

AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORITY IN THE NOVELS OF ROSARIO CASTELLANOS

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The Candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

The two *indigenista* novels, *Balún-Canán* (1957) and *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962), written by the Mexican author, Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974), deal in a unique way with the problems of gender, class and race in modern Mexico. It will be shown, in this thesis, that what some previous critics have considered to be the solidly 'progressive message' of Castellanos' novels - that women and indigenous communities might break down centuries-old patterns of oppression by gaining lasting access to authority and a sense of self-identity through writing - is undermined by the very discourses of authorship and authority which form her texts.

In proposing to examine what these novels say about the concepts of authorship and authority and, more importantly, how they say it, the stage that has been reached by previous criticism of Castellanos' novels must first be addressed. Thus, Chapter 1 provides a review of such scholarship. This is followed by an outline of a new critical basis for the study of these texts which will be informed by ideas from contemporary literary theory. Chapter 2 examines some of Castellanos' non-fiction writing on the issues of language, authorship and identity, and its historical context, in order to establish the discourses which were available at the time. Chapters 3 and 4 consist of a sustained 'close reading' of the novels, analyzing their narrative structures, use of traditional novelistic devices, and how they are formed by prior discourses, such as state ideologies, class and race ideologies, and discourses of feminism and egalitarian politics. The purpose here is to discover how these novels are related to the culture within which they were written, by reading them as 'sites' where discursively-produced meanings from that culture, and beyond, converge and compete.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Introduction	1
Chapter One PAST CRITICISM AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES	
Part One: A Review of Scholarship Dealing with the Novels of Rosario Castellanos	8
Part Two: A Different Critical Perspective	29
Chapter Two THE SITE FOR DISCURSIVE MEANINGS	
Part One: Language: A Tool of Domination and Liberation	39
Part Two: Writing 'Herstory': History and Identity	59
Part Three: Which Discourse?	74
Chapter Three <i>BALÓN-CANAN</i>	
Part One: An Autobiographical First Novel	89
Part Two: <i>Indigenista</i> or <i>Ladinista</i> Novel	114
Chapter Four <i>OFICIO DE TINIEBLAS, OR BALÓN-CANAN REVISED</i>	
Part One: Authority	147
Part Two: Authorship	192
Conclusion	207
Notes	216
Bibliography	234

KEY

Numbers in square brackets refer to a 'Notes' section, beginning on page 216.

Two abbreviations are frequently used, in square brackets, which are not explained in the text: [B.C.] refers to pages in the novel *Balún-Canán*; [O.] refers to *Oficio de tinieblas*. Full bibliographical details of the editions of these novels are to be found in note [10], of the Notes on the Introduction.

INTRODUCTION

What is at stake in writing is the very structure of authority itself. [1]

Unlike the medieval *auctor* who based his authority on divine revelation, an author *himself* claimed authority for his words and based his individuality on the stories he composed. [2]

If the medieval *auctor*, as Donald E. Pease writes, adhered in an obvious way to the authority of his cultural antecedents, then the more modern figure of the author, which appeared at much the same time as the European 'discovery' of the New World and coincided with the fall of the *auctor*, always pointed to his freedom from such restraints. According to Pease, the *auctor* was supplanted when the Europeans, 'in confronting humans they believed to be of a nature other than their own, recognized their capacity to be other' [3]. Authors seized upon what was 'new', in the New World, in other words, that which had not been described in the ancient books and the 'recognition of what was new depended on an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of allegory as a source of cultural knowledge':

Whereas medieval allegory subsumed a culture's persons and their actions - no matter how various or qualified - within its unchanging typologies, what was new asserted its difference from, rather than its correspondence with, these cultural typologies. By inventing new words to describe things in the New World, authors declared their right to be represented on their own terms rather than in the words of the ancient books. And their writings produced readers who also learned how to define themselves in their own terms. [4]

It is clear from Pease's account, then, that the birth of the author was the result of a profound shift of power which brought about, in turn, the appearance of another figure, the individual 'subject', who could apparently determine his own identity and actions 'out of his own experiences in a culture he could reform rather than endorsing the auctorial aim of transcending culture' [5].

If the story of the author and the New World seems so far to read as one of liberation from old and oppressive structures, then the other side of the story undermines this account. When the Spanish conquered Mexico, they were conquering civilizations with ancient traditions amongst which was that of writing. Accounts provided by Conquistadors attest to thousands of texts being burned and destroyed. Only a handful now exist - after being hidden for centuries before they were 'rescued' - and it is difficult to see how representative they might be of the written cultures that were wiped out, as they have suffered translation, sometimes through several languages before being reconstituted into the modern Spanish of their contemporary editions. Very few of the 'amate' pages of their original versions were allowed to survive. And so it was a difficult claim to counter, given the lack of evidence, that the peoples of pre-Columbian America were completely incapable of literacy. And so, rather than sharing in an exchange of values and experiences with the 'Old World' of Europe, they were, of course, made its slaves.

As Barbara Johnson writes:

One of the ways in which colonial powers succeeded in imposing their domination over other peoples was precisely through

writing. European civilizations functioned with great effectiveness by remote control. And indeed, when comparing itself to other cultures, European culture has always seen its own form of literacy as a sign of superiority. [6]

Yet, as Johnson also points out, it is not writing which enslaves, but the control of writing: 'The "other" can always learn to read the mechanism of his or her oppression' [7]. And so, it has been the desire of progressive governments and benevolent people from the dominant classes, throughout the history of Latin America, to relinquish the control of writing, or at least to open up access to this medium to those who have been enslaved by it in the past. This is frequently linked in political terms to the modernization processes of the individual nation states which make up the continent, as they seek to establish themselves as entities which act in the interests of all their 'citizens'.

It should have become clear from this brief overview that the history of writing, authorship and authority is an extremely complex one in terms of the experience of Latin America. This fact has not escaped literary critics who have seized upon this difficult genealogy in order to comment on the various associated discourses, which have arisen as a result. The most recent of these is Roberto González Echeverría who in his book, *The Voice of the Masters* [8], traces the recurring trope of the Dictator in several Latin-American texts by male authors, and uncovers the relationship between this figure and that of the author.

Few such studies have been carried with regard to texts by Latin-American

women, however, and as a gender whose access both to authority and writing has been limited, this is a serious omission [9].

This thesis, partly in order to redress this imbalance, takes as its object of study the novels of a Mexican female author, which not only contain a profound commentary on much of the historical debate on authority and authorship, but which were produced at a time when these issues were firmly on the modern political agenda, in the form of literacy campaigns among the indigenous peoples who made up a large part of the Mexican population, and in the development of feminist ideas about self-hood, citizenship and authorship in the wake of women achieving the vote in 1953, some forty years after these women and many of the indigenous communities had fought side by side with white and *mestizo* men in that country's Revolution. The author, Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974), who produced these novels, and who also wrote poetry, essays, short stories and plays, was involved in both of these areas of political struggle as a writer and on a practical level, as an individual who participated in various groups and organizations whose concern was to open up access to the concept of *Mexicanidad* to people who had so far been excluded from it.

Her two novels, *Balún-Canán* and *Oficio de tinieblas* [10], which have received little detailed analysis, have been recognized as texts which deal in a unique way with the problems of gender, class and race in modern Mexico. Yet, they have suffered from the kind of dismissal to which novels by women frequently seem to be prone from the hallowed canons of 'great literature', because they appear to belong to a genre of writing, *indigenismo*, which has become discredited or at least unfashionable in

Latin America since the postmodernist 'happening' of the 'Boom' in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Yet it is precisely because they belong to this genre, and are formed by the generic expectations and discourses which make it up, which makes these novels such fascinating contributions to the history of the twin concepts of authority and authorship in Latin America.

In this thesis, I propose to examine both what these novels appear to say about these concepts and also how they say it, but I shall first attempt to establish what stage the criticism of Castellanos' novels has reached, in order to see what remains to be done. It is to this end, that the first chapter provides a critical account of scholarship on these novels, the first time that this criticism has been viewed as a body of work. This part of the chapter is followed by a second which outlines the critical practice for a study of Castellanos' novels which will be informed by ideas from contemporary literary and feminist theory.

The second chapter, which is divided into three parts, examines some of Castellanos' writing on the issues of language, authorship and identity, principally through her essays and articles. It does this not out of a belief that what the author has to say about these issues outside of her novels provides some idea of her 'real purpose' in writing them, although clearly it does. Nor does it treat them as 'fact' counterposed to the 'fiction' of the novels, although their documentary value is significant, for Rosario Castellanos was an expert in the fields she wrote about. Rather, the intention is to treat the author not as some autonomous God-like figure solely and directly responsible for everything she wrote, but as a 'site' where discursively-produced meanings from the culture in which she lived

converge and compete, and finally are filtered through her gendered experience, which is itself formed by language. The final part of this chapter examines, for example the question of how and why she might have come to write what she did given the particular discourses which were available to her.

The final two chapters turn to the novels and consist of a sustained 'close reading' of them, which looks in detail at their narrative structures, use of traditional novelistic devices such as interior monologue, and also how they are formed by prior discourses, which may be state ideologies, discourses from past dominant class and race ideologies, or indeed from the more recent discourses of feminism and egalitarian politics.

In many ways, an examination of the concepts of authorship and authority simply provides a convenient new opportunity to re-examine the novels of Rosario Castellanos, which have certainly been neglected in comparison with the rest of her work. But this study is undertaken here in the belief that in this manner, the discursive production of these texts can be unravelled in a way which will prove useful in the future study of the work of other Mexican authors.

It will be shown, in this thesis, that what many critics have considered to be the progressive message of Castellanos' essays and her novelistic output - that the author was attempting to depict a society in which women and indigenous communities could begin to break down centuries-old patterns of exploitation and oppression by gaining access to authority and a sense of self-identity through writing, despite the last gasps of opposition from

the old patriarchal order - is undermined by the very discourses of authorship and authority which form her texts. The analysis of her novels which points up these discourses in the texts is not undertaken in order to prove how unprogressive, or 'backward' either Castellanos' beliefs, or indeed her novels, are: the intention is not to find fault or to cast blame for any contradictions which might be present, in the way that other critics have hailed Castellanos as a heroine for the 'advanced' political views she expresses. Instead, the purpose is simply to discover where, precisely if possible, these novels 'are coming from', how they are related to the culture in which they are produced, and to the gendered experience of the person, also formed by that culture, who produced them.

CHAPTER 1: PAST CRITICISM AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

PART 1: A REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP DEALING WITH THE NOVELS

OF ROSARIO CASTELLANOS

Rosario fue una gran escritora mexicana y lo fue no sólo para sí misma sino para las demás; las que vendrían después. Abrió la gran puerta de la literatura femenina y la inició. En cierta forma es gracias a ella que escribimos las que ahora pretendemos hacerlo. [1]

This tribute to Rosario Castellanos made by another Mexican woman author, Elena Poniatowska, in 1985, has been made in kind many times over by other Latin American women writers and feminists. Throughout all of the eulogies one consistency is particularly striking; all of Castellanos' feminist admirers feel very strongly that from her earliest poetry until her last few newspaper articles, Rosario Castellanos was never shaken from a feminist outlook and was the first contemporary author whose writing was imbued with an ineluctable consciousness of what it was to be of the female gender in twentieth-century Mexico.

It would run completely against the grain of what is known about the treatment of other, earlier feminist writers at the hands of critics and academics if Castellanos had not suffered from the effects of her openly

feminist stance in an uncompromisingly masculine culture. So it is unsurprising to find that although it would be untrue to state that she, as an author and public figure, was completely ignored - indeed throughout her literary life she won prizes both inside and outside of Mexico, and was finally rewarded with the ambassadorship which is almost customary, even for somewhat oppositional, successful writers - she certainly found herself on the receiving end of a great deal of anecdotal griping about 'lady authors', which, though difficult to survey since little of it appears in print, still continues to this day.

It is much easier to bear testimony to the kind of tactics used by the Mexican academy in order to marginalize her work, for while all her novels, short stories and poetry were reviewed upon publication, as would be expected, by the Mexican press in generally favourable terms, the amount of criticism of her work which has surfaced from within the enclaves of the Mexican and Latin American literary and higher education establishments was minimal for a career which lasted almost thirty years. Maureen Ahern, in her groundbreaking critical bibliography which appeared in 1980 [2], listed 172 entries which she considered worth mentioning for the section dealing with Castellanos criticism. However, most of these are short newspaper or magazine reviews and most deal with Castellanos' extensive output of poetry. Ahern can list only four or five full-length studies (if 150 pages and less qualify as full-length), of these several are unpublished *licenciatura* theses which deal only with poetry, one is an *homenaje* produced by Castellanos' friends after her death, and the only real attempt at a more broad-reaching, critical appraisal of Castellanos' prose is Rhoda Dybvig's *Rosario Castellanos: biografía y novelística* [3], which was a

privately published thesis of some 134 pages in length, and which appeared in 1965.

It is not particularly the place here to peruse the question of why Castellanos' work, in particular her prose, received such paltry critical attention compared with that of her contemporaries. Suffice to say that anyone who might be interested in this matter can turn to Joanna Russ' interesting and witty book, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* [4], or to Toril Moi's equally fascinating if slightly more serious article about the critical reception of the work of Simone de Beauvoir, 'Politics and the Intellectual Woman' [5], for enlightenment.

What is more relevant to a review of Castellanos' criticism is obviously to examine the successes and limitations of work that has been produced and for that reason most of what follows in my discussion will deal with articles, theses and full-length books which appeared at the time of or following the publication of Maureen Ahern and Mary Seale-Vásquez' *Homenaje a Rosario Castellanos* [6] in 1980, up to and including works which appeared in 1990. This book, which, as has already been mentioned, included Ahern's up until then exhaustive bibliography, paved the way for a small but rather more significant body of criticism than that which had appeared prior to its publication, and, as will be shown, set the tone for much of what has been produced since, particularly in feminist circles and outside of Mexico. However, it is the contention of this thesis that much remains to be examined and that Castellanos' work is still a very fruitful area for research into Mexican literary culture.

Since this thesis deals principally with Castellanos' novels, criticism which has tackled her poetry, her critical essays and her short stories, which have been more amply reviewed in any case, will, in general, be omitted from what shall follow. This approach, broadly speaking, neatly narrows the field of vision down to two particular areas, which might be categorized first as criticism of Castellanos as an *indigenista* novelist and then criticism of Castellanos as a feminist writer. These two areas do overlap, but I shall attempt to examine them in the above order, for simply to treat each work of criticism in chronological order would produce possibly the very real image of a long list of individual pieces of criticism, largely produced in isolation from one another, and which rarely if ever consciously entered into a dialogue with each other. Certainly, as far as I am aware this paper constitutes the first prose, rather than bibliographical, assessment of the substantial criticism of Castellanos' fiction as a coherent body of work.

The 'Castellanos as indigenista' Camp

Rosario Castellanos made it clear at various points in her career that she was not entirely satisfied with any classification of her prose fiction or her approach to literature in general as *indigenista*. It seems clear that her objection was based on the commonly-held notion that *indigenismo* could not be 'true' literature and that it had more in common with the fields of sociology and anthropology. Certainly, this notion could have been used to marginalize her work by those who wished to see it as genre fiction and therefore as irrelevant to the great scheme of Literature as Art. However, as soon as her novels appeared most critics found it unavoidable to point

out the similarities of plot, themes, and characterization between Castellanos' fiction and that of other Mexican and Central American *indigenista* classics such as Ricardo Pozas' *Juan Pérez Jolote* (1948) and Miguel Angel Asturias' *Hombres de maíz* (1949).

The first piece of substantial - at least in length - criticism to deal with Castellanos work within Mexico was, as mentioned above, Rhoda Dybvig's thesis, subtitled *Biografía y novelística*. Because of its avowed intent to combine these two aspects the result is immensely interesting in terms of much anecdotal biographical information, derived from many interviews with both Castellanos herself and friends and acquaintances of hers in Chiapas and Mexico City; it is, however, inevitably, weak on the critical side and the literary appraisal is of the hagiographic kind. However, because Dybvig does see literature as uncomplicated representation of reality, and she constantly notes that Castellanos' novels come out of her direct experience of life in Chiapas, the image of Castellanos as caring *indigenista* writer is established in the same way that later interviews with the author and other biographical articles were to reaffirm.

By far the greatest champion of Castellanos' work, as *indigenismo* or social protest, both inside and outside of Mexico has been the critic, Joseph Sommers, whose book, *After the Storm*, first published in 1968, remains a landmark in the field of Latin American literary criticism. His first four articles to deal with Rosario Castellanos were all published early in 1964 [7] and served to establish his opinion that Castellanos' fiction was a major improvement, in literary terms, on many of the *indigenista* texts which had preceded it. The third of these articles, entitled 'El ciclo de

Chiapas: nueva corriente literaria', is the early classic of Castellanos' scholarship. In this article he groups together *Balún-Canán* and *Oficio de tinieblas* with novels by Ricardo Pozas, Ramón Rubín, Carlo Antonio Castro, Eraclio Zepeda and María Lombardo de Caso, and suggests that they are not only linked by their political geographical and ethnographic concerns, with the indigenous peoples who inhabit the area which makes up the highlands of Chiapas in the south eastern corner of Mexico, on the border with Guatemala, but that their works form a continual literary project, with a greater psychological and sociological realism in the depiction of the indigenous inhabitants of the region as its aim. He leaves the reader in no doubt as to which author he feels is at the more progressive end of this continuum: 'Es Rosario Castellanos la que aporta en sus cuentos y novelas, hondura y alcance al ciclo de Chiapas' [8].

Although, in these early articles, Sommers restricts himself to analysing plot, characterisation and tone, his main aim was to establish the work of Castellanos and the other authors mentioned as worthy of literary merit at a time when the prevailing literary ideology, caught up as it was in the 'Boom', was looking towards texts which exhibited rather more Modernist and/or Postmodernist concerns than the so-called Social Realist *indigenista* novels of the period. On the idea that these novels, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, were mere naïve, obvious political tracts, Sommers had this to say:

En contraste, el ciclo de Chiapas parte de la conciencia cultural. Hilo común en todas las obras precitadas es la influencia de conocimientos y criterios antropológicos, los cuales desembocan en interés por formas y conceptos indígenas: leyendas, simbolismo del mito, papel de lo sobrenatural en la vida actual, predominio del pasado en

el presente. Esta estilización de formas indias, desde el *Popol-Vuh* hasta leyendas orales contemporáneas, es análoga a la elaboración que hizo Diego Rivera, usando motivos de la cerámica precolombina y los códices aztecas. [9]

Sommers continued to highlight Castellanos' fiction in *After the Storm* and in later articles. However, by 1978, he was beginning to modify his completely positive approach to her work. In an article entitled 'Forma e ideología en *Oficio de tinieblas* de Rosario Castellanos' [10], he revealed that he no longer wished to approach *indigenista* fiction in general, and Castellanos' work in particular as literature which tried to interpret 'lo indio'; instead, he was going to try to analyze them as revealing of the attitude and the system of values of the author who produced them and the dominant culture within which they were produced. One important effect of this development in his analysis was that, although he retained his belief that the work of Castellanos was by far and away superior to most previous fiction by *indigenista* authors, nonetheless it betrayed its roots, as it were, because, written as it was from the perspective of a white woman from the landowning classes, it could never represent indigenous peoples on their own terms. Finally, in an article published as recently as 1989, Sommers has this to say about Castellanos' novel, *Oficio de tinieblas*:

[*Oficio de tinieblas*] no logró romper con la largamente vigente tradición del paternalismo, como es patente en su sentido de la ineficacia y pesimismo culturales. Pero en su desafío de la mistificación ideológica y la profundidad de su cuestionamiento crítico de la historia, sólo fueron igualados unos ocho años más tarde, después de Tlatelolco[...] [11]

In these last two pieces of criticism Sommers finally examines factors which are external to Castellanos' texts, yet which have a bearing upon them; by so doing, he gives his analysis a far greater critical edge. However, until Sommers undertakes to write a longer study, his work on the Mexican author will remain principally rooted in plot, character and style analyses which may well seek to champion Castellanos as a writer to vie with the best, but in their failure to refer to developments in the fields of linguistics and literary theory are limited in scope.

Several critics have attempted to investigate the same terrain as Joseph Sommers, but few if any have made it their own. One such author is Marta Portal, who in 1975 published an article which made a comparison between Castellanos' *Oficio de tinieblas* and Ricardo Pozas' *Juan Pérez Jolote* amongst other novels, much as Sommers had done in the 1960s, and she adds little to his work as she surveys the colourful characters, lush settings and political correctness present in both. However, this article has to be mentioned, for in two, almost throwaway sentences she delivers one of the single most original observations about Castellanos' narrative:

La novela pone de manifiesto, acaso de una forma exacerbada, uno de los problemas más agudos de la de la política mexicana, el de la difícil mexicanización de todo el territorio nacional. En la zona de Chiapas, término geográfico donde se ubica la anécdota, a las gentes de la capital de la república se las considera extranjeros; se sienten incluso más vinculados a los guatemaltecos que a los propios nacionales.[12]

She then proceeds to bury this insight in a wealth of details about characters and never goes on to examine it more closely. Unfortunately,

few other critics have dwelled much on it either. One of the aims of this thesis is to look more closely at this idea and the implications it has for *Oficio de tinieblas* and *Balún-Canán*.

The majority of the critics who have concentrated their work on the *indigenista* aspects of Castellanos' novels have generally had as their major aim the championing of the books' literary merit. This is certainly true of Joseph Sommers. However, several of the most important critics in this vein, perhaps because of their own political priorities, have also examined the idea that the novels of Rosario Castellanos contribute to a wider understanding of the position of the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

One of the earliest pieces of criticism to focus on *Oficio de tinieblas* was María del Carmen Millán's 'En torno a *Oficio de tinieblas*', which was published in 1963, the year after the novel appeared. In this article, this major critic in the field of Mexican letters examines the abiding theme of the 'indio' in Latin American literature before going on to survey the plot, themes and characters of the novel in question. Millán arrives at the conclusion that novels such as *Oficio de tinieblas*, with its coverage of 'la vida misma del indio a través de sus propios testimonios y en función de una convivencia que permite un real acercamiento y válidos elementos de juicio para la interpretación de la psicología y de la cosmología indígenas' [13], contribute to the valuable realization that there is no such thing as full national integration in Mexico and that many resources which have been well established in more central areas of the country since the Revolution, have not been extended to areas with high indigenous populations such as the state of Chiapas.

One of Millán's ideas here, that Castellanos deals with 'la cosmología indígena' or indian world view in her novels, has become a constant theme in Castellanos criticism. It appears in several forms. In Donald Lee Schmidt's 1972 thesis on 'The Changing Narrative Techniques in the Mexican *Indigenista* Novel' [14] which briefly examines *Balún-Canán* in a chapter entitled 'Universality Attained', he concludes of Castellanos that

She is the first to balance effectively the social and psychological aspects of her characters. Characterization is enhanced by her use of modern narrative techniques such as interior monologue. [...The novel] succeeds in convincing with respect to both white and Indian characters. [15]

Because indians apparently 'speak' in Castellanos' novels through free indirect discourse and interior monologue, an authentic indian world view emerges, according to Schmidt.

Alfonso González, in his 1975 article 'Lenguaje y protesta en *Oficio de tinieblas*' [16], underlines this point about the authenticity of the characters, which makes the reader sympathise with them in their oppression. However, his is a rather superficial account, which relies on impressionistic ideas about the sound and repetition of words and their effect.

As Castellanos' criticism entered the 1980s these central ideas changed little but the analyses became more sophisticated. A rare full-length study of *Oficio de tinieblas* was undertaken as a thesis by Aura N. Román-López in 1981 [17], which concentrates once more on the world view of the Chiapan indians, as well as that of the white community. Román-López examines the

narrative structures, plot and characters of the novel at some length, using traditional methods of literary criticism, in order to back up her claim that Castellanos is principally concerned with the existential anguish of her characters. However, this approach does not claim to go beyond its main aim of investigating what the author of the novel really meant, as if everything which appears in *Oficio de tinieblas* can be reduced to the intentions of Rosario Castellanos.

One of the most stimulating articles on *Balún-Canán*, although it relies on a similar methodology, was 'La legitimación indígena en dos novelas centroamericanas' written by Martín Lienhard and published in 1984. This short article compares Castellanos' first novel with the Guatemalan writer, Miguel Angel Asturias' *Hombres de maíz* (1949). The title of the piece neatly summarises what Lienhard believes to be significant about *Balún-Canán*. But he also draws attention to the literary precursors of Castellanos' novel, such as the Maya-Quiché text, *Popul Vuh*. The major value of this article, tantalisingly brief as its discussion of Castellanos' novel is, resides in its subtle criticism of Castellanos' position as an *indigenista* writer, when he writes of an 'estética ladina' [18] which uses the Maya literary inheritance for its own ends:

el mero hecho de atribuir a una colectividad maya actual, sumida en la miseria y desprestigiada a los ojos de los representantes de la ideología dominante, un discurso indígena aureliado por el prestigio del *Popul Vuh*, sí constituye quizá la confesión de un fracaso literario, representa también un paso adelante hacia el pleno reconocimiento de los valores indígenas *actuales*. Uno de los méritos principales de *Balún-Canán*, además, es el hecho de no ocultar su ambigüedad *indigenista* constitutiva. La autora, en efecto, introduce ficcionalmente su propia situación de escritora *ladina*: la narradora de la primera y de la tercera parte de esta novela-retablo, una niña asombrada, crédula-incrédula frente al

mundo de los indios tzeltales, corresponde autobiográficamente a la niña Rosario Castellanos, hija de un hacendado [...] de Chiapas. [19]

Lienhard leaves this kernel of an idea at that; however, I shall take up these points again in my analysis of *Balún-Canán*.

One of the few British critics to produce work on Rosario Castellanos is Frances Dorward. In her 1984 PhD thesis, entitled 'Literary Art and Indian World View in Twentieth-Century Mexican Indigenista Fiction' [20], she examines Castellanos' narrative work, as well as that of other writers, and considerably advances the debate about the *indigenista* elements in the Mexican author's work. In her examination of *Balún-Canán*, Dorward attributes the first-person narrated first and last sections of the novel to a need for authenticity. She also comments, like Lienhard, that the use of interior monologue for indian characters in the novels poses similar problems of authenticity when the author does not share the ethnic or cultural background of the character. More impressive than this thesis is Dorward's 1985 article, 'The Function of Interiorization in *Oficio de tinieblas*' [21] which relies on a close examination of some of the narrative techniques in the novel, in order to develop some of the ideas from her thesis on the problems of interiorizing techniques. Her conclusion is that Castellanos uses these strategies in order to provide insights not only into individual characters but also into the world-view of the Chamula indians as a group. In this article, Dorward seems more convinced than in her thesis of the literary value of Castellanos' techniques:

the consciously deployed interiorizing techniques in *Oficio de tinieblas* offer a manifest example of the significant move

forward in quality of expression which, while enhancing the climactic sequence of the novel's structure and subtly engaging our sympathies with the indians, has enabled the author to present a truly convincing portrayal of indian outlook and psychology. [22]

This article is extremely useful for the close reading it provides of Castellanos' second novel; however, according to Dorward, Castellanos is still undoubtedly an autonomous producer of the text, the kind of Author-God that Wayne Booth describes in his study of narrative techniques, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.

I shall end this survey of the work of the main critics who deal with Rosario Castellanos as an *indigenista* writer, first and foremost, with a brief examination of the work of three critics, who seem to me to begin to go beyond the realm of traditional literary criticism.

Cynthia Steele's 1980 PhD thesis, 'Literature and National Formation: *Indigenista* Fiction in the United States (1820-1860) and in Mexico (1920-1960)' [22] only briefly examines Castellanos' novels and then only reaffirms previous ideas about the psychological realism of her characters. However, the value of this thesis for the Castellanos' critic resides in her more general ideas about the role of literature of social protest in nation-building. While she is extremely original in her analysis of the paradigms which nations construct, such as the Mexican necessity for cultural homogeneity, she fails in her refusal to examine fully the links between the individual writer and his or her nation. Once more, writers seem to operate autonomously within history.

Harry L. Rosser's excellent 1986 book, *Conflict and Transition in Rural Mexico: The Fiction of Social Realism* [23], usefully discusses Castellanos and also Elena Garro, another Mexican woman novelist and contemporary of Castellanos, amongst other authors and is obviously on the same track as Cynthia Steele. His account concentrates on a descriptive approach to the *Cardenista* period of Mexican history and of how this period is reflected in the novels he examines. That history is reflected in literature is a concept he uses without questioning its validity, in an age informed by literary and critical theory. He remains uninterested in exactly how the images of social reality which appear in the works he surveys are constructed.

The final piece of principally *indigenista*-oriented criticism I wish to include in this survey is another North-American PhD thesis, by Thomas Washington, entitled 'The Narrative Works of Rosario Castellanos: In Search of History - Confrontations with Myth' [24]. This thesis, (which follows on from a master's thesis by another author on myth in *Oficio de tinieblas*, [25]) examines the roles of history and myth in *Balún-Canán*, *Oficio de tinieblas*, and Rosario Castellanos' play *El eterno femenino*, and provides an excellent coverage of issues which have principally occupied other critics only in the field of Castellanos' poetry and essays, namely her constant attempts to debunk Mexican myths. Washington attempts to show how it is this factor which provides a unifying thread in Castellanos' work since it links what he acknowledges as her interest in feminism with works which on the surface seem to deal more with *indigenismo*, such as *Oficio de tinieblas*. Although Washington does not advance any hopes for a more sophisticated approach to Castellanos in terms of modern literary theory - he uses

biographical information in order to elucidate Castellanos' 'true message' - his is one of the most original and imaginative full-length studies of the novels, because it does prefer to look at Castellanos' work in the light of various elements which may inform it, instead of fighting an ideological battle over the relative significance of feminism or *indigenismo*. It is therefore an appropriate final entry for this section.

The 'Castellanos as Feminist' Camp

Mary Helene Parham's thesis, 'Alienation in the Fiction of Rosario Castellanos' [26] contains the following assertion in its abstract:

In an effort to combat exaggerated and erroneous notions of *indigenismo* in the fiction of Rosario Castellanos, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate that the problem of alienation therein is of pivotal importance and that this element is that which is most responsible for the universal relevance of Castellanos' fiction.

While I shall make no further reference to this thesis, which is a purely thematic study, once more preoccupied with finding out what Castellanos was really trying to say, it is nonetheless striking for its attack on the 'indigenist' critics for unfairly claiming Castellanos as one of their own. This attack does not appear in the same form in the feminist criticism which will be examined in this section; however, much of this criticism seems to have the same suspicion lying just beneath its surface, as if it were of primary importance to reclaim Castellanos' novels for a feminist project.

The pioneer of the feminist criticism of Castellanos' work in general is the American critic, Beth Miller who has published a number of articles which deal mainly with Castellanos' poetry and essays. Because she was writing about these from very shortly after Rosario Castellanos' death in 1974, when the international feminist impact of her work was relatively insignificant, Miller obviously regards her work as part of this important task of reclaiming women authors for wider recognition. Unfortunately Miller's articles do not address the novels at any length, nor indeed has she completed any full-length study of Castellanos' writing; however her influence can be seen in the work of all the other feminist critics of Castellanos' novels. Her one essay on *Oficio de tinieblas*, 'Historia y ficción en *Oficio de tinieblas* de Castellanos: un efoque gramsciano' [27], published in 1986, is not typical of her other articles, since it deals with similarities in the plot and themes of this second novel to Gramsci's ideas on hegemony and revolution.

Two feminist theses appeared in the 1970s in the United States which examined Castellanos' fiction along with that of five or six other Mexican women writers [28], both of which emphasized the feminist themes of the novels and catalogued the women characters who appear in them to prove that feminist concerns were pivotal, to quote Parham again.

By far the most impressive full-length feminist study of Castellanos' fiction, though, is Raquel Scherr's 1979 unpublished PhD dissertation, 'A Voice Against Silence: Feminist Poetics in the Early Work of Rosario Castellanos' [29]. Scherr's work aims to show that Castellanos' principal concern was to foster communication by using realist literary forms which

combated the esoteric and exclusionary nature of Modernist literature and to stress the fact that those who have suffered most from this exclusion in the past have been those 'without literature', women and the indigenous peoples of Mexico. In response to this 'silence', Castellanos, according to Scherr, uses tale-telling, as a theme and a technique. The main problem with this thesis which concentrates in its later chapters on a study of *Balún Canán*, is that it is rooted in a radical feminist stance, which is completely unquestioning of its own author-centred approach to literary criticism. I quote the following example of Scherr's style:

A major function of the tale is to communicate an experience to an audience [...] While the tale is not the exclusive property of women writers, Castellanos is only one among many who are fascinated with the tale as a form that not only broadens understanding but, more specifically, communicates feelings. My preliminary studies of the tale indicate that women tend to use the tale to chronicle affective experiences. The tale provides a vehicle, then, for a type of history that centers on feelings rather than facts. [30]

However, many of Scherr's insights are very original, such as her idea that the female characters in Castellanos' novels and poetry frequently duplicate her theoretical role as the recreator of fictional events, in their constant tale-telling [31], and this is a point which I will develop in this thesis.

In 1980, *Homenaje a Rosario Castellanos*, edited by Maureen Ahern and Mary Seale Vásquez appeared [32]. Although the collection of essays it contains refers only in passing to the two novels, the critical bibliography by Maureen Ahern is worth mentioning once more if only because of the effect it has had on subsequent Castellanos criticism, which has become more self-

referential as a result. This volume also contributed in its way to establishing Castellanos as a figure of international stature to feminism.

Two Mexican books were published in the mid-1980s which took as their point of departure, Castellanos' feminine gender. The first was Perla Schwartz's *Mujer que supo latín* [33], which examined Castellanos' feminism and then disappointingly failed to advance the debate about her fictional response to that feminism by listing the by now familiar set of ideas surrounding the themes and the characters of the novels. The second book is far more interesting. In *Rosario Castellanos: Semblanza psicoanalítica* [34], despite the book's problematic aim of uncovering Castellanos' unconscious motivations as an author and its constant recourse to the novels and poetry as sources of biographical information, María Estela Franco has produced a fascinating study which sees Castellanos' attempt to write herself into existence as essential in any understanding of her work.

Similarly fascinating, although difficult to characterize strictly as an example of feminist criticism is Nahum Megged's *Rosario Castellanos: Largo camino a la ironía* [35] which I include here because it was published in 1984, the same year as the two other Mexican studies. Nahum Megged was a close friend of Rosario Castellanos; however, his book largely avoids biographical anecdotes and concentrates instead on tracing in Castellanos' early poetry and novels the author's apparent belief in the impossibility of communication between men and women, and between whites and Indians. Megged's book finishes with his assertion that it was because of this central political belief that the author turned eventually to using irony and more indirect forms of communicating her opinions about humanity in

her later work. This summary simplifies his arguments, but they are in fact well-documented and persuasively presented. Nonetheless they still rely on traditional forms of literary criticism.

I shall now turn to an examination of the final three studies to be included in this survey which have changed the terms of the debate about Castellanos' work in general, and her novels in particular.

First, in 1988, Maureen Ahern published *A Rosario Castellanos Reader*, a follow-up study to the 1980 *Homenaje*. Despite the fact that it refers only in passing to the novels in its critical introduction, it is one of the first pieces of work to be informed by developments in literary theory. Ahern's examination of Castellanos' critical essays is particularly good in this regard:

By using the sign systems of other women authors to enrich and feminize her own, Castellanos actually familiarizes their writing, resulting in a new awareness of the network of women writers and thinkers through their relativization in a new context.[36]

Ahern still tends to view Castellanos as being in almost complete control of what takes place in her texts, and moreover this introduction is only just over fifty pages long, nonetheless, the reader succeeds in its aim which is to shed some light on new areas for future Castellanos critics.

Jean Franco's *Plotting Women*, which was published in 1989, is by far the most ambitious study of Latin American women's writing to date, concentrating as it does on gender and representation in Mexico from the

early post-Conquest period to the present. In it, she attempts to 'reconstruct the dynamic interaction of subjects, domains of discourse, and political constraints [in order to...] constitute a common ground for a feminist understanding of Mexican culture' [37]. In a chapter entitled 'On the Impossibility of Antigone and the Inevitability of La Malinche: Rewriting the National Allegory', Franco examines Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* and Rosario Castellanos' *Oficio de tinieblas* and although there are several points with which I take issue, Franco's general assertions about the discursive formations which existed at the time when these two texts were produced are highly original. This chapter attempts to establish that in the Mexico of the 1950s and 1960s, 'within the genre privileged as the the allegory of national formation - the novel' [38], rewriting the master narratives around a heroine was a dangerous business for an author, especially considering the fact that 'the problem of national identity was [...] presented primarily as a problem of *male* identity' [39].

After a brief discussion of the plots and narrative structures of the two novels, Franco concludes thus:

Both Garro and Castellanos seem caught in a predicament [...]. In both cases the problem is rooted in their attempt to appropriate the then hegemonic genre - the novel as national allegory. [40]

The most glaring omission in this otherwise brilliant analysis is any explicit handling of the question of genre and its role within the particular discursive context of the time. Although Franco mentions that the novel was the hegemonic genre, she does not dwell for long on the issue of the literary genre or genres operant within a particular text or body of

texts. This is one omission which this thesis will seek to address. Otherwise, Franco's short examination of *Oficio de tinieblas* is by far the single most impressive piece of work on any of Rosario Castellanos' texts.

The most recent piece of Castellanos criticism, which deals principally with Castellanos' short stories although it does mention the novels in passing, is Chloe Furnival's article [41] in the 1990 book *Knives and Angels*, on Latin American women's writing. I draw attention to this piece because it bears testimony to the effect of Jean Franco's book on subsequent studies in its intelligent use of modern literary criticism.

Rather than examining every single text which has dealt with Castellanos' novels, I have opted to trace instead the general developments, noting only the more substantial studies, either in terms of length or content. It should be clear that much remains to be done. Few of the full-length studies have discussed both novels, and only Jean Franco's discussion of *Oficio de tinieblas* has cast more than a cursory glance in the direction of modern literary theory. In the next section, I shall set out in detail the frame of reference within which my own examination of Castellanos' novels will take place.

PART 2: A DIFFERENT CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

[Toril Moi, discussing the work of Elaine Showalter]

There is no indication here that the feminist critic concerned with women as writers should bring other than sympathetic, identity-seeking approaches to bear on books written by women. The 'hermeneutics of suspicion', which assumes that that text is not, or not only, what it pretends to be, and therefore searches for underlying contradictions and conflicts as well as silences in the text, seems to be reserved for texts written by men. [1]

It is to be hoped that, following on from the previous section, the need has been established for a different approach than that illustrated in the quotation above to the novels of Rosario Castellanos. Although the situation with regard to the critical attention received by her works has improved radically in the last decade with several theses and full-length studies, much work remains to be done. Studies of Castellanos which untypically do deign to include her on the periphery of the canon of Mexican literature, though never mention her in the same breath as Paz, Fuentes or Rulfo, have, thankfully, been overtaken by more specialist studies, following on from the excellent work done by Joseph Sommers. This newer work has often sought to rescue Castellanos' novels and essays from critical oblivion and also from the kind of tokenistic treatment from which Castellanos suffered at the hands of various critics [2]. However, this singularly benevolent approach, where Castellanos' critics cannot hide the fact that they wholeheartedly support the aims of her political project, has failed to ask some of the crucial questions of the Mexican author's work. These critics, in particular Raquel Scherr, Thomas Washington, Beth

Miller and the contributors to *Homenaje a Rosario Castellanos*, have tried to marry new forms of criticism to the object of their study; however, they still adopt the view that Castellanos' work, even with its radical themes, is a direct and inevitable outcome of the authorial intention behind it. Liberal humanism, here attached to a few contemporary political concerns, triumphs again as Castellanos' work is taken at its apparent face-value.

If there is room for a new approach then it must surely begin where the old approach ends, frequently that of simply marvelling at the fact that Rosario Castellanos could become a successful writer in a country beset with *machismo* like Mexico and of noting how radical her themes were. That is, as Chris Weedon puts it in her book, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, by employing a perspective which attempts to

contribute to an understanding of the range of discourses of gender in circulation and the subject positions available to women both at particular moments in history and in the present. Looked at in their historical specificity they demonstrate *what it was possible for women to say about the patriarchal societies within which they lived from a specific discursive context, that of fiction, and how it was possible to say things.*
[3, my emphasis]

Whilst it is understandable that many feminist critics have been extremely suspicious of new approaches in the field of critical theory, particularly those working in the area of Black and minority women's fiction who may feel that fashionable reports of the Death of the Author have been greatly exaggerated in the cases of those authors who, in their opinion, have not had much of a 'life' yet, many other influential feminist critics such as Toril Moi, Catherine Belsey and Gillian Beer have shown that just because

many of these theories have been produced by (mostly male) critics who would not have been at all out of place in the old critical schools of thought, this does not necessarily preclude them from being used and transformed by feminist critics today.

The crucial point of difference between those above mentioned critics of Castellanos and other critics in general is not one of competing political ideals; in many cases, these are shared. Instead, it resides in a different view of language, literature, culture and history.

Castellanos' critics are not alone in the field of Latin American literary criticism in their reluctance to use critical theories which have often come out of European and American poststructuralist debates; however it is difficult to understand this reluctance when even some of the most 'traditionalist' critics are finding it hard to avoid taking on board some ideas, the political underpinning of which is anathema to their own viewpoints. One of the most spectacular examples of this comes in the book *Not Saussure*, by Raymond Tallis, where this very sceptical author manages to declare in an account otherwise very hostile to modern literary theory,

The realm of knowledge is verbally organised and access to it is verbally mediated. The reality that any individual inhabits is a vast inverted pyramid of discourse poised on a tiny apex of experience. [4]

So, what stands to be gained from a critical approach which has so far been absent from studies of Castellanos' work?

As Chris Weedon again writes, in traditional criticism

The author is the speaking, full, self-present subject producing the text from her own knowledge of the world and she is the guarantee of its truth. The effect of this discourse is to fix meaning. Traditionally author-centred criticism seeks to get inside the the artist's mind and interpret what she/he really meant for the benefit of the ordinary reader.[...] It assumes that *artistic intention is what is important and is the source and guarantee of the meaning of a text*. It is a project which is fundamentally flawed by the impossibility of ever knowing what an author intended. Moreover, authorial intention, even when apparently voiced in aesthetic theory, is no guarantee of the meaning of an actual fictional text. [5, my emphasis]

However, in a criticism which takes on board both feminism and poststructuralism, the central point of interest becomes the way in which texts construct meanings and subject positions for the reader, the contradictions in this process and the political implications, particularly with regard to the historical context.

If contemporary literary criticism is to be fruitfully married to an analysis of the work of Rosario Castellanos, then, going back to some of Chris Weedon's earlier comments, it must prove its usefulness on at least two different but related levels: first, what was it possible for Castellanos to say about the society in which she lived, and second, how was it possible for her to say those things?

One of the aspects which seems to take on new significance with this approach is that of historical context, but there is an area for caution here. This is a problem which has been raised by feminist writers, Gillian Beer and Jane Moore [6], and concerns the hazards for critics of what they term 'presenting', that is, the practice of reading past texts in order to convert their concerns into current categories. As Gillian Beer explains further:

the informing of the text with our learnt awareness of historical conditions is not a matter simply of providing 'context' or 'background'. Instead it is more exactly in-forming, instantiation - a coming to know again those beliefs, dreads, unscrutinized expectations which may differ from our own but which may also bear upon them. The task of the literary historian is to receive the same fullness of resource from past texts as from present: to respect their difference, to revive those shiftly significations which do not pay court to our concerns but are full of the meaning of that past present.[7]

Although Gillian Beer makes, rather uncharacteristically for her, the role of the critic faced with past texts sound a somewhat mystical project here, her thoughts on this subject prove extremely useful for the critic of the work of Rosario Castellanos. For not only is one faced with a different historical context when approaching her novels and essays, the Western European-educated critic is also dealing with a different *cultural* context. Neither Gillian Beer nor Jane Moore touch upon this aspect since they are dealing principally with European texts. However another, increasingly influential writer and academic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, has raised the problem of the ethnocentric ignorance of many white, Western feminists and their subsequent inability to analyze politically texts both from Developing

countries, and even classics of Western literature, such as *Jane Eyre*, which have imperialist subtexts. As she writes:

It seems particularly unfortunate when the emergent perspective of feminist criticism reproduces the axioms of imperialism. A basically isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo-America establishes the high feminist norm. It is supported and operated by an information-retrieval approach to 'Third World' literature which obviously employs a deliberately 'non-theoretical' methodology with self-conscious rectitude. [8]

Another writer, Chandra Mohanty, in an article called 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' develops this view:

The crux of the problem lies in that initial assumption of women as a homogeneous group or category ('the oppressed'), a familiar assumption in Western radical and liberal feminisms

What happens when this assumption of 'women as an oppressed group' is situated in the context of western feminist writing about third-world women? It is here that I locate the colonialist move. By contrasting the representation of women in the third world with [...] western feminisms' self-presentation in the same context, we see how western feminists alone become the true 'subjects' of this counter-history. Third-world women, on the other hand, never rise above the debilitating generality of their 'object' status. [9]

This practice of dealing with the women of the 'third world' as if they were a monolithic block for Western feminist academic enquiry has surely had an effect on the analyses of many critics of Castellanos' work. She is for many of them an object of reverence simply because she is a 'fellow woman', and the fact that she was a member of an elite-educated social class - on first name terms with the ruling class of her country - is glossed over. In accepting her automatically into the 'universal

sisterhood' of Western liberal feminism, an attempt at effacing all difference is made and her specificity entirely disappears from view. Domna C. Stanton writes wittily of some of the unconscious motivations for this process in the field of feminist criticism of women's autobiographies (or 'autogynographies') as follows:

the valorized notion of female identity in most readings by F S [the universalizing Feminist Scholar] was conjoined with an explicit or implicit belief in the referentiality and truth-value of autogynographies as 'honest records of the moment', or of women's 'inner lives'. It was almost as if [...] the feminist scholar's own identity depended on the referential reality of the woman in the text, *as if that woman was the same and different other through whom F S needed to construct and relate her self.* [10, my emphasis]

The Western critic, then, inherits a certain set of difficulties from this position of privilege and must shy from seeking unity in Castellanos' texts, or even her life, and focus attention instead on how her text is produced from the range of culturally and historically-specific meanings, beliefs and knowledges of her particular situation. As Jane Moore writes,

Correspondingly, the project of interpretation shifts from a corrective position which bemoans a text's, or more often, the author's failures to one that, instead of employing the value-laden terms of success and failure, while claiming to undertake an 'objective', that is, value-free, assessment of 'good' writing, openly explores the political implications of the meanings of femininity and masculinity that are produced [...] [11]

One of the more specific areas with regard to which a new critical approach will prove invaluable is that of genre. Castellanos' novels were so easily

pigeon-holed as of marginal significance by earlier critics precisely because as they saw it she 'restricted' herself to certain genres of fiction writing, unlike the 'great' Fuentes (though they do omit to mention the under-prolific Juan Rulfo when making this point). The more recent critics of Castellanos' work also mention her reliance on certain genres although only to emphasise that this does not mean she was not a good writer. Of course, it does not, but surely it would be more profitable to investigate why she chose to frame her work in this way. If the point of analysis is to see how this particular female subject inscribed herself in writing, then it is not difficult to do this, and at the same time to examine the choice of genre as part of the system of discourses available to Castellanos at her time of writing. The feminist insistence on the interlocking nature of genre and gender will also be useful here, as Jane Moore writes:

This relationship [between genre and gender] occupies a privileged position in current feminist criticism's preoccupation with questioning the place from which women speak [...] [12]

These questions will be addressed in the third part of Chapter 3 of this thesis.

One more area of doubt for many feminist critics needs to be addressed before the arena of feminist, poststructuralist criticism can be happily occupied by the Castellanos critic. This concerns the accusation often levelled at this approach that it is 'dehumanizing'. However, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, in an article entitled 'My Statue, My Self: Autobiographical Writings of Afro-American Women':

Some would even argue that the coherence of a [literary] tradition is only to be sought in the strategies of representation; the self is a function of discourse - a textual construct - not of experience at all. Others, including many black feminist critics, would emphasize black women's writing as personal testimony to oppression, thus emphasizing experience at the expense of text. Neither extreme will do. The coherence of black women's autobiographical discourse does incontrovertibly derive from black women's experience, although less from experience in the narrow empirical sense than from condition - the condition or interlocking structures of gender, class, and race. *But it derives even more from the tension between condition and discourse, from the changing ways in which black women writers have attempted to represent a personal experience of condition through available discourses and an interaction with imagined readers.* [13, my emphasis]

The empty slogan that the author is dead then is insufficient for the purposes of this study. 'Rosario Castellanos', the name which graces the front of two Mexican novels and a whole body of other work is not entirely insignificant. Yet, this name does not represent a fully self-present, autonomous or authoritative guarantor of the 'true' or pre-linguistic meaning of the work. Instead, it denotes a subject position formed by material and historical circumstances, whose experience of those circumstances is never, at any stage, *outside* of language or discourse, and so they cannot be 'represented' in writing, only repeated.

This, then, is the critical project for this thesis, to examine Castellanos' novels and ideas in the light of this particular synthesis of theoretical perspectives and thus to attempt to answer the questions about her work which have so far gone unanswered. Not: was she or was she not a great writer? Or: did she or did she not tackle important and radical themes for her time? But: how was it possible for this particular historical subject to write what she wrote, given when and where she wrote it? This may seem a simple question but it clears the way for a radical re-reading of

Castellanos' essays and novels, in order to uncover the discursive production of these undoubtedly engrossing texts.

Finally, the question must be addressed as to the validity of the technique of 'close reading' or practical criticism which forms the basis of the examination of Rosario Castellanos' novels in Chapters 3 and 4 below. In employing this practice, I would not want to suggest that signifying systems of the novels can be limited to 'the words on the page', which have been the object of study in traditional close reading. Or, that even if I do not treat the author as an autonomous being, that I would wish to treat the texts as if they were entirely self-sufficient, or another 'God' to worship in the absence of the author. Instead, my view is shared with that of the critic, David Lodge, when he writes that

Novels are narrative discourse, and narrative is a kind of language in itself that transcends the boundaries of natural languages within which stylistic criticism operates most confidently and competently. It was my neglect of this simple and obvious truth [...] - my attempt to reduce all questions of meaning and value in novels to questions of specific verbal usage - that now seems to me a fatal flaw [...] [14]

The critic should not, then, defend the idea that texts have a fixed, original meaning which can be recovered, but 'we can locate meaning in the dialogic process of interaction between speaking subjects, between texts and readers, between texts themselves' [15].

CHAPTER 2: THE SITE FOR DISCURSIVE MEANINGS

PART 1: LANGUAGE: A TOOL OF DOMINATION AND LIBERATION

Si usted, querido lector (sí, usted, no se haga el disimulado y no vale la pena que se esconda puesto que yo sé que existe), se estaba haciendo las ilusiones de que iba a ponerme a hablar, en este espacio que EXCELSIOR pone semanalmente a mi disposición, del Sol y de la Luna y de los abstractos problemas del desarrollo del silogismo o de cualquier otro asunto que no sea el que me trae alborotada, está en un error. Y no me culpe de ello. Porque ha tenido el tiempo suficiente como para saber que mi columna es el espejito, espejito al que cada sábado le pregunto quién es la mujer más maravillosa del planeta y, como en el cuento de hadas, siempre me contesta que Blanca Nieves.[1]

From the year 1966 until her death in 1974, Rosario Castellanos, writing usually as a literary critic for various Mexican newspapers, cultural supplements and journals (*Novedades*, *¡Siempre!*, *Excélsior*, *Revista de la Universidad de México*, *La palabra y el hombre*), built up a substantial body of critical essays on a whole variety of cultural, linguistic and historical themes. Many of these essays, usually characterized by Castellanos' use, as in the quotation above, of an ironic and highly personal tone - developed only after her earlier academic approach in her Master's thesis, *Sobre cultura femenina*, (which appeared in 1950) - have survived in the form of the published compilations *Juicios sumarios* (1966), *Mujer que sabe latín* (1973), and the posthumous *El uso de la palabra* (1974) and *El mar y sus pescaditos* (1975)[2]. In addition to these volumes, however, there exist approximately a further one hundred uncollected pieces in this genre. These critical essays have received scant critical attention until recently when it has been acknowledged that, despite their journalistic origin and often

self-consciously frivolous style, they seem to constitute a fairly coherent presentation of Castellanos' ideas on culture and history.

It must be emphasized at the outset that the theoretical approach throughout this chapter differs somewhat from that entertained by those previous critics who have examined Castellanos' articles. The analysis here does not take as its point of departure the belief that the written text can be reduced, always and inevitably, to the intentions of the author who produced it. Thus, these essays are not being reviewed in order to elucidate the 'real purpose' of the author in writing them. Nor are they under examination in order to provide the 'factual' account of the author's opinions, which might be later compared to her 'fictional' views, as 'expressed' in the two novels. Rather, they are to be studied here as evidence of the author as a 'site' where discursively-produced meanings from the culture in which she lived converged and competed, and finally filtered through the experience of her specific gender, class and ethnic positioning, which is itself formed by language. This is not to deny that Rosario Castellanos was an 'expert' in those fields she chose to write about. Clearly, Castellanos was brought up in rural Chiapas and was well-informed about racial and linguistic issues in Mexico through her work with the 'Instituto Nacional Indigenista' (INI). However, the national discourses of class and race, together with state imperatives for integration and modernization, were the ones which were to form both her 'factual' and 'fictional' work on these issues, and this, then, is the process which is under investigation.

Here, I will attempt to examine a particular aspect of Castellanos' views, that is her perspective on the question of language in Mexico and the related issue of the problems which beset the indigenous peoples, in particular those of her native state of Chiapas. In order to do this, I will concentrate on an analysis of three of her essays in particular, 'El idioma en San Cristóbal las Casas' in *Juicios sumarios*, 'Divagación sobre el idioma' in *El uso de la palabra* and 'Notas al margen: el lenguaje como instrumento de dominio' in *Mujer que sabe latín* [3]. These essays have been selected because they all deal with what Castellanos believed was the central issue in the oppression of the communities in question: that of language, orality and literacy.

-...ENTONCES, coléricos, nos desposeyeron, nos arrebataron lo que habíamos atesorado: la palabra, que es el arca de la memoria,
[B.C. p9]

Castellanos would have us be aware of the power of language; as it has imprisoned, so, too, can it liberate. [4]

San Cristóbal de las Casas - named in part after the sixteenth-century Spanish bishop, Bartolomé de las Casas, who presided over the region - was the former capital of the Mexican state of Chiapas, and the highland area which surrounds it, provided the location for much of Castellanos' fiction, in particular *Oficio de tinieblas*, where it appears with the neighbouring Tzotzil village, only six miles away, of San Juan Chamula. It is this town, with its changing name - Jobel and Ciudad Real the ones Castellanos used in her novels - which is the object of scrutiny in one of the author's most famous essays, written after her second novel, and her experience of

working for the INI in this same small city. In 'El idioma en San Cristóbal las Casas', which is, in fact, a review of a book by an anthropologist, Susana Francis, called *Habla y literatura popular en la antigua capital chiapaneca*, Castellanos lays bare the rigid lines of class and, especially, race discrimination. She provides a descriptive account of the turbulent history of this place, in particular the battles which were fought out there over which country Chiapas would belong to, Mexico or Guatemala, which were finally resolved in Mexico's favour. Then, she turns to the events of the twentieth century, after the Revolution:

Después de este golpe San Cristóbal ha resentido otros no menos graves: esporádicas sublevaciones indígenas; la amenaza de la Reforma Agraria, que de haberse llevado a efecto en la medida en que se planeaba, habría modificado completamente la fisionomía económica, social y cultural de la región. San Cristóbal se ha defendido, para arreglar estos problemas a su modo, con un arma de dos filos: el aislamiento. La falta de comunicaciones le permitía conservar su usos y costumbres en el seno de un mundo en que resultaban anacrónicos. De este hecho, el testimonio más inmediato y la imagen más vívida, nos lo proporciona el lenguaje. [5]

According to Castellanos, language, which in its Chiapan usage enshrined the differences of the hierarchy of race and class with the phenomenon of the *voseo*, is the vehicle of the organization of a society which has become 'petrified' in a series of institutions which are not ruled by justice, but by force:

La rígida diferenciación de clases, la distancia entre los dos polos del mundo sancristobalense - el señor y el indio -, la explotación sistemática de los que ocupan las escalas inferiores por los que detentan los puestos de privilegio, se patentizan en todos los órdenes de la actividad humana y de la convivencia. [6]

In her most original contribution to the debate on these issues, Castellanos then traces the various strata of this kind of society, and examines the question that such a rigidly defined system needs a whole network of intermediaries, who also benefit from the oppression of those at the bottom of the scale, in order to sustain the *status quo*.

The Mexican author makes it clear as to what she thinks part of the solution is:

Es un círculo vicioso que hay ^{que} romper. Y la ruptura se inicia, puede advertirse ya, desde el campo indígena. En efecto, al elevar su nivel de ingresos, al preservar su salud y procurar su instrucción, se produce un aumento del aprecio que los indios se conceden a sí mismos, una mayor confianza en sus propias capacidades y una respuesta afirmativa al estímulo de competencia y superación. El 'ladino' ya no se les aparece con el prestigio inalcanzable de vencedor y dueño natural, sino con la medida que sus defectos y cualidades dan a un hombre. [7]

These priorities are not Castellanos' own: they come directly from the state-sponsored policies of *indigenismo*, which had been formulated as a response to the problems of national integration in the post-Revolutionary period.

The word *indigenismo* describes two areas of activity, and two sets of discourses, which are both linked. The second of these, the cultural manifestation of *indigenismo*, will be examined in a later chapter. But the first, which concerns us here is the political formulation. In the Mexican context, this concept is most often associated with the political programmes of José Vasconcelos (1882-1959), in particular to his policy of 'nacionalismo cultural'. Vasconcelos was appointed as Secretary of

education by President Obregón and throughout the early 1920s put into practice his ideas of building a new Mexico through education as an egalitarian force, combatting illiteracy with a vast network of rural schools, and through widespread promotion of the arts. The nation's future was to be built on a firm recognition of its own pre-Conquest past, which privileged the cultures and histories of the indigenous peoples of the country over and above the values of the decadent West (Jean Franco has pointed out the influence of Spengler's work on this movement). As for the indigenous peoples themselves who currently inhabited Mexico, and whose situation had remained largely unaffected by the Revolution, or had been worsened by it, Vasconcelos proposed their incorporation into the mainstream of *mestizo* society, again through education and the acquisition of the Spanish language with which they could become literate.

This integrational ideal, or 'melting pot', which nonetheless did not aim to efface difference altogether since it did value the indigenous populations on what it considered to be 'their own terms', was continued and developed throughout later presidencies, in particular that of Lázaro Cárdenas from 1934 to 1940, who linked his policy of Agrarian Reform to this project. One of the results was the emergence of the 'Instituto Nacional Indigenista', which had centres in many rural communities with high indigenous populations and was involved in attempts to take basic education out to those who needed it. It was this organization for which Castellanos had worked, in San Cristóbal, in 1956-1957, after she had written her first novel, *Balún-Canán*, and had begun to write her second, *Oficio de tinieblas*, which is, in part, set there.

It is this set of political concerns which form the unspoken subtext of the views which Castellanos expresses here as her own. Several critics have noted this, in particular Joseph Sommers in his later work on the Mexican author. But they also directly form the text itself; the very words she uses come from the modernizing, egalitarian rhetoric of *indigenismo* to the point where they could become an official manifesto of aims and purposes. And yet, at the same time, this article, while denying its own origins, offers a clear analysis of the operation of the discourses which convey the ideology of the 'ladino' - the Latin, or white person from the rural ruling classes:

El habla de un pueblo nos da, además de un índice de su forma actual de vida, una gráfica de estados de ánimo colectivos, de ambiciones, de recuerdos, de propósitos. ¿A qué corresponde, en el habla de San Cristóbal, el abuso del diminutivo, la complicación de la frase, la elección de la palabra menos corriente? ¿Es el estilo del 'español que pasaba a las Indias', del hombre que está seguro de su fuerza, tan asentado en su poder, tan en posesión de sus derechos, que se permite el lujo de parecer fino, de ser cortés, de ponerse un guante encima de la garra? [8]

This essays portrays, unconsciously, the very battle which was the more overt struggle in Castellanos' novels: that between the, here hidden, voices of the State versus the rather more antiquated ideology of the *latifundistas*, who stubbornly blocked 'national progress' in rural Chiapas.

Castellanos closes this article with an account of the superstitious stories with which the *ladinos* narrativize their terror at their fragile domination over their enclave into a region in which the indigenous peoples still predominate in terms of their numbers and on whose continuing survival the landowners depend. These stories of terrible creatures who will carry off

and devour anyone who does not conform to the rigid rules of their society act as controlling devices established to ensure certain forms of behaviour will continue to be unquestioned. They are micro-discourses which both mask and carry the ideology which produced them. In the same way, Castellanos' 'freely-chosen' words in 'El idioma de San Cristóbal las Casas', of justice, equality and progress, mask and carry another controlling ideology.

Despite the deliberate self-depreciation of their titles, and the frequently ironic tone of their contents, Rosario Castellanos' two essays, 'Divagación sobre el idioma' and 'Notas al margen: el lenguaje como instrumento de dominio', constitute somewhat more than a rambling or peripheral discussion of the limits and possibilities of language and the role of the Mexican writer when using it. In these two later essays, and particularly in the latter one, Castellanos states possibly more clearly than in any of her other pieces of critical work what she considers the task of the writer *should* be in the second half of the twentieth century. Although her essays compare poorly in length (only nine pages in total) with a text such as Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* (1947), which shares many of the same concerns, her analysis compares very favourably with his. Indeed, as I shall show later, it owes a great deal to the Sartrian legacy, in its harsh criticism of *el arte por el arte*, and its shared vision of literary utopia of language and writing established once and for all as a means of communication amongst equals.

This is clearly what interests and inspires Regina Harrison Macdonald in her study of Castellanos' critical work, 'Rosario Castellanos: On Language'

in the volume of critical essays *Homenaje a Rosario Castellanos* (1980). She chooses to concentrate on these two essays in particular as she sees them as 'the best introduction to Castellanos' observations on *language as a cultural system*' [9, my emphasis].

After an introduction to Castellanos' general ideas on language in history, Macdonald sets about the task of analyzing them as a model for other areas of her critical and narrative work. In particular, she focuses on Castellanos' treatment of three 'victims' of oppression in Mexico: *el Indio*, *la Mujer* and *el Escritor*, arguing that:

Language provides a cohesive basis of analysis for all three victims, in a paradigmatic fashion, are engaged in a prolonged dialectic with their circumstances and are equally enveloped in a system which hampers their dialogue with self and with others. [10]

Macdonald acknowledges Castellanos' unique focus, in these two essays and elsewhere, on the interdependency of the Indian and the *Ladino*. Castellanos, she says, understands both 'as the end product of the long history of the Conquest [...], locked into a complex set of behaviour patterns and situations from which it is impossible to escape [...and] which reinforces *Ladino* and Indian stereotypes' [11]. As Castellanos herself puts it in another essay:

A primera vista se tiene la impresión de que el papel de víctima corresponde al indio y el de verdugo al otro. Pero las relaciones humanas nunca son tan esquemáticas y las sociales lo son aún menos. Las máscaras se cambian a veces, los papeles se truecan. La espada de la injusticia, dice Simone Veil, es una espada de dos puntas y hiere tanto al que la empuña como al que se encuentra en el extremo contrario. [12]

Macdonald then sets out to describe the axis around which Castellanos' ideas on language revolve:

For only when the exact adjective is captured, the precise noun named, can one begin to describe oneself, to eliminate the need to hide behind a mask, to begin a dialogue with a self that is known: "Cuando nos atrevamos a conocernos y a calificarnos con el adjetivo exacto y a arrostrar todas las implicaciones que conlleva, cuando nos aceptamos, no como una imagen predestinada sino como una realidad perfectible, estaremos comenzando a nacer".

And with this rebirth, facilitated by language, comes the possibility of a dialogue with the Other. [13]

Yet Macdonald's analysis, which frequently takes Castellanos' arguments at their face values, misses some important points as I shall show in the following examination of these two important essays.

Of the two essays, 'Divagación sobre el idioma' is the more jocular in tone. It conveys the simple yet effective message that, given the way in which the Spanish language was imposed on most of Latin America in general, and Mexico in particular, is it surprising that Mexicans have difficulty in being precise about anything? As Castellanos puts it:

el idioma no sólo es problemático cuando funciono en tanto que escritora, sino cuando existo en tanto que mexicana. Como no quiero resignarme a ser un caso patológico estrictamente individual, he elaborado una teoría que lo explica todo y que nos incluye a todos: la teoría de que el castellano es un idioma creado por un pueblo profundamente diferente al nuestro, con otros antecedentes históricos, otro temperamento, otras circunstancias, otros proyectos, otras necesidades expresivas. [14]

This explains, Castellanos argues, not only the singularly Mexican pastime

of *albures*, or punning built on incredibly long lists of similar sounding words, but, more importantly, that the whole phenomenon of language provides for many difficulties of communication and authenticity:

Cada encuentro, cada diálogo es un torneo con la Esfinge.
Y lo que nos preocupa no es tanto los enigmas que nos propone,
sino el habernos quedado en ayunas acerca del modo con que lo
hemos resuelto. [15]

The second essay, 'Notas al margen: el lenguaje como instrumento de dominio', is of an altogether more serious tone. After a historical survey of the Mexican situation vis-à-vis language, as a country which was created by the Conquest which saw the almost complete destruction of the linguistic diversity of the pre-Columbian period, Castellanos launches an attack upon the Baroque concept and practice of Art for Art's sake. She has an interesting view of this, seeing it as an unfortunate but inevitable result of the nature of the Spanish Conquest:

Los que hablaban, hablaban con *sus* iguales. El ocio regalaba al criollo la oportunidad de refinarse, de pulirse, de embellecerse con todas las galas que proporciona la riqueza y las que procura el ingenio. [16]

She is, nonetheless, merciless in her appraisal:

Helos aquí, amanuenses atareados en el menester de construir un soneto que sea legible de arriba para abajo y viceversa, de izquierda a derecha y al revés; un acróstico acrobático, una silva en que la selva se petrifique en mármoles helénicos. No importa que la selva estalle y la piedra se pudra. La palabra no ha sido vulnerada porque estaba aparte, y más allá de la piedra y de la selva. Se desgranaba eternamente en el reino de los sonidos puros. [17]

The conclusion to the essay is entitled 'El lenguaje, posibilidad de liberación'. It is here that she offers up her route out of the impasse which she describes in both essays:

Hay que crear otro lenguaje, hay que partir desde otro punto, [...] Porque la palabra es la encarnación de la verdad, porque el lenguaje tiene significado.[18]

Language, Castellanos believes, has become worn out and lost clarity. It needs to regain its original freshness, 'pristinidad':

Y esta pristinidad consiste en la exactitud. *La palabra es la flecha que da en "su" blanco.* Sustituirla por otra es traicionar a la cosa que aspiraba a ser representada plena y fielmente [...] [19, my emphasis]

She also draws attention to the responsibility of the writer confronted with language:

Lo que ya no les [a las palabras] está permitido volver a ser nunca es gratuitas. Las palabras han sido dotadas de sentido y el que las maneja profesionalmente no está facultado para despojarlas de ese sentido sino al contrario, *comprometido a evidenciarlo, a hacerlo patente en cada instante, en cada instancia.* [20, My emphasis]

It is remarkable that neither Macdonald, with the awareness of literary theory she expresses in her article, nor many of the other critics who have studied Castellanos' work, have noticed whose words Castellanos is clearly echoing here and in much of her discussion of language and the role of the writer. Yet, the Mexican author quotes this theorist as much as any other in her own theoretical work. For, in much of her critical writing, Rosario

Castellanos was asking the same questions and in many instances coming to the same conclusions - although with a different emphasis because of her Mexican/Latin American context - as a French contemporary, Jean-Paul Sartre, author of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*. She quotes from this text a great deal:

Ya Sartre hizo brillantes análisis de este fenómeno en sus ensayos acerca de *¿Qué es la literatura?* cuando propone, como una de las preguntas básicas, ¿para quién se escribe? [21]

Sartre's thesis in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* was to pose the question: what was the situation of the writer in 1947; what is writing; why write; for whom does one write? What was his response to the conundrum he had posed?

J'ai seulement tenté de décrire une situation, avec ses perspectives, ses menaces, ses consignes; une littérature de la Praxis prend naissance à l'époque du public introuvable: voilà la donnée; à chacun son issue. Son issue, c'est à dire son style, sa technique, ses sujets. [22]

For Sartre, as for Castellanos, words are not in themselves objects; instead they designate objects. People are *in* language as they are in their bodies, so 'parler, c'est agir'. The writer should reveal the world in order to change it. There is no such thing as impartiality. Sartre calls words 'des pistolets chargés' - Castellanos 'una flecha que da en su blanco'.

As for the question, why write? Sartre says 'le sujet recherche l'essentialité dans la création'. Castellanos writes 'Escribir es

transformar lo azaroso en legítimo, lo gratuito en necesario' [23]. When Sartre writes 'Il n'y a d'art que pour et par autrui', one is reminded of Castellanos' words:

El sentido de la palabra es su destinatario: el otro que escucha, que entiende y que cuando responde, convierte su interlocutor en el que escucha y el que entiende, estableciendo así la relación del diálogo que sólo es posible entre quienes se consideran y se tratan como iguales y que sólo es fructífero entre quienes se quieren libres. [24]

For Castellanos, for real communication to take place, in art as in life, it must take place on the basis of equality between writer and reader, speaker and audience. For Sartre, writing is an act of confidence in the freedom of Mankind, since both author and reader must recognize the freedom of the other. It is clear, then, that Castellanos shares Sartre's project of a literature of Praxis. It is also clear that she shares his views on the malaise of language facing the writer; while she calls for words to be restored to their 'pristinidad' and that writers have a responsibility to be true to them ('cometido' is the exact word she uses for this responsibility), Sartre writes:

La fonction d'un écrivain est d'appeler un chat un chat. Si les mots sont malades, c'est à nous de les guérir. Au lieu de cela, beaucoup vivent de cette maladie. La littérature moderne, en beaucoup de cas, est un cancer de mots [...] Notre premier devoir d'écrivain est donc de rétablir le langage dans sa dignité. [25]

Castellanos' views do not always coincide so neatly with Sartre's. However, it is evident that one of the things they have in common, despite their differing situations as writers and theorists, is their faith in the

redemptive possibilities in the struggle against oppression. Language, if used properly and responsibly by the writer can be a powerful motor for change, as a free appeal to the liberty of the reader, as Sartre would see it, or as a dialogue among equals, as Castellanos would have us believe.

Most of the critics who have analyzed Castellanos' work, including Regina Macdonald, seem at the very least reticent about examining these claims in detail, if they do not go as far as concurring with them. This is a serious shortcoming because if there are contradictions in, or a 'hidden agenda', behind Castellanos' ideas about language and the role of the author, then it is the critic's responsibility to tease them out.

Another French literary theorist, and commentator on modern cultural life in general, with whose work Castellanos was familiar, was Roland Barthes. It must be said that Castellanos was not as impressed by his work as she was with that of Sartre. In an essay of hers entitled 'Los 60s, péndulo de la abstracción al compromiso', she rather scathingly reduces his theories on literature to the following terse statement: 'La técnica es el ser mismo de toda creación' [26].

There is no documentation to suggest that Castellanos had read Barthes' text *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953), but it would have been an interesting encounter if she had. In this text, Barthes engages in a deconstructive dialogue with Sartre and his arguments on language, form, and literature in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*; it might therefore be a useful, and revealing enterprise to apply some of Barthes' criticisms of Sartrian analysis to Castellanos.

Like Sartre and Castellanos, Barthes believed that all writing reveals the author's relationship to history; there is no escape from this. What he examines in his book is the relationship between the two, and this is where his views differ. Barthes' major contribution is to separate form from language (or linguistic possibilities) and style in order to give it a new prominence .

Barthes believes that, in writing, the author chooses his moment of history and that writing itself is an act of historical solidarity, the very link between creation and society:

Elle [writing] est la forme saisie dans son intention humaine et liée ainsi aux grandes crises de l'Histoire. [27]

Barthes also understands the moral imperative which must lie behind modern literature - he was a Marxist, after all. He calls writing 'la morale de la forme'. But again his view differs; the writer only has very limited choices open to him in his enterprise:

Ainsi le choix, puis la responsabilité d'une écriture désignent une Liberté, mais cette liberté n'a pas les mêmes limites selon les différents moments de l'histoire. Il n'est pas donné à l'écrivain de choisir son écriture dans une sorte d'arsenal intemporel des formes littéraires. C'est sous la pression de l'histoire et de la Tradition que s'établissent les écritures possibles d'un écrivain donné: il y a une Histoire de l'écriture; mais cette Histoire est double: au moment même où l'Histoire générale propose - ou impose - une nouvelle problématique du langage littéraire, l'écriture reste encore pleine du souvenir de ses usages antérieurs, car *le langage n'est jamais innocent*, les mots ont une mémoire seconde qui se prolonge mystérieusement au milieu des significations nouvelles. *L'écriture est précisément ce compromis entre une liberté et un souvenir, elle est cette liberté souvenante qui n'est pas liberté que dans le geste du choix, mais déjà plus*

dans sa durée. [27, My emphasis]

He continues:

Comme Liberté, l'écriture n'est donc qu'un moment.
Mais ce moment est l'un des plus explicites de l'Histoire
puisque l'Histoire, c'est toujours et avant tout un choix
et les limites de ce choix.[28]

Because the choice of form is linked to history, the particular choice of form (though, according to Barthes, any choice at all is limited to the moment of its making: there is no choice in duration) always and inevitably reveals its link to history. It is this very explicitness which makes literature a *signifying mode*. This means that, for Barthes, no matter how hard a writer tries, no matter how conscious he is of making a choice, writing will always signify itself as writing with a particular link to history from which it cannot escape. This rather bleak view of literature means that Barthes believes that even the will to effect positive social change cannot exempt one's writing from the alienated context within which one works. Thus

Un roman de Sartre n'est roman que par fidélité à un certain ton récité, d'ailleurs intermittent, dont les normes ont été établies au cours de toute une géologie antérieure du roman; en fait, c'est l'écriture du récitatif, et non son contenu, qui fait réintégrer au roman sartrien la catégorie des Belles-Lettres.
[29]

The more Sartre doubles his efforts to break with the weight of history, the more it is that his narrative re-imposes

un Temps unique et homogène, celui du Narrateur, dont la la voix particulière, définie par des accidents bien reconnaissables, encombre le dévoilement de l'Histoire d'une unité parasite, et donne au roman l'ambiguïté d'un témoignage qui est peut-être faux.[29]

There are many points on which Castellanos would agree with Barthes: that literature is not *innocent*, it does not simply reflect reality. Instead it *shapes* reality in its own image; Castellanos' analyses of the linguistic oppression of the indigenous communities in 'El idioma en San Cristóbal las Casas' and elsewhere amply demonstrate this. Nonetheless, Castellanos clearly does not subscribe to the view that all writing must necessarily display a fundamental duplicity, offering a meaning, and at the same time wearing a label to which it points, as does Barthes. Nor could she possibly agree with the view that just as literary language poses its own universality, the very words it uses to do so signal their complicity with that which precludes the very possibility of universality, as Fredric Jameson writes [30].

This examination of Barthes' theory in relation to Castellanos' work has not been made in order to suggest that her dream of a responsible freedom of expression within language is completely naive, or that her desire for the self-expression of oppressed groups rather than their continued self-denial is impossible. Writing in the 1950s and 1960s, Rosario Castellanos may well have had some justification for her fervent belief that authors writing with a social purpose were 'right' and authors who chose instead to write novels without the letter E [31] were engaging their talents in nothing more than literary onanism. As is evidenced by the three essays by Castellanos which have been analyzed here, the Mexican author was

undoubtedly aware of many of the component parts which make up the 'Prison House of Language', to steal Fredric Jameson's phrase. Yet she concluded that escape was possible if it is made in good faith.

Her choice of words on these subjects betray their relationship to history and its discourses. Her recourse to the language of existential *engagement*, with its promotion of the concepts of authenticity and of writing as a form in which self-expression is possible and which is undertaken as an attempt at free communication, reveals its origins in the ideologies of bourgeois individualism, which assert an independence from 'dominant systems', as such, that can only be illusory. The writer cannot just place himself or herself outside these systems in a heroic stance and call a spade a spade for the good of mankind.

In 'EL idioma en San Cristóbal las Casas', Castellanos seems to acknowledge more than anywhere else in her work that, as Barthes also believed, one possible source of resistance to this fundamental problem is by turning a microscopic gaze onto the dominant groups and their discourses in order to demythologize them:

El término 'indio alzado' con que los llaman expresa, a la vez, su condenación y su alarma. Y significa que hasta el ladino aún no ha llegado, en forma eficaz, ninguna idea que ponga en crisis sus prejuicios ancestrales.

Urge, pues, hacer un examen de la conciencia del ladino; descomponerla en sus elementos, mostrar el mecanismo de sus actos, descubrir sus puntos débiles y sus fallas. Es tarea de antropólogos, de sociólogos, de sicólogos. [32]

It is also one of the tasks of novelists, and, as we shall see in the later chapters on her novels, one which Castellanos herself attempts in her own fiction. Whether she manages to achieve it, or whether, in fact, her attempt is subverted by the forms she uses is a question which will be addressed later in the analysis of those novels. It is clear, though, that these essays reveal more about Castellanos' relationship to the dominant ideologies of her culture by the way they communicate their ideas than by what they say, and this will continue to be the focus of this examination of her ideas as the spotlight falls on other areas of her journalism.

PART 2: WRITING 'HERSTORY': HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Latin America's contemporary reality does not derive from some indecipherable curse. My intention has been to explore its history in order to explain it and to help make it by opening up those spaces of liberty in which the victims and the defeated of the past might become the protagonists of the present.

Eduardo Galeano. [1]

[Estos textos [de la narrativa mexicana contemporánea] representan un esfuerzo por poner en crisis el lugar común en el que habíamos arraigado; por inventar una actitud que sustituya esa otra que llegó a estereotiparse de tal manera que ya no éramos capaces de contemplar sin un rubor de vergüenza y sin un amago de náuseas; para elaborar un cuestionario, con base en una serie de elementos que hemos ido adquiriendo en nuestra experiencia y que configuran nuestra situación actual, acerca de quiénes somos y dónde estamos.

Rosario Castellanos. [2]

The contemporary Mexican writer, Elena Poniatowska, who was a friend of Rosario Castellanos, has described how, during her lifetime, Rosario was part of a literary establishment which constantly belittled her work as "caserita" como la comida casera, simple, fácil de hacer a un lado'[3]. However, following her sudden death in 1974 - a case of electrocution, which certainly seemed to capture the imagination of the Mexican public - the reputation of her work was quickly rescued for a place in the literary pantheon, and collections of her essays, articles and poetry were hurriedly published. It was in this atmosphere of somewhat belated reverence, that Mexican critics, including Elena Poniatowska, began to undertake the task of reassessing Castellanos' then unique contribution to such important debates as the question of national identity and Mexican feminism.

What these critics, and others since, have usually omitted from their assessments, however, is a discussion of the problematic nature of this particular arena and of Castellanos' interventions into these questions, both in her novels and her essays, even though she could hardly avoid this terrain given the nature of the literary establishment within which she worked. This omission is all the more striking given that Rosario Castellanos was not the only Mexican women writer of the period to come up against these problems; Elena Garro, writer of *Recuerdos del porvenir* (1963), and, interestingly then married to the poet, Octavio Paz, is another case in point.

This particular examination of Castellanos' views on Mexican history, culture and identity will attempt to tease out some of the contradictions and difficulties inherent in her approach, some of which did not escape Castellanos' attention, and so may well have contributed to some of her decisions about what kind of novels, short stories and poetry to write. These views are expressed, just like those on language which were examined above, in many of her essays and also in her master's thesis. The same approach will be employed here as before, and so the object of this investigation is to attempt to situate the expression of her ideas very much in the discourses and ideologies of the period in which she lived.

After nearly a quarter century of European and North American critical attention, it has become almost a truism to state that the most frequent subject matter of Latin American literature concerns a quest for national or continental identity. Why this should be so has most recently been investigated by the British writer, Gerald Martin, author of a book called *Journeys through the Labyrinth* [4]. He writes,

As we have seen, the problem for a Latin American, more than for the members of any other major world culture, is that identity is not given: it has to be searched for, discovered or even invented. And it is always twice dual. [...] A Latin American must face the fact that s/he is both part of and the product of many cultures, but *at least two*: hence the proliferation of concepts like bi-culturalism, transculturation, the neobaroque, or Magical Realism, as codes for the social reality and cultural expression of the colonized Mestizo continent - whose project, nonetheless, in the modern era, must surely be that of the truly multicultural and polylingual space. [5]

The fact that this debate still rages in the continent itself and, in particular, in Mexico, is due to the continued attentions, not so much of politicians and policy makers, but principally of writers and poets. In the Mexican context, it is the work of one such poet which has come to form the point of departure for the literary and philosophical search for national identity.

Octavio Paz's psycho-historical essay, *El laberinto de la soledad*, was published in 1950 to great critical attention, both in Mexico and elsewhere. In this book, Paz expands on many of the themes and images of his poetry to outline a metaphysical explanation of the importance to the Mexican/Latin American psyche of concepts like solitude which derive their historical and, indeed, contemporary meanings, Paz argues, from the

essential nature of the Conquest and colonization of the continent by Spain and other imperial powers. This text, with its powerful images of archetypal rape and treachery, has exerted a great attraction on other authors and poets who have borrowed and built on Paz's many metaphors for the course of Latin American history. Perhaps, more importantly though, it has helped to ensure that much of the literature which has appeared in the forty years since its publication has unavoidably displayed a strong consciousness of the experience of colonialism.

Rosario Castellanos was but one of many authors who took up the challenge of a literary debate with the ideas and images of Octavio Paz. When *El laberinto de la soledad* was published in 1950, Castellanos was completing her thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Mexico City and so witnessed at first hand the impact on the Mexican literary scene of Paz's text. Several critics have noted that while Castellanos praises Paz for his poetic genius frequently in her work, she also expresses a good deal of unease with what she sees as the ahistorical nature of his enquiry into what it means to be Mexican, and in particular with 'lo que Octavio Paz ha encontrado como definitivo de nuestra problemática: la búsqueda de la filiación' [6].

In several of her essays, rather than attacking Paz, and others who have adopted his ideas and images, face on, she attempts to debunk some of the myths perpetuated by his attitude to Latin American and Mexican culture and history usually with a good dose of humour. The best example of this strategy comes in an essay entitled 'La tristeza del mexicano', which was

written in 1971. The article poses as a response to a question from a reader and is worth quoting at length:

'¿dónde está el origen de nuestra falla como pueblo?
¿Por qué nuestra apatía, nuestros múltiples complejos
negativos, la ausencia absoluta de un espíritu de equipo
en todos los niveles, la carencia de una mística nacional
contra un lastimoso exceso de patrioterismo?

'Octavio Paz ha escrito cosas muy lindas e
interesantes sobre el mexicano y su máscara, la nada de
nuestra realidad ontológica y el haz de jeroglíficos
que implica nuestra actitud hacia la vida. Ahora le
toca a usted. Cuando pueda...' [7]

Castellanos' reply is a long tirade of clichéd snippets from Mexican myth interspersed with history:

¿Por qué es triste [el mexicano]? Porque Tezcatlipoca
puso de vuelta y media a Quetzalcóatl; porque el indio
escuchó "el sollozar de sus mitologías"; porque La Malinche
traicionó a su raza; porque Cortés lloró bajo el árbol de
la noche en que su nombre lleva ya nuestra característica;
porque la Conquista se hizo con lujo de fuerza y crueldad
y no como se hacen todas las otras conquistas [...] [8]

This list continues for nearly a whole page, so no reader can escape the irony. But, just in case, Castellanos includes the following explanation of her tactic:

El mecanismo es muy simple: aserción de un hecho,
explicación de ese hecho gracias a los mitos
prehispánicos, a la historia colonial, a los
turbulentos años del principio de nuestra
época independiente, a la paz porfiriana y a la
gesta revolucionaria. Y, por último, señalamiento
de lo que ese hecho tiene de ético, mérito que
no es deleznable para nuestra sensibilidad. [9]

Castellanos does not deny the attractions of such methods - 'filosóficos, psicológicos, líricos' [10] - of examining national identity. However, she makes it perfectly clear as to where her objections to them lie:

yo olfateo en todos estos enfoques no tanto la necesidad de alcanzar el conocimiento puro sino otro afán más turbio y más inmediato: el de justificarnos. Y lo logramos con tal éxito que cuando describimos nuestros defectos lo hacemos con una complacencia tan exagerada que, quien nos contemplara desde el punto de vista de Sirio, creería que estamos hablando de nuestras cualidades. [11]

This humorous conclusion may, at first, seem fairly insubstantial compared to the musings of Paz, and Vargas Llosa. However, few writers had dared come out and say what strikes anyone with even the vaguest awareness of feminism when they read Paz's discussion of 'El chingón' and 'La chingada' before Castellanos openly ridiculed his view that Mexican history stems from a sexual paradigm, the relationship between Hernán Cortés and Doña Marina/La Malinche/Malintzín [12].

Raquel Scherr explains further why Castellanos felt a particular need to lampoon this kind of writing:

In this way, Paz not only justifies historical models of conquest and subordination, but he also legitimizes the existing political and social structure. One gets the nagging sense that he views women as only being 'un montón inerte de sangre, huesos y polvo' rather than victims of an unjust political and social system.[13]

Her rebuke of Paz, then, is entwined with her suspicion that his type of philosophical model leads only to stereotypes which may provide Mexican history with poetic cohesion and the Mexican with psychological comfort, but at the price of frozen racial and sexual images from which the individual cannot escape. [14]

What Castellanos advocates to replace the ahistorical methods of Paz is a commitment to a historically-based enquiry into the nature of Mexican identity - one which takes into account the 'lost' histories of the indigenous populations of Mexico and of women - not so that in knowing themselves Mexicans can opt for tidy closures and striking images, but so that

Cuando nos atrevemos a conocernos y a calificarnos con el adjetivo exacto y a arrostrar todas las implicaciones que conlleva, cuando nos aceptamos, no como una imagen predestinada sino como una realidad perfectible, estaremos comenzando a nacer. [15]

Her project is clear not only from her own novels and writings about Mexican history, but also from her literary criticism. The writing she obviously values is that which refuses to indulge itself in essentialist myths and clichés, unless attempting to debunk them. In a speech given in 1963, 'La novela mexicana contemporánea y su valor testimonial', Castellanos describes and prescribes what the national novel should aim for.

La novela mexicana, desde el momento mismo de su aparición [...] ha sido, no un pasatiempo de ociosos ni un alarde de imaginativos, ni un ejercicio de retóricos, sino algo más: un instrumento útil para captar nuestra realidad y para expresarla, para conferirle sentido y perdurabilidad. [16]

Es hasta después del movimiento revolucionario de 1910 (que nos lega un cúmulo de testimonios y documentos y anécdotas, pero, si acaso, una o dos novelas) cuando comienza a surgir, en todas las modalidades artísticas, el deseo consciente y explícito de encontrar las formas propias, distintivas, inconfundibles, de ser y de parecer de un país que inicia, vigorosamente, su proceso de integración. [17]

In this speech, Castellanos makes it clear that she feels that the Mexican novel in particular was borne out of a particular historical context which saw the growth of modern Mexican nationalism, and the novels which succeed within her particular set of criteria are those ones which, like Agustín Yáñez's *Al filo del agua*, bring into question, or 'ponen en crisis', the historical basis for Mexican reality and open up spaces for social and political change.

Castellanos' progressive intentions in her project for the Mexican novel, then, are not in any doubt, but this, of course, does not ensure success even on her own terms. Questions remain as to the appropriateness or otherwise of Castellanos' models for social progress, such as, is it enough for women authors merely to insert themselves into an established arena such as the 'National Novel' or 'Essay on Identity' and hope to change things from within?

Several critics have tantalizingly posed this question and yet, have left it unresolved. In her unapologetically feminist PhD thesis on Rosario Castellanos, Raquel Scherr wrote,

The question, of course, that we must contemplate is whether the writer really sets himself up against the cultural mainstream or whether (as Auerbach contends) he becomes, instead, its vanguard, expressing not only the culture's anxieties and needs but furthering its desires and prejudices as well. [18]

Scherr does not resolve this dilemma for us.

Jean Franco, in her book, *Plotting Women : Gender and Representation in Mexico*, in a discussion of Castellanos' *Oficio de tinieblas*, poses it again: Franco's conclusion is that, at least in *Oficio de tinieblas*, Castellanos does not escape this dilemma and fails because, in essence, the realist novel format elided her own subjectivity beneath the voice of the omniscient narrator. Whether or not this is accurate - which will be questioned later in the more detailed discussion of *Oficio de tinieblas* - Franco adds that this failure is one of an inability to plot women as protagonists/heroines in the national novel and that because of this Castellanos repeats 'La Malinche's "betrayal"' [19]. Franco feels that Castellanos' failure is a failure not just as a progressive writer but precisely as a *feminist* writer and yet, in her admittedly brief discussion of *Oficio de tinieblas*, she omits to explore exactly what kind of a feminist Castellanos was; indeed, exactly what kind of feminist she could not help but be, given her particular context.

Elena Poniatowska writes of Rosario Castellanos' immense influence on the burgeoning Women's Liberation Movement in Mexico particularly during the early seventies with her speeches and articles on women's history, women writers and women's participation in building a modern Mexico [20]. Castellanos' contribution to feminism had begun much earlier, though, with the publication of her 1950 Master's thesis, entitled *Sobre cultura femenina*.

This thesis, while not particularly original in its general observations on the condition of women - these being largely derived from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *The Three Guineas* and to a lesser extent from Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe*, published as recently as 1949 - was the

first theoretical exploration of women's systematic exclusion from Mexican cultural life. The structure of the thesis is extremely revealing. Castellanos begins with a very long analysis and debunking of all of the misogynistic theories and myths perpetuated principally by men about women, in order to explain why women have been warned off participation in male culture, and only after this, indeed it would seem as an afterthought, does she evaluate women's actual participation in that culture and the possibilities for a non-hierarchical feminine culture based on equality and communication between the sexes. This was a structure which Castellanos repeated years later in her long essays 'La mujer y su imagen' and 'La participación de la mujer mexicana en la educación formal' [21] and was perhaps a conscious device given the extremely hostile climate within which the thesis was produced.

Castellanos does not escape recreating some of the essentialism of the misogyny and sexism which she attempts to unmask in her assertion that because women are more aware of biological continuity - and seek permanence not in male-dominated art but in motherhood - they are prone to have a greater cultural and historical consciousness than men. However, more important to an understanding of Castellanos' feminism is her argument as to why it would be beneficial as much for men as for women to bring about the insertion of women into the Mexican cultural arena as full and equal participants, and what women and men must do to achieve this. In an interview with Dolores Cordero in 1972, after acknowledging her debt to the ideas of Simone Weil, she gave the following explanation:

Una vez hecho el balance, se advertirá que si la mujer mexicana ha aparecido como una víctima, se debe, como lo afirma Bernanos,

a que ha sido cómplice de su verdugo. Y es a partir de este sitio de víctima en que la mujer se coloca para el aniquilamiento, desde donde tiene que empezar a hablarse de regeneración. La mujer tiene que asumir su calidad de persona humana, tiene que respetarse a sí misma, tiene que amarse, porque no se puede dar a otro lo que uno no ha empezado por darse a sí mismo. [22]

And in her essay, 'La participación de la mujer mexicana en la educación formal', which was originally a conference paper delivered in 1970, she writes,

Los hombres no son nuestros enemigos naturales, nuestros padres no son nuestros carceleros natos. Si se muestran accesibles al diálogo tenemos abundancia y variedad de razonamientos. Tienen que comprender, porque lo habrán sentido en carne propia, que nada esclaviza tanto como esclavizar, que nada produce una degradación mayor en uno mismo que la degradación que se pretende infligir a otro. Y que si se da a la mujer el rango de persona que hasta ahora se le niega o se le escamotea, se enriquece y se vuelve más sólida la personalidad del donante. [23]

Several of Castellanos' critics have seen this argument on the way out of the impasse of sexism - which, incidentally, is much the same as Castellanos' argument on the way out of the impasse of racism-for 'women' read 'indians', for 'men' read 'whites' - as evidence of her sophisticated understanding of the nature of oppression. Certainly it is a very neat, very attractive-sounding exposition. However, look again at what she says women and men must *do* to escape their mutual dilemma. The woman, in Castellanos' schema, must take responsibility for self-regeneration, a reality which proves much easier for some (white, affluent, educated) women than for others. As for the man, he should listen to reasoned arguments for justice and fair play and give to women the space in which to develop their

personalities. So much for overthrowing of patriarchy (of which Castellanos clearly has some understanding).

María Estela Franco, who has carried out a psychoanalytic study of Castellanos' life, has some very interesting observations to make on the nature of the author's feminism, which help to explain her lack of a more conceptual model for feminism, of which intellectually she was more than capable:

Rosario parece proponerse a sí misma como un testimonio viviente de la lucha desarrollada por la mujer bajo las circunstancias de su condición y de su época.

Pero no alcanza a ver aún el problema femenino en una dimensión social más amplia como lo han propuesto los movimientos feministas . De estos movimientos, ella elogiaba, en su tiempo, 'la luz que arrojan sobre el problema, el análisis de los hechos y el rigor con que destruyen una serie de tabúes inoperantes', pero desconfiaba porque creía ver en algunas de sus propuestas un simple cambio de signo: 'en vez de abnegación: agresividad; en vez de apariencia femenina: descuido de la apariencia; en vez de fecundidad: negación a ser madres'. [24]

Castellanos remains inescapably a liberal or bourgeois feminist. Her ambivalence towards radical or socialist feminism is further expressed later in her interview with Dolores Cordero:

no es muy práctico pensar en la mujer como en un género, una clase, sino como lo que yo creo que es y quisiera que siempre fuese: como una persona cuya única obligación es la de descubrirse a sí misma y la de realizarse. [25]

Castellanos' feminism plays itself out, not untypically for an author of her generation and experience, in terms of female access to *individualism*. It is here that the paradox central to Castellanos' work and aims resides; her integrational dream. Castellanos despised individualism and over and over again in her work from *Sobre cultura femenina* onwards she attacked it. Yet her own self-conception and understanding of oppression is inextricably linked in her essays to this concept. All she could prescribe for modern women was 'inventarse, descubrirse, elegirse, realizarse' [26]. It was, after all, what she and countless other educated, affluent women writers - like the ones she describes in *Mujer que sabe latín* - had managed to do.

Thus, the discourses of liberal feminism, with its belief in the sovereignty of the individual and its individualistic rhetoric, come straight out of the 'master' discourses of Western meritocratic individualism. Both rely in turn on the related sovereign power of experience. In these discourses, indeed in that of liberal humanism in general, as Chris Weedon writes,

Experience is what we think and feel in any given situation and it is expressed in language. Experience is prior to language but requires language in order to be communicated to other people. Experience is authentic because it is guaranteed by the full weight of the individual's subjectivity. It relies upon what Jacques Derrida calls a metaphysics of presence, that is the conviction that words are only signs of a real substance which is elsewhere. [27]

These 'common sense' beliefs that the mind of the individual is the source and guarantor of meaning and that experience is always 'pre-linguistic', and can be testified to by language and, of course, writing 'para conferirle sentido y perdurabilidad', as Castellanos writes [16], make it difficult, if not impossible, to provide for the idea of the 'complicity' of this all-

powerful individual in his or her oppression. Even the existentialist idea of 'bad faith' used by Jean-Paul Sartre to explain this phenomenon - to which in any case Castellanos never refers in her essays - is linked by its assumption that even this is a choice made by a fully self-present individual, to the same set of ideologies. This then is a major contradiction in Castellanos' thought, and one which undermines her undoubtedly advanced ideas on feminism, which otherwise went completely against the grain of the prevailing sexist opinions of 1950s and 1960s.

In the same way that men must listen to newly-'invented' women and then miraculously give up their power, so male writers must give up space and power in discursive arenas such as the national novel, which Castellanos believes would be enriched for the contribution of women. Of course, she is correct, but just as her feminism bolsters meritocratic individualism, so the participation of certain, privileged, educated women in building the national identity by simply adding their testimony (of pre-linguistic experience) also bolsters already powerful ideologies such as nationalism and individualism. It can never radically challenge them precisely because it does not stand beyond their reach.

It is worth remembering, at this stage, that Rosario Castellanos never declares her opposition to nationalism, merely to the exclusion of certain groups from its annals: her dream of integration is one where women and the indigenous peoples of Mexico, as we saw above, gain access to the authority, through education and writing, that white men have had, and which she, herself, has won, to a certain extent. Whether or not this is possible was not a question she considered at any length. She assumed that

it was, once the myths preventing a historically-based analysis of the Mexican situation had been jettisoned and women and indians were allowed to develop the role they had been denied.

Once more, then, it has been worth asking of Castellanos' work what Annette Kolodny asked when advocating her 'suspicious approach to literature': 'What ends do those [aesthetic] judgments serve [...]; and what conceptions of the world or ideological stances do they (even if unwittingly) help to perpetuate' [28]?

In the next part of this discussion, I shall consider the question of how exactly Castellanos' political and aesthetic priorities, which have been examined throughout the course of the first two parts of this chapter, were to be expressed in the novelistic discourses which were available to her.

PART 3: WHICH DISCOURSE?

Before embarking on a detailed examination of Rosario Castellanos' two novels, some more, pressing questions must be answered regarding what might be described as the literary and historical discursive space from within which Castellanos was writing, that is to say, attention must at this point be focussed on the range of *literary* meanings, beliefs, knowledges and indeed discourses in circulation at the time when these texts were produced. As is to be expected, one set of questions simultaneously begs another set for the feminist critic: even if it were technically possible to 'retrieve' this discursive space, what is the nature of the relationship between it and the individual author or speaking subject, in this case Rosario Castellanos?

Many feminist critics, as we have seen, have responded to, or even ignored this dilemma with what might be called 'special pleading' on behalf of the female author, emphasizing women's writing as the transparent personal testimony of their individual and collective experiences. Others have sought to analyze women's writing in the light of Foucault's theories of discourse, whilst acknowledging that these theories lack a perspective on gender. According to these critics, gendered subjectivity must be accounted for, but in a way which does not rely on an unreconstructed adherence to the notion of the unitary subject. Jean Franco writes:

although Foucault's ideas are highly suggestive in discussing the broad process of exclusion and discrimination that occurs within discursive formations and in identifying the domains of discourse and institutional practices that support those

formations, there is something missing in his theory which I can best identify by introducing the word 'experience' - or better perhaps, Raymond Williams' 'structures of feeling' or Habermas' 'life forms'. [1]

This brings us back to the arguments I presented earlier where I referred to the tension between 'condition' and discourse.

Jean Franco's ideas are themselves particularly useful as she attempts to unravel how women have 'plotted' themselves into the mainstream and the margins of a broad sweep of Mexican culture and I will come back to them later. However, her attempt to account for subjectivity is significant here for it rejects the essentialism of some feminist criticism in favour of the need to recognize gender and cultural differences because of the different subject positions (usefully defined by Chris Weedon as those discursively constructed 'range of forms of subjectivity open to any individual on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background' [2]) that these conditions open up within particular discursive formations at specific points in history. As Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore write:

If black authors write differently from white, that is not because of their biological skin colour, but because of the different subject positions that being black in a white society constructs. [3]

Obviously, in a perspective which does not privilege language as a transparent medium which expresses a pre-given meaning, instead which sees those meanings as dependent on the discursive power relations within which they are located, nothing is fixed once and for^{all}; thus, black authors are not doomed always to take up the same subject positions.

This perspective enables us to account for the 'individuality' of an author's work - to answer the obvious question, for example, why did Castellanos write the novels she did and *not* those of her contemporaries - without relying on ideas about individual 'genius' or 'vision'. Yet it also allows us to account for and then further explore what might be tentatively described as the 'predictability' or similarities (to a certain extent) of texts produced within broadly similar discursive formations.

As for the notion of 'choice', it becomes clear that we cannot retain the concept of a full range of literary discourses arranged like goods on the supermarket shelf, waiting for the author to come and take his or her pick. For one thing, not all discourses are possible ways of meaning at all points in time. For another, not every subject position allows access to the literary arena and even those which are admitted enter on unequal terms according to the discursive power relations at a given moment. Finally, as Margaret Atack writes, 'On what basis can an individual choose between discourses if they are constitutive of the individual *qua* individual' [4]?

Having now laid some more theoretical foundations for this analysis, let us turn to the specific object of this enquiry.

In *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico*, Jean Franco attempts to 'reconstruct the dynamic interaction of subjects, domains of discourse, and political constraints [...in order to] constitute a common ground for a feminist understanding of Mexican culture' [5]. She opts for the long historical view, tracing women's struggle for interpretive power throughout centuries,

from Aztec empire to colonial New Spain [...], from colonized New Spain to Independent Mexico, and from revolutionary Mexico fighting for its autonomy to an increasingly crisis-ridden society that has undergone violent modernization. Religion, nationalism, and finally modernization thus constitute the broad master narratives and symbolic systems that not only cemented society but plotted women differentially into the social text. [5]

Franco devotes a whole chapter to a discussion of Castellanos' *Oficio de tinieblas* and Elena Garro's *Recuerdos del porvenir*, and although there are several points with which I shall take issue at a later stage in my discussion of Castellanos' second novel, Franco's general assertions about the discursive formations which existed at the time when these two texts were produced prove useful here.

This chapter, entitled 'On the Impossibility of Antigone and the Inevitability of La Malinche: Rewriting the National Allegory', attempts to establish that in the Mexico of the 1950s and 1960s, 'within the genre privileged as the allegory of national formation - the novel' [6], rewriting the master narratives around a heroine was a dangerous business for an author, especially considering the fact that 'the problem of national identity was [...] presented primarily as a problem of *male* identity' [7].

Under these circumstances, national identity could not but be a problematic terrain for women novelists, although it was not something they ^{covid} avoid. How could they plot themselves into a narrative without becoming masculine or attempting to speak from the devalued position, the space of the marginalized and the ethnic which was not the space of writing at all? [8]

After a discussion of the plots and narrative structures of the two novels, Franco concludes thus:

Both Garro and Castellanos seem caught in a predicament [...] in both cases the problem is rooted in their attempt to appropriate the then hegemonic genre - the novel as national allegory. In such novels the personal lives of the protagonist generally represent the problems of the nation as a whole. But as these novels show, it is simply not possible to retain verisimilitude and make women into national protagonists. Women's attempts to plot themselves in the national novel become a recognition of the fact that they are not in the plot at all but definitely somewhere else. [9]

These insights are fine in so far as they go. But the most glaring omission is any explicit handling of the question of genre and its role within the particular discursive context of mid twentieth-century Mexico. Although Franco mentions that the novel was the hegemonic genre, she does not delve for long into the question of the literary genre or genres operant within a particular text or body of texts. As we shall see later, the scene of the production of *Oficio de tinieblas* was one complicated by a proliferation of literary genres and styles because of its coincidence with the beginning of the cultural explosion known as the 'Boom'. One can be sure that there were other ways to write a novel which, as Franco notes, dealt with 'the contradictory and antagonistic nature of gender relations as they intersect with race and class' [10]. And yet, *Oficio de tinieblas*, like *Balún-Canán* before it, is a classic of *indigenista* fiction.

This very fact has itself proved a very important site for a struggle for interpretive power amongst many of Castellanos' critics: those who would dismiss her novels on the grounds of their adherence to what is often dismissed as a minor and hackneyed genre. This particular strategy has been well-analyzed by feminists as a not very subtle means of further

marginalizing women's writing. And then, on the other hand, there are those other critics who object to Castellanos' radicalism being appropriated solely in the name of anti-racism. Raquel Scherr provides, in her unpublished dissertation, a prime example of this strategy. Still further critics, for example Mary Seale-Vásquez, have backed this notion up by noting that Castellanos did not consider herself to be one of the *indigenista* current of Mexican writers, 'judging that the indigenist writers had presented too simplistic a view of all-good *indígena* and nefarious *ladino* and had paid insufficient heed to style' [11]. But this will not do. Castellanos also said of herself, before she wrote her novels that 'Ningún otro género me parecía accesible' [12]. It is evident that Rosario Castellanos would not wish for her work to be associated with crude or overly anthropological *indigenismo* - the *indigenista* novel with footnotes - since she obviously considered herself to be active in the field of literature and not sociology, or ethnography. But *indigenismo* had come a long way stylistically, as novels such as Asturias' *Hombres de maíz* (published in 1949) had shown.

In her essay, 'Tendencias de la narrativa mexicana contemporánea', Castellanos outlines with bleak humour the choice confronting the modern Mexican writer:

A la problemática nacional el escritor mexicano añade la que le depara su oficio propio. Y entonces se encierra en su torre de marfil para pulir la belleza de forma y entregar a una inmensa minoría un producto preciosamente elaborado. O se compromete con una causa a la que sirve con tal entusiasmo que se siente eximido de intentar la perfección. Las páginas se redactan a vuela pluma, como si el destinatario [...] tuviera una urgencia inaplazable por recibir las consignas adecuadas, por enterarse de las ideas correctas, por explicar lo que ocurre.

[13]

This rather crude summary of what Castellanos jokingly regarded as the self-present choice made by the Mexican author between (post-)modernism and *engagement*, becomes more useful to us if we read it through some of the Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas about genre: 'The author's quests for his own word are basically quests for an authorial position' [14].

According to Bakhtin, as Gary Saul Morson writes,

To understand how ideological practice is performed, we cannot begin with a model of the individual utterance as the spontaneous production of an individual consciousness. Rather, the utterance must be seen as bearing within itself a complex and contradictory set of historical elements. In this sense, Bakhtin observes, *all* speech is reported speech, for all speech carries with it a history of use and interpretation by which it achieves both identity and difference. [15]

Hence, for Bakhtin, as Morson continues, the proper study of ideology begins with an analysis of ideological form, with the study of genre, 'not in any autonomous or transcendent sense of genre or form but in the sense that form presents a location of tension between the past and the present' [15].

The quest for an authorial position in the production of a text, then, is not free from history; it is tied to it by, amongst other discursive formations, genre. But making these links visible is not a simple procedure. As Terry Threadgold writes, again following Bakhtin:

What we need to know is how institutions and institutionalized power relationships and knowledge are both constructed by and impose constraints on and restrict access to) [...] genres. We need to know why certain genres are highly valued, and others marginalized. We need to understand the changing history of such valorizations. We need to know why some genres are possible, others impossible ways of meaning at given points

in history. We need to know how and why these factors construct identities for social agents (those who think they 'use' the genres) and how and why some social agents are able/willing to resist and others to comply with existing situational and generic constraints. For it may be a truism, but while you can lead a horse to water, you cannot make it drink: and even providing equal access to situation-types and genres does not always produce equal results. [16]

It has been worth quoting this at length, but now we should begin to answer some of the questions it poses with regard to Rosario Castellanos.

Without falling into the traps of traditional author-based criticism, it is clear that even a brief examination of the facts of Castellanos' life (gender, class, race, regional origin, and so on) begins to explain something about the subject position she took up. For it is obvious that if she had not been born into an upper-class, Chiapan landowning family, who, after the death of her only brother, moved to Mexico City, which then opened up access to a traditional Mexican elite education in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, usually reserved for male offspring, it would have been unlikely that she would have been in a position to take up a profession as a published writer.

To take this line of enquiry further, we must engage with the role of gender as a determining factor as regards Castellanos' access to literary genre. Teresa de Lauretis usefully defines the importance of gender as 'the issue of a difference that divides the social subjects and imposes the question of the relation of subjectivity and experience to meaning, social formations and power' [17]. We have already seen above how Jean Franco argues that during the period in question, the hegemonic genre in Mexico

was that of the novel as National Allegory which was, in turn, bound up in an exploration of National (read: Male) identity. Franco also noted that entering this terrain was difficult for women, even if it was possible by then, given the social changes as regards women's access to education and to certain professions. What she does not say is that this master narrative when combined with the contemporary institutions and institutional power relationships largely determined *how* women entered the terrain.

If we turn back to Castellanos' own outline of the choices open to Mexican writers of the period, we can note that scarcely even one *published* Mexican woman writer was engaged in what she reduces to pure art-for-art's-sake novel writing. However, several were published, or beginning to be published, authors in the sphere of the novel of social protest or *indigenista* fiction (Magdalena Mondragón, Rosa de Castaño, María Lombardo de Caso, Alba Sandoiz in Mexico alone). Was it then a requirement of those few women novelists to be *engagées* before they could be published? Or was it rather that *indigenismo* or social protest fiction, which was itself a sub-text of the national allegory narrative, dealing as it did with the ancient and modern problem of how mainstream Mexican society should incorporate its indigenous population into 'national' life, *signified* 'genre fiction'? In other words, that it signified a kind of literature which conflicted with another master narrative operating in the period (and perhaps to this day) not just in Mexico but in much of the Western world, the discourse of Romanticism with its denial of constraints and systems, and with its hierarchy of individual creativity and freedom: 'true art' is

the aesthetic text, free from historical and social constraint, produced by the individual Author/Genius, who was invariably male? This is what Beaujour has termed the 'terroristic denial of genre in post-Romantic modernism' [18].

I do not wish to give the impression that these discourses or power relationships, and the genres within them, are fixed and unchanging. On the contrary, they can be subverted precisely because they cannot be separated from their participation in social and historical processes and these are subject to change. Also, as Threadgold writes, once more after Bakhtin,

Genres are 'products' and 'processes' - 'systems' and 'performances'. Each time a text is produced so as to realize and construct a situation-type it becomes the model for another text and another situation-type. As a model, it functions like a static, finished product or a system according to which new texts can be constructed. Once the constructing begins it becomes again a dynamic process, a 'performance' which will inevitably change the model with which it begins. [19]

Equally I would ^{not} want the conclusion to be drawn that Castellanos was, in some fatalistic way, doomed to write novels in the *indigenista* style without some self-present 'say' in the matter. Her critical essays are, for example, filled with her sense of social responsibility towards what she regarded as the essential task for mutual benefit of integrating the indigenous peoples of Mexico into the mainstream of Mexican life without effacing completely their languages, traditions and cultures. Undoubtedly, this concern derived largely from her own childhood experiences in Chiapas and later, from her work with the Instituto Nacional Indigenista during the

late 1950s, the very period when she wrote *Balún-Canán* and began to write *Oficio de tinieblas*. However, the fact that these two novels were published, were read by increasing numbers of educated readers under the burgeoning print runs of the incipient 'Boom', won prizes for literary excellence (*Balún-Canán* won the 1958 Premio de Chiapas, and was translated into many languages), and went a good way to opening up further spaces for more recent Mexican *autoras* to repeat and develop Rosario Castellanos' achievements, can be attributed more to social and historical factors, such as growing urban populations, developments in Mexican public education and social welfare provision, which have all been acknowledged as important factors in the study of Mexican literature by the great Mexican specialist, Joseph Sommers.

One element so far missing from this discussion is an analysis of the extent to which Castellanos' novels were 'monogeneric', that is 'merely' *indigenista* novels. This is undoubtedly what Raquel Scherr is trying to debunk in her thesis, and yet she does not get to grips with it because she does not include an examination of genre in her approach, and, moreover, she does tend to rely for her conclusions on what she regards as Castellanos' stated aims in her work. The story is obviously more complex.

Descriptive poetics has placed a [...] high importance on the singularity of genres, that is their coherence, their obligatory elements, their separateness from one another, and this discourse blends with the Romantic discourse of the genre of literature [...] Thus the Renaissance concept of *genera mixta* has become an 'ugly name'. [20]

Bakhtin's work has been extremely influential in revitalizing the ideas around the mixing of genres with its discussion of intertextuality, polyphony and heteroglossia, and this has in turn been taken up and developed by theorists such as Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida, who wrote that one 'cannot not mix genres' [21]. These ideas will be more usefully employed later in the detailed discussion of Castellanos' two novels, which forms the second half of this thesis, when I come to analyze in depth, that is, in the very narrative practice, the effect of discourses, both from other texts and from the political ideologies in circulation at the time, on the author's work.

For now, however, it should be sufficient simply to outline what has been the 'missing genre' of Castellanos' narrative texts, missing, that is, from most, if not all other analyses of her work. Many critics have noted that her fiction has an extensive autobiographical subtext. In fact, it has been one of the most difficult areas of her work to ignore given that places where she lived, names of people from her family (rarely even thinly disguised) and actual events (for example, the death of her brother, Mario Benjamín) constantly crop up in the plots of much of her work. Yet critics have had little, if anything to say about the importance of the genre of autobiographical fiction. This is strange because the idea of such a genre occupied much of Castellanos' attention in her critical essays. From *Juicios sumarios* to *Mujer que sabe latín*, she writes of women authors who 'authored' themselves through their writing. Of the illegitimate Violette Leduc, author of the autobiographical *La batârde*, she wrote,

Escribir es dar una forma a la experiencia, un ritmo a la temporalidad, un orden al caos, una interpretación a lo abstruso

Escribir es transformar lo azaroso en legítimo, lo gratuito en necesario. Escribir es nacer de nuevo [...] [22]

Of Simone de Beauvoir, she wrote,

Para Simone de Beauvoir la palabra es también prosa, es decir, signo para apuntar a la realidad, instrumento para orientarse en el mundo [...]. El lenguaje va a ser el medio gracias al cual ella, que era originariamente amorfa - en tanto que 'segundo sexo' en particular, en tanto que ser humano en general - va a realizar la tarea de construir su existencia [...] [23]

Of herself, she wrote,

Soy yo misma la que quiere verme representada para conocerme, para reconocerme. ¿Pero cómo me llamo? ¿De quién me distingo? Con la pluma en la mano inicio una búsqueda que ha tenido sus hallazgos, pero que todavía no termina. [24]

She draws broader conclusions about what might be a common link throughout what women write about themselves in an essay entitled 'La mujer ante el espejo: cinco autobiografías', where she argues that despite men's images of them, women have always metaphorically looked in the mirror,

[para] construir la imagen propia, autorretratarse, redactar el alegato de la defensa, exhibir la prueba del descargo, hacer un testamento a la posteridad (para darle lo que se tuvo pero hacer constar aquello de lo que se careció) evocar su vida. [25]

These reflections on women's recourse to autobiographical forms make up what is perhaps the most original and perceptive area of Castellanos' body

of critical theory. They link up with her ideas of women and other oppressed groups gaining authority through writing, but also in their attempt to establish the reasons why women write autobiographically they prefigure much of the recent work done on women's autobiographical writing: the conclusions drawn - that women write autobiography in order to create a self-identity from nothing, or in response to false male images of themselves, are remarkably similar, given that twenty years separates Castellanos' analysis from that of texts such as *The Private Self* (published in 1988) and *The Female Autograph* (published in 1984).

Yet just as I refuse to take the idea of a self-present choice of *indigenismo* as a genre for granted, so must I question the discursive formations at work here. Even if, as much feminist theory would have it, men's autobiographical practice differs from that of women in that men write largely to preserve and celebrate the self they have been [26], the history of men's and women's autobiography has almost entirely been synonymous with the history of the Western obsession with self.

As much as Castellanos' novels will be seen to be bound by the reaches of specifically Mexican or Latin-American discursive formations, such as the post-colonial nationalist concerns delineated by Jean Franco and Joseph Sommers, or by the generic processes of *indigenista* fiction, which I will examine in the chapters which follow, they are also bound by the reaches of the European novel and by the discourses of Western meritocratic individualism, just as we have seen that her essays and critical ideas are.

This part of the present chapter has, from the beginning, taken the form of a questionnaire but it was not intended to provide all of the answers it has set. Many of these - such as the questions of intertextuality and heteroglossia and the effect of the most obvious examples of *genera mixta* in the texts - will be broached in the examination which follows, dealing with Castellanos' novelistic practice. In many respects, the most fitting ending to an initially broad-sweeping analysis of the complex tensions between condition and discourse is an open-ended one, in which not all questions can be answered because there is no one omnipotent individual - or one meta-narrative - which controls everything but, instead, layer upon layer of ever-shifting mediations.

CHAPTER 3: *BALÓN-CANÁN*

PART 1: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FIRST NOVEL

La primera y la tercera partes de *Balún-Canán* están narradas en primera persona por la hija de los Argüello. [...] No se le da nunca ningún nombre propio, y se supone que la que nos relata los sucesos a través de sus recuerdos infantiles, es la autora. [1]

Rhoda Dybvig, the author of the above quotation, came to the same conclusion about *Balún-Canán*, as many other critics: that this first novel by Castellanos can, in some way, be labelled as autobiographical. María Estela Franco, in her psychoanalytic study of Rosario Castellanos, went so far as to write that *Balún-Canán* 'constituye un material básico en el estudio psicoanalítico de Rosario Castellanos porque ella misma, en repetidas ocasiones, reconoció el carácter autobiográfico de la novela'[2]. It is certainly true that in the various autobiographical interviews and accounts Castellanos gave during her lifetime [3], she drew attention to this whenever she spoke about *Balún-Canán*. The following quotation is a typical example:

A la novela llegué recordando sucesos de mi infancia. Así, casi sin darme cuenta, di principio a *Balún-Canán*: sin una idea general del conjunto, dejándome llevar por el fluir de los recuerdos. Después los sucesos se ordenaron alrededor de un mismo tema.[4]

Obviously not everyone has drawn these conclusions solely from reading Castellanos' comments. Several critics, including Rhoda Dybvig and María

Estela Franco, have extensively researched Castellanos' early childhood history in order to support their arguments.

It might be useful at this stage to give a brief summary of the biographical details that other critics have outlined as important to this line of thought [5].

Castellanos was born in 1925 in Mexico City, the first child of César Castellanos and Adriana Figueroa. Shortly afterwards she was taken to live in Comitán in the state of Chiapas, in the Castellanos family home, where she was brought up principally by an indigenous *nana*, Rufina, who according to several accounts, also acted as her wet-nurse. César Castellanos was an engineer by profession, but also inherited the various family ranches (in the hands of the Castellanos family since shortly after the Conquest) and occasionally took his family with him to one ranch in particular, the Rancho 'Rosario' near the River Jataté, not far from Ocosingo in Chiapas. The only other child born to the marriage, in 1926, was a son, Mario Benjamín, who according to Rosario Castellanos and several relatives, completely eclipsed the first-born daughter in importance to the two parents. However, Mario died of appendicitis at the age of seven, a tragedy which almost destroyed his parents, but which, nonetheless, ensured that Rosario received a university education, which, by virtue of being female, was certainly not hers by right. The family stayed on in Chiapas until 1942, when they were forced to sell and redistribute their properties, according to the Código Agrario; they moved to Mexico City, where Rosario Castellanos attended a *preparatoria* and then the National University.

Castellanos' childhood had, then, coincided with the period of history when the Mexican Revolution finally reached the far-flung state of Chiapas. The private Catholic elementary school she attended was closed down by federal decree and the landowners, including her father, were forced to face up to the effects of the Cárdenas presidency (1934-1940) and the growing demands for justice by the local Maya communities - in the case of the Rancho 'Rosario', the Tzeltal Maya - first to stop the practice of the *baldío*, then to ensure provision of education for all, and, ultimately, to redistribute the lands, many of which were illegally seized back after the Cárdenas period, although by then the Castellanos family had moved for good. Relatives of Rosario Castellanos are still, to this present day, farming in that same area near the border with Guatemala.

The many similarities between this account and parts of the text of *Balún-Canán* are fairly obvious, in particular the family members' names [6]. However, there are also obvious differences: for example, Mario died before Lázaro Cárdenas became president. It is also essential to point out that no critic who has qualified the novel *Balún-Canán* as autobiographical has extended that argument to mean that it is pure, untrammelled autobiography, and scarcely 'fictional' at all.

Recent critics, informed by literary theory, have been less anxious to note the striking similarities between text and life. Chloe Furnival in her paper on Castellanos' short fiction, makes the following comment:

[The influence of autobiographical events] needs to be rejected as the central informing factor of the work [...]. In the light of more recent feminist literary theory this unproblematical movement from the text to the world beyond it can be criticized

for its unquestioning acceptance of the *patriarchal* view of literature as representation [...] [7]

It should be clear by now that the approach undertaken in this present thesis ties in more closely with these views expressed by Furnival than with those at the other extreme, epitomised by María Estela Franco. However, here, the discussion of Castellanos' first novel will centre on the idea of autobiography, or autobiographical *fiction* to be more exact, precisely as a *literary* phenomenon, operating under a set of literary conventions. So, while the apparent referentiality of the text to Castellanos' childhood remains undeniably the most powerful factor in some readers' understanding of the novel as autobiography, I contend here that it is the use of certain strategies, inducing particular genre-expectations, which signify it as autobiographical for most readers, those whose knowledge of the details of Castellanos' background corresponds only to those bare facts printed on the cover of the first edition of the novel: 'La autora aprovecha esos hechos, para referir *de acuerdo con sus experiencias personales*, multitud de episodios cotidianos' [8].

One of the most striking of such conventions is the use of a first-person narrator, which, although in itself does not guarantee that the reader will always associate the predominant narrative voice with the author, given the way in which the narrative voice develops in *Balún-Canán*, I hope to show that this is exactly what happens. Even Rhoda Dybvig in the quote given above, which opens this discussion, gives us a *literary* clue as to one of the particular strategies of first-person narration which helps the reader to conflate the text with autobiography: 'No se le da ningún nombre propio,

y se supone que la que nos relata los sucesos a través de sus recuerdos infantiles, es la autora'.

The first-person narrative style is the first and most important of the conventions I shall examine and following on from this, it would seem logical to analyze here only those parts of the novel which are narrated from this standpoint, in the case of this text, the first and last of the three parts into which it is divided. However, there are also other valid reasons for so doing. One of the contentions I wish to make here is that *Balún-Canán*, with its particular elements of *genera mixta*, is an example of two texts or powerful genres vying with each other for ascendancy. This would explain why so many critics, particularly the early reviewers of the novel, have disagreed about its failings and have fallen, roughly, into two camps over it: those who feel that it would have worked better had it been narrated entirely from the seven-year old girl's point of view, and those whose preference is for the omniscient voice of the middle section [9].

The fact is that *Balún-Canán* has a remarkable, in other words, finely-crafted, symmetry that no other critic has remarked upon: the first part of the novel consists of seventy-four pages and twenty-four chapters; the middle part has one hundred and forty-one pages and eighteen long chapters; and the final part has seventy-five pages and also has twenty-four chapters. Thus the novel is divided almost exactly in half in terms of the narrative voice: one hundred and thirty-nine pages of narrative from the point of view of the young girl and one hundred and forty-one pages of omnisciently narrated text.

This detail is made even more notable , and more important from the point of view of reading the novel as autobiographical fiction when examined with a fact which emerged in Rhoda Dybvig's 1965 interview with Rosario Castellanos and which, again, other critics have since omitted to remark upon:

Al iniciar la novela, [Castellanos] no tenía ningún plan preconcebido, sino más bien una serie de recuerdos inconexos que giraban alrededor de un hecho que le había obsesionado siempre, la muerte de su hermanito.[...] *Escribió la primera parte y la tercera de la novela* (que está dividida en tres partes) *una después de la otra* [...] [10, my emphasis]

Castellanos wrote the middle section of novel (the most 'fictional' part in terms of its similarities with the details of her own childhood) only after writing a continuous first draft of parts one and three, as if she were writing the 'autobiography' first and the 'fiction' second. In her interview with Emmanuel Carballo, again in 1965, Castellanos uses an interesting choice of words about the narrative style of the middle section of the novel, which I italicize in the following extract:

El núcleo de la acción, que por objetivo corresponde al punto de vista de los adultos, *está contado por el autor en tercera persona*. La estructura desconcierta a los lectores. Hay una ruptura en el estilo, en la manera de ver y de pensar. Esa es, supongo, la falla principal del libro. Lo confieso: no pude estructurar la novela de otra manera.[11]

In this quote, Castellanos is not reticent in her use of first-person pronoun references to relate what she thinks about her work, yet resorts to

the curiously distancing 'el autor' to refer to the narrator of the omniscient middle section. Clearly these two halves of the novel were approached with almost entirely different sets of concerns in mind, at least initially. This results in a variety of textual differences, where one half of the novel flows out into the other. This is important to note here, in this discussion of *Balún-Canán* as an autobiographical novel because this traffic is largely one-way: elements from the middle section most frequently spill out into the first and third parts.

Turning now to concentrate on a textual analysis of the first and last parts of *Balún-Canán*, as noted above, the first device to alert the reader to the possibly autobiographical nature of the text is the first-person narrative voice, that of the unnamed seven-year old girl, which emerges as soon as she tells her Tzeltal Maya *nana* that she does not want to listen to her story. Instead she embarks on telling her own:

No soy un grano de anís. Soy una niña y tengo siete años
Los cinco dedos de la mano derecha y dos de la izquierda.Y
cuando me yergo puedo mirar de frente las rodillas de mi papa.
Más arriba no.[B.C.p.9]

These first few words establish several things at once. First, the girl's story begins in response to an affront; the *nana* tells her she is insignificant and she describes herself in order to prove she is *not*. She begins her story to establish a sense of self and a notion of status in relation to others in authority, a fact which is important, both at the level of plot and of narrative structure, because, by virtue of being female,

her selfhood, indeed, her very existence, is not particularly important to any other character in the novel, except for her *nana*; she does not merit being given a name; and she scarcely appears at all in the middle part of the novel. Second, an attempt is obviously being made at conveying a seven-year old's style of speech: short sentences and the depiction of an infantile method of counting establish this, according to conventions of psychological realism. However, even at this early stage, indeed, on this very first page, other textual elements serve to undermine this initial reading of a little girl telling us her own story:

Miro lo que está a mi nivel. Ciertos arbustos con las hojas carcomidas por los insectos; los pupitres manchados de tinta; mi hermano. Y a mi hermano lo miro de arriba abajo. Porque nació después de mí y, cuando nació, yo ya sabía muchas cosas que ahora le explico minuciosamente.[B.C. p.9]

Despite the assertion that she is looking at what is at her level, words like 'minuciosamente', while conveying the pomposity of the little girl, also signal a break in the attempt to convey the speaking style of a child. This is a rare hiccup in these first few paragraphs and the departures from the childlike registers of vocabulary only begin to occur in great numbers further on in the text, particularly in the passages where the young narrator describes her surroundings in the Chiapan town of Comitán. Nonetheless, even on this first page textual signals begin to be sent out that behind the 'voice' of the little girl, lurks another - apparently - 'authorial voice'. This is, of course, simply the effect of another literary convention.

Many 'novels of childhood' employ the device of an adult narrator looking back on their early years through the eyes of the child they once were. Frequently, for example, in the early chapters of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the adult narrator will provide a commentary on events in order to explain how subsequent developments came about, whilst most of the plot is revealed by using the child as a perceptual focalizer or an 'eye'. Other kinds of novels, for example, the beginning of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, attempt a stream of consciousness approach, in order to depict the random, unselective and uncomprehending, or partially comprehending, 'experiencing as it happens' of a child becoming aware of the world and himself: the child appears to be both instantaneous narrator and focalizer, or, is the adult narrator merely imagining himself back? One of the best recent accounts of the conventions of narration and focalization is given by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her 1983 book *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* [12]. She examines at some length the verbal indicators which can determine a reading of focalization, such as lexis, syntax, use of evaluative adjectives, shifts in tenses, and many others. However, for the moment, one of the most important points she makes is that in first-person retrospective narratives, focalization and narration are separate. So, although nowhere in the novel *Balún-Canán* is it pointed out that the little girl's story is, in fact, being narrated by someone else, the reader's expectations that this is the case are set off, initially by the verbal indicator of lexis. The hunt for the 'real' narrator in this novel is set off from the very first page.

It is at this point that it becomes clear that frequently the intention of

an author can become irrelevant to the possible readings of a text. Every time that Castellanos wrote or spoke of *Balún-Canán*, she made it clear that she was attempting to capture particular experiences and events through the eyes *and voice* of a child in the first-person narrated sections. However, whether inadvertently or on purpose, literary conventions force, or, at the very least, strongly recommend, a reading of the text in which the identity of the narrator is brought into question. With no alternative clues being furnished by way of naming the little girl, Rosario Castellanos, the author whose name graces the front of the novel, becomes the number one suspect. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan speaks of this compulsion as

a kind of contract between the text and the reader, so that some expectations are rendered plausible, others ruled out, and elements which would seem strange in another context are made intelligible within the genre. [13]

Once suspicions are raised that the little girl is to be associated with the authorial voice responsible for the novel as a whole, certain other conventions closely related to the autobiographical tradition also begin to come into play.

In the first part of the novel, Castellanos resorts principally to the device of 'showing' rather than 'telling' [14] as a means of revealing aspects of the plot and characterization. This is what might be expected, according to conventions of psychological realism, of a narrative which has as its focalizer a seven-year old child who could not be expected to be sufficiently mature or self-aware to comment on the importance of certain events as opposed to certain others, or to reveal deep insights into the

characters of the people who surround her. Castellanos' method of doing just this, then, at least initially, is to resort to an episodic approach, whereby the development of the plot and characters are revealed to the reader through the presentation of significant 'scenes' where the narrator appears more as another character, who merely witnesses events and transparently describes them, than as someone who comments on what is happening. Castellanos describes this technique thus:

La acción avanza muy lentamente. Se le podría juzgar como una serie de estampas aisladas en apariencia pero que funcionan en conjunto. [15]

However, as the novel progresses, this approach is increasingly abandoned and the first-person narrative voice becomes more and more active in both the selection of events to be recounted and in commenting on the significance of these events. As Rimmon-Kenan comments, 'showing' is always an illusion since 'language can only imitate language, which is why the representation of speech comes closest to pure mimesis, but even here [...] there is a narrator who "quotes" the characters' speech thus reducing the directness of "showing"' [16]. In *Balún-Canán*, it is part of the fiction that it is the narrator who is telling the story, so right from the outset it should be the little girl narrator who is selecting events in a particular way for a particular storytelling purpose. However, it is not until the girl's authorial interventions become more obvious that the reader is alerted to this. When the reader is confronted by these interventions, the fiction of the retrospective, judgmental voice which plays a large part in conventional autobiographical narratives comes into play and works to

reinforce the impression given by other elements that an autobiographical account is what is, in effect, being related here.

Two episodes from the text will serve as examples here, both drawn from early sections of the narrative. The first episode, occurring in Chapter four of the first part, concerns one of the novel's most important themes: the little girl's increasing awareness of the way in which the racism which surrounds her every day operates. As the indians from Chactajal are arriving in Comitán for a fiesta, the little girl is made aware that her *nana* fears them. When she asks why, the *nana* shows her the scars and tells her that she was attacked because 'he sido crianza de tu casa. Porque quiero a tus padres y a Mario y a ti' [B.C.p.16]. The girl asks:

-¿Es malo querernos?

-Es malo querer a los que mandan, a los que poseen. Así dice la ley.

As the girl leaves her *nana*'s side temporarily after this conversation, she reflects on what she has been told, and in a rare moment of psychological maturity, she relates a discovery:

Yo salgo, triste por lo que acabo de saber. Mi padre despide a los indios con un ademán y se queda recostado en la hamaca, leyendo. Ahora lo miro por primera vez. Es el que manda, el que posee. Y no puedo soportar su rostro y corro a refugiarme en la cocina. [... Mi nanal como siempre desde que nací, me arrima a su regazo. Es caliente y amoroso. Pero tendrá una llaga. Una llaga que nosotros le habremos enconado.[B.C.pp16-17]

Although this short passage is essential for what it reveals about the plot and the wider themes of the novel, it is perhaps even more fascinating from

the point of view of the narrative techniques it employs. For despite the fact that this incident is relayed in the present tense - the fiction is that it is being relayed instantaneously or remembered as if it were happening in the same moment in which it is being narrated - it has a curiously retrospective and considered ring to it. In fact, there is nothing curious about how this works. None of the chapters narrated by the little girl employ the stream of consciousness technique that Castellanos favours in certain parts of the middle section of the novel for interiorization purposes. This means that while most of the child's narrative is in the present tense it nonetheless reveals its traditional retrospective organising structure. Frequently this is done, as it is in this episode, by means of first recounting a significant event and then recounting the conclusions to be drawn from it, in the manner of a physical stimulus followed by a psychological effect. The use of the present tense mainly serves to underline the 'simplicity' of the narrative style as if it really were the work of a seven-year old, while in no way altering the retrospective signals it simultaneously sends out.

The second example, drawn from Chapter thirteen of the first part of the novel, is even more of a candidate for a stream of consciousness approach than this first example. The little girl is taken by her mother to the church where she sees a painting of the crucified Christ and immediately associates it with an image stored in her memory of the body of an indian from her father's workforce who had been violently killed because of his loyalty to the Argüello family.

La revelación es tan repentina que me deja paralizada. Contemplo la imagen un instante, muda de horror. Y luego me lanzo, como

ciega, hacia la puerta. Forcejeo violentamente, la golpeo con mis puños, desesperada. Y es en vano.[...]

-¿Qué te pasa?

No puedo responder y me debato entre sus manos enloquecida de terror.

-¡Contesta! [...]

- Es igual (digo señalando al crucifijo), es igual al indio que llevaron macheteado a nuestra casa. [B.C. pp.42-43]

Here, the signifiers of retrospective organization are reversed. The fact that this is a sudden revelation is announced *before* the reader is told what the sudden revelation is. The information about the cause of the narrator's consternation is held back until after its effect is described, creating suspense. Again the use of the present tense to create immediacy is subverted by other organising devices in the narrative, in this case in order to emphasize the significance for the plot and the character of the little girl that she comes to associate the suffering and injustice inflicted on the indians, by virtue of their association with her family, with a symbol of universal suffering and martyrdom, the body of Christ.

In terms of the narrative structure of the first and last parts of *Balún-Canán*, then, the little girl is constructed as more than a simple cipher, and is far from being a non-judgmental eye through which events are viewed in order to provide a variation in tone from the omniscient voice of the middle section of the novel. Even if the reader is not forearmed with information that many of the events in the book run parallel to real events from the author's childhood, the particular literary devices employed plant more than a suspicion that the novel, or large parts of it, is to be read as autobiographical fiction and that the anonymous little girl is somehow to

be associated with the adult author responsible for the text as a whole: Rosario Castellanos.

Having established this, I now propose to undertake the somewhat unusual task of providing a reading of the novel as if the middle section did not exist - that is, reading the first and last parts of it almost as Castellanos says that they were written - in order to examine what the autobiographical novel, which is but one part of *Balún-Canán*, purports to say. There are many difficulties in this approach, not least of which is the fact that, as I mentioned earlier, concerns, and even narrative styles, flow out particularly from the middle section into the last section of the book. Since the concerns and styles of the omnisciently-narrated section form the main object under investigation in the second half of this chapter on Castellanos' first novel, I propose to ignore these difficulties for now, while recognising that they undermine the argument that the sections of the book which are set in Comitán can be read as a seamless narrative. As I hope eventually to show, this is not the case at all, and much of the interest to be derived from this novel comes from the particular combination of generic concerns which it exhibits.

The plot of the first-person narrative which forms roughly half of the novel *Balún-Canán* is quite straightforward and can be summarized as follows. The seven-year old narrator lives in Comitán with her father, César Argüello, her mother, Zoraida, her younger brother, Mario, and her Tzeltal Maya *nana* who like the young girl herself remains unnamed .

The Argüello family are landowners who so far have been unaffected by the changes inflicted on many of their social class by the Mexican Revolution (the novel would appear to be set in the early years of the Cárdenas presidency, from early 1934 onwards). However, times are changing and the news of the changing policy on land ownership is brought to the readers' attention through a visit to the little girl and her brother by their 'uncle' David very early on in the novel, along with at first rumours and then concrete evidence of violence when the body of one of the indians loyal to the Argüellos is brought to their house in Comitán from their family ranch at Chactajal. Eventually, César is made to face up to the demands of the Cárdenas administration, and has to make plans to set up a school for the indians on his ranch. Meanwhile, the Argüello children's own school in Comitán, a private Catholic school, is forced to close down when a government inspector comes to visit and sees that it contravenes policy on free, secular education for all. Nonetheless, despite the criminalization of practicing the Catholic religion, the children are to begin catechism lessons with their mother's spinster friend, Amalia. One day, the little girl enters her father's study and steals a manuscript she finds there which turns out to be (it is reproduced in its entirety) a text apparently written by a Tzeltal indian from Chactajal and it tells of the history of the place both before and after the Spanish Conquest and the arrival of the earliest Argüellos. Her mother discovers her reading the papers and tells her that she should not touch them: 'Son la herencia de Mario. Del varón' [B.C.p60]. Because of the problems which need to be sorted out on the family's ranch in Chactajal, César decides to take his family there. They leave, after a warm farewell between the girl and her *nana*, taking with them Ernesto, César's brother's illegitimate son, who is to run the school

for the indians, stopping off at the ranch owned by César's sister. The first part of the novel ends with their arrival at Chactajal, amidst many rumours and presages of trouble.

The final part of the novel opens with their journey back to Comitán from Chactajal. When they arrive, the girl gives her *nana* a present, a stone. When the *nana* learns that it comes from Chactajal she becomes frightened. The *nana* tells Zoraida, to her horror, that the indians of Chactajal have deliberated on the future of the Argüello line and have decreed that Mario must die. The *nana* is forced to leave for good. News comes from César, who is away in Tuxtla trying to prevent the redistribution of his lands under the 1934 *Código Agrario*. Zoraida becomes increasingly worried about the curse on Mario and contemplates all sorts of desperate acts, including exorcism; however, she is convinced that he must take his first communion, and so the children are sent to Amalia to rapidly complete their catechism instruction. There the children learn about the existence of hell, and their terror of this discovery is compounded by the tales about the fatal effects of first communion on a little boy who has made a pact with a devil, told to them by the indian girls who now look after them. Mario is so terrified he resolves not to receive his first communion. The little girl steals the key to the private chapel where they are to present themselves for the mass and hides it. Mario is taken ill: in his delirium he is afraid someone saw her take the key. The mother begins to believe that the curse is taking effect on her son, whom the doctor believes has appendicitis. She throws away his prescription. The little girl resolves not to give back the key, apparently out of some desire for self-preservation; however, Mario dies and she is stricken by guilt. On the Day

of the Dead, the little girl is taken to visit the family mausoleum. Mario's name is still missing from the list of the Argüellos buried there, but as the little girl hides the key in the tomb, she begs her dead relatives to look after him. On the way back home, they meet Miss Silvina, the teacher from the private school which has been closed. She is now forced to teach the families of the Comitán *nouveaux riches*, who cannot read. The little girl thinks she sees her *nana* in the street, but when the woman does not stop, she believes she must be mistaken since all indians look the same. Finally, she arrives home and begins to write the name of her brother, Mario, everywhere 'Porque Mario está lejos. Y yo quisiera pedirle perdón' [B.C. p291].

These, of course, are the bare facts of the plot and to have some sense they must be filled out a little. The little girl has two sets of relationships which seem to act in parallel. First, her relationship with her *nana* is contrasted with that with her mother. Her *nana* is presented as her real 'social' mother, so to speak, providing her with the unconditional love and support that her mother denies her, in favour of her brother. Her *nana* tells her stories - which also underpin the narrative in other ways which will be examined later - and figures in her dreams. She is the person the little girl runs to with her news and discoveries about herself, for example, in the episode in Chapter seven of the first section, when she experiences the wind as freedom: 'Ahora me doy cuenta de que la voz que he estado escuchando desde que nací es ésta' [B.C.p.23]. It is the *nana* who appears in the dream, recounted in Chapter eight of the second part of the novel, when the girl imagines a world without the distinctions between 'tú'

and 'vos': Y mi nana y yo quedaremos aquí sentadas, cogidas de la mano, mirando para siempre' [B.C.p245]. It is because of the influence of the *nana*, that the little girl resists for so long taking on the racist attitudes of her family, and it is not until her *nana* has been forced to leave, by her mother, that she succumbs to this part of her socialization as a white person, a member of a privileged class and race: 'Nunca, aunque yo la encuentre, podré reconocer a mi nana. Hace tanto tiempo que nos separaron. Además, todos los indios tienen la misma cara' [B.C.p291]. Her mother, on the other hand, is portrayed - by the little girl herself - as having no time for her daughter. After the episode with the manuscript, recounted above, there is also the memorable phrase she utters within the earshot of her daughter, after hearing of the curse on Mario: 'Si Dios quiere cebarse en mis hijos...;Pero no en el varón! ;No en el varón!' [B.C.p250].

Second, the little girl's relationship with her father is contrasted with that with her brother. Her father is somebody she fears, partly because of his physical presence, which she describes on the very first page, but also because through her relationship with her *nana*, she comes to see what his power is, where it comes from, how it operates, and what its effects are. This *toma de conciencia* is contrasted with her attitude towards her brother who, she learns principally through her mother's attitude, is to inherit everything his father has, in terms not only of material possessions, but also of authority and power, by the sole virtue of being male. It is this fact, that her *younger* brother does not have to do anything to achieve this, which forms her sense of injustice as female in a society where this patently counts for little.

It is in this context that the death of Mario must be closely examined. Although the little girl expresses grief after her brother has died and, in fact only stole the key to the chapel in order to help him avoid the first communion about which he became so terrified, her feelings during his illness are ambiguous to say the least. Raquel Scherr, in her dissertation, contrasts the death of Mario in *Balún-Canán* with the crucifixion of Domingo, another young boy, in *Oficio de tinieblas* [17]. She suggests the idea of the 'symbolic' sacrifice of the male, which provides an 'antidote to the perpetual sacrifice of daughter by mother'. I would suggest that if such a sacrifice takes place in *Balún-Canán*, it is certainly not portrayed simply as symbolic. A very real decision in favour of self-preservation is shown to be taken by the little girl. This emerges during her conversation with Tío David in Chapter fifteen of the final part, when in response to his jokey suggestion that they should both escape all of the problems going on around them, the little girl writes:

Volví a negar. Pero ahora con dulzura. Y para que el tío David no sospeche que le digo que no porque no lo quiero, porque sus razones me atemorizan y su figura me desagrada, añadí, mintiendo, porque no estoy dispuesta a entregar lo que escondí:

-No puedo irme. Tengo que entregar una llave. [B.C.p274]

Unlike many of the commentaries that the girl comes to make about her actions and her decisions, which are generally conveyed in the present tense, the use here of the preterite tense serves to emphasize the concrete fact of this particular course of action. Later, in Chapter seventeen, when the little girl is shut away in the room with Amalia's senile grandmother, and she has a chance to reconsider her decision not to hand back the key,

she does not change her mind. Instead she concocts a plan, based on what she has heard of Guatemala as a place of refuge, to escape there:

Pero Mario no puede correr; está enfermo. Y yo no puedo esperar. No, me marcharé yo sola, me salvaré yo sola.
[B.C.pp278-279]

Then after she has learned of Mario's death, her *first* concern is whether or not the priest arrived in time:

Alcanzó a saberlo todo. Alcanzó a castigar a Mario. Pero la llave está bien guardada en el cofre, entre la ropa de mi nana. Y yo estoy a salvo. [B.C.p281]

At the end of the novel, when the little girl can only write her brother's name in her notebook and on the walls 'con mi letra inhábil, torpe', the final feelings with which she leaves the reader are ones of guilt, which lead her to try and recapture the spirit of her brother. She notes that this is all in vain:

Porque Mario está lejos. Y yo quisiera pedirle perdón.[B.C. p291]

This, of course, is *the* symbolic irony of the novel, *Balún-Canán*. For, if they are read as a seamless narrative, the first and last parts of this novel provide a fictional portrayal of an anonymous little girl, who writes about *her* life, indeed, who writes herself into existence, lacking, finally, only a name. Read in this way, *Balún-Canán* becomes the story of a young self in crisis, formed by experiences of racism and gender discrimination,

who comes to have some awareness of who she is in relation to others, and who finally opts for self-preservation, a difficult decision since it is at someone else's expense. In fact, it could be argued that this is a reading provided by the novel as a whole, because so many of the issues and plot expectations raised in the middle section of *Balún-Canán* fail to resurface in the final part and thus remain unresolved, leaving centre stage to the story of the little girl.

It is also important to underline the fact that the little girl's story is portrayed, despite the breathless use of the present tense throughout much of it, as having been *written*. It is not a stream of consciousness narrative; as we have seen, it is organised, principally, around a series of 'epiphanies', or significant moments which prompt the little girl's *toma de conciencia*. These moments are frequently commented upon in the manner of a traditional, self-aware, nineteenth-century narrator - so that the reader is provided almost at every turn with an 'authorial' stamp of meaning - while other 'writerly' devices far too complex for a little girl, such as suspense, constantly subvert the idea, suggested by the use of the present tense, that the narrative is to be seen as having been recounted orally.

We have seen how, because of certain genre-expectations, the author, Castellanos, provides a name and an adult identity for the little girl. The question remains to be asked, however, how does this particular example of autobiographical fiction relate to the range of discourses in operation at the time of writing? Whilst this question will be analyzed in more detail towards the end of this chapter, in conjunction with other aspects of the

novel, for now, I propose to restrict myself to some brief comments about the general place of *Balún-Canán* within the traditions of autobiographical practice in Latin America and of women's autobiographical writing.

Sylvia Molloy's recent book on Spanish American autobiographical writing, *At Face Value* [18], has greatly facilitated the task for the Latin American literary critic in building upon the ground-breaking studies of the authors, Georges Gusdorf and James Olney [19] on autobiography in general. Molloy writes, to explain why autobiography became increasingly prevalent in Latin America from the nineteenth century onwards:

It is no coincidence, I believe that questions about the validity of self-writing, or reflections on the goals of autobiography, should appear at the moment a received order is slowly replaced by a produced order; that it should appear, in addition, within the context of the more general debates over national identities and national cultures, debates in which relations to Spanish, and more generally European, canonical authority are forcibly renegotiated. [20]

This mirrors what has been said about women's autobiographical writing by many feminist critics in recent years [21], that autobiography becomes an essential form for women as the old patriarchal forms of authority have apparently been brought into question, particularly during the so-called Second Wave of feminism, heralded for many by the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* in 1949. Increasingly, women have turned to this form in order to establish a sense of self through writing. The rise in female self-assertion brought about by the development of liberal and then radical feminism from the 1950s onwards, has then, according to these

critics, been matched by an increasing tendency towards self-assertion in writing.

Unfortunately, Sylvia Molloy does not provide much coverage of this phenomenon in Latin America, apart from an interesting essay on the possible precursor of Latin American bourgeois feminism, Victoria Ocampo, and, even more unfortunately, she does not mention Rosario Castellanos at all in her book, despite the fact that Castellanos was the first person to point out, in her essays, the importance of Ocampo's work for feminism, and one of the first to write about the importance of autobiography for women and for feminism, from her Latin American context. As we have seen in the chapter on Castellanos' views on history and identity, the Mexican author was well-versed in arguments about writing oneself into existence and well-read with regard to other women writers, Virginia Woolf, Violette Leduc, Simone de Beauvoir, Simone Weil and many others who had integrated this project into their work.

It is, then, all the more remarkable that despite the fact that a convincing reading of *Balún-Canán* as autobiographical fiction, which demonstrates many of these self-consciously feminist characteristics, is available, as indeed I hope to have shown, an even more seductive reading on the evidence is that the first and last parts of this novel form a very 'reluctant' autobiographical account which *masks* itself as fiction. Sylvia Molloy provides a convincing explanation of why this might be true, with regard to certain autobiographies:

The perceived scarcity of [Hispanic] life stories written in the first person is less a matter of quantity than a matter of

attitude: autobiography is as much a way of reading as it is a way of writing. Thus, one might say that, whereas there are and have been a good many autobiographies in Spanish America, they have not always been read autobiographically: filtered through the dominant discourse of the day, they have been hailed either as history or as fiction, and rarely considered as occupying a space of their own. This reticence is in itself significant. For the reader, in denying the autobiographical text the reception it merits, generically speaking, is only reflecting a disquiet that the text itself harbors, at times well hidden from view, at others, more manifest [...] In addition, from the ill-defined, marginal position to which it has been relegated, Spanish American autobiography has a great deal to say about what is not itself. It is an invaluable tool with which to probe into the other, more visible, sanctioned forms of Spanish American literature. As that which has been repressed, denied, forgotten, autobiography comes back to haunt and to illuminate in a new light what is already there. [22]

To see if this is true, to see if the autobiographical elements of *Balún-Canán* really do come back and haunt the rest of the narrative, casting new light on what already exists, we will continue this discussion of Castellanos' first novel with an analysis of the other generic configurations which make it up.

PART 2: INDIGENISTA OR LADINISTA NOVEL

Muchos de mis personajes eran indios. Para hacerlos recurrí a los modelos literarios que crearon sus antepasados, imité deliberadamente el estilo del *Libro del consejo*, de los *Chilam Balam*, de los *Anales de los Xahil* [...]
¿Qué esto no es real ni verosímil? No. Es una convención que es lícita si el lector la acepta y la recibe. [1]

In these comments, Rosario Castellanos reveals herself to have had somewhat different expectations about the appearance of Maya indians in her novels and short stories than many of the critics of her work, who have strenuously sought to praise the realism of these characterizations, and have lauded them as an attempt to give indians the status of full human beings in literary fiction, rather than to portray them as the cardboard cut-out characters which featured heavily in the turn-of-the-century Indianist tradition.

Without doubt, as we have already seen from the discussion on Castellanos' views on history and identity in previous chapters, the Mexican author opted to frame her novelistic work within the category of politically committed literature, the most accessible form of which, for a female author was *indigenista* fiction. Although many critics, such as Joseph Sommers and Donald Schmidt, have taken this as read, very little detailed examination of this assumption has actually taken place. Here, I propose to undertake such an examination of the effects of this genre on the novel, *Balún-Canán*.

First, some background comments must be made about the history of the genre of *indigenismo*. In an earlier chapter, the political background of policies of ethnic integration was sketched, in order to provide a context for Castellanos' own ideas about the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

But the other side to *indigenismo* is its cultural manifestation. This was part of Vasconcelos' original project, and initially revealed itself in the great muralist movement of painters such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, but began to influence writers in Mexico from the mid-1930s onwards. The themes of cultural *indigenismo* were generally anthropological, mythical and historical. Muralists, for example, sought to draw links in their paintings between struggles against the oppression of the past - for example, the Conquest - and those of the present - the Revolution and the ongoing fight against international capitalism - using a symbolism drawn principally from Mexico's indigenous traditions.

When these developments reached the realm of the novel, as Donald Lee Schmidt writes, 'what is portrayed, is a culture clash between white and indian in which each group views its antagonist as other' [2]. Schmidt also remarks that unlike the revolutionary zeal which often inspired the muralists, the propagandist intentions of *indigenista* novels in Mexico were generally reformist. The early novels that Schmidt examines also frequently have little to distinguish them from previous 'Indianist' novels, which used the indian simply as an exotic object around which to weave a colourful *costumbrista* tale. These and later novels employ many of the

techniques familiar to much realist and regionalist literature: use of local colour; attempts to capture the speech patterns of characters, in the case of indian characters, usually conveyed with broken Spanish and punctuated by indian words and phrases; staging of religious ceremonies or festivals specific to indigenous communities. And also, in the anthropological and ethnographic spirit which frequently motivated them, these novels generally concentrate on *real* as opposed to mythical communities, and are often based on the experiences of authors living in or near these places, or on their own research.

The heyday of *indigenista* fiction coincided, interestingly, with the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) and the period of Agrarian Reform. This is not surprising for the novel of the Revolution had long since established the tradition of Mexican literature commenting on, and developing national political debates. The late 1930s was a time when the ideas of Vasconcelos were reappraised and then reaffirmed. Cárdenas was widely known as a 'friend to the indians', and prioritised education in much the same way as the previous Secretary of Education had done.

By the time that Rosario Castellanos had published *Oficio de tinieblas* in 1962 - it had taken her five years to write it, compared to the ten months it took to complete her first novel - the *indigenista* novel was very much dead, if not buried, by the new concerns brought to the fore by the 'Boom', and the new international market for Mexican fiction. Nonetheless, the genre had flourished again briefly in the 1950s. I think that there are two reasons for this. First, the Guatemalan writer, Miguel Ángel Asturias' novel, *Hombres de maíz*, which was published in 1949, had shown the way

forward for a more complex approach to the subject matter, and had influenced many Mexican authors, particularly those, like Castellanos, whose interest was the *zona maya*. Second, this new flourishing, with novels by Carlo Antonio Castro, Eraclio Zepeda and, of course, Castellanos coincided with the presidency of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958), when economically Mexico was experiencing intense growth. During the 1950s a *Cardenista* rhetoric re-emerged into public and political debate: the ideals of the Revolution had not been put into practice and the wealth which was being generated was not equally distributed among all Mexican citizens. Ruiz Cortines and his predecessor, Miguel Alemán, once more put effort into developing the rural areas far from Mexico City. The role of the indigenous communities and the issue of social justice were again firmly on the national agenda, even if this time these subjects were surrounded by a great deal more pessimism that so little had thus far been achieved. It is not surprising, then, that authors such as Castellanos set their work in the Cárdenas period when so much more seemed possible.

To sum up then, literary *indigenismo* was born of much the same set of concerns as its political counterpart, a progressive desire to see the indigenous peoples of Mexico as full citizens able to take up the rights afforded to them as such, and to share in the fruits of the 1910 Revolution. Also, inevitably, as Cynthia Steele writes, it was a somewhat less progressive vehicle for those who wished to promote the national project of modernization by making the people of the geographical area of Mexico more culturally homogenous [3]. The isolated indian *campesino* of far-flung rural areas like Eastern Chiapas, who had previously belonged to

the *zona maya*, would be encouraged to view himself as Mexican, and thus would become assimilated into the project of nation-building.

One of the elements in Castellanos' novels which distinguish them from most other texts in the *indigenista* tradition is that this concern with cultural homogeneity and shoring up national boundaries can be said to extend itself as much to the rural white communities who remained fearful and suspicious of post-revolutionary Mexico, as to the indigenous peoples who lived side by side with them. This has rarely been remarked upon. However, in a short article published in 1984 [4], the Swiss critic, Martin Lienhard, makes the point that Castellanos' concerns in *Balún-Canán* are as much *ladinistas*, in other words related to the *ladinos*, or white ruling class, as they are *indigenistas*.

Lienhard first makes a similar point to that made by Castellanos in her comment which opened this discussion, that in many respects 'real' indians are absent from her novel because these characters are drawn from the famous 'pre-Columbian' texts, rather than from life:

[...] si la realidad social, tal como la viven y sufren los indios, abastece a estos escritores con abundantes materiales testimoniales, los relatos antiguos les proponen una serie de formas y de motivos literarios de apariencia indígena. Dentro de este modo de producción literaria, los

grupos indígenas actuales, en tanto que portadores de contenidos y formas culturales y artísticas, no juegan sino un papel marginal. Este límite, la escasa permeabilidad de los textos narrativos con respecto a las culturas indígenas vivas, es un rasgo constitutivo de la literatura *ladina* en la zona maya: a la imposible inmersión en el mundo indígena, ella sustituye la sugestión de su presencia. [5]

In case the reader should surmise from this that he thinks Castellanos has a cheek to employ only ancient literary models for the indian world view she portrays in her first novel, Lienhard adds:

Uno de los méritos de *Balún-Canán*, además, es el hecho de no ocultar su amigüedad indigenista constitutiva. La autora, en efecto, introduce ficcionalmente su propia situación de escritora *ladina*: la narradora de la primera y la tercera parte de esta novela-retablo, una niña [...] corresponde autobiográficamente a la niña Rosario Castellanos. [6]

I would disagree that this is the primary function of the first-person narrative voice as I hope to show later, however, despite its brevity, Lienhard's arguments in this article provide a good point of departure for a reading of *Balún-Canán*, which will bring to the fore the effects of the *indigenista* conventions used, in order to analyse where the limits of their generic hold lie within this novel, and what, precisely, their results are.

By choosing the title, *Balún-Canán*, for her novel, the Tzeltal name for the Chiapan town of Comitán - which translates as the 'nine guardians' and refers to the nine hills which surround the town - Castellanos not only signals that this is an *indigenista* novel, but also that it might be associated in some way with the so-called pre-Columbian texts, with their

similar sounding names: *Popol-Vuh*, *Chilam-Balam de Chumayel*. Indeed, Castellanos once jokingly remarked that she was often mistaken for the author of the *Chilam-Balam*. As Lienhard remarks [7], this choice of title is also quite ironic given his idea that real indians are absent, since the words 'Balún-Canán' are from the Tzeltal Maya language, the real language of the area portrayed in the novel, whereas the title of the *Popol-Vuh* comes from Maya-Quiché - it translates as the 'Book of Advice' or the 'Book of the Community'.

The novel then opens with two quotes from the *Popol-Vuh*, from a Spanish translation, which are placed together with no indication of where they come from in the *Libro del consejo*. Most critics believe that this epigraph and the two others which open the second and third parts of the novel, serve two functions. The first and perhaps most obvious is that they comment in advance on the plot of each part, and on the themes of the novel as a whole. The second and more important function is that they set up a tone of *indigenismo* from the outset, which Castellanos will then mimic at various points in her narrative, for re-telling myths and reproducing fictional indian documents, in order to legitimate them with, as Lienhard puts it, 'una ascendencia *Popol-Vuh*' [8]. Lienhard then gives a list of those parts of the novel where this happens, which I shall paraphrase here: the *nana*'s opening speech which the little girl interrupts; the manuscript which the little girl discovers, which is purported to have been written by the 'Hermano mayor de la tribu' (First Part, Chapter eighteen); Felipe's text about the building of the school (Second Part, Chapter seven). Lienhard does not mention the other principal incidences of this. There is the creation myth told by the *nana* to the little girl in

Chapter nine of the first part. And then, there is Chapter sixteen of the Second Part of the novel which eventually describes the fire at the ranch, but first contains a long *Popol-Vuh*-like description of the origins of Chactajal.

In this particular example, which runs for two pages (from page one hundred and ninety-two onwards) and then continues to appear intermittently after this, broken up by more traditional omniscient narration, we can see how this technique works. The most striking device used is that of repetition, of particular phrases ('Los que por primera vez ...'), of successive sentences beginning with 'Y' or 'Ni', which is immediately recognizable to anyone acquainted with the *Popol-Vuh* (as most Mexican schoolchildren now are). Or, indeed, to anyone with a knowledge of the early books of the Bible in Spanish, since it is important to remember that the *Popol-Vuh* is only available to a handful of scholars in its original language. It comes to most of us via translations into Spanish, which have all been made with the assumption that this document is a 'Maya Bible' of sorts, and so a biblical register is deemed appropriate. This chapter is interesting, because the question of legitimating an indian voice does not seem to arise; instead, the 'indigenous tone' here forms part of the omniscient narration, or, at the very least is interwoven with it to be almost inextricable. It would seem that its purpose, with its description of the ancient beginnings of Chactajal, and the subsequent arrival of the *ladinos* there, leading up to the fire at the mill, is to underline the ancient nature of the wrong that is being punished by the fire, and that this punishment is inexorable, or preordained. Thus, it would appear that the imitation of the style and tone

of the *Popol-Vuh* is also used in order to confuse the causes of events in the narrative which can be rationally explained (for example, the fire was an act of sabotage) and supernatural systems of magical and religious belief.

What of Castellanos' claim that she resorted to literary models for her Maya characters? The first indian character to appear in the novel is the indian *nana*. She is the character who opens the text with a speech, interrupted by the little girl, which continues in the style and tone of the epigraph from the *Popol-Vuh*, which precedes it. It takes up the same themes of the cyclical, non-linear nature of time and history, and the rise and fall of civilizations. The *nana* is frequently given this voice which is highly imitative of the style of this pre-Columbian text, which makes any claim that she is a realistic character faintly ridiculous. Several critics, nonetheless, including Raquel Scherr, repeat anecdotal evidence that the *nana* and the stories she tells to the little girl are drawn directly from Castellanos' own childhood. This may be so, but the way she is made to speak is remarkably reminiscent of the voice of the *Popol-Vuh*. She, like the narrator of this text, is anonymous, and she, like its gods and its *Caudillos*, offers advice to those who come afterwards, in her case to the little girl, and finally, to Zoraida, who is told her son will die. This is not her sole function in the novel but it is the central part of her relationship with the little girl: the anonymous voice of an ancient, though syncretic god advising her that all civilizations come to an end, that the rich can only enter heaven if they can find a poor person to take them.

Felipe Carranza Pech, the indian who learned how to speak and write Spanish, is another character who eventually takes on the voice of the *Popol-Vuh* in Chapter seven of the Second Part of the novel when his written text on the building of the school appears, framed by speech marks by the omniscient narrator. Here, he not only apes the style of the *Popol-Vuh*, particularly in the use of the first-person plural references, but, in his reiteration of the importance for the indians of the memory that they have lost (and that they can recuperate through education), he is also reinforcing the themes, both of the original epigraph and the opening speech of the *nana*.

This mention of Felipe, the catalyst for many of the events in the novel, conveniently leads us to an examination of another important element of *Balún-Canán's indigenismo*: the plot, particularly of the middle section of the narrative. The storyline of Castellanos' first novel is one of its least 'original' aspects drawing as it does on storylines from almost every other *indigenista* narrative, which, in the Mexican context, in turn draw on elements from the *novela de la Revolución*. This constantly re-interpreted story is that of a *toma de conciencia* on the part of the oppressed, usually the indian *campesinos*, who rise up to demand justice from their oppressors, the white, landed ruling class, who are forced to defend their position.

Interestingly, in *Balún-Canán*, the *deus ex machina* for this process is Lázaro Cárdenas, with whom Felipe shakes hands in Tapachula. Even more importantly, the impulse for the uprising in this novel is not the question of land, despite the fact that mention is made of the change in the law with regard to the practice of the *baldío*. Here, the awareness of injustice

revolves around the issue of education. Felipe, who has learned of the policies of Cárdenas on his travels, where he has also learned to read and write and speak Spanish, demands that César Argüello should conform to the law and set up a rural school for the indians. His own education gives him the authority within his community to become their spokesman: "Me escogieron a mí, Felipe Carranza Pech, para que yo fuera la voz" [B.C. p.98]. but it also gives him the authority, backed by the law, to confront César, who, in spite of trying the ruse of employing Ernesto, who cannot speak Tzeltal, as the teacher, cannot ignore him. Felipe, authorised not only by the law and Lázaro Cárdenas but by his ability to read and write Spanish, thus presides over the opening of one school, while in the background of the shifting rural power structures, the private Catholic school for the white children in Comitán is closed. One community gains the right of education, while another loses its right to educate its children in the manner which it has chosen for centuries.

The shifting balance of power is not only conveyed at the level of plot. The entire middle section of the text is set up in such a way that this message is presented through the narrative structure. What most critics, including Donald Lee Schmidt [9], have portrayed as the novel's inventiveness in its use of modern narrative techniques, in particular interior monologue, does not play a role limited simply to providing greater psychological depth and realism to the characters than was previously employed in the *indigenista tradition*. If this is so, as Joseph Sommers in his early articles on Castellanos seemed to think was the case, then, as he acknowledged in his later article, 'Literatura e historia: Las contradicciones ideológicas de la ficción indigenista'[10], it does not

work very well, and fails to remove us completely from the stereotypical realm of the stock characters who populate most *indigenista* novels.

If the narrative voice, or voices, of the middle section of the text are put under the microscope, their role in conveying meaning becomes clearer. This section opens with another epigraph from pre-Columbian literature, this time the Yucatecan *Chilam-Balam de Chumayel*, which declares the inevitable transience of time, life and power. Then the principal shift in the narrator from the first person of the first part of the novel is announced by the unobtrusive sentence, '*Esto es lo que se recuerda de aquellos días*' [B.C. p.75]. The third-person omniscient narrator then proceeds to recount the story, describing landscapes, characters' physical appearances, and reproducing conversations. Of course, despite the apparent shift in narrative voice, there is no real difference between the style of the dialogues portrayed by the omniscient narrator here, and the style of the dialogues reproduced by the seven-year old narrator of the first part of the novel, which underlines the suspicion that both narrators are in fact one and the same. However, just a few pages into the middle section, we are entering the minds of characters, such as César Argüello, by means of techniques such as free direct and indirect discourse.

One of the first examples of this major shift comes on page eighty-three, following a conversation between César and his illegitimate nephew, Ernesto:

César había pronunciado estas palabras sin ánimo de ofender. Para él era tan natural el comportamiento de su hermano que no se preocupaba siquiera por encontrarle un atenuante, una disculpa. Pero si se hubiera vuelto a ver tras de sí habría

encontrado el rostro de Ernesto con una marca purpúrea como si acabaran de abofetearlo. Todo él, temblando de cólera, no podía contradecir la aseveración de César porque lo que había dicho era verdad. No, no era cierto que perteneciera a la casta de señores. Ernesto no era más que un bastardo de quien su padre se avergonzaba. Porque cuantas veces pretendió aproximarse a él, siguiendo los consejos de su madre y sus propios deseos, su propia necesidad, fue despedido con una moneda como si fuera un mendigo. Y a pesar de todo, él había querido a ese hombre que nunca consintió en ser para su hijo más que un extraño.

The literary devices at work here are extremely complex, but entirely intelligible, if not noticeable, to any reader schooled in traditional Western novelistic discourses. The passage begins with an omniscient comment describing the internal motivation of the character, César. Then the narrator performs the task for the reader that César does not: the narrative focus turns round, behind César's back, first to describe Ernesto's physical appearance at that instant, then to portray his feelings, not simply by an omniscient description this time, but by means of free indirect discourse. This is signalled in the passage by the phrase 'No, no era cierto [...]'. A potential reporting verb is absent: 'Pensó que no era cierto' or "'No es cierto," pensó', and, instead, the narrative combines the two voices, that of the omniscient narrator and that of Ernesto's pre-verbal perception.

Free indirect discourse can carry out a variety of functions in a text [11]. In this case, I would argue that it serves to bring into play a plurality of speakers and attitudes, which has been largely absent from the first part of the novel, dramatizing, as Rimmon-Kenan puts it, 'the problematic relationship between any utterance and its origin' [12]. Second, it has a

double-edged effect: as well as giving an insight into the mind of the character, the reader also gains access to the attitude of the omniscient narrator towards the character's plight: here, this is clearly sympathetic.

Free indirect discourse can also have a thematic role to play; this is, perhaps the main effect of its use in this instance. In this passage, Ernesto's relationship to an authority figure, here, to César via his brother, and in turn to the concepts of legitimacy and authority as a whole, is communicated very effectively by the use of the technique which shifts the focus onto his unconscious, or at least, non-verbal, feelings in such a way that the reader is compelled to share the narrator's empathetic position *vis-à-vis* this character. This is made even clearer as the passage, and the use of free indirect discourse, continues:

[...] Y ahora, Ernesto seguía arrimándose a una sombra del difunto [su padre]; al hermano, que tenía el mismo acento de autoridad cuando hablaba; que hacía ademanes semejantes; que se mantenía a la misma distancia desdeñosa que el otro.
[B.C. p84]

This and other interiorizing devices are also used with respect to other characters in this section of the novel. In the very next chapter, Zoraida is given the platform of a stream of consciousness reminiscence of her life, in which she describes in detail her relationship to the same authority figure as Ernesto has been allowed to do previously: her husband, César. This chapter, which is extended over some three pages, is presented as the incoherent ramblings of an ill-educated, superstitious woman, who has suffered greatly throughout her life, first because of an inferior class position:

Y es que la familia de César me consideraba menos porque mi apellido es Solís, de los Solís de abajo y yo era muy humilde, pues. Pero nada tenían que decir de mi honra. Y cuando me casé estaba yo joven y era yo regular. [B.C. p91]

Second, she has been oppressed as a woman, as César's wife. Zoraida continues:

Después me vinieron los achaques. Me sequé de vivir con un señor tan reconcentrado y tan serio que parece un santo entierro. Como es mayor que yo, me impone. Hasta me dan ganas de tratarlo de usted. Pero delante de él por boba si lo demuestro. ¿Por qué voy a dar mi brazo a torcer? Para que yo deje que se me acerque todavía me tiene que rogar. No sé cómo hay mujeres tan locas que se casan nomás por su necesidad de hombre.

Obviously, one of the functions of this passage, portraying as it does a particular manner of speech and furnishing the reader with details of the character's personal history, is to contribute to the illusion of psychological depth required by the conventions of literary realism. However, as is beginning to emerge, the main function of the interiorizing strategies of this middle section is to provide a variety of ideologies which are to be seen as separate from the ideology of the narrator, although they are in fact frequently commented on by that same person. In this passage, the reader is given apparent direct access, signalled by the use of free *direct* discourse, into the mind and motivations of Zoraida, in order to discover her relationship, as a white woman, to authority, in much the same way as was done previously with the illegitimate *mestizo*, Ernesto. The only major difference in this case is that this passage is presented as if ^{it}were untouched by the omniscient narrator. It is not organised into paragraphs; no authorial comment seems to impinge on the details and the

reader is encouraged to empathize with Zoraida only on the basis of what she is purported to have said, and not through the combination of points of view which was examined earlier.

Is it true that a hierarchy of oppressions is being set up by the omniscient narrator's seeming enthusiasm for empathy in some cases but not in others? This becomes an attractive reading of this middle section if the narrative response to other characters is analyzed.

César Argüello is portrayed from the very beginning of the novel, when his daughter describes his physical stature, as being the principal figure of authority in *Balún-Canán*, the character in relation to whom other characters are compelled to situate themselves. It is interesting, therefore, that at least to begin with in the middle part of the novel, techniques of interiorization are used only sparingly with him, as if his position is given, or not questioned or subjected to the same scrutiny as that of other characters. The first occasion on which such techniques are used comes in a passage in which César's relationship to the indians who work on his ranch is described. This relationship is portrayed as typically patrician, one that has been handed down from generation to generation of landowning Argüellos. Their authority - the 'palabra de Argüello' which is mentioned several times in the novel - is inherited according to the ancient rules of primogeniture; it no longer needs to be fought for, or so it would seem. After a long day's work, César shares pleasant, inconsequential conversation with his serfs:

César sabe modular el tono y escoger las frases adecuadas.
Dosifica la aprobación de modo que no parezca absoluta y el

consejo pese de autoridad y el reproche inspire temor. [B.C. p94]

Thus far this passage is narrated in the usual omniscient manner, with this authorial comment which distances the sympathies of the narrator from this character. Yet, it is important to note that it is narrated in the present tense which seems to enhance the effect of the timelessness of this relationship of superior to inferiors. Initially César seems to be presented as a somewhat benign dictator, one who speaks the language of his 'employees' and who likes to set aside time to discuss the issues of the day with them. As the passage proceeds, however, a brief insight is gained into his underlying attitude by means of free indirect discourse:

[...] muchos de los que César contaba como los suyos (tal vez alguno de sus hijos entre ellos), se han rebelado. Exigen el salario mínimo, se niegan a dar el baldío como era la costumbre, abandonan la finca sin pedir permiso [...] No son dignos de compasión, se buscan su desgracia. A los que se quedan aquí César les muestra, en cambio, una deferencia especial no muy distante de la gratitud. Aunque siga conservando su severidad y su rigor y a la hora de exigir el rendimiento de una tarea, su gesto, su voz, sean naturalmente despóticos. Lo trae en la sangre y es el ejemplo que contempla en los vecinos y en los amigos. [B.C. p95]

The free indirect discourse is only fleeting here: 'No son dignos de compasión, se buscan su desgracia'. After this the narrator returns to the ironical, mocking stance towards César with which the passage opened. However, what is most significant about the use of FID here is where it is situated. It is positioned just after the first questioning of César's authority, the first hints that he realizes that his inherited position is under threat. Times are changing.

The next time when Castellanos uses an interiorizing mode of discourse with regard to César only comes some eighty pages further on in the narrative just before the fire at the ranch, when the situation for the *patrón* has most certainly changed.

Chapter fifteen opens with what is presented in the text as a speech from César. This lasts for three pages when he is interrupted by Ernesto. Yet, there is no audience except the reader; he speaks to no one but himself. This is one of the reasons why it is sensible to treat this passage as one of free direct discourse. Another, perhaps more compelling reason is that it exhibits direct parallels with the stream of consciousness passage authored by his wife, Zoraida, which was discussed above. The César which emerges here is a reformed character; he no longer chooses his words with the precision and purpose that have characterized his speech up until this point. Once more this is signalled for the reader by the lack of organization into paragraphs and also, by the extremely colloquial register of vocabulary used, untypical for César, but strikingly reminiscent of that of his wife. In this rambling speech, he, like her, contemplates incoherently his present position and his own personal history. These are the thoughts of an almost broken, though still defiant man:

Para algo soy el mero tatón. Y ante todo, está el principio de autoridad, qué carambas. Ya estos pendejos se quieren ir con todo y reata. Bastantes errores he cometido por darles gusto.
[B.C. p182]

If César's interiorized interventions appear only as he loses, or begins to lose his authority - to the point where he is reduced, both as a character

and as a narrative voice, to the same desperate flailings as his wife - those of Felipe Carranza Pech disappear as he gains in his personal authority. These two characters are linked in many respects, not least in the names given to them, both of past emperors: César the fallen emperor; Felipe the emperor triumphant. But one of the most important parallels is that of the narrative devices used to convey each character's changing relationship to authority.

There are only two examples of interiorization with respect to Felipe. The first occurs just after the gathering of the community elders at which Felipe is nominated as their spokesman for their dealings with César over the school. Felipe has described at length what he has learned in Tapachula of the changing laws and he conveys his trust in the president, Lázaro Cárdenas. Once the meeting is over, Felipe contemplates his feelings about the community to which he has returned after the experiences which have transformed him:

La primera vez que habló con ellos, a su regreso de Tapachula, los encontró inconformes, próximo a la rebeldía. Pero andaban aún en tinieblas. Y no para consolar, no para mentir, les contó lo que había visto.[...] No había que esperar la resurrección de sus antiguos dioses, que los abandonaron en la hora del infortunio, que permitieron que sus ofrendas fueran arrojadas como pasto de los animales. ¡Cuántos habían esperado y cerraron los ojos sin haberlos visto venir! No. Él había conocido a un hombre, a Cárdenas; lo había oído hablar. (Había estrechado su mano, pero éste era su secreto, su fuerza.) y supo que Cárdenas pronunciaba justicia y que el tiempo había madurado para que la justicia se cumpliera. Volvió a Chactajal para traer la buena nueva. ¿Para qué más podía volver? [...] No. Venir porque sabía que era necesario que entre todos ellos uno se constituyera en el hermano mayor. [B.C. p105]

This is another example of free indirect discourse: the interior voice of the character is combined with that of the omniscient narrator, here to underline the fact that very important messages concerning the theme of this middle section are being conveyed. This passage establishes Felipe as the vehicle for future change in the Tzeltal community and it details how he has come to be authorized for such a role. It contrasts his belief in rational processes with the superstitious approach of the other indians. His magical secret, his one deviation from reason, is submerged within parenthesis. He is the man, no longer in shadows, who is capable of becoming the 'hermano mayor'. As we shall see later, in the chapter devoted to Castellanos' second novel, this passage has a significance which exceeds the limits of *Balún-Canán*; however, for now we shall concentrate on this image of the Elder Brother of the tribe. The passage continues

[...] Cuando Felipe los habló alzaron los hombros con un gesto de indiferencia. ¿Quién le dio autoridad a éste, se decían? Otros hablan español, igual que él. Pero Felipe era el único de entre ellos que sabía leer y escribir. Porque aprendió en Tapachula, después de conocer a Cárdenas. [B.C. p106]

Who is the 'hermano mayor'? He is, of course, the narrator of the text inserted into the first part of the novel, discovered by the little girl among her father's papers. He is the one who commits the story of the origins of Chactajal to paper in order to preserve the memory of the original inhabitants, before then going on to carry out the task for which he was undoubtedly commissioned to write the document in the first place, that of staking the claim of the Argüellos to the land they came to inhabit. César also refers to the papers of this document when he is talking to Ernesto:

- ¿Qué los escribió un indio?
- Y en español para más lujo. Mi padre mandó que los escribiera para probar la antigüedad de nuestras propiedades y su tamaño. [B.C. p82]

It is Felipe's ability to read and write (in Spanish) which will endow him with the authority to become the new 'hermano mayor'. The second and final example of 'interiorization' with regard to his character shows him actually in the process of becoming this figure:

"Ésta es nuestra casa. Aquí la memoria que perdimos vendrá a ser como la doncella rescatada a la turbulencia de los ríos. Y se sentará entre nosotros para adoctrinarnos. Y la escucharemos con reverencia. Y nuestros rostros resplandecerán como cuando da en ellos el alba."

De esta manera Felipe escribió, para los que vendrían, la construcción de la escuela. [B.C. pp125-126]

Strictly speaking this is not an example of interiorization as such; it is set out with speech marks and finished with a comment from the omniscient narrator which signals the text as having been written, in the manner of the manuscript from the first 'hermano mayor'. Nonetheless it carries out the function of interiorization in a very concrete sense, since like the other example, which it completes, it shows Felipe's changing relationship to the concept of authority, by bringing that relationship up to date. Felipe, by virtue of his education, has now become the voice of his tribe, yet his is an interior voice in a very real sense, since it awaits the audience for which it is intended. For the time being, Felipe is writing for himself, within the framework of the narrative, in much the same way as other characters, such as César and Zoraida, speak to themselves in their interior monologues.

It is important to point out here that Felipe has finally become the author of a 'papel que habla'. This is a recurring trope throughout the novel, which is first mentioned by Felipe, when telling the community elders of his time in Tapachula: 'fue donde me dieron a leer el papel que habla. Y entendí lo que dice: que nosotros somos iguales a los blancos', [B.C. p101]. It also reappears, as we shall see, in *Oficio de tinieblas*, and it will be examined in greater detail in the chapter on that novel. However, in this aside, it is necessary only to point out one of the possible origins of this trope which help to infuse it with a meaning which goes beyond the obvious interpretation that the 'primitive mind' sees written texts merely as graphic records of oral experiences. The writings of the North-American authors of the so-called 'slave narratives', the most famous of which is James Gronniosaw, are credited by many critics as having given birth to this striking image. As Henry Louis Gates Jnr. writes:

the recording of an authentic black voice - a voice of deliverance from the deafening discursive silence which an enlightened Europe cited to prove the absence of the African's humanity - was the millennial instrument of transformation through which the African would become the European, the slave become the ex-slave, brute animal become the human being. So central was this idea to the birth of the black literary tradition in the eighteenth century that five of the earliest slave narratives draw upon the figure of the voice in the text - of the talking book - as crucial "scenes of instruction" in the development of the slave on the road to freedom. [13]

This is certainly true of the role of the 'papel que habla' in *Balún-Canán* for it is this act of writing that links Felipe on yet another level with César (as well as the little girl narrator and the original 'hermano mayor') as two of the 'authoritative' characters whose written texts are reproduced or mentioned in the novel. César's texts, which compound the idea of his

authority seeping away from him, are two letters: one which he gives to Ernesto who is to take it to the municipal president of Ocosingo demanding help in dealing with the growing unrest at the ranch. This letter is not reproduced, nor does it arrive in Ocosingo because Ernesto is shot dead, and his indian assassin rips it up and casts the fragments into a river, a gesture which symbolizes César's growing impotence as a character [B.C. p214]. César's final interventions in the novel are also through letters which, this time, are reproduced, in the final part of the text where Zoraida reads them (they also provide examples of the narrative style of the middle section spilling out into this final part). César is writing to his wife from Tuxtla, where he has gone to see the state governor. The first letter, [B.C. pp232-234], shows a still hopeful César:

Chactajal volverá a ser nuestro. No en las mismas condiciones que antes, no hay que hacerse ilusiones. Pedro [sic] podremos regresar y vivir allí. Para que Mario se críe en la propiedad que más tarde será suya, y así aprenda a cuidarla y a quererla.
[B.C. p233]

However, he cannot get an appointment with the governor; the implication is that he is no longer important enough to merit this, and the rest of the letter is full of his disillusionment and disappointment with what has happened. The second letter confirms this image of an impotent man who has no more left to give in his fight for his land. Even though he succeeds in meeting the governor at a barbecue, he does not feel he can raise his problems with him, so the issue remains unresolved and César is left waiting. The most important aspect of this letter is that César dismisses the seriousness of Mario's illness, of which he has been informed by his wife, which means that this letter - his last appearance in the novel -

suffers the ignominy of being summarily dismissed by the frantic Zoraida. It is tossed away impatiently, and César's fate, as a character who can no longer exert any power over the events of the narrative, is finally sealed.

To bring to an end this discussion of the effects of the interiorizing modes of discourse in *Balún-Canán*, it only remains to examine briefly the other two characters, from the middle part of the novel, with whom these techniques are employed. They can be considered together since the empathetic position of the omniscient narrator towards them is effectively the same.

Juana, Felipe's wife, is not one of the indian characters drawn from the pages of pre-Columbian texts. She is a far more modern character than that, and is clearly Castellanos' most self-consciously feminist creation in the novel, with the possible exception of the little girl. Juana is subjected to interiorizing treatment on two occasions. The first of these, which forms the final part of Chapter four, reveals the by now familiar pattern of establishing the character's personal history through the combined voices of both character and narrator in another example of free indirect discourse. In its description of Juana's far from perfect marriage to Felipe, the omniscient narrator makes it clear as to where the reader's sympathies should lie:

Pero temía a este hombre que le había devuelto la costa,
amargo y áspero como la sal, peturbador, inquieto como el viento.
Y en lo profundo de su corazón, en ese sitio hasta donde no baja
el pensamiento, ella deseaba que se marchara otra vez. Lejos.
Lejos. Y que no regresara nunca. [B.C. p108]

The second instance of this occurs in Chapter fourteen, and continues the meditation on Juana's relationship with the new figure of authority in the novel, Felipe, and also uses free indirect discourse as Castellanos continues to force the reader into a position of sympathy for this character who, uniquely in this novel, is portrayed as doubly oppressed on the grounds of her gender and her race.

Matilde, César's cousin, who comes to stay with the family in Chactajal and is made pregnant by Ernesto in less than felicitous circumstances, is the only other character to be treated to interiorizing scrutiny, in perhaps the most complex variations of all. Examples of free indirect discourse in the middle part of Chapter five help to establish why she left the ranch at Palo María. This passage is inserted between brackets both because it interrupts a conversation between Zoraida and Matilde, and also because it is presented as a secret that Matilde does not want to reveal to the other characters. In the following chapter, free indirect discourse is used to establish Matilde's wider personal history: how she came to be an aging spinster, the ideal subject matter for Castellanos to weave into a narrative mode which, once more, is used to arouse the reader's sympathies.

The other two major examples of interiorization which concern Matilde are unique in the narrative and therefore require more attention. They seem to strike up a dialogue with the *nana's* story of the 'dzulúm', presented in the first part of the novel. In these examples in Chapters nine and eleven of the middle section, the interiorization functions in order to show how Matilde, who by now knows of her disastrous pregnancy, uses the story of this mythical Maya creature, who carries off young girls who have come to

no good end and who in some way desire death, to meditate on the possibility of her own suicide. This meditation effectively becomes fact when later, after several attempts at killing herself, she is told by César to leave the Chactajal ranch, her scandalous secret known to all, and she is never seen again. In these two passages, Castellanos interweaves free indirect discourse with free direct discourse and omniscient narration to create the following powerful effects:

Un terror irracional, de yegua que se encabrita al olfatear el peligro, se apoderó de Matilde. Porque su deseo de morir había rondado, hasta entonces, en una zona de fantasía, sólo en la imaginación. Pero ahora Matilde estaba caminando hacia su fin, lo mismo que caminó Angélica y tal vez hasta iba siguiendo la huella de aquellos pasos.

[...] Matilde se incorporó precipitadamente como para despertar de una pesadilla. No lo haré, no soy capaz de hacerlo, se dijo. [...] No soy capaz de hacerlo. Una sonrisa de burla, de desprecio para sí misma afeaba su cara. No lo haré. Soy demasiado cobarde.

[...] ¡Cómo pudo suceder, Dios mío! No puede ser pecado. Pecado cuando se goza. Pero, así. En el asco, en la vergüenza, en el dolor. Ya. Dije que nunca volvería en lo que pasó. Ya no tiene remedio. Quiero morir. Esto es verdad. [B.C. pp139-140]

The interiorization, which as we have seen above usually serves to provide an insight into a character's relationship to authority, here serves the same function, albeit in a much more complicated manner. There are two types of power or authority in play here. First, there is the patriarchal authority we have seen explored through the interior monologues of other female characters: Matilde has become pregnant by force; she cannot marry the illegitimate Ernesto, and so is condemned to face the same fate as Ernesto's mother, or to kill herself. But a second type of authority is

also at work and may be defined as the power of the story. By virtue of her complete terror at her situation she seems to insert herself into the framework of a pre-existing narrative over which she has no control. This is the story of Angélica and the 'Dzulúm', which seems to act, over and above its 'entertainment' value, as a gendered controlling mechanism, in the manner of those presumably apocryphal stories of schoolchildren who fall down stairwells, which they are then said to haunt. The story of the 'Dzulúm' is told precisely to prevent girls from ever becoming wayward. The *nana* hints at this in her original telling of the tale to the little girl:

Se llamaba Angélica. Era como una vara de azucena. Y tan dócil y sumisa con sus mayores. Y tan apacible y considerada para nosotros, los que servíamos. Le abundaban los enamorados. Pero ella como los miraba menos *o como estaba esperando a otro*. [B.C. p20, my emphasis]

If the various strands of this discussion are now drawn together, the limits of the generic hold of *indigenismo* on Castellanos' first novel can be established. It is clear that in terms of its plot and characters, and its *Popol-Vuh*-inspired rhetoric, *Balún-Canán* is set in the same terrain and peopled with the same figures as many other novels in this genre: the patriarchal figure of the landowner; the covetous illegitimate relation; the dissatisfied wife; the superstitious indians; the heroic indian who would free his people from their oppression. But this is not the only way in which this novel is *indigenista*.

The most interesting contribution of *Balún-Canán* to the genre is the manner in which its themes and ideas are conveyed by its narrative structure. In terms of the middle part of this novel - which is most clearly signalled as part of the *indigenista* tradition - the various interiorizing devices used show the intricate relationship of each principal character to authority and power. Castellanos uses techniques such as interior monologue and free indirect discourse in order to reveal where her sympathies lie, and to compel the reader to follow suit, particularly with regard to the female characters. In her characterizations of the two most important *indigenista* figures, César and Felipe, these same techniques are employed in order to convey their changing relationship to power: the growing vulnerability of the first shown by an increase in the use of interiorization; the increasing authority of the second revealed by the initial paucity and then, finally, the complete disappearance of this narrative mode.

If, on the one hand, authority is linked in the very narrative structure of the novel to the concept that it is to be derived primarily from an unproblematic sense of self, which does not require the internal meditations portrayed by interiorization, it is also important to point out that the process by which authority may be acquired by those who do not have it is also elaborated in *Balún-Canán*. This is where the novel enters the terrain of national political concerns which are an integral part of the genre of *indigenismo*. Education - which on a simplistic level, the Indians gain and the whites lose - is shown to be the key, for it is through his education that Felipe gains the writing tools with which he can assume the role of an author, the 'hermano mayor' of his tribe, recording its history so that it does not become lost.

In *Balún-Canán*, the other political concerns of *indigenismo*, of shoring up the national boundaries and trying to establish cultural homogeneity, are given a twist: it is the rich, white inhabitants, the landowners, who will not comply with the laws and ideology of the post-Revolution state of Mexico. Mexico is portrayed as a distant country; in his struggle to retain his lands, César does not even leave the state of Chiapas for even Tuxtla, the state capital, is a long enough journey. The geographical fact that a neighbouring country is, in many respects, portrayed as a far more concrete place than the 'República', is conveyed throughout the novel by the use of Guatemala as a recurring trope which signifies escape from an encroaching Mexico, and as a place where the old oppressive value system is still intact [14]. Of all the characters, only Felipe and the little girl dream of an integrated Mexico born of *cardenista* ideals.

However, the single most important fact concerning the *indigenismo* of *Balún-Canán* is that, to all intents and purposes, it stops as the middle section of the novel comes to a close. The storyline of the Indians' incipient uprising, which has only consisted of a fire at the ranch and the shooting of Ernesto, is not pursued. César is transplanted to Tuxtla, where nothing is done in response to his demands to save his land. Zoraida is the only character from the middle section to survive the transition into the final part of the novel.

The one question which remains, then, is what is the effect of the suspension of one story, indeed, of one genre, in this novel? The answer must surely lie in the fact that another story is allowed to continue.

Clearly, this is where the autobiographical story comes back to haunt the novel as a whole. It is the account of the little girl, and her concerns, which provide the only available narrative closure, and this fact must surely have repercussions for a final reading of *Balún-Canán*.

Yet, the story is not as simple. It is made more complex if the opening epigraph is examined in greater detail. This means that it must be analyzed as a device which has another function beyond those of presaging the plot and setting up an indigenous rhetoric to be imitated, as other critics have noted. As I mentioned above, this epigraph comes from two separate, unattributed quotations - which are in fact paraphrases - from the *Popol-Vuh*. They are difficult to track down since there is no documentation about which edition of the translated text Castellanos was working from. However, I shall reproduce them here in the full form in which they appear in a respected modern edition of this text. The quotation which forms the first part of the epigraph also occurs first in the *Libro del consejo*:

Ahora diremos también el nombre del padre de Hunahpú e Ixbalanqué. *Dejaremos en la sombra su origen, y dejaremos en la oscuridad el relato y la historia del nacimiento de Hunahpú e Ixbalanqué. Sólo diremos la mitad, una parte de la historia de su padre.* [15, my emphasis]

Here, it is clear, from the way in which Castellanos alters this quote, that what is most useful for her purposes is this idea that the origins, the history and the tale *can* be told (the verb reproduced in *Balún-Canán* is 'musitar') whereas in the original text, the quote reveals the editing process to which the story has been subjected.

The second quotation is far more significant for it comes from one of the more important parts of the *Popol-Vuh*:

-¡Oh hijos nuestros! Nosotros nos vamos, nosotros regresamos; sanas recomendaciones y sabios consejos os dejamos.[...] Nosotros nos volvemos a nuestro pueblo, ya está en su sitio. Nuestro Señor de los Venados, manifiesto está en el cielo. *Vamos a emprender el regreso, hemos cumplido nuestra misión, nuestros días están terminados. Pensad, pues, en nosotros, no nos borreís (de la memoria), ni nos olvidéis.* [16, my emphasis]

This passage portrays the farewell scene of the 'Four Caudillos', who having established their community are about to die, leaving matters in the hands of their many 'hijos'. This is the beginning of a cycle of decline in the *Popol-Vuh*, as decadence and indolence set in. This farewell of these God-like men heralds a twilight of the old Gods, as the established order crumbles and the new age is not yet achieved. The *Popol-Vuh*, with its non-linear, cyclical view of history as a series of rises and falls, is full of such threnodic passages, lamentations on the many farewells and deaths that punctuate its narrative.

I would argue that, viewed in this context, *Balún-Canán* has far more parallels specifically with the anonymously authored *Libro del consejo* than have been previously noted. As well as its function as a Maya bible, with its recounting of creation myths, this book, also known as the *Libro de comunidad*, is viewed as a collective testimony to the origins of an ancient civilization, in ascendance and in decline. *Balún-Canán*, which fictionalizes the idea that it has been anonymously authored, also tells of a once transcendent civilization now in the throws of decline, as its established

truths of racial, class and gender superiority are being challenged both by national ideological changes and by the personal development of individuals who are equipped to take their place in the emerging status quo. As in the case of the pre-Columbian texts, testimonies can only be borne by, if not the winners then by the survivors of such historical processes. This is also true of the fictional testimony which makes up Castellanos' first novel, where the little girl records not only her own personal history of self-affirmation and survival, made possible by her act of authorship, but also chronicles the cyclical decline of her family into superstition and relative poverty, and with this, of her class.

This element of *Götterdämmerung* which informs both the themes and the structures of *Balún-Canán*, as authority is moved about between the characters on the level of the various narrative voices employed, means that this is a *ladinista* text in an extremely complex sense; it sets up one story of an individual self in crisis with another, the story of a whole community facing its death. The little girl effectively becomes the 'hermana mayor' of her tribe, although as we have seen, her anonymity is undermined in the novel by the genre-expectations aroused by the use of certain literary conventions.

This theme of the Twilight of the Gods is, of course, a powerful trope in Western literature and Castellanos is as likely to have been influenced by these sources, as by the pre-Columbian texts. This is made even more likely by her use of the European conventions of the family chronicle, which seems to borrow heavily from the work of a writer whom she greatly admired, Virginia Woolf, who in her novel, *The Years*, employed a similar

narrative style to portray the decline of of the upper classes in Edwardian London.

It is fitting that the multiple inheritances which inform this novel are so visible, for, in the case of a modern nation state like post-colonial Mexico, there is no one 'origen' which can be muttered, only the contributions of various cultures and civilizations which have come to make it up. And yet there is an illusory sense of egalitarianism in this *cardenista* rhetoric. The pre-Columbian allusions which appear in a great deal of Latin-American literature almost always, inevitably, come from references to these so-called 'pre-Hispanic' texts. There is very little which is pre-Hispanic about what remains of the *Popol-Vuh*, as we know it today. The survival of these texts, in their translated forms, sold in their thousands to tourists in search of the 'original America', is sanctioned more by the functions they serve as a domesticated 'Other', than because they tell great truths of past civilizations. Perhaps this is a reading of history which can be partially adduced from *Balún-Canán* itself, with César's declaration that his father commissioned the indian text which appears in the novel, in order to prove his family's unassailable right to the land.

In any case, *Balún-Canán* does privilege one reading over any other. It is the little girl's personal and collective threnody which closes the novel, leaving the other stories it also tells suspended in an unresolved state.

CHAPTER 4: OFICIO DE TINIEBLAS, OR BALÓN-CANAN REVISED

PART 1: AUTHORITY

Venir porque [Felipe] sabía que era necesario que entre todos ellos uno se constituyera en el hermano mayor. Los antiguos tuvieron uno que los guiaba en sus peregrinaciones, que los aconsejaba entre sus sueños. Éste dejó constancia de su paso, una constancia que también les arrebataron. Y desde que los abandonó, años, años de tropezar contra la piedra. Nadie sabía cómo aplacar las potencias enemigas. Visitaban las cuevas oscuras, cargados de presentes, en las épocas calamitosas. Masticaban hojas amargas antes de decir sus oraciones y, ya desesperados, una vez escogieron al mejor de entre ellos para crucificarlo. Porque los blancos tienen así a su Dios, clavado de pies y manos para impedir que su cólera se desencadene. Pero los indios habían visto pudrirse el cuerpo martirizado que quisieron erguir contra la desgracia. Entonces se quedaron quietos y todavía más: mudos. [B.C. pp105-106]

In this short passage from Castellanos' first novel, which, surprisingly, critics have not remarked upon, the author ties together Felipe Carranza Pech's fictional destiny with the real existence of the text of the *Libro del consejo*. However, more importantly for my purposes here, she also ties in these two elements with a reference to another story, which she considered historical fact, that of a failed uprising in which indians were said to have attempted to equal the power of the Christian crucifixion by enacting one of their own, in order to empower themselves for rebellion with a belief in eternal life. It is this story which forms the basis of the Mexican author's second novel, *Oficio de tinieblas*, which took her five years to write before it was published in 1962.

Castellanos spoke of the novel to Emmanuel Carballo:

Está basada en un hecho histórico: el levantamiento de los indios chamulas, en San Cristóbal, el año de 1867. Este hecho culminó con la crucifixión de uno de estos indios, al que los amotinados proclamaron como el Cristo indígena. Por un momento, y por ese hecho, los chamulas se sintieron iguales a los blancos. [1]

Most critics who have analyzed Castellanos' use of this story have noted that because of the failure of the uprising which follows the crucifixion, both in the apparently historical version, as well as in the fictionalized account provided in the novel, an extremely pessimistic reading is the only one possible from *Oficio de tinieblas*. I would agree with this reading, and yet the story is far more complex than this simple declaration of pessimism will allow. If the passage reproduced above is examined, then it is clear that Castellanos places this failed event *before* the appearance of the new *hombre formado*, the new 'hermano mayor', Felipe, whose more positive development forms part of the middle section of the novel, *Balún-Canán*. This would suggest that Castellanos would view the events recounted in both novels in different, but *related* ways, a fact which belies the way in which these novels have been read in the past, either as entirely separate entities, or as having only the obvious - in other words, not worth examining - similarities of two *indigenista* texts by the same author.

It is my intention in this chapter to examine *Oficio de tinieblas*, effectively as a rewriting or revision of the first novel, formed by the same issues - both at the level of narrative structure, as well as on that of themes, plot and characters - but coming, or attempting to come to different conclusions. In the second part of this discussion, I will concentrate on one such issue, that of authorship, which as we have seen was essential to a reading of *Balún-Canán*. Here, in this first part, the

question of authority will be addressed. First, however, it will be necessary, briefly, to outline the similarities examined by those few other critics who have seen the two novels as, in some way, related.

Aside from the fact that most critics have noted that both novels fall within the genre of *indigenista* fiction, largely because both recount an indian uprising, the other, most obvious similarity to have been addressed has been that between the characters of the novels. Raquel Scherr [2], for example, concentrates in her thesis on comparisons between the little girl in the first novel and Idolina in the second, Mario and Domingo, the boys who die in the two texts, Zoraida, the mother in the first novel, and Isabel, Idolina's mother, the anonymous *nana* and Teresa Entzín López, the tale-telling *nana* from the second novel. Equally, parallels have been drawn between Juana, Felipe's sterile wife, and Catalina Díaz Puiljá, the infertile *ilol*, between Felipe Carranza Pech and Pedro González Winiktón, between César Argüello, the tenacious patriarch of *Balún-Canán*, and Leonardo Cifuentes, the *latifundista* of *Oficio de tinieblas*. These comparisons - with the exception of Raquel Scherr's discussion of the four tale-telling characters mentioned above, which will be examined later, with the issue of authorship - have been, at the very least, cursory, suggesting perhaps that critics believe they are not worthy of analysis because most *indigenista* novels are populated by the same set of stock characters. If the two novels are, however, read as two versions of the same story, the similarities and differences between characters must merit attention.

Given that characterization and its relationship to the use of interiorizing

modes of discourse was essential to the earlier analysis of authority in *Balún-Canán*, a similar examination will become the point of departure in the discussion here.

In accordance with its supposed basis in historical fact two of Castellanos' principal characters are provided by the event which she fictionalizes in *Oficio de tinieblas*. Castellanos is said to have learned of the details of this event, the 1867 indigenous uprising in San Cristóbal, from the account given by the highly respected anthropologist, Ricardo Pozas, whom she knew personally. In his 1977 book, *Chamula* [3], Pozas sets out the story as follows: a religious cult arose around the figure of a Tzotzil Maya indian, Pedro Díaz Cuscat and an indigenous woman, Agustina Gómez Checheb, from Tzajal-hemel. The woman was said to have given birth to clay idols, which spoke to her, and she became known as the mother of Gods. The local Catholic priest intervened, but to no good effect; Pedro Cuscat was arrested and accused of trying to bring about an insurrection, but was freed. After his release, which was so unexpected that it confirmed him in the minds of his community as a holy figure, he began to claim that the Tzotziles should crucify their own Christ in order to wrest for themselves the power invested in the white Christian community, and so Agustina's son, Domingo Gómez Checheb, was crucified on Good Friday, 1868. This led to the uprising, which petered out after several of the leaders were killed, proving that the indians had not gained the eternal life, or the ability to be reborn in this world, that their version of the Crucifixion was supposed to afford them.

According to several contemporary anthropologists, this account is a mixture of fact and myth; the crucifixion almost certainly did not happen, and the indians were the victims of white-community hostility, rather than the instigators of an uprising [4]. The critic Jean Franco uses this fact to criticize Castellanos for basing her novel on a dubious legend, thus repeating the racist attitudes which gave birth to it in the first place, although she acknowledges that Castellanos could not have known this [5]. This will be examined in greater detail later. For now, though, let us look at the two characters who are based on Pedro Cuscat and Agustina Gómez: Catalina Díaz Pulijá and Pedro González Winiktón.

Catalina Díaz has been recognized by many critics, as the most astonishing indian woman character ever to appear in Latin American literature, because of the narrative space given over to her, the 'psychological depth' of her portrayal, and the fact that she is a 'positive image' - in much the same way as Jesusa Palancares, the narrator-heroine of Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* - in a tradition where such characters normally appear only as humiliated victims. Yet, she is not completely unique in Castellanos' fiction; her precursor, the Tzeltal Maya woman, Juana, despite coming from a different, neighbouring indian community, appears to have been married to the same man, to have suffered from the same afflictions and, indeed, to have had several of the same attitudes that Catalina expresses at the beginning of *Oficio de tinieblas*. But, of course Juana, the wife of Felipe in *Balún-Canán*, is only an embryonic Catalina. Her last appearance in the novel, [B.C. p182], sees her dissolving into tears, powerless to wrench her husband's attention away from his new-found role as saviour of his tribe, her sterility marking her out as suspiciously

different from the rest of the Tzeltal women, and yet earning her only their derision. Catalina's character seems to take up where that of Juana is left unresolved.

In *Balún-Canán*, as outlined above, Juana's interior monologues are used principally to engage the reader's sympathy for her character as Castellanos allows her to voice her feelings about her oppressive relationship with the growing authority figure of her husband, Felipe, and about her sterility and passive existence. In *Oficio de tinieblas*, this is also the initial role of the modes of the interiorizing discourse associated with the character of Catalina. However, since Catalina is a major character in this last novel - whereas Juana is really only a secondary figure in *Balún-Canán* - her interior monologues come to serve far more complex purposes.

Frances Dorward's excellent article on 'The Function of Interiorization in *Oficio de tinieblas*' [6] concentrates principally on examining Castellanos' characterization of Catalina, and is extremely comprehensive in its detailed textual analysis. However, while it is useful to base my discussion here at least in part on Dorward's work, since I agree broadly with her arguments about where interiorization appears with respect to Catalina, my conclusions differ somewhat from hers about the principal effects of this discourse.

Dorward traces how free direct discourse and free indirect discourse are employed - apart from engaging readers' sympathies by giving an insight into Catalina's motivation for her actions and thence as a means of

convincing character portrayal according to traditions of psychological realism - in order to frame the very structure of the novel. She writes:

Its forty chapters are distributed more or less equitably between matters indian and matters *ladino*, the two worlds which form the sides in the conflict. The first half of the novel in page terms (Chapters 1 -15) is devoted to establishing these two worlds, Chapters 1-6 being largely concerned with the indians, chapters 7-15 with the *ladinos*. The mid-point in page terms at the end of Chapter 15 marks the novel's central articulation. After this, the second half of the novel is primarily taken up with the cumulative effect of three climaxes involving conflict between the two worlds, the last of these climaxes involving the indians' rebellion and concluding with their defeat.

When we consider these three climactic sections of the second part of *Oficio de tinieblas* in relation to the question of interiorization we find that the concentration on Catalina, incorporating interior monologue, emerges precisely when she is on the point of or in the midst of acting in a way which provokes the progress of the plot as regards the indian-*ladino* conflict. [7]

Dorward then traces the development of this narrative punctuation from chapter 16, which presents Catalina's rediscovery of the stones and her discovery of her destiny, through to Chapter 22 where she recreates the Gods and her religious role is linked by Pedro to a political purpose, that of regaining the land, until, finally, in Chapters 32 and 33, interiorization is used as Catalina achieves the height of her power and influence with the crucifixion of her adopted son, Domingo, and she launches the Tzotzil rebellion with the claim that the community now has its own Christ.

Dorward concludes:

The inner focus on Catalina does not simply coincide with the beginning of these three climactic sections. It is implicitly linked to the indians's collective self-assertion. The individual focus on Catalina, evoking our sympathy with her own self-assertion in the face of the hardships of her life - barrenness and rejection - gives way, in each case, to an increasingly

active assertion of the indians as a group, culminating with their rebellion. [8]

Dorward also makes the point that once the rebellion is under way, Catalina's interior monologues disappear:

by this stage she is a broken woman - structurally and in relation to the indians' relationship with the *ladino*, just as her previous surges prepared us for the indians' self-assertion, so her collapse prefigures the eventual collapse of the indian rebellion. [9]

This is an interesting reading, yet partly because it does not examine the role of Catalina's admittedly sparse interiorized interventions into the first six chapters of the novel it misses out on a more obvious interpretation.

In these first six chapters, Catalina is described in the words of the omniscient narrator as a character who exists only in relation to her husband, Pedro, and to the main problem in their marriage, her inability to bear him children. The first example of Catalina's free indirect discourse comes in Chapter 1:

¿Qué lo mantenía junto a ella? ¿El miedo? ¿El amor? La cara de Winiktón guardaba bien su secreto. Sin un ademán de despedida el hombre abandonó la choza. La puerta se cerró tras él.

Una decisión irrevocable petrificó las facciones de Catalina. *¡No se separían nunca, ella no se quedaría sola, no sería humillada ante la gente!* [O. p13, my emphasis]

This is almost identical in both content and function to the only other example of interior comment made on behalf of this character which comes in Chapter 3:

Si esto era lo que estaba considerando en sus adentros Winiktón; Catalina tuvo la áspera satisfacción de adivinarlo. Y la rebeldía reventó, como un golpe de sangre, en su pecho. ¿Acaso ella era culpable de no tener hijos? ¿A qué medio, por doloroso, por repugnante que fuera, no había recurrido para curarse? Todos resultaban inútiles. Tiene la matriz fría, diagnosticaban, burlándose, las mujeres. Estaba señalada con una mala señal. *Cualquiera podía despreciarla. Cualquiera. Pero no Pedro, no su marido.* [O. p32, my emphasis]

These two quotations show how, interwoven almost to the point of being indistinguishable from the omniscient narrative voice, Catalina's first non-speech direct comments reveal her taking small tentative steps towards self-assertion with regard to those in positions of superiority around her, in particular towards her husband, over the issue of her barrenness.

If Chapter 16 is now examined, which, as Dorward writes, provides the first extensive recourse to various types of interiorization into Catalina's mind and motivations, a pattern does begin to emerge. Catalina has now adopted Domingo, the son conceived by the rape of Marcela Gómez Oso and the *latifundista*, Leonardo Cifuentes, but feels she is beginning to lose him, at the same time as Pedro is becoming distanced from her as a result of his position as community 'juez'. The examples of free indirect discourse and even of stream of consciousness narration which abound in this chapter show Catalina pondering her many problems, calling on San Juan Fiador, patron saint of Chamula, to come to her aid. And then, she remembers the

cave in which she, as a girl, had discovered the stones. At that time she had run away, scared. At this point, in the stream of consciousness passage, Catalina appears to hit rock bottom in terms of morale. Referring once more to her husband, she continues:

No sé defenderme, no puedo. Voy a abrir ya este puño que no puede retener nada. Voy a desatar el nudo de mi amor que no guardó más que el aire. Estoy sola. Es preciso entenderla bien. Sola. [O. p192]

After this passage has been sustained for several more pages, what Frances Dorward refers to as the voice of Catalina's *alter ego* intervenes, informing her in the 'Tú' form, that she is in the negative position she is now because she ran away from the cave and so did not bring to her people the news of her discovery of the stones. Then, the omniscient voice intervenes to describe Catalina's decision to return to the cave. Finally, the chapter ends with a return to the voice of the *alter ego*, urging her that this is where her destiny, and her salvation lie:

Eres dueña del mundo, Catalina Díaz Puiljá, ahora eres dueña de tu destino. Sal, grítalo a todos los vientos. ¡Que vengan! ¡Que se inclinen ante ti, todos! ¡Pedro! ¡Domingo! ¡Gente! [O. pp195-196]

This chapter constitutes the most sustained piece of interiorization in the novel so far and is only exceeded in length by the use of free direct and free indirect narration in Chapters 32 and 33. After these chapters, which close with Catalina at the peak of her power, able finally to deliver her exhortation to the indians to revolt, there is no further interiorized

reference to Catalina. As Dorward has pointed out, Catalina is indeed a broken woman.

These interiorized modes of discourse do not only function as a structural link to, or a prefiguring of the rise and fall of the collective fate of the Tzotzil community. They are linked also on the far more straightforward level of plot. In a similar manner to the way in which interiorization is used to convey changing fortunes of characters with relation to authority in *Balún-Canán*, direct access to Catalina's thoughts and feelings are at a premium only until she finally manages to gain a fleeting power by giving up Domingo; up until that point in Chapter 33, she is never portrayed as a completely autonomous person. Instead, her interior monologues reveal her to be a self in crisis, struggling to achieve an identity beyond those of a failed sterile wife and an adoptive mother, who is ultimately rejected by her son as he leaves her to go off with his father figure, Pedro, in order to learn the ways of men. Catalina only achieves slightly more power than one of the models for her character, Juana, and she cannot retain that power because, for all that it is dressed up in the accoutrements of magic and religion, this power is linked, from her earliest interiorized interventions in the narrative, to the biological and social functions of motherhood. The possibility of a lasting power has disappeared because she has killed the son who has temporarily given her that legitimate role to play.

What of her husband Pedro? Unfortunately, Frances Dorward only mentions him in passing in her discussion. Yet Pedro exhibits even more obvious similarities with the character of Felipe Carranza Pech from *Balún-Canán*

than his wife, Catalina, does with Juana. First of all, he is shown to have had a very similar political development and his politicization takes place, like Felipe's, when he is working away from his home village, where he also learns to read, write and speak Spanish. He also meets Lázaro Cárdenas on the President's visit to Tapachula, where he hears him pronounce the word 'justicia', and shakes his hand. It is this experience which equips him with the desire to become a Judge, as is customary within his community on a rotating basis, and why even after this experience ends he retains the authority to become the main intermediary, and translator, for his community when Fernando Ulloa and César Santiago come to help them gain back their ancestral land. However, this is, as we shall see a different era than that described in Castellanos' first novel - a time of 'tinieblas' - even though it is apparently set in the same historical period. Pedro does not share Felipe's pretensions to become the 'hermano mayor' of the tribe; he never becomes the author of any written text; unlike Felipe, his role remains at an oral level and so with his passing - and the reader has to presume that he is killed at the end of the novel along with Ulloa - his memory and the traces of his life are apparently wiped out.

Interiorization is only used very sparingly with regard to this character - like that of Felipe - but always in a revealing context in terms of its overall role as a mode of discourse in the novel. Most of his speech is direct, and aimed at other characters with some purpose in mind. His interiorized interventions, however, almost always show him at times of weakness or incomprehension. First, on page 30, the reader is given access to his thoughts in order to discover the origin of his sense of injustice.

His youngest sister was wounded by a 'caxlán', a white man, for no apparent reason. Interiorization is used later, in Chapter 6, when Pedro is away from Chamula, as his uncomprehending thoughts on his unjust experience of peonage are communicated by a piece of direct discourse interior monologue [O. p53]. After this, he gains access to an education of sorts through working for a landowner who is slightly more enlightened than is usual, and then he meets the President.

Following these episodes, Pedro's interior monologues or thoughts disappear from the narrative. He is at the height of his power. In Chapter 10, we hear of the authority of his voice:

La voz correspondía a la figura. Firme, decidida, varonil.
Y había hablado en español, correcto, fácil, sin esa entonación
aflautada, ese 'canta-castilla' del que tanto se burlan los
ladinos. [O. p124]

This is clearly reminiscent of the Felipe of *Balún-Canán*. However, as the narrative proceeds, Pedro's interior monologues grow more frequent again, as his character fails to develop, and he becomes desperate enough to believe in Catalina's powers, along with the rest of the community. These monologues are used to convey his uncertainties about his relationship with his wife, and his growing insignificance which parallels her rise in importance [O. p213; to express his scepticism that the legality of the indians' claim to their land will be sufficient. And then, finally, in Chapter 18, comes his last major intervention in the novel:

Si no bastara el sufrimiento padecido (se decía entre sí)
para merecer la redención, tenemos otros méritos: el haber
sabido agruparnos alrededor de un hombre que se ha inclinado

a escuchar nuestras quejas, que conoce la extensión de nuestra miseria y que ha sondeado nuestra angustia: Fernando Ulloa. Está midiendo lo que se nos debe y cuando haya terminado marchará en busca del Gobierno hasta la ciudad de Tuxtla, donde los ajwaliles firmarán los papeles de la restitución. Seremos, desde entonces, indios con tierra, indios iguales a los ladinos. Y ésta será la primera palabra del dios que se haya cumplido. Lo que Pedro sabe es una verdad. Pero una verdad que apenas está germinando, que todavía no resiste ni la intemperie ni la luz. Pedro se hace silencio para protegerla. ¿Hay algo que pese más que un secreto? El juez no tiene con quién hablar. [O. p215]

Here, the free direct discourse, which is interspersed in the by now familiar manner with the omniscient narrative voice, reveals that Pedro is depending on the actions of other people - Fernando Ulloa and the 'ajwaliles' - in order for the aims of the indians to be realized. He is still hopeful but he knows that his hopes are fragile to say the least. His own position is presented as most fragile and ineffectual of all: 'El juez no tiene con quién hablar'. Neither on his own, nor with the indians as a solitary group, will anything substantial be altered in their position.

We come now to the final two major characters, who have certain antecedents in *Balún-Canán* (Idolina and her *nana*, Teresa will be discussed in the second part of this chapter): Isabel Zebadúa and her second husband, Leonardo Cifuentes, the adopted brother of Isabel's first husband, Isidoro Cifuentes, whom he is rumoured to have murdered. Isabel is portrayed as having similarities with Zoraida Solís, the little girl's mother in the first novel, particularly in her difficult relationships with her husband, - who philanders not only with indian women, as César Argüello does, but also with other white women, such as Julia Acevedo - and with her invalid daughter, Idolina. Unlike the character of the mother in *Balún-Canán*,

Isabel is a much less important figure in this second novel. Leonardo's most intimate relationship is with his mistress, and Idolina relies on this same woman, Julia, as well as on her nurse, Teresa. This limits the amount of interiorization necessary to convey an idea of her mentality, but the last few pages of Chapter 7 convey the basic development of Isabel's unequal marriage. Little interior 'asides' - '¿cuántos años de vivir juntos? (siempre se enreda en los cálculos)'[O. p73] - communicate the notion that, like Zoraida, she regards herself as a little stupid and although there is no sustained interiorization to compare with Zoraida's stream of consciousness passage in the other novel, Isabel clearly shares the same uncomfortable position, married to a man who enjoys all of the privileges of his sex and is not too discreet about that enjoyment.

Leonardo Cifuentes shares with César Argüello the ownership of vast lands and the effective peonage of hundreds of indians. Although Leonardo has not simply been born to the privilege of his position - it has been earned albeit by a series of dubious acts, he has the same unwillingness to give up his lands just because a government decree tells him to. As we saw in *Balún-Canán*, César's interior monologues increase as the novel develops and he loses his authority. In *Oficio de tinieblas*, there are very few examples of interior discourse which are associated with Leonardo. He is, instead, one of the few characters whose physical appearance is described by the omniscient narrator, in much the same way that his thoughts are described, although they are occasionally tinged with a touch of ironical humour. This is true of one of the rare examples of free direct discourse, which occurs in Chapter 7:

Su carácter de advenizo le dio un punto de vista crítico. Y cada vez que sus deseos entraban en contacto con las normas que la sociedad proclama como intangibles Leonardo pasaba por encima de ellas dando preferencia y satisfacción a sus deseos. Gracias a este sistema Cifuentes podía considerarse, a los cuarenta y tres años de edad, dichoso. Y mañoso también, agregaba con un guiño picaresco. *Porque la maña me da lo que la suerte me niega.* [O. p67, my emphasis]

Frances Dorward also notices this almost complete absence of interiorized comment on behalf of the character of Leonardo Cifuentes. Her conclusions about this detail fit in with the rest of her analysis of interiorization as a whole in the novel:

Since Rosario Castellanos clearly has the capacity to present any given character partly through some process of interiorization and since Leonardo Cifuentes would seem, from his past history, to be a potentially fascinating subject, we must conclude that her avoidance of this approach in his case is deliberate and that the function of the omission is to create an intentional effect.

[...] Castellanos's use of interiorization thus emerges not only as a means of convincing character presentation. Through where she concentrates this approach and where she purposely omits it, we are given also a subtle kind of commentary to ensure our sympathies with the indian side of the conflict. [10]

Even if we could be certain of *intentional* effects, on behalf of the author, it is difficult to see how Dorward's claim stands up in the face of the evidence, in the novel, of the use of interiorization with respect to a whole range of non-indian characters (Dorward's analysis only focuses on Catalina). But clearly the absence of this mode of discourse in the characterization of Leonardo is important in its effect on the narrative.

In many respects, this absence ensures that Leonardo remains a stock character of the *indigenista* genre, the 'macho landowner' as Jean Franco

describes him [11]. But he also represents the triumphant force in the novel, the one who, by virtue of his 'mañas', remains on top of the situation, retaining his lands, and even managing to build a political career out of what happens. At no point in the text is he portrayed as being in trouble; he is always the pragmatic controller of events. Clearly Castellanos may not have wanted the reader to sympathize with this nefarious figure, and many of her omniscient descriptions of him underline this more than anything else, often exhibiting a distancing irony into the bargain: 'Leonardo no quiso, no supo afectar modestia. Y el tema, además, lo apasionaba' [D. p353].

However, the fact that Leonardo's character is only established either by omniscient descriptions or on the authority of his own word - as it were, by the so-called 'showing' device of direct speech - would seem to contribute to the effect that only some of the major characters need to have their fictional identities subjected to the scrutinizing strategies of interiorization. If we look back at the use of these devices in *Balún-Canán*, we saw that the character of César Argüello, a similarly authoritative figure, only received this treatment as his character was beginning to lose his powerful position in the changing times the novel chronicles. Whereas the revelations of the inner mind of Felipe Carranza Pech in the same novel stop once that character becomes the 'hermano mayor' with his writing of the text about the building of the school. Since Leonardo Cifuentes neither gains nor loses his authority during the course of the narrative in this second novel, it is, according to this argument, entirely logical that his character neither gains or loses in interiorization.

If the major function of interiorization in post-nineteenth century Western literature, according to Wayne C. Booth and Robert Humphrey [12], is to give an illusion of psychological depth, a form in which to express prespeech levels of consciousness, then Castellanos' selective use of it, with regard to only those characters who are powerless, oppressed or portrayed as 'selves in crisis', reveals far more than what is usually expressed by critics of her work: that here is an author writing a more modern form of *indigenista* novel than those previously attempted by other Latin-American writers. If the 'inner lives' of characters who are constantly authoritative in *Balún-Canán* or *Oficio de tinieblas* are not represented, then it promotes a reading of these texts which suggests that they do not require such treatment, that there is such a thing as a 'given self' - a dominant self which is not problematic or subject to question, and who is authorized to speak for himself - and, conversely, there is the self of the Other, whose psychic being is revealed in its moments of crisis.

What is especially interesting about Castellanos' novels is that these two kinds of self are generally shown as being in a state of flux. This is certainly true of *Balún-Canán*, where César and Felipe effectively switch positions, both on the level of the narrative devices used to convey their characters and on that of the demands of the plot for one to lose and the other to gain power. In her first novel, as we have seen, Castellanos also reveals how authority may be gained, through progressive changes in the law, education and access to writing.

In the plot of *Oficio de tinieblas*, access to authority is not shown to be

so readily available for all. Pedro's education, identical to Felipe's, does not automatically ensure the success of his struggle. Leonardo, unlike César, does not waiver in his position at all. The effect of this difference in the outcome of the plot will be examined in greater detail later; however, first, some more comments must be made about another function of characterization in the second novel.

The Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, as we have seen above, characterized the novel as polyphonic, and maintained that, 'One of the essential peculiarities of prose fiction is the possibility it allows of using different types of discourse, with their distinct expressiveness intact, on the plane of a single work, without reduction to a single common denominator' [13]. This is certainly true of *Oficio de tinieblas*, which is a discursive novel in two main senses. First, it incorporates certain prior discourses, or pre-existing ideologies which are offered up as subject positions to the reader through characters who both act as mouth-pieces - or, indeed, ideologues - and who 'personify' these ideologies because of their individual backgrounds. Second, because these ideological positions are set into conflict within the plot, which, as much as anything else, is the story of a struggle for ideological dominance, they fictionalize a discussion of the validity of these positions within their historical context.

The principal subject of this sustained fictional discussion is quite clearly a debate over *cardenismo*. To a certain extent, this is also true of *Balún-Canán*, which, through the characters of César Argüello, representing the rural status quo, and Felipe Carranza Pech, as the voice of progressive

reform, discusses this same issue, although that discussion is left unresolved as the middle section of the novel closes. In any case, not much narrative space is devoted to it. In contrast, *Oficio de tinieblas* has a proliferation of characters who voice or represent political positions, for as Beth Miller has pointed out [14], it is a more comprehensive portrait of a community in crisis than the first novel.

The voice of *cardenismo*, the official Mexican state ideology, is less Pedro Díaz Winiktón - the counterpart of Felipe - than Fernando Ulloa, the government official from Mexico City, who has come to Chiapas in order to ensure the enactment of the agrarian reforms. As he arrives in the South-Eastern state, it is his firm belief that 'La batalla será únicamente legal' [O. p153], and that the indians will inevitably be liberated:

-Hasta hoy los indios han estado bajo una tutela que se presta a muchos abusos. Pero alcanzarán la mayoría de edad cuando sepan leer, escribir, cultivar racionalmente su tierra. [O. p150]

Later, through a combination of free indirect discourse, omniscient narration and then direct speech, his point of view regarding the roots of the inequalities which set the indians apart from the whites is outlined:

Según Ulloa la historia mexicana podía representarse por el ensanchamiento paulatino de un círculo: el de los propietarios de la riqueza. De los conquistadores a los frailes, a los encomenderos, a los criollos... Faltaba mucho para que la riqueza llegase hasta las masas ínfimas de la población. Grandes intereses se oponían al desarrollo de este proceso; así, cada nuevo ensanchamiento del círculo se había logrado a costa de ahogar al país en ríos de sangre, de convertirlo en fácil presa de rapiñas extranjeras, de arrojarlo a la sima del caos más bestial. Terreno propicio para la aparición de falsos redentores y de caudillos venales. [O. p174]

After continuing with a long list of injustices which beset Mexico, the narrative concludes with this rallying cry for change which has as a point of departure the positivistic God of *cardenismo*: reason,

¿Qué se va a hacer entonces? Luchar, combatir. No sólo contra los terratenientes, a los que perjudica al reparto de los latifundios, sino contra la gran muchedumbre fanatizada que se rehusa a aceptar un beneficio porque le han hecho creer que es un sacrilegio. [O. p175]

His views, however, do not remain unchallenged either by the changing situation portrayed in the novel, or, indeed, by the views of other characters: Leonardo predictably attacks his naivety, and puts it down to the fact that Fernando 'no es de aquí' [O. p152]; while César Santiago, who becomes Fernando's disciple, confronts his idealism with some more local realism:

Este hombre, rumia César al ver al ingeniero inclinado sobre sus papeles, se está metiendo en camisa de once varas con su promesa de ayudar a tales infelices valiéndose de la ley. ¿Cuál ley? En Ciudad Real, en los altos de Chiapas, no hay más ley que la fuerza. Y la fuerza la tienen los fiqueros.[...] Fernando no tiene agallas para jefe. Es bien intencionado y no se adelanta a las malicias de los demás. [O. pp186-187]

As the inhabitants of Ciudad Real turn more and more against him, Fernando's attitude first begins to harden and grow more desperate;

-Ciudad Real no es ya lo que ustedes creen: el coto cerrado de unos cuantos señores y leguleyos. Ciudad Real es México y en México hay leyes justas y un Presidente honesto. [O. pp242-243]

As for his fraternal feelings of solidarity with the indians, these begin to be tested:

Fernando volvió a ver el rostro de Pedro como buscando que confirmara sus esperanzas. Pero no halló más que la dureza de siempre, el secreto bien guardado por los ojos, las palabras detenidas ante el pliegue de los labios. ¿Cómo aproximarse a esta raza? Sólo se abre en la embriaguez, en el riesgo, en el cataclismo. [O. p244]

Chapter 31 sees his biggest humiliation, for not only is he forced to lie to the indians that things are going well, as he reports to their *junta*, but Pedro mistranslates his speech and launches a call for the use of force. At this point Fernando is shown to be becoming even more bitterly realistic about the limited potential for real change:

-No me fío de milagros. Conozco la historia. Las rebeliones de los chamulas se han incubado siempre, como hoy, en la embriaguez, en la superstición. Una tribu de hombres desesperados se lanzan contra sus opresores. Tienen todas las ventajas de su parte, hasta la justicia. Y sin embargo fracasan. y no por cobardía, entiéndame. Ni por estupidez. Es que para alcanzar la victoria se necesita algo más que un arrebató o un golpe de suerte: una idea que alcanzar, un orden que imponer. [O. p308]

It is his assistant, César Santiago who, towards the end of the novel when all is lost for Fernando and his ideals, points out to his mentor that he did not even live up to this revised version of his mission:

-El error, aunque no valga la pena echar malhayas, es no haberse impuesto desde el principio. Con órdenes. Pero usted los quiso tratar de igual a igual. [O. p346]

After the gruesome fact of the crucifixion which he has witnessed, Fernando is forced to recognize that reason was not enough;

Ninguno de los acontecimientos últimos era susceptible de ser ni comprendido por la razón ni calificado por la moral. Él mismo giraba alrededor de una órbita ajena a sus convicciones más entrañables, a sus hábitos más arraigados. No se reconocía. Era parte del mecanismo de un mundo ininteligible. [O. p347]

The character of César Santiago is very interesting in this question of the representation of certain ideologies. He certainly plays the role of bolstering up Fernando's *cardenista* views, albeit providing them with a more realistic, and pragmatic edge. What is striking about him, however, is the narrative importance Castellanos ascribes to this seemingly secondary character, especially the amount of text space which she gives over to a description of his background. This lengthy digression takes place in Chapter 14 of the novel, where Castellanos lays out, in an extremely humorous fashion (it is the most sustained piece of humour in the novel) the Comitecan origins of César's family and their social rise and fall, ostensibly in order to provide a motivation - a sense of *arriviste* injustice - for César's character. Yet this passage lasts for over eight pages, is narrated omnisciently, apart from one or two snatches of free indirect, and free direct discourse, and serves rather more than amply to show the reader where the character is coming from.

The key here surely lies in the omniscient voice and the ironical humour, which serve to distance this passage from the rest of the narrative. Castellanos, in her own authorial voice, launches here an unbridled attack on the small-mindedness and infantile attitudes of the people from the town where she grew up. It is surely no coincidence that this character is called César - like the author's father despite the fact that the descriptions do not match at all - a detail which might lead the reader to associate him in some way with the author's background. César, and this small tale within a tale, thus provide one of the few sustained examples of the author's views, or ideology, becoming explicit in the narrative. It is interesting, therefore, that the ideology expressed by the character of César in the rest of the novel is that of the Comitecan - not quite 'Coletos' - *cardenista* enthusiast, who nonetheless retains a more than healthy dose of pragmatism in his politics and realism in his expectations for change.

Presenting the ideological case for the landowning classes in *Oficio de tinieblas* is Leonardo Cifuentes. Many of his attitudes are revealed in his long discussion with Fernando Ulloa at his ranch in Chapter 12, either in direct speech or by omniscient narration. It is in this chapter where Leonardo emphasizes the importance of the continuity of centuries-old traditions, which deny any claim by the indians to the land, validated by mere legality or moral rightness. The white men were the ones who came and tamed the land and the indians, and made both more productive. The indians owe their very positions, not to mention their survival, to the *finqueros*. In three memorable paragraphs, definitions of the 'patrón', the 'ejido' and the 'indio' are set out, the first of which begins,

Ser patrón implica una raza, una lengua, una historia que los coletos poseían y que los indios no eran capaces de improvisar ni de adquirir. [O. pp149-150]

On the pages which follow, Leonardo outlines in direct speech his views on certain historical episodes, including the events surrounding the Yucatecan War of the Castes in the 1860s, which are worth reproducing here:

-[Nuestros peones] Venían alebrestados, porque habían oído decir por ahí que en el Norte y en Yucatán había guerra de castas. [...] Total que el mal ejemplo cundió y hubo un levantamiento en que Ciudad Real estuvo a punto de desaparecer.

-[...] El Presidente Juárez, al que usted ha de tener en un altar, no mandó un soldado ni un rifle para que nos defendiéramos. Más bien Guatemala puso a nuestra disposición su ejército. Por lealtad, una lealtad que México no agradece, no aceptamos la ayuda de los guatemaltecos y nos batimos solos. Las pérdidas fueron cuantiosas ¿y de qué valió nuestro sacrificio? Unos cuantos años de paz y ahora otra vez la amenaza.

-[.... Los indios] Se envalentonan porque son muchos y porque ya han visto que cuentan con el apoyo de unas autoridades que, a sabiendas o no, están provocando otra sublevación.

[O. pp152-153]

This passage is fascinating for several reasons. First, it clearly sets out where Leonardo, and others like him lay the blame for past and potential, future uprisings, and the Chiapan landowners' sense of outrage that their own distant government has not come to their aid in the past, nor does it appear that it will now. Then, at the same time as 'México' is established as no useful ally, Guatemala, geographically nearer, is posited as an automatic, more natural friend to the Chiapan *latifundistas*, in the same way that it does at the time of the uprising, later in the novel. Guatemala appears as a similar kind of trope in *Oficio de tinieblas* as it does in *Balún-Canán*: an ally because it does not want the Mexican Revolution to infringe on its territories; a place of escape for those who have everything

to lose from agrarian reform; and with all the luxury items which litter the pages of both novels, - for example, Doña Pastora's goods in the first novel and Julia's shawl in the second - this country provides a symbol of the old riches which used to be easily accessible to the wealthy Chiapans before their position was threatened by political change. Finally, in this passage, Castellanos is effectively allowing her character to make a story-within-a-story allusion to the 'real' historical event on which this novel is based: the 1867 Chamula uprising.

If the reader needs any more proof that Leonardo Cifuentes represents the voice and views of the Chiapan *latifundistas* of the period, then this is provided towards the end of the novel when he actually becomes their representative:

No, lo que se precisaba era un caudillo. Y el caudillo tenía que ser coleteo hasta los tuétanos y hombre enérgico, audaz y ambicioso. ¿Quién encarnaba estas virtudes? La multitud lo supo cuando Leonardo Cifuentes, seguido de otros finqueros, se abrió paso para llamar a la puerta del Palacio Episcopal. [O. p272]

This last reference to the religious authorities opens up another rich vein of ideology within the novel, fictionally portrayed in several different characters. The first of these is Don Alfonso Cañaverall, the bishop who sends his militant young priest, Manuel Mandujano, out to the Chamula community. Don Alfonso props up the old customs of turning a blind eye to the immoral acts committed by those in his flock who are influential, such as Leonardo's extra-marital activities. He personifies the complacent,

hypocritical, yet still powerful voice of the provincial Catholic Church, which had been knocked back but not destroyed by the anti-clerical thrust of the Revolution:

-Durante muchos años he conducido a mi grey sin violencias, a satisfacción de todos y con el beneplácito de mis superiores.

Esta última frase daba por finiquitada la escaramuza y restablecía el principio de autoridad. [O. p101]

His young priest, Mandujano, is from an altogether different generation, less accomodating and more direct in his approach. He is made to articulate the views of the militant clergy. Unlike his superiors in the Church, like Don Alfonso who have attempted to ensure the survival of the institution by being accomodating to a fault with what he calls 'la autoridad civil', Mandujano is dangerously hostile to the government from his pulpit: 'Son gobernantes injustos. Su injusticia nos exime de la obediencia' [O. p106]. It is for this outspokenness that the wise bishop sends him away from Ciudad Real, to a place where he can apparently do less damage. This is rationalized by the bishop, not out of conviction, but because he knows it will appeal to the idealistic Mandujano, as a mission similar in purpose to that of the early Jesuit priests, who went out among the indians in order to spread the Gospel and win over to Catholicism thousands of souls. His real reasons are guessed at by the young priest:

Por motivos poderosos (¿y cuál era más: la presión de las autoridades civiles? ¿La conveniencia de vigilar una zona en la que el gobierno quería implantar innovaciones? [...]) don Alfonso había decidido nombrar a Manuel párroco de San Juan y ningún argumento lo disuadiría. [O. p110]

This collusion between the different interest groups which make up the civil and religious authorities illustrated here is also shown at other points in the novel. In the following quotation, it is expressed to a somewhat ironic effect by the figure of Father Balcázar, the bishop's aide:

-Es confortador - decía -, ver cómo las contradicciones entre las potencias terrenales y la potestad espiritual, se anulan. Cómo toda se concilia cuando se persiguen metas comunes: la justicia, el orden, la paz. [O. p356]

If the different subject positions analyzed above are all participating in the principal ideological struggle for hegemony in *Oficio de tinieblas*, that of *cardenismo* versus the rural status quo, clearly won by the reactionaries as Ulloa is killed and the indians are defeated, then there are other subsidiary debates going on in the novel at the same time, which are not resolved as clearly as this first. One of these, which I shall examine here was particularly pivotal to Castellanos' own political beliefs: the question of women. This debate is introduced into the novel in a brief paragraph of omnisciently narrated text, which occurs in the midst of what the reader is led to believe is a sustained meditation by the priest, Manuel Mandujano, on the nature of the people of Ciudad Real:

En las mujeres la virtud máspreciada es la castidad y la modestia. Virtudes incómodas que exigen una vigilancia constante sobre sí, un renunciamiento a los placeres de la vanidad y de la carne, un sacrificio de los impulsos primarios. Alguna mujer será capaz de realizarlos. Pero muchos son hábiles para fingirlos. [O. p105]

Leonardo also expresses his own views - the ideology of the privileged male - on the place of women, which provides a counterpoint to this traditionally Catholic view:

Patrón: el que sostiene una casa en Ciudad Real, con la esposa legítima y los hijos, los muchos hijos; el que instala una querida en el pueblo y otra en el rancho (aparte de las aventuras ocasionales con muchachitas indias y pequeñas criadas mestizas; aparte, también, de las incursiones en el barrio prohibido).
[O. p150]

The author's own mocking voice clearly intervenes here, with the unlikely repetition of 'aparte'.

Another voice begins to intervene on this subject towards the end of the novel as the omniscient narrator conveys the changes undergone by the various strata of the Ciudad Real community, as they begin to prepare for a possible attack either by the indians or by government troops. After a passage which describes the oppressed position of the spinsters of the town, typical of Castellanos, a dialogue between the anonymous women ensues, in which mothers and their daughters discuss the rumour that the soldiers have the habit of carrying off and raping the women they come across:

La señora de respeto estaba disgustada precisamente porque lo que le habían preguntado era verdad. ¡Cuántos casos no se vieron durante la Revolución! La pobre Angélica Ortiz, tan bonita y con novio formal, tuvo que sufrir el abuso de los oficiales y delante de su familia. Quedó como loca, naturalmente. Y ya nunca se pudo casar. [O. p275]

The name of this female casualty, Angélica, who went mad, is extremely reminiscent of the character from *Balún-Canán*, who was carried off by the 'Dzulúm'.

However, the principal, this time collective, intervention into this debate is provoked by 'La Alazana', Julia Acevedo, Fernando's common-law-wife and Leonardo's mistress. Julia is presented as an outsider, because she comes from Mexico City, and yet she tries to become an accepted member of the privileged social circles of Ciudad Real, a herculean task made more difficult because of the scandal which surrounds her relationship with Leonardo. The confusion which surrounds the community when it perceives itself to be faced with an external threat, the imminent attack of troops or indians, gives her what she thinks will be her chance, though, and she begins to hold receptions for the 'señoras' in, of all places, Leonardo's house. But it does not work and she is left to ponder the thought that she will always be an outsider. Then, as the women return the next day, there follows a very long passage of omniscient narration interspersed with free direct and indirect discourse in which the personal concerns of each of them are joined with those of the others, and are raised almost to a universal level, as they speak for all the women of their social class, about men:

Hombres. Primero conocí a mi padre, decían. El padre, al que estaban sujetas y del que heredaban un apellido, una situación, una norma de conducta.

El padre, dios cotidiano y distante cuyos relámpagos iluminaban el cielo monótono del hogar y cuyos rayos se descargaban fulminando no se sabía cómo, no se sabía cuándo, no se sabía por qué. [O. p285]

The women continue to talk, in this single collective voice, of their early sexual experiences, of menstruation, courtship, physical self-awareness, marriage, children, dowries, inability to inherit property, lack of financial independence, and so on: a vast list of their experiences in this consciousness-raising session, unique in Latin-American literature of the period for its frankness. This collective voice shows how all of these experiences in the women's lives are policed by men, fathers, priests, husbands, lawyers, and is extremely explicit in the relationship between their oppressions and the various forms of male authority they come up against in their lives. In terms of the fact that this issue is not addressed again in the novel, and so remains unresolved, this ideological debate is a *callejón sin salida*; the women do not miraculously gain in authority. Instead, the value of this collective outpouring is described in the novel: 'Hablar es como abrir un abceso. Corre el pus; la inflamación disminuye; la fiebre y sus desvaríos se mitigan' [O. p288]

If we turn back to Bakhtin and his ideas about polyphony and heteroglossia, we can see how his description of how different ideologies may be conveyed within novels is extremely appropriate. Castellanos not only uses characters as mouth-pieces, through direct speech, but she also employs what Bakhtin considered as a typical device of the psychologically realist nineteenth-century novel: 'character zones', which he defined as 'the field of action for a character's voice', in other words the narrative space around their direct or indirect speech, which encroaches 'in one way or another upon the author's voice' [15].

Bakhtin's analysis of the different kinds of discourses which can be conveyed through these methods might also prove appropriate in summing up here. The Russian critic spoke of 'prior discourses' and 'internally persuasive discourses' [16]. Bakhtin defines the difference between the two as follows: 'authoritative discourse cannot be represented - it is only transmitted' [17], whereas internally prior discourse can be shaped by the author. The first category, consists of authoritative discourses already in circulation with which the author may or may not agree, such as state-sponsored political ideas - in this case, *cardenismo*, represented in this novel by Fernando Ulloa, and to a lesser extent by Pedro Winiktón. Or, they may be ideas which still exist but are no longer in ascendance within a country - in this case the patriarchal feudalism, propped up by the Church, and personified by Leonardo Cifuentes. In *Oficio de tinieblas*, there is a clear winner in the ideological struggle between these two characters and their respective world views since Fernando Ulloa is forced by events to modify his opinion (which changes into internally persuasive discourse as a result), and then, ultimately, he is killed. The defeat is neatly encapsulated in the narrative by the collective voice of the people of Ciudad Real: 'que el Presidente sepa que en Chiapas sus leyes valen una pura y celestial chingada' [O. p277]. It is this very struggle, which also takes place on a similar textual level in *Balún-Canán*, which precisely is not completely resolved in that novel as the little girl's story takes over in the final part.

Yet, the picture is complicated here by the second category, 'internally persuasive discourses', or discourses to which the author is frequently more sympathetic, and thus often moulds with his or her own voice. Here, the Comitecan, César Santiago's more pragmatic reworking of *cardenista* principles

might be an example of this. But far more convincing is the inclusion of a feminist dialectic, rather out of place on the level of psychological realism for a group of otherwise reactionary, 1930s upper-class provincial, Mexican women, in which Castellanos' 1950s and 1960s sympathies are obvious for all to see.

Having examined the struggle in *Oficio de tinieblas* for ideological authority, the final element I would like to address here is another struggle in the novel, this time for textual authority. This struggle is less explicit than that which works itself out in Castellanos' first novel. In *Balún-Canán*, the battle is fought between two different genres: autobiographical fiction and an *indigenista* narrative. It is made more obvious through the use of a different narrative focus in the various sections, and is clearly won by the *Götterdämmerung* story told by the little girl, which provides the closure for the novel as a whole, while the other text remains unresolved. In *Oficio de tinieblas*, the two texts fighting each other for ascendancy may be loosely defined as the 'Indian Text' and the 'Western Text'.

In many respects, these two texts are separated out in this novel, at least in terms of the layout of the first sixteen chapters which, as we have seen, Frances Dorward describes as being 'distributed more or less equitably between matters indian and matters *ladino*' [7]. This is signalled by an intermittent use in the 'indian' chapters of the tone and literary devices of the *Popol-Vuh*, a clear example of which can be found on the first few pages of the novel with the mythical description of the origins of San Juan Chamula. The 'Western' text signifies its clear arrival in Chapter 7 with its use of the conventions of psychological realism, third-person omniscient narration, a general lack of

poetic language, and a greater attention to detail with regard to characterization, and so on. Obviously, the use of interiorization is used to add 'realism' to the indian characters as well, and so elements of the Western text do not confine themselves entirely to separate chapters, especially when Fernando and César are with the Tzotzil community. I will take up these issues in more detail in the next part of this chapter, where I will discuss the question of authorship. However, I would like to conclude this part of my discussion by concentrating on one specific, and hugely important element in this battle for textual supremacy, the way in which two religious texts, each representing the 'Sagradas Escrituras' of the two communities in dispute in *Oficio de tinieblas* are interwoven: the Christian Bible and the Maya-Quiché *Libro del consejo*.

In much the same way that *Balún-Canán* signals itself as an *indigenista* novel with its Tzeltal title, *Oficio de tinieblas* points to its relationship with the matter of religion, and in particular the question of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The meaning of the title was first explained in detail by María del Carmen Millán in 1963:

El nombre mismo del libro se refiere a uno de los ejercicios de Semana Santa, que contiene pasajes de las *Lamentaciones* de Jeremías; es anterior a las celebraciones de Viernes Santo, y consiste en apagar gradualmente las velas que están en el altar, cuyo número varía entre doce, quince y veinticuatro, y de las cuales sólo debe quedar prendida una. Se trata de un oficio fúnebre que sugiere el desconsuelo y la oscuridad en que quedó el mundo después del prendimiento de Jesucristo y de su crucifixión: la convulsión de la naturaleza, el dolor de los discípulos y la ceguera de los judíos. La luz renace con la resurrección y el sacrificio propicia la vida eterna. [18]

Of course, the indians' version of Christ, Domingo Díaz Puiljá, does not rise again, although few critics have thought this worthy of examination and even fewer have noted the proliferation of images of light and darkness in the novel (see particularly, *O*, pp10-11). One critic has made some very persuasive remarks about these images, however; although unfortunately he does not tie them in with Millán's ideas about the title. Thomas Washington, in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, discusses at length the final sentence of the novel: 'Faltaba mucho tiempo para que amaneciera'. He refers to studies of the *Popol-Vuh* which claim that the images of light and darkness are central to that Maya text [19], light or dawn symbolizing the necessary precondition for the creation of the 'hombre formado', the successful version of human beings. Washington concludes, of the final sentence:

These few words quintessentially summarize the thesis of the novel: that the development of the 'hombre formado' or complete, non-distorted human being cannot be realized in the darkness or 'tinieblas' which Castellanos so aptly detailed: that of sexism, racism, and the multiple forms of exploitation, human degradation, and alienation which grow out of and are perpetuated by a mythic and static history and the socio-political structure on which it is based; that creation is not complete until the 'hombre formado' does appear; and that, in the light of the complexity of the task at hand and the pervasive effects of these myths in their many manifestations in society, 'Faltaba mucho [sic] para que amaneciera'. [19]

This is a very convincing reading, and would be even more so if it had been linked to the question of the title of the novel and the crucifixion of Domingo towards the end of the novel. These issues can begin to be examined properly if we turn to the matter of the epigraph of the novel, again from the *Popol-Vuh*, which has just as important an effect on this second novel as did the quotations which framed *Balún-Canán*.

The choice of epigraph this time has all of the same functions as those used in the first novel: setting up an ancient, indigenous tone, which will be employed later in the novel to legitimate the novelist's attempt to mimic 'indianness'; to prefigure the plot; and to emphasize the theme, once more, of a twilight of the Gods. But it also has other effects. The quotation [20], again heavily edited, is taken from the address to the Señores de Xibalbá by the twins Ixbalanqué and Hunahpú, who are wreaking their vengeance on the Señores for the murder of their parents, Hun-Hunahpú and Vucub-Hunahpú. Significantly, this passage is immediately followed, at the beginning of the third part of the text, by the creation of the 'hombre formado' in the time of the 'amanecer', a fact apparently not noticed by Washington. But, more significant for my purposes here is to note what immediately precedes the text of the quotation. In order to carry out their revenge on the Señores, the twins concoct an elaborate plan to deceive them. They have acquired, through prolonged practice, the ability to kill themselves and others, and to commit acts of destruction, all of which they can then reverse. They gain such notoriety for this trick that they are called before the Señores where they perform this skill successfully until the Señores, fascinated by how it works, ask the inevitable favour:

-¡Haced lo mismo con nosotros! ¡Sacrificadnos!, dijeron.
¡Despedazadnos uno por uno![...]
-Está bien, después resucitaréis. [21]

Of course, they are not resuscitated afterwards, and, the Twins' revenge complete, they then utter the speech which Castellanos reproduces in her novel.

It is, of course, a plan similar to the one concocted by Catalina Díaz Puiljá.

No tiembles tú, mujer, por tú marido ni por tú hijo.
Va al sitio donde se miden los hombres. Y ha de volver
arrastrando por los cabellos a la victoria. Intacto, aunque
haya recibido muchas heridas. Resucitado, después del término
necesario. Porque está dicho que ninguno de nosotros
morirá. [O. p325]

Unfortunately, Domingo is not 'resucitado' afterwards. Nor are those
indians who die in the ensuing uprising. It is significant that the same
word 'resucitar' is the one used in the story in the *Popol-Vuh*; clearly it
is also the word used in the Bible, in Spanish, to describe the
Resurrection. However, it is not just this word, but similar stories -
Jesus dies and is reborn so that man might receive eternal life; the Twins
in the *Popol-Vuh* die and come back to life, to rid their world of evil and
darkness, so that the 'hombre formado' might be created - which 'están
dichos', to paraphrase Castellanos, in both texts.

If the story of sacrifice and rebirth from the *Popol-Vuh* can be said to
receive a somewhat ironic ^{treatment} (with hindsight, for it is presented in an
entirely deadpan manner in the text) at the hands of Castellanos in this
novel, it is clear that the Bible and with it organized Catholicism have an
even more obvious, parodic commentary made about them.

After the symbolism of the title, the birth of the aptly named Domingo, at
the same time as the heavenly appearance of an eclipse, begins to suggest
that some parallel with the Christian Gospels is being set up. Domingo's
conception is, ironically, far from immaculate; it is the result of the rape

of his Tzotzil mother by Leonardo Cifuentes. So it would seem that from the outset Domingo is being established as a *Mestizo* Christ figure, which befits his future position as the rather syncretic saviour of his community when he later is chosen for the act which will give the Tzotziles their power with which to combat that of the white Christian landowners. Domingo's crucifixion is presented in terms of extreme cruelty; but nonetheless, there are, in the subtle references to the original event, unmistakable traces of a black sense of humour, as if Castellanos wants to make explicit her view of the pathetic nature of this ridiculous event:

Sólo sus ojos, más que asustados, estupefactos, se clavaban con insistencia en los de Catalina como pidiéndole, antes que una ayuda, una explicación.

[...] Ahora sí, la muerte tomará posesión de éste como la toman siempre los dioses: haciendo alarde de su poderío sobre un enemigo al que sometió en la lucha desigual, al que redujo por la fuerza, al que ha desgarrado hasta la última fibra sensible. ¡Y son tantas!

[...] El primer borbotón de sangre (del costado, como en todas las crucifixiones) ciega a Catalina. [D. p321]

Yet, this is not the only parody of the Gospel stories in the novel, for there is another symbolically-named character, this time from the white community (and drawn from the original 'historical' incident in 1867): the priest, Manuel Mandujano. He is, as we have seen, presented as an uncorruptible and militant, if ultimately ineffectual evangelist sent out to the 'savages', ostensibly to spread the word of God. When he hears of the pagan cult, being established by Catalina, he goes to her cave in Tzajalhemel, and appropriately, he sweeps aside the false idols, the stones, which line the indian altar. Finally, when he tries to break up the cult for a second time, he is cut to pieces with machetes, by the Tzotziles. If this

does not appear to be a suitable fate for someone who is elsewhere mapped out as another Christ-figure, the reader can refer back to *Balún-Canán*, where the little girl links the image of the crucified Christ in her church to the memory of the 'indio macheteado' who is brought back from her father's ranch. Interestingly, it is when Catalina contemplates a statue of the suffering Christ on the Cross, in the Chamula church, that she gets her idea to sacrifice Domingo in this way.

Several critics have chastized Rosario Castellanos for her use of these images and, as we have seen, also for her rewriting in the first place of a dubious historical episode which, as Jean Franco puts it, acquiesces 'in the view of the literal-mindedness of the indigenous population propagated by positivism'. She continues:

In her novel the indians sacrifice a real child because they cannot understand the symbolism of the Eucharist, whereas as anthropologists point out, the symbolic systems of those very indigenous peoples* are of the utmost sophistication. [22]

Even though Castellanos should be given the benefit of the doubt against this attack simply on the basis of her extensive writings about the Tzeltal and Tzotzil peoples, borne of her first-hand knowledge of their communities, there is in fact textual evidence to contradict this reading on the very first page of the novel. Here, we are back in the language of the *Popol-Vuh*, as the poetic-sounding omniscient narrator sets out how a Church came to be built upon the site visited by San Juan Fiador. He changes the sheep which inhabit the countryside into white stones so that the temple may be constructed, but the Tzotziles do not understand that they are meant to do

this; he is a Catholic saint, after all, and Catholicism has not yet arrived:

Todo les fue balbuceo, párpados abatidos, brazos desmayados en temeroso ademán. Por eso fue necesario que más tarde vinieran otros hombres. y estos hombres vinieron como de otro mundo. Llevaban el sol en la cara y hablaban lengua altiva, lengua que sobrecoje el corazón de quien escucha. Idioma, no como el tzotzil que se dice también en sueños, sino férreo instrumento de señorío, arma de conquista, punta del látigo de la ley. Porque ¿cómo, sino en castilla, se pronuncia la orden y se declara la sentencia? ¿Y cómo amonestar y cómo apremiar sino en castilla? [O. p9]

Although the white men who come, significantly, do not understand exactly what is meant by the miracle of the sheep, they set about building a church anyway, or rather they set the Tzotziles about that task. After another visit by the saint, the church is dedicated to him, and becomes filled with what are described as useless and decadent images of saints, as well as sync retic versions of the old indian gods. Catholicism is then set up from the outset as part of the conquest of the Tzotzil world: it is not something they choose, nor can they understand it since it is initially conveyed to them in Spanish. Later, the intermediary, Xaw Ramírez, the drunken 'uncle Tom' figure in the novel, is the indian sacristan charged with guarding their Catholic souls, and the only way he communicates with them is by enhancing a sync retic form of Christianity which at times verges on complete 'paganism'. They are never meant to understand it, because it is not there for their salvation, but portrayed throughout *Oficio de tinieblas* as a controlling mechanism, with a priest who acts as a policeman, and a corrupt bishop who is in cahoots with the church-going, but decidedly un-Christian local landowners, all anxious to see that the anti-clericalism of *cardenismo* does not catch on in their back-yard. The

Tzotziles are meant to remain in darkness; it is the bidding of their still triumphant masters. At the very end of the novel, after the state governor has spoken to Don Alfonso, this aptly half-blind bishop asks him to close the curtains to shut out the sunlight:

A tientas, el Gobernador buscaba la salida. A sus espaldas oyó un suspiro profundo, como de quien descansa.
-¡Ah, por fin! ¡Otra vez la oscuridad! [O. p361]

From the first page of this novel, the institution of Catholicism is portrayed as one of the main causes of the oppression of the Tzotzil community; it brings them nothing but harm, and then when they take it literally, it leads to their almost complete extinction. The authorial view of the pathetic tragedy of these events is conveyed largely by the parody of the Gospels, which punctuates the plot at several levels. In the same process, the authority of these 'Sagradas Escrituras' is questioned.

But of course the Bible is not the only sacred text under question in *Oficio de tinieblas*, nor are its events the only ones parodied. The incident which undermines the effectiveness of a similar kind of text to the *Popol-Vuh* for the Tzotzil community is established in a passage near the end of the novel, which, in turn, refers back to the opening pages. In the opening pages we read that there is a written testimony about the building of the church - rather like Felipe's text recording the construction of the school in *Balún-Canán* - which is engraved 'en los tres arcos de la puerta de entrada del templo'. At the end of the novel, the Tzotziles store a book which they are convinced is another such sacred record in an ark in the centre of Catalina's cave. This text which they

revere in their religious ceremonies is not one that any of them are equipped to read: it is the book of 'Ordenanzas militares', Leonardo's instructions to his forces from Ciudad Real who all but wipe out the indians.

In the battle of the sacred books, and the versions of religious belief, neither kind wins, for both are parodied in the novel. But institutionalized Catholicism, in its provincial 1930s Mexican incarnation, triumphs anyway, like the other shadowy forces of the old order in Ciudad Real to which its fate is linked.

It should be clear, then, that *Oficio de tinieblas*, like *Balún-Canán* before it, contains a sustained discourse on the nature of authority, and indeed attempts to portray a battle between different versions of authority, with their own systems of prior discourses frequently represented by the respective interest groups who are fictionalized as characters in the novel. Unlike the first novel, however, where this struggle is suspended at the end of its middle section, 'para ceder la palabra' to the little girl and her story, issues are resolved in *Oficio de tinieblas*, as the indians are routed, and the landowners and Church remain in power. The lack of narrative closure for the *indigenista* story is what renders the first novel a lament on the passing of the landowning classes, as it links the little girl's story of the death of her brother with the wider themes of a lost childhood paradise, in a golden age which will not be repeated. Ending *Balún-Canán* in this way masks the actual historical events which saw the Chiapan

uprisings of the 1930s put down by the *latifundistas*, and most of the redistributed land was illegally seized back.

The second novel, which as we have seen, is, in so many ways, an extremely complex rewriting of the themes and narrative structures of the first, provides a rather more historically accurate closure for its story of the defeat of the indigenous peoples of the region, despite the best efforts of the *Cárdenas* regime and subsequent presidencies. Here, the old Gods do not fall; they hang on. And education as a means of escape does not even seem to be on the agenda for the Tzotziles, leaving them with no viable means of transforming their situation. The only possibility open to them of sacrifice and rebirth is deconstructed by the novel, as it also deconstructs the practical value to the illiterate indians of the two sacred books which seem to promote it.

This is where it becomes intriguing to consider what the effect is of transferring the supposed events of 1867 to the time of the *cardenista* years of the 1930s and early 1940s, and why do this in a novel which has many of the same plot details, themes and characters as a previous novel. Few authors contemplate the extensive rewriting of their work, at least on the scale of these two novels. First, situating *Oficio de tinieblas* in exactly the same period of history as *Balún-Canán* has the effect, if the two novels are read together, of dispatching the events narrated by the latter into oblivion, almost as if, fictionally, they had never happened that way at all, or are only half the story. This is made even more complex by the fact that both novels refer to the 1867 uprising as a distant historical event, the mistakes of which must be learned by both sides of

the 1930s conflict if it is to be prevented from happening again. Yet, despite these ingenious complexities, the effect of updating in fiction what Castellanos clearly thought was a disaster the first time around and turning it into a text which answers, negatively, most of the questions which are left unresolved in the previous book is the promotion of a pessimistic reading of the novel as a whole.

Jean Franco cites this pessimism as one of the reasons for what she sees as Rosario Castellanos' failure, even 'betrayal' in this novel: her 'attempt to be true to history dooms her protagonist' [23]. Yet according to the rest of her argument, if one is part of the subaltern classes, or marginalized groups, apart from a very limited ability to rebel, one is doomed to failure, precisely by history and its discourses. Joseph Sommers makes the much better point that both Castellanos' novels,

corren parejas con el movimiento para incorporar en la novelística nacional, el énfasis universal de posguerra sobre la angustia humana, los fracasos de la sociedad, el ocaso de la antes indiscutible regla del 'progreso inevitable'. [24]

While this may well be true of *Oficio de tinieblas*, it surely cannot apply to the first novel, for *Balún-Canán*, whether intentionally or not, invested heavily, at least in part, in many of the mid-1950s neo-cardenista ideals of progress, such as national integration, and access to authority through education and, in particular, literacy campaigns. *Oficio de tinieblas*, on the other hand, does indeed seem to provide a severe critique of those ideals, and does so largely through presenting cardenista philosophies as a prior discourse in the novel, set up against the historically more powerful

ideology of patriarchal feudalism, which certainly triumphed in the Chiapas of the time. I use the phrase 'seems to provide' for I shall go on to examine in the final part of this thesis how it sends out ambiguous messages even in this respect.

This second novel was begun in 1956, the year after *Balún-Canán* was completed, but it was only finished in 1961, five years later, and after Castellanos had returned from Mexico City to her native state of Chiapas to work for the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. The following quotation, in which she describes her impressions upon returning, may give some clues as to why she was less inclined to be optimistic in her second novel:

He defendido mi esperanza con la tenacidad de que soy capaz; estaba dispuesta a resistir muchas decepciones. Pero lo que he encontrado aquí superó en mucho mis cálculos más pesimistas [...] Es la autoridad transformada en injusticia, premiando a los logreros, exaltando a los mediocres, pisoteando a los débiles. Es la ley degenerada en capricho insano. Es el interés de unos cuantos individuos, sobreponiéndose al beneficio de aquellos a quienes el INI se comprometió a ayudar. [25]

And even this jaundiced view deepened as she grew older: in her final play, *El eterno femenino*, written just before she died, she included the following lines of dialogue between Adelita, the revolutionary, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz :

- ADELITA: Hubo un papel, muchos papeles. Con el precio módico de diez millones de muertos logramos convertir a México en un inmenso archivero.
- SOR JUANA: Pero los libros de historia dicen que la Revolución triunfó. [26]

PART 2: AUTHORSHIP

¡Escribir! ¡Manía de mujeres solas!
[O. p360]

These heavily ironic words, which are uttered by the bishop, Don Alfonso Cañaveral, towards the end of Castellanos' second novel when he hears of the anonymous letters which he guesses have been sent to the state governor by Idolina, help to draw attention to one of the other 'oficios' referred to by the title according to several critics, including Beth Miller [1]: that of authorship. Unfortunately, despite pointing this out, perhaps only Raquel Scherr has spent any time analyzing what this might mean for the novel, and her response is to deny the significance of writing, in favour of an emphasis on the 'oral' storytelling which seems to go in it, and in *Balún-Canán*. Here, I will attempt to counterbalance this view with evidence of what I see as the profound importance of writing as a theme, and of the centrality once more of a young girl in this. Finally, I will pick up again the idea of the two texts in *Oficio de tinieblas*, in order to show how the reading of this book, as a more up-to-date novel, with a greater degree of political realism than the first, can in fact be subverted.

It is Raquel Scherr, in her unpublished dissertation, which considers Castellanos' early fiction in greater detail than *Oficio de tinieblas*, who, nonetheless, points out the clear similarities between the characters of the little girl and her *nana* in *Balún-Canán*, and Idolina and her *nana*, Teresa Entzín López in the second novel. Scerr traces how this latest rejected

daughter, Idolina's propensity for telling tales begins with her exaggeration of her illness, and then becomes focussed on playing solitary games in which she ascribes personalities to playing cards:

El rey de espadas, por ejemplo, correspondía a su padrastro, por las ideas que ambos le sugerían de crueldad, poder y daño. La sota de oros era su madre y el caballo de bastos el médico en turno. Idolina los agrupaba en extrañas combinaciones y les prestaba voz para que sostuvieron diálogos en los que se desahogaba una imaginación exasperada por el rencor y el aislamiento. [O. pp85-86]

Scherr notes how it is precisely because Idolina shuts her *nana* out by playing these games that Teresa starts to invent her own stories, presented as prophecies, in order to regain the girl's attention and to establish some kind of communication. Scherr's argument is that tale-telling is a trope, both in *Balún-Canán* and in *Oficio de tinieblas*, which signifies the possibility of dialogue and the breaking down of silence and solitude. She counterposes this to Castellanos' obvious dislike of so-called elitist forms of literature, such as modernism, and finally suggests that the Mexican author's narratives confuse the boundaries between tale-telling (=positive value) and novel-making (=negative value). This may reveal a great deal about Scherr's own attitude, largely one of 'script-aversion' or phonocentrism, with its almost unconscious promotion of orality, as warm, life-enhancing, anti-elitist, and, most of all, feminine: 'It is through her tales that she gives us a glimpse of a culture that engages in the process of communicating feelings and does not seek as its end-product a constricted and closed system of "silent texts"' [2]. But it is not an entirely convincing reading of what are, of course, *written* texts. Yet, Scherr's most telling comment, which nonetheless seems to contradict the

rest of her argument as it recognizes, albeit as a necessary evil, the centrality of writing in Castellanos' world-view, reads as follows:

in the general evolution of her two young female protagonists from listeners to readers, to creators of tales, and finally to writers [Castellanos seems to suggest] that writing, in its ability to make experience concrete, can confer existence upon events which might otherwise be forgotten in the telling. In other words, it is the beginning of the historical process as we know it. But the history that these protagonists record assumes the viewpoint of the female gender; after all, feminine identity, as Castellanos affirms in an autobiographical notation, lies at the root of these attempts at a history. [3]

Raquel Scherr does not examine *Oficio de tinieblas* in any detail, so I shall take up where these comments leave off.

Idolina is clearly marked out as a character with an identity problem, revealed as usual with much free indirect discourse. Castellanos describes her 'ansia de ser' [O. p92], as the girl surveys people around her and imagines what it would be like to be them, and thence to *be*, in general. Her first attempt at writing requires a close analysis. It is described in Chapter seven of the novel, after Idolina becomes certain that her stepfather, Leonardo, is having an affair with her new friend, Julia Acevedo, and is clearly portrayed as the girl's only recourse, because her *nana*, Teresa, is not there for her to be able to vent her anger:

Es medianoche y el rescoldo del brasero se ha extinguido. Tropezando, va hasta la luz y la enciende. Pero el proyecto que la empujó a levantarse se desvanece ante la llama pálida y oscilante de la vela. ¿Qué quería? Ah, sí, quejarse, protestar. Pero no mañana; transcurriría siglos antes de que amanezca. Ansiosamente

busca un papel y un lápiz. Ella, que apenas sabe escribir, está llenando ahora una página y otra con esa letra grande, desgobernada, de quienes están acostumbrados a emplear la mano en otros menesteres. Es un relato tumultuoso, una confesión infantil, el último grito del que se ahoga. Cuando termina está jadeante como si hubiera hecho un gran esfuerzo físico. Dobla los papeles y los guarda en un sobre. Sólo entonces se da cuenta de que no tiene a quien dirigírselo. Antes de apagar la vela prende fuego a una de las puntas del manuscrito. Ayudada por esta claridad vuelve al lecho. Ahora tiritita de frío y el alivio momentáneo que le produjo la escritura ha desaparecido. [O. p202]

Then, as she plans to try again later, Idolina begins to imagine the awful possibility that she might die without ever doing this. So in this passage writing is linked to providing a release from the anguishes of life, and to establishing and giving a permanence to an identity which might otherwise be effaced. Also, in the description of the clumsy, childlike handwriting, one is reminded of the 'letra inhábil, torpe' of the little girl writing her brother's name in *Balún-Canán*. But, given the importance of the symbolism of light and darkness in the novel, from its title onwards, this passage is clearly significant in other ways. Idolina goes towards the light from a solitary candle in order to write. As she hesitates about whether to start at that moment, the deciding factor is 'transcurrirían siglos antes de que amanezca', prefiguring the final words of the novel, which in turn seem to symbolize the impossibility at that time for real progress or change [4]. Thus there is an ambiguity over whether or not the writing here is a positive or a negative element: the light certainly seems brighter as Idolina burns the papers. But then Idolina's efforts here are useless anyway for there is no 'destinatario' this time. Here, she does not manage to reach beyond her solitude through writing, though she now knows that this is how she will approach it in the future.

Evidence that Idolina might have managed to write some letters surfaces in Chapter 28 - although no concrete proof of her identity is provided at this stage - and that they have found their way to a reader. Julia discovers a bundle of letters - 'letra irregular, ortografía plebeya' [O. p290] - among Fernando's belongings, which betray her infidelity with Leonardo in rather extreme terms. They are not signed, - it is vaguely hinted at that Julia might have guessed their origin - but end with "'una persona que lo estima, pero que cree más prudente no dar sus señas"'.

The final time that there is a reference to Idolina's letter-writing skills is in Chapter 37, near the end of the novel, when we hear that the state governor has been another recipient. In his conversation with the near-blind bishop, Don Alfonso Cañaveral, he describes how his role *vis-à-vis* the uprising was affected by the news he received in these letters from Ciudad Real:

En esas cartas me aseguraban que la situación no era grave; que los finqueros habían armado a sus propios peones para simular un peligro que no existía. [O. p359]

Because the letters convinced him that he was being deceived about the real situation by the Coletos, that they only wanted the help in order to put off the redistribution of the lands and not because they were under any real threat of attack, he refused their requests to send state troops to put down the Tzotzil uprising. Although he is annoyed that he was deceived in this way, he is still happy that he did not send the forces because 'Los finqueros querían usar al ejército como verdugo, no como defensor'. So, in fact, here is proof that the letters have a slight, positive effect. The

governor does not back the landowners, and the Tzotziles, despite heavy losses inflicted by Leonardo's men, are not all massacred; some will live on, possibly to fight another day. This is not the only outcome: the letters tell of Leonardo's supposed role in Ulloa's death, so that he could set himself up permanently with Julia Acevedo, who has, in fact, left Ciudad Real. This scandalous detail will harm Leonardo's hopes that he will be the next governor.

The false stories told in the letters not only have several positive effects, but they also, in different ways, tell the truth. In the second matter of Ulloa's death, although Leonardo cannot be held entirely responsible on this occasion, it is more than hinted at earlier in the novel, that Leonardo was responsible for the death of Isidoro Cifuentes, his adopted brother and Idolina's father, in order to steal his inheritance and his wife, Isabel. So, a past truth in the fictional history of one of the characters is updated and adapted by a fictional author in order to right an old wrong.

The second piece of truth in the fiction of the letters is more complex. The story that Idolina tells about the uprising may not be entirely accurate: certainly, a perceived threat from the Tzotziles is identified by the people of Ciudad Real, even if it is exaggerated and exploited by the devious Leonardo Cifuentes, and it clearly benefits his interests to do so. However, if what contemporary anthropologists say about the 1867 uprising is true, that there was no crucifixion and the whole event was invented by the landowners in order to attack their peons, then the story in the

letters is (perhaps unwittingly on the behalf of the real author, Castellanos) almost completely truthful. This ironic twist seems to provide a corrective - certainly on a intra-narrative level and possibly in its reference to the original historical event - to the racist account which would have the rebellious indians as gratuitously bloodthirsty and destructive savages.

The bishop has guessed that the letters with their false signatures come from Idolina, and he gives his reasons for this;

Cuando alguno está solo, solo de raíz y durante mucho tiempo, adivina las intenciones de los demás antes de que se cuajen en actos y palpa los delirios ajenos y da nombre y sustancia a las criaturas que los otros sueñan sin saberlo. [O. p361]

He empathizes with her; he has done much the same thing in his sermons, which provided the first hints to Idolina of Julia and Leonardo's affair and inspired her to write [O. p203]. But this particular 'manía de escribir', which produces such letters, only seems to afflict lonely women, not powerful bishops.

Idolina's status as an author, then, is a little less anonymous than that of the little girl in *Balún-Canán*. Even though she is never actually named as responsible for the letters, enough clues are dropped for the reader to be in no doubt about their provenance. She is an archetypal 'unreliable narrator' and her letters underpin the story in many fascinating ways. Their role is like that of the little girl stealing the key and 'causing' the death of her brother in the first novel, or like the *nana's* story of the

'Dzulúm', which helps to lead Matilde to her oblivion. They act as a kind of *deus ex machina*, orchestrating events from the outside - after all, they are not reproduced in the text of the novel. What is more, although 'fictional', they derive their power from the fact that they seem to tell essential truths, which other characters believe and use to justify their actions. As a consequence, Idolina becomes far more powerful, indirectly, than any other character in the novel, the fates of whom she controls, and she achieves this through her clumsy, spiteful, letters, written (can we presume?) at the dead of night by the light of a solitary candle. This is a less noble version of gaining authority through writing than that which runs through *Balún-Canán*, but it is a version of it nonetheless, and one of the principal effects of the letters - that the Tzotziles do survive, albeit severely depleted - furnish the plot with one of the few notes of hope.

There is even the briefest of suggestions, at the end of the novel, that Idolina might have dreamed the entire plot, as the omniscient narrator describes a nightmarish fantasy that the young girl entertains:

Repentinamente la muralla se derrumba. Y hablan las bocas sofocadas de tierra.
Catalina repite una salmodia sin sentido. Fernando pronuncia la palabra ley y los oídos sordos la rechazan y la devuelven convertida en befa. 'El que nació cuando el eclipse' grita cuando la Cruz lo crucifica. Winiktón arenga a un ejército de sombras. [...] Idolina escucha un instante, sobrecogida de terror. Y grita, como si también la crucificaran, y Teresa Entzin López, su nana, acude a ella solícita y la acoge en su regazo y acaricia su cabeza y le cuenta un cuento para calmarla [...]. [O. p366]

The tale that Teresa tells her, beginning with one of the traditional notices served by oral storytellers that their work is about to begin, 'En

otro tiempo', is at once a recasting of the plot of *Oficio de tinieblas* and a reference back to a prehistory of the plot, rather like Leonardo's earlier allusion to the 1867 uprising:

-En otro tiempo - no habías nacido tú, criatura; acaso tampoco había nacido yo - hubo en mi pueblo, según cuentan los ancianos, una ilol de gran virtud. [O. p366]

This story is somewhat different again from the original historical incident and from the story of Catalina. The 'ilol' gives birth to a stone son, and has magical power, for which she becomes famous throughout the *zona fría*. Her pride causes her to demand the sacrifice of the first born son from every family, leading the heads of both the white community and the Tzotziles to rise up against her. They shoot at her, but the bullets only rebound and kill some of their followers. However, an old sacristan tells them a trick, to persuade her to wrap her stone son in a shawl woven by the 'brujos' of Guatemala. This kills her son, and she commits suicide, an act which also wipes out most of her tribe. The Lords of Ciudad Real order the remaining tribe members to carry out a penitence for this disaster:

Los mismos señores proporcionan a los culpables los instrumentos para la consumación del castigo. El nombre de esa ilol, que todos pronunciaron alguna vez con reverencia y con esperanza, ha sido proscrito. Y el que se siente punzado por la tentación de pronunciarlo escupe y la saliva ayuda a borrar su imagen, a borrar su memoria. [O. p368]

And so, in this way, the story of Catalina is turned through its repetition as orally transmitted legend, is turned into another familiar controlling

device, the tale of the deviant woman who comes to no good end, and who, when she falls, brings others down with her. Jean Franco writes of this passage:

The ending of Castellanos' novel seems to reflect a belief that subaltern cultures (including that of women) cannot become counterhegemonic because they do not have access to writing, and because even their oral culture is penetrated by myths of submission. Teresa's mythic interpretations of Catalina's actions, transmitted not to her own people but to Idolina, who belongs to another social class and race, demonstrates the fact that all transculturation is destructive to the indigenous community [...].
[5]

I would certainly disagree with the first comment: clearly, women, or one young woman in particular, do have access to writing in *Oficio de tinieblas*, and this has a powerful effect on the plot. Yet, the second point, about the penetration of oral culture by oppressive values from the dominant culture is very compelling. Teresa only feels fulfilled when she is telling her stories to Idolina. When she is staying with the Tzotzil community she ponders the thought that 'aun la palabra más pequeña, la más insignificante le parecía un desperdicio. Porque no era escuchada por Idolina' [O. p253]. But her stories are only heard, and so are easily forgotten when Idolina makes new friends like Julia Acevedo. Teresa's method of combatting this is deliberately to tailor her stories for their audience: she tells Idolina, a resentful adolescent girl from the white landowning classes what she wants to hear, prophecies about the violent deaths of her mother and stepfather, in her *nana's* prediction from the 'ceniza' [O. p87]. And the girl even falls calmly asleep to this last story of the rout of the Tzotziles. Yet, when Teresa begins to tell her the tale of the 'ijc'al', which does not seem as relevant to Idolina's life, she instructs her *nana*:

'Callate nana. no quiero más historias'. Idolina, whose own stories are not silenced because they are written, and therefore indestructible, has the power to censor any unsuitable accounts, just like the little girl in *Balún-Canán*, who silences her *nana's* story of the Conquest.

And yet just as Idolina's invisible letters frame the narrative of Castellanos' novel in an important way, so do Teresa's stories. Like the *nana's* tales in *Balún-Canán*, they combine with the other *Popol-Vuh*-like elements, such as the passage which opens the novel and many of Catalina's interventions, to form a current in the text which would seem to preserve recognizable oral patternings, harking back to a completely pre-literate, orally constituted sensibility. They appear to reproduce a magico-religious discourse. They do not explain events but instead provide a totalizing description, and so, are self-consciously aggregative rather than analytic. They frequently draw attention to the fact that they are the record of a speaking voice, a 'papel que habla', even when they are not framed by direct speech marks:

Pues he aquí que el plazo de la purgación ha terminado. Que los signos de prueba se cumplieron. Las potencias oscuras se reconcilian con sus siervos y les conceden el don que ha de hacerlos semejantes, en fuerza, en mando, a los caxlanes.
[O. p318]

It is this discourse, this 'papel que habla', which makes up what might be called the 'Indian Text' in the novel, and it comes, as it did in *Balún-Canán*, not from an actual oral tradition, but from the written record of an oral tradition, the pre-Columbian texts that so many other *indigenista* writers have exploited for similar stylistic reasons.

In *Oficio de tinieblas*, this descriptive discourse which seems to provide much of the 'showing' which goes on in the novel, appears side by side with an analytic, or 'Western Text', which provides much of the 'telling'. This second text reveals the central struggle fought out between dominant ideologies; the victory of the racist, anachronistic values of the Chiapan landowning classes over those of the idealistic state visionaries, pointing to the fact that, as we saw before, the novel appears to provide a thematic repudiation of the idea of an inevitable march towards progress, justice and rationalism, revealing the values of both ideologies to be as ridden with bad faith and superstition as the beliefs of the Tzotziles are [6].

And yet, this second 'Text' does seem to exert a great deal of power over the first. Apart from the obvious paradox of reproducing orally constituted sensibilities in writing, for the process of putting spoken language into writing is always governed by contrived, 'artificial' rules, other aspects of the traditional novelistic discourse serve to subvert the idea of the straightforward aggregative account of Tzotzil culture. Jean Franco seems to touch upon this in *Plotting Women*:

[Castellanos' novel has a validity which is] undermined by a third person narrative that masks an ideological positioning. Her story is not official history, yet it is structured by the master narrative of the landowners in ways in which she^{is} not even aware. Her omniscient voice puts her outside the orally transmitted cultures of the indigenous community and women and allows her to speak from a place - the national novel - in which there are no heroines, only heroes. [7]

Unfortunately Jean Franco does not explain this further, except to say that

'the realist novel elided her own subjectivity beneath the voice of the omniscient narrator' [7]. I would suggest that the ideological positioning to which Franco refers is masked less by the choice of a third person narrator and more by the *omniscient* voice of that narrator, and that the problem is not that Castellanos is eliding her own subjectivity under this voice, but bolstering the whole concept of subjectivity, in general.

It is in the use of traditional narrative devices, such as interior monologue and free indirect discourse, to depict subjectivity throughout *Oficio de tinieblas* and in the middle section of *Balún-Canán*, which critics believe has created the effect of 'whole' and 'rounded' characters for which Castellanos has been so praised, show that the Mexican author's idea of 'musitar el origen' is inevitably linked to a set of twentieth-century Western concerns. We have seen how each character is shown in crisis, through interiorization, and how their motivations are revealed through these crises of interior conscience. Idolina is motivated by spite, and solitude; César is motivated by injustice caused by his inferior class position. Castellanos also employs these devices with regard to the Tzeltal and Tzotzil characters she describes, so that Catalina becomes an *ilol* because she cannot have children of her own; Teresa Entzín López is alienated from her own culture by her effective enslavement by the Cifuentes family; Felipe and Pedro become literate in order to fight against the injustice they see all around them. The omniscient narrator sees and explains all of this, setting it out not just in the direct speech of the characters but also in the 'zones' in the text which surround their interventions.

It is the entire epistemology of the omniscient narrator - based on the premise that every self, including the indian self, is inherently knowable - which undermines the otherwise radical, pessimistic, political message of *Oficio de tinieblas*. It is the recourse to this epistemology which bolsters the bourgeois notion of the unitary self, so beloved of the rationalistic and positivistic discourses which are otherwise under attack in the novel, and which certainly lays waste to any concept of an indigenous world view which critics have said that Castellanos is promoting in her two novels.

In many ways, *Balún-Canán* remains a more open-ended text, with a more ambiguous message than this much longer, and more tightly controlled second novel. This is principally because it lacks the firm narrative closure which characterizes *Oficio de tinieblas*, where every storyline is resolved and everything finally explained, in spite of the fact that its plot is raised to the level of a myth in the final pages.

I am not interested in issuing any kind of blame to Castellanos for some kind of weakness in this regard, for it is a truism in most forms of literary criticism that no novelist sets out to create a novel simply out their lived experience, but because, before they even start, they are familiar with and formed by this very kind of textual organization of experience or opinions. What is important is that the ideological positioning behind the traditional omniscient novel with its interiorizing devices does not allow the unambiguous promotion of the kind of political perspective which several progressive critics have tried to ascribe to Rosario Castellanos, for it cannot provide her with a value-free artistic

vehicle - a *tabula rasa* - with which to launch an effective, radical attack on the victors of history.

Just as Idolina's invisible letters, as she writes herself into a position of authority, exert a powerful influence on the events described in *Oficio de tinieblas*, so do the other, seemingly invisible, organizing principles of the Western novel control the narrative process as a whole, limiting and modifying what can be achieved as Castellanos writes herself into authority. It is not that she fails, as Jean Franco writes, 'to appropriate the then hegemonic genre - the novel as national allegory' [8]. But that, just as the few remaining Tzotziles worship the 'Ordenanzas militares' which have helped to bring about their downfall, at the end of *Oficio de tinieblas*, the kind of writing which is underpinned by those very values and assumptions which ensure the survival of the systems of oppression to which Castellanos is opposed is, in turn, held in reverence and re-used, albeit with altogether different purposes in mind.

CONCLUSION:

In order to see herself or be seen she has to insert herself into a preexisting narrative.

(Mary Jacobus writing of Artemisia Gentileschi) [1]

Autobiographies, writes Sylvia Molloy, 'are wont to highlight the privileged encounter with the written word as a symbolic beginning for their life stories, an acknowledgment of the very tools for self-definition' [2]. In Rosario Castellanos' first novel, *Balún-Canán*, the fictional protagonist tells the confessional tale of the events that prompted her to take up her pen for the first time. This autobiographical project - emphasized by the fact that the young girl characters in the two novels are both writers - takes the form of a written, fictional equivalent of the 'family album'. *Balún-Canán's* first and last parts portray meaningful snapshots of the gender, class and race socialization of their subject, who provides an eccentric, in the sense of off-centre or marginal, view of turbulent events. Rosalind Coward, in describing autobiographical texts authored by women, writes of the ideological constructs of this form of writing:

The central protagonist is shown making sense of the world as a child makes sense of the world: children, it is believed, work out their world slowly, only through enquiry, eavesdropping, prying and looking into the closets of their immediate family. The child in this ideology is a sort of miniature detective, working out its genealogy, with a quick idea for the missing links. [3]

The fictional quest for identity through writing on behalf of the little girl in *Balún-Canán* and of Idolina in *Oficio de tinieblas* very much parallels that of the real author:

Mientras llevo a cabo esta tarea [de escribir...] no soy aquella a quien la muerte ha deshechado para elegir a otro, al mejor, a mi hermano. No soy aquella a quien sus padres abandonaron para llorar, concienzudamente, su duelo. No soy esa figura lamentable que vaga por los corredores desiertos y que no va a la escuela ni a paseos ni a ninguna parte. No. Soy casi una persona.

[...] Soy la autora de eso que los otros leen, comentan. [4]

Both Castellanos, in her autobiographical texts, and her two fictional protagonists maintain a belief in writing as a form of personal salvation, affirming their existence in the face of solitude and marginality. But we have also seen how Castellanos points, in her texts, to this same practice as a form of liberation for other oppressed groups, in particular the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

Neither of these ideas are original, even if their particular combination in Castellanos' work is unusual for her time and, thus, noteworthy. The belief that the subject status of women and other marginalized groups may be achieved through writing and 'self-expression', reversing their position as passive, oppressed objects, draws on the discourses of liberal and radical feminism, and on policies seeking to integrate minorities into a more productive role within the modern post-colonial nation state. These discourses came into conflict in post-Revolutionary Mexico with the residual ideological positions of the old ruling élites, the landowning classes.

This is precisely the conflict which Castellanos dramatizes in her two novels, and for which purpose she adapted the form of the *indigenista* novel as her vehicle. These various ideological positions are conveyed in her two novels through the spoken words of her characters and in the omnisciently-narrated 'zones' which surround them. Certain characters are made to voice the then state-sponsored concerns of modern citizenship for all, justice and the law, territorial integrity and the pre-eminent importance of literacy to communicate these ideas. Others represent the discourse of the embattled, rural *status quo* in alliance with a beleaguered Catholic Church, with their assembled voices of paternalism. And other more marginal characters touch upon the concerns of an incipient feminism, struggling against centuries of prejudice and double standards.

The overt political message of the novels is far from being the unambiguous one many critics have believed. It is precisely because the story told in the middle section of the first novel, *Balún-Canán*, remains unresolved that an optimistic, or supposedly progressive political reading is possible: Felipe's struggles are successful; César does not retain his lands. Yet, for this same reason - the lack of narrative closure of one story in favour of that provided by another - the overt politics of *Balún-Canán* seem to take a back seat to another set of concerns: the loss of the family home, a family member and a childhood paradise; the end of a period of history, seemingly never to be repeated and the twilight of its Gods; the survival of the little girl who, in the absence of a male rival, may now establish her own identity in writing.

Many critics have preferred to ignore the dubious ideological complexities

of the first novel in favour of what are obviously considered to be the greater certainties of the second. In *Oficio de tinieblas*, the *petite histoire* of the little girl is apparently removed from the picture, leaving only the vast sweep of a rural epic in which, this time, the actual victors of history are seen to triumph in the fictional battle which is portrayed. The value of concepts such as justice, the power of the law and the inevitable march of progress are tested against the powers of 'tinieblas' and are found wanting, just as the historical rhetoric of *cardenismo*, resurrected by the Mexican official party presidents of the 1950s, was discovered by many, including Rosario Castellanos, to be hollow and impotent in the face of regressive forces which had not disappeared after the Revolution, and which ultimately were to be co-opted by the state, in much the same way as other Mexican ideological power bases were.

There is, however, one constant in the themes of the two novels. The texts written by Idolina may not appear in the narrative in the same way as those of the anonymous little girl of *Balún-Canán*, but they exert as much authority over the events of the novel. They are also borne of the same needs and fulfil the same purposes for Idolina: a need to be seen, a desire to be important in the scheme of things, to bear testimony (albeit a seemingly false one) to events in her life. If the rather more optimistic vision of writing as a means to salvation is somewhat modified in *Oficio de tinieblas* in comparison with the earlier novel - there is no school for the Tzotziles as there was for the Tzeltales; Pedro, like Felipe before him can write, but he does not take advantage of this - it is because in the novelistic universe in the second novel, the possibilities for real change simply through social reform with regard to the indigenous communities are

shown to be more firmly under the control of their oppressors. Much of Castellanos' later work, after she had abandoned the novel form, see her growing even more doubtful about the value of social reform alone, and even more convinced of the need for a more complete 'cultural' revolution, to defeat superstition and backward attitudes, which, of course, still required literacy as a first step.

It is clear that Castellanos' choice of themes in novels situate her firmly in the ranks of integrationist politics and liberal feminism, and the exploration of this, in terms of uncovering the discursively produced meanings which compete in the texts, has been one of the aims of this thesis. Yet equally important has been a detailed study of the narrative forms of the two novels, which combine structures from the traditional 'European' novel with elements from the indigenous cultures of Mexico in at least as imaginative a way as Asturias had done in his 1949 classic, *Hombres de maíz*. This, too, is worthy of note for, as Gordon Brotherston writes, 'With its class-defined origins in Europe and corresponding norms of setting, character, and so on, the novel transplanted to America has not always wished to explore this order of the new environment' [5].

The form of the traditional novel, however, cannot help but point to its own historical origins and the master discourses which form it. Despite the framing of her texts with pre-Columbian elements of style which strive to give them an 'authentic' indigenous legitimacy, both *Balún-Canán* and *Oficio de tinieblas* remain inescapably rooted in Western traditions of narrative discourse. There are no clearly defined characters in the *Popol-Vuh*, or *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*, who analyze their identities and situations in

the way that the Tzotzil and Tzeltal characters of Castellanos' two novels constantly do. We never learn of the in-depth motivations of Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué, as we learn of those of Catalina Díaz Puiljá, Teresa Entzín López and Felipe Carranza Pech largely through the devices of interiorization, and who are in this way shown to be following at all times the imperatives of intense personal experience. It is this last aspect of the two novels, this 'equal opportunities characterization', in which the indigenous characters are seen as having experiences in the same way as 'the rest of us', that critics have praised as progressive, and as an advance in terms of humanist understanding on much previous *indigenista* fiction. Yet this kind of 'subjectivist intensity' - to steal a phrase that the critic, Raymond Williams, frequently used - is part and parcel of a discursive format whose rise coincided with the birth of industrial capitalism and the growth of bourgeois individualism. As Catherine Belsey writes,

Classic realism presents individuals whose traits of character, understood as essential and predominantly given, constrain the choices they make, and whose potential for development depends on what is given. Human nature is thus seen as a system of character-differences existing in the world, but one which nonetheless permits the reader to share the hopes and fears of a wide range of kinds of characters. [6]

This is the tradition from which Castellanos' novels derive their 'intelligibility'. The interior monologues and free indirect speech ensure that there are few characters in either novel with whom we cannot have some sense of shared humanity. And just as Castellanos gives authority to her characters as individuals, she authorizes herself and her readers as subjects. Even in the 'higher form' of realism of the first and last parts of *Balún-Canán*, in the first person narrated text, the same practices are at

work.

These practices, here adapted by the discourses of egalitarian politics, are based, as indeed are Castellanos' views on feminism and the national integration of indigenous peoples, on the idea of the experiential individual who lies at the heart of Western society, and on the belief that their experience is 'real', in other words pre-linguistic, and can be 'represented' in writing. This view, which sees the establishment of the subjectivity of women and other oppressed peoples - on a par with that of dominant groups - as an unquestioned good, together with the discourses of the realist novel which convey it, situate the Mexican author firmly in the historical moment of liberal feminism. Or rather, they help to situate her novels in this way, for the work of Rosario Castellanos continued for a period of twelve more years - with poetry, short stories, articles and plays - which saw these discourses of feminism change.

The purpose in carrying out this form of analysis of these novels and of some of the ideas which informed them has been that of articulating a response to those forms of criticism which, in seeking to champion the work and the person against the grain of prevailing sexist attitudes, have provided only very generalized readings which have revealed more about the political priorities of the critic than about the novels. This last censure can clearly be extended to all endeavours at literary criticism, including this one, and the best that can be hoped for is for the critic to be as honest as possible about his or her aims. The 'hidden agenda' in this particular enterprise has obviously been linked to a belief in the dangers of a subjectivist normativity, and to a desire, as Gayatri Spivak puts it,

'to situate feminist individualism in its historical determination rather than simply to canonize it as feminism as such' [7].

In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed an account of the rise of the figure of the author and his relationship to authority, quoting Donald Pease who wrote that 'By inventing new words to describe things in the New World, authors declared their right to be represented on their terms rather than in the way of the ancient books' [8]. Here, in the conclusion, it only remains to be added that it is clearly not so easy for Latin-American women novelists to free themselves from the *auctors* and the discourses of the old order and to write their own new words and establish their own authority. For it would seem that words, or perhaps their known configurations, are already furnished with the old meanings. Castellanos dramatizes the processes of a literary inheritance in one of her most famous poems, 'Al pie de la letra', which despite acknowledging where writing comes from, still asserts that originality and freedom are possible, and that what can be achieved can long outlast the individual who produces it. I will close with some of the stanzas from this poem, with their striking imagery:

Desde hace años, lectura,
tu lento alardo se hunde en mis entrañas,
remueve la escondida fertilidad, penetra
hasta donde lo oscuro - esto es lo oscuro: roca -
rechaza los metales con un chispazo lívido.

Plantel de la palabra me volviste.
No sabe la semilla de qué mano ha caído.
Allá donde se pudre
nada recuerda y no presiente nada.

La humedad germinal se escribe, sin embargo,
en la celeste página de las constelaciones.

[...]

Lo que soñó la tierra
es visible en el árbol.

La armazón bien trabada del tronco, la hermosura
sostenida en la rama
y el rumor del espíritu en libertad: la hoja.

He aquí la obra, el libro.

Duerma mi día último a su sombra.
[9]

NOTES:

INTRODUCTION

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8. Roberto González Echeverría, *The Voice of the Masters: Writing and Authority in Modern Latin American Literature* (Austin, 1985)
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All subsequent references in this thesis are to these second editions of these novels, and any quotations or references to these novels will be denoted in the text between square brackets and symbolized by [B.C.] or [O.] and followed by the relevant page number(s). See also the 'KEY' note after the 'Table of Contents'.

CHAPTER 1: PAST CRITICISM AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

PART 1: A REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP DEALING WITH THE NOVELS OF ROSARIO CASTELLANOS

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11. Joseph Sommers, 'Literatura e historia: las contradicciones ideológicas de la ficción indigenista', *Revista de Crítica latinoamericana* (1989), 9-39
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13. María del Carmen Millán, 'En torno a *Oficio de tinieblas*', *Anuario de Letras: Revista de la facultad de letras (UNAM)*, (1963) vol.3, 287-299, 288
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17. Aura N.Román-López, 'Conflicto cultural y existencial en *Oficio de tinieblas*', *DAI*, vol.43, no.3,(Sept. 1982), 817-A
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19. *ibid.*, 116
20. Frances R.Dorward, 'Literary Art and Indian World View in Twentieth-Century Mexican *Indigenista* Fiction', PhD Edinburgh,(1984), *Aslib*, vol.34, part 2 (1986),147
21. Frances R.Dorward, 'The Function of Interiorization in *Oficio de tinieblas*', *Neophilogus*, (1985) vol.69, 374-385, 384
22. Cynthia Steele, 'Literature and National Formation: *Indigenista* Fiction in the United States (1820-1860) and in Mexico (1920-1960)', PhD University of California, San Diego, (1980), *DAI*,vol.41, no.7,(Jan. 1981), 3127-A
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14. David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London, 1990) 75
15. *ibid.*, 86

CHAPTER 2: THE SITE FOR DISCURSIVE MEANINGS

PART 1: LANGUAGE: A TOOL OF DOMINATION AND LIBERATION

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3. Rosario Castellanos, 'El idioma en San Cristóbal las Casas', *Juicios sumarios* op.cit., 131-137
'Divagación en el idioma', *El uso de la palabra* op.cit., 152-155
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14. Rosario Castellanos, 'Divagación [...]' op.cit., 152
15. *ibid.*, 155
16. Rosario Castellanos, 'Notas al margen [...]' op.cit., 177
17. *ibid.*, 178

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21. Rosario Castellanos, 'Arte y destinatario', *El mar y sus pescaditos* op.cit., 193-197, 195
22. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* (Paris, 1948) 356
23. Rosario Castellanos, 'Violette Leduc: la literatura como vía de legitimación', *Mujer que sabe latín* op.cit., 67-72, 72
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7. Rosario Castellanos, 'La tristeza del mexicano', *El uso de la palabra* op.cit., 164
8. *ibid.*, 166
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13. Raquel M.Scherr, op.cit., 34, citing Octavio Paz, op.cit., 77
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18. Raquel M.Scherr, op.cit., 13
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 27. Chris Weedon, op.cit., 84-85
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PART 3: WHICH DISCOURSE?

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2. Chris Weedon, op.cit., 95
3. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, op.cit., 16
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5. Jean Franco, op.cit., xii
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7. *ibid.*, 131
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9. *ibid.*, 146
10. *ibid.*, 145
11. Mary Seale Vásquez, 'Rosario Castellanos, Image and Idea' in *Homenaje a Rosario Castellanos* op.cit., 32
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16. Terry Threadgold, 'Talking about Genre: Ideologies and Incompatible Discourses', *Cultural Studies* vol. 3, no. 1, January 1989, 101-127, 106
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20. *ibid.*, 113
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23. Rosario Castellanos, 'La mujer ante el espejo: cinco autobiografías'
Mujer que sabe latín op.cit., 43-44
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49
25. Rosario Castellanos, 'La mujer ante el espejo [...]' op.cit., 41
26. See also the work of James Olney and Georges Gusdorf

CHAPTER 3: *BALÓN-CANÁN*

PART 1: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FIRST NOVEL

1. Rhoda Dyvig, op.cit., 37
2. María Estela Franco, op.cit., 32
3. Emmanuel Carballo, 'Rosario Castellanos', *Diecinueve protagonistas de la literatura del siglo XX*, (Mexico, 1965) 409-424
'Rosario Castellanos' in *Los narradores ante el público* (Mexico, 1966) 89-98
4. Emmanuel Carballo, op.cit. 419. Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain a copy of the short story to which Castellanos refers on the same page, and so cannot comment on it:

Escribí dos cuentos; uno de ellos, 'Primera revelación', es un germen de *Balón-Canán*.

5. Biographical sources are as follows:
Germaine Calderón, *El universo poético de Rosario Castellanos* (Mexico, 1979)
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Irene Nicholson, *Mexican and Central American Mythology* (London, 1967)
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6. The main difference between fictional and real family names are those of the mothers; in the novel, Zoraida Solís de Argüello, in real life, Adriana Figueroa de Castellanos. My feeling is that the mother is portrayed as such a negative character in the novel that Castellanos would not wish for her to be associated with her real mother. María Estela Franco, however, gives several reasons why parallels may be drawn, op.cit., 32-39
7. Chloe Furnival, op.cit., 66-67
8. From the back cover of *Balón-Canán* (my emphasis). An example of such a reader is Maurice Richardson, who reviewed the novel in the British magazine, *New Statesman*, (July 25, 1959) 115-116, who wrote:

Unfortunately she puts [most of the novell] into the mouth of the seven-year old Argüello daughter, herself, presumably - who narrates away in the breathless historic present, like an

all-seeing eye.

9. For example, see the reviews of the novel contained in eds. D. W. Foster and V. Ramos Foster, *Modern Latin-American Literature: A Library of Literary Criticism*, vol. 1, (New York, 1975) 240-246
10. Rhoda Dybvig, op.cit., 32
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12. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London, 1983) 71-85
13. *ibid.*, 125
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15. Rosario Castellanos in Emmanuel Carballo, op.cit., 418
16. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, op.cit., 108
17. Raquel Scherr, op.cit., 188
18. Sylvia Molloy, *At Face Value: Autobiographical writing in Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1991)
19. See particularly James Olney, *Autobiography, Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980)
20. Sylvia Molloy, op.cit., 3-4
21. Texts which deal with autobiographical writing by women are:
Shari Benstock, ed., op.cit.
Estelle C. Jelinek, *Women's Autobiographies* (Bloomington, 1980)
Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiographies, Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, 1987)
Domna C. Stanton, op.cit.
22. Sylvia Molloy, op.cit., 2

PART 2: INDIGENISTA OR LADINISTA NOVEL

1. Rosario Castellanos, 'Rosario Castellanos habla de Rosario Castellanos', op.cit., 22
2. Donald Lee Schmidt, op.cit.
3. Cynthia Steele, op.cit.
4. Martin Lienhard, op.cit.
5. *ibid.*, 113-114
6. *ibid.*, 120
7. *ibid.*, 114
8. *ibid.*, 115
9. Donald Lee Schmidt, op.cit., 191
10. Joseph Sommers, 'Literatura e historia: las contradicciones ideológicas de la ficción indigenista', op.cit., 9-39
11. Here, I am once more basing my discussion on my survey of these techniques by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, op.cit., 106-129
12. *ibid.*, 113
13. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Writing "Race" and the Difference Literature Makes', *"Race", Writing and Difference* (Chicago, 1986) 11-12
14. I will analyze this in more detail in my discussion of a similar device used in *Oficio de tinieblas*.
15. Anónimo, *Popol-Vuh*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez Díaz (San Salvador, 1980), 73
16. *ibid.*, 146-147

CHAPTER 4: OFICIO DE TINIEBLAS OR BALÓN-CANAN REVISED

PART 1: AUTHORITY

1. Emmanuel Carballo, op.cit., 420
2. Raquel Scherr, op.cit., 188
3. Ricardo Pozas, *Chamula*, 2vols. (Mexico, 1977)
4. Leticia Reina and Jan Rus, cited in Jean Franco, op.cit., 221n
5. Jean Franco, op.cit., 141
6. Frances Dorward, 'The Function of Interiorization in *Oficio de tinieblas*', op.cit.
7. *ibid.*, 382
8. *ibid.*, 384
9. *ibid.*, 384
10. *ibid.*, 381-382
11. Jean Franco, op.cit., 139
12. Wayne C, Booth, op.cit., 54
Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*
(California, 1954) 6-7
13. Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse Typology in Prose' An extract from
Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics ed. Caryl Emerson (Manchester 1984)
14. Beth Miller, op.cit.
15. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* ed. Michael Holquist (Austin,
1981) 316
16. *ibid.*, 342-352
17. *ibid.*, 344
18. María del Carmen Millán, op.cit., 292
19. Thomas Washington, op.cit., 124-125
20. *Popol-Vuh*, op.cit., 111
21. *ibid.*, 110
22. Jean Franco, op.cit., 141

23. *ibid.*, 146
24. Joseph Sommers, 'El ciclo de Chiapas', *op.cit.*, 260
25. Letter by Rosario Castellanos to Gastón García Cantú, 'El vínculo con la tierra y sus dioses', *Rosario Castellanos; El verso, la palabra y el recuerdo op.cit.*, 62-73, 75
26. Rosario Castellanos, *El eterno femenino* (Mexico, 1975) 42

PART 2: AUTHORSHIP

1. Beth Miller, op.cit., 42
2. Raquel Scherr, op.cit., 234
3. *ibid.*, 233
4. The final words of the novel are prefigured at least once more in the novel: 'Faltaba mucho para que la riqueza llegase hasta las masas ínfimas de la población' [O. 174].
5. Jean Franco, op.cit., 144
6. Thomas Washington clearly shows in his thesis (op.cit.) that this second novel is as much about debunking the myths and superstitions of the dominant Mexican classes, as those of the underclasses.
7. Jean Franco, op.cit., 145
8. *ibid.*, 146

CONCLUSION:

1. Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman, Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York, 1986) 132
2. Sylvia Molloy, *op.cit.*, 55
3. Rosalind Coward, 'How I Became My Own Person', *The Feminist Reader* *op.cit.*, 35-48, 41
4. Rosario Castellanos, 'Escrituras tempranas', *op.cit.*, 193 and 194
5. Gordon Brotherston, 'The Latin American Novel and its Indigenous Sources', *Modern Latin American Fiction: A Survey* ed. John King (London, 1987) 60-77, 60
6. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London, 1980) 74
7. Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', *op.cit.*, 244
8. Donald E. Pease, *op.cit.*, 107-108
9. Rosario Castellanos, 'Al pie de la letra', *Meditación en el umbral* *op.cit.*, 129

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is divided into the following sections:

1. PRIMARY SOURCES (Castellanos' Novels, Other Narrative Fiction, Collected Critical Essays and Other Works to which Reference has been made)
2. SECONDARY SOURCES (Criticism dealing with relevant areas of Castellanos' Work)
 - A. Books (including unpublished dissertations)
 - B. Parts of Books
 - C. Articles
3. OTHER SECONDARY SOURCES

SECTION 1: PRIMARY SOURCES

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