

responsible for authorizing the weekly installments, ostensibly offering them no more than tales of adventure in the Spanish picaresque tradition.

Pedro Sarmiento, the picaresque hero, has all sorts of adventures and misadventures due to his faulty education. For a reader conversant with the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the equivalent would be a literary rendition of the popular English engravings known as *A rake's progress*. In the opinion of the Board of Censors, the novel was educational and commendable in the light of its moral intent.

The chapters sold well as they appeared, until one, well into the fourth volume, discussed slavery. Abolition was recognizably part of the feared Insurgents' program. The censors now read the novel in a new light, as a radical critique of the state

of affairs in colonial Mexico.

Publication of the novel was abruptly suspended and a complete edition was not available until 1830, three years after the author's death.

Literature as such was not Lizardi's main objective, though he wrote four novels, several plays, poems and fables to get his message across. Once Mexico was independent, in 1821, he went back to the expository and argumentative style of journalism.

The literary genre he boldly inaugurated in the Spanish dominions was essential to the making of independent Mexico. Freedom of thought and imagination are prerequisites for freedom of speech. The right to explore ideas freely, unfettered by political, historical or economic constraints is inherent in literature. It is not surprising that novels were banned from New Spain, as Plato had banned the works of poets from his ideal Republic.

A "nation-in-the-making"—as all nations are—needs endogenous works of fiction to describe Utopia or its opposite, and life and human relations therein. Latin America in general, and Mexico in particular, has been prodigal with such proposals for alternative modes of viewing the world, the ethics of shared human life on Earth, amid divine forces.

The novel has flourished in Latin America; fireworks of the imagination have amazed readers of diverse cultural traditions, enriching their views of themselves and "the good life." From its inception, the Latin American novel has been imbued with social concern, with imagining what is not yet but can be. And in that we can see the influence of its founder, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, "The Mexican thinker."

Lilian Alvarez de Testa

Pre-Hispanic Studies Seminar for the
De-Colonization of Mexico, UNAM.

Katherine Anne Porter and Mexico: The Illusion of Eden

Thomas Walsh

University of Texas Press, Austin
Texas, 1992, 269 pp.

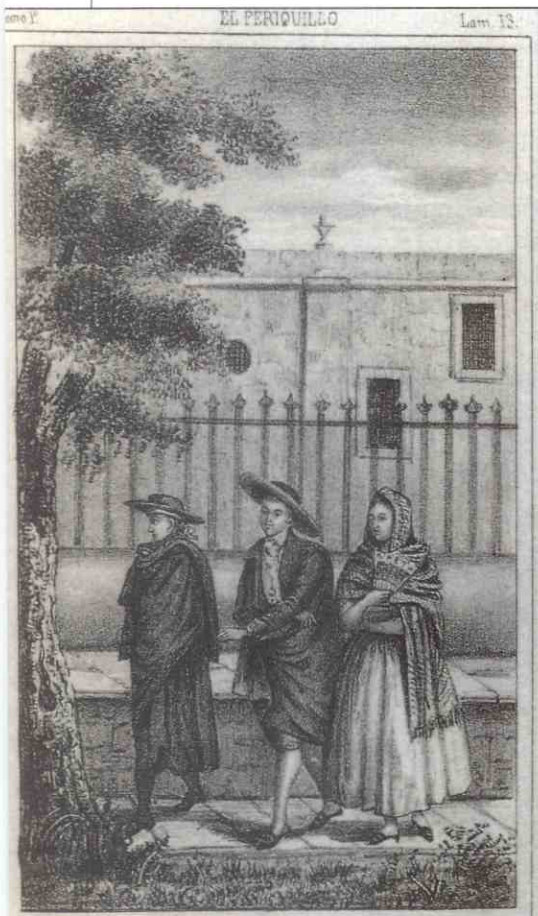
Thomas Walsh's book, *Katherine Anne Porter and Mexico*, is a carefully researched text, to be studied and savored as a source book of both Mexican history and literary analysis. The author has used Porter's fiction as a framework to tell the story of the world of politics and intellectuals in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s.

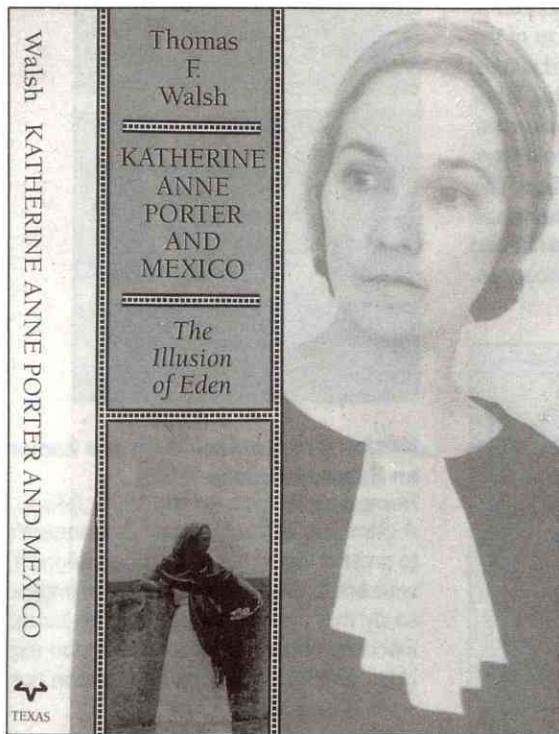
Porter came to Mexico as a foreign correspondent in 1920, encouraged by the musician Tatanacho (Ignacio Fernández Esperón) and Adolfo Best Maugard, whom she met in New York, where Best studied anthropology at Columbia University under Franz Boas.

Walsh elegantly fuses Porter's experiences and the people she meets with passages taken from *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, *Flowering Judas*, and many other short stories.

Every person mentioned is meticulously identified. The author provides the reader with critical information about each individual's role in the overall scenario, his or her relationship to other significant figures, their field of action, and the period in which they lived. The reader is provided with an overview as well as detailed key information about the relationship each one of these persons had with Porter and his or her role in Mexican history.

The world of radical intellectuals in Mexico in the 1920s is described with extensive quotes from Porter's fiction, including portraits of figures such as Diego and Lupe Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Manuel Gamio, Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo), Xavier Guerrero, Roberto Montenegro, Carlos Mérida, Miguel Covarrubias, and Rufino Tamayo. The foreign cast of





Although Tom Walsh's field of expertise is literature, his interest in, and research into, history provides the reader with detailed accounts of the period, including political intrigues, counterrevolutionary efforts, and Katherine Anne Porter's role in these events.

Walsh came across a letter mentioning General González while working on Porter's papers. He followed this trail, tracing the people and events until the pieces of the puzzle fell together. We are treated to information found in the Military Section of

Mexico's National Archives, which sheds some light on this period.

The United States had not recognized the Mexican government when Porter first arrived in Mexico. There were many unresolved controversial issues, primarily those dealing with land ownership and the right to exploit Mexican oil reserves. The Constitution of 1917 called for land reform and government control of natural resources, at a time when many American citizens owned large tracts of land, and the oil industry was in the hands of foreign corporations.

Porter's role is not clear. She was interviewed by J. Edgar Hoover, she was watched and followed, and yet the Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy lent her four hundred dollars to bail a fellow radical out of jail in Laredo, Texas. The author's painstaking research provides facts which he contrasts with Porter's fiction. Walsh then identifies characters and events which Porter invents for dramatic effect, as she retells a version of Mexican history scantily veiled by changes in names and places.

characters includes, among others, Carleton Beals, Anita Brenner, Roberto Haberman, Alma Reed, and Bertram Wolfe.

Porter's motivation in coming to Mexico, like many other intellectuals in the early 1920s, was to participate in the building of an ideal society. She was a follower of socialist Eugene Debs, but never joined the Communist Party. The Mexican revolution's period of armed struggle was over; it was time to build a new society, one that met the expectations of the leading radicals who were at that time active internationally.

Beals, an American journalist, taught English to Venustiano Carranza and his troops. He helped Wolfe escape the persecution of radicals in the US by getting him a job, also as an English teacher. Wolfe's real mission was to organize the Communist Party in Mexico. Roberto Haberman, an important person in Porter's life, arrived in Mexico in 1916. He contracted with Felipe Carrillo Puerto to help transform Yucatán into an ideal society.

Katherine Anne Porter and Mexico is the product of at least thirteen years of research. It is an unusual combination of American literature, Mexican history, and rigorous research, worthy of careful study by students and scholars in both literature and history.

Walsh's text reveals outstanding research methodology, new information about leading figures of the Mexican revolution, and an atypically unprejudiced analysis of facts and events. The author begins with Katherine Anne Porter, a radical feminist in constant conflict with herself and others, but she gently fades out of the limelight, and the passion of the inquiry into political history takes center stage in the material presented.

Tom Walsh's recent tragic death after a brief illness is a major loss for scholars interested in the relationship between intellectuals in Mexico and the United States.

Walsh's primary professional occupation was teaching English at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. His interest in, and love for, Mexico began with his wife María. It grew every summer, when he and his family returned. Tom loved the flowers, the food, the people — and unraveling political situations in Mexico and the US.

The hours he spent immersed in historical documents at the National Archives were the source of excited and enthusiastic discussions, even while delicately balanced on the roof of his home in Cuernavaca, taking pictures of the solar eclipse during the summer of 1991.

Rest in peace, Tom, and thank you for a major contribution to understanding between the peoples of Mexico and the US ❧

Susannah Glusker

Free lance writer, working on a PhD on the relationship between US and Mexican intellectuals.