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The Mexican Revolution in the Eyes of Katherine Anne Porter and Nellie Campobello

THE LITERATURE OF THE U.S. SOUTH HAS FOUND NEW life in the burgeoning field of inter-American literary studies.¹ Both the U.S. South's literatures and its histories have played key roles in the academic attempt to connect the literatures and histories of the United States to those of Latin America and the Caribbean from the groundbreaking work of Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia's 1986 collection, *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of Literature of the United States and Spanish America*, through Gustavo Pérez Firmat's "invitation or come-on" (5) to study American literatures side by side in his 1990 edited volume, *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* to Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine's recent collection, *Hemispheric American Studies*. The U.S. South aptly serves as the metaphorical bridge between the northern and southern halves of the American hemisphere because, as Deborah Cohn and Jon Smith argue in their introduction to *Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies*, "the U.S. South comes to occupy a space unique within modernity: a space simultaneously (or alternately) center and margin, victor and defeated, empire and colony, essentialist and hybrid, northern and southern (both in the global sense)" (9).

With the importance of the U.S. South in this inter-American conversation, it is surprising that very few scholars examine the work of Katherine Anne Porter from a hemispheric approach, especially considering Porter's involvement in Mexican art and politics in the early 1920s and again in the early 1930s.² Thomas F. Walsh's *Katherine Anne*

Porter and Mexico: The Illusion of Eden and José E. Limón's *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture* stand out as the two primary examples of literary criticism that does bring Porter's biography and literary corpus into a hemispheric context, although only Limón's approach can be considered comparative since Walsh focuses primarily on Porter herself, her time in Mexico, the pieces she wrote while living in Mexico, and the works about Mexico that she wrote after returning to Texas. Limón, in contrast, brings Porter's life and literature into conversation with the experiences and work of her friend Manuel Gamio—a renowned Mexican archaeologist and anthropologist whom Porter met in the early 1920s—as one of several readings that support his comparative analysis of the U.S. South and what he calls "Greater Mexico." Following the lead of Américo Paredes, Limón uses this term to describe "all Mexicans, beyond Laredo and from either side [of the U.S.-Mexico border], with all their commonalities and differences" (3), and he insists that Greater Mexico maintains an ironic relationship with the U.S. South since the two "have had much in common historically" (9).

In the following pages, I place Porter's writings about Mexico alongside the work of Mexican author and outspoken *villista* Nellie Campobello to offer a critique of how each writer creates what she calls "authentic" portrayals of the Mexican Revolution. This reading supports Limón's comparison of the U.S. South and Greater Mexico and expands the latter construct by showing the lasting effects of the Revolution on both a quasi-canonical writer of the Mexican Revolution and on a foreigner who insisted that Mexico was her "familiar country" (Porter, "Why" 356).³ Reading Porter and Campobello side by side reinforces the primary argument of inter-American literary studies, that literature is best understood when read across and through the national and linguistic borders that supposedly separate various American literary traditions. However, this reading also demonstrates that the very identities that a hemispheric approach to American literatures calls into question—in this case both the national and regional constructs of the United States, Mexico, the U.S. South, and northern Mexico—heavily influence Porter's and Campobello's depictions of the Revolution.⁴ Finally, a comparative analysis of Porter's and Campobello's writings offers a more nuanced perspective on the convoluted series of events we call the Mexican Revolution by balancing Porter's increasing disil-

lusionment and eventual cynicism toward the Revolution and its leaders with Campobello's fragmented description of the conflict and her undying praise for Francisco Villa.

REVOLUTIONARY SYMPATHIES AND TRUTH-CLAIMS

Campobello's fiction and her explanatory writings and Porter's early writings, correspondence from Mexico, and interviews all reveal that both authors were deeply concerned that the "true" heroes of the Mexican Revolution had been disenfranchised and degraded by those who eventually gained power. In an interview with Hank López, Porter claimed that "the fighting heroes nearly all went out when their war was won. You know the trouble with every movement, every revolution, is that the people who do the work and do the fighting and bloodshedding and the dying, quite simply are not the people who run the thing afterwards" ("Country" 124). In a similar vein, Doris Meyer nearly paraphrases Porter's thoughts as she describes Campobello's feelings about revolutionary heroes, claiming that Campobello "felt that the Revolution had been betrayed and its true heroes maligned by those who came to power once the fighting had ceased" ("Nellie Campobello's" 747). Porter's and Campobello's sympathies with the leaders of the Revolution seem curiously akin, but their fictional portrayals of revolutionary leadership abruptly diverge in Campobello's *Cartucho* and Porter's "Flowering Judas." Campobello's depiction of revolutionary leadership remains optimistic and redemptive, at least as far as Francisco Villa is concerned, while Porter's representation of revolutionary leaders becomes caustic through her portrayal of Braggioni.

For Campobello, Francisco Villa embodied the positive attributes of a revolutionary leader in that he fought with and for his people—the impoverished peasants of northern Mexico. In the prologue to *Mis libros* [*My Books*], Campobello sets up her fictional portrayals of the Mexican Revolution as a battle between good and evil and claims that as a child she saw "how those good men [*villistas*] fought against the truly evil ones [*carrancistas*]. Thus, I saw, learned, and knew that the evil rob the good and kill them; that for the good guys, justice does not exist not even in hundreds of years" (9).⁵ Although some would place Villa with the men Campobello calls "truly evil" since he, too, robbed and killed, he remains heroic in Campobello's eyes because of his connection to the people. For Campobello, Villa's crimes were really military actions that protected and improved the lives of the poor *norteños*.

As a *norteña*, Campobello felt more than justified in defending Villa's tarnished name from those who called his revolutionary tactics banditry or organized crime. She was appalled by the texts she was required to read in school that attacked Villa and his men by calling them "horrible bandits and killers," and she felt that these texts had the clear purpose of destroying Villa's "personality as a great Mexican and a brilliant warrior" ("Prólogo" 14). In reaction to the histories and literatures that cast Villa in a negative light, Campobello felt obligated to rewrite Mexican history (44). *Cartucho* was her first attempt to revise this history, and thus, redeem and reclaim Pancho Villa as a hero for all Mexicans. As Gabriella De Beer explains in "Nellie Campobello, escritora de la Revolución mexicana" ["Nellie Campobello, Writer of the Mexican Revolution"], Campobello hoped that *Cartucho* would "put things in order" and demonstrate "the virtues and the heroism of Francisco Villa and his soldiers who had been vilified" (214).⁶ For Campobello, Villa and his men were heroes—positive examples of what it meant to be revolutionaries—not thieves, and she glorified them in *Cartucho* to balance the negative representations.

This balancing act eventually leads Campobello into the same snare that entraps her antagonists—the temptation to place Villa on one side of the binaries of good/evil and hero/villain rather than creating a realistic character with both positive and negative traits. This problem is most visible in Campobello's dramatic revision of *Cartucho* for its second edition in 1940. In the first edition of *Cartucho* (1931), Villa is a presence more than a character, and one of the few scenes that approaches him directly—an *estampa* titled "Villa"—critiques Campobello's hero by showing his unwillingness to assist the widow of one of his dead soldiers (39).⁷ The *estampa* ends with Nellie, the child narrator who recounts the majority of the *estampas* in both editions, relating that her mother "let some harsh words fall upon Villa" after viewing this scene (39). The fact that it is Nellie's mother, rather than Nellie herself, who criticizes Villa is significant since she is often read as "the other hero" (Keller 146) of the text and since she continually risks her life and the lives of her children by remaining an open supporter of Villa even when his enemies invade their home.⁸ The original *Cartucho*, then, creates a positive aura around the figure of Pancho Villa but suggests that even the hero is capable of making errors.

In the second edition of *Cartucho*, Campobello avoids the overt critique of her hero by deleting “Villa” completely and by adding more than twenty new *estampas*, many of which approach the general in a more direct manner than any of the scenes in the first edition. Tellingly, “Villa” is the only *estampa* from the original edition that does not reappear in the revised version, and none of the new sketches offer anything but praise for Villa. Although “Villa,” the *estampa*, might appear to contradict Campobello’s goal of redeeming Villa, the man, the additional coverage he receives in the second edition more than compensates for the critique offered in “Villa.” Furthermore, including “Villa” in the revised version of the text would have served to balance the second edition’s direct approach to and almost blind praise of the general. Reading “Villa” alongside the second edition creates a complex and conflicted Villa, but reading just the second edition—which Doris Meyer claims that Campobello “considered definitive” (Translator’s Note 3)—flattens Villa’s character.⁹ It is this Villa, the war hero with no visible flaws, who needs to be read alongside Porter’s biting portrayal of revolutionary leadership.

Porter’s revolutionary sympathies are even more problematic than Campobello’s because Porter originally romanticized several major participants in the Revolution, regardless of their conflicting interests. In her early nonfiction about Mexico, Porter idealizes both Venustiano Carranza and Alvaro Obregón. In the 1922 “Where Presidents Have No Friends,” Porter romanticizes the death of Carranza by telling it through the eyes of one of his soldiers who claims, “I remember him in this way, riding always ahead of us, without a word, his white beard blowing over his shoulder. I loathe all causes, madame, and all politics, but the man inspired admiration” (406). Sharing this heroic description of Carranza would seem to taint her views of Obregón, Carranza’s successor, since his forces killed Carranza; however, only pages later, Porter sympathizes with Obregón and claims that all his problems were really inherited from Carranza (409–10). In “The Mexican Trinity” (1921), Porter openly doubts that Obregón’s mixed cabinet can function: “Such a coalition government for Mexico is a great idea, . . . But it will not work” (401). Yet, in “Where Presidents Have No Friends,” she praises Obregón for organizing such a cabinet, claiming that this political move was a wonderful “act of faith . . . in himself” (409–10). As though the

contradictions between idealizing Obregón and Carranza are not problematic enough, Porter was also fascinated with Villa. López claims that Porter originally hoped to interview Villa when she arrived in Mexico in 1920. Although this interview never took place and Porter never wrote about Villa directly, she was intrigued enough to praise him in her conversations and interviews with López (*Conversations* 60). By commending Carranza, Obregón, and Villa, Porter demonstrates how her initial sympathies for the Revolution were simultaneously aimed at any significant revolutionary leader even though these generals had already pitted themselves and their men against each other.

Porter's work, her letters, and the scholarship about her time in Mexico all indicate that she socialized with individuals who were involved in the Revolution and/or the government, including figures as dissimilar as Felipe Carillo, Moisés Saenz, and Manuel Gamio.¹⁰ The fact that she could mingle with disparate groups, praise contrasting factions of the Revolution, and still optimistically declare in 1923—"I watched Mexico, and all the apparently unrelated events that grew out of that first struggle never seemed false or alien or aimless to me" ("Why" 355)—suggests that Porter was originally convinced that the Mexican Revolution could succeed.¹¹ Unlike Campobello, Porter's outside perspective—specifically her Texas background as compared to Campobello's *norteña* background—does not drive her to support one specific faction within the Revolution. Instead, the duality of her experience as a U.S. southerner simultaneously connects her with opposing forces within the Revolution. Porter grew up in an established Southern family that had fallen on hard times, thus, she heard tales about her aristocratic bloodline while living in poverty. Joan Givner claims that the effect of this paradox "was that all her life Porter wavered in her class identification, now agitating on behalf of downtrodden, exploited people, now speaking proudly of belonging to a slave-owning, aristocratic class" (61–62). Porter could identify with both the landed gentry who eventually took power in Mexico and with the peasant revolutionaries who fought alongside, and later, against them. Figures like Villa and his followers reminded Porter of the poverty of her own family while figures like Carranza hinted at her family's fabled regal past. While Porter's connections to both poor and rich help explain her contradictory sympathies, her initial support of an individual like Obregón might simply be linked to self-interest. According to what Porter told López,

Obregón hired her to help organize the first Mexican art exhibit that was going to travel from Mexico to the United States ("A Country" 125). Thus, a positive portrayal of Obregón in her writing could have helped her keep this job while concurrently increasing the exhibit's chances to enter the United States since the U.S. government had not yet recognized Obregón's presidency.¹²

The differences between Porter's and Campobello's ties and sympathies with participants in the Mexican Revolution increased as the Revolution moved farther into the past; Campobello's loyalty to Villa grew with time while Porter's allegiance to the revolutionaries in general faded as she became increasingly disillusioned with the Revolution. Campobello not only wrote and revised *Cartucho* in praise of Villa, but she continued to defend him in her fiction when she wrote *Las manos de mamá* [Mama's Hands] in 1937. She even left the literary realm of her fiction and poetry for a time to write *Apuntes sobre la vida militar de Francisco Villa* [Notes About the Military Life of Francisco Villa], in which she declares Villa as "the only brilliant warrior of his time, one of the greatest in history; the best in America, and after Genghis Khan, the grandest guerrilla that has ever lived" (10). In contrast to this accolade, Porter's descriptions of the revolutionaries became increasingly sardonic. Somewhere between the early 1920s and 1930—the year in which Porter published "Flowering Judas" and then returned to Mexico—Porter became disillusioned with the Mexican Revolution and its leaders. In two letters that she wrote from Mexico in late 1930 and early 1931 she stated, "the Indian is poorer than ever, his heels are cracked as deeply, his face as despairing" (qtd. in Bayley 24) and "the net result of this revolution is that now several politicians have good jobs and can buy air-planes and ranches on the public charity money" (32). The lack of substantial change for anyone but the rich left Porter disenchanting with the revolutionaries she had once praised.

The differences between their portrayals of Mexican revolutionaries could be attributed to Campobello's position as an insider in Mexico and Porter's gaze as an outsider, or the contrasts might simply be connected to the number of revolutionary leaders each author originally chose to support. As a Mexican citizen, Campobello was invested in Mexico and the aftermath of the Revolution. As a *norteña*, she had an even more vested interest in the positive portrayal of her regional hero as a national figure. Thus, for Campobello, Villa was not only the best

of the Mexican revolutionaries, but the greatest warrior in all America. Unlike Campobello, Porter found no need to redeem even one portion of what she felt had become a corrupt Revolution because she was not really invested in it. She could visit Mexico when she wished, but when she grew tired of a Revolution that failed to create positive results and pushed the indigenous Mexicans into greater poverty while providing the former revolutionary leaders with large amounts of wealth, she could criticize the system and leave. Campobello, on the other hand, was intrinsically connected to the system. Even more than Porter, she saw the corruption inside the Revolution, but her critiques of the system came through direct praise of Villa—a figure that the Mexican government had belittled and sought to erase. By choosing her childhood hero to embody the positive attributes of the Revolution, Campobello simultaneously criticized the situation in Mexico and redeemed the Revolution. In contrast, by initially praising all sides of the Revolution, Porter could not salvage any of them when she realized that the revolutionary leaders had not delivered the changes they had promised. Her applause for the Revolution turned into cynicism because she could not seek to reclaim one figure from a movement whose leadership she had already judged as a whole.

While their portrayals of the Mexican Revolution greatly differ, both Campobello and Porter claim to provide the “true” version of the Revolution. Campobello begins the prologue to *Mis libros* by boldly stating, “if it were possible to write these *truths* with the tips of sharpened arrows in the copper-colored hands of Comanches at war, I would do it” (9, emphasis added). With this statement, Campobello not only brands her introductory remarks as true, but she prepares the reader for other truth-claims that she will make about *Cartucho*. Later, she claims, “the narrations in *Cartucho*, I should clarify this once and for all, are historical truth” (17).¹³ This declaration would seem less surprising if Campobello were describing *Apuntes Sobre la Vida Militar de Francisco Villa* since biographers tend to pitch their work in this manner, but labeling *Cartucho*—a work whose fragmented form alone cuts against conventional depictions of history—as “historical truth” serves as a reminder of Campobello’s overriding goal to redeem Villa through both fiction and biography. Porter also made general truth-claims about her writing. She told López, “I would tell you as an absolute rule that has never been broken yet, that *everything I ever wrote in the way of fiction is based very*

securely on something real in life" ("A Country" 123). With this and other statements, Porter sought to authenticate all of her fiction by connecting it to her own biography. But, when discussing her writings about Mexico, she went even further, claiming, "I write about Mexico because it is my familiar country. . . . The artist can do no more than deal with familiar and beloved things, from which he could not, and, above all, would not escape" ("Why" 356). For Porter to be able to meet her own requirement of only writing about things that were real to her, she had to cast herself as someone who knew and understood Mexico.

The purposes behind Campobello's and Porter's claims of truth differ greatly. Campobello made truth-claims in order to redeem Villa. Near the end of her prologue, Campobello invites other *villistas* to speak out: "The truth should be told. We, the children of the true revolutionaries, have the obligation to talk and ask that the curtain be opened. History asks this of us, since our country is not the property of a few *carrancistas*, *obregonistas*, or *callistas*. . . . These idols, for me, represent the evil men who dispossessed and killed the good ones" (44). Even without saying Villa's name, Campobello's purpose is clear; she tells her truth about the Revolution, hoping her narrative will act as a catalyst and drive other Mexicans, whether writers or ordinary citizens, to re-create Mexican history by reclaiming Pancho Villa as a Mexican hero.

In contrast to Campobello's goal, Porter made truth-claims to validate herself. Originally, Porter hoped that her writing would portray Mexico in a positive light, and for this purpose, she declared that her experiences in Mexico qualified her to tell a type of truth that other visitors did not take the time to learn. In "The Mexican Trinity," Porter complains about the "choice company of people who can learn about peoples and countries in a couple of weeks. . . . They come dashing in, gather endless notes and dash out again and three weeks later their expert, definitive opinions are published. Marvelous!" (399). This description of a foreign reporter/hack-writer represents the competition Porter faced when she tried to get her pieces on Mexico published in the United States, but it also represents Porter's insecurities about her own position in Mexico, insecurities that would not have existed had Porter believed in a concept like Greater Mexico since her Texas homeland would have been a part of that space, and thus, would have obviated any need to prove an authentic connection to Mexico the nation-state.¹⁴ Walsh warns that Porter's writings from and interviews about

Mexico must always be taken with a grain of salt because her hope to appear authentic often led her to place herself in the middle of fictional situations she created around historical events (5). Porter wanted her work on Mexico to be taken seriously. She authenticated her nonfiction by claiming that she knew Mexico, and like Campobello, she validated her fictional version of the Revolution by calling it “truth.”

CAMPOBELLO’S VILLA VERSUS PORTER’S BRAGGIONI

The differences between Campobello’s and Porter’s sympathies with and truth-claims about the Mexican Revolution can best be seen by comparing Campobello’s first attempt to write about the Revolution, *Cartucho*, with Porter’s only published story that directly discusses the Revolution, “Flowering Judas.”¹⁵ With *Cartucho*, Campobello turns Mexican history on its head by portraying Pancho Villa, not only as a hero, but as a man who was inherently good. While this move may not seem radical now since Villa is considered a Mexican folk hero—a Robin Hood who helped the poor and withstood national bullies and international imperialists—when first published, *Cartucho* was extreme both in its style and in its open support of Villa. Campobello’s attempt to champion Villa literally ruined some of her friendships even though it eventually won her public acclaim. She stated, “people who had claimed to be my friends refused to greet me, since they wanted nothing to do with the defender, according to them and their lies, of bandits” (“Prólogo” 27).¹⁶ *Cartucho* caused such a negative reaction because it portrayed the former revolutionaries who entered the Mexican government—figures like Carranza, Obregón, and Calles—as traitors and called Villa the real hero of the war.

Kate Peters claims that in *Cartucho* “there are no winners, no good guys and no bad guys” (338). It is true that neither side wins in *Cartucho*, but it is difficult to argue that there are no good guys or bad guys, not only because Campobello continually claims that there are in “Prólogo,” but also because the sketches in *Cartucho* depict the people as content when the *villistas* are around and as agitated when any other general’s armies are in town. For Campobello, the Revolution is a picture drawn in black and white, a story of good versus evil. This simplified version of Villa and his followers are “*los buenos*” while Carranza and his followers are at least some of “*los malos*.”

For Porter, the Revolution is not a story of good versus evil, but a melancholy account of how good intentions can lead to negative out-

comes. Deborah Cohn explains that Porter's "interest in Mexican culture and politics imbued many of her other writings with a hope for and, ultimately, disillusionment of the prospect of change following the revolution" (136). "Flowering Judas" clearly demonstrates Porter's initial hope that the Revolution could change Mexico, but the story ends as the protagonist, Laura, screams herself awake from a bizarre nightmare in which Eugenio—Laura's friend who commits suicide in jail with painkillers she delivered to him—appears to her as a ghost and drags her toward death (102). The Revolution becomes the nightmare that drives Laura toward the same death that has already engulfed Eugenio. For Porter, the Mexican Revolution is not a clear battle between good and evil; rather, the Revolution degenerates from good to evil as she watches the followers of the Revolution fall into despair when the revolutionary leaders become carbon copies of the corrupt men they once opposed.

The distinct perspectives of Nellie, the narrator, and Laura, the protagonist, create dramatic differences between each text's portrayal of the revolutionaries, the revolutionary leaders (Villa and Braggioni, respectively), and the Revolution in general. Nellie is a *norteña* who respects Villa, a child narrator who watches events with an uncanny clairvoyance that only children have. Laura is an outsider who has committed herself to Mexico and to a revolutionary band led by a man named Braggioni. Her mature pessimism starkly contrasts the innocent front that she reveals to those who think they know her. Perhaps the most important difference between these two characters lies in Nellie's youthful optimism compared to Laura's jaded cynicism about the Revolution. This difference is clearly illustrated by comparing Nellie's jovial exclamation, "Entrails, how pretty! Whose are they?" (*Cartucho* 85) with the sentiment Laura holds that "she has been betrayed irreparably by the delusion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be" ("Flowering" 91). Nellie is optimistic enough to see beauty in a bag of intestines. Even though she has seen executions and cadavers, she can separate the image of the entrails from any negative image they could conjure up about the dead man from whose body they have been extracted. Nellie quickly learns that the intestines belonged to General Sobarzo (*Cartucho* 85), and with this knowledge, the entrails become even more beautiful to her because she connects them to Sobarzo's honorable death in trying to retake Nellie's northern town of Parral for the *villistas*. Laura, on the other hand, becomes increasingly pessimistic

about the Revolution. Not only does she feel that the clash between her beliefs and her actual life creates a paradox, but she also sees the same contradiction in the lives of the leaders of the Revolution. She never meets a revolutionary general like Sobarzo who gives his life for his cause. Instead, she watches the leaders live off the spoils of the Revolution.

Nellie sees the *villistas* as real men with families, fears, and senses of humor while Laura sees revolutionary followers as both naive and self-important. The first and smallest section of *Cartucho*—"Los hombres del norte" ["The Men of the North"]—creates a descriptive picture of the men who follow Villa. Nellie remembers them, not only because of their military accomplishments, but for their human attributes. For example, when a soldier named Kirilí dies, Nellie remembers that he liked to sing, that he smiled easily, that a young woman named Chagua fell in love with him, and that his mother "really loved and admired him" (50). In Nellie's eyes, the men of the north are real people, honorable men who fight, not just for Villa, but for their families and for the people of the north. In contrast, Laura sees revolutionaries in a more depressing light. She feels that many of them naively hope that Braggioni will use his influence to spring them from jail, and she often finds them "sit[ting] in tumbled beds and talk[ing] bitterly as if all Mexico were at their heels, when [she] knows positively they might appear at the band concert in the Alameda on Sunday morning, and no one would notice them" ("Flowering Judas" 94). Laura dedicates her life to these men, but she cannot convince herself that they will ever be independent from the "energetic men" (91) who lead them. To her, the revolutionaries are merely followers of powerful men like Braggioni, sheep who continue to follow a corrupt leader because they need a place to apply their nervous energy—a cause to maintain and support. The only revolutionary that Laura knows who breaks out of this mold is Eugenio, and he only takes his own initiative in one violent act as he commits suicide in jail to overcome his boredom (100).

Nellie's and Laura's contrasting opinions about revolutionary followers set up their divergent experiences with revolutionary leaders. While corrupt revolutionaries do exist for Nellie, she focuses her attention primarily on her ideal revolutionary leader—Villa. Two particular sketches, "Nacha Cenicerós" and "El sombrero" demonstrate why Nellie reveres Villa. The rumor about Nacha Cenicerós is that Villa had her shot because she killed—accidentally or out of jealousy—one of his colonels. This rumor plays to the stereotype of Villa as a trigger-happy

bandit who commands his men to kill Nacha even after he has been made aware of the circumstances surrounding his colonel's death (66). Nellie challenges the rumor about Nacha, claiming that Villa did not kill her, but that he released her so she could return to her home and reestablish her life (66–67). In "El sombrero," Villa has the opportunity to kill several of the town's rich youth while they dine in the house of one of his friends, but instead, he merely scares them, lectures them about the injustice of their excess while so many Mexicans go hungry, and warns them not to walk the streets at night so they won't get shot by his sentinels (137–39). While both sketches begin with the possibility of portraying Villa as a callous leader, they both end by making him seem like a just man who has been misunderstood. Both *estampas* show Villa as sincere toward his followers and toward his enemies. For Nellie, his sincerity is his most redeeming trait, and she points to it repeatedly throughout *Cartucho* in an attempt to portray Villa as a hero.

Laura also associates with one revolutionary leader in particular, a fictional revolutionary named Braggioni who resembles Villa's alter ego. Like Villa, Braggioni has a large group of followers, but unlike Villa, he does not live with his men. Instead, he lives a life of excess while his men suffer. The narrator describes Braggioni's position: "Not for nothing has Braggioni taken pains to be a good revolutionist and a professional lover of humanity. He will never die of it. He has the malice, the cleverness, the wickedness, the sharpness of wit, the hardness of heart, stipulated for loving the world profitably. *He will never die of it*" (98). Laura sees the injustice in the relationship between Braggioni and his followers. His "glutinous bulk" disillusiones her; she thinks that Braggioni "should be lean, animated by heroic faith, a vessel of abstract virtues" (91), but she soon realizes that only his followers fit this description. Braggioni is a corpulent man driven more by the lucrative economic opportunities the Revolution offers than by any desire for equality. Along with his excessive lifestyle, Braggioni distrusts his own men (98) and cheats on his wife—an active revolutionary in the city's factory system (99). Laura's vision of Braggioni is the opposite of Nellie's view of Villa. While Villa is sincere with everyone, Braggioni is not. Villa either suffers or prospers alongside his people while Braggioni grows rich and fat alone. Laura once believed in Braggioni the way Nellie believes in Villa, but Braggioni's deception of Laura and his other followers leads her to doubt that the Revolution will ever be capable of improving the life of the masses along with that of the leaders.

Porter's criticism of revolutionary leaders in "Flowering Judas" is heavy-handed and almost too reductive. By only allowing Laura to meet one leader, Porter depicts the entire leadership of the Mexican Revolution—regardless of ideology or personality—in a negative light. Campobello's portrayal of revolutionary leadership, though it is primarily based on a romanticized and simplified version of Villa, is much more complex. While *Cartucho* is full of opposing generals who Campobello and Nellie (character/narrator) criticize directly, Campobello does manage to question Villa on at least one occasion. In "Los hombres de Urbina" ["Urbina's Men"] Campobello relates the unwarranted death of a young man named Santos Ruiz who dies simply because he does not want to be a *villista*. "Santos had told them that he didn't want to be a *villista*. No one wanted to execute him, even the most devout *villistas* begged for his life and had the hopes of convincing him" (89–90). On the surface, Campobello's critique of Villa and his followers is twofold. First, the idea that Santos must die just because he will not sign a paper that claims he supports Villa seems ridiculous since all of the townspeople already know him. Second, the fact that the *villistas* gain nothing by executing Santos and that Santos gains nothing through his refusal to declare himself a friend of Villa makes the whole episode, the whole Revolution, seem pointless. This reading makes an *estampa* like "Los hombres de Urbina" appear risky considering Campobello's goal of recovering Villa, and thus, casting the Mexican Revolution as a battle of conquered good and triumphant evil. However, a more in-depth reading of the same *estampa*, one that understands the historical context surrounding the figure of Tomás Urbina, obviates the previous critique. The apparently innocent victim, Santos Ruíz, was one of Urbina's men. Urbina famously betrayed Villa, and although Campobello seeks to salvage Urbina's reputation at various times in *Cartucho*, the fact remains that Villa and his men eventually ambushed Urbina who was hiding out at his ranch with a group of his own men after he had abandoned Villa's forces. As one of Urbina's followers, then, Santos' refusal to declare himself a *villista* is a refusal to re-affiliate himself with Villa after having turned against him, and this act is equal to treachery. An *estampa* like "Los hombres de Urbina" only briefly raises questions about Villa and his followers and then justifies their actions even if the narrator does not directly articulate the justification. However, the piece does allow the reader a moment to question the narrator's view of Villa while Porter's depiction of Braggioni creates only contempt for Braggioni.

CHRISTIAN IMAGERY AND VIOLENCE

Both *Cartucho* and “Flowering Judas” are replete with Christian imagery that serves to further contrast Campobello’s and Porter’s versions of the Revolution and its leadership. Through positive Christian imagery that shows Villa as a human and as a god, Campobello contradicts the negative portrayals of him that had become the norm in Mexico. Through inverted Christian imagery around Braggioni, Eugenio, and Laura, Porter reiterates her disappointment in the Revolution. Neither author discusses this imagery in her correspondence or personal writings about her fiction, but for each of them, Christian allusions usefully demonstrate her optimism or pessimism about the Revolution. Christian imagery is particularly powerful in their depictions of the Mexican Revolution because both Christianity and revolution create similar spaces for a savior figure.

The Christian imagery in *Cartucho* revolves around a duality in Campobello’s depiction of Villa, specifically, as both a human and a god. Several *estampas* show the positive side of Villa’s human nature. “Las sandías” [“The Watermelons”] and “Las rayadas” [“The Strips of Sweetbread”] show how Villa literally thirsts and hungers like any other man. In “Las sandías,” Villa and his men stop a train, but instead of robbing the passengers, they merely unload all of the watermelons to quench their thirst (131), and in “Las rayadas,” Villa mistakes a few village boys for bakers and sends them flour and sugar to cook bread for his men (132–33). Each episode combats the negative stereotypes of Villa as a murderer or bandit by showing that he has compassion. He shows empathy for his men, who are hungry and thirsty, but he also shows mercy to the people he could have considered enemies—the passengers on the train and the boys in the old bakery. Villa takes the watermelons from the train but leaves the passengers unharmed, and instead of forcing the boys in the abandoned store to give up their bread—they really had none to give—Villa sends them the ingredients to make new bread. According to these *estampas*, this revolutionary leader is both human and humane.

Campobello continues her depiction of Villa’s human qualities in “Las lágrimas del general Villa” [“General Villa’s Tears”] and “Las hojas verdes de Martín López” [“Martín López’s Green Leaves”] which both show Villa crying. In “Las lágrimas del general Villa,” Villa asks the hard-

working peasants of Pilar de Conchos why they fight against him and why they fear him if he has never attacked them. With tears in his eyes, Villa tells them not to fear him because he never fights against working people (136). In “Las hojas verdes de Martín López,” Villa cries more than anyone else when he learns about the death of his assistant, Martín López (152). These tears might go even further toward humanizing Villa than his desires to eat bread and drink watermelon juice. If Villa, the feared general, cries in front of los *concheños* and openly mourns the loss of Martín López, he not only feels human emotions, but he willingly shows his emotions like any other person might in the same circumstances. The image of Villa as a hard-nosed leader breaks down when the reader considers the tears he sheds for the Mexican peasants and for his friends.

While *Cartucho* as a whole demonstrates Villa’s human qualities, certain sketches also provide Villa with a divine nature. In “La voz del general” [“The Voice of the General”], Villa’s exhausted men immediately mount their horses in preparation for battle when Villa proclaims, “we have to go help the boys, they are in a jam, Carranza’s men are all over them. Let’s go” (134–35). Severo, the narrator who shares this story with Nellie, claims that “the *villistas* were one single man. The voice of Villa knew how to unite the people” (135). Villa’s voice immediately unites his people, not just because it is loud, but because the man behind the voice has godlike power that his followers both respect and fear. While this sketch compares Villa to a god of power, “El sueño de El Siete” [“El Siete’s Dream”] compares him to a god of love whose grand-fatherly voice awakens a sleeping *villista* boy by saying “wake up, son, where is your horse?” (115). Villa’s kind words are not inherently godlike, but the young soldier feels that these words are a gift from God, stating, “God rewarded me . . . I heard Papa Pancho’s voice” (116). Through these two *estampas*, Campobello describes a war general who is not merely a leader, but a god of both might and love. Villa, as deity, has power and demands respect, but much like the human version of Villa that Campobello tries to depict, the godlike Villa also shows respect.

Like Christianity, a successful revolution needs a leader who is willing and capable of saving his people. Campobello places Villa in the role of savior for the people of northern Mexico. Through her dual portrayal of Villa, Campobello replaces his tarnished image as a murdering thief with a new image of him as a redeemer, who like Christ, is both human and divine, both all-powerful and ever-loving. This portrayal of Villa reveals

Campobello's constant optimism about Villa's participation in the Revolution, and it clearly redeems him since it portrays him as one who redeems.

Porter also utilizes Christian imagery in her description of revolutionary Mexico, but her twisted biblical allusions actually invert the role of the savior figure, demonstrating how revolutionary leadership and the Revolution itself fail. For example, when Braggioni finally returns home to his wife after living in a hotel for a month, she approaches him in tears and says, "Are you tired, my angel? Sit here and I will wash your feet.' She brings a bowl of water, and kneeling, unlaces his shoes, and when from her knees she raises her sad eyes under her blackened lids, he is sorry for everything, and bursts into tears. . . . His wife leans her head on his arm and says, 'Forgive me!'" (101). This scene clearly draws from the New Testament passages in which a sinful woman approaches Christ for forgiveness, washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair, only here, the roles should be reversed. Braggioni, not his wife, is the adulterer. He should wash her feet in hope of finding forgiveness, but instead, he takes the role of savior and forgives his wife for supposedly driving him from her presence a month earlier because she cried too much. This twisted allusion suggests that Braggioni is unworthy of the savior image, not only in his own house, but in his country as well. He cannot save his followers, just as he cannot really forgive his wife, because both his followers and his wife live up to the revolutionary ideals he preaches while he does not. Braggioni is a hypocrite, a self-proclaimed redeemer who saves no one.

Porter's biblical allusions do not end with her rejection of Braggioni and the leadership of the Mexican Revolution. In the finale to "Flowering Judas," Porter places Eugenio, the follower, in the position of savior only to demonstrate that the sacrifices made by common revolutionaries were as futile as the hollow promises of their leaders. "Flowering Judas" ends as Laura, in sleep, follows Eugenio toward death:

Then eat these flowers, poor prisoner, said Eugenio in a voice of pity, take and eat: and from the Judas tree he stripped the warm bleeding flowers, and held them to her lips. . . . She ate the flowers greedily for they satisfied both hunger and thirst. Murderer! Said Eugenio, and Cannibal! This is my body and my blood. Laura cried No! And at the sound of her own voice, she awoke trembling, and was afraid to sleep again. (102)

Laura's nightmare is clearly linked to the guilt she feels for having provided Eugenio with the drugs that he took to commit suicide. In such a reading, the blossoms of the Judas tree represent the pills that Laura gave Eugenio, and Laura, like Judas Iscariot of old, becomes a murderous traitor. Yet, these flowers symbolize even more than Laura's personal treachery if this passage is read as another critique of the Revolution. The Revolution, like Christianity, needs a savior figure to offer himself as a sacrifice for his people. In Laura's nightmare, Eugenio takes this role and offers the blossoms—his flesh and blood—as a Communion that satisfies Laura's thirst and hunger. But in reality, Eugenio kills himself in prison, and his death accomplishes nothing. For Porter, then, all of the sacrifices made in the Revolution are only effective in dreams. The lost blood of the peasants, the workers, and even the leaders is a vain sacrifice, a failed sacrament that brings about no positive change in Mexico.

The bizarre finale of "Flowering Judas" provides a transition into what might be the most obvious difference between Campobello's *Cartucho* and Porter's "Flowering Judas"—the representation of violence. "Flowering Judas" has very little violence, especially considering the theme of the story and the volatile atmosphere that Porter attributed to revolutionary Mexico in other works. Violence comes secondhand as Laura tells Braggioni that Eugenio is dead (100) and as she dreams that Eugenio drags her toward death (101–02). *Cartucho*, on the other hand, consists mainly of violent sketches. The violence often comes secondhand when Nellie's mother and other characters tell her about a battle or an execution, but Nellie also sees guns, blood, and cadavers firsthand. There is so much violence in *Cartucho* that even Nellie, the child narrator, becomes desensitized to it claiming, "'more than three hundred men executed in the same moment, inside the barracks, is very very impressive' the people said, but our infantile eyes found it sufficiently natural" (81), and in another *estampa*, "that cadaver seemed like it belonged to me. . . . I liked to look at it because it seemed to be very scared. . . . I slept that day, dreaming that they would execute another and hoping that it was next to my house" (88). The violence in *Cartucho* is disturbing, but Nellie's clear descriptions of and candid reactions to it are even more so. *Cartucho* suggests that the dead and the wounded are not the only casualties of the Revolution. The survivors—both participants and witnesses—will be forever scarred by the violence of the Revolution that defined and altered their lives.

The approach of each author to the violence of the Revolution seems ironic since Porter seeks to show the futility of the Revolution while Campobello praises Villa's participation in it. In other words, the strategy of each author seems to match the purpose of the other writer rather than her own goals. But, this discrepancy can be explained if one embraces the idea that Porter's and Campobello's distinct cultural backgrounds might predetermine the way each sees, accepts, and portrays violence in her fiction. In his famous treatise *El laberinto de la soledad* [*The Labyrinth of Solitude*], Octavio Paz creates a binary between the United States and Mexico, and part of this binary rests on the distinct way he believes that Mexico embraces violence as compared to the United States. Paz claims that instead of a weekend or small party that gives people in the United States the chance to blow off steam, Mexicans have only the great fiestas in which gun shots and knife blades become an integral part of the party (70). He describes the Revolution as the ultimate fiesta, stating, "the revolutionary explosion is an extraordinary party in which the Mexican, drunk with himself, finally meets, in a mortal embrace, the other Mexican" (180).¹⁷ Following Paz's explanation of violence in Mexico, Campobello's open acceptance of violence and Porter's aversion to it seem natural regardless of their authorial goals because each writer is merely reflecting her culture's supposed standards about violence.

However, from an inter-American perspective, and even more specifically, considering Limón's concept of Greater Mexico, Paz's statement is far too simplistic; Porter's Texan background should not be different enough from Campobello's *norteña* childhood to explain such a great discrepancy in their portrayals of violence since they are both from virtually the same geographic space. This is where the constructs of nation and region—United States, Mexico, U.S. South, and northern Mexico—demonstrate their lingering power. National and regional expectations, rather than geography, separate Campobello's portrayals of the Revolution from Porter's. As a Texan (both U.S. citizen and U.S. southerner) rather than a Mexican or a *norteña*, Porter has the luxury of entering the Revolution when she pleases and critiquing it from afar.¹⁸ If her critique does not include the violence which defined the Revolution, it does not really matter because her audience can find a critique of violence in other sources of U.S. media that criticize the Mexican Revolution. Campobello, as a Mexican and as a *norteña*, must live with the reality of

the Revolution's aftermath and with the reactions that her portrayal of the Revolution might cause among her fellow Mexicans. If she were to ignore the violence of the Revolution, her claim to be telling the "true" story of the Revolution would immediately collapse because her audience is personally aware of the violence that surrounded the Revolution. The lives of Campobello's audience, like that of Nellie the narrator, have been changed and even defined by this violence. This is not to suggest, as Paz might, that Campobello bathes her text in violence because she is Mexican and violence is an inherent part of her culture or that Porter avoids violence because she is from the United States where violence cuts against the cultural norm. Instead, the violence portrayed in *Cartucho* and in "Flowering Judas" is heavily connected to each author's personal proximity to the Revolution and her ability or inability to distance herself from the outcome of the violence; this mobility or lack thereof rests upon Porter's and Campobello's national identities even though said identities do not dictate how each author conceptualizes violence.

Reading Campobello's and Porter's work side by side demonstrates the value of an inter-American concept such as Greater Mexico while reiterating the continued power of the myths of nation and region. Both writers, regardless of the national and linguistic borders that might have separated them, were fascinated by the Mexican Revolution, were driven to portray it in their fictional and historical writings, and were consumed by the fear that their depictions might be rejected as unauthentic. But at the same time, their versions of the Revolution and its leadership were overwhelmingly affected by what each author considered her regional and national identities. A comparative reading of "Flowering Judas" and *Cartucho* also allows us to see beyond Porter's unflinching critique of Braggioni and Campobello's near worship of Pancho Villa to arrive at a more balanced view of the Revolution and the people who led it—a view much like Campobello's own *estampa* "Villa," which she eventually discarded and for which she overcompensated in her revision of *Cartucho*. In short, the comparative, hemispheric angle of this essay brings the Revolution and its leaders into better focus even while this very focus shows how both the framework of Greater Mexico (a region that breaks through and spreads beyond national borders) and the broader inter-American frame itself are always already bound to the constructs of region (northern Mexico, the U.S. South) and nation (Mexico, the United States).

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NOTES

1. Cohn and Smith note that “every term for ‘the Western Hemisphere’ derives from European and Eurocentric cartographic imaginations.” They prefer the label “New World Studies” to describe the type of broad comparative approach I adopt in the following pages because they claim that “it places its biases up front, making them easier to neutralize than various covert tributes to Amerigo Vespucci” (16 n.8). However, I use the labels “inter-American literary studies” and “literatures of the Americas” as a conscious reminder that the Americas were not new upon Columbus’ arrival in 1492. Also, I should acknowledge the fact that inter-American literary studies is not the only field that has given new life to the literatures and histories of the U.S. South. The “new southern studies”—which, as Kreyling notes, includes “the globalization of the issue of region and nation” (9)—has also rejuvenated the study of the U.S. South’s literatures and histories. The new southern studies, however, also includes scholarship which redefines the white, male, and upper-class underpinnings of the construct of *the* South from the inside, and thus, it is not synonymous with inter-American literary studies.

2. One could make a similar comment, although without the specific connection to Mexico, about the work of any U.S. southern writer except William Faulkner. Indeed, one critique of the branch of inter-American literary studies that seeks to connect the U.S. South to Latin America and the Caribbean is that without Faulkner there would be little basis for the comparison. Quality scholarship that brings other U.S. southern authors into dialogue with American writers beyond the borders of the United States will strengthen the overall push for hemispheric approaches to American literatures although Faulkner will most likely remain a key figure in this field.

3. Literary scholarship about Campobello in both Spanish and English has increased since 1979 when De Beer described her as “una escritora muchas veces mencionada y pocas veces estudiada” [“an often mentioned but infrequently studied writer”] (“Nellie Campobello, escritora” 212), but her writings on the Revolution are still considered peripheral when compared to the works of Mariano Azuela, Martín Luis Guzmán, and Rafael Muñoz.

4. Limón’s conceptualization of Greater Mexico is also a regional construct, but unlike the U.S. South and northern Mexico, it undermines the construct of nation since it exists inside, between, and throughout both Mexico and the United States. Northern Mexico and the U.S. South (even when it is simply referred to as *the* South), contrastingly, reiterate the idea of nation since each region is a specific place within but never outside of Mexico or the United States, respectively.

5. All translations of Campobello’s texts are my own.

6. All translations of De Beer’s “Nellie Campobello, escritora de la Revolución mexicana” are my own.

7. All citations of the *estampa* “Villa” are from the 1st edition of *Cartucho*. All other citations from *Cartucho* are from the 2000 re-publication of the 2nd edition.

8. All translations of Keller are my own. For more on the importance of Nellie's mother figure in both *Cartucho* and *Las manos de mamá* see Oyarzún, and De Beer.

9. By claiming that the second edition of *Cartucho* flattens Villa's character, I do not wish to suggest that this version of Villa is without depth. When analyzing the *estampa* "Los hombres de Urbina," Campobello's Villa can be complex, but he never has room for error. The second edition justifies all of Villa's words and actions.

10. Felipe Carillo was an indigenous revolutionary leader in the Yucatan area of Mexico. Porter created a fictional portrayal of Carillo in an unfinished short story titled "Trinidad" (Uncollected). Moisés Saenz was a government official who preached revolutionary doctrine. Finally, Manuel Gamio was a Mexican archeologist who spent significant time with Porter during her trips to Mexico. He conducted research in Mexico and in the United States after being exiled from his homeland.

11. The 1923 date of this statement shows some of Porter's naiveté about how bad the violence in Mexico really was from 1910 to 1920. While several people on both sides of the border were optimistic about Madero's Revolution bringing change to a country that had been living under the rule of Porfirio Díaz for over thirty years, few kept this optimism into the 1920s. Campobello's optimism, for example, is linked specifically to Villa and his part in the Revolution, not to the outcome of the Revolution.

12. Even with her positive portrayals of Obregón, the art exhibit was not allowed to enter the United States. The U.S. government called the exhibit "political propaganda," and Porter and her colleagues were sent back to Mexico ("A Country" 125–26).

13. This claim becomes even more interesting when we remember "Villa." Did Campobello delete this *estampa* from the second edition because she did not want Villa's foibles included in her recounting of "historical truth?"

14. Porter's fiction itself demonstrates that she saw Mexico and Texas as completely separate spaces since she often wrote about Mexicans in Mexico but, as Limón notes, "never wrote Mexican-Americans or Mexican immigrants into her fiction about" Texas (68). Indeed, her claims about familiarity with Mexico appear to be based solely on her frequent visits there—several with her father in her youth, by herself in 1920, and again in 1930—rather than on any interaction with Mexicans or Mexican Americans in Texas.

15. "Flowering Judas" is Porter's only complete story about the Mexican Revolution. However, *Uncollected Early Prose of Katherine Anne Porter* contains several incomplete stories about the Revolution.

16. We should question whether Campobello's claims of receiving a cold shoulder from previous friends upon publishing *Cartucho* refer to the publication of the first or the second edition. According to Jorge Aguilar Mora, Campobello became a close acquaintance of Martín Luis Guzmán in 1936, and Mora asks whether the dramatic revisions of the second edition of *Cartucho* reflected his tutelage (31–32).

If the negative reactions she claimed to receive came after the second edition, why would Campobello be so worried about them since one of the Revolution's canonical voices and one of Villa's most famous defenders oversaw *Cartucho's* republication? If the reactions came after the first edition, then perhaps salvaging Villa's image was as taboo as Campobello suggests since that edition offered a less romanticized version of Villa than the revision. However, considering the success of Guzmán's previous and later writings on Villa, the harsh treatment that Campobello claimed to receive must have been based on her gender and her writing style as much or more than her subject matter.

17. All translations from Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* are my own.

18. Texas' inclusion in *the South* might be debatable for some U.S. southerners, but it was certainly not debatable for Porter. A proud Texan, she opened her essay "Portrait: Old South" as follows: "I am the grandchild of a lost War, and I have blood-knowledge of what life can be in a defeated country on the bare bones of privation" (160).

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