

Cult of Defeat in Mexico's Historical Fiction

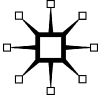
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CULT OF DEFEAT IN MEXICO'S
HISTORICAL FICTION

FAILURE, TRAUMA, AND LOSS

BRIAN L. PRICE

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CULT OF DEFEAT IN MEXICO'S HISTORICAL FICTION
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Hay que hacer la historia de las derrotas. [The history of defeat needs to be written.]

—Ricardo Piglia, *Respiración artificial*

Yo sé (todos lo saben) que la derrota tiene una dignidad que la ruidosa victoria no merece... [I know (everyone knows) that defeat enjoys a dignity that noisy victory does not deserve...]

—Jorge Luis Borges, “Nota para un cuento fantástico,” *La cifra*

Crisis, however, facile the conception, is unescapably a central element in our endeavors toward making sense of our world.

—Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

I spoke just now of “having suffered together” and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.

—Ernst Renan, “What Is a Nation?”

I’m writing for the survivors, that they may know what it was they survived. I’m writing, if you will, for posterity, that people may understand what went wrong and resist the historical imperative of judging us too harshly.

—Don DeLillo, *Great Jones Street*

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

—Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*

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All translations from the Spanish language are mine with four exceptions: for quotations from Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial*, Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio*, Ignacio Solares's *La invasión*, and Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada*, I have followed *Artificial Respiration* (trans. Daniel Balderston, 1994), *News from the Empire* (trans. Alfonso González and Stella T. Clark, 2009), *Yankee Invasion* (trans. Timothy G. Compton, 2009), and *The Lettered City* (trans. John Charles Chasteen, 1996), respectively.