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## NICOLAS SHUMWAY

### *Don Catrín de la Fachenda* and Lizardi's Crisis of Moral Authority

On first glance, *Vida y hechos del ilustre caballero don Catrín de la Fachenda* hardly seems morally ambiguous. After all, it is a novel in which priests refute heresy, crime leads to poverty, and the sinful body, even before death, becomes corrupt. I argue in this article, however, that a fundamental ambiguity lies at the core of the novel, an ambiguity reflected in the debate between traditional authority on one side and modernity (or *catrinismo* if I may be allowed a useful neologism) on the other. I further contend that this debate reflects a conflict between two Lizardis, one a cautious reformer who from 1814 to 1820 survived fairly well in Ferdinand VII's stultifying New Spain, and the other a fire-breathing militant who flirted with, but did not entirely embrace, the moral uncertainties of the modern age. But before analyzing these aspects of the novel, first a word (longer than I would like) about the two Lizardis.

1820—the year Lizardi finished *Don Catrín* and the year José de Iturbide began his successful campaign against Spain—was a watershed for both Lizardi and Mexico. *Don Catrín* lies on the cusp of that change. Although not published until ten years later, in early 1820 the novel was presented in manuscript to the Inquisition's Board of Censors who issued the following decree on February 22, 1820:

La vida y hechos de D. Catrín de la Fachenda con las notas del Pensador americano es un jocosero con que se ridiculiza a los viciosos merecedores de este epíteto por su vida libertina, deduciendo una sana moral con que arreglen sus sentimientos y deberes a los de la religión. (cited in Spell 123)

Of course, Lizardi had not always gotten on so well with the Church. His early enthusiasm for the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz made him suspect of "liberalism." Early issues of his periodical, *El pensador mexicano*, founded in 1812, enthusiastically defended the Constitution's

key provisions—constitutional monarchy, freedom of the press, representative government, and parliamentary rule. Yet, as this list suggests, Lizardi was hardly a Jacobean radical. He deplored populism and frequently expressed doubts concerning the potential of Mexico's lower classes for self rule. Possibly the event that most marked Lizardi's formative years occurred in 1810 when he and other principal citizens of Taxco feigned support of Miguel Hidalgo's insurrection to keep Hidalgo's marauding hordes from sacking the city. The ruse worked too well, for a year later, when Captain Nicolás Cosío restored the city to Spanish rule, Lizardi was taken prisoner to Mexico City for supporting the insurgency. Lizardi eventually cleared his name, but his fear of Hidalgo-style populism earned him the distrust of radicals, while his Illuminist reformism made him just as suspect to ultra-royalists (Spell 117).

Lizardi's public devotion to liberalism suffered even further with Ferdinand VII's rise to the Spanish throne in 1814. Indeed, the intellectual chill brought by Ferdinand's restoration of the Mexican Inquisition no doubt contributed to Lizardi's decision virtually to abandon his newspaper and begin writing didactic novels like *El periquillo sarniento*, the first volume of which appeared in December of 1815. Ever vigilant against heresy, the Holy Office carefully scrutinized Lizardi's novels but apparently found insufficient grounds to charge him with heresy. Mexican conservatives, however, continued distrusting him. Except for some unpleasantness in 1817 regarding the fourth volume of *El periquillo sarniento* (the censors did not like Lizardi's criticism of slavery), Lizardi had few problems with Ferdinand's viceregal government, partly because the *pensador* kept his criticism unfocussed and made many moves to flatter the powerful. Indeed, *Don Catrín* itself might be seen as one such move given its favorable portrait of priests, its condemnation of Rousseau (*Catrín* 14), and its equation of "liberalism" with heresy (*Catrín* 70). In sum, as the above quotation reveals, the Church judged *Don Catrín* to be what Lizardi evidently intended: a defense of the faith and a cautionary tale against immoral thought and behavior.

But suddenly Mexico changed, and apparently so did Lizardi. In March of 1820, one month after *Don Catrín* received the Censors' imprimatur, Rafael Riego led an assault on Ferdinand VII and forced the king to swear allegiance (yet again) to the Consitution of Cádiz. News of the Riego rebellion and the King's born-again devotion to constitutionalism allowed Lizardi to found a new newspaper, *El con-*

*ductor eléctrico*, dedicated to promoting constitutional monarchy. In the manifest announcing the new paper Lizardi asserts, "Viva la Nación Española, viva la unión, viva la constitución, y el digno Rey que la juró" (*Prólogo, El conductor*, n. pg.) In the first issue Lizardi painstakingly ignores the king's previous contempt for the constitution, arguing that the Monarch had merely been led astray by "el egoísmo, la adulación, la tiranía, la barbarie, el despotismo, la hipocresía, la superstición etc. [que] se presentaron en la funesta escena, vestidos con los brillantes trajes de la lealtad, amor a su persona, justicia, ilustración, soberanía, virtud y religión." These evil advisors "le hicieron creer a este buen Monarca que la Nación estaba disgustada con el gobierno de las Cortes, y ansiosa de ser regida por el antiguo . . ." (*El conductor*, June 1820, 2). Whether Lizardi believed such nonsense is anyone's guess; more likely than not, he felt that Fernando would continue to rule in New Spain come what may, and that holding him to the constitution was the only real option for progress. These early issues of *El conductor* argue persuasively for the guarantees of the constitution and wax particularly eloquent in their defense of freedom of the press and the rights of Blacks to full citizenship. He also condemns the Inquisition as something alien to true Christianity and further argues that religious orders should be ruled by local bishops (Spell 126). Such positions, of course, did not endear him to the conservative hierarchy.

Lizardi's devotion to the king didn't last. Only a few months after praising Ferdinand while denouncing his evil advisors, Lizardi proclaimed his support of José de Iturbide's campaign to separate Mexico from Spain altogether. (Iturbide, by the way, was the first insurgent Lizardi ever supported.) So taken was Lizardi with Iturbide that he established a printing operation in Tepoztlán that produced pamphlets praising the Iturbide insurgency and Iturbide's famous Plan de Iguala of February 12, 1821. He later celebrated Iturbide's victorious entrance into Mexico City with these words:

Yo espero que en la primera sesión del Congreso, por aclamación se le destine el trono. ¡O! tenga yo el gusto de besar una vez la mano del Emperador de la América, y cierre la muerte mis ojos para siempre.  
(cited in Spell 126)

Iturbide's preening incompetence soon dampened Lizardi's enthusiasm. On November 18, 1821, he published a famous pamphlet

titled *Cincuenta preguntas para quien quiera contestarlas* in which he questions Iturbide's commitment to constitutional liberalism as framed in the Cádiz Constitution. The pamphlet also criticizes Iturbide's sycophantic courtiers, among whom were several high clerics. Iturbide himself objected to the pamphlet, but Lizardi did not let up. On February 13, 1822, he published an even more audacious pamphlet titled *Defensa de los Francmasones* in which he argues against several papal condemnations of Masonry, holding that "no puede menos que ser santa una religión, secta o comunidad donde el fundamento es la beneficencia, el amor al género humano, la hospitalidad y el desinterés" (*Defensa* 3). Lizardi further defends Masonry as an authentic religion by pointing to its scriptural base, and later dismisses papal pronouncements on the subject as acceptable "según las luces de su siglo" but hardly atuned with modern enlightenment (*Defensa* 6). He thus not only defends a heretical sect; he also questions the authority of not one but several papal pronouncements.

Not surprisingly, given the Church's hysteria on the subject, Lizardi's defense of Masons brought swift judgement. Eight days after the pamphlet appeared, Lizardi was excommunicated, a punishment particularly harsh in his society since it involved a kind of shunning that brought him to the verge of financial ruin. Nonetheless, quite unlike the accommodationist who wrote *Catrín*, Lizardi continued his attacks on the government while also protesting his excommunication. Indeed, so consumed was he with his ecclesiastical status that church-related subjects dominate most of his late writings. When no printer would publish his work, Lizardi bought his own printing press and continued writing for a clandestine market, albeit for very little money. During the constituent convention of 1823 he militated for a kind of separation of church and state, and was profoundly disappointed when the constitution of 1824 legalized only the Roman Catholic Church. Only after Guadalupe Victoria's election as Mexico's first constitutional president did Lizardi pull in his horns. He made peace with the Church, and in 1825 Victoria appointed him editor of a government newspaper, a position he held until his death in 1827. Despite the government appointment, however, Lizardi did not die in functionary paradise, partly because his enemies missed having the old Lizardi to kick around. In 1826 one of these, José María Aza, published a pamphlet reminding Mexicans that the Lizardi now at peace with the Church and in the

employ of a revolutionary government had often been investigated for heresy, opposed Independence heroes like Hidalgo and Moreno, and supported the repressive Ferdinand VII. Not amused by Aza's accusations, Lizardi brought charges against him for defamation of character. Unfortunately for Lizardi, Aza came to court armed with such convincing evidence that the court ruled in favor of Lizardi's accuser (Spell 127–38).

From this brief sketch we see that *Don Catrín de la Fachenda* indeed lies between two quite different Lizardis: the accommodationist Lizardi whose novel pleased the Censors in February of 1820 and the impassioned militant who only months later supported and then opposed Iturbide, defended Masons, and fought excommunication. As a didactic work blessed by the Church, the novel would seem to characterize the earlier figure and have little to do with the later one, and indeed critics like Dinko Cvitanovic, María Rosa Palazón, and Catherine Beroud have analyzed the book primarily in terms of its didactic qualities.

My goal in this article, however, is to show that such is not the case, that although Lizardi wrote *Don Catrín* as a cautionary tale, a moral fissure underlies the novel, a fissure that has Lizardi the accommodationist on one side and Lizardi the firebrand rebel on the other. Specifically, I argue that Lizardi's desire to use *Don Catrín* as a bad example threatens to get away from him, and that at times *Catrín* and his fellow *catrines*, like Milton's disfigured angel, sound alarmingly persuasive and not unlike the Lizardi who would later defend Masons and defy Church hierarchs. I further contend that *Catrín* becomes so persuasive that Lizardi the accommodationist has no choice but to infect, mutilate, and kill him. To justify *Catrín*'s destruction, this Lizardi reveals a moral authoritarianism that is quite at odds with the pluralistic spirit of the militant Lizardi who emerges later. And finally, I propose that *Catrín* and *catrinismo* ultimately resemble the modern spirit in ways that might have secretly pleased their author.

To begin, there is little question but that Lizardi intended *Don Catrín* to be a cautionary tale, a didactic work that would teach by way of bad example. As *Catrín* himself puts it, "... el objeto que me propongo ... es aumentar el número de los catrines; proponerles mi vida como modelo" (4). Nor does *Don Catrín* differ in any significant ideological fashion from his earlier work. Rather, it faithfully reflects a New World

enlightenment, as Nancy Vogeley has perceptively analyzed, but departs in significant ways from the Golden Age picaresque, as Lasarte has shown. Where *Don Catrín* does differ from Lizardi's earlier novels is in its structure. For unlike the *pícaros* in *El periquillo sarniento*, the *catrines* in *Don Catrín* have a real voice and hold spirited arguments with their accusers. Consequently, we can actually speak of *catrinismo* as a kind of philosophy, a kind of anti-morality, whereas we would be hard pressed to identify Lizardi's *pícarismo* as a doctrine of any sort. By giving his *catrines* a real voice and by following that voice wherever it might lead, Lizardi unleashes a force he later has a hard time controlling. But I get ahead of my argument. At this point we should first examine the nature and substance of *catrinismo*.

*Catrinismo* turns out to be a much more sophisticated philosophy than Lizardi might have intended. Allow me a couple of examples of the *catrines'* extraordinary view of the world. Profoundly shaken by a scolding received from his uncle, a priest, Catrín hears the following advice from his fellow *catrín*, Don Tremendo:

Olvídate de esas palabras con que te espantó el viejo tonto de tu tío. Y pasa buena vida. Muerte, eternidad y honor son cocos con que se asustan los muchachos. *Muerte*, dicen; pero ¿quién temerá a la muerte, cuando el morir es un tributo debido a la naturaleza? Muere el hombre, lo mismo que el perro, el gato y aun el árbol, y así nada particular tiene la muerte de los hombres. *Eternidad*: ¿quién la ha visto, quién ha hablado con un santo ni con un condenado? Esto es quimera. *Honor*: esta es una palabra elástica que cada uno le da la extensión que quiere. . . . Esto lo has visto; la gracia está en saber pintar las acciones y dictar las partes. (23)

Don Tremendo's advice, of course, is hardly anything Lizardi wants us to take seriously. Yet, whatever Lizardi's intentions, Tremendo's arguments show considerable sophistication. For example, his words on death: "¿quién temerá a la muerte, cuando el morir es un tributo debido a la naturaleza? Muere el hombre, lo mismo que el perro, el gato y aun el árbol, y así nada particular tiene la muerte de los hombres." Is this not modern biology, a description of the essential oneness of all living things? Is there not an echo here of Newtonian physics and their implicit determinism—a determinism quite at odds with notions of God and free will? Similarly, when Tremendo says of eternity, "¿quién la ha visto, quién ha hablado con un santo ni con un condenado? Esto es

quimera," is this not a statement of the materialist hypothesis, an idea that would place Tremendo and by extension *todo el catrinaje* in the not unenviable company of David Hume and other modern spirits? And what do we say of his argument that honor "es una palabra elástica que cada uno le da la extensión que quiere. . . . Esto lo has visto; la gracia está en saber pintar las acciones y dictar las partes"? In arguing that words are elastic, that meaning is unavoidably a human construct, does not Tremendo unwittingly support Plato's contention in the *Cratylus* that the meaning of words is merely a matter of convention? Similarly, when today's postmodernist enthusiasts contend that apparent knowledge is merely discourse, and discourse masks power, are they not in some sense repeating Tremendo's insight that "la gracia está en saber pintar las acciones y dictar las partes"? In sum, sophisticated readers of many ages—and perhaps even Lizardi himself—might be forgiven for not finding *catrinismo* entirely alien.

In another revealing passage on *catrinesque* relativism, Catrín defends his philosophy to yet another priest who insists that "estos *catrines* tienen mucha parte en el abandono que vemos" (63). To this accusation Catrín responds:

Delante de un *catrín* verdadero nada es criminal, nada escandaloso, nada culpable.

. . . Lleno siempre el legítimo *catrín* de amor hacia sus semejantes, a todos los disculpa y aun condesciende con su modo de pensar. Al que roba, lo defiende con su necesidad; a la coquetilla, con la miseria humana; al que desacredita a todo el mundo, con que es su genio; al ebrio, con que es alegría; al provocativo, con que es valor, y aun al hereje lo sostiene, alegando la diferencia de opiniones que cada día se aplauden y desprecian. (64)

What Lizardi the traditional moralist wants to condemn here is relativism. He would like us to conclude that theft, prostitution, drunkenness, and aggression are always wrong. What Catrín says, however, is that certain individuals might be driven to thievery because of need, that prostitutes might rise from social conditions in which women have nothing to sell but their bodies, that brave people may be justified in resorting to aggression, and that in a society tolerant of different opinions, even heresy is permissible. In sum, despite Lizardi's evident desire to demonize such attitudes, those very attitudes are markers of pluralism and the soul of intellectual freedom. Indeed, Catrín's relativism

certainly seems closer to the modern spirit than Lizardi's apparent hunger for moral absolutes.

As a philosophy in its own right, *catrinismo* needs its own commandments. To this end Lizardi has *Catrín* present us with a decalogue he attributes to Machiavello by way of Albertus Magnus—an odd attribution: if we consider that Albertus Magnus predated Machiavello by nearly two and a half centuries and the commandments in question most surely did not issue from the pen of Machiavello. Of these “Machiavellian” commandments *Catrín* underlines the fourth: “Aúlla con los lobos,” which he explains a couple of pages later in the following fashion:

... comencé a observar exactamente el decálogo, especialmente el cuarto precepto, haciéndome al genio de todos cuantos podían serme útiles; de manera que dentro de pocos días era yo cristiano con los cristianos, calvinista, luterano, arriano, etc., con los de aquellas sectas; ladrón con el ladrón, ebrio con el borracho, jugador con el tahúr, mentiroso con el embustero, impío con el inmoral, y mono con todos. (72–73)

Obviously, Lizardi does not think one should be a “mono con todos.” Yet, what is wrong with a society where Calvinists and Lutherans might have a place? How does the pluralist society that Lizardi apparently supported only two years later in his rabid opposition to officializing Roman Catholicism, not to mention his defense of Free Masonry, differ from *Catrín*'s vision of a society where even Lutherans and drunkards have the right to be wrong? Where do the accommodationist Lizardi and his radical other half draw the line between diversity and unacceptability? As *Catrín*'s faithful scribe, Lizardi allows these questions to be raised, but he fails to let any of *Catrín*'s opponents answer them, perhaps because they have no good answers, particularly for someone like Lizardi who is drawn to pluralistic relativism yet nostalgic for absolute truth.

We cannot but wonder, however, why Lizardi chooses relativism for particular pummeling. In previous works he had ridiculed corruption and immoral behavior, but seldom before does he seek out a particular philosophy or doctrine. Moreover, of all available evils, why does he single out relativism for such harsh treatment? Of course, there is no way of knowing an author's motives, and certainly no reason we should confine our reading to seeking out the author's intentions. I

would suggest, however, that Lizardi's construction of *Catrín* as a relativist was a ploy to ingratiate himself to the Church on what was arguably the touchiest subject of the time: the question of authority: who determines truth, and who has the power to suppress “error”?

To a remarkable degree much of history can be reduced to a struggle to answer these questions. In his noteworthy book, *Inventing the People*, Edmund Morgan carefully traces how the rule of kings was slowly replaced by the notion of a sovereign people in which the king's loyal subjects become a collective of citizens with innate rights, one of those rights being that of self-government through the expression of individual opinion. (Morgan, *passim*). This evolution consisted of a gradual displacement of authority, a displacement by which a subject people became a self-ruling people to whom the formerly sovereign king yielded authority. The very notion of democratic, representational rule presupposes a variety of opinions and a relativism not unlike the attitudes parodied in *Catrín*. Even worse from the absolutist perspective, representative government in some sense replaces truth with consensus, right with accommodation of difference, *absolutismo* with a kind of *catrinismo*.

These subtleties were not, of course, lost in debates on liberalism, and no doubt Lizardi knew that his defense of traditional authority would please the hierarchy on such a basic issue. The question in the Church, of course, was not whether the people had rights of some sort, but whether popular sovereignty could replace traditional social and ecclesiastical hierarchies. The Church could point to a grand tradition of *concern* for the people. Drawing from Scripture, Catholic thought is replete with prescriptions and proscriptions for leaders, be they monarchs, princes, or factory owners. Good civic leadership in Catholic thinking promotes the material and spiritual welfare of the people, and is particularly concerned with protecting the weak from the strong, the poor from the rich, the disenfranchised from the majority. Indeed, traditional Catholic thinkers, including the current Pope, continually criticize liberal democracy for opening doors to bullies and leaving the weak unprotected.

What is not found in traditional Catholic thought, however, is consistent support for the notion that people should create systems of self-government, particularly when that process involves a “diferencia de opiniones,” some of which—inevitably—must be wrong, if not li-

centious and sinful. Indeed, one of the central heresies of Protestantism was its location of authority in the congregation of believers. Protestants, or at least most Protestants, turn Catholic polity on end by saying that God's will is manifest through the collective voice of the people rather than the Church's magisterium, that the people, however sinful as individuals, can, when properly constituted as a congregation of believers, articulate the will of God. Calvin for example, after a lengthy disquisition on Biblical examples of ecclesiastic appointments writes that "We therefore hold that this call of a minister is lawful according to the Word of God, when those who seemed fit are created by the consent and approval of the people" (Calvin 21–23). The central importance of governance in the Reformation is yet borne out by the names of major Protestant bodies. Congregationalists locate authority in local congregations to such a degree that Congregational ministers can be dismissed at any time by a majority vote. Episcopalians, in comparison, locate authority in the episcopate, the council of bishops who, although elected, have near dictatorial powers once they are in office. In contrast, from Calvin on, Presbyterians look to the presbytery, a kind of elected legislature with representatives from several congregations, to make their important decisions.

Alarmed by political liberalism as well as protestant polity, Rome made no secret of its preference for hierarchical systems in the civic as well as the ecclesiastical sphere. On January 30, 1816, Pius VII asked that his "venerable brethren, Archbishops, Bishops and dear sons of America, subjects of the King of Spain" render "due obedience to your King" (cited in Kennedy 23–24). Eight years later, in 1824, Leo XII called on the American bishops to work for the return of the Americas to the rule of the King of Spain. It was not until 1885 with the publication of Pope Leo XIII's famous encyclical *Inmortale Dei* that the Vatican finally accepted democracy as *one* of the permissible forms of government.

Thus we see that, however humorously framed, Catrín's defense of "una diferencia de opiniones" is highly relevant to the period. Indeed, by calling authority itself into question, he is touching on arguably the most sensitive topic of his time, a topic for which governments fell and heads rolled. Nor is it difficult to see why catrinesque relativism was particularly odious to the absolutist mind. For Catrín not only questions the existence of absolute truth; he manifests a remarkable

indifference to its very existence. In sum, by refuting such attitudes, Lizardi was guaranteed to please the traditionalists.

Yet, by creating a character to express those views, he was also playing with fire, so much so that very soon in the novel Lizardi's biggest unstated problem is how to silence his unruly *catrín*. In trying to control his creation, Lizardi may have sensed the frustration that drove Unamuno to describe novels as *nivolos*, as works that somehow write themselves and reduce authors to little more than scribes for their characters. Had Lizardi been a less passive witness of his character's development, Catrín might have emerged as yet another fool, something like Periquillo, entertaining but essentially mute. Catrín and his fellow *catrines*, however, develop their own voice and proclaim their own ideas. Nonetheless, despite many priestly fulminations against them, Lizardi remains their faithful scribe.

Recognizing that Catrín is getting out of hand, Lizardi involves Catrín in conversations with several worthy folk whose job it is to set Catrín straight—a task of course that is also Lizardi's. And who are these worthies? For the most part they are priests: Catrín's uncle (65–66), a couple of non-specified *clérigos* (67), and a tediously pious *practicante* who delivers the epitaph (107–09). But not only do priests admonish Catrín. On one occasion he is condemned by a count who throws him out of his house (75). And on another he is scolded by a virtuous military officer, Don Modesto, who maintains that "el oficial que tiene el honor de militar bajo las banderas del rey, debe ser atento, comedido, bien criado, humano, religioso y de una conducta de legítimo caballero" (24). Thus, by speaking through priests, aristocrats, and *militares*, Lizardi refutes Catrín's *catrinismo*; or said differently, Lizardi's authorities represent the Church, the aristocracy, and the army. Is it any wonder that Lizardi begins to suspect that he needs to do more, that the voice of these secondary figures just isn't enough to silence Catrín?

So what does Lizardi do? He intrudes in his own narrative using a time-honored technique beloved by scholars: he inserts footnotes. Through footnotes Lizardi identifies himself in his own voice as Catrín's real opponent, the one who argues through the voice of priests and soldiers, and then backs them up with footnoted scriptural references and commentary. Initially, Lizardi's footnotes only give Biblical references to support the arguments of the priests trying so earnestly to silence the catrinesque demon (f.n., 70). When Biblical references prove

insufficient, Lizardi inserts his own commentary. For example, when Catrín argues again that no one has seen heaven or hell, Lizardi interjects himself in a footnote with a curt "Así piensan los que no saben en qué consiste el verdadero honor" (f.n., 106). On the same page a second footnote quotes Scripture, followed by the more trenchant, "La paz de los pecadores es pésima' dice el Espíritu Santo" (f.n., 106). We can only assume that this reference to the Holy Ghost suggests that Lizardi couldn't find the exact Biblical quotation, so he "merely" footnoted the alleged author of Holy Writ. Modern scholarship would, of course, demand greater specificity, a Biblical reference or perhaps a dated interview.

But in the final analysis even the moral arguments of priests, aristocrats, army officers, Scripture and the Holy Ghost cannot silence the *catrines'* increasingly bothersome voice. Thus Lizardi resorts to plagues and scourges. Catrín's soulmate, Don Taravilla, is infected with syphilis, or as he puts it, "Venus me ha maltratado, que no Marte. Cinco veces ha visitado Mercurio las médulas de mis huesos, haciéndome sufrir dolores inmensos" (89). Later, wounded by a jealous husband, Catrín has a leg amputated (92). And finally his body fills with fluid from dropsy, or as he puts it, "Una anasarca o general hidropesía se apoderó de mi precioso cuerpo; me redujo a no salir de casa, me tiró en la cama" (103). Thus Lizardi shows that sin inevitably corrupts the body, and by implication contrasts Catrín's flesh that rots in life to the bodies of saints that remain incorrupt even in death. But despite such afflictions Catrín dies unrepentant (106). In the last words of the novel the *practicante* who cares for him to the end finally says what Lizardi wanted to say all along: "¡Pobre Catrín! ¡Ojalá no tenga imitadores!" (108). In sum, the novel that begins with Catrín's desire to replicate himself ends with Lizardi's hope that such will never happen.

At this juncture three points should be clear. First, Lizardi saw Catrín and *catrinismo* as real dangers, so much so that discrediting him, demonizing him, and eventually killing him became rhetorical necessities. Second, the novel is ultimately a dialogue between Lizardi and his own creation, a dialogue in which the creation occasionally seems to out-argue his creator. And third, one finds in *catrinismo* several attitudes that, despite Lizardi's ironies and moralizing, seem amenable to the modern spirit, and perhaps to the Lizardi who only weeks later would take on the Church, the ersatz emperor Agustín I (as Iturbide

wanted to be called), and the Constituent Convention. For *catrinismo* suggests a world where there is no absolute good, where no one is definitively right, where no authority serves for all, where individual and thereby relative perspective matters. Or said differently, *catrinismo* suggests a kind of pluralism that would have spared the militant Lizardi a lot of trouble. That Lizardi demonizes such pluralism in the figure of Don Catrín is obvious; less obvious is the possibility that this dialogue between the author and his creation is in fact a dialogue between two sides of Lizardi's soul, one that found a niche for itself in Ferdinand VII's repressive New Spain and another that fought repression on a truly heroic scale.

And it is here that we find Lizardi's crisis of moral authority. As a reformer, as a liberal steeped in Illuminist reading, as a supporter of the remarkable Cádiz Constitution of 1812, Lizardi defended freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of debate as well as the liberal institutions in which such freedoms could be acted on. What he does not accept in the novel, however, is the fact that these freedoms, to have any meaning at all, must include a dose of *catrinismo* that allows for a diversity of opinions and a world where even Lutherans, Calvinists, prostitutes and *catrines* have the right to be wrong. Lizardi repeatedly tried to embrace the world of liberal pluralism and often came close to doing so. Yet, he also wanted to bring God, absolute truth, and scriptural authority with him. That these two worlds—liberal relativism and traditional absolutism—might ultimately be incompatible with each other surely occurred to Lizardi. But when faced with true relativism in the persona of his literary creation, Don Catrín, Lizardi saw no choice but to silence him with priestly sermonizing, drown him in scripture, and make him die as the result of moral degeneracy. I would suggest, however, that although Lizardi killed Catrín sometime in the early part of 1820, echoes of *catrinesque* pluralism, despite its demonized form, are audible in the rebel Lizardi who, prior to dying seven years later, insisted that his body have a public viewing so his enemies would know that he had not been taken to Hell (Spell 140).

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## GUSTAVO VERDESIO

## Memoria colectiva y ciudad letrada en *Recuerdos de provincia*

Según Sylvia Molloy, Sarmiento lega (como tantos notables de la vida pública latinoamericana) a la posteridad, un retrato o, como escribe la autora mencionada, una estatua (*At Face Value* 139), presentando al lector una imagen de sí mismo como prócer<sup>1</sup>. Una imagen que sólo a él le está dado brindar, pero que de todos modos pretende tener cierto grado de representatividad<sup>2</sup>. En este caso, la representación que se asume es la de la nación argentina, de una forma tan clara, que ha llevado a varios críticos a señalar la coincidencia entre el "Yo" enunciador y la patria<sup>3</sup>. La estructura que sostiene al texto revela una frecuente correspondencia entre el hogar paterno (más bien materno) y la vida de la nación, entre las vicisitudes del microcosmos familiar y las peripecias de la vida política y social argentina. De modo que en este texto (y en *Mi defensa*, siete años antes) Sarmiento pone más énfasis en el aspecto autobiográfico que en *Facundo*, aunque sin abandonar del todo su interés en la historia<sup>4</sup>.

Como ha señalado Molloy, la necesidad de legitimación del proyecto autobiográfico ante el lector, es una constante en la historia de la autobiografía hispanoamericana ("At Face Value" 17), pues en muchas de ellas se percibe la urgencia de demostrar que el anecdotario puramente personal tiene relevancia para el lector y que puede enseñarle algo. En este caso, lo que el libro tiene para ofrecer es una reafirmación (desde una perspectiva algo distinta) del proyecto nacional que Sarmiento elaborara en *Facundo*. Su propuesta, como es sabido, consta fundamentalmente de dos aspectos. El primero es un diagnóstico, una caracterización de la realidad que se manifiesta en la dicotomía civilización/barbarie. El segundo es el proyecto propiamente dicho, que consiste en eliminar la barbarie y en imponer los criterios de organización que provienen de lo que él denomina civilización. En este trabajo voy a proponer que se entienda ese proyecto como tributario (o como una consecuencia) del ejercicio continuado de un tipo de control y