

INTERAMERICAN RESEARCH: CONTACT,
COMMUNICATION, CONFLICT

Entangled Heritages

Postcolonial Perspectives on the Uses
of the Past in Latin America

Edited by
Olaf Kaltmeier and Mario Rufer

ROUTLEDGE



Entangled Heritages

Relying on the concept of a shared history, this book argues that we can speak of a shared heritage that is common in terms of the basic grammar of heritage and articulated histories, but divided alongside the basic difference between colonizers and colonized. This problematic is also evident in contemporary uses of the past. The last decades were crucial to the emergence of new debates: subcultures, new identities, hidden voices, and multicultural discourse as a kind of new hegemonic platform also involving concepts of heritage and/or memory. Thereby we can observe a proliferation of heritage agents, especially beyond the scope of the nation-state. This volume gets beyond a container-vision of heritage that seeks to construct a diachronic continuity in a given territory. Instead, authors point out the relational character of heritage focusing on transnational and translocal flows and interchanges of ideas, concepts, and practices, as well as on the creation of contact zones where the meaning of heritage is negotiated and contested. Exploring the relevance of the politics of heritage and the uses of memory in the consolidation of these nation-states, as well as in the current disputes over resistances, hidden memories, undermined pasts, or the politics of nostalgia, this book seeks to seize the local/global dimensions around heritage.

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Entangled Heritages

Postcolonial perspectives on the
uses of the past in Latin America

Edited by


Olaf Kaltmeier

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2 ¡Mexicanos al grito de guerra!¹

How the *himno nacional* became part of Mexico's heritage

Sarah Corona Berkin

In the words of Edgar Morin, the nation appears at once

anthropomorphic, theomorphic and cosmomorphic, because it expresses itself in human terms, resents offenses, has a sense of honor and a will to power and glory; theomorphic by virtue of the cult and religion of which it is the object; and cosmomorphic for bearing within itself all its territory, cities, countryside, mountains, and oceans.

(Morin, in Giménez 1993)

Common metaphors concerning the *Himno Nacional Mexicana*, the Mexican national anthem from here on abbreviated HNM, include 'the voice of Mexico calling to us' and reminding us that the *Patria* is *our home*, in words that give order to the national cosmos and without which 'the universe's multiple voices would confuse us in despair and anguish' (Serra Rojas 1954).

For Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, patrimony or heritage is precisely that collective emotional and cultural resource that allows one—and many—to feel and inhabit the nation. It is the repository of cultural elements—some tangible, others intangible—that a given society considers its own, and which it draws upon in confronting problems (any kind of problem, from great crises to apparently trivial everyday matters); in formulating and attempting to achieve its aspirations and plans; in imagining, enjoying and expressing itself' (Bonfil Batalla 1993, 21).

In this paper, I examine how the HNM became heritage, its process during different historical periods, and the ways schools affected its teaching and diffusion. I address the national anthem from the vantage point of heritage, considered by Florescano to be 'one of the solidest elements of social identification.' I observe with Vaca (2012) that, different from the concept of collective memory, heritage is a result of modernity. With weakening of a memory originally linked to times of the Church, its rituals, and religious events, there was consequent weakening of the past as a means of guiding social behavior. Still, memory does not completely disappear as a guide for new behavior, but remains in its civil form, which we call heritage. It doesn't seek to eliminate 'nor abolish the past, nor discard history, but rather to filter through reason and rational critique, all that pertains to humans, individually and socially' (Vaca 2012, 12). The concept of heritage

is thus a tradition anchored in processes of rationality, secularization, and nineteenth-century nationalisms. Next, I'll describe the history of the appearance of HNM, its consolidation as an official anthem, and the educational process that has brought it heritage status.

The history of the *himno nacional*: marching toward heritage status

The Mexican national anthem appeared later than those of other Latin American countries that had also achieved independence during the nineteenth century, and whose anthems originated in the process of forming their national states: Venezuela's dates from 1810; Argentina, 1813; Ecuador, 1830; Uruguay, 1833; and Paraguay, 1846. In Mexico, it was only after consolidating independence, and then not until 1853—during one of Antonio López de Santa Anna's dictatorial periods and amid the chaos of losing national territory—that a contest was launched to generate a national anthem. This had been tried several times before, beginning in 1821, with no success at defining either popular taste or that of the authorities. Santa Anna applied himself to the task hoping that patriotic sentiment would deflect attention from imminent civil war.

But this was also the moment in which the nation was finally taking shape; after losing a war to the United States, the northern frontier was for the first time precisely understood, and Mexico was more consciously naming that territory which it had to defend, and thus sing about as a nation.

In 1854, Santa Anna announced a contest in which the musicians and poets of the era might compete. Francisco González Bocanegra, a romantic poet from the state of San Luis Potosí, came out as the winner from among 26 contestants. Immediately afterward, the call for musical entries was answered, and chosen from among various proposals was that of Catalanian Jaime Nunó, who had previously taught military music in Cuba.

An honorary jury was assembled, which selected the 'best' poem and music for the anthem. However, Santa Anna was not pleased with González Bocanegra and Nunó's winning piece, as the lyrics failed to flatter him as he'd hoped. The fact that the President did not appear at the theater for the work's premiere, or that despite there being an official contest winner, the legislature's official daily record announced there would be three anthems performed so that 'among these three, patriotic enthusiasm may adopt the one it likes best to celebrate the Republic's triumphs' (*Diario Oficial* September 1854, cited in Romero 1961, 114), was equivalent to undermining the recognition bestowed by the jury. Santa Anna did not even issue the decree declaring the contest winners for music and lyrics, which would have lent them legal status.

From its premiere in 1854 until the end of the nineteenth century, González Bocanegra and Nunó's HNM went from being just one more (and not the best liked) of the anthems played during the era to flatter successive governments: Santa Anna's several regimes, plus those of Ignacio Comonfort, Miguel Miramón, and Benito Juárez. The winning 1854 HNM passed relatively unnoticed for almost

50 years, for lack of acceptance by governments (and by those leaders who felt it paid them insufficient homage).

Nor did the resulting national disorganization upon Santa Anna's departure in 1855 create conditions for the HNM to be widely played. The national independence holidays on September 15 and 16, 1855, were suspended, although days later they were reinstated, alluding to the importance of patriotism:

Mexico is again free, and shall use its rights to show the world that it knows to value the efforts and sacrifices of its nation's founders. And what better testimony could there be than a dignified and patriotic celebration of the anniversary of our independence?

(*El Siglo XIX*, September 14, 1885, 4)

The HNM was not played during these festivities.

When Francisco González Bocanegra died in 1861, the press barely mentioned his death: when it did, it was for the loss of a young poet, never mentioning his authorship of the HNM. This anthem hadn't attained the legitimacy necessary for representing the nation, nor was its author recognized for his creation. Still, a local literary note in San Luis Potosí exalts Bocanegra for having been born in that region and for having written

the forceful martial stanzas of that brave song which has so often led us to victory and will ever touch our souls, enveloping them in war-like ardor, inspiring the holy love of our homeland, personified for González Bocanegra by San Luis Potosí.

(*El Correo de San Luis*, November 1888)

This notice demonstrates the battle for hegemony between the regions and the center of the republic.

González Bocanegra gained decisive national recognition as author of the HNM from the twentieth century. It wasn't until 1901 that Sánchez Marmolejo mentioned him as the 'author of our National Anthem' in the compendium entitled *Letras Patrias* (Romero 1961, 148). The first allusion to the work of the national anthem's author is in 1944 when Julio Jiménez Rueda included González Bocanegra for the first time in his anthology of *Letras mexicanas en el siglo XIX*. This long indifference to the author speaks of the slow process of drawing the HNM into the country's heritage.

Historian Romero explains how the Mexican Philharmonic Society, 'the most prestigious educational institution, with highest cultural ranking in Mexico, gathered the most distinguished intellectuals into its bosom, as well as those wielding greatest influence within the government' (1961, 137), in the program for its 1867 concert dedicated to Juárez, said:

Mexico has no march that is truly and exclusively national, as neither that of Hertz nor Nunó's anthem fits the bill. It fell upon the Philharmonic Society

to fill this vacuum, and it thus charged Dr. Aniceto Ortega with composing such a march . . .

(Romero 1961, 137)

. . . to be played on said occasion. The Bocanegra–Nunó anthem was not officially used in civic ceremonies from Plan de Ayutla in 1854 until the fall of the Second Empire. This anthem arose from the conservatives, and liberals would not support it. In 1869, Ignacio M. Altamirano praised Aniceto Ortega's anthem, which aimed to replace that of Bocanegra–Nunó:

The 'Zaragoza March' is Mexico's *Marseillaise* and from now on it will always be our call to arms. Ortega's inspiration is the daughter of victory and not of suffering; thus his harmonies never translate into laments nor complaints, but burst forth in shouts of joy, accented by triumph and enthusiasm. The *Marcha Zaragoza* shows not a people vacillating childishly in the face of battle, but one that walks erect and proud, triumphing upon the bloody battlefield and among the cadavers of the annihilated enemy.

(Romero 1961, 139)

This march, as distinct from the earlier anthem, was more allied with the liberals—it being an homage to Zaragoza who defeated the French in the 1862 Battle of Puebla. This may also be the reason that, during the Empire of Maximilian, the HNM was played at official events and festivities that he and/or his wife attended.

In 1881, however, the HNM was still not national heritage. On March 13 of that year, the metropolitan newspaper *La Patria* (March 13, 1881, 3) published the following news item:

What is known today as the National Anthem was the work of a Spanish 'philharmonicist' named Jaime Nunó. It gained popularity and was vulgarized in times of the Empire, by orders of Maximilian. It thus cannot serve as the National Anthem, as neither its music nor its lyrics are as worthy as they should be, and they lack the requisite of nationality. To have our own anthem, we regard the following as necessary: 1st, that the government call for entries from poets and musicians throughout the Republic, for our Anthem's lyrics and melody. 2nd, that a qualified jury be named, to select and award the authors of the composition chosen as National Anthem. 3rd, to premiere this anthem next September 16th.

This item shows us that the HNM had not been consolidated as a legitimate and unquestionable referent for the nation. In 1882, various daily newspapers published a debate over the possibility of having a new *himno de paz*, that is, peace hymn or national anthem.

At the same time, there was a bad feeling among the population about the anthem's 'vulgarization':

The abuse committed by playing the anthem just anywhere should be abolished. A ballerina raises her toes and her admirers ask that the anthem be played; a circus horse falls, or a bullfighter, and the anthem plays to distract the crowd; throw a parade for some sailors, or cats, and they'll be hailed by the anthem. Opening a pulquería, throwing a party for a comedian or light-opera star, this patriotic hymn is employed for everything, when it should only be heard on great solemn occasions, and for appearances by the nation's first magistrate.

(*El Telégrafo* November 3, 1881, 3)

With Benito Juárez's arrival as president, the González Bocanegra and Nunó anthem was seldom officially heard; both creators in fact feared for their lives, though perhaps not entirely with just cause. The first hid out, and the second left Mexico. But conservatives did not allow the HNM to wane. In a memorial celebration to Iturbide, following the attendant speeches and a churchly sermon, 'the Holy Mass continued, and upon raising the sacramental host, a magnificent orchestra played the national anthem, its notes filling the vaults of the lovely temple' (*El Amigo de la Verdad*, February 10, 1886).

It wasn't until 1872, with the death of Juárez and during the presidency of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, that official tension against the anthem began to loosen. We may also recall that it was Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, the president's brother, who as the highest official in Santa Anna's Ministry of Development, Colonization, Industry and Commerce, signed the famous 1853 call for national anthem entries.

In 1883, the police prohibited singing the anthem in non-official situations, and in 1891 the Ministry of War and the Navy referred to the prohibition: 'It is strictly forbidden for Military Bands to use the National Anthem beyond those cases specified by Law; the reception and leave-taking of the Flag, or honoring the Nation's Chief Magistrate' (Romero 1961, 190).

González Bocanegra had died of typhus very young, at 36, but in 1901 Jaime Nunó was found by chance in Buffalo, New York, during an important Pan-American Exposition, to which Mexico had sent a substantial number of representatives. His discovery and return to Mexico caused a great commotion, and that year the annual cry of independence was celebrated with the HNM, played by bands that Nunó himself conducted, and sung by a children's choir. The rally of popular emotion denotes how the HNM had been preserved in the collective memory. Military and school bands, which customarily played in town and city plazas, had the Bocanegra–Nunó anthem in their repertoires, and this probably allowed it to be remembered all those years. Another source of its heritage status was the school system. The book *El Amigo de los Niños Mexicanos*, with its 25 editions from 1890 onward, contained the anthem's lyrics.

During the festivities and warm homage paid to Nunó, a greeting was made in the Nahuatl language 'in the name of the indigenous race.' Nunó's visit was one of the most important moments for HNM's achievement of heritage status: it gave the anthem authenticity via its genuine creator and made indigenous people participants in the rebirth of the nation during the symbolic first year of the twentieth

century. In that same context, during a session of the legislature on October 3, 1901, congressman Juan A. Mateos put forth an initiative to award Jaime Nunó a pension, with the following words:

Once our compatriots at the Buffalo Exposition found the author of the National Anthem still alive, they offered him grand ovations, with good reason: this anthem, wrested from the hands of the tyrants, crossed the mountains of Ayutla and brought victory to the Reform and Constitutional movements. The hearts of our fathers and those of our sons have beaten to its rhythm.
(Romero 1961, 176)

The HNM was made official, its origin under Santa Anna forgiven, and it was granted a history and a tradition.

As 1910 began, the debate between liberals and conservatives over the national anthem again heated up. For the former, Hidalgo was without a doubt the only father of Independence and Iturbide a secondary hero of doubtful patriotism; for the latter it was the opposite—Iturbide, author of the Plan de Ayutla, was the true Independence hero. Here were two ways of chronicling a nation, with that of the liberals winning out. Since 1910 was the first centenary of the independence, liberals looked on in dismay when Hidalgo wasn't mentioned in the nation's own song, but Iturbide was. The Centenary Commission proposed changing the awkward phrase 'Iturbide's the sacred flag' to 'the nation's sacred flag,' but conservative voices rose in protest against excluding Iturbide from the HNM. In a conciliatory gesture and to promote national integration, the Ministry of Public Education approved a version containing no proper names, to be used only in schools. It goes without saying that this later became the official national version of the HNM. From then on, no particular hero would be mentioned in its lyrics.

The year 1942 was decisive for the process of the HNM's patrimonial adoption. The *El Nacional* newspaper published the headline 'Yesterday Mexico stood unified before the nation's flag,' and a piece titled 'Country moved by profound patriotism' described the 'apotheotic spectacle of features unique in the annals of our civic life, where the notes of the National Anthem, ringing out from bands of musicians and thousands of throats, roused a supreme patriotic spirit in the multitudes' (*El Nacional*, February 25, 1942). On October 12, 1942, Día de la Raza, the remains of González Bocanegra and Jaime Nunó were exhumed with full honors and removed to the Rotunda of Illustrious Men. In his speech, poet Enrique González Martínez pronounced: 'No Mexican can hear or sing it without being profoundly moved. When far from his or her country its notes are heard, the music seems to work the miracle of filling the abyss of exile' (Peñalosa 1961, 168). In this way, the HNM was being sung to the land, to the *mestizo* race, and to national feeling.

In that same year of 1942, by decree of President Ávila Camacho, it was officially determined that performance of the HNM would include just four stanzas, interspersed with five renditions of the chorus.

Eric Hobsbawm observes that 'the invention of public ceremonies had the objective of transforming the republic's inheritance into a conjoint expression of

State pomp and power, and citizens' joy' (2012, 282). On September 15, 1954, with the motive of the HNM's centenary, conductor Luis Sandi Meneses led 13,000 children in a choral sing of the HNM at Constitution Plaza. This event, along with confirming the HNM without a doubt as official, served to establish guidelines for singing it. The HNM's music, originally conceived in E-flat major for military band instruments of the day and for trained singing voices, had to be converted to C Major to make it more suitable for untrained voices.

But it wasn't until 1984, with the government of Miguel de la Madrid, that this abbreviated form of the anthem became regulation. That year, with the publication of the Law for the National Seal, Flag and Anthem, the official words and music were defined with the purpose of assuring precision and uniformity in its singing, performance, publication, and recording. One of the main reasons for the new law was to replace the restrictive character of the 1967 legislation so that Mexicans would have access to their national symbols in daily life, while avoiding legal infractions. In this spirit, the prohibition against performing the national anthem at non-civic shows and social gatherings, and in all sorts of public establishments, was lifted, with the condition that it be interpreted in a respectful and solemn manner.

On December 8, 2005, article 39a was added to the Law for the National Seal, Flag and Anthem, announcing that indigenous people and communities could perform the national anthem, translated into their own languages. The National Institute of Indigenous Languages was selected to do the corresponding translations, which would be authorized by the Secretary of State and Ministry of Public Education.

Article 46 of this Law determined that the national anthem should be taught to children attending primary and secondary schools; it was modified in 2005 to also include preschools.

The national anthem: a matter for the schools

According to Bhabha (1990), the pedagogic condition of national symbols comes right down to their distinctive characteristics. The responsibility given to the Ministry of Education (SEP) for teaching the HNM allows us to understand the forms in which teaching accompanies the construction of Mexican social identity.

I have sought the presence of Mexican nationalism in the national educational process, which despite being homogenous and comprehensive as imparted by the SEP, shows tensions manifesting in textbooks, particularly when covering the HNM. National planning may be observed in the official pedagogic strategy for the anthem, which is illustrated with images of those considered Mexican. I analyze a collection of images accompanying the text² of the national anthem in its various versions, in textbooks dating from 1943 to 2012, with the objective of distinguishing those considered to be Mexicans who sing the HNM. Prior to the first date, I found only two references to the HNM in the body of textbooks, and these were unaccompanied by images. The governmental periods from Ávila Camacho (1940–1946) to Calderón (2006–2012) show what the process of HNM heritage status has meant to primary education books.

President Ávila Camacho, and his recently nominated presidential successor Miguel Alemán Valdés, moved to change the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) into the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), so it went from being a party of revolutionaries to an institution that again took up the colors of the nation's flag, and revived the national anthem.³ In 1943, the anthem became official and an illustrated excerpt of its lyrics appeared, albeit hesitantly, in textbooks for first grade children.

The governments of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952) and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952–1958) promoted the HNM with greater determination. During Miguel Alemán's presidency, a book on the HNM was produced, and profusely illustrated by Spanish refugee painter Bardasano. For his part, Ruiz Cortines had a brochure on the anthem published, its cover a nationalist engraving, and this stayed in print for over a decade.

With López Mateos (1958–1964) began another stage of illustrating the anthem. In the new universal depiction of the mother country on the covers of free textbooks (1959), López Mateos's approach complemented the ritual. The anthem was sung to a mother country that had to that point been *mestiza*—as opposed to Bardasano's classic-looking *Madre Patria*—and included the country's productive forces, as defined by the PRM. These included four sectors: workers, farmers, the military, and the public; now, the different organizations that were merging with the party were being added.

With Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970), a 1967 regularization of the anthem was accompanied by its history, in the form of a comic book. With expressive genre elements, it narrated the story of the authors, emphasizing their inspiration in creating the anthem. Free textbooks issued under reforms carried out during Echeverría's time in power (1970–1976) show less emphasis on Mexican nationalism and more on Latin American identity, with content addressing Latin American poetry and song, while excluding coverage of the HNM.

De la Madrid (1982–1988) legislated so that the anthem could be sung any place, at any time, beginning in 1984. This measure can be viewed in a free textbook photograph where a child prepares to listen to the anthem on a modern record player of that time. Salinas (1988–1994) and Zedillo (1988–2000) continued teaching the anthem. Mexico joined the globalization process, wagering that a quick and bold entrance on the world stage would accelerate its economic development. But on the other hand, after a decade of economic decline and growing social conflicts and demands, it needed to offer an image that would unite Mexicans around common symbols and stories.

At the end of the twentieth century, the PRI's seven decades in power came to an end. It had been a constant in the history of free textbooks and various citizenship models in Mexico. Beginning in 1959, through the 1972 and 1992 reforms, these programs were undertaken with the PRI occupying the presidency and in command of the government's principal institutions. Starting with the transformations we have reviewed as the HNM appeared in textbooks, differences can be observed between the visions for the nation each of these presidents

furthered. Still, belonging to the same party represents a certain ideological and political unity, a certain common vision of history.

The most recent free textbook reform was that conducted with a party other than the PRI in power. For the 12 years from 2000 to 2012, Vicente Fox Quezada and Felipe Calderón, belonging to the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party), occupied Mexico's presidency.

Books in this period broke with the nationalist discourse emanating from the Revolution, where the *patria* or homeland depended on Mexico's distinctive miscegenation (*mestizaje*) and the unity of its inhabitants. In place of a homogenous discourse, these books presented a fragmented, heterogeneous, and contradictory vision. All ideological proposals are valid, with no order nor dialogue; the civic pedagogic approach is a multiculturalist exploration, of differences on display. The fifth-year Civics text tells us: 'Instead of looking down on and rejecting people, get to know them. When you do, you'll wind up liking them because their different ways of being, thinking and living will make you glad.' The book in this case chooses a solution removed from any political path to solve the problem of different types coexisting. It's difficult to believe that affection and delight are plausible alternative methodologies for bringing twenty-first century Mexican nationals into agreement, or into a frictionless coexistence.

In this context, the anthem is treated as folklore, with the image of the flag in a handcrafted tin frame and mariachi figures made of straw. As an inclusive sample of all Mexicans, singing of the anthem in indigenous languages was made legal in 2005. Around the same time and contradictory to support for national diversity, a 2006 poster was published showing photographs of the Mexicans who sang the HNM: white European-featured adults, from a homogenous middle class. Indigenous people were not represented, nor those from the great national majorities. In this graphic, not only are Mexicans no longer *mestizos*, but there are no different social classes, nor occupations.

We find these recent textbooks embracing Mexican nationalism, while a national present that includes challenges and conflicts disappears. What do they offer instead? A version of a Mexico with room for all opinions, without need for discussion.

The HNM nevertheless remains a symbolic means of uniting the nation. In some years, official heritage-making has been more energetic than others: none prior to 1854, when there was not even a clear territory to call *patria*, but 1901 for example, when the Porfiriato dictatorship was consolidating the nation, and 1942, when Mexico was announcing itself a nation within a new order of nations. Today the state and the education system worry less about how to make the HNM work as heritage, but the process of its 'patrimonialization' lets us observe the historical ups and downs during the fight for nationhood.

Notes

- 1 Mexicans, heed the battle cry.
- 2 Free Textbooks or Libros de Texto Gratuitos (LTG) is the only official program in the West that distributes textbooks free of charge for teaching all children nationally. The

books are standardized, and obligatory for all Mexican children from first to sixth grades of primary school. In 2009, the program celebrated its 50th anniversary: up to that date it had published and distributed 5 billion free textbooks in Mexico. While the LTG program began in 1959, this article also considers earlier books, beginning in 1943 when the first illustrated allusion to the HNM appears in books directed at public education.

- 3 The Nation Revolutionary Party (PNR) was founded in 1928, restituted by the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) in 1938, which changed its name to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1946.

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