

SHADES OF SENSIBILITY: CIRCULATING GENDER AND RACE IN TWO EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN QUIXOTIC NOVELS

MATICES DE SENSIBILIDAD: LA CIRCULACIÓN DE GÉNERO Y RAZA EN DOS NOVELAS QUIJOTESCAS AMERICANAS DE PRINCIPIOS DEL SIGLO XIX

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Recibido: 23/01/2023 · Aceptado: 20/06/2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5944/etfv.36.2023.36691>

Abstract

Discourses of sensibility reflected gendered categories of race and class in independence-era America in two novels with female quixotic protagonists: José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *La Quijotita y su prima* (1818-1819, 1832); and Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon* (1801). As they attempt to apply models of love and courtship learned from the novels they read to their own lives, these American female quixotes embody issues associated with the circulation of gender, sensibility, and race during the birth of their new nations: hierarchy, status, subordination, property, freedom and enslavement, civilization and savagery. Gendered quixotic readers and quixotic reading show that transnational and transatlantic notions of sensibility circulated through novels and novel reading and adapted to national contexts and discourses of race and class.

Keywords

Female quixotism; gender; national identity; Tabitha Gilman Tenney; José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi

Resumen

Los discursos de la sensibilidad reflejaron categorías de género asociadas con clase social y raza en la América del periodo de la independencia en dos novelas con protagonistas femeninas quijotescas: *Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic*

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This article was presented at the Conference «Gender, Modernities and the Global Enlightenment» organized by CIRGEN (Circulating Gender in the Global Enlightenment: Ideas, Networks, Agencies, Horizon2020/ERC-2017-Advanced Grant-787015).

Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon (1801), de Tabitha Gilman Tenney, y *La Quijotita y su prima* (1818-1819, 1832), de José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. Al intentar aplicar los modelos amorosos y de cortejo que aprenden de sus lecturas románticas, las dos quijotitas personifican las tensiones sociales asociadas con la circulación de género, raza, y sensibilidad durante el nacimiento de las nuevas naciones de los Estados Unidos y México, como la jerarquía, el rango social, la subordinación, la propiedad, la libertad y la esclavitud, la civilización y la barbarie. Las lectoras quijotesca y su lectura muestran que las nociones transnacionales y transatlánticas de sensibilidad circulaban por medio de las novelas y la lectura y que se adaptaban a los contextos nacionales y los discursos de raza y clase social.

Palabras clave

Quijotismo femenino; género; identidad nacional; Tabitha Gilman Tenney; José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi

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0. INTRODUCTION. TRANSATLANTIC FEMALE QUIXOTES

The topic of this dossier, «Ways of Loving», alludes to the ways practices, texts, and discourses about gender and sensibility circulated in the long eighteenth century. By the century's end, new discourses of liberalism and nationalism reflected both continuity and the gradual transformation of old regime social practices and relations. «Sensibility» at that time, according to historian G. J. Barker-Benfield, was understood as an enhanced ability to experience feelings «signifying certain emotional pains or pleasures in oneself or in others»². The new genre of the novel associated with women readers and the culture of sensibility circulated these discourses and patterns of behavior. Eighteenth-century novelists repeatedly adopted the Cervantine literary model and his character Don Quixote, the deluded novel reader, to satirize sensibility and novel reading³. While sensibility could be displayed by both men and women, satires of female novel reading criticized women's supposed susceptibility to romantic ideas that threatened the status quo. Amelia Dale has shown how feminine quixotic readers in eighteenth-century British novels evoked the power of novel reading to «imprint» ideas on readers⁴. British author Charlotte Lennox drew on the period's feminization of the novel and novel reading in *The Female Quixote* (1752). Lennox's novel and its novel-reading female protagonist circulated through translation and inspired imitations. This article studies two transatlantic female quixotic novels from the early decades of the nineteenth century, Tabitha Tenney's *Female Quixotism* and José Joaquín de Lizardi's *La Quijotita y su prima*, to examine how these authors mirrored through the quixotic paradigm the shifting alignments of gender and sensibility with racial categories in their societies.

Tenney's *Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon*, was published in Boston in 1801. The first two volumes of Lizardi's novel, *La Quijotita y su prima. Historia muy cierta con apariencias de novela*, were published in installments in Mexico City between 1818-1819 and all four volumes were published in a posthumous version in 1832. Both novels drew on the powerful quixotic model that had been appropriated and adapted repeatedly throughout the eighteenth century in the transatlantic world⁵, and both novels appeared during crucial moments of nation formation. Tenney wrote during the early republican period of the young United States, when the new Republican Party formed by Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton challenged John Adams's Federalist Party. Lizardi published his serialized novel during Mexico's protracted struggle for independence from Spain, in the course of which peninsular-born Spaniards vied with Creole elites for status and power. As Creole and Mexican

2. Barker-Benfield, 2010: 1. On the culture of sensibility in eighteenth-century Britain, see Barker-Benfield, 1992. For the culture of sensibility in the the U.S., see Barker-Benfield, 2010: chapter 2. On women, gender, and the culture of sensibility in eighteenth-century Spain, see Bolufer Peruga, 1998, chap. 6.

3. A classic study for Britain is Paulson, 1998. See also Si acaso le digo que a mi no me imprta ir dos vees qye no lo fuerce para el 11 o 120 Pardo García, 2020. For Spain, see Giménez, 2006, and Lopez, (1999).

4. Dale, 2019.

5. Bannet, (2007). Hanlon, 2019: 106-27.

discursive identities came into being, historian Tamar Herzog notes the continuity of earlier discourses of national belonging along with the new. Even more important than race, genealogy, culture, or language, at the turn of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century the «distinction between permanent members and transient foreigners ... defined the boundaries of new communities». In Spanish America, this meant that European Spaniards were excluded. Herzog argues that a «discourse of love» united people who shared the same space over time and could be trusted⁶.

The two American female quixotes attempt to live according to models of love and courtship (and also, in the Mexican case, of sainthood) imbibed through their reading. Tenney adheres most closely to Lennox's model of female quixotism. Tenney's protagonist Dorcasina holds an exalted and unrealistic ideal of sentimental love impressed on her from her reading of British novels by Samuel Richardson and others. Lizardi may have known of Lennox's novel, for it had been translated into Spanish in 1808. But rather than seeking romantic love like Dorcasina, Lizardi's protagonist Pomposa personifies traditional feminine vanity and what Lizardi viewed as false values of Creole society derived from European models. In their different cultural contexts, these two early American female quixotes embody tensions surrounding notions of gender, class, and race during the birth and early years of their new nations: hierarchy, status, subordination, property, freedom and enslavement, civilization and savagery. Gendered quixotic readers and quixotic reading show how transnational and transoceanic notions of sensibility circulated through «migrant fictions», to borrow Eve T. Bannet's term, through stories retold in different forms and published in different formats, and how these notions were adapted to the needs of different national contexts⁷.

1. GENDERED CATEGORIES OF RACE, CASTE, CLASS

The new U.S. republic in early nineteenth-century North America inherited categories of class and race from British colonial society, but these categories were subject to constant change. «Whiteness» in Britain's North American colonies was never a fixed, absolute category but constantly changed as European, African, indigenous, and Asian peoples mixed in the evolving new society. Scholars such as Dierdre Coleman, Roxann Wheeler, Kathryn Woods, and Felicity Nussbaum analyze how whiteness in Britain and its colonies at the turn of the eighteenth century was a visible sign of lineage and social status closely aligned to signs and behaviors of gender such as sensibility.

Coleman notes that the «racialization of whiteness» became visible through gender in Britain and its colonies in the 1760s and 1770s. The process is important

6. Herzog, 2003: 163.

7. Bannet, 2011: 10-15. On the quixotic model as exceptionalism, see Hanlon, 2019. Motooka examines the relationship between reason, sentimentalism, and quixotism in the eighteenth century. Motooka, 2013. On the theory of «indigenization», the adaptation of stories that travel, see Hutcheon, 2006: 148-53.

«for understanding how gender increasingly came to encode ideas of racial difference»⁸. Wheeler argues that throughout the eighteenth century, «[o]lder conceptions of Christianity, civility, and rank were *more explicitly* important to Britons' assessment of themselves and other people than physical attributes such as skin color, shape of the nose, or texture of the hair», although this underwent change by the end of the century⁹. Nussbaum refers to the instability of complexion as a category, the «slippery shades of Otherness» found in descriptions of complexion in relation to women¹⁰.

New Spain inherited Spain's ideology of «limpieza de sangre» or blood purity distinguishing «Old Christians» whose blood was unmixed with that of Muslims and Jews. In New Spain, Ilona Katzew explains, society was divided «between Spaniards (or whites) and the rest of the population, which was composed of Indians, Africans, and *castas*», or those with mixed genealogies¹¹. Another classification simultaneously in effect was between «*gente de razón* (people who reason) versus Indians; *gente decente* (respectable people) versus the pleb; and tributaries (Indians, Africans, and mulatos) versus non-tributaries»¹². While the ideology of blood purity in Spain evinced Spanish anxiety regarding the conversion of Muslims and Jews to Christianity, in New Spain the *casta* system early in the colonial period expressed the anxieties of colonial society regarding the difficulty of distinguishing between socioracial categories of the population¹³. The mixing between Europeans, indigenous peoples, and Africans tainted by their connection to slavery produced the complex reality of *mestizaje*.

The Iberian ideology of blood purity informed the system of *castas* that in part used visible racial characteristics to define categories but also depended on notions of *calidad* or quality¹⁴. Socioeconomic changes in New Spain caused the inherited ideology of blood purity to «merge with an incipient idiom of class that featured the concepts of *calidad*, *condición*, and *clase*», according to María Elena Martínez: «notions of purity and race became increasingly secularized, gradually detached from religion, kinship, and lineage and inserted more into pseudoscientific and visual discourses of the body»¹⁵. According to this system, Indian blood could be «improved» or «whitened» by mingling over several generations with whites, although the same was not true for Africans tainted by their connection to slavery. In general, Katzew reasons, the caste system had several purposes:

to guarantee that each race occupy a social niche assigned by nature; second, to offer the possibility of improving one's blood through the right pattern of mixing; third, to

8. Coleman, (2003): 170.

9. Wheeler, 2000: 7.

10. Cited in Coleman, (2003): 188.

11. Katzew, 2004: 42.

12. Katzew, 2004: 43. On *casta* painting and identity, see also Carrera, 2003.

13. Martínez, 2009: 41.

14. Katzew, 2004: 45.

15. Martínez, 2009: 42.

inhibit the mixture of Indians and blacks, which was deemed the more dangerous to the Spanish social order¹⁶.

Rebecca Earle argues that caste was both genealogical and fluid, allowing for inherited qualities to change «both within an individual's lifetime and across generations»¹⁷. Fluid and imprecise despite its classificatory impulse, the caste system functioned as a method for Spaniards and Creoles to attempt to maintain social, political, and economic control in New Spain.

Martínez stresses that the obsession with blood purity in both Spain and New Spain displaced onto women the anxiety over impurity¹⁸. In Britain's North American colonies, as well, gender inflected categories of race and caste. In New Spain, legislation and religious and secular institutions «enabled the emergence of a Mexican vision of a Catholic mestizo patria, one that simultaneously recognized the favored place of the native people within New Spain's spiritual economy and betrayed the creole elite's privileging of Spanish bloodlines and whiteness». This dynamic continued through the independence period¹⁹. Theorists point out that these processes must be understood historically. Within a historical-temporal framework, Max Hering Torres argues for the study of a plurality of «racisms» and Martínez describes the processes of «racialization» and their relation to power structures²⁰. María Eugenia Chavez argues that the «the discourse of purity of blood should be understood «as a 'discursive practice', a «contested field of enunciation» connected to power relations²¹.

Tenney's and Lizardi's novels provide examples of these complex discursive categories of gender, race, and class by opposing the literary ideals of the protagonists' quixotism and the women's circulation through the «reality» of their racialized societies. The novels reveal tensions that underlay the formation of the national subject in the early United States and independence-period Mexico. In these novels, gendered quixotic readers show how transnational and transoceanic notions of gender circulated and were adapted to national contexts and discourses of social rank or class and «whiteness»²². These two very different authors—a young woman from New Hampshire married to a U.S. congressman and an impoverished but relentlessly critical journalist in Mexico City—adapted the female quixotic motif within a few decades of each other to amuse and instruct their readers (especially women). They painted a vivid picture of the anxieties that haunted their colonial societies as they became independent nations²³.

16. Katzew, 2004: 51. On processes of «blanqueamiento», see also Hill, 2018: 72, 81-82.

17. Earle, (2016): 432.

18. Martínez, 2008: 274.

19. Martínez, 2008: 275.

20. Hering Torres, 2012; Martínez, 2008.

21. Chavez, 2012: 39, 55.

22. This process is described in Bannet, (2007).

23. Carnell and Hale describe how female quixotic novels of the late eighteenth century create female characters immersed in «political and cultural specificity» who «must learn, despite early missteps, to negotiate the complexities of her sociopolitical landscape». Carnell and Hale, (2011): 518-19. See also Vogetley's important discussion of Lizardi's critique of women and race in Mexican society in *La Quijotita*. Vogetley, 2001: 187-211. Sharman

2. FEMALE QUIXOTES AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

Female Quixotism appeared anonymously in Boston in 1801, little over a decade after the signing of the Constitution of the United States in 1787²⁴. The novel's probable author, Tabitha Gilman Tenney (1762-1837), married Dr. Samuel Tenney, a surgeon during the Revolutionary War in 1788. In 1799, she was the likely author of an anonymously published reader for young women called *The New Pleasing Instructor*. Upon Dr. Tenney's election to Congress in 1800, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., where he served three terms as a Federalist senator representing the state of New Hampshire. Dr. Tenney, and perhaps his wife, opposed the election of Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson in 1800. Congressman Tenney voted for the continuation of the Alien and Sedition Acts signed into law by President John Adams in 1798. The Acts suppressed political dissent during the Federalist era in the roiling wake of the French Revolution. The Alien and Sedition Acts facilitated the deportation of foreigners and made it harder for new immigrants to vote. John Adams had worried about the dangers of a democratic society that could be seduced by unscrupulous, lower-class upstarts. Tenney's novel, Linda Frost claims, «embodies a catalog of class anxieties that particularly disturbed the Federalist constituency of the new republic, anxieties about who would in fact 'inherit' the power of rule in the new country»²⁵. Despite his fear of social unrest caused by immigration and new citizens eager to claim their share of political power, Congressman Tenney, like his wife, was a committed abolitionist. After her husband's death in 1816, Tenney returned to New Hampshire and resided there until her death in 1837. *Female Quixotism* went through five editions in the first half of the nineteenth century: 1801, 1808, 1824, 1829, and 1841, all published in Boston²⁶.

Seventeen years after the publication of Tenney's novel in New England, the *Gaceta del Gobierno de México* announced on July 23, 1818, that a work of «moral criticism» would soon be published by subscription:

Está para salir a luz una obrita estampada crítica moral con el título de la *Quijotita y su Prima*, a cuya suscripción se convida.

questions whether Lizardi «invented» the modern, Mexican individual, and notes that for Lizardi women were also considered to be closer to nature and more easily corrupted by culture. Sharman, 2020: 212-13.

24. Tenney was first mentioned as the author of *Female Quixotism* in 1855 in a contributor's letter to the *Cyclopedia of American Literature*. Nienkamp and Collins, 1992: xix.

25. Frost, (1997): 113-14. Traister similarly claims, regarding the deceptive suitors of Tenney's protagonist, «As literary trope, the American libertine embodied the political anxieties of the age». Traister, (2000): 8. Hanlon finds that the transnational eighteenth-century quixotic narrative both «preserve[d] traditional class conceptions and socioeconomic power dynamics» while provoking vexed political questions. Hanlon, (2014): 94. Harris acknowledges the conservative impulse of *Female Quixotism* but argues for its representation of female agency. Harris, (2011).

26. For biographical information on Tenney, see Nienkamp and Collins, 1992: xxiii-xxix. See also Davidson, 1986: 190-92. Arch cautions that Tenney's authorship is not certain and suggests that the novel be read as an allegory of «literary resistance to Jefferson». He argues it can be considered «an allegory or parable for liberty in the United States in 1800» that shows the negative aspects of liberty. Arch, (2002): 177-79, 198.

El prospecto de dicha obra se hallará desde hoy en el puesto de la gaceta y cajón inmediato de D. Domingo Llano, portal de Mercaderes.

Dicho papel da alguna instrucción así para el conocimiento de la obra, como para el gobierno de los señores suscriptores, a quienes se dará *gratis*, y a los que no lo sean, a medio real²⁷.

Shortly thereafter, the first volume of *La Quijotita y su prima* began to circulate in installments in Mexico City. Lizardi (1776-1827) was a Creole writer and journalist who earned a living with his pen and wrote to reach the ears of the common people²⁸. Lizardi's career spans the 1808 invasion of Spain by Napoleon Bonaparte and Napoleon's usurpation of the Spanish throne; the 1810 Hidalgo uprising by American-born Spaniards; and Mexico's winning of independence from Spain in 1821. We know a great deal more about Lizardi's political views than we do about Tenney's. The Mexican writer's opinions evolved throughout his long and prolific career. Lizardi began writing about political reforms by 1812. According to his biographer J.R. Spell, in his early career Lizardi did not oppose the Spanish viceregal government and «[h]is purpose was apparently conciliation; for he suggested that the mother country, by a more liberal policy, could win the love and friendship of the colonists instead of hate»²⁹. The usurpation of the Spanish throne by Napoleon provoked a crisis of authority for Spanish subjects in New Spain, few of whom «had imagined breaking with Spain before the sudden, profound crisis ... in 1808»³⁰.

When the promulgation of the Spanish Constitution of 1812 established freedom of the press, Lizardi took advantage of the relative liberty it promised and founded his first newspaper, *El Pensador Mexicano*, although he continued to suffer persecution from the authorities and other enemies because of his critical opinions, calls for reform, and for his criticism of *criollos*, who he said had «inherited the vices of both the Indians and the Spaniards». Lizardi also «deplored the depravity of the lower classes and expatiated at length on the thieves, beggars, and drunkards that infested the streets of the Mexican capital»³¹. Lizardi was a keen observer of the social and racial ferment of Mexican society. After the crisis of authority of 1808 and the Cortes of Cádiz in 1812, the struggles for political power were broadened. The 1812 Constitution, notes Anthony McFarlane, «marked a radical break with the past». As subjects became citizens and new social classes gained access to political representation, indigenous peoples were included while descendants of Africans

27. *Gaceta del Gobierno de Mexico*, (23 de julio de 1818): 8. Spelling and punctuation here and in quotations from Lizardi's works have been modernized.

28. Wright, 2016a: 149-54. Wright asserts that «the two births—of the nation and of the Latin-American novel—were linked». Wright, (2016b): 839.

29. Spell, 1931: 17.

30. McFarlane, 2022: 52.

31. Spell, 1931: 18-28. Spell notes «the hatred toward [Lizardi] of the ultra-royalist faction». Lizardi was alternately praised for his liberal views and criticized for his conciliatory articles. *Ibid*: 25-26.

were not³². Nancy Vogeley notes that Lizardi's novels show a complex range of responses to colonial discourse, including loyalty and fierce criticism³³.

When Fernando VII's return to the throne in 1814 reimposed strict censorship, Lizardi abandoned the more risky practice of journalism for fiction. In 1816, he published the first three volumes of what has been called Latin America's first novel, *El Periquillo Sarniento* (the censors suppressed the fourth volume because of its criticism of slavery), followed by the first two volumes of *La Quijotita* in 1818 and 1819³⁴. The third and fourth volumes remained unpublished during his lifetime, most likely due to the author's economic hardships. With the restoration of press freedom in 1820 and Mexican Independence declared in 1821, Lizardi returned to journalism, although he continued to battle censorship³⁵. He again was in trouble when he published a pamphlet in 1821 criticizing Iturbide's reactionary impulses and advocating «equal rights for all regardless of color, the establishment of a Cortes that would represent all classes, the direct election of deputies by popular vote, the enfranchisement of women with a right to a seat in the Cortes, and complete religious freedom»³⁶. When Lizardi defended the Freemasons in 1822, the Church excommunicated him and he thereafter suffered persecution and financial ruin³⁷. Slavery was abolished in Mexico in 1825, the same year that Lizardi wrote an antislavery drama set in Cuba, *La segunda parte del Negro sensible*³⁸, which never saw a performance. Despite enduring constant criticism and censure Lizardi relentlessly advocated political reform until he died, completely impoverished, in 1827.

In 1831, Lizardi's friend Daniel Barquera published the complete novel *La Quijotita y su prima. Historia muy cierta con apariencias de novela, escrita por el Pensador Mexicano*, including the final two volumes. The editors announced its didactic intent:

persuadidos de que su lectura ha de cooperar en mucha parte a formar política y cristianamente la presente generación y las futuras, para hacer este servicio a la república, se encargaron de darla a luz y a costa de trabajos y sacrificios lograron contratar el resto de la obra que dejó manuscrita el autor...³⁹

Like Tenney's novel, Lizardi's novel went through several editions throughout the nineteenth century, all published in Mexico, in 1831, 1842, 1853, and in 1897, a luxury edition with colored prints.

Both Tenney's and Lizardi's female quixotic novels, therefore, appeared during the first two decades of the nineteenth century when American societies began to fashion new national identities building on their colonial past. Both authors

32. McFarlane, 2022: 53.

33. Vogeley, 2001: 11-13.

34. Spell, 1931: 32.

35. *Ibid*: 33-36.

36. *Ibid*: 37-38.

37. *Ibid*: 39-47.

38. *Ibid*: 48-49, 65-66. See also González-Contreras, (2016): 67-74.

39. Ruiz Castañeda, 1979: ix-xi. For biographical information on Lizardi, see also Spell, 1931: 9-54.

declared their pedagogical intent to instruct their female readers. Tenney begins her novels with a presentation from the supposed «Compiler» of the story: «To all Columbian Young Ladies, Who read *novels* and *Romances*». The «Compiler» explains that having heard in Philadelphia of the amusing adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon, he (or she, it is unclear) procured an introduction and listened to the lady herself recount her tale. He/She now presents the book for his/her female readers, insisting that it is not a «romance» but a «true picture of real life»:

a true uncoloured history of a romantic country girl, whose head had been turned by the unrestrained perusal of Novels and Romances. That, by observing their baneful effects on Miss Sheldon, who was in every other respect a sensible, judicious, and amiable girl, you may avoid the disgraces and disasters that so long rendered her despicable and miserable, is the sincere wish, My dear young Ladies, Of your Friend and Admirer, The COMPILER⁴⁰.

Tenney sets the novel «[on] the beautiful banks of the Delaware, about thirty miles from Philadelphia»⁴¹, the capital of the United States until 1800. She invokes the quixotic model of an otherwise admirable person deluded and even driven mad by her reading in order to present her comical interactions with a colorful array of social ranks, different races, and foreigners. The elderly quixotic protagonist, Dorcasina, heiress to her father's estate, repeatedly mistakes pretenders and adventurers with designs on her property for true lovers.

Similarly, Lizardi declares his intent to instruct and be of use to his readers in Mexico in his «Advertencias preliminares» to *La Quijotita y su prima*. He refers to the success of his novel *El Periquillo Sarniento* in correcting the behavior of his readers: «...me determiné a escribir esta obrita, considerando que acaso podría ser de provecho a no pocas personas»⁴². In a sign of the newly literate reader he imagines and the ephemeral nature of his work, Lizardi finishes his «Advertencia» with instructions about how to preserve and collect the serialized pamphlets in which the novel is published. Lizardi answers in his «Prólogo» a letter from a supposed female reader of his *Periquillo*, who requests a similar book dedicated to women. Although he fears the criticism of his readers, he decides he will write a true story:

Voy a escribir una obrita y esta no será una novela, sino una historia verdadera, que he presenciado, y cuyos personajes usted conoce.
Por ventura se acordará usted bien de la *Quijotita y su Prima*, damas harto conocidas en esta capital. Pues la historia de estas madamas voy a escribir por complacer a usted⁴³.

Both Tenney and Lizardi create the fiction of a truthful tale for their imagined readers for whom they will describe a recognizable world with an anti-heroine.

40. Tenney, 1992: 3.

41. *Ibid*: 4.

42. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979: xxiii.

43. *Ibid*: xxvii.

The female quixote misreads the signs of the world around her by misinterpreting the signs of speech, clothing, and physical appearance that denoted class and race. Both quixotes mistake as true suitors imposters who are not of the class that they claim to be and who are attracted to their property and inheritance. Tenney's and Lizardi's female quixotes' errors teach their readers how to read signs of identity in societies when they could no longer necessarily rely on earlier distinctions of rank, privilege, and hierarchy.

Tenney's female quixote's misreadings sow confusion and imperil her position as a member of the landed gentry⁴⁴. Lizardi's female quixote, from the middling Creole class, encounters all the varied races and castes of her complex society, from indigenous servants to Peninsular imposters, usually to her detriment. Tenney's and Lizardi's female quixotes' ungovernable sensibility, from tenderheartedness in Tenney's novel to vanity and pride in Lizardi's, constantly leads them astray. Historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, referring to Bakhtin's analysis of dialogical discourse and heteroglossia in the novel, notes that «language assumes meaning only in social dialogue»⁴⁵. Tenney's novel reveals the violent contestation of national identities formed by inclusions and exclusions that Smith-Rosenberg finds in the «cacophony of political, social, and cultural voices» in the United States following the American Revolution⁴⁶. The heteroglossia of late colonial and independence-era Mexico also echoes throughout Lizardi's work. Lizardi's *Quijotita* encounters all her society's discursive registers of Creoles, mestizos, servants, masters, foreigners, and indigenous peoples.

These novels show that gender is a crucial category for defining the new national subject. Smith-Rosenberg writes that society always gendered as masculine the important value of «virtue», both in the civic humanist tradition and in the commercial republican order that prized hard work and thrift. This discourse genders seductive corruption, lack of self control, and aristocratic non-productivity as feminine. Aristocratic and middle-class male writers and speakers displaced onto women the criticism of extravagance, decadence, seduction or duplicity that had first been directed at themselves. «The feminine», concludes Smith-Rosenberg, «came to represent not only the negative but the most controversial and contested points in these male discursive battles. Polymorphic and conflicted, female subjectivity formed at the heart of ideological and discursive conflict and contradiction»⁴⁷. Nancy Vogeley has likewise argued that Lizardi's novel about women «considers questions that go to the heart of colonial rule. Displaced onto 'woman' are criollo concerns about what inferiority might mean...»⁴⁸. Sharman finds that Lizardi broke with the classical republican tradition of virtue to allow more races and classes, and even women, in theory, to attain virtue⁴⁹, although his stated political views and his fictional worlds do not always coincide. Both Tenney's and Lizardi's novels, with

44. See Samuels's discussion of nationalism, class, and reading in the early American novel. Samuels, 2012: 1-22.

45. In Kerber, *et al.*, (1989): 572.

46. Smith-Rosenberg, 2010: 7.

47. *Ibid*: 573.

48. Vogeley, 2001: 188.

49. Sharman, 2020: 209-213.

their quixotic anti-heroines, their dialogic nature, and their heteroglossia, reflect the changes experienced by their societies. The novelists attempt to make their reality intelligible through the gendered performances of their female quixotes⁵⁰.

3. PERFORMING THE FEMININE IN *FEMALE QUIXOTISM* AND *LA QUIJOTITA Y SU PRIMA*

A comparison of scenes from the two novels shows how the authors represent gender and sensibility with descriptions of social rank and racial markers, such as complexion, hair, and clothing. The female quixotes' very bodies are signs of the dangerous dissolution of distinctions of rank and the mixing of races feared by their societies. In *Female Quixotism*, the aging protagonist, Dorcasina, grey-haired, sallow, and toothless after an illness, has imagined that her good-looking young servant, John, is a gentleman in disguise and is in love with her. She goes out riding with him, having shaved her hair off and donned a fashionable wig ordered from Philadelphia:

Having been informed that wigs were all the rage, among the ladies of Philadelphia, Miss Sheldon had the week before sent thither, and purchased one of a light flaxen colour, and had her own grey hair close shaved, hoping that the next growth would be darker. She had at the same time purchased a small black hat, with two enormous high feathers. Having dressed herself in a new riding dress, this hat, this wig, and these feathers, she mounted a mettlesome horse, and cantered off, with John by her side, with the air and spirit of a girl of eighteen⁵¹.

Unfortunately, her horse gets skittish and bolts; Dorcasina hangs on but loses her hat, feathers, and wig. John retrieves the hat, but a pig picks up the wig with its snout and some small boys play with it. The spectacle of Dorcasina's wild ride home amazes her neighbors, and Dorcasina's humiliation becomes quite public:

The doors and windows were filled with women and children, as she passed, and all that saw her stood amazed at the singularity of the phenomenon. Some stared, some hallooed, and some were frightened. Some, more ignorant and superstitious than the rest, thought the appearance supernatural, and, having heard of witches riding through the air on broomsticks, concluded that this was one, who chose to be conveyed in a less elevated manner⁵².

Dorcasina dons the latest fashion from the capital city, Philadelphia, to disguise her aged appearance. Tenney presents feminine fashion here as superficial

50. Wright, 2016a: 842-43.

51. Tenney, 1992: 256.

52. *Ibid*: 257.

and deceptive, for it camouflages the «true» self. Dorcasina is an old woman masquerading as a young woman.

Tenney also associates feminine fashion with the decadence of the city as opposed to the simpler, more virtuous life of the country. The author closely identifies the land with North American identity. Dorcasina lived with her father, who had developed an aversion to cities and populous places in Europe. He chose to live on «the beautiful banks of the Delaware, about thirty miles from Philadelphia». His preference for a country abode suggests the uneasy friction between trade and patriotic virtue and the process through which commercial republicans sought to gain gentlemanly status by acquiring estates⁵³. After her father's death, Dorcasina gives his clothes to her servant John. Despite his new clothes, John never convinces anyone besides Dorcasina that he is a gentleman.

A similar horseback scene evoking the female quixote's public humiliation appears in Lizardi's novel. Dionisio and Eufrosina, the quijotita's parents, raise her to be extravagant and vain. They neglect Pomposa's education and entrust her to indigenous wet nurses and servants in their Mexico City home. Pomposa's uncle, the «colonel», and her aunt Matilde carefully educate their own daughter, Pudenciana, in virtuous domesticity and filial obedience. One day the two families ride out from Mexico City on horseback to attend the country wedding of the son of Pascual, the peasant foreman of the colonel's ranch. Pudenciana and her mother appear wearing riding habits that allow them to sit astride without a sidesaddle, while Pomposa uses an elegant side saddle:

Se ensillaron los caballos y el de Pomposita se adornó con un famoso sillón: cada uno fue montando en el que le tocaba. Pero ¡cuál fue mi admiración y la de muchos, cuando vimos salir a la niña Pudenciana y a su mamá vestidas con sus túnicas de montar, calzadas con sus zapatos de botín, con acicates de plata y adornadas sus cabezas con unos gorros muy preciosos!⁵⁴.

The vain Pomposa is jealous of the praise heaped on her cousin for the practicality of her outfit that allows her to dismount easily and then fastens with buttons to become a skirt. Such a riding habit, a family friend tells Pomposa, is used all over in Europe and even in Mexico by some foreign and Spanish women.

Distracted by her envy, Pomposa manages to drop her parasol over her horse's ears, causing it to get skittish and bolt:

Tanto se embobó Pomposita oyendo al señor Labín, que se le cayó el paraguas sobre las orejas del caballo. Este, sin embargo de su mansedumbre, se espantó al verse con aquel embarazo delante de los ojos, y sin esperar razones, dio la estampida, y a poco trecho cayó en tierra mi señora doña Pomposa, mal de su grado; pero en tan indecente

53. Smith-Rosenberg, 2010: 65-66.

54. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979: XV, 120. All quotations from *La Quijotita* refer to the chapter and page number of the 1979 edition by María del Carmen Ruiz Castañeda.

postura que, cuando menos, nadie dudó de qué color eran sus ligas ... su vanidad sí quedó bien abatida...⁵⁵.

Pudenciana behaves like a rational and progressive cosmopolitan woman, while Pomposa uses the showy and impractical saddle of fine ladies. In both these scenes, the quixotes suffer public humiliation for their ridiculous vanity and adoption of city fashion.

Like Don Quixote and like Lennox's quixote Arabella, both Dorcasina and Pomposa adopt costumes to imitate heroines of the stories they read. Dorcasina imagines she is a young, romantic heroine in love, and Pomposa decides she will become a hermit in imitation of the hagiographies she reads of female saints like Saint Rosalie of Palermo. Following Dorcasina's wild ride home on her horse, she laments the loss of her expensive wig. She insists that her suitor John, the servant she mistakes for a gentleman, write an advertisement to post in public. Since John is illiterate, another servant helps him write the advertisement, which they then tack up in the tavern in their village:

No al men by thes presants, whereas Miss dorcasina Sheldon Wil giv five dolars to any Body that wil find her wig. She los it last Thursday riden a horsebak. P.S. said wig Was frizled al over afor and Behind like negurs owl⁵⁶. [Know all men by the present, whereas Miss Dorcasina Sheldon will give five dollars to anybody that will find her wig. She lost it last Thursday riding horseback. P.S. Said wig was frizzled all over in front and behind like Negro's wool.]

Not only does Dorcasina pose a danger to her society's structure by trying to mix ranks, but this written portrait of the aging, ridiculous quixote associates decadent pride with city fashion and her wig with pejorative racial characteristics («negurs owl»).

Lizardi also satirically portrays his quixote's saintly pretensions with a public advertisement. Unlike Tenney's romantic Dorcasina, who exalted sentimental love, Pomposa conceived of as love as feminine power over men. At one point, under the influence of a *beata*, a superstitious, religious spinster, Pomposa decides to forswear love. She will instead pursue saintly heroism and become a hermit. Her motivation is above all personal vanity and religious superstition, which Lizardi links to feminine weakness⁵⁷. Pomposa dresses for her role and slips away from her parents' house one evening. She passes through the city to reach the gate just before the drawbridge would be raised and then wanders around the outskirts of Mexico. Pomposa hears a rustling in her suitcase and faints from fright, taking it for a spirit. An «indio carbonero» finds the girl and takes her home. Lizardi connects the man's dark appearance to his labor as a coal miner and shows that he is more truly

55. *Ibid*, XV: 121.

56. Tenney, 1992: 258.

57. Vogeley discusses Pomposa's deficient education and Lizardi's critique of the «blind faith» and the «pities» of the *beatas*. Vogeley, 2001: 203-07.

compassionate and «Christian» than Pomposa, and more like «gente de razón» than the young *criolla*. The *indio's* «darkness», which frightens Pomposa, therefore merely signals his status and his labor. The *carbonero's* wife, frightened by the «ridícula hermitaña», almost runs away: «La india, luego que la vio, quiso correr, pensando que era muerta, fantasma o cosa mala ... ; pero su marido la contuvo diciéndole en su idioma que no temiera, que aquella pobre muchacha era una loquita que había encontrado en el camino...»⁵⁸. As with Dorcasina, who was mistaken for a witch by the townspeople during her wild ride, the *indios* almost mistake Pomposita for a supernatural apparition. The quixotes' transgressive gender performances create confusion. They even cause them to be interpreted as witches: aging, unproductive, or sinister and seductive women associated with the fear of feminine power.

Like the notice about Dorcasina's lost wig posted by her illiterate suitor, Pomposita's escape from her parents' home to go live as a hermit prompts her ignorant mother to post an advertisement:

En toda la noche [Eurrosina] no durmió, y luego que salió el sol tomó la pluma y escribió una porción de rotulones.

Ya los iba a mandar poner en las esquinas, cuando entró el coronel y leyó que decía así, ni más ni menos:

«Quien hubiere hallado una niña bonita como de quince años, que se extravió anoche como a las diez, de su casa, y se fue en camisa y naguas blancas, ocurra a entregarla a mi casa y le daré un buen hallazgo»⁵⁹.

This written portrait of the quijotita describes her as a sexually desirable young girl but in shamefully intimate terms («en camisa y naguas blancas») that suggest her licentious public availability and uncontrollable nature («se extravió anoche ... de su casa»). Pomposa's uncle rightly fears that the notice would injure the girl's reputation and the family's honor: «que podían interpretar los maliciosos contra el honor de su sobrina»⁶⁰. These notices about the female quixotes posted in public places are literary portraits of a fictional character embedded in the novel. They recall the *mandamiento* or warrant read out by one of the *cuadrilleros* in the inn calling for Don Quixote's arrest for having freed the galley slaves:

58. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979, XXX: 243. There is a difference between the 1832 second edition (the first complete edition) and the later editions upon which Ruiz Castañeda's 1979 edition is based. In the 1842 edition (called the «cuarta edición»), a new scene was inserted as Pomposa leaves the city gates. In the new scene, she frightens the sentinel so much he nearly faints away: «¿cuál sería su sorpresa y espanto al ver que se le acercaba a pasos lentos una mujer vestida, según le pareció, de su mortaja, con un santo cristo colgado al cuello, y su corona de flores ajadas y deslucidas, como podía distinguirse a los pálidos rayos de la luna que comenzaba a salir? Le temblaban las rodillas, y siguiendo hacia él la aparición, sin vacilar sus imperturbables movimientos, llegó a la puerta y pasó junto al centinela, que no pudiendo sufrir más, ofuscado su entendimiento y desfallecidas sus fuerzas, cayó al suelo...»; Fernández de Lizardi, 1842, XXX: 429-32. There is a second insertion in the 1842 edition referring to this scene: «La india, luego que la vio, quiso correr, pensando que era muerta, fantasma o cosa mala, como sucedió al centinela de la garita de San Cosme...»; Fernández de Lizardi, 1842, XXX: 437 [emphasis added]. These additions were maintained in the later editions.

59. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979, XXX: 243.

60. *Ibid*, XXX: 243.

...le vino a la memoria que entre algunos mandamientos que traía para prender a algunos delincuentes, traía uno contra don Quijote, a quien la Santa Hermandad había mandado prender por la libertad que dio a los galeotes, y como Sancho, con mucha razón, había temido. Imaginando, pues, esto, quiso certificarse si las señas que de don Quijote traía venían bien. Y sacando del seno un pergamino, topó con el que buscaba, y poniéndosele a leer de espacio, porque no era buen lector, a cada palabra que leía ponía los ojos en don Quijote y iba cotejando las señas del mandamiento con el rostro de don Quijote, y halló que, sin duda alguna, era el que el mandamiento rezaba...⁶¹

In Cervantes's novel as in these American female quixotic novels, the embedded literary descriptions of the protagonists present erroneous portraits that refer to the deceptive relationship between reality and its representation in literature. The unstable relation between sign and signifier, between text and its interpretation by the reader, lies at the heart of the quixotic paradigm. These literary portraits are types of ekphrasis, literary representations of visual art, real or imaginary⁶². They purport to reveal their subject's true identity but signal instead the quixotes' inability to control their representation due to the erosion of easily discernable signs of rank, virtue, and race. Their slippery, unstable identity is gendered in the American quixotic novels as feminine.

4. MIX-UPS: CLASS AND RACE

Tenney's Dorcasina exhibits an excessive amount of sensibility and constantly mistakes the objects of her devotion. She confuses both the social class and race of her admirers: «She had received from nature a good understanding, a lively fancy, an amiable cheerful temper, and a kind and affectionate heart ... she was unfortunately of a very romantic turn, had a small degree of obstinacy, and a spice too much of vanity».⁶³ Tenney shows through Dorcasina's succession of suitors the instability of the categories of whiteness and darkness as indices of character and class in her society. The narrator describes Dorcasina herself as «rather dark»:

[s]he was of a middling stature, a little embonpoint, but neither elegant nor clumsy. Her complexion was rather dark; her skin somewhat rough; and features remarkable neither for beauty nor deformity. Her eyes were grey and full of expression, and her whole countenance rather pleasing than otherwise. In short, she was a middling kind of person; like the greater part of her countrywomen⁶⁴.

Tenney does not code «whiteness» of complexion as a defining feature of national identity and she does not code «darkness» negatively here or elsewhere in the novel,

61. Cervantes, 1978 (I, 45): 546.

62. On ekphrasis, see Krieger (1992).

63. Tenney, 1992: 5.

64. *Ibid.*: 5.

as we will see in her description of Scipio, Dorcasina's African servant. Dorcasina's «rather dark» complexion did not obscure her «pleasing countenance». Tenney's protagonist stands for all her countrywomen from the dominant «middling» class, neither very high nor very low socially.

Complexion, class, and national identity intertwine as Dorcasina engages with her suitors, both honest and dishonest. Dorcasina rejects her first suitor, Lysander, the son of a family friend approved by her father. She objects to him because he was not romantic enough for her taste and also because he was a Virginia slave owner. Tenney employs Cervantine irony in the juxtaposition of the ridiculous reason (not romantic enough) for rejecting Lysander and a serious objection. Even before meeting Lysander, Dorcasina imagines that if she were to marry him, she could set his slaves free. She strongly condemns slavery and those who are «supported by the sweat, toil, and blood of that unfortunate and miserable part of mankind». Dorcasina advocates a «remedy»: emancipation and paying wages for the former enslaved people's labor⁶⁵. Through the quixotic trope, Dorcasina's rejection of Lysander, an otherwise perfectly acceptable suitor in terms of rank and respectability, suggests Tenney's pessimism regarding the future of the political union of slave and non-slave states. Nienkamp and Collins point out that Tenney's novel reflects the «ambiguous social relations between African-Americans and the ruling white elite» as the northern states began to emancipate their slaves. Dorcasina's critique of slavery suggests the role that women would come to play in the abolitionist movement⁶⁶.

After Dorcasina rejects Lysander, Tenney next presents a scheming Irishman as a danger to decent United States society. O'Connor is «the natural son to the steward of an Irish nobleman» who comes to the United States after narrowly escaping a conviction for robbery in London. He arrives on a ship whose captain «never consider[ed] what mischiefs have been occasioned to this country by its being an asylum to European convicts, fugitives from justice, and other worthless characters»⁶⁷. In O'Connor's person, the Irish are an immoral servant class obstructed from owning property by the British in Ireland. They try to move into the landed gentry in the United States through deception and seduction. Irish immigrants aspirations to move up in society ironically mirror the Anglo-American process of class mobility through the seizure of indigenous land in Britain's North American colonies. However, Tenney represents the Irish as unscrupulous foreigners who threaten national identity⁶⁸.

65. *Ibid*: 8-9. Critics have reached various conclusions regarding this scene. Arch concludes that Dorcasina's daydream is «useless»; Arch, (2002): 193. Similarly, Frost claims it is «another catalyst for Dorcasina's wild fantasizing»; Frost, (1997): 131. Hanlon points out that there was a less defined class structure in rural Pennsylvania, the setting for Tenney's novel, than in the plantation South; Hanlon, (2014): 79. Lang proposes that Dorcasina imagines herself as a revolutionary, able to overturn the slave system of the South; Lang, (2009): 132-33.

66. Nienkamp and Collins, 1992: xviii.

67. Tenney, 1992: 16-17.

68. Arch, (2002): 193.

In the new United States' racial imaginary, «the Irish story plays class tensions against the dark issues of colonial domination»⁶⁹, writes Smith-Rosenberg. Linda Frost claims that O'Connor represents «the Federalists' fear of the Irish overall, a people depicted as wild, dangerous, and rebellion-loving» and points out that the Federalists attempted to repress their disruptive grab for political rights with the Alien and Sedition Acts, which Tenney's congressman husband supported⁷⁰. Scheming to take advantage of Dorcasina's romantic imagination, and familiar with the discourses of romance she has imbibed from her novels, O'Connor relies on his pleasing looks and educated address to woo Dorcasina in order to secure her fortune:

his person was tall, well proportioned and graceful. He had fine black eyes, good features, and a florid complexion.—In a word, superficial observers would have called him handsome; but those of more nice discernment would pretend to discover, by the expression of his countenance, that he possessed neither a good heart, nor a good temper⁷¹.

O'Connor's pleasing physical appearance emphasizes that his beauty is merely superficial. In contrast, Scipio, Dorcasina's father's Black servant, repeatedly proves himself loyal, brave, and intelligent: «under an ebony skin, [he] had more understanding than all the rest»⁷². These two men represent the tensions between the markers of class and race, on the one hand, and between native and foreign in American society.

Lennox contrasts the Irish interloper with the loyal African servant in a scene of mistaken identities. One evening, Dorcasina consents to O'Connor's plan to meet late at night in a summerhouse in her garden. The same evening, Scipio decides to sleep in the summerhouse to frighten off thieves who had been stealing their melons. Scipio had invited a «favourite in the village, of his own colour», who had promised to join him there. Dorcasina approaches the summerhouse in the dark and mistakes the sleeping Scipio for her lover O'Connor. She sits down by him «and, putting one arm round his neck and resting her cheek against his, resolved to enjoy the sweet satisfaction which this situation afforded her»⁷³. Meanwhile, O'Connor approaches at the same time as Scipio's friend, Miss Violet. O'Connor mistakes Violet for Dorcasina and pulls her into the summerhouse, and «having placed his sable mistress just at the entrance, began to pour forth his expressions of gratitude and love»⁷⁴. Scipio awakes and beats O'Connor, who flees, and Dorcasina jumps out of the window and faints.

69. Smith-Rosenberg asks: «How can penniless and unconnected young men gain land and thus middle-class status and economic security in the throes of a capitalist revolution where claims to land divide along racial and imperial lines (red/white; Irish/Anglo Irish; indigenous/imperial)?». Smith-Rosenberg, 2010: 270.

70. Frost, (1997): 121.

71. Tenney, 1992: 18.

72. *Ibid*: 102.

73. *Ibid*: 53.

74. *Ibid*: 54.

Dorcasina awakes to hear Scipio and Violet laughing and talking about what had happened: «‘Ah! Good for noting dog!’, said Scipio, ‘I bang him well; he no come again after Violet, nor arter melon!’». Dorcasina,

listening a few minutes to the conversation of the African lovers, soon discovered how matters were situated. Mortified and disappointed beyond measure, she crept into the house, and got to bed undiscovered; where, between her own personal chagrin, and distress for her lover, she lay the whole night in sleepless agitation⁷⁵.

Dorcasina then displays many symptoms of excessive sensibility. She «gave herself up to the most violent grief. She beat her breast, and tore her hair», displaying «marks of as great sorrow as ever was experienced for the death of a lap-dog, or favourite parrot; and, refusing all sustenance, she gave herself up to sighs, tears and lamentations». The narrator attributes all these reactions to Dorcasina’s «romantic imagination» and «novel-mania»⁷⁶. Tenney conveys through these quixotic mix-ups how the insider «African» Scipio is loyal and protects his master’s property (his melons and his daughter) from the dangerous incursions of the outsider Irishman.

Dorcasina’s quixotic, novel-induced sensibility had led her to mistake a Black servant for a white lover. She also dangerously mixes social class by deciding to dress herself in her maid Betty’s clothes to visit O’Connor in his room at the inn: «She then dressed herself in Betty’s clothes; and, to disguise herself the better, she wore a strange old-fashioned bonnet, which had been her mother’s; to which she added a veil of black gauze, that entirely concealed her face»⁷⁷. O’Connor urges her to elope with him to Philadelphia, but not wanting to abandon her father, Dorcasina will only promise that she will never marry another man. Dorcasina’s violation of class norms of dress and behavior, and her unwitting violation of racial norms in her embrace of Scipio, almost lead to her own literal violation. As she is leaving the inn after visiting O’Connor in his room, the Irish servant of another guest sees her and decides he has license to take liberties with her. Dorcasina «found herself in a more disagreeable situation than even that she had been in the night before when, with her snowy arms, she encircled Scipio’s ebony neck»⁷⁸. Tenney uses these foreign figures who attempt to seduce Dorcasina, Frost concludes, «to illustrate just who is not acceptable to govern this «territory»⁷⁹. O’Connor’s Irishness remains outside acceptable British identity⁸⁰.

In Lizardi’s *La Quijotita*, clothing denotes the potential confusion of class and race during Pomposa’s family’s excursion from the city to the country wedding. Lizardi describes the peasant bride’s typical dress in elaborate detail, and the girl herself, Marantoña, as «blanca» with other signs of mixed indigenous ancestry:

75. *Ibid.*: 54-55.

76. *Ibid.*: 56-57.

77. *Ibid.*: 57.

78. *Ibid.*: 59.

79. Frost, (1997): 128.

80. Herzog compares the cases of North and South America and discusses how the concept of «European» was formed in the colonies, rather than in Europe itself; Herzog, 2012: 147.

«gordita, no muy alta, pero sí blanca, huera, colorada y con unos ojos grandes y negros». Pomposa and her mother try to give the *mestiza* bride city women's clothes, «un túnico negro, una mantilla y un abanico, todo muy bueno como que era de gala», to use during the ceremony. But the bride, showing true sensibility, blushes from embarrassment and rejects the luxurious garments. She knows they would look ridiculous for someone of her class:

... poniéndose más colorada de lo que era, le dijo:
—¡Ay! No, señora; yo con su licencia no me pongo esos sacos prietos. Esos se quedan para las señoras como su merced; pero ¡para mí que soy una probe paya! En mi vida me he puesto eso; ¿qué dirán mis amigas si me lo ven puesto? Ya parece que las oigo. Dirán: —Mire la ranchera motivosa; ayer andaba arreando vacas con sus naguas de jerguetilla y agora sale izque con túnico negro, como una marquesa o una conda⁸¹.

When the peasant bride decides she will go to the church in her own rebozo, the colonel praises her behavior as an «oportuna lección de conformidad» with class expectations: «me agrada en ella su carácter sencillo y su juicioso modo de pensar ... Esta es mucha humildad y moderación en una payita joven»⁸². Lizardi carefully draws the lines between pretentious, American-born *criollas* and the rustic *mestizas* of the countryside. The novelist codes the latter as closer to the local indigenous culture and uncontaminated by urban decadence and European dress and customs. Here and throughout the novel, Lizardi signals through Pomposa's clothes and her behavior the negative values of European culture—pride and extravagance—as feminine. In contrast, her cousin Pudenciana benefits from learning practical and modern customs (she is also taught to mend watches), while rejecting luxury and accepting her (subordinate, feminine) place in society.

5. INTROJECTION: RACE, GENDER, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

An intriguing example of the complex way in which Lizardi embodies the construction of national identity through race, class, and gender appears in the very first chapter of his novel. Pascual, the colonel's ranch foreman, bursts into the colonel's house in town holding two small dogs in his hands:

A este tiempo tocaron la campanilla de la escalera, abrieron el portón, y entró haciendo un terrible ruido con las espuelas precipitadamente a la sala seguido de una vieja, un payo con su mangota embrocada, su paño de sol en los hombros, sus botas de campana y dos perritos en las manos, y sin quitarse el disforme sombrero dijo: —Ave María seor amo... Estas son unas picardías, unas perradas que no se pueden aguantar entre cristianos. No sé cómo no caen rayos a manojos y acaban con la cuidá⁸³.

81. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979, XV: 124.

82. *Ibid.*, XV: 125.

83. *Ibid.*, I: 3.

Pascual tells the colonel that he entered another elegant, city house on an errand and found a fine lady nursing two little dogs to relieve the pressure in her breasts while her newborn son cried at her feet, unfed since the Indian wetnurse left. After some humorous wordplay between him and the old woman, Pascual explains:

...me jallo a la señora Luterina dándole de mamar a estos dos cachorros, sin tener tantita caridá de un probe muchachito de tres meses que estaba tirado a sus pies en una saleyita, dando el pobre angelito unos gritos que hasta se desmorecía, y croque era de hambre, porque se chupaba las manitas y se revolcaba como culebra⁸⁴.

The old lady defends her mistress: «como la leche de mi ama está retesa, no se la puede dar porque se empachará el pobrecito»⁸⁵. Pascual counters that her mistress is the picture of health, «qué colorada está y más gorda que un marrano capón, y con dos tetas tamañotas, que a fe que para vaca chichihua valía su dineral: mañosa estará ella, que no enferma»⁸⁶. Pascual's righteous indignation at this unnatural neglect by the baby's mother aligns inherent virtue and human decency with the lower, mixed-race class, while the selfish, vain neglect of motherly duties is projected onto the upper-class *criolla*. Rousseau and eighteenth-century Christian moralists criticized wet-nursing as «unnatural». The practice was connected imaginatively with the dangers of blood mixing and racial contamination by non-white classes in Iberia and Spanish America⁸⁷. What is interesting about Lizardi's evocation of mercenary wet-nursing is that he associates «natural» virtue with the outraged *mestizo* Pascual and «unnatural» abandonment of maternal duty with the Europeanized *criolla*. Vogeley points out that Lizardi's readers would have connected this image to the «linkage of woman, land, and colonial exploitation»⁸⁸.

This humorous and suggestive scene crystallized the tensions of class, race, and gender Lizardi's readers experienced. It became a defining image associated with his novel. An engraving in the second edition of the complete novel in 1842 featured the scene and succeeding editions reproduced it. The nineteenth-century editions of 1853 and 1897, the latter featuring colored «láminas cromolitografiadas»⁸⁹, increasingly exaggerated the racial characteristics of the mestizo peasant Pascual, evidence of the power of Lizardi's formulation of gender roles and early Mexican identity. As Vogeley convincingly argues, with this praise of Pascual, Lizardi criticizes colonial education and «wants his reflections on women's dependency, inferiority, carnality, and ignorance to further the discussion of

84. *Ibid*, I: 3.

85. *Ibid*, I: 3.

86. *Ibid*, I: 4.

87. For discussions of the wet nurse in the Spanish American social imaginary, see Katzew, 2008: 57; Martínez, 2008: 55-56; and Earle (2016): 442-43. Sharman discusses the influence of Rousseau and the critique of wet-nursing in Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento*; Sharman, 2020, 208-14.

88. Vogeley, 2001: 207-208.

89. Fernández de Lizardi, 1897: title page.

colonialism»⁹⁰. Members of Lizardi's lettered, Creole class were culturally Spanish but experienced the historical process of the loss of identity as Spanish subjects and having to adopt a new national identity. In the complex society of late viceregal and early independence-era Mexico, the Pensador Mexicano claims for the new Mexican readers who form his audience the decency and manly virtues of the mixed-race peasant class, while displacing onto the feminine the negative aspects of their European heritage.

Smith-Rosenberg has theorized that as England's colonies attempted to construct a new identity separate from that of their British forebears, from whom they nevertheless proudly inherited their cultural legacy, they went through a process of «introjection», the term that Freud used to describe the infant's passionate, possessive, and even sadistic desire for the mother's breast. European Americans' «desire to incorporate the superabundance, the plenitude, the power of the continent—coexisting with a nationalistic need to differentiate themselves from Europe—possessed the emotional excessiveness, the insatiability, *introjection* captures»⁹¹. Smith-Rosenberg's analysis is a suggestive way to interpret the erotically charged primal scene that begins Lizardi's novel. The writer clearly introjects into the masculine the simple, natural virtue of the mixed race, lower class «payo», while also intensively identifying with the pain and powerless rage of the infant son abandoned by its selfish European-American mother, upon whom he projects all the negative qualities of European Spanish culture the new *criollo* ruling class wanted to shed.

In Tenney's novel, the gendered and racial aspects of this type of introjection are equally complex. An analogous scene to that of Lizardi's novel is the humorous summerhouse mixup, when Dorcasina embraces her Black servant, Scipio, mistaking him for her duplicitous Irish lover, O'Connor. The process of introjection explains the curious erotic charge of this scene in which Tenney both depicts Dorcasina's transgression of race and class norms with her embrace and excuses it as inadvertent, only to repeat the image later as heightened in Dorcasina's memory by the quixote's overheated rhetoric of sensibility: «Her delicate mind could hardly bear to reflect on her familiarity with her father's servant...»⁹². When accosted by an Irish servant after surreptitiously visiting O'Connor in the inn, Dorcasina «found herself in a more disagreeable situation than even that she had been in the night before, when, with her snowy arms, she encircled Scipio's ebony neck»⁹³. Dorcasina, however, only considered the situation «disagreeable» in retrospect. She found the actual, although unwitting, embrace of Scipio highly pleasurable: «with a heart thrilling with transport, she blessed the accident, which, without wounding her delicacy, afforded her such ravishing delight»⁹⁴. Rebecca Earle theorizes how the «pleasures of taxonomy» and regulation in colonial society created desire. Novels allowed erotic, «pleasurable, imaginative speculation» about the experience of empire⁹⁵.

90. Vogeley, 2001: 208-211.

91. Smith-Rosenberg, (2004): 1330.

92. Tenney, 1993: 55.

93. *Ibid*: 59.

94. *Ibid*: 53. Rebecca Earle notes that racial transgressions in novels of this period were erotic, because regulation breeds eroticism.

95. Earle, (2016): 461-62.

Scipio beats the Irish upstart O'Connor. Scipio is agile, quick-witted, loyal, and resourceful, and «so much stronger than [O'Connor']»⁹⁶. To complete the Irishman's defeat, Dorcasina later witnesses the interloper's public humiliation when he is whipped in the pillory in Philadelphia. Tenney projects on to the masculine «foreigner», in this case, negative aspects of decadent, European culture that the new Americans wanted to exclude. She instead shows Dorcasina imaginatively bonding with the loyal Scipio, an American of African descent, introjecting his admirable qualities of loyalty to her father and to her father's land⁹⁷.

Tenney's female quixote, already quite elderly, comes to her senses at the novel's end. She rejects a French-influenced, libertine, Jacobite scoundrel interested only in her money and property. The aged Dorcasina spends the rest of her life doing works of charity. Lizardi's Quijotita does not end as happily or wisely as Tenney's protagonist. Duped by a «gachupín», a convicted criminal from Cádiz who pretends to be a «marqués»⁹⁸ from Spain, Pomposa loses what is left of her fortune. Her mother forces her into prostitution and Pomposa ultimately dies of syphilis. On her deathbed, a desperately poor but kind-hearted *mestiza* woman cares for her. Lizardi's final advice to his women readers reflects how the new Mexican political order excluded women as political subjects: «En los negocios de su familia, y no en los del Estado, es donde una mujer debe manifestar su talento y su prudencia»⁹⁹. Despite this conclusion, at one point Lizardi advocated political rights for women¹⁰⁰.

6. CONCLUSION

Tenney and Lizardi both drew on the transatlantic model of the female quixote to critique the values and norms of their societies. The novels' discourses of gender and sensibility reveal through signs of race and class their nations' evolving categories of identity. The two American female quixotes embody the unresolvable tensions surrounding belonging, hierarchy, and subordination in their societies¹⁰¹. The quixotes repeatedly violate gender norms of dress and behavior. They mistake true love for false, «good» suitor for «bad», servant class for upper class, thereby threatening their families' property and reputation. In

96. *Ibid*: 54.

97. The American Psychological Association *Dictionary of Psychology* [Online] gives two definitions for «introjection»: «1. A process in which an individual unconsciously incorporates aspects of external reality into the self, particularly the attitudes, values, and qualities of another person or a part of another person's personality ... 2. In psychoanalytic theory, the process of absorbing the qualities of an external object into the psyche in the form of an internal object or mental representation (i.e., an introject), which then has an influence on behavior. This process is posited to be a normal part of development, as when introjection of parental values and attitudes forms the superego, but it may also be used as a defense mechanism in situations that arouse anxiety». Accessed on July 8, 2022. URL: <https://dictionary.apa.org/introjection>

98. Fernández de Lizardi, 1979, XXXVIII: 285.

99. *Ibid*, XXXIX: 292.

100. Spell, 1931, 37-38.

101. On Lizardi's novel as a lesson in women's subordination, see Vogeley, 2001, chap. 7, and Jaffe, 2020: 76-79.

Tenney's and Lizardi's novels, the discourses of gender, race, and class circulating via the quixotic paradigm reflect the fluid process of the construction of national identities in the early nineteenth century¹⁰². These American female quixotes show how intimate «ways of loving» also make legible «discourses of love»¹⁰³, ways of belonging to the nation.

102. Carnell and Hale discuss Tenney's novel in a transatlantic context, comparing it to Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* to show the quixotic «tradition's emphasis on political and cultural specificity as the hallmark of its heroines' nuanced transformations from delusional girls to perspicacious women». Carnell and Hale, (2011): 518.

103. Herzog, 2003: 163.

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