

FRAY SERVANDO TERESA DE MIER'S PATRIOTIC COSMOPOLITANISM:
PARIS, LONDON, AND PHILADELPHIA

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New Spain's Holy Office of the Inquisition was suppressed on May 31, 1820. Days before, a minister of the Tribunal, Antonio Pereda, sent a letter to Viceroy Juan Ruiz de Apodaca justifying the imprisonment of the renowned insurgent fray Servando Teresa de Mier (1763-1827). Mier, who had become a leading intellectual force behind the independence of Mexico, was one of the Inquisition's final victims. Pereda's "Informe del Tribunal," describes Mier as:

[...] el hombre más perjudicial y temible en este reino de cuantos se han conocido. Es de un carácter altivo, soberbio y presuntuoso. Posee una instrucción muy vasta en la mala literatura. Es de genio duro, vivo y audaz, su talento no común, y logra además una gran facilidad para producirse. Su corazón está tan corrompido que lejos de haber manifestado en el tiempo de su prisión alguna variación de ideas, no hemos recibido sino pruebas constantes de una lastimosa obstinación. Aun conserva un ánimo inflexible, un espíritu intranquilo, superior a sus desgracias.

En una palabra, este religioso aborrece de corazón al Rey, lo mismo que a las cortes y á todo gobierno legítimo. No respeta ni a la silla Apostólica ni a los Concilios. Su fuerte y pasión dominante, es la independencia revolucionaria, que desgraciadamente ha inspirado y fomentado en ambas Américas por medio de sus escritos llenos de ponzoña y veneno. ("Informe" 2)²

Pereda's accusations provide a blunt justification of Mier's imprisonment by reasserting the right of the ecclesiastical authorities to continue the persecution of anyone who endangered Spain's sovereignty over its possessions. Pereda's claims are based in the Mexican patriot's well-known denunciation of the illegality of Spain's conquest and imperial rule of the Americas. In 1794, Mier was convicted to ten years in prison immediately after his sermon questioning the miraculous origin of the imprint of the Virgin of Guadalupe on Juan Diego's cloak, among other scandalous propositions. After six years of imprisonment in Spain, the Real Academia de la Historia, supported by Juan Bautista Muñoz, requested Mier's release, but the Consejo de Indias upheld that he must complete his full sentence. Before any appeals were heard, however, Mier escaped and began a pilgrimage to a number of European and North American cities where he fearlessly promoted the independence of New Spain as the solution to the ills of his homeland.

In the course of thirty years of travel, Mier became an itinerant interlocutor and political broker for several key European and Anglo-American liberal figures, and his diplomacy proved vital in obtaining political and financial support for the wars of independence. As Pereda rightfully charged, Mier's most damaging influence to Spain's interests "en ambas Américas" was a result of efforts, not in Mexico or South America, but in Paris, London, Florence, Philadelphia, and New York. In these urban settings, the Mexican friar crossed paths with anti-imperial Spanish expatriates such as Juan Antonio Llorente and Joseph Blanco White, as well as a long list of exemplary figures of the Spanish American independence movement, including José de San Martín, Simón Bolívar, Simón Rodríguez, Andrés Bello, Juan López Méndez, and Carlos Alvear. Mier's sphere of influence was broad and rightfully feared. Events close to home sent Spanish American insurgents into exile, but instead of weakening the war, they in many ways strengthened the independence movement by establishing ties across the Atlantic and between centers of rebellion that resonated around the world. Mier's experience in foreign cities also left a profound imprint on his own ideas about sovereignty for Mexico and in the construction of his own political identity.

Recent scholarship has reached a near consensus that identities are social constructions that are always relational and historically specific.³ Enlightenment cultural products reveal constructions of identity contingent on a profound historical consciousness, in which narratives on identity always confront the past to understand the

present. Identities are also inescapably linked to relations of power—that is, through hegemonic forms of self-understanding that are continually performed, reproduced, and challenged. Textual and visual forms of representation where identity plays a central role embody political agency. In his critical examination of Afro-Colombian identity and social movements, Arturo Escobar proposes: “identity is a dialogic process that simultaneously highlights history and struggle, agency and determination” (202). According to Escobar, identities are predicated on difference; they are “resources of knowledge for social change” (204). He also argues that the construction of difference occurs through a series of practices concerned with its politicization and “the construction of a new political subject” (201). Escobar’s incisive analysis is relevant to understanding the context of the social and political movement that fueled the independence wars. Creole intellectuals, such as Mier, sought to define their identity as Spanish Americans through history.

Identities are also sutured to place and territory—perhaps even more so for exiled intellectuals living far from their homelands and struggling with feelings of displacement. As cultural theorist Iain Chambers argues, the mobility of the modern subject in time and place greatly complicates identity, ideology, and history.⁴ As Michael Keith and Steve Pile suggest, identities are always generated in relation to specific place contexts, both territorial and social. For them the notion of “spatiality” captures the manner in which the social and the spatial cannot be separated from one another. Fray Servando Teresa de Mier’s political discourses authored in foreign cities reveal a reflection on individual and collective identity that was mediated by his sites of enunciation. Mier’s own political identity and postcolonial imaginings regarding New Spain’s future were both infused with the liberalism embodied by these urban centers.⁵

This critical essay reflects on Mier’s undertakings in Paris, London, and Philadelphia. His revolutionary writings recall early colonial history, but more importantly, his ideas are caught within a coalition of transatlantic ideologies and spatial imaginaries in which the political self is shaped, even as it shapes others. I focus on his early exchanges in Paris with the French abolitionist and Bishop of Blois, Henri Grégoire, in order to understand Mier’s subsequent writings in London and a decade later in Philadelphia. At the intersection of different languages, histories, and revolutionary experiences, Mier embraces a sort of patriotic cosmopolitanism to argue against slavery, for individual rights, and for freedom.

Kwame Anthony Appiah has defined the notion of “cosmopolitan patriotism” as the particular sentiment of patriots who transform themselves into citizens of the world without putting aside the love for their country: “The cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of the world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different, people” (22). The cosmopolitan patriot welcomes the rest of the world, as he celebrates his or her own cultural or national identity and history.

Late colonial cultural and political figures such as Mier broke the spatial bond between “home” and “away” by participating in established networks of urban intellectuals. Their exchanges within these important circles and urban spaces profoundly influenced how late colonialism was understood and how they designed Spanish American territories as independent domains. If these revolutionary subjects were deeply influenced by liberal tenets on morality and ethics, the historicist wave of the Enlightenment accentuated their historical sensibility. In Mier’s writings, Mexico’s historical past becomes a powerful instrument of persuasion against the logic of desperate administrators and loyalists intellectuals reacting to the insurgency. In that vein, I read Mier’s political and autobiographical writings as counter-histories of Spanish colonialism inspired and profoundly influenced by his experiences in foreign cities.

I. “Cuando os persiguieren en una ciudad, huid a otra”

Mier has been introduced into the cultural history of Mexico as an author and political figure most noted for his sermon at the Collegiate Church of Guadalupe and collected volume of autobiographical writings

known as *Memorias*.⁶ In these highly personal accounts, he narrates once and again the terrible events of 1794, when he denied to his congregation the popular narrative of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe at Tepeyac. He instead related a different origin story: just after the time of Christ, the Virgen had been imprinted on the cape of the apostle St. Thomas, identified in Mexican codices as Quetzalcoatl. The myth of St. Thomas's pre-contact evangelization had already been deployed by a number of early colonial chroniclers and commentators including Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, and the Augustinian friar Antonio de la Calancha, among others in many parts of the Americas.⁷ For creoles of the independence era, the revisionist version of Amerindians' conversion to Christianity before Cortés's arrival on the coast of Yucatan was politically convenient to their argument of the illegitimacy of a conquest justified on evangelical grounds. Mier's intricate arguments about the apparitions that led to his confinement are narrated in a number of autobiographical writings, including the *Apología del Doctor Mier*, *Relación de lo que sucedió en Europa*, fictional letters to Juan Bautista Muñoz, "Manifiesto apologético," and *Exposición de la persecución que ha padecido desde el 14 de junio de 1817 hasta el presente año de 1822*.⁸ In these texts, Mier establishes the historical and legal significance of his sermon, but more importantly details his years in exile in European and Anglo-American cities.

While Mier's reflective autobiographical accounts were completed during his years in Inquisition prisons, most his revolutionary writings produced while in transit outside of Mexico constitute his most significant body of political thought. David Brading argues that Mier should be viewed not only as the first Mexican historian of the struggle for independence, but also as its most original thinker. For Brading, Mier was the first intellectual to fuse sixteenth-century colonial history to arguments for independence (*Los orígenes* 61). Brading's opinion must be reconsidered in light of the time and place where Mier developed his retelling of the early colonial past, which was inextricably bound to his engagements abroad.⁹ Place matters: for patriots in their native lands, locality produced a moral geography of inclusion and exclusion; however, for cosmopolitans in European and Anglo-American cities, their moral ethos was based on principles of empathy, respect, and sovereignty for all. Spanish American insurgents such as Mier understood and appealed to these same Enlightenment cosmopolitan values. But the influence of these revolutionary subjects went beyond this. They wielded the authority of their historical narratives and experience to reach widely, to shape foreign cosmopolitans' geographical imaginations, and thereby achieve international support. Spanish Americans' "militant particularism," as David Harvey would call it, became internally coherent in these urban contexts. The displacement of exile also sharpened their critical stance toward their patrias' colonial condition.¹⁰ It is in these foreign cities that they were able to make sense of the late colonial conditions of material deprivation, violent and unjust wars, and continued exploitation suffered by many in the Spanish colonies, and to develop programs for resolving this immoral status quo.

In order to understand Mier's political writings abroad, it is crucial to consider Mier's assessment of exogenous ideologies and his autobiographical writings. These personal narratives, best known for their literary character, must be understood as a desperate act of defense regarding his criminal case. They shed light on his travels and his fortunate encounters with Jansenists, Masons, and members of the liberal elite who zealously followed the crumbling of the Spanish empire and the emergence of the Spanish American insurgency.¹¹ These same individuals contributed to Mier's understandings of European liberalism, which he embraced without putting aside his patriotic sentiments or forgetting the war at home. This intellectual perspective sheds light on how Mier transformed himself into a cosmopolitan patriot while gaining a deeper understanding of the fight for independence in the Spanish colonies.

In Paris, Mier encountered Jansenism; and in London, freemasonry, a major social force enabling a sector of the bourgeoisie to embrace liberal cosmopolitan principles. During this same period, Spanish American struggles for independence had become a focus of much attention among individuals linked to the Freemasons and other gentlemen's societies that sympathized with revolutionary causes.¹² In London, Francisco de Miranda's engagement with masons constitutes one of the best examples of these crucial

intellectual exchanges, which provided a model to organize young creoles and promote Spanish American independence.¹³ Freemasons or not, a broad swath of Europe's urban elite supported Spanish American insurgents. For them, their commitment combined both a moral duty and an opportunity to nurture a strong alliance with the future republics that could benefit the expansion of trade and commerce.¹⁴

The reconfiguration of Mexico's history went hand in hand with Mier's participation in a movement of global citizenship that did anything but obscure the pressing issue of independence. In his autobiographical writings it is clear that his major concern was Mexico; however, he was able to appreciate and critique the same urban centers of power where he gained new perspectives and aspirations. Like many political figures of his time, he looked back at the lessons from history in order to find models to follow. Many creole revolutionaries appropriated the image of the Amerindian as a symbol of courage and resilience; however for Mier, the sixteenth-century Dominican advocate for Amerindian rights Bartolomé de las Casas came to serve as a primary guide and model on this subject, crucially during his visit to Paris in 1801-1802.

II. Paris: The Other Las Casas

Mier's stay in Paris was brief but pivotal to the international stature he achieved during his travels in Europe. As he narrates in his *Memorias*, Mier taught Spanish with Simón Rodríguez, served as cleric at St. Thomas Church, made the acquaintance of former Spanish Inquisition secretary Juan Antonio Llorente (the future editor of his writings on Las Casas), and befriended the French liberal and Jansenist priest Henri Grégoire (1750-1831). Later in 1814, he became the first Spanish American to be granted membership in the French National Institute. When Mier first arrived in Paris, Grégoire invited him to attend the Second National Council of the Constitutional Church. There is no doubt that Grégoire was one of the most polemical figures of his time. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Parisian intellectual life was dominated by heated discussions on human nature, racial equality, women's rights, slavery, and religious tolerance. These themes were relevant not only to the national reconfiguration of France under Napoleon, but also to discussions about European colonial subjugation across the Atlantic. Grégoire played a major role in the reconstitution of France's National Church and in French national politics supporting the independence of Haiti.¹⁵ He was a leading advocate for religious tolerance, and was widely hailed in Europe and the Americas for his staunch abolitionist stance. He held that blacks had the same intellectual capabilities as whites and were able to produce literature on a par with anyone in Europe. Grégoire, like Mier, was a revolutionary and a cleric embodying the ideals, complexities, and contradictions of the culture of the Enlightenment where religiosity, cosmopolitanism, and their dream of righteousness and justice flourished in an environment dominated by political despotism. Mier celebrated everything that Grégoire stood for. Regarding his role in the National Church Council, Mier claimed, "fué el alma de este Concilio, como del primero, y el sustentáculo de la religión en Francia" (*Memorias* 44). Grégoire's ideas prevailed in Mier's political thought as shown in his later writings.

Mier and Grégoire's shared admiration for Bartolomé de las Casas provided the main basis for a long-lasting intellectual relationship. Grégoire had embraced Las Casas's ideas opposing Amerindian slavery, which in his view differed little from his own opposition to the global use of African slave labor.¹⁶ The political and racial turmoil unleashed by the Haitian Revolution intensified Grégoire's interest in Spanish-ruled regions of the Americas, their indigenous populations, and Las Casas's advocacy of Amerindian rights. Where Mier's interest in Las Casas was concerned, the issue was not so much about slavery as it was about emancipatory politics. Early on, Las Casas had questioned the legitimacy of the conquest in his analysis of the just titles conferred to Spain in the papal bulls. For Mier, Las Casas was "el más antiguo defensor de la libertad de América," and a radical spirit worth imitating ("Discurso preliminar" xxxv).¹⁷

In their mutually influential exchanges, Grégoire advised Mier on the issue of religious tolerance (Domínguez Michael 167). According to Grégoire's "Apologie de Don Barthelemy de las Casas," Mier educated

him in turn on the violent history of Spanish rule, drawing on sources unfamiliar to him. Their relationship preexisted Mier's arrival in Paris. Grégoire's 1800 lecture on slavery to the French National Institute identifies Mier as the "American savant" who had exposed him to the contents of the manuscript copy of Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* and Juan Bautista Muñoz's 1793 *Historia del Nuevo Mundo* ("Apologie" 378).¹⁸ Grégoire's declaration sheds light into the intellectual nature of their relationship and helps explain the tight bond that resulted from their Paris encounter. The centrality of Las Casas's writings for them is also confirmed by their correspondence.¹⁹ In a letter to Grégoire dated April 22, 1802, Mier refers to previous exchanges from Spain and Grégoire's advice to write a biography of Las Casas: "Me escribes con la confianza en que yo por fin esté escribiendo la vida de las Casas. Lo prometí, pero me libraré del compromiso. No quiero echarme una carga más porque carezco de paz del espíritu, de facilidad de vivir, no tengo de España los libros apropiados, cuando convenga regresaré a ello" (qtd. in Pulido Herráez 440).

History became a defining factor of identity among *españoles americanos* and cosmopolitan liberals who found meaning for their present struggles in historical epic narratives such as Las Casas's life. The Enlightenment had turned history and historical explanation into master discourses occupying a central place in philosophical debates on a wide range of matters (Knudsen 43-45). If Enlightenment historiography was tied to notions of progress, secularization, utilitarianism, and the search for critical rationality, for Creoles, historical inquiry became an engine for attaining political freedom. Mier's contribution to the situated cosmopolitanism that emerged in European and North American cities challenged Eurocentric liberalism with new interpretations of early Spanish American history.

Interestingly, Mier made a concerted effort to insert *himself* into this liberationist historiography. Juan Antonio Llorente's first collection of Las Casas's writings (1820) includes Mier's commentary on the French prelate's "Apologie." Mier unsettled his readers once again by creating a fictional intellectual history of their relationship, as he had done with his fictional letters to Juan Bautista Muñoz, authored many years after Muñoz's death.²⁰ Mier intentionally misdated his commentary to the year 1806, to make it appear that he had joined Grégoire's effort to clear Las Casas's name at a moment when travel accounts about the "weakness of savages" had generated a heated debate on race and coloniality among French intellectuals (Staum 35-36), but Mier made the mistake of alluding to his *Historia de la revolución*, which had been written in London just before its publication in 1813. It is worth noting that long before Darwinian approaches to evolution, racial theorists were debating the nature of non-European groups, not only on the basis of taxonomic classification and nomenclature, but also in terms of historical development. Grégoire and Mier's essays were strong refutations of philosophical histories on the nature of the Americas by Corneille de Pauw and William Robertson. More importantly, both denounced Antonio de Herrera's *Historia de las Indias Occidentales*, the crucial reference for all accusations aimed at tarnishing Las Casas's reputation among Enlightenment thinkers.

While Mier certainly influenced Grégoire's understanding of Spanish colonialism, Grégoire's own strong convictions about the political duty of clerics and the conditions of freedom due to all individuals softened Mier's prejudice towards Amerindians and members of the *castas*. As is well known, racism toward non-white groups was widespread among liberal Creoles fighting for independence, but Mier, in his writings from London, shifted his views to show greater concern for social inequality, slavery, and religious intolerance--all of which were central topics of Grégoire's writings. Grégoire's influence exhibits the ways Mier entered into the liberal discourse of these urban communities. The improved material and social conditions of urban life made his political writing possible. While Mier was in prison, his writing was mostly about himself; while abroad, he engaged the world with a rhetorical agency assimilated from the individuals he met during his journey.

III. London: Thinking Historically

After a decade of nomadic travel through southern Europe, Mier settled down between 1811 and 1816 at 28 Grafton Street, the famous London residence of Francisco de Miranda, just after Miranda had left to join Bolívar in the struggle to liberate Nueva Granada. This haven for revolutionary exiles provided Mier with an ideal place to strengthen his relationships with Andrés Bello, Luis López Méndez, and Carlos María de Alvear. As members of the Sociedad de Caballeros Racionales and well-known agents of the independence cause, they all found a welcome place at Miranda's home. López Méndez and Alvear soon followed Miranda and Bolívar back to Caracas, yet Bello remained in London for some time, and Mier acquired such affection for Bello and his cause that on occasion he signed essays with the pseudonym U.C.R. for "un caraqueño republicano." Mier and Bello also participated in frequent gatherings at Holland House, a celebrated center of political and cultural activity and Foxite Whig republicanism. During the 1810s, the Lord Holland and his circle showed great interest in Spain and its troubled empire. They provided protection for liberal intellectuals such as José María Blanco White, editor of *El Español* (1810-1814), who in turn, according to Ivan Jaksic, made efforts to secure financial support for Bello and Mier (36).

Blanco White, the intellectual circle of Holland House, and their support for Edmund Burke's ideas influenced Mier to step away from Jacobinism and more willing to critique the violence of the independence wars. In his monthly journal, Blanco White presented a profound critique of the Regency government in Spain, the Cortes in Cádiz, and the wars of independence. A decade later in his address to the first Congreso Constituyente, Mier vividly remembered this experience:

Yo también fui jacobino, y consta en mis dos Cartas de un americano al español en Londres, porque en España no sabíamos más que lo que habíamos aprendido en los libros revolucionarios de la Francia. Yo la vi veintiocho años en una convulsión perpetua; veía sumergidos en la misma a cuantos pueblos adoptaban sus principios; pero como me parecían la evidencia misma, trabajaba en buscar otras causas a que atribuir tanta desunión, tanta inquietud y tantos males. Fui al cabo a Inglaterra, la cual permanecía tranquila en medio de la Europa alborotada, como un navlo encantado en medio de una borrasca general. Procuré averiguar la causa de este fenómeno; estudié en aquella vieja escuela de política práctica, leí sus Burkes, sus Paleys, sus Bentham y otros muchos autores, oí a sus sabios, y quedé desengañado de que el daño provenía de los principios jacobinos. Estos son la caja de Pandora donde están encerrados los males del Universo. Y retrocedí espantado, cantando la palinodia, como ya lo habla hecho en su tomo VI mi célebre amigo el español Blanco White. ("Profecía" 293)

"Yo también fui jacobino" signals a marked shift in approach to political change. The urban spaces from where Mier wrote made a clear difference in his writing and ideological stance. Ensnared in the relatively peaceful and open intellectual environment of London, Mier found a new model of government for Mexico that rejected the radicalism and violence of the French Revolution and embraced constitutionalism. British institutions exercised a clear sway over Mier, as he sought models of governance and sovereignty. In his *Historia*, he advises: "en cuanto lo permitan las circunstancias, debe ser la constitución [como la] de esta nación dichosa donde escribo, y donde se halla la verdadera libertad, seguridad y prosperidad" (II: 578).

Beyond finding a new model of government, while in London Mier defined the struggles, found solutions, and wrote the history of his own political cause. In Paris, his profound knowledge about Las Casas served him well in his intellectual exchanges with Grégoire. It was in London, however, where he found strength in exile and for the first time devoted time to reflect and write on the earlier history of colonialism with Las Casas as its central protagonist. All evidence indicates that Mier divided his time writing between Miranda's Grafton Street home and the Holland House's library on the way to publication of the first of five editions of Las Casas's *Brevísima relación*. The "Prólogo" to this text was Mier's first attempt to justify in writing the fight for independence using Las Casas's political claims and rhetorical force.

The 1812 London edition of the *Brevísima* must be considered one of Mier's most significant acts of defiance to the Spanish Crown and the Inquisition rulings. This work had been listed by the Holy Office's index of banned books since 1659, and now with the ongoing Cortes of Cádiz allowing greater freedom of expression among the representatives of Spain and its colonies while they decided what to do about the French occupation, Mier did not hesitate in recovering this sixteenth-century propagandistic bestseller for a new generation of *americanos*.²¹

In Mier's biographical sketch in the "Prólogo," Las Casas emerges as the embodiment of the cosmopolitan patriot, who, for the love of his Spanish homeland and to protect it from retribution by God for its obscene acts during the conquest, insists on moral universality. Las Casas's writings serve as the central authority for Mier's denunciation of Spanish despotism and the devastation of its American populations in recent times. Las Casas was also worth remembering because he had been crucial in the interpretation of colonial legislation that made the Spanish American territories kingdoms and not colonies of the Spanish crown—a legal precedent fundamental to American participation in the Cortes of Cádiz and formulation of a new constitution for the empire. Mier's Prologue on Las Casas thus asserts:

... el evangelio debiendo ser pacíficamente anunciado y voluntariamente recibido a ninguno da derecho²² para sujetar a nadie ni menos para privarle de su libertad, bienes y señoríos: que lo mas que debían pertenecer a los reyes de Castilla por la protección del evangelio encomendada a ellos por la silla apostólica era el título de emperadores que efectivamente tomaron y los reyes de Indias sin otro perjuicio sólo debían pagarle un derecho a ese fin, que es el que se impuso con el nombre de tributo. A consecuencia se declararon las Américas reynos independientes de Castilla sin tener con ellas otro vínculo que el rey como emperador de las Indias. Se nos dio una constitución liberal que después ha hallado el despotismo no menos que las antiguas de España y se canjaron las leyes del código de Indias, que como dice muy bien Remesal no son otra cosa en lo favorable que las conclusiones de los escritos de Casas. ("Prólogo" n. pag.)

Mier legitimized his denunciation of Spain's appropriation of rule over the Indies with Las Casas's writings and the opinions of an entire cadre of Dominican theologians regarding the rights of discovery, just war, and the legality of the conquest. Directly alluding to British legal tradition, Mier emphasized that the Laws of the Indies contained a *magna carta* for governance in the Americas: These regions were true kingdoms with their own institutions that compared favorably to those in Europe. He further developed this idea in the *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España*: "la necesidad de derecho en que estaban los pueblos hispanoamericanos de separarse de la metrópoli, dada la obcecación del gobierno español de no reconocerles su igualdad con las provincias peninsulares" (7). Thus, he conferred a new history and memory to Mexico that was quoted by many, including Simón Bolívar in his "Carta de Jamaica": "El emperador Carlos V formó un pacto con los descubridores, conquistadores y pobladores de América, que como dice Guerra [Mier], es nuestro contrato social" (17).²³

While in London, Mier also published his two-volume *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España* (1813) under the pseudonym of José Guerra. He referred to it as an "apologetic history," reminding us of Las Casas's *Apologética historia sumaria*.²⁴ In the *Historia*'s first volume, Mier focused on the downfall of Viceroy José de Iturrigaray; in the second, he analyzed Miguel Hidalgo's popular insurrection with the goal of shaping British public opinion and seeking political support. Different from the works of other Creole intellectuals, Mier presents a catalogue of indigenous codices and accounts from Mexico's conquest period that explicitly appealed to foreign readers' thirst for knowledge of ancient cultures. His exaltation of the indigenous past corroborated the horrors of colonial violence described by Las Casas. Early colonial events, such as the promulgation and erasure of the New Laws, provided Mier with powerful justification for Mexico's insurgency. In his *Historia*, he even included an account of Las Casas's activities in Mexico and a description of his courageous actions before the Royal Court and the Holy Office when he asked for protection of the Indians: "Mil veces se trató de hereje a Casas, y por haber sostenido en el concilio de México de 1546 que no se podía hacer esclavos a los Indios,

tuvo que comparecer como reo de estado ante el consejo de Indias” (I: viii). As noted previously, Mier’s recovery of Las Casas’s life, works, and ideas has multiple meanings and layers of interpretation. In this passage, Las Casas’s life sheds light on the injustice of the legal system that Las Casas and Mier both had to confront at different moments in the history of Spanish colonialism.

Of particular importance during the London years are Mier’s arguments on social equality. One of Mier’s key propositions during this period was that Indians and the *castas* should be paid a fair wage for their labor. He debated this issue initially in his first letter to Blanco White, “Carta de un americano en *El español*” (1811), and later in the *Historia*. He legitimized these ideas with reference to Las Casas’s efforts to end the *encomiendas*: “Casas fue quien en 1542 sacó las primeras leyes para que se les pagase su trabajo” (I: 81). Undoubtedly, Las Casas’s early denunciations served as the backbone of Mier’s arguments and identity as a cosmopolitan patriot.

During his five years in London, Mier put aside personal apology and devoted his time to writing and seeking international support. He was not alone. Many other revolutionary subjects, including Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín, openly admired Britain and recognized the importance of good transatlantic relations with this rival imperial power. While in residence in London, Bolívar proclaimed: “I am convinced that England alone is capable of protecting the world’s precious rights as she is great, glorious and wise” (Bollus and Asprey 88).²⁵ These same leaders were also deeply influenced by Mier. If Mier’s appropriation of Las Casas allowed him to redefine his identity as a revolutionary subject while he lived in Paris, his political designs for Mexico gained clarity and coherence during his extended residence in the British capital.

IV. Philadelphia: Encountering Republicanism

Mier states in his “Manifiesto apologético” that he sailed from Liverpool in 1816 with a pension from the Anglican Church to travel to New Orleans, a city that had become an important enclave for Spanish American insurgents.²⁶ He was desperately trying to find his way back to Mexico, and the Spanish liberal Francisco Javier Mina’s planned expedition to fight for the freedom of Mexico offered him the opportunity to return to his *patria*. The expedition failed, Mina was executed, others arrested, and Mier was sent back to the Inquisition’s jails for another painful period (1817-1821).²⁷ While imprisoned, he to his personal writings, this time confronting his past and producing memoirs based upon petitions to the Tribunal, letters to friends and allies, and struggle with immense solitude. His petitions to the Inquisition failed, and he was convicted of political and religious heterodoxy. Even after the Inquisition was disbanded, Mier’s case was upheld and he was ordered back across the Atlantic into exile. While in transit, he feigned illness upon reaching the port of Havana and used the opportunity to flee to Philadelphia with the help of Vicente Rocafuerte, who later became president of Ecuador (1834-1839).

In the early nineteenth century, Philadelphia was known as the “American Athens.” The city was an important publishing center full of intellectual activity often generated by new immigrants.²⁸ Political refugees from Spain and the Spanish Americas benefited from the freedom of the press and intellectual institutions such as the American Philosophical Society, the Philadelphia Library, and the Historical Society. Important political manifestos in French and Spanish were produced by Philadelphia printers such as Mathew Carey, John Mowry, and Thomas and William Bradford (Kanellos 688). Juan F. Hurtel printed Francisco Vidaurre’s *Plano del Perú* and *Cartas americanas*, Vicente Rocafuerte’s *Ideas necesarias a todo pueblo americano que quiera ser libre*, Mier’s *Memoria político-instructiva*, and the Philadelphia edition of Bartolomé de las Casas’s *Brevísima relación*. As Domínguez Michael asserts, exiled Spanish American intellectuals exchanged their old escape route from Cádiz to Paris for a new one from Havana to Philadelphia (594). As the revolutionary crisis escalated and moved towards its denouement, letters, historical accounts, and treatises published in Philadelphia ruthlessly attacked Spain’s last attempts at maintaining political control, demanded immediate independence, and outlined original forms of

government for the new republics. Although the United States never provided the kind of direct aid Haiti gave to Bolívar, like Britain, it gave abundant diplomatic and moral support to the wars of its neighbors to the south.²⁹

In Philadelphia, Mier enjoyed the sponsorship of Manuel Torres, a key intellectual and business entrepreneur from New Granada referred to as the “Franklin of the Southern World” by newspaper editor William Duane.³⁰ Torres was in Philadelphia what Miranda represented to Spanish American insurgents in London. Linked to the Masons and well connected in Washington and to the Anglo-American business community, Torres played a leading role in shaping public opinion about the wars of independence. He introduced *españoles americanos* to wealthy sponsors, and after the establishment of the República de la Gran Colombia he served as its ambassador before President James Monroe.³¹

With Torres’s support, Mier found easy entry into Philadelphia’s elite intellectual and political circles. According to Duane’s piece on Mier in *The Aurora*, “[e]l doctor Mier se ha destacado en Europa y en toda la América por su destacado espíritu y opiniones filosóficas y es admirable por su desinterés y virtudes personales” (qtd. in Rodríguez O., *La formación* 18). Thanks to such support, Mier was able to publish a new edition of Las Casas’s *Brevísima relación* and the important political tract *Memoria político-instructiva enviada desde Filadelfia en agosto de 1821 a los gefes independientes del Abáhuac, llamado por los españoles la Nueva España*, both in 1821³²

Edmundo O’Gorman and Christopher Domínguez Michael assert that the *Memoria político-instructiva* may be the most significant document of independence produced in Philadelphia during this period. After its publication, in a letter to Pedro Gual dated September 21, 1821, Mier states: “Bolívar, San Martín e Iturbide hacen prodigios con la espada: pero yo también hago los míos con la pluma y en medio de la mayor pobreza” (“Letter” n. pag.).

Mier’s republicanism gained coherence from his dialogue with Torres and Rocafuerte and his reading of American republican thinkers such as Thomas Paine and Jonathan Mayhew. Torres had translated Paine into Spanish, although Mier had also translated portions of Paine’s work for his *Historia de la revolución* (Kason 181). From the friendly intellectual climate of Philadelphia, Mier embraced the protection of the United States, and he began to advocate this neighbor to the north as the protector and guide for the new Spanish American republics. Against Iturbide’s Plan de Iguala, which retained the model of a European monarchy, Mier argues for a republican government for Mexico: “el objeto es destruir el plan monárquico de Iturbide y precaver las maniobras de España” (“Al Señor Doctor Pedro Gual” n. pag.). As Nancy Kason argues, in his writings “Idea de una constitución” and “Nos prometieron constituciones,” Mier rejected the British model of constitutional governance for the republican form of the United States. For Mier, it became clear that the notion of freedom could not be achieved in a moment or by declaration; freedom is a process that includes the eradication of poverty and injustice and the establishment of rights for all.

It is precisely during this period that Mier revised his essay “Cuestión política: ¿Puede ser libre la Nueva España?” Like all of his essays, it reflected on the future of Mexico, in this case asserting his ability to play an ambassadorial role similar to Torres. Here, Mier proposed his appointment as “ministro plenipotenciario,” who could serve as an ideal broker between the United States government and the new republic of Mexico in order to “hacer todo lo que le parezca convenir para dar la libertad e independencia a la república anahuacense” (224).

Mier was more conscious than ever of the power of persuasion when writing on political issues. Indeed, Mier again demonstrated his belief that Las Casas’s rhetoric of destruction could be deployed to persuade almost anyone. In the Gual letter, he praised the *Brevísima relación* as “[una] cosa excelente para la revolución, y con sólo leer un capítulo en una misa en Soto de la Marina todo el pueblo tomó las armas.” While in Philadelphia, Mier revised and expanded his introduction to Las Casas’s *Brevísima relación*. Departing from his previous London essay, he introduced Las Casas as a universal authority transcending all temporal and spatial contexts. Thanks to Mier, Las Casas’s efforts became well known in Paris, London, and now Philadelphia,

where Las Casas's writings were widely used to construct a new Black Legend against Spain. Mier continued to portray Las Casas as an exemplary figure concerning issues of freedom and equality.

¡Quién puede contar cuánto le debieron y le debemos todos los americanos! El hizo prohibir como ilícita la guerra que le daban a los indios con pretexto de religión y abolir el título de conquista. Les restituyó la libertad, quitó las encomiendas, el repartimiento, el trabajo forzado de las minas, los servicios personales y gratuitos, la disminución de tributos. (Mier, "Prólogo" n. pag.)

Tragically, few Anglo-Americans showed an interest in applying Las Casas's insights to the ongoing treatment of Amerindians by their own republic.³³

V. "Cities: The Contemporary Topos of the Modern World"³⁴

It has been argued that cultural crossings produced by colonialism are a key feature of modernity. According to Iain Chambers, cities provide the locus where migrants become nomads "transforming and absorbing" knowledge produced by their cultural encounters (14). Expanding on Edward Said's ideas on migrancy and exile, Chambers agrees that migration and cultural crossings are deeply inscribed in modern reasoning (2), in which the traveling subject constantly interrogates and breaches any "centered language, being, position and politics" (14). Indeed, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's transoceanic mobility and access to urban cosmopolitan cultures prompted marked ideological shifts and the development of a historical consciousness fixated on the early colonial period that redefined his political identity, loyalties, and the intersection of his personal and political struggles. Mier's political articulations of the past, present, and future were deeply influenced by these cities where he argued against the brute force of empire. Like many intellectuals writing from prison or political exile, Mier in his memoirs, letters, and treatises elucidates the contradictory, constructed, and complex nature of the experience of revolutionary subjects influenced by urban liberal elites.

For these revolutionaries, mobility itself constituted a transgressive act. Access to cosmopolitan cities in Europe and the United States allowed for a broad range of articulations of history and the undoing of their original point of departure, the *patria*. Interlaced with strong cultural memory, revolutionary subjects' writings re-envisioned their homeland in a restless dialogue with cosmopolitan urban elites who shared their interest in the Spanish Americas. Mier's writings offer one of the best examples of a strong historical consciousness and intersubjective reality. By rethinking critically the political discourses of independence and taking into account mobility and the difference that cities made, we can shed light on Mier's self-fashioning as a cosmopolitan patriot. His writings reveal the dialogical nature of identities: they are intertwined with the past and with the experience of places—those same sites of urban sensibility that shaped and were in turn shaped by cosmopolitan patriots.

Mier's cosmopolitan patriotic sentiments are most visibly articulated in his political writings in exile and his efforts to recover and reinterpret Las Casas's *Brevísima relación*. In contradistinction to his autobiographical writings from the Inquisition's jails, Mier's political tracts, letters, and *Historia de la revolución*, clearly deploy ideas about equal rights and dignity for humanity that did not share other cosmopolitans' views on global homogeneity. Using as evidence Las Casas's own autobiographical writing and early biographies by Antonio Remesal and Agustín Dávila Padilla, Mier fashions Las Casas as the perfect model of the tireless intellectual and civil servant who dedicated his life to the moral good of his home country. We must remember that Las Casas, in his *Memorial de despedida al Consejo de Indias* (1565), claimed that his actions and denunciation of the cruelties witnessed in the Indies were done to save his country from the rage of God; by doing this, he placed himself within the recurrent providential worldview of Columbus and many missionaries in the Americas. Mier's critical commentaries on Las Casas are as much about the evils of Spanish governance as they are about the drama of

his own persecution in and out of Mexico, which serve as further examples of the corruption of the Spanish administration, echoing Las Casas's powerful critique of Spanish domination.

Mier inserts his autobiography into the colonial history of the Americas (and at times, he even inserts himself fictitiously into the intellectual history of his compatriots) as another counter discourse and example of injustice by the Catholic Church and the Spanish authorities. His political writings connect with his multiple autobiographies by challenging the reader to engage with his circumstances. Mier's exile and material dispossession cause him to lose the rooted and bounded world he knew, constituted by his *patria* and his most precious belongings. In the process, a modern world defined by urban cosmopolitan experience opens up to him—and to his readers as well. Mier's personal history enmeshed within colonial history is not about finding a new world within the old, but about engaging with a world of ideas new to him that enable him to shape a new future with a renewed identity. These urban circuits of modernity allowed Mier to promote his own cause as well as that of Mexican independence. For españoles americanos like Mier, foreign cities provided a dynamic space for intellectual exchanges that sharpened these insurgent-intellectuals' critical stance regarding the difficult relationship between Spain, Europe, and the colonies and, in the end, brought about the liberation of their homelands.

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Notas

- ¹ Research for this essay at the University of Texas Austin's Nettie Lee Benson Library was made possible by the Big XII Faculty Fellowship Program..
- ² The original manuscript, under the title "Constancias de la prisión del Dr. Don Servando de Mier," can be located among Mier's papers in the Benson Collection.
- ³ On the changing notions of identity and the challenges posed by poststructuralism, see Stuart Hall's "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" as well as the essays in Kathryn Woodward's *Identity and Difference*; in relation to space and place, see Jones and Garde-Hansen's introduction to *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*, and in relation to history making, see Jürgen Straub's edited volume *Narration Identity and Historical Consciousness*.
- ⁴ For Chambers "the chronicles of diasporas . . . constitute the ground swell of modernity" (16). This essay on Mier was initially inspired by his book *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. In this collection of essays, he explores the important question of being in the contemporary world as a displaced, nomadic, and homeless modern subject. For Chambers diasporic movement makes everything contingent and indeterminate. It is important to note, however, that his theorization is mediated by a reflection of his personal experience that provides the context to understand his ideas about travel, difference, and identity.
- ⁵ Timothy Cresswell, who has theorized the centrality of place in the analysis of ideology, explains that *places* embody meaning: "because we always exist and act in places, we are constantly engaged in acts of interpretation" (13).
- ⁶ Mier's *Apología* and *Relación de lo sucedido en Europa* were published initially by Manuel Payno in 1865; however, Alfonso Reyes republished them in 1917 under the better-known title of *Memorias*.
- ⁷ The classic study on this subject is Jacques Lafaye's *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness*.
- ⁸ All of these autobiographical narratives were authored from the Inquisition's prison in Mexico City and the Castle of San Juan de Ulúa between 1818 and 1822.
- ⁹ In the field of literary and cultural studies, the scholarship on Mier has been devoted mainly to his autobiographical accounts. The most complete critical work on Mier is Christopher Domínguez Michael's *La vida de fray Servando*. Other critics such as Kathleen Ross, René Jara, and Ángela Pérez Mejía authored important essays on his autobiographical writings, which have inspired the attention Mier has received more recently in this field.
- ¹⁰ Militant particularism refers to the manner in which all politics (local, urban, national, etc.) originates in "the collective development of a particular political vision on the part of particular persons in particular places at particular times" (Harvey 190).
- ¹¹ On Mier's travels as parody, see Ángela Pérez Mejía.
- ¹² On the entanglements of Spanish American revolutionaries with Masonic organizations, see Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*; and for the Caribbean context, see Jossianna Arroyo's *Writing Secrecy in Caribbean Freemasonry*.

¹³ The nature of Spanish American freemasonry in London remains an understudied subject because of the culture of secrecy maintained by the Grand Lodge of England. This organization has denied the Lodge's involvement with émigré communities in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Their public documents assert that organizations such as the Gran Logia Americana founded by Francisco de Miranda and the London chapter of the Sociedad de Caballeros Racionales were pseudo-Masonic organizations whose main concerns were political. These groups were criticized for not following religious principles behind freemasonry. See Seal-Coon on the influence of freemasonry among Spanish American revolutionaries in London.

¹⁴ As Estela Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach points out, while the British government needed Mexican silver during the Napoleonic wars, after 1812 merchants saw the financial prospects of the growing Mexican markets. See her discussion (328-338)..

¹⁵ Grégoire's extensive literary contributions include the publication of *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des juifs* (1788) and *De la littérature des Nègres* (1808). On Grégoire's contribution to the intellectual history of France, see Sepinwall.

¹⁶ On the other side of the Atlantic, in 1818, Gulian Verplanck, president of the New York Historical Society, hailed Grégoire as the new Las Casas (Sepinwall 172).

¹⁷ In Francisco de Miranda's periodical *El Colombiano*, Mier signed some of his essays with the name "Casas." Mier has been described as a direct heir of the critical tradition against Spain dominated by Bartolomé de las Casas in the sixteenth century (see Adorno, Barrera, Brading, Lombardi, Ross, and Rotker).

¹⁸ Las Casas's *Brevísima relación* had circulated widely in Europe since the 16th century, but his *Historia de las Indias* remained unpublished early in the nineteenth century. Grégoire's opinions on the role of Las Casas in the slave trade had not taken into account the *Historia de las Indias'* third book where Las Casas acknowledges his support of slavery to protect the Amerindian population.

¹⁹ A sample of the correspondence between Grégoire and Mier can be found in Mier's *Escritos inéditos*, edited by Miquel i Verges and Díaz-Thomé.

²⁰ On Mier's letters to Muñoz, see Arias.

²¹ The Spanish Cortes were a form of assembly inspired by a medieval form of parliament with delegates of free regions. According to John Charles Chasteen and Sarah Chambers, Creoles elected to the Cortes during the French occupation sought "greater home rule and freer trade while remaining within the Spanish empire" (80). Their adoption of the Constitution of 1812 marks the high point of liberal governance in Spain during the wars of independence.

²² In the Christian intellectual tradition, apologetic narratives illustrated the history of Christianity and its adversities. Las Casas framed his own *Apologética historia* within this Christian framework, while Mier offered a secular history, a defense of his native land and the fight for independence.

²³ Domínguez Michael asserts that Bolívar's "Carta de Jamaica" was inspired by Mier's *Historia de la revolución* (739).

²⁴ As Susana Rotker states in her annotations to the edition of Mier's *Memoirs*, he was an "expert at disguises" but always left some trace of his identity. For her, José Guerra represents two parts of Mier's full baptismal name (236).

²⁵ These words are engraved in the impressive statue of Simón Bolívar in London's Belgrave Square.

²⁶ Raúl Coronado argues that by 1820 New Orleans had surpassed Philadelphia as the most important haven for exiled revolutionaries (159).

²⁷ Mina wanted to fight Fernando VII and his absolutist turn in his own territorial possessions. Mier's "Manifiesto apologético" details the failed attack..

²⁸ On the intellectual activities and publications of *españoles americanos* during the nineteenth century in U.S. cities, see Coronado. With regards to Philadelphia, see Lazo.

²⁹ Britain and the United States were deeply interested, both economically and politically, in establishing international relations with the republics-to-be; on this topic, see Blaufarb.

³⁰ William Duane also played an important role in the dissemination of news and support for the wars of independence (Dykstra 269). His was by far the most influential republican paper in the United States from 1800 to 1812. On Duane's activities in Philadelphia, see Remer and Phillips.

³¹ On Manuel Torres's influence in Philadelphia and Washington, see Bowman.

³² Details about the relationship between Manuel Torres and Mier are provided in the eleven letters included in Yael Bitrán's *Servando Teresa de Mier en los Estados Unidos*. In addition, letters exchanged between Mier and Torres can be found among Mier's Papers in the Benson Collection.

³³ Las Casas's thought received a great deal of attention in North American newspapers, particularly during the nineteenth century. Some interesting examples are: Philadelphia's *Weekly Visitor, or Ladies' Miscellany* (September 1806) where a fragment of a *memorial* on cruelties committed by Pizarro is inserted among stories and anecdotes of love and virtue; *The Saturday Evening Post* (August 1822), which includes a commentary on Las Casas's role in the African slave trade; and *The New York Literary Journal and Belles Lettres Repository* (October 1820) republished from the *New Monthly Magazine* the literary essay "The Vision of Bartolomé de las Casas."

³⁴ See Chambers's chapter "Cities Without Maps" in *Migrancy, Culture and Identity* (92-114).