casas from blame for such proposals, but he definitely

> did make them in this period. Slavery was then common in Portugal and especially in southern Spain, where he came from, and no one thought there was any harm in it. Not till much later did Casas gradually awake to a realization that Negro slavery was just as contrary to the will of God as Indian slavery. (23)

Indeed, Las Casas mentioned allowing a limited number of Africian slaves under certain conditions; however, he certainly did not intend for the mass "importation" of African labor as what eventually became the case. What is more, it is important to note that while there is no denying that Las Casas does advocate for African slavery, Rolena Adorno is careful to point out that he is not the reason why African slaves were brought to the American continent:

> The erroneous portrayal of Las Casas as the instigator of African slavery in the Americas has been a theme coloring the evaluation of his life and work since the eighteenth century. Contrary to popular opinion, Las Casas was not the originator of African slavery in the Indies, for it had begun within the first decade of Columbus's arrival in America. (Adorno *Polemics* 64)

Nevertheless, this notion has persisted; perhaps the fact that Las Casas' *Historia de las Indias*, where he laments this position on African slavery, was not published until the later nineteenth century has played a part in "allowing" this belief to continue to be propagated. Adorno offers a brief yet telling synopsis of how the view of Las Casas as the cause of African slavery came about and even came to be widely accepted by the beginning of the nineteenth century:

> The idea of Las Casas as the author of African slavery in America seems to have begun with Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century, specifically the works of the French Jesuit Pierre-François-Xaviera de Charlevoix ... the Dutch cleric Cornelius de Pauw ... and Guillaume-Thomas ... which interpreted wrongly a passage in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas's *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y tierra firme del Mar Océano* ... (1601-1615). The notion became solidified in the English-language tradition when the Scottish historian William Robertson wrote, in his classic *History of America.* (*Polemics* 68-69)

Unsurprisingly, then, the same critics who tend to point to Las Casas as the exaggerating originator of the Black Legend also find in him (albeit erroneously) the origins of the African slave trade.

In the third book of *Historia*, Las Casas attempts to explain the context of the dilemma. In short, Las Casas clarifies that he had, more or less, "signed off" on African slavery as a way to alleviate the burden on the natives, but no sooner had he consented (or even suggested) than he found individuals taking advantage of the new source of cheap labor: "[A]lgunos vecinos ... deseaban tener licencia para envicar a comprar a Castilla algunos negros esclavos, ... y aun algunos hubo, ... que prometían al clérigo Bartolomé de Las Casas que si les traía o alcanzaba licencia para poder traer a esta isla una docena de negros, dejarían los indios que tenían para que se pusiesen en libertad" (III, 129, 474). Las Casas offers more details about the situation in describing how, once licenses were granted for some Spaniards to bring slaves, others began to follow suit, and

soon enough a rush began to import African slaves while they could still buy the licenses. Of course, with the help of hindsight, when the friar reflects on his part in the whole matter, "se halló arrepiso, juzgándose culpado por inadvertente, porque como después vio y averiguó ... ser tan injusto el cautiverio de los negros como el de los indios, no fue discreto remedio el que aconsejó que se trajesen negros para que libertasen los indios" (III, 129, 474). Much of his regret also lies in the fact that, as Las Casas goes on to point out, the African slaves were not "justamente cautivos" (III, 129, 474)—as part of a just war—but rather were victims, illegally and unjustly taken from their homes. Despite his clear change of heart, the fact that he did advocate for African slavery is still a point of contention that comes up when discussing his legacy.

That the friar Las Casas had both allies and foes during his lifetime is without question, yet the voice of the cleric in question, whether rightly so or not, has come to drown out those of most of his contemporaries, for he remains one of the most prominent figures of his time. However, the fact that Las Casas the historical figure is recognized and even well known does not necessarily mean that the man himself—his life and his work—is equally well known and understood. As I have already mentioned, when dealing with such larger-than-life individuals, tendencies to simplify and take sides abound. For example, despite the fact that Las Casas wrote many works, from tracts and treatises to histories to sermons, one of his shorter, illicitly published pamphlets has not only survived the test of time, but also has become one of, if not the most widely read, of all of his texts. What is more, this particular document, the *Brevísima relación*, is oftentimes the only contact that non-scholars will have with Las Casas, and as a result, it is easy to characterize the entirety of his life's work by the tone and content of the

Brevísima. In his introduction to the *Brevísima*, André Saint-Lu affirms that "para la mayoría de [lectores] que, sin llegar a especialistas, tienen algún conocimiento de Las Casas, viene esta obra a confundirse, representándola por entero, con la figura histórica de su autor, así identificada de una vez para todas a través de estas tremendas denuncias de atrocidades" (11). This type of error, then, can be magnified and exaggerated to the point of obscuring fact. Such is the argument that some critics make, that given the widespread distribution and readership of this work (the *Brevísima*), its exaggerating tone has been a major contributor to the misrepresentation of the Spanish nation, specifically as it relates to the so-called "leyenda negra" (Adorno *Polemics* 78).

It is not surprising that such a polarizing man like Las Casas and his work (again, the impassioned *Brevísima* in particular) have been the basis for a debate that has been going on for some five centuries. To be sure, though it was published illegally and then censured in Spain, his *Brevísima* was, from the first, rather well received outside Spain once it was first translated into Flemish in 1578 (Adorno *Polemics* 78), for it offered critics an easy and readily available—not to mention irrefutable[103]—source of ammunition. André Saint-Lu brings to light the extent to which this work and its content reverberates around Europe (particularly outside of Spain) after being published:

> Pocas ediciones hubo en España ... hasta tiempos recientes, tardando casi un siglo la segunda (1646) ... La obra, al parecer, no estaba en olor de santidad en la patria del autor. Menudean en cambio las publicaciones extranjeras en el último cuarto del siglo (a partir de 1578) y durante todo

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[103] Having been written by a priest who, as a Spaniard, had actually witnessed the events about which he writes in his book, the account of the *Brevísima* is altogether difficult to undermine.

> el XVII. Las más numerosas son las holandesas[104] ... seguidas por las francesas y las inglesas, y luego las alemanas e italianas. ... [S]altan a la vista las intenciones antiespañolas de los editores. ... Vale decir que el escrito lascasiano ... se utiliza ahora como arma ofensiva por un país europeo, y protestante, abiertamente rebelado contra la oprresiva dominación española. ("Introducción" 47)

Saint-Lu goes on to note that many other editions that have been published tend to flood the market with anti-Spanish sentiment at times of war or conflict, specifically mentioning Hapsburg Spain and the Spanish-American wars of independence ("Introducción" 47-49). And so we may observe, very early on, even while the cleric was still alive, the co-opting of his legacy for personal, geo-political, and intellectual purposes. In this manner, then, some have come to view Las Casas as the principle source of the "leyenda negra," or the Spanish Black Legend. Though the so-called Black Legend did not come to be known as such until the twentieth century, the origins of the anti-Spanish sentiment date back to the time of the conquest (or before), and Las Casas' *Brevísima* is seen as a central factor. Regardless of whether or not Las Casas was the "original" source of the Black Legend, the friar's most known text, the *Brevísima*, has historically been a powerful propagandistic tool that countries, peoples, and movements have looked to as a means to promote anti-Spanish sentiment.

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[104] The Dutch published nearly twenty editions of the text in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, according to Saint-Lu ("Introducción" 47). Indeed, this is not entirely surprising considering that the Dutch nation's Protestant views contrasted with Spain's Catholicism.

Principle Players in the Las Casas Opposition

Though critics have debated Las Casas' status as encomendero as well as his advocating for African slavery, and have even traced the origins of the leyenda negra to the friar, contemporaries of the man of God rebuffed his unrealistic approach to the complexities of the encomienda system and the general treatment of the Indians. It is only natural that those who are directly profiting from an exploited labor force resist Las Casas' calls for reform; the abolition of the encomiendas meant, in short, financial ruin for no small number of Spaniards. Indeed, outrage at his outspoken condemning of the encomienda reached such heights that Las Casas even had to go into hiding at times. During his failed attempt at collaborating with the Hieronymites, according to one critic, "[p]ublic resentment against Casas had meanwhile risen so high that the Dominicans took him into their monastery, where he was at least safe at night" (Wagner and Parish 30).

What is more, Las Casas had not only incensed the general public, but his would-be religious brothers, too, for later on in his life, Las Casas engaged in a feud of sorts with another man who had taken orders, the Franciscan Toribio Benavente. Benavente, also known as Motolinía, accused Las Casas of not only being overly idealistic and not truly understanding the reality of the situation in the American continent, but also a hypocrite who also exploited the natives by requiring their services without pay or by refusing to administer sacraments unto them (Castro 165-66). According to Francis Augustus MacNutt, Motolinía "described [Las Casas] as a restless, turbulent man, who wandered from one colony to another, provoking disturbances and scandals" (xix). Indeed, Motolinía's view of Las Casas seems to mirror the opinion of many who opposed the friar. Accordingly, then, Castro takes a tempered but admittedly revisionist view of

the friar in describing him as less of a paternal figure than a paternalistic one whose chief aim was, essentially, that of ecclesiastical imperialism. While Castro does do a fine enough job of maintaining a balanced approach in addressing the polemical figure, it is clear that his intention is in no way an apology. Without a doubt, Las Casas represents, for Castro, "another face of empire," the concept to which the book's title refers. Reading Las Casas from an imperialist eye or through the lens of the struggle of power, however, is not a new perspective, for Lewis Hanke mentions in his text published over sixty years ago that, for some, Las Casas was a "pre-Marxist" (*Bartolomé de Las Casas: Bookman* 84).

In fact, though Las Casas did much for and with the indigenous populations directly, much of his work involves lobbying and appealing to the Spanish crown. In the "Argumento" for his *Brevísima*, he addresses Prince Felipe, in charge of governing the Spanish Indies, "para que Su Alteza fuese en que se les denegase [a los españoles]" (70). Indeed, the whole of the *Brevísima relación* is an attempt to appeal to the moral, emotional, and logical senses of those in authority, and he routinely mentions that the crimes he has witnessed are unchristian and jeopardize the souls of the Indians and the Spanish alike (172-174). And playing on the word "destruction," he ends the work by stating that such acts as described in *Brevísima* "deshonran a Dios y roban y *destruyen* al rey" (177 my emphasis). So not only the Spanish colonies and its peoples suffer destruction at Spanish hands, but also the empire as a whole, even the King.

The 1552 publishing and subsequent translations of the *Brevísima* are not the only examples that crop up during the life of the friar. Las Casas engaged in a number of political debates and skirmishes, so to speak, while in the pursuit of his cause. I have

already mentioned his small feud, so to speak, with Motolinía, which is related to Las Casas' unrealistic approach to confession[105] and doing away with the encomienda. We can also point to the Valladolid debate with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in the year or so before *Brevísima* was published. As I have already mentioned, Rolena Adorno's treatment of this famous encounter in her "Councilors Warring at the Royal Court"—a chapter in *Polemics of Possession*—offers a detailed look at the context and the main lines of argumentation. Though by "midcentury ... discussion of the character and comportment of the Amerindian reached its apogee" (99), another topic formed the basis of the debates convened in 1550 and in 1551, particularly "the right of the Castilian crown to conquer the lands and native inhabitants of the Americas and, in particular, how to govern them" (99). Adorno's chapter traces the fluctuating tide of Spanish legislation regarding the issue, one that had been a major point of discussion even in the first years of the conquest.

Las Casas' adversary in Valladolid, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, grounded his perspective within the Aristotelian position that assigns the role of natural slave to the intellectually inferior. Adorno affirms that Sepúlveda's argument is based upon the idea of "natural slavery [which] consisted of a hierarchical relationship between those with the talent and training to rule and those who were better off being ruled by others" (*Polemics* 113). Adorno continues by further emphasizing that "Sepúlveda consistently interprets the inferiority of the Indians as a hierarchical relationship with respect to a superior

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[105] Regina Harrison notes that Las Casas' rigid guidelines for confessing conquistadors was a particularly sensitive subject for Motolinía, who "vehemently complained that Las Casas ordered that a notary be present at confession and that sins be painstakingly assessed before administration of absolution to conquistadors, *encomenderos*, and merchants" (28).

people" (*Polemics* 115). Even so, Sepúlveda does not argue outright for enslaving the Indians; in fact, he insists that once they have become more civilized in the European, more specifically the Spanish Catholic, ways, they may be granted more freedoms (Adorno *Polemics* 117). In light of his position, then, Sepúlveda's intellectual duel with Las Casas takes shape. In essence, if Las Casas came to believe and argue that the natives must not be subjugated before, at least, they had been given the chance to accept or reject the faith, Sepúlveda saw their subjugation as a necessary step in their decision to ultimately come to Catholicism. In other words, "[P]olitical subjugation came first for Sepúlveda and last for Las Casas; what was first for Las Casas (the peaceful acceptance of Christianity by the Indians) was last for Sepúlveda" (Adorno *Polemics* 121). Despite continuing the fight after the end of the debates via other pamphlets and published texts, ultimately, Las Casas' efforts could not stop the court from lifting the 1550 ban on conquests in the Americas.

Though Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda is certainly one of the best known adversaries to Las Casas, others have set out to rebut the priest. André Saint-Lu devotes some of his introduction in *Brevísima* to the critics of Las Casas who, either during Las Casas' lifetime or afterward, attempted to refute the friar: "Frente a las duras acusaciones del memorial lascasiano y a su agresiva utilización extranjera, salieron a la palestra varios contradictores españoles de distintos estados y condiciones" ("Introducción" 48). More specifically, Saint-Lu mentions notable cases from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries (in both Spain and the Americas) of individuals who published manuscripts in response to Las Casas ("Introducción" 48-49). For him, the Captain Vargas Machuca, for example, gives voice to the objections raised by the accused themselves, that is the

conquistadors, or those who participated in the colonization of the Americas and as such "contradice ... punto por punto las denuncias de Las Casas, invertiendo su visión antitética de los indios y españoles" ("Introducción" 48). Despite Saint-Lu's mention of other more obscure texts, the modern case for anti-lascasian sentiment has found, perhaps, its most fertile soil within the texts of Menéndez y Pelayo, who "le culpa [a Las Casas] de fanático e intolerante" ("Introducción" 50-51), and the aforementioned Ramón Menéndez Pidal's text from 1963. Of course, we might also include in this list Daniel Castro's more recent critique or critical reconsideration of Las Casas, which reframes the priest in light of his ecclesiastic paternalism, even if Castro does not attempt to "debunk," per se, the Lascasian "myth," but rather round it out.

Given the differing viewpoints surrounding the priest during his lifetime and since his death, it is certainly not out of the question to discuss Las Casas' legacy as one that is far from static or fixed. Indeed, this centuries-long debate has morphed and progressed as scholars add to it. But the legacy of Las Casas has also moved outside of the purely academic, as we may observe by the treatment accorded the friar in the film *También la lluvia*. In this regard what the film says about Las Casas in its depiction of him as well as the way in which it confronts his controversial legacy explicitly and otherwise provides a worthwhile measuring stick by which I analyze a more modern understanding and representation of the man of the cloth.

Las Casas the Historian

Having discussed his legacy, we turn to the texts he produced. Indeed, as a clergyman, we are not suprised that Las Casas penned—and delivered—a number of

sermons and other religious treatises, yet we must also remember that he had training in the Spanish legal system, the style of which is reflected in much of his writing and in documents he presented before the Spanish court. Furthermore, he composed letters and recorded the history of the world around him in detail. The issue of genre as it relates to Las Casas is an important one, as the priest adapts his writing according to the text he writes and the genre to which it pertains.

Walter Mignolo's widely read work on three major textual genres of the colonial period in Latin America helps to frame and clarify the diversity that makes up Las Casas' writing. Though they are oftentimes grouped together under the general category of texts that "chronicle" the history of the conquest of the "New World," Mignolo distinguishes between the genres that are mentioned in the title of the book chapter "Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento y la conquista." In effect, according to Mignolo, both letters and "relaciones" of conquest and colonization were written in response to an official request by the crown to give some sort of account of what they had seen and experienced in the New World. Though, of course, a letter is directed to a recipient specifically and is generally signed and dated at the close, a main difference is, in reality, the length and depth of the account given. And so, a "relación" is, for Mignolo, a "relato/informe solicitado por la Corona" (70), even though, on some level this could also be true of the "cartas" that were, too, solicited by the Kings and Queens who sent the conquistadores out under their respective countries' banners. As Mignolo notes, this "overlap" is present in the fact that Cortés' writings were compiled (in 1522) under the title of "cartas de relación" (66). As such, then, Mignolo clarifies that the letter is much more of an inmediate genre in that the parties intend to exchange vital information

quickly, whereas the "relación" is more concerned with giving a detailed account than it is with giving a speedy one. What is more, the relación, he continues, developed into a highly codified form over the course of nearly a century, wherein "tres momentos históricos ... caracterizan el tipo discursivo *relación*: 1) el período no oficial que se extiende desde 1505 hasta 1574; 2) el período oficial posterior a 1574, y 3) los libros que se modelan, en parte, bajo el mismo principio organizativo de las relaciones cuya base es el cuestionario" (71 original emphasis). If the genre of the relación informally begins with the first letters from the Spanish crown to Columbus in which they asked for more detailed information about the New World, the year 1574 marks an important occasion when, Mignolo notes, official questionnaires would now form the basis for the relación. Up until this point, many of the previous relaciones had been products of personal opinion, which is to say that, for the most part the author chose what to include and what to omit. Though questionnaires did exist before 1574, the standard fifty-question format was adopted in this year, which is why Mignolo chooses this date as the ending point for the "unofficial" relación period (70-73).

The final genre that Mignolo points to is the chronicle/history. While in theory the terms *crónica* and *historia* have distinct meanings, they are used nearly synonymously in colonial Latin American historiography, and Mignolo demonstrates this fact by appealing to Las Casas' *Historia de las Indias*, which includes a prologue in which *crónica* and *historia* are used interchangeably (75-77). Additionally, Mignolo notes that letters and relaciones, since they were written in response to Royal petitions, were written by anyone from the less educated to the elite classes. Given their erudite nature, histories or chronicles, however, were to be written by educated and qualified

individuals: "En una palabra la escritura de la historia no puede dejarse en manos de cualquiera, sino de los *letrados*" (78 original emphasis). Indeed, Las Casas himself asserts this same point of view in his prologue to the *Historia de las Indias* in stating that "[t]ampoco conviene a todo género de personas ocuparse con tal ejercicio, según sentencia de Metástenes, sino a varones escogidos, doctos, prudentes, filósofos, perspicacísimos, espirituales y dedicados al culto divino, como entonces era y hoy lo son los sabios sacerdotes" (I, prólogo, 6). Nevertheless, not all histories during the conquest and colonization of the Spanish Indies were written by "qualified" individuals, so to speak, for the extenuating circumstances required that "unqualified" persons take part in the act of writing history. Thus, Mignolo asserts, we see a proliferation of excuses and pleas for forgiveness for the shortcomings of the work, which is certainly the case of the ex-soldier Bernal Díaz as he writes decades removed from his time served under Cortés (78-79).

An adequate treatment of Mignolo's "Cartas, relaciones y crónicas" has been necessary as the two works that form the main part of my analysis of Las Casas' legacy as it is developed and continued in literature and film, respectively, belong to two different genres of colonial literature. These two genres are readily apparent in the works' titles: the *Brevísima relación de the destrucción de las Indias* and the *Historia de las Indias*. The *Brevísima relación*, though it is classified as a relación and not a history, is the priest's most known work across the disciplines, and as a result it has come to be a historical account of rather accessible length—a "reader's digest" version of the conquest of the New World, so to speak. Indeed, the work conforms to Mignolo's designation of a relación in that it serves as a response to an official request for a more detailed account.

Las Casas states that, after he told of the abuses and injustices he had witnessed while in the American continent, his report "[causó] a los oyentes ... una manera de éxtasis y suspensión de ánimos, [y Las Casas] fué rogado e importunado que de estas postreras pusiese algunas con brevedad por escripto" (*Brevísima* 69). Indeed, this relación would be delivered before the crown in 1542 before being published (without official permission) some ten years later. As such, considering that this Las Casas intends to deliver this particular relación orally, before the court, he employs a more informal, that is to say personal, tone. The priest immediately and regularly inserts himself in the text by reminding the reader that he bore witness to the events he describes or that he heard it from a credible source. To be sure, the third word of the second paragraph of the prologue is none other than "I": "Considerando, pues, yo"[106] (*Brevísima* 72). This "consideration" of the "I-author," reflects, again, what Mignolo states about the nature of relaciones during this stage of their development—that they are created in response to official request but are subject to the personal opinion of the authors. To this end, it is much more than a response to the list of prompts from a questionnaire as the text is formulated in order to achieve a desired result, and so, then, his tone is quite strong, and the content is grounded in morality as a means to persuade the reader—namely the king.

While the *Brevísima* responds to an official request for more information about the situation in the Indies, the *Historia* grows out of Las Casas' own desire to chronicle the history of the Spanish presence in the New World. Despite it being a personal project, as it were, the text is more measured and seemingly objective, and clearly Las Casas strives to achieve a level of objectivity by removing himself (directly) from the

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[106] Interestingly, the wording here is extremely similar to that of his *Historia*, which reads: "Pensando, pues, y considerando yo muchas veces" (I, Prólogo 16).

equation, and this is reflected in Las Casas' clearly defining the work as an "historia" rather than a "relación." What is more, he often writes about himself in the third person as a historical figure (or source of information) rather than as the historian as such. And though the text is not so replete of gratuitous sermonizing, Las Casas reiterates that in addition to the simple purpose of recording history, he also desires to give testimony to the atrocities that he has witnessed in the Spanish Indies (*Historia* I, prólogo, 11). Clearly, for Las Casas the *Historia* is a more "serious" undertaking, which is why he begins the text with a long explanation of the causes and objectives of writing history. And though at one moment he offers the obligatory statement of false humility to excuse his shortcomings, the formidable project stands as an argument for Las Casas' own place among the notable historians he cites in the prologue. Indeed, the fame that he is writing *Historia* denotes that he believes himself to be among those qualified to write history: the *letrados*, the wise, chosen men of the religious orders.

The Relevant Activist: Las Casas' Continuing Legacy in También la lluvia

To attempt to account for the entire trajectory of the centuries-long legacy of Bartolomé de Las Casas is not my present concern. Instead, a brief biography and summary of the priest's views, allies, and opposition offer a framework by which we are able to understand the complexity of the man and his legacy. The film *También la lluvia* takes up this same issue when it portrays Las Casas (and Antonio de Montesinos) and his actions through the distant and cloudy lens of history.[107] Even though the film recognizes

[107] Indeed, the film began as an effort to achieve historiophoty. In an interview with film critic David Poland, director Icíar Bollaín explains that the script—which was written by

Las Casas' shortcomings and, as such, does not blindly praise him, it does, however, present the Dominican monk as a relevant example of a person engaged in battling injustice and oppression.

In short, *También la lluvia* follows an ambitious film crew that attempts to depict the horrors of the Spanish conquest in what might be considered a film adaptation of Las Casas' *Brevísima relación* and *Historia general de las Indias* with aspects of a Columbus biography. That is, it is a film about the making of a film[108] about the discovery and conquest of the Americas with the goal of overturning simple notions of a heroic Columbus and presenting a shocking depiction of the complex encounter between vastly different civilizations. The film's script is seemingly based on historical documents, with a major source found in the writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas. Despite their lofty ambitions of uncovering the injustices of the conquest, due to lack of funding, the Spanish filmmakers decide to film in the Bolivian jungles rather than on the Caribbean islands where many of the scenes actually took place in history, for they are able to pay the poorer citizens of Cochabamba less money. To be sure, the crew's penny-pinching is more than a matter of historical inaccuracy, though; at one point the crew foregoes the added expense of a crane and asks the extras to raise a massively heavy prop—ironically, a large, wooden cross—with nothing but ropes and brute force.

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her partner Paul Laverty—was originally meant to be the first part of a series that would dramatize Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (Bollaín).

[108] Due to the possibility of confusion when discussing *También la lluvia*, I will refer to the actual film *También la lluvia* simply as the film or the real film whereas the motion picture that is in the process of being produced throughout the course of *También la lluvia* will be referred to as the fictional film. Indeed, this confluence of up to three films at once is a recurring topic in film reviews. In the *New York Times*, Stephen Holden states, "Although the movie punches hard, its impact is diminished by an overly schematic screenplay and excess conceptual baggage" (par. 9). Part of this baggage, Holden asserts, includes the priests Las Casas and Montesinos.

Parallel to the filming of the historical movie, a real-life human rights crisis is erupting over the privatization of water in this arid Bolivian city. The water company has now raised the cost of water to an extreme, and eventually rioting breaks out. Like the film crew uses real historical documents in their motion picture, real television scenes from the 2000 "Water wars" are featured in the film. At first, the social tension is a minor headache, but a main actor, Daniel—whom Terence Clarke in his review for the *San Francisco Chronicle* calls the "real moral center of the film" (par. 10)—, takes an increasingly important role in mobilizing the Cochabamban citizens to fight against the water company—to the point that he is beaten, arrested, and causes the filming to grind to a halt. Eventually, the points of comparison between the very intrusive film crew and the colonial, conquering Spaniards become hard to avoid, and as Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* notes, we realize that "the self-righteous crew is blind to its own kind of exploitation" (par. 11). Ultimately, the film project takes a back seat as the crew must face the reality of a real-life struggle against oppression. The film and the events going on outside of the film, then, shed light on each other, as Jorge Marí states in his review of the motion picture: "En la película de Bollaín, se entremezclan ambos niveles ... de manera que cada una de las narraciones funciona como un espejo de la otra" (369).

Interestingly, the fictional film makes use of historical documents, not only as a reference or to bring it to life on the screen in dramatic fashion; indeed quotations from historical texts form part of the dialogue. Nevertheless, these texts and quotations are sometimes adapted or modified to fit the agenda of the fictional film. Unsurprisingly, then, the film *También la lluvia* brings up the debate about Las Casas, his polemical biography, and his legacy, even if few reviews of the film remark upon this aspect.

Morena Films' description of the motion picture, however, keys in on Las Casas and Montesinos as a central part of the would-be film: "[*También la lluvia*] cuenta la historia de Sebastián y Costa, un director y un productor que quieren hacer una película sobre Cristóbal Colón que de [*sic*] la vuelta al mito. La historia de un Colón obsesionado por el oro y represor de indios y también la de quienes lo denunciaron: los padres Bartolomé de las Casas y Antonio Montesinos" ("También la lluvia" par. 1). Given this description,[109] then, unsurprisingly, divided perspectives on Las Casas permeate the production, and from very early on in the film the viewer observes contrasting points of view of Las Casas. Just over sixteen minutes into the film we meet the actors portraying Las Casas and Antonio de Montesinos, Alberto and Juan, respectively. The actors cast as the two religious figures in the would-be documentary offer candid accounts about the men they are portraying. Alberto, speaking of Las Casas, summarizes the friar's life. He is sure to mention that while Las Casas did participate in the encomienda system, "traumatizado un poco por las masacres que vio, dedicó el resto de su vida a la causa de los indios." He later states that the Dominican was the first international rights advocate and that there were even death threats issued against the Friar. We learn that Alberto has been reading in depth about Las Casas, for Juan mentions (as an aside) that he has not done as much research into Montesinos' life as Alberto has undertaken regarding Las Casas. Still, Alberto complains that despite the importance of Las Casas in history, he only has eight scenes in the film. Indeed, this and other comments correctly lead the viewer to believe that while the fictional film includes Las Casas, it is not entirely about him—indeed the

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[109] It must be noted, though, that since Morena Films is based in Spain, the production company might be more inclined to recognize these important figures in Spanish/Spanish American history.

film seems more interested in portraying the horrors of the conquest than the people who fought against these acts of brutality. The scene ends with Juan saying that Montesinos was more important than Las Casas because he was the first to stand up for indigenous rights.

This moment is notable for a number of reasons, but perhaps the most striking, initially, is that it is filmed in black and white. By this point in the film, the viewer has come to understand that the black and white film belongs to a third production—a second film within the film—, which is a documentary that is being made alongside of the fictional film. While there have been conversations between the producer and director as part of the documentary, the exchange between Alberto and Juan is truly the first behind-the-scenes look at the fictional film. The effect of the black and white footage (which evokes a feeling of stepping back in time by reminding the viewer of the days before color television and film), when combined with the in-costume actors, creates the illusion and feel of a real, even historical, documentary. Briefly, the two actors become the men they are portraying, and Juan himself seems to get caught up in the moment when he claims Montesinos' legacy as his own, saying, "Yo fui el primero a intercedir por los indios. Yo fui el que desencadenó todo, que di el famoso sermón, es de, 'Yo soy la voz de Cristo en el desierto de esta isla y estáis en pecado mortal'. Ese fui yo." Juan's argument about being the first to speak out against Spanish cruelty is of interest. The quote from Montesinos' famous sermon is a reference to a biblical passage that first appears in the book of Isaiah and is then repeated by John the Baptist in the book of John. John the Baptist considered himself to be the precursor to the Messiah, the one who came before and prepared the way for Jesus. In *También la lluvia*, we see the same logic at

work when Juan quotes the sermon and bases his argument of Montesinos' importance on the fact that the priest was the one who was first, the one who came before Las Casas.[110]

The excerpt that Juan brings up in this scene, however, is more a "highlight" of the most memorable lines rather than a direct quotation. According to Las Casas' own summarized account of the sermon and its effects in the third book of his *Historia de las Indias* (chapters 4-5), we know that this particular passage is actually a combination of two different quotations that Las Casas cites in his tome. The first excerpt gives us the first "catch phrase": "Para os lo dar a conocer me he subido aquí, yo que soy voz de Cristo en el desierto desta isla, y por tanto, conviene que con atención, no cualquiera, sino con todo vuestro corazón y con todos vuestros sentidos, la oigáis" (III, 4, 13). The second passage is where the "deadly sin" reference is taken from: "Esta voz, dijo él, es que todos estáis en pecado mortal y en él vivís y morís, por la crueldad y tiranía que usáis con estas inocentes gentes" (III, 4, 13). The pieced-together passage, as Juan quotes it, appears to have become something of a running joke among the cast and crew of the fictional film, for when another discussion (this time much more passionate and serious) breaks out at the dinner for the cast at an upscale restaurant, the quote is used sarcastically to lighten the mood as the entire crew recites the quotation in unison and in laughter.

This scene, which will become part of a "documentary" about the fictional film, brings in another level of depth in *También la lluvia*. Of course, a documentary purports to be a "true" accounting (on video no less) of things, yet it becomes clear that the documentary, like history, is guided by an ideological perspective. At first, the character

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[110] The similarity is even further cemented when considering that the actor in the film and the prophet share the same name: Juan/John.

María, played by Cassandra Ciangherotti, begins shooting behind-the-scenes footage of the extras and the actors, and then she begins to conduct interviews. Indeed, not long after filming Juan and Alberto in their costumes, she attempts to strike up a conversation with Daniel and others as they are working on digging a trench for water pipes, but their light-hearted answers cause her to turn off the camera in annoyance. In fact, Daniel's friends insist that they are only interested in the money they earn as extras, rather than acting in the film per se. Clearly, she was looking for another "reality" than the one before her. Instead of actors who are eager to play a part in this important film, she finds workers who struggle to survive on little to no pay or water, and still others who are suspicious of her motives altogether.

If initially she is inconvenienced by their joking, interestingly, the moment when María puts down the camera is when she truly glimpses the reality around her. Having given up on interviewing the extras, she asks them what they are digging, and they inform her of the water shortage and their efforts to bring well water to the neighborhood. A conversation ensues, and before long, a truck crests the hill on the horizon. The appearance of the vehicle angers the workers, though both María and the viewer are unsure why. We learn that the truck belongs to the local water authorities, and they want to stop the digging and, in short, control access to the well water. A small scuffle breaks out, as Daniel and the others hurl insults and objects at the truck before it speeds away. While it is not entirely certain, this brief encounter seems to change María's perspective, for the next time we see her operating a camera, the documentary has apparently taken a drastic twist: she is filming Daniel as he leads a protest in which he provokes the same authorities. Immediately afterwards, she asks Costa for permission to make a

documentary about the water crisis, but he replies that it is not his problem. This is, in effect, the last time that we see María filming for any documentary, whether about the fictional film or the water crisis. On the one hand, she cannot "force" the documentary about the film to happen if the extras do not want to participate, and on the other hand, she does not have permission to tell the story of the water crisis. María's circumstances not only bring to light the complexities involved in "telling" or literally recording history, but also how ideologies have a part in just what history is told. More specifically, when we observe the evolution of the documentary footage, we see that her videos magnify the irony of the situation: the documentary is meant to capture the true "history" surrounding the making of the fictional film, yet it does not capture (at first at least) what is truly happening. When María attempts to change this fact, however, Costa's response shows that his documentary lens would be willingly blind to the crisis. Again, we observe here just how those with the power to write (or in this case, record) history are the ones with the final say in what history is told.

Less than ten minutes after María interviews Juan and Alberto, Juan will reprise his roll as Montesinos in a dress rehearsal of the famous sermon of December[111] 1511. This, time, however, we see behind the scenes without the aid of María's lens; Bollaín allows the viewer to peer into this important moment as part of the film (rather than footage from the fictional film). The camera offers an establishing shot of the "church" where Montesinos/Juan will be preaching; the sound of hammers and construction noises fill the air. A cut to show director Sebastián (García Bernal) inside the parish walls

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[111] In the film, Director Sebastián erroneously states that it takes place in March 1511.

reveals indigenous-descended locals working on constructing the church scenery and set. Sebastián gives final instructions, and Montesinos/Juan begins his sermon:

> Los fariseos mandaron a alguien a preguntarle a san Juan Bautista quién era, y éste replicó: "Soy una voz que clama en el desierto". Los indios están extrayendo el oro con el que construimos nuestras ciudades, incluso nuestras iglesias, un oro que financia nuestras conquistas en lugares remotos y hace girar la inmensa rueda del comercio. A todos nos alcanza el sudor de los indios y a los que más, a su Majestad y a sus obispos. Como sacerdote que soy, me debo a los mandamientos del Evangelio, y el primero de ellos es predicar la verdad. Yo soy la voz de Cristo en el desierto de esta isla, y estáis en pecado mortal.
>
> [Interjection of Sebastián, reading lines as the angry churchgoers]
>
> Vivís en pecado y en él morís, ¿por qué? Por la crueldad y tiranía que usáis con esta gente inocente. Decidme, ¿con qué derecho y con qué justicia tenéis en tan cruel y horrible servidumbre a estos indios? ¿Con qué autoridad habéis hecho tan detestables guerras a estas gentes que vivían pacíficamente en sus tierras?
>
> [Sebastián/churchgoers interrupt.]
>
> ¿Con qué derecho les tenéis así de oprimidos, así de exhaustos y así de hambrientos? Se mueren por vuestra culpa, o mejor dicho, les matáis.
>
> [Sebastián/churchgoers interrupt.]
>
> ¿Cómo podéis estar tan dormidos, tan hundidos en ese sueño letárgico? Mirad a los indios a los ojos. ¿Acaso no son hombres? ¿No tienen almas

racionales? ¿Acaso no estáis obligados a amarles como a vosotros mismos?

[Sebastián/churchgoers interrupt.]

La verdad tiene a muchos en su contra; la mentira muchos a su favor.

As we can see in the transcription of the fictional film's sermon scene above, Montesinos' message is essentially comprised of extracts of the quotations that Bartolomé de Las Casas includes in his *Historia*. Although the film version condenses or simplifies the language at times, the fictional film includes nearly all of Las Casas' account of the sermon, and in much the same manner that the friar recorded it in his *Historia*. Nevertheless, the content of the sermon up to the famous "yo soy la voz" line is not present in Las Casas' *Historia*, nor are their records of Montesinos' actual discourse, for much of what we know about Montesinos sermon comes from Las Casas.[112] Indeed, these lines appear to be more for the benefit of the moviegoer than anything else, including historical accuracy. Montesinos' sermon in 1511 would likely not need to explain his use of the phrase "Yo soy la voz..." as a reference to John the Baptist; to be sure, an audience of Catholics attending mass would be familiar with it. Five hundred years later, however, the context might not be so obvious, and so it seems that Bollaín adds this quick explanation as to the background of the Biblical allusion taken from the book of St. John chapter 1.

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[112] Hanke clarifies, "Nungún escrito de Montesinos se ha conservado, ni aún su retrato; fuera de lo que sabemos de su vida después del famoso sermón, que muy poco conocemos, consta que habló en la Corte española en nombre de los indios y halló su muerte, protegiéndoles, en Venezuela. ... Nuestros apuntes sobre su gran aparición en la historia surgen de las Instrucciones reales donde se le ordenaba silenciar su voz y de la *Historia de las Indias*" (*Bartolomé de las casas: pensador* 24).

Another notable modification that we observe in the dress rehearsal of Montesinos' sermon is a compression of the timing and ordering of events surrounding the sermon and its effects. At the end of the sermon, an official, whose lines are read by Sebastián, states that he will require an official retraction of the sermon, for Montesinos' words have called into question his and the king's authority. However, according to Las Casas' text, the call for a retraction and the accusation of questioning the king's authority took place afterwards, in a meeting with Diego Columbus (Christopher Columbus' son) and other Spanish officials on the island.[113]

A final consideration in this scene, with regards to the ordering of events, is the response that Montesinos/Juan gives when leaving the pulpit: "La verdad tiene a muchos en su contra, la mentira muchos a su favor." The brief and memorable line is effective in leaving an impression, but it is not part of the sermon and may not even have been spoken by Monstesinos. Indeed, Las Casas includes a similar statement when he relates how he eventually came to "convert" to the Indian cause. He states that, on one[114] occasion when he went to be confessed, an unnamed clergyman initially denied his request. When Las Casas demanded an explanation why he could not be absolved, the cleric replies, "Concluíd, padre, con que la verdad tuvo siempre muchos contrarios y la mentira muchas ayudas." (*Historia* III, 79, 283). It is clearly this passage that provides the foundation for the fictional film's line, but the context is not at all the same. To be

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[113] Las Casas describes the events in more detail in stating, "Sentados todos, propone primero el Almirante [Diego Columbus] por sí y por todos su querella, diciendo que ... porque aquel sermón había sido tan escandaloso y en tan gran deservicio del rey y perjudicial a todos los vecinos desta isla, que determinasen que aquel padre se desdijese de todo lo que había dicho; donde no, que ellos entendían poner el remedio que conviniese" (III, 4, 15).

[114] Indeed, Las Casas was denied absolution once more, nearly twenty years later (Harrison 25).

sure, though at least one critic[115] admits the possibility that it was Montesinos who denied confession to Las Casas, in *Historia* Las Casas does not specifically state that Montesinos was the obstinate confessor. However, if it is indeed the case that Montesinos was who denied confession to Las Casas, then the words would, in fact, belong to the Dominican priest, even if the occasion is not the same as in the fictional film.

Perhaps the most open and complete treatment of the dual legacy of Las Casas takes place between the documentary scene and Montesinos' sermon. The dinner scene at the upscale restaurant—which I have already briefly mentioned—that takes place after Alberto and Juan discuss their roles as part of the fictional documentary about the film, Antón, the actor who will play Christopher Columbus, accuses the film's director of vilifying Columbus and giving inaccurate and overly positive depictions of Las Casas. In short, he asserts that the film is little more than propaganda. The viewer comes to suspect the same, for much of the scenes that are shot for the fictional film have more to do with Spanish brutality than historicity (or the supposedly important priests), and in that sense, Las Casas' greatest contribution to the film is not his on-film presence, but rather his contribution to the Spanish Black Legend. Unsurprisingly then, Antón, brings up the polemical point of Las Casas' suggestion to have African slaves take the place of Indians and why the film makes no mention of this fact. He also emphasizes that Las Casas did not question the Spanish crown's authority over the Americas or their inhabitants. Finally, as Costa—the director—tries to lighten the mood, Antón states, "El plan está claro. Santificas a este par de cabrones y a mí me lincháis. Esto no es arte; esto es pura propagranda." As in Alberto and Juan's scene when they seemingly take on the personas

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[115] MacNutt states that it was "possibly the redoubtable Montesinos himself" (60) who denied Las Casas confession, but even so, it is not certain.

of the character they portray, Antón, too, takes the matter of Columbus' reputation personally: "a mí me lincháis."

In response to Antón's claims, both Alberto and Sebastián chime in to explain and defend Las Casas and his actions. When Antón reacts sarcastically to Alberto's gesture (the middle finger) of annoyance, he states, "Qué poco piadoso eso padre, pero tranquilo, que el director lo cortará como tantos detalles importantes. Por ejemplo, el hecho de que Las Casas pretendía que los esclavos negros africanos substituyeran a los indios." At this (true) accusation, Sebastián, as the director, is compelled to offer his explanation for why this information is not in the film. His answer, however, is more an admission of Las Casas' stance rather than recognizing that the film might be biased: "Es verdad. Él lo pensaba de joven. Pero fue durante un período de tiempo muy chiquito. Lo lamentó durante toda su vida." Astutely, Antón is not satisfied with the evading answer and continues to press the issue with a comment that reveals Las Casas' complicity with the slave trade: "¿Y su trato con los negreros?" To this, Alberto becomes visibly uspet as he explains what he calls "[u]n error, un desastre que le avergonzaba." He then further defends Las Casas, to the point of even offering a quotation:

> Las Casas usó hasta su último aliento para denunciar a los obispos corruptos, a los comericiantes, a los funcionarios del rey. El estado entero lo odiaba. ... Afirmó que los indios habían sido sacrificados, y cito textualmente, "por apetitos e intereses privados". Hace quinientos años. Luego llegan los cínicos como tú y quieren reducir toda su vida a un solo error.

Again, here, we see Alberto's fervor and passion for the figure whom he will portray in the film. Like in the "documentary" footage moments before, he offers a quotation, even if the origin is unknown.[116] Indeed, in this telling scene we see a dramatization of the main lines of debate surrounding the Lascasian legacy. Antón's statement that the film is propaganda, for example, echoes certain views regarding the *Brevísima*—that its exaggerated one-sidedness not only unfairly lays all "blame" upon the Spanish, resulting in the so-called Black Legend, but it also creates a false picture of Las Casas as a perfect and exemplary figure. This is a valid criticism, for it is rather apparent that the directors making the fictional film are unwaveringly in favor of Las Casas (and against Columbus), and as a result, it is understood that the film will prove to be an equally positive depiction of the Dominican. And so, regardless of the controversy surrounding him and his legacy, Las Casas is still very much the center of abundant praise, and this fact only further supports Antón's final comment, which effectively ends the debate: "Es como en el fútbol: la historia siempre es cruel con los perdedores." And Antón's words take on even more weight when we consider them in the light of the concept of refashioning.

Without a doubt, his efforts on behalf of the Indians have brought many to identify with him and his cause, and as such the film depicts Las Casas in accordance with the mythical size of his legacy. On the other hand, the use and rewriting of historical documents portray Columbus, as the character Antón suggests at the dinner table debate, overtly negatively. Specifically, the first scene where we see Columbus portrayed in the fictional film is when the actors practice lines for the scene of Columbus' arrival to the New World. What begins as an informal reading of lines becomes more

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[116] I have been unable to locate this quotation outside of the context of the film.

dramatic when the actors take a cue from Antón, who emphatically "claims" the lawn beside their table for Spain. Immediately after that, "Columbus" is summoned to inspect a native woman's gold earring, and he begins to question her as to the metal's whereabouts. The scene culminates in Columbus' yelling at the woman, soon followed by a release in the tension as Antón breaks character. Indeed, our first exposure to Columbus indicates the manner in which he will be portrayed in the fictional film: as a greedy and ruthless hypocrite.

In addition to the clips that depict Antón dressed in (or out of) his Columbus costume as he threatens or even punishes the fictional film's "natives," on one occasion we find Antón in his room practicing his lines with Costa. The lengthy discourse spoken in archaic language is foreboding and unnerving as Columbus describes the new peoples he has encountered on his voyage. He gives special attention to the fact that they are naive and generous with the gold, and that they could be easily conquered. He even notes that he has taken some prisoners by force; in a way, the viewer is (fore)seeing the destruction of the New World in its beginning stages, before Las Casas writes during and after the fact. When the monologue ends, we are informed that these were actually Columbus' own words. Antón clarifies, "Pues ésta es exactamente la primera carta que Colón envió desde el nuevo mundo a la corona española. Por eso Sebastián es tan fiel al texto." In reality, though, the monologue is not "exactly" the same; it is more of a summary of the more notable points of the letter. And as is to be expected, the out-of-context excerpts are paraphrases, somewhat altered even, of some of the more damning passages in the letter.

Even with the aid of direct quotations from Columbus' letter, then, the scene clearly presents an ideological bias—that is to say, the fictional film's script was written, as Antón has noted, to portray Columbus in a certain way and Las Casas in another. While there can be no doubt to Columbus' role in the "conquest" and destruction of the Americas and its peoples, his motives, in the context of the entire letter, seem much less malicious. For example, when hearing Antón recite his lines, the tone and content of the monologue lead the viewer to believe that Columbus was, from the beginning, attempting to weave his scheme filled with an insatiable hunger for power and a thirst for native blood. The film's "letter" from Columbus reads as such:

> Son tan ingenuos y generosos con lo que tienen que nunca niegan nada. Cualquier cosa que tenga, si se la pides, te la dan, invitándole a la persona a compartirla con ellos. Aun no he podido descubrir si tienen propiedad privada. Con sólo cinquenta hombres se les puede reducir y obligarles a hacer lo que uno quiera. ... En la primera isla que encontré, tomé a algunos a la fuerza. Sus Altezas podrán observar que les daré tanto oro que deseen a cambio de un poco de ayuda. Además de especies y algodón, hay esclavos, tantos como se soliciten. Toda la cristiandad debería regocijarse y agradecer solemnemente a la Santísima Trinidad el haber convertido a tantas almas a la fe sagrada. Así, como de los innumerables beneficios materiales que esto nos reportará, puesto que no sólo España, sino que toda la cristiandad gozará de solaz y provecho.

There is no doubt that the text is indeed adapted from Columbus' letter, but it is certainly not a direct quotation of the text, despite Antón's comment that it is. The text that is

presented as a single monologue in the film is actually a series of fragments[117] taken from throughout the much longer letter. The result is, as is clear, a text that has been updated into archaic *sounding*, though much modernized, language that serves the ideological needs of the fictional film.

The contrast the between Las Casas and Columbus in the fictional film is truly striking, for although the script of the fictional film vilifies Columbus, interestingly, the real life Las Casas is much less harsh in his estimation of the *almirante*. In the "Presentación" of Las Casas' *Vida de Cristóbal Colón* (edited by André Saint-Lu), the

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[117] The corresponding excerpts from Columbus' letter are similar, though not exactly the same as Antón states. I have taken the following passages, copied here verbatim unless otherwise noted, from the facsimile and transcription of the 1493 Barcelona copy, which is available in *The Spanish Letter of Columbus to Luis de Sant'Angel Escribano de Racion of the Kingdom of Aragon*, edited by Bernard Quaritch, in whose possession the letter had been before he donated it to the New York Public Library (9):
"[E]llos son tanto sin engaño y tan liberales de lo que tienen, que no lo creerian sino el que lo viese. Ellos de cosa que tengan, pidiendosela, jamás dizen que nó; antes, convidan la persona con ello" (3).
"No he podido entender si tenian bienes propios; que me pareció ver que aquello que uno tenía todos hazían parte, en especial de las cosas comederas" (5).
"Y luego que llegué á las Indias, en la primera isla que hallé, tomé por fuerza algunos de ellos para que deprendiesen y me diesen noticia de lo que avia en aqullas partes" (4).
"[N]o saben que sean armas, y andan desnudos, ... son los más temerosos que ay en el mundo; asi que solamente la gente que allá queda es para destruir toda aquella tierra; y es ysla sin peligros de sus personas sabiendo se regir" (5).
"[P]ueden ver Sus Altezas q[ue] yo les daré oro cuanto [h]ovieren menester, con muy poquita ayuda que Sus Altezas me daran; agora [e]speciaria y algodon quanto Sus Altezas mandaran cargar, y almastica cuanta mandaran cargar—e de la cual fasta [h]oy no se ha fallado salvo en Grecia en la ysla de Xio, y el Señorío la vende como quiere—; y lignumaloe quanto mandaran cargar, y esclavos quantos mandaran cargar,—y seran de los ydólatras" (6).
"[N]uestro Redemtor dió esta victoria a nuestros ilustrisimos Rey e Reyna, e á s[us] reynos famosos, de tan alta cosa, donde toda la Christiandad deve tomar alegria, y fazer grandes fiestas, y dar gracias solennes á la sancta Trinidad, con muchas oraciones solennes por el tanto enxalçamiento que havran en tornandose tantos pueblos á nuestra sancta fe, y despues por los bienes temporales que no solamente á la España á mas todos los Christianos, ternan aqui refrigerio y ganancia" (7).

friar's opinion of Columbus is apparent when the editor[118] affirms, "No hay duda de su admiración, de su respeto, hasta de su devoción en la defensa [de Colón]" (viii). Las Casas himself employs flattering adjectives to describe the "discoverer" of the New World, calling him notable, this chosen gentlemen, and illustrious within the space of only the first two paragraphs (*Vida* 1). And so we observe the fictional film's desire to simplify a very complex moment in history, as well as two key individuals during that time.

Despite the rather liberal editing that has taken place in this "exact" copy of Columbus' letter, the scene offers a look at Sebastián's personal view of historical accuracy. Again, throughout the film we understand that not only Sebastián, but also a number of the actors, see the film project as more than just a box office venture—indeed, they believe they are creating a work of history, or more specifically, historiophoty. The director/scriptwriter has incorporated real quotations from historical texts, and the actors are studying books by and about their characters. Even though, on first glance, the film has all the appearances of a true and accurate depiction of history, the logic that Sebastián employs is flawed; just as Antón astutely asserts at the dinner table, the film is propaganda—not because it is ideologically motivated (I have argued that all history has a structuring ideology), but rather because it only (re)presents one point of view. And so, Sebastián's own perspective becomes clear: he believes that adherence to specific texts is equivalent to accuracy or truth even. But one question remains unasked: which texts are true? Whose history is truth?

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[118] The "Presentación" does not name an author and is not written by Saint-Lu.

Indeed the fictional film falls into the trappings of the true/untrue, official/unofficial dichotomy, when in reality a plurality of views would be necessary to overcome the propagandistic perspective of Sebastián's film. Whereas Sebastián fails in his attempt to put Spanish imperialism on full display because of an ideological-motivated simplification of historical complexities, Fabrizio Cilento notes that director Icíar Bollaín develops her reading of neocolonialism by merging multiple genres and histories:

> Bollaín's film emphasizes the continuity of colonialism in its different forms throughout the centuries ... [by] engaging with the changing styles of regional Latin American cinema over different periods. In other words, the history of colonialism and the history of Latin American cinema are not separate histories, but together form an articulated critique of colonialism made possible thanks to the application of different stylistic approaches to the cinematic medium. (246)

Bollaín's view, then, is much more heterogenous than her directorial counterpart in the film, Sebastián. Indeed, if the fictional film incorporates direct quotations, Bollaín even includes real television footage or radio content. Cilento further argues that Bollaín's characters are snared, then, in a world where history (and injustice) is repeated in Nietzschian fashion (247-247), despite the fact that, ironically, they are making a film about history and injustice. However, it is ultimately not their knowledge of the past that breaks the cycle of history, but rather their willingness to see history through another set

of eyes.[119] Cilento points out that "Costa does not stoically accept yet another cycle of colonial invasion but begins to comprehend the native's point of view" (247). Indeed, like Bollaín's fusion of histories rounds out a poignant picture of (neo)colonialism, Costa's ability to "see" history another way fuels his transformation.

The diverse lens of Bollaín's camera even forces us to call into question the status of Las Casas himself. In what will be the climactic scene of the dramatized history of early Spanish America, the directors re-enact the death of Hatuey, "[u]n cacique y señor muy principal" (Las Casas *Brevísima* 91) who attempted to flee and defend himself against Spanish soldiers. Las Casas describes in his *Brevísima* that Hatuey was taken captive by the Spanish in Cuba and was to be burned at the stake. In his final moments, a Franciscan monk administered his last rights and told him that "si quería creer aquello que le decía, que iría al cielo" (Las Casas *Brevísima* 92). Hatuey, however, responds quite unexpectedly, as Las Casas laments in the following lines: "Él [Hatuey] pensando un poco preguntó al religioso si iban cristianos al cielo. El religioso le respondió que sí, pero que iban los que eran buenos. Dijo luego el cacique ... que no quería él ir allá sino al infierno, por no estar donde estuviesen y por no ver tan cruel gente" (93). The fictional film preserves this dialogue very much as it is represented in Las Casas' work, and the visual representation of the exchange is quite striking. While Las Casas essentially summarizes the events, the fictional film does not, and so an actor playing a Franciscan

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[119] In her interview with David Poland, Bollaín also comments that she had to learn to listen to the extra cast members' point of view, particularly concerning compensation. Rather than only cash, some actors asked for bricks to be given to the community to build structures, or they requested vehicles to haul construction materials. Nevertheless, she also admits to manipulating the young girl's emotions to motivate her for a scene where a man has his arm chopped off (Bollaín did not warn her about the scene beforehand and surprised her by having the girl's brother play the part of the man being punished).

offers a quick and disingenuous gospel message to the defiant Hatuey in a last-ditch effort to convert him. Also, the fictional film depicts Hatuey speaking and listening through an interpreter, yet the question is mostly the same. In the film, he asks, "¿Van los cristianos al cielo?," to which the Franciscan replies, "Los buenos cristianos, sí." To this, Hatuey spitefully retorts through clenched teeth, "¡Prefiero ir al infierno!" In this scene we can clearly observe the influence of Las Casas' text over the script, but also the fictional film goes a step further by physically placing Las Casas at the scene of the massacre, which he was not. Even though the scene is clearly designed to evoke emotion to cause the viewer to further sympathize with the fictional film's point of view of a positive Las Casas, it brings up a number of questions that the reader might not think to demand of Las Casas when reading the *Brevísima*. For instance, how does Las Casas have this information? It is hearsay or was he actually there? Why does he not do more to prevent the massacres and punishments? Again, the film depicts the friar among the Spaniards, and though he protests, he ultimately does nothing to stop the crimes before him. In a way that the book does not, the film forces the viewer to confront the question of Las Casas' complicity in what happened. For in the book, Las Casas plainly states the facts, and the abundance of grievances and abuses against the Spanish are such that one does not question Las Casas' own proximity to it all. Upon seeing the character of Las Casas among the masses of Spanish soldiers in the fictional film, however, it is difficult to maintain the distance that *Brevísima*'s narrator achieves when relating the horrors of the conquest.

Still, though Hatuey's death is the last scene of the fictional film that we will see in *También la lluvia*, it is not the final word on Las Casas' legacy. Despite the fictional

film's clear ideological leaning, the actual film of *También la lluvia* is slightly more balanced. While it dares to present Las Casas' legacy as being far from spotless, it also presents the friar in a way that links him to the positive progression and ultimate goodness brought about in Costa—the fictional film's producer. Furthermore, the film seems to relate Las Casas with the activism of Daniel and the Cochabamban people as they protest the government's limiting access to water as well as a multinational corporation's driving up prices to secure higher profits.

Indeed, it is hard to ignore the film's undertones that Costa and Daniel are each, in different ways, both Las Casas reincarnated. On the one hand, Costa reminds us of the tainted legacy of Las Casas, of the man who was an encomendero and even advocated for African Slavery. Similarly, in the film, Costa begins as an indifferent professional with only capitalistic concerns in making a revenue-producing movie. He cares little about the volatile situation in Cochabamba, unless of course it somehow affects him. Throughout *También la lluvia*, Costa plays the greedy foil to director Sebastián's seemingly noble aspirations of making a life-like recreation of the events described by Las Casas during the Spanish Conquest. It is Sebastián who decides to cast Daniel in the film, despite Costa's hesitation; Sebastián even reprimands his colleague Costa for exploiting the extras on the set. What is more, at a key moment in the film, Daniel overhears Costa bragging about how the exploited Bolivian extras are quite happy to receive even the lowliest of wages. Because Daniel had worked in the United States as a mason, he understands Costa's remarks in English and confronts him. This moment seems to mark a slow but steady turning point in Costa and in his relationship with Daniel, as both transition from mistrust and enmity to respect, gratitude, and friendship. Eventually, a

role reversal takes place as the viewer realizes that Sebastián cares more about the completion of the film than its message, much less the social and political struggle in which the film's extras are involved on a daily basis. Costa, though, moves away from his cynicism, selfishness, and greed and even risks his own life to save Daniel's daughter's life when she is caught on the front lines of riots between protestors and police. In contrast, Sebastián and the rest of the crew decide to simply evacuate the city for fear of their own safety. By the end of the film, then, Costa is the only member of the cast or crew who actually decides to get involved in the lives of those around him in Bolivia, and so he risks his life for Daniel's daughter's safety. In this "conversion" from imperialist to activist, we can clearly see the parallel to the controversial legacy of Las Casas. And in accepting Costa's "conversion" (and forgetting his previous faults), we, too, come to overlook Las Casas' checkered past in favor of his legacy of activism.

Then, of course, the character of the indigenous Daniel embodies the positives of Las Casas, without the negatives or controversies. Unlike Costa, who must undergo a transformation, Daniel is involved in the struggle from the beginning: he stands up for those waiting in line for the casting call, he stands up when the water company comes to stop the well from being dug, and he puts himself, physically, in harm's way to ensure water for the people of Cochabamba. It is clear, then, that Daniel is meant to reflect the constant struggle for Indigenous rights that Las Casas undertook and carried out during most of his life.

Perhaps the most visible example of this continuing legacy of Las Casas comes in the final two scenes of the film when Daniel and Costa say their final goodbyes. The closing scenes of the movie come just after the water riots have died down, Costa has

saved Belén, Daniel's daughter, and news of the multinational corporation's withdrawal from Bolivia has been announced. A long, establishing shot frames the vast city below, and one hears the sound of horns honking in the distance. The film cuts to another long shot that shows Costa standing in the middle of the large warehouse where props, including the massive replica of a Spanish ship, were created and stored. The room is so large that Costa is almost lost amidst the chaos of the props and even appears to be a prop himself, yet, despite its size, the warehouse is in no way visible or distinguishable in the previous establishing shot. Director Icíar Bollaín's lens seems to draw a parallel between the space of the warehouse and the person of Costa as they are both assimilated into and enveloped by their immediate surroundings and are, thus, lost. The large building is nothing when compared to the city, and Costa, who plays the film's "big shot," appears quite small in this particular shot.

It is important to keep in mind that the warehouse where Costa stands is the same place where Daniel had overheard Costa's conversation in English about his delight to be able to save some money by exploiting the extras. Now, however, the location is quite different than in that previous scene, for it is resignified as a place of reconciliation. Instead of chit-chat, actors practicing lines, or the noise of tools working on props, there is only an eerie silence. The warehouse is dimly lit, as only the sun illuminates the space through windows high up above. This place that was so central to the film is now abandoned and forgotten, a fact that is hinted at by the establishing shot of the city. Similarly, Costa has undergone a transformation; if previously Costa had been motivated by the film and the idea of profits, it is now clear that such endeavors have been dwarfed

by the circumstances in which he has taken part. Like the warehouse lost among the cityscape, the old Costa has been lost among remnants of the film.

Costa proceeds to take in the sight of the scene before him and then flip through the script somewhat nostalgically. A medium close up of a pensive Costa reveals the fuzzy outline of a person standing in the doorway, in the background of the shot. The natural light from outside backlights the individual, which silhouettes the person's features at the same time that it overexposes what is directly around the figure—the dark image of the individual is shrouded and surrounded by white light. Additionally, due to the short focal length of a medium close up, the figure also appears blurry and out of focus. Even though the shot hides the identity of the person, it is of no surprise that it is Daniel, who quickly comes into focus as he walks toward Costa.

It is of note that while the shot stays a medium close up for Costa, even as he turns around to face the approaching Daniel, it is, at the same time, a medium shot for Daniel, whose whole body occupies less space on screen than Costa's shoulders and head. This sequence—the medium close up of Costa with a silhouetted, out-of-focus Daniel in a medium shot—forces the viewer to recall their similarly unequal and nebulous relationship at the same time that it suggests a role reversal by depicting Daniel's arrival as almost angelic. Throughout much of the movie, there was never any doubt that Costa is the authoritative, paternal figure who attempts to exploit, bribe, and even silence Daniel, and this is echoed in the contrasting shots that frame both characters as large and small, the one—Costa—in relation to the other—Daniel. The fact that Daniel is shown at first as a blurry silhouette who then gradually moves into focus reflects the change that has taken place between the two of them, as their relationship

experiences a shift of focus in the film. Finally, Daniel walks up to Costa to speak with him, and as he does so, both are now depicted with medium close ups, each occupying the same amount of the screen. Daniel is no longer out of focus; no longer does he appear "smaller" than Costa. On the contrary, they stand face-to-face, eye-to-eye. They are equals in life, on camera, and most importantly, in each other's eyes.

The scene continues framing Daniel and Costa with medium close ups filmed using over-the-shoulder shots and shot-reverse-shot as they speak. Costa asks about Belén (Daniel's daughter) and informs Daniel of the multinational corporation's exit. Daniel then responds, "Siempre nos cuesta tan cara, nunca es fácil. Ojalá hubiese otra forma, pero no la hay. ... Y ahora queda lo más duro." Just before Costa leaves, Daniel gives him a wooden box as a present from his pocket. Only later, during the next and final scene of the film, does he open it. As he leaves the city in a cab, Costa opens the box that contains a small vial of water, and says to himself "Yacu," the word for water in the local indigenous language and the native language of Daniel and many of the extras Costa has once exploited. It is a term he learns when members of the film crew jovially ask an indigenous woman the word for water while she waits on them and pours them a glass of water at the fancy restaurant. At the time, however, Antón criticized their fleeting interest in the language by asking them a rhetorical question: how long would they remember that "yacu" means water? Costa, though, clearly remembers the word at the end of the film, which points to the lasting impact that Daniel has had on him. Now, we understand that the equality of the two men is more than how they see each other, more than their relationship as friends: in a sense, they are the same person, for they are both representations of Las Casas.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Bartolomé de Las Casas holds a prominent place in history, even if not everyone can decide exactly what his legacy is or should be. The friar found both allies and opponents in his struggle for the Indigenous cause, and for centuries scholars have had to grapple with the unpleasant reality that Las Casas had a hand in the oppression of American and even African peoples. Nevertheless, Las Casas' work continues to speak for itself as the priest clearly shaped his own image in his writing, particularly as we see in his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* and the *Historia de las Indias*. In these texts, we find a master rhetoritician and historian who set out to reframe the narrative of the conquest, and in the end, it is his writing, and not his lobbying the Spanish court, that has come to truly inform not only the way we see the Spanish's actions in the Americas during the early colonial period, but also the way we view the friar himself.

Furthermore, Icíar Bollaín's *También la lluvia* dramatizes—and subsequently participates in the refashioning of—the life and legacy of Bartolomé de Las Casas by offering the viewer in one filming project a simplified, propagandistic perspective that is based on historical texts that also have been adapted to suit the film's ideology. In this manner, the fictional film reflects the trajectory of Las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* in that it creates a dichotomy of good/bad, hero/villain. In Las Casas' text, for example, the ubiquitous, though oftentimes faceless, Spanish are the antagonists, while the fictional film offers the specific case of Christopher Columbus as the symbolic and actual face of evil. On the other hand, the *Brevísima* paints the natives almost universally as passive and pacific victims of Spanish oppression, without giving

much in the way of a rounded out perspective of the context as a whole. Similarly, Costa and Sebastián's attempt to portray the horrors of Las Casas' text ends up exalting the author of *Brevísima* without really acknowledging his shortcomings or rounding out his image, as it were. The task of giving the full picture of the complexities of clashing cultures, however, is carried out and achieved through the representation of the Cochabamba water wars around the turn of the new millennium. As a whole, then, the film is a warning against the dangers of overly simplified views of history, as they relate to Las Casas and the conquest on the one hand, and, on the other, in dealing with oppression and political unrest in present times. Even so, *También la lluvia*, though it does offer a more complete perspective of Costa, also falls into the tendency of simplification by clearly portraying the Cochabamba conflict in terms of binaries of us/them, right/wrong, oppressor/oppressed. And so from the beginning the viewer identifies and rejoices with the cause and victory of Cochabamban locals. The difference, then, is the complex progression within Costa—and his relationship with Daniel—that we witness throughout the film, one that mimics Las Casas' own nuanced and controversial biography as it has been refashioned over the course of half a millennium.

Conclusion

I have argued against a universalist view of history in favor of a perspective that includes "alternative" histories, particularly popular histories. In this argument I ground my analysis of three important historical figures related to Latin America: Lampião, Che Guevara, and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Indeed, each of these individuals' legacies is complex to the point that multiple narratives not only exist, but also compete to establish their own particular historical "truth" as *the* truth. Of course, it would seem rather logical and even fitting if Lampião were to go down in history as a bandit who terrorized the Brazilian *sertão*; however, this is not his only legacy, and perhaps it is not his primary legacy. For the *cordel* pamphlets have played a major role in refashioning the bandit's legacy by appropriating the historical figure of Lampião and then creating a mythic history in order that it might signify or encapsulate an idea of *sertão*-ness, as the epitome, an example, of what it means to be a Northeasterner. No doubt, Che Guevara could be remembered in a similar manner as Lampião, as a warmongering murderer, and as an accomplice in establishing the decades-long Castro regime in Cuba. However, there is a major contingent that not only looks up to Che as a model human and humanitarian, but also views him as a symbol of the just fight against oppression and imperialism. Finally, Las Casas was the recipient of much criticism and finger pointing throughout the last half-millennium, and some have viewed him as a naive and meddling bureaucrat who sought personal advancement and who may even have given rise to centuries of hatred against the Spanish nation as the "creator" of the Black Legend. Nevertheless, the refashioned priest does not cease to draw admiration and respect as a forefather of

international human rights, a human being who has inspired and continues to inspire social movements.

The fact that competing narratives do exist regarding these figures points to the fact that the three men's legacies comprise a fair amount of controversy, which then forces us to ask why or how such debate came about. The answer, if there is one, is both simple and complex—definitive and yet undefined. As I have previously stated, if we think of history as a (the) monolithic structure by which we come to know about the past, we are mistaken. As Walter Benjamin has written, history is a catastrophe out of which we attempt to create meaning, and that meaning is also the story of a specific group of people or culture that has the power to tell such a narrative. In the same manner that storytelling in oral societies is a collective process of remembering, history, too, represents a narrative specific to a people in time; yet history—also like stories—is subject to alteration depending on whose (hi)story it is. Thus, the legacies of these three individuals are not fixed, static histories of their lives, but rather the result of an ongoing refashioning process of interpersonal, intercultural, and interpolitical negotiation. Consequently, in short, it is possible for these individuals to "mean" different things to different people at different times. My dissertation, then, has sought to uncover the narratives of signification that these competing legacies tell and to demonstrate the literary roots that have, in turn, influenced the refashioning of these figures as they are portrayed in specific films.

Without even realizing it, then, a postmodern turn may have brought us to the point where we can critically engage history (and culture) by, in Benjamin's words, going against or "brushing" against the grain. In the volume *Walter Benjamin and the*

Demands of History, Michael Löwy discusses Benjamin's politics of history in terms of the dominating classes and the oppressed. As I pointed out in the introduction, and as Löwy also notes in discussing Benjamin's seventh thesis from the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," historical narratives are often carefully crafted products of the dominating classes. And so, Löwy's article, "'Against the Grain': The Dialectical Conception of Culture in Walter Benjamin's Theses of 1940," attempts to define Benjamin's views of history and culture (how both can be used as means of oppression) and how to, in Benjamin's words, "brush history against the grain" ("Theses" 256). Löwy not only offers a concrete example of a historical narrative as "produced" or shaped by the powers that be, but also he describes what rubbing history against the grain would "look like" in such a context:

> An example from our times may help to illustrate [Benjamin's] intentions: the celebrations of the Quincentennial of the Discovery of the Americas (1492-1992). The cultural festivities promoted by state, church, and private initiatives were a good example of empathy with the sixteenth-century victors—an *Einfühlung* that invariably benefits the present rulers. Brushing cultural history against the grain would have required refusing any identification with the official heros [*sic*] of the Quincentennial: the Spanish conquerors; the European power bringing religion, culture, and civilization to the "savage" Indians. It would also have demanded the considering of each monument of colonial culture ... as a document of barbarism, a product of war, extermination, and ruthless oppression. (212)

Löwy goes on to state that brushing history against the grain in this case would also involve a historical consideration from the perspective of the defeated as well as recognition of how dominant historical-cultural narratives and actions "present dangers threatening the descendants of the Indian and Black slaves of colonial times" (212). Even so, Löwy plainly states, "The past remains present in the collective memory of the classes and ethnic communities: the tradition of the victors and the tradition of the oppressed inevitably oppose each other" (213). Yet it is this indomitable memory that allows communities, even ones that are not part of the dominant order, to assert their own agency by refashioning history as they see fit.

It is important to note that, for Löwy, culture also plays a major part in the legitimization of official, dominating historical accounts. The festivities of the Quincentennial are/were culture artifacts of descendants of conqueror and conquered alike, but even so, they conform to the perspective of the victor as they celebrate the "discovery"—certainly not the obliteration—of the Americas. Culture, then, like history can very much be manipulated (and thus refashioned) by and then put into service of the dominant, "official" history. Benjamin argues that "[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" ("Theses" 256). Thus, Löwy affirms that "cultural treasures [should be viewed] with suspicion. ... [T]hey are like the spoils carried by the winners in the triumphal procession—spoils whose function is to confirm, illustrate, and ornament the superiority of the powerful" (208). In short, culture becomes a national(ist) treasure that is used to prop up and further legitimize the dominating historical narratives. Nevertheless, Benjamin takes a "revolutionary attitude"

that requires a "dialectical intervention that destroys the bourgeois fetishism of 'cultural treasures' and unveils the hidden, barbarian side of cultural products" (Löwy 212).

It becomes clear that history—and culture alike—are both highly susceptible (if not suspect) to being converted into vehicles by which the dominating classes seek to—and do—reaffirm their belief of the legitimacy of their rule. Like history, cultural artifacts also inevitably bear the "grains," the markings, of the victors. When dealing with such larger-than-life figures as Lampião, Che Guevara, and Bartolomé de Las Casas, whose past(s) has been rewritten and refashioned time and again for different purposes, it is easy to imagine that these same figures—as treasures of a given culture, people, or nation—may likely be incorporated into the national(ist) discourse that they, in reality, stood against. Their legacies can and perhaps will be recycled to firm up the foundation of the present dominating classes and established orders. In other words, these iconoclasts will likely be remade into icons of those in power.

And I believe we have already begun to see evidence of this happening. The Northeast of Brazil is dotted with government-sponsored museums and attractions that play up the legendary history of the *cangaceiro*, Lampião in particular. In Rio de Janeiro, the festival of São Cristóvão has become a home to those sertanejos who have migrated south, and a "mini-vacation" of sorts for *cariocas* (dwellers of Rio de Janeiro) or tourists who wish to step into the shoes of the backlanders from the North—and the *cangaceiro* bandit is a major component of this experience at São Cristóvão. Beyond the curious and entertaining traditions that this *feira* preserves, the divide between North and South is still as deep as ever, as evidenced by the political affiliations that are, generally speaking,

matters of geography as much as party.[120] Not to mention the pop-culture interest in the bandit phenomenon as evidenced by the recent telenovela *Cordel Encantado*. Some ninety years ago, perhaps it would be unimaginable that bandits would be remembered so romantically, and surely Getúlio Vargas (who, when he came to power in the 1930s, made it his mission to put an end to banditry in Brazil) would not have believed that the Brazilian government would sponsor academic studies[121] about *cangaceiros*, Lampião, and the *cordel*.

Furthermore, though at least one government official might have accurately "predicted" the revolutionary legacy of Che Guevara (as quoted in the epigraph for chapter two), no one might have guessed to what heights the name Che would rise, and Che himself could never have known (and he, doubtless, would never have wanted) that his face would be instantly recognizable as part of pop culture, even if his name and his politics are not quite so easily remembered. Nevertheless, it is clear that in 1997, when Fidel Castro exhumed and relocated the remains of his long-dead comrade, it was more than an act of respect by a friend. Without a doubt, Fidel Castro also knew the symbolic power that the bones of Che Guevara could lend the Cuban state. And now the gaze of Che watches over the people in the Plaza de la Revolución in La Habana, reminding them of the hope of the Revolutionary cause. His legacy has been co-opted as a tool of the state.

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[120] Voter maps for the 2014 presidential election—which saw the worker's party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) carry the seat for yet another term—depict this chasm quite clearly, even if they do not tell the whole story: in broad terms, the northern part of Brazil voted for the incumbent Dilma to be re-elected, while the south of the country tended to vote for the ultimately unsuccessful challenger.

[121] The Academia Brasileira de Literatura de Cordel has enjoyed the benefit of the government's support (and its literal seal of approval) for more than one publication.

Similarly, as I have previously stated, Las Casas' *Brevísima* appealed to Simón Bolivar as a patriotic device during the Latin American struggle for independence, a phenomenon that Las Casas could not have been anticipated while writing in the mid sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the clandestinely published document managed to become ammunition for the cause, as powerful as any lead bullet. Even the more vocal critics of Las Casas could not impede the momentum of this priest who has, on occasion, been named as a possible replacement for Christopher Columbus and his national holiday in the United States.[122] It would indeed be a curious turn of events if the United States government were to issue a federal holiday in honor of a Spanish priest, especially if it were to come at the cost of Columbus Day.

To be sure, though, the refashioning that I have described in this manuscript is not the final say in the matter, just as the police and military forces that killed Lampião and Che, respectively, seemed to know that the death of individual they sought did not, in reality, mean the death of his legacy or memory. It is worthwhile to remember that both Lampião's and Che's corpses were mutilated and/or disposed of in a manner that would bring about humiliation or, better yet, cause the man to be forgotten. Of course, then, Lampião's adversaries, as well as the bandit's contemporaries in general, understood and even embraced the entertainment value of the bandit and his remains, for officials paraded his head from town to town until they were forced to send it to the Bahian capital for examination. Even then, however, the "show" of Lampião did not stop, but continued on as the specimen was placed on exhibit, where it would be viewed for years to come.

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[122] Recently, the cities of Seattle, Washington and Minneapolis, Minnesota officially replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day (Grinberg), and no small number of Internet campaigns have proposed Las Casas as a figure more deserving of a federal holiday.

Quite the contrary to the carnavalesque treatment that Lampião's head received, Che's captors actively sought to avoid the inconvenient possibility that the Argentine would be remembered, but not before a parade of curious commoners had flocked to the town of Vallegrande to gaze upon his corpse and take home would-be relics. Only after snapping the picture and taking their own souvenirs did they hide the body—the only evidence would now be the photograph that ended up contributing to the legacy and myth of the revolutionary. Furthermore, in order to understand just how quickly and to what extent both Lampião and Che's legacies were evolving in the time after their deaths, we need only consider that both the Brazilian and the Argentine "martyrs" would undergo an official burial of their remains some thirty years after the dates of their respective deaths. Lampião's head was taken out of a museum to be laid to rest in a cemetery (in 1969, thirty-one years after being separated from its body) in Salvador, Bahia; Che's remains, which had initially been hidden, were dug up in 1997 (thirty years later) and placed in a Cuban mausoleum for perpetuity.

Indeed, the films I analyze constitute another type of "exhuming" in that they delve deep into the past to uncover and recover what has been forgotten, and then to resignify the narrative surrounding the individuals' lives. *Antônio das Mortes*, for instance, recapitulates *cordel* forms, tropes, and mythology, and the end result is that Lampião's legacy undergirds the entire production without ever having to physically portray him. Likewise, Che's image is recycled and eventually extrapolated from *Notas de viaje* and other letters and texts in order to present the film *The Motorcycle Diaries* as part of the various autobiographical texts that Che wrote throughout his life. Similarly, in *También la lluvia* a rather close adherence to Las Casas' texts helps problematize and

ultimately reveal the friar to be the underlying factor that transforms or liberates. The film, in a manner of speaking, revives Las Casas' memory—and his history, which is to say the version of history that he told about the Spanish Conquest of the Americas—through two of his most known and notable texts.

In any case, whether one attempts to cover up the history of the other, or whether one attempts to recover and refashion it, we are engaged in a battle for the past, for historical "truth." And Che Guevara considered this to be a battle of great importance, for he viewed the revolutionary task of the new man as one in which the "taras del pasado" ("El hombre" 37) must be carefully and systematically eliminated in order to bring about a truly new, revolutionary consciousness. Of course, though, the past need not be "eliminated" entirely, per se, for it can be covered up or even altered, resignified—refashioned. In this dissertation, then, I have demonstrated that such alternative histories do exist in relation to three specific historical figures, and these competing histories do not cause any one to be any less "true" or historical. Instead, the historical legacy of each figure is the compilation of many different, differing, and even disparate accounts that have been woven together and have been inscribed with a meaning that is unique to a particular people or culture, and it is one that continues to evolve.

As such, I have not attempted to resolve the controversies and/or (apparent) contradictions with regards to Lampião, Che, or Las Casas. Much of the literature that deals with these individuals is concerned with arriving at its own conclusion or decision on how we are to view the person in question. Again, this has not been my concern. Indeed, I consider these different viewpoints to be part of the whole legacy. Lampião, Che, and Las Casas are not unequivically "good" or "bad," heroes or villains; they are,

instead, a paradoxical combination of both, and to insist on one legacy without acknowledging the other is to engage in mythmaking, to not tell the whole (hi)story. As such, because I consider these disparate perspectives to be equally valid, I believe my study addresses a gap in the research, one in which, by bringing these three figures together in the same theoretical consideration, the question of what the "true legacy" of a given person is, may be replaced with a series of questions that address the "how" and the "why" of the competing narratives. To this end, I have offered an analysis that is grounded in history, theory, literature, and film in order to demonstrate the "how/why" of specific, recent legacies of Lampião, Che, and Las Casas. Literature provides a foundation for filmic representations or interpretations of these figures' legacies, and these representations, consequently, come to form part of the historical narrative of these individuals as another link in the chain of refashioning.

The power of history pales in comparison to the human capacity to recover and refashion history over and again and for different—while paradoxically also the same—reasons. The films I have analyzed reveal just how much we are drawn to certain narratives that represent us and our way of perceiving the world around us, and in this case, these narratives are based on certain historical figures and writing by or about them. Glauber Rocha's *Antônio das Mortes* harkens back to the *cordel* and its mythification of Lampião, and as a result it pushes both the *cordel* and the Lampião mythic cycle beyond its limits by presenting an idealized version of the sertenejo—an ideal that is based on a criminal who, only a few decades prior, was deemed the terror of the land he is said to epitomize. Similarly, Walter Salles draws heavily from the diaries of the travelers whose lives he chronicles in *The Motorcycle Diaries*. However, the film adds another layer of

interpretation by reading both Che Guevara and Alberto Granado's personal diaries as a "great awakening" of a proto-revolutionary. Therefore, Salles not only presents a reading of the motorcycle journey as he inserts the film into the "canon" of Che's diaries, but also he presents the viewer with a prepackaged reading of the diaries themselves, not to mention the life of Che Guevara post-1952-travels. Indeed, the viewer is meant to participate in the sympathetic refashioning of the revolutionary as the film reframes the Argentine's life in light of his political humanism. Finally, then, Icíar Bollaín's *También la lluvia* offers us a modern-day, true-to-life parable that is designed to evoke the Lascasian spirit of resistance and human rights. Interestingly, Bollaín does not shy away from the controversy surrounding Las Casas, nor does she attempt to present an idealized version of him (as is the case in Rocha and Salles' films, respectively). Instead, the film seems to recognize the sensationalism—and even hypocrisy—of the friar's most famous text, the *Brevísima*, as it literally and simultaneously deconstructs (for it ceases production as the city crumbles around the warehouse) the film-within-the-film that is based upon it. Conversely, Bollaín's film seems to prize the honest and reflective nature of Las Casas' *Historia general de las Indias*, as the author admits and regrets his mistakes and faults. This same narrative of change is what eventually shines through and what, ultimately, Bollaín presents as the lasting (and controversial) legacy of the Dominican priest Las Casas.

In the end, whether in storytelling, history, literary text, or film, the powerful process of refashioning walks hand in hand with human culture and human nature. As humans continue to live and seek to create meaning out of the catastrophic "piles" of signification that surround them, they will also continue to use ideologically framed

lenses to interpret the "mess" of reality. Indeed, the literature and films I have analyzed only serve to further emphasize the point that the process of refashioning that takes place is not one that replaces or excludes past or alternative interpretations, but one that allows for the inclusion of other histories, realities, and significations. It is a framework by which we are able to critically engage the paradox of the legacies of these and other figures that have divided the opinion of more than a few individuals.

I believe, then, that the theoretical framework of refashioning lends itself to further study. By concentrating on what has taken place, we are able to avoid the tautological and prescriptive debates of how we should or should not view historical figures. To this end, it would be worthwhile to look at the refashioning of other individuals (like Columbus, for example). What is more, refashioning can also be extrapolated beyond the realm of the individual in history and be used in tandem with literary works or even social issues and phenomena. More specifically, we might look at the issue of gay marriage in the United States and study how, in the space of a decade, public perception of the issue has changed so drastically. Also, we could use the idea of refashioning to shed light on changes in perception or interpretation of specific texts or ideas. I find it interesting that certain critics seem to experience a rapid rise in academia—their works and ideas come into "fashion" seemingly out of nowhere. Refashioning could give us a vocabulary to discuss the phenomenology of the collective agreement among scholars that leads to a certain critic's sudden popularity. Finally, refashioning will help to uncover, not only the trends or evolution, but also the hidden ideologies that are all around us, though we take this fact for granted. And as I continue my reseach in this area, I will surely expand this study along these lines.

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