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The Ethos and Telos of Michoacán's Knights Templar

Introduction

In a book of essays published in 2016 on the unraveling of Mexico's national narrative, I argued that Mexico has been living a crisis of representation.[1] Over the past thirty years, its society has been radically transformed, but the emerging social formation has not yet found its voice —in the political system, the media, or the academy. There is a disconnect between the political and symbolic representation of Mexican society, on one hand, and the transformed mores of the people, on the other, a mismatch that is related to that nation's demographic transition (with its deep connections to changing family structures), the wreckage of the peasantry, the meteoric rise of export manufacturing, the communications revolution, and, last but not least, the criminalization of valuable economic activities. Each of these momentous changes requires and leads to cultural experimentation.

In this paper, I explore one example of such experimentation, in the world of organized and disorganized crime, by way of an analysis of the ethos and telos, the historicity, of the drug organization known as the Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar), from Mexico's western state of Michoacán. My analysis is based on existing published material and supplemented by a few field trips and interviews, though no genuine ethnographic fieldwork. It relies crucially on firsthand anthropological research on Michoacán's drug war by Salvador Maldonado, Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, and Falko

ABSTRACT This essay is an ethnographic exploration of the ethos and mores of Mexico's contemporary drug culture. It uses temporal directionality (telos) to interpret the idiosyncratic symbols and rituals developed for the warrior order known as the Caballeros Templarios or Knights Templar cartel (Michoacán). The essay shows that Mexican drug organizations, in their dedication to the business of privatizing public goods, are thus at the same time parallel state structures and trust-based organizations of brothers working to build a collective future. The essay emphasizes the cultural elaboration of competing communitarian and bureaucratic organizational forms and ideals in order to explore the leadership style and moral codes of honor of the Knights Templar, underscoring the centrality of transnational movement in the invention of an acutely gender- and class-based culture of violent domination and caste formation.
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Ernst and on investigative reporting in the region, notably by Dalia Martínez and Humberto Padgett, as well as on an analysis of Templar propaganda, and a deluge of news items on the drug war in that region.[2] I offer an anthropological reading of these materials in an attempt to understand the teleological frames that legitimate and contain violence in contemporary Mexico.

Aporia of the "Cartel"

Since the drug war's inception in 2006, organized and disorganized violence has claimed approximately 200,000 lives in Mexico, and more than 30,000 people have "disappeared." In the thirteen years that have transpired since then, more people have been killed in Mexico's war than in the US invasion of Iraq, and more have been forcibly "disappeared" than during Argentina's Dirty War. Illegal economies have been revolutionized along the way, in processes that Natalia Mendoza has called "cartelization," which started with the privatization of trade routes for illegal border traffic, most notably of drugs and migrants, and with the development of a bureaucracy within the illegal economy.[3] Contrary to the general prejudice, "cartels" are not reliant on trade in illegal drugs in any transcendental sense; they rely essentially on the armed privatization of public space, the ransom of public liberties, and the forcible appropriation of public goods.

Because cartelization depends crucially on exacting tribute in exchange for protection, cartels can be seen as the privateers of deregulation, and in Mexico they are involved in the regulation of activities as diverse as drug running, undocumented migration, mining, fishing, logging, commercial agriculture, street vending, prostitution, illegal gasoline traffic, construction, arms trafficking, and appropriation of water sources. They are known as "drug cartels" because the vast wealth that poured in from drug trafficking in the 1990s helped leverage a diversification of activities, most notably in the business of transnational migration, but drugs are not indispensable to cartelization. Protection, territorial control, and the credible fear of unbridled violence are. Indeed, territorial control is an essential requisite for cartelization, but local entrenchment brings with it a core tension, that is, a tension between protection and extortion.

This antinomy between protection and extortion is expressed in social-organizational form as ambivalence between the representation of the cartel as a ruthless business and as a family-like guardian against, or coldly indifferent or downright hostile to, outside forces (such as the government). This tension between bureaucratic and familistic paradigms is inherent in the process of cartelization itself. Indeed, once cartelization sets in, the

opposition between the "social bandit" and the regular unmarked brigand gets deeply complicated, because these two modes of criminal self-fashioning must be strategically juggled by the cartel and by individual operators at all times. This is because gaining territorial control requires some degree of redistribution such that a patriarchal rhetoric of protection naturally develops, but the final aim of cartel control is amassing unrestrained translocal organizational power and freely circulating private wealth. As a result, the contradiction between the familistic "man of the people" and the "strictly business" conceits of criminal self-fashioning is an aporia that runs through the whole of the so-called narcoculture. Indeed, the new cultures of criminality that are emerging in Mexico are forged in the space of precisely this contradiction.

The Pledge of the Knights Templar

In what follows, I focus on the Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar) and, tangentially, on La Familia Michoacana (The Michoacano Family), the organization from which the Templarios stemmed. These two drug cartels are often seen as exceptionally "bizarre and deadly" because they developed what has been characterized as "religious" and "messianic" components.[4] Their exceptionality, however, has a strategic component that reflects and reveals a cultural logic that transcends the Michoacán case.

Michoacán has long been a marihuana producing state, and its Tierra Caliente region has also produced opium poppy since the 1950s.[5] When Colombian cocaine started to be channeled to the United States through Mexican middlemen in the early 1990s, however, the value and scale of Mexico's drug business surged. The much-galvanized cartels that emerged from this process had their home bases on or near the border, and one, the Tamaulipas-based Gulf Cartel and its "praetorian guard," Los Zetas, took notice of Michoacán as a valuable asset. This was because Michoacán's city of Lázaro Cárdenas is Mexico's largest and most modern port on the Pacific Ocean, and a rail line had been built connecting Lázaro Cardenas to Texas, passing through Mexico's burgeoning automotive and aerospace manufacturing region in the Bajío. In addition, Michoacán's Tierra Caliente was home to experienced drug producers and runners, along with a thriving but relatively weak local crime organization known as Los Valencias. Given this tempting combination of factors, the Zetas decided to oust Los Valencias and take control of the state.

In order to do this, they relied on the leadership of a number of Michoacano operators, some of whom later staged a rebellion against the Zetas, forming an organization that differentiated itself by stressing their

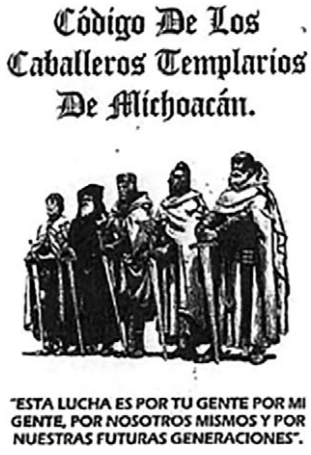

FIGURE 1. Opening image of the *Código de los Caballeros Templarios de Michoacán*, Tribal Analysis Center, http://www.tribalanalysiscenter.com/PDF-TAC/Codigo%20De%20Los%20Caballeros%20Templarios%20De%20Michoacan.

own local roots and commitments. This was the origin, in 2006, of La Familia Michoacana, whose identitarian strategy for seeking local support against the Zetas lies at the origin of the apparently exceptional familistic and religious bent of both La Familia Michoacana and its splinter group, the Caballeros Templarios, which emerged in 2011. The Templarios' principal innovation was its code of honor. Thus, whereas La Familia portrayed itself loosely as an organization of Michoacanos pledged to protect the interests of the population of that state, the Caballeros Templarios thought of themselves as sworn members of a quasi-religious order with strict rules of induction for its members.

The *Code of the Knights Templar of Michoacán* (*Código de los caballeros templarios de Michoacán*) is a twenty-three-page document composed of fifty-three articles, chivalrous illustrations, and the text of the "Templar's Oath" (fig. 1). It establishes in article 5 that no one who has not been inducted through the proper ritual and sworn to uphold the code may be admitted to the order, and in article 7 it imposes a vow of silence on all its members. Knights Templar must also believe in God (article 9), struggle against materialism (article 10), and fight against injustice and in defense of the values of society (articles 10–14). They must value freedom of expression and freedom of religion (article 15), foment patriotism (article 18), be chivalrous and courteous (articles 19 and 21), be respectful and protective of women (article 22), be sober and good humored (article 30), observe hierarchical discipline (article 31), abstain from killing without approval of the council (article 41), and forfeit their lives and that of their families if they betray the order (article 52).[6]

Despite its punctilious effort at regimentation, and despite its belabored parallels both with the medieval order of the Knights Templar, or perhaps

with the Freemason Lodge that existed with that same name in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the cultural significance of this effort of turning an extremely violent crime organization into a chivalrous order is anything but transparent. Indeed, even the code's practical significance within the organization is murky. In part, this is because the Knights Templar had only a brief flourishing, from approximately 2011 to 2014, which is hardly long enough to consolidate a knightly ethos. The moral code of the Knights Templar was thus more a project than a well-established ritual order.

Moreover, we still know comparatively little about just how much of an effort the Knights Templar actually invested in shaping a unified ritual system. It is true that the writings of Nazario Moreno, who was the guiding intellect of the Knights Templar, were widely distributed amongst members of the organization and that Templar culture and propaganda was on show in the regional capitals of Uruapan, Morelia, and Apatzingán, but we don't know the degree to which these displays were complemented by a routine drilling of new recruits or whether the distribution of publications was instead oriented to shaping a public image and, as such, was simply a part of the Templario propaganda machine.

To these considerations—insufficient time for institutional consolidation and insufficient information on the operative uses of Nazario Moreno's key texts—I must add still a third, which is that, like all other drug organizations of this period, the Caballeros Templarios arose and declined in the midst of a war. They expanded rapidly for a time, then contracted and are now dispersed. To consolidate a knightly order under conditions of competitive recruitment and changing allegiances isn't easy, and it seems likely that the Templars had only limited time and space for the indoctrination of newcomers, especially once the group began to expand into territories beyond Michoacán. Indeed, there is an inherent disconnect between the creation of a knightly order and recruiting an army, which is what the drug war demanded. As a result, the moral code of the Knights Templar was only briefly and unevenly implemented, while the degree to which it was adopted by the organization's rank and file is still very much in question. Even so, the fleeting phenomenon of this cartel's moral project provides a useful vantage from which to interrogate the connection between changing mores and Mexico's narcoculture.

The Family Brand

In addition to its role in the self-fashioning of its members, the moral code of the Knights Templar was used to project an image of the organization to the outside world, and especially to Michoacano society.

That image contrasted with those of competing organizations, who weren't at all shy about chopping the Templars down to size. So, for instance, "El Chapo" (Joaquín Guzmán), head of the Sinaloa Cartel, differentiated himself from "La Tuta" (Servando Gómez Martínez), leader of the Caballeros Templarios, by saying that whereas he, El Chapo, was a *narcotraficante*, which is a type of businessman, La Tuta was a common thief (*un ratero mugroso*).[7] El Chapo was thus drawing a distinction between a professional with a distinct product and expertise, and a gang member who made his living by stealing, kidnapping, and extortion.

The Sinaloa Cartel wanted to be seen as a business organization with a clear purpose: the production, transportation, and sale of illegal drugs. The Knights Templar, on the other hand, wanted to be seen as an organization that existed to protect Michoacán from the depredations of both the federal government and other cartels. Maintaining the drug economy was only one aspect of that project. Thus, when the Knights Templar took over municipal governments throughout Michoacán, they set up levies, including taxes on basic food supplies such as tortillas and meat, as well as on commercial agricultural production. Those taxes played perilously on the line between extortion and protection, since one man's racketeer could be another man's guardian. Thus, one high-ranking Templario granted a reporter from *Proceso* an interview in which he emphasized just this protective ethos, as against extortion:

> When we dissolved as La Familia Michoacana and founded the Knights Templar we decided that in this brotherhood there would be no kidnappers, no delinquents, rapists, bank robbers or murderers. Whoever disobeys pays with his life, according to the Código de los Caballeros. That was a reason why we detached ourselves from La Familia and why we now fight against all of the rest of them.

When the journalist asked who "the rest of them" were, the drug lord responded: "The Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación, the Familia Michoacana, the Zetas, the Beltrán Leyvas, the Amezcuas, the Gulf Cartel, the Arellano Félixes, La Resistencia, etc."[8] Indeed, the familistic and regionalistic turn of both La Familia Michoacana and its successor organization, the Knights Templar, was a deliberate strategy of differentiation. Thus the people who formed La Familia Michoacana, and who had, for that purpose, split off from Los Zetas and from the Cartel del Milenio, first created an organization that they named "La Empresa" (The Business), which was later renamed La Familia. In other words, they initially espoused the sort of shadow corporate image promoted by people like El Chapo Guzmán, who fancies himself a businessman, but then eschewed the rational business model in favor of an image of community defense in a strategic effort to distinguish themselves in Michoacán's competitive business environment.

In short, the religious and communitarian component of the Knights Templar was meant to capitalize on an ambiguous boundary between insiders and outsiders. They were competing with other cartels for entrenchment in Michoacano society while at the same time participating in the international commercial networks of the methamphetamine trade, which involved imports of precursor drugs from China, through Michoacán's Pacific port of Lázaro Cárdenas to local meth kitchens in Michoacán, and thence into the United States.

Saint Nazario and the Revolutionary Brand

One unusual twist in the Templarios' efforts to brand organized crime as a communitarian vocation was the attempt to anoint their leader with all of the signs of religious charisma. Indeed, there is an intriguing coincidence between the rise and fall of the Templar cult and Nazario Moreno's two deaths, for Nazario was allegedly killed in December of 2010, just as the Knights Templar emerged as a splinter organization of La Familia Michoacana (though he did not die in fact until March 2014). Thus the Templario cult indulged in mystification of "Saint Nazario" from its beginnings, even while Nazario Moreno continued to pull the strings from his ranch near Apatzingán.

Nazario Moreno had already built himself up as a messianic figure while he was still a leader of La Familia Michoacana, before his alleged first death. His closest lieutenants were known as "The Twelve Apostles." So, for example, in his 2010 study of La Familia Michoacana, George Grayson reported that one nickname for Gómez, La Tuta, who became Nazario's heir apparent, was El Once, the eleventh apostle.[9] The splinter group that became the Knights Templar seems to have taken advantage of Nazario's (false) death in an attempt to canonize him once and for all (fig. 2). Thus, on December 11, 2010, after the alleged death of Nazario, the *Blog del Narco* published a warning from La Familia to President Felipe Calderón:

> Take care Felipe Calderón, pray to your saint because we have the benediction of our God. Our God Nazario, may God keep him in his glory.[10]

Shortly after Nazario's erroneously reported death on December 9, 2010, the Templars published his memoir, titled *Me dicen: "El más loco"* (They call me: "the craziest one"), a book that was subsequently banned by Mexican authorities (fig. 3). The memoir appeared with an epilogue, allegedly written by one of his companions, narrating the battle in which Nazario was

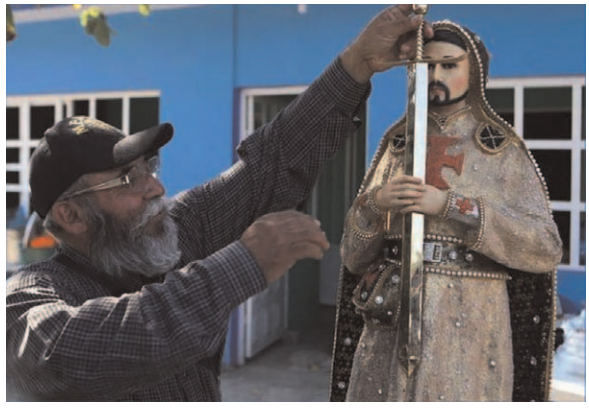

FIGURE 2. Statue of "San Nazario" in Buenavista Tomatlán (Michoacán) being desecrated by Autodefensa leader Estanislao Beltrán (aka "Papá Pitufo"), "La Marina acribilló a un 'santo,'" SIPSE.com, 10 March 2014, https://sipse.com/mexico/san-nazario-culto-lider-templario-oracion-michoacan-79725.html.

FIGURE 3. Front cover of Nazario Moreno's memoir, a book that was banned by Mexican authorities.

supposed to have lost his life: "Our chief died, but his ideals will never pass as long as there are poor [people] and injustice in this Mexico of ours."[11] The story of Nazario's putative death in battle was then supplemented with testimonies about his personal attributes. So, for instance, Nazario's mother's memento (real or apocryphal) emphasized his extreme sensitivity, reminiscent, rather ambiguously, either of Saint Francis or of a more demonic *nahual* (animal spirit) trickster: "Several times I discovered him talking to animals as if they were people. He seemed to communicate with them."[12] Nazario's mother then declared that when she heard on TV that he had been killed, she cried: "No! It's not true! It's not true! My son lives!" (As, indeed, he did). In short, the testimonials were set up to create a legend that was complete with sightings of Saint Nazario who was, of course, alive and well. The Mexican government also contributed to this project of

obfuscation (in its own ham-handed way): it was so eager to claim victories by killing or jailing drug king-pins, that it triumphally claimed Nazario's death on the basis of hearsay.[13]

A second testimonial, by Nazario's *comadre*, emphasized that he always gave all of his god-children the same clothing: "To him all of his god-children were the same, regardless of who their parents were."[14] This emphasis on paternalistic egalitarianism is of a piece with the Templarios' self-image as revolutionaries. In their reportage on Templar propaganda, Dalia Martínez and Humberto Padgett discuss a book, *Palabra de caballero*, written in 2012 by a Templar propagandist who signs himself Edgardo Morales and draws a parallel between the Knights Templar and the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas of 1994, while characterizing the predatory activites of the former as "civil resistance."[15]

Templar leaders were also fond of musing about the fact that their capital, Apatzingán, was where Mexico's first constitution was published, a fact that was underlined in the lyrics of the "Templar Hymn," which begins with a wink to "Father of the Nation" José María Morelos's famous proclamation, "The Sentiments of the Nation":

Soy un caballero templario	I am a Knight Templar
Un soldado a la Orden del Temple	A soldier of the Order of the Temple
Represento los sentimientos	I represent the sentiments
De los oprimidos de esta nación.	Of the oppressed of this nation.[16]

Adding yet more grist to Nazario's claim to the status of martyred *caudillo*, the testimony of his *comadre* also emphasizes that the man didn't drink and was a good husband. Finally, she adds: "To me he has not died. To me he is alive in the mountain or in the ravines, but to me he has not died."[17] And so on.

In short, the publication of Nazario's memoir was launched shortly on the heels of official government news of his death as part of an effort to establish him as a kind of patron saint, a move that was fueled by the fact that locals soon knew or heard that Nazario was in fact alive, so that the Templar's patron saint was at once a martyred revolutionary and a beguiling trickster with a knack for cheating the government. The brief period when Nazario was at once officially dead and actually alive may well have been the zenith of the Nazario cult, since there appears not to have been significant interest in preserving the Nazario cult since his second and final death early in 2014, when the government and the media made sure that his corpse was DNA tested and exhibited (fig. 4). The widely reproduced photograph of his corpse harks back to a tradition of graphic exhibition of the dead bodies of trickster bandits and popular heroes. The 1919 photograph of the corpse of Emiliano Zapata is the most famous example of this

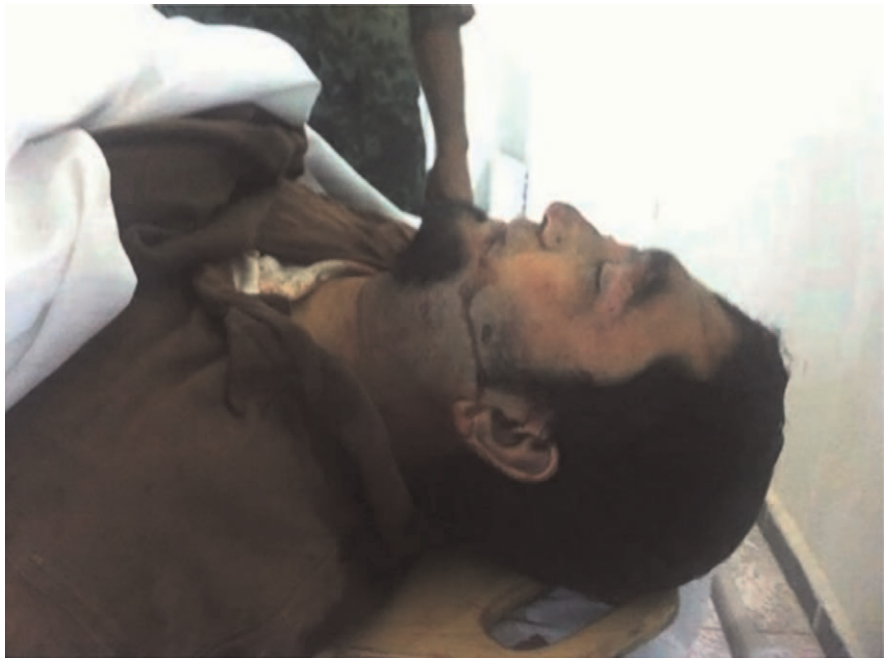

FIGURE 4. Cadaver of Nazario Moreno.

genre, though the earlier case of the would-be assassin of Porfirio Díaz, Arnulfo Arroyo (1897), relied on practically identical images, which had the ambiguous effect of serving as proof of death and conferring evidence of possible martyrdom.[18]

Michoacán's Family Crisis

I now turn to the challenges currently faced by the family as an institution, which are relevant for understanding transvaluation and the creation of a new criminal ethos. In recent decades, roughly 40 percent of people born in Michoacán have lived for some period of time in the United States. Its communities each participate in a variety of transnational migratory circuits; that is, they are communities that have at least two geographic nuclei, one in Mexico and another in the United States.[19] Moreover, there are communities that have more than two nuclei—one in Michoacán and two in the United States, for instance, or two in Michoacán (often a ranch and a regional capital) and one, two, or more locations in the United States. There are also Michoacano communities that have a nucleus in Michoacán and then a population that is dispersed in the United States.

These arrangements have deep implications for family organization, but at the most general level, they present a core paradox, which is that the migrant is at once a provider—or at least a key figure of hope as provider—and a person who is abandoning the family. The migrant can thus be seen as at once self-sacrificing and selfish, nurturing and neglectful.

This ambivalence has multiple effects on family dynamics and morality. Gabrielle Oliveira, for example, studied migrant mothers who leave one or more children behind in Mexico in order to go work in the United States, a phenomenon that has grown over the last couple of decades. She found that the act of emigrating while leaving kids behind is leading to the reconfiguration of family morality because mothers insist that in migrating they are not *abandoning* their children, as they are often accused of doing, but rather *caring* for them, providing for their education and sustenance.[20] Indeed, they are caring for them, yet it is also true that they have left those children behind. In short, the situation produces an intense moral ambivalence.

Similar tensions have long been relevant to Michoacano fathers, who have been leaving their families and communities behind for more than a century, often with the purpose of saving the very same families and communities they have abandoned. Migration's core conundrum is thus that the loss of some of the family's most prized members is a sine qua non condition for family unity.

The role of remittances is a second consideration that is key to understanding anxieties around social reproduction. The long history of Michoacano migration to the United States is a story of changing habits and patterns of consumption. Alvaro Ochoa Serrano has described the introduction of household appliances; changes in men's and women's apparel; and transformations in vernacular architecture, modes of communication, and transportation during the whole of the twentieth century in connection precisely to migrant remittances.[21]

Michoacán is one of the Mexican states that receives most money from migrants, and yet harnessing this income for social reproduction is precarious and increasingly difficult.[22] The state entered a period of deep economic transformation in the 1980s, complete with rapid urbanization, real-estate bubbles, the ruination of subsistence agriculture, and, since Mexico's entry to NAFTA in 1994, booms in both mining and commercial agriculture, especially around the cultivation of avocado, lemons, and berries.[23] The transformation of the countryside complicated the patterns of circular migration that operated during most of the twentieth century, through which migrants sought to gain or consolidate ranch ownership, or to help their families move from a ranch to the local municipal seat, where children might go to school. Overall, the goal was to return with both

improved general circumstances and greater personal authority and autonomy within the family.

The rise in real-estate prices, even in small migrant towns, and the increased investments needed to sustain a productive ranch, as well as changes in family consumption standards, tempered the migrant's triumphal return laden with cash, a new pickup truck, and domestic appliances for the wife and daughters. In such a context, entering the drug market even in a marginal or occasional capacity became more tempting.

The Subversion of the Image of Limited Good

In the 1950s George Foster studied economic anthropology in the peasant village of Tzintzuntzan, on Patzcuaro Lake in Michoacán, where he developed the idea that the culture of peasant societies was governed by what he called "the image of limited good," a zero-sum economy, wherein one man's wealth was another man's poverty.[24] Such a society inhibited ostentation, except perhaps with regard to funding community events such as local fiestas, or shared spaces, such as local churches or improvements in the town square.

Although the heart of Michoacán's so-called narcoculture is in the *Tierra Caliente*, not in the region Foster studied, the zero-sum economy is equally evident in the former. *Tierra Caliente* had historically been subject to waves of colonization, and at the same time had benefited from little government support. Its economy is dominated by ranches run on austerity, where ranchers and their ranch hands identify closely with each other. Roger Rouse's ethnography of Aguililla, in the early 1980s, puts the matter most clearly:

> A family's house and the bodies of its members, particularly its women, stood as analogues of its patrimony and, as such, were meant simultaneously to exhibit and reinforce its ability to resist unwanted intrusion. There was thus a heavy emphasis on unassuming forms of domestic architecture and interior design and on modest styles of female clothing.[25]

And yet, for well over half a century, Michoacán's migrants have also lived in places like Los Angeles, Chicago, and the Bay Area, in close proximity to extravagant wealth freely exhibited and safeguarded by a robust state apparatus. As a result of this experience and the heavily monetized economy that goes with salaried labor, ostentation started to become fashionable, and the modesty that had been so valued by earlier generations began to give way to a culture of consumption marked by the fetishization of the pickup truck, a concern for the latest fashions, a desire for luxuries in the home and the

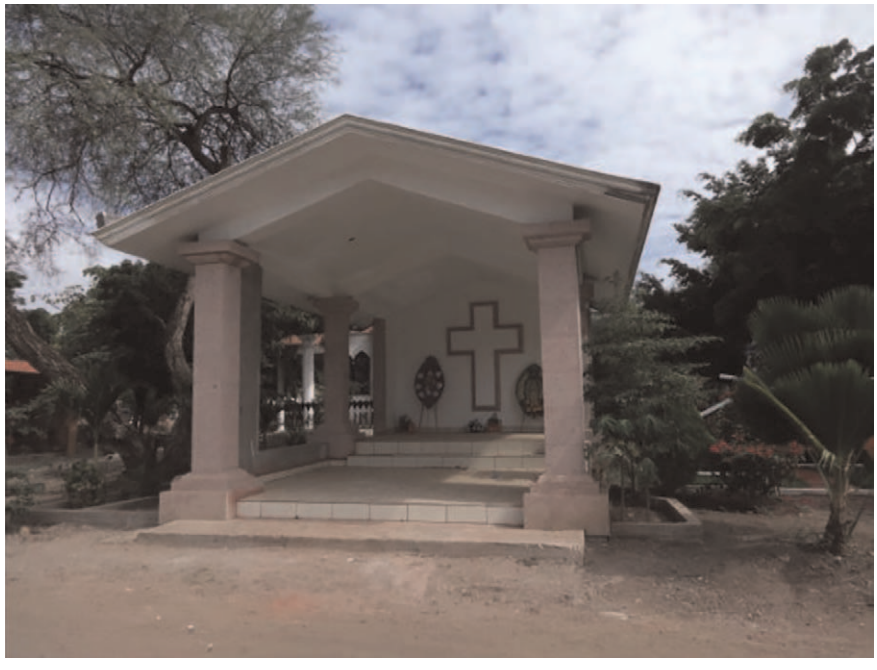

FIGURE 5. "Narco-tomb" in an Apatzingán cemetery. Source: Humberto Padgett, Michoacán: Viaje al intestino de la guerra, *SinEmbargo*, January 6, 2015, https://www.sinembargo.mx/06-01-2015/1202796.

best breeds of cattle on the ranch, and the need for ready access to large amounts of cash. The celebration of these achievements is a core theme of the so-called *narcocorridos*, or ballads, of which "Clave Privada" (Beeper PIN number), written by the Tucanes de Tijuana in the 1990s, is one example:

> For too long I was poor
> People humiliated me
> Then I started to make money
> Everything has turned around
> Now they call me boss
> And I've got my private PIN number.

At the same time, acquiring incalculable sums of money and engaging in unlimited expenditure is also thought to be a symptom of proximity to death, because these excesses can only be attained by setting familial and community mores aside. In fact, the invocation of an idealized funeral, which is a common theme in *narcocorridos*, has its material counterpart in substantial tombs that are often built for men who become powerful

through the drug trade, but who also frequently die premature and violent deaths (fig. 5).

As a supporting illustration of this association, the lyrics of a playful corrido, "El último contrabando," by Beto Quintanilla (2005), speak to the connection between new forms of consumption and death:

Adornen mi tumba entera	Decorate my entire tomb
Con goma y ramas de mota	With opium and branches of dope
Y quiero, si se pudiera	And, if possible, I would like
Entiérrenme con mi troca	To be buried with my pickup truck
Nomás pa que vean que la tierra	So that everyone sees that the earth
No se tragó cualquier cosa.	Didn't just swallow up a trifle.[26]

The scale of excess in funerals and tomb structures indexes the close relationship between unlimited money and a violent death. Maybe for that reason, the lack of a dignified burial may prompt, anecdotally at least, a grim moment of self-reflection for some low-level operators. Anthropologist Falko Ernst published biographical material on one of the Knights Templar's foot soldiers and assassins, who dated his disillusion with that organization back to precisely such an instance. After a battle between rival drug armies, in which the Knights Templar lost twenty men, the assassin told Ernst:

> Instead of handing [their bodies] over to their families, what do you think [our chief] did? He burned them and dumped them into the river. . . . We weren't worth anything. We were fighting without recognition, for a cause that nobody knew.[27]

The lavish tombs of successful drug lords have untold numbers of mass graves as their counterpart and supplement. Indeed, not everyone embraces death with the flourish of Beto Quintanilla's corrido figure, who asks to be buried along with his pickup truck, and there is a fair amount of energy expended in trying to translate wealth into a sustainable lifestyle. Thus, the children of important bosses are packed off to the United States or Canada for their education, often as early as middle school. Even so, the translation of ill-gotten money into tranquil familial reproduction is known to be difficult. Thus, Manuel Eduardo Castro's song "Destiny Sends Its Bill" renounces that fantasy and suggests that peaceful social reproduction and engaging in the illegal drug trade are incompatible with each other:

> If I ever get out of jail
> And God forgives me
> I want to see my parents
> And my beautiful Sinaloa
> To then plant my corn
> And not return to the drug trade.

In short, drugs have a fraught relationship with social reproduction: they can elevate a man's importance and turn him from an exploited nobody into a person of weight, an *hombre decidido*. At the same time, the drug economy deals in death, and those who engage in it are living on borrowed time. The protagonist of the corrido "Entre perico y perico" (From cocaine to cocaine) by the Grupo Exterminador (1997) expresses this life of drugs as a constant negotiation with death in a succinct and, for Mexico, rather old-fashioned way:

La muerte me anda buscando	Death is looking for me
No me le voy a esconder	I'm not going to hide from her
Por el contrario la encuentro	Just the opposite, I'll find her
Sé que me va a comprender	I know that she'll understand me
Y que me dará licencia	And that she'll give me permission
De ver otro amanecer.	To see another dawn.

The fact that Michoacanos' lives rely on the continued existence of migratory circuits means that modesty and austerity are no longer invested with as much prestige as before the increase in migrations to the United States, since the economy now relies crucially on integration with the United States. Indeed, the art of combining the two lifeworlds—rural Michoacán and urban America—and harnessing the one to remedy the other easily becomes an *idée fixe*, not unlike alchemy's obsession with squaring the circle.

Core Elements of the Templar Ethos: The Doctrine of John Eldredge

I now turn to the ethos of the Knights Templar, a task that is facilitated to some degree by the unusual fact that the Templars had an intellectual among their leaders. Nazario Moreno, "El Chayo," also known as "El más loco," was born on a ranch in the hamlet of Guanajuatillo, in the municipality of Apatzingán, Michoacán, in 1970. He was one of twelve children. His father was an alcoholic. "The poverty to which I was born and in which my family survived was such that hope simply did not exist. Since I was little I struggled desperately to help my mother and my sisters, because the poverty and misfortune in which we found ourselves wounded my body and bruised my spirit."[28] This is a story that is more or less standard amongst "narcos" who are called upon, or take it upon themselves, to tell their life story, and so to embelish the legends that are springing up around them.

Indeed, one of the stanzas of the hymn of the Knights Templar figures stigmatized class origin as a core identitarian element for all members of the order:

Fui señalado, fui rechazado	I was singled out and rejected
Y muchas veces fui humillado.	And very often humiliated
Por eso ahora soy rebelde	But now I'm a rebel
Un rebelde de corazón	A rebel at heart
Respetando el voto de silencio	Respecting the vow of silence
Que a toda costa conservaré	That I shall always maintain.

According to his memoir, El Chayo did not go to school, because there was no school in Guanajuatillo. He taught himself how to read with the then-popular *Kalimán* comic books, and to tell stories with the ranchero radio soap opera *Porfirio Cadenas,* but he later became a voracious reader and, I would say, a decent writer. After working in poorly paid jobs in Apatzingán—as a peon cutting melons, as a porter in the local market—Nazario emigrated in 1986 with his older brother to the United States, where he began to sell marihuana and to read a wide range of disparate material. Had he emigrated a few years earlier, I might perhaps have bumped into him unknowingly, when I was doing my PhD at Stanford, since Nazario was part of the network of Michoacano migrants on the San Francisco peninsula, many of whom cleaned and gardened in and around that university, while others, like Nazario, sold marihuana.

Nazario's disorganized reading diet laid part of the groundwork for his aesthetic affinity with postmodern pastiche, for he relied on those readings to build an ideology for his organization that is an imaginative mix of widely disparate temporal elements. So, for instance, when Nazario was already a Knight Templar and involved in a war with the Mexican army and rival drug cartels, he gave himself the name of Ernesto Morelos Villa after Ernesto Ché Guevara, Mexican independence leader José María Morelos, and Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa, all subsumed into the crypto-Christian mumbo-jumbo of the Knights Templar.

While in California, Nazario had a second experience that would also become central to his organizational strategy and mythology: his fight against alcoholism and a drug habit that had led him to Alcoholics Anonymous and other intensive rehabilitation programs through various churches, the details of which we do not yet have available.

It was in that context that El Chayo first came across John Eldredge's books. Eldredge is an American evangelical pastor and best-selling author, whose book *Wild at Heart* became compulsory reading (in its Spanish translation) for anyone who wished to enter the Knights Templar.[29] Padgett writes that one of the other leaders of the Templars, La Tuta, who had been

a schoolteacher before becoming a drug lord, arranged to have Eldredge's book distributed by a branch of Mexico's Ministry of Education (CONAFE) and promoted by the ministry's schoolteachers.[30]

Why did an evangelical pastor's book become compulsory reading for one of Mexico's bloodiest crime organizations? There are several aspects of Eldredge's work that were inspirational for Nazario. One of them was stylistic: the constant references to television and popular culture seamlessly woven together with classical or ancient texts and themes. Eldredge moves easily between Shakespeare and the Hollywood film *Gladiator*, between the story of Samson and *The Magnificent Seven*. This freedom from canonical strictures bore an affinity with El Chayo's own reading habits and, more important perhaps, with the disjointed cultural and temporal referents of the transnational migrant.

Eldredge's impact on El Chayo's subsequent thinking is still more important at the substantive level, for *Wild at Heart* deals with the salvation of American masculinity. Its work is to rescue American men from emasculation. According to Eldredge, too many habits have led the American man down the path of feminization: lack of father figures, excess maternal presence, feminization of boys in school and at home, and feminized images of Christian goodness. These are Eldredge's targets, and they are also the problems that Nazario Moreno used to build the foundation of his sect.

For Eldredge, Jesus Christ was a warrior—closer to William Wallace, from the film *Braveheart*, than to a bland but good-natured Mr. Rogers. For Eldredge, the feminization of the American man is the adversary in the Christian battle, not because women are bad, but because men should not be women. Eldredge criticizes a version of Christianity that underemphasizes courage and believes that American Christianity has promoted the "nice guy" as a stand-in for genuine masculine Christian virtue. And yet the nice guy has neither teeth, nor grit, nor balls.

Wild at Heart's mission to rescue masculinity is relevant in Michoacán, which is a state full of divided families, with men of reproductive age disproportionately represented as out-migrants. This means that the family, so much exalted in Michoacán's social life, often has children growing up at a remove from their fathers. This was also Nazario's case, though his separation from his father was due not to migration, but to his father's alcoholism.

For most of the Knights Templar or their potential recruits, Eldredge's book might also have resonated because paternal authority is chronically vulnerable in Michoacán, not only because of the high level of mobility amongst young men in the family structure but also due to the difficulties that migrants have in assuming the places they anticipate occupying

when they return to Mexico. Rouse's ethnography of the Aguililla-San Francisco Bay Area migrant circuit provides a "thick description" of just this difficulty:

> Felipe's problems in adjusting [upon his return to Michoacán] . . . concerned the images that he had developed of his own identity and of the nature of Aguilillan society. . . . In order to cope for so long with a way of life that he considered alienating and constraining, he had defined himself essentially as a peasant farmer, as someone whose true identity lay in another place and in other kinds of labor. These images had undoubtedly helped him deal with the difficulties of daily life in the United States but, since his return to Aguililla, they were proving problematical.[31]

Upon his return, Felipe discovered that the savings that he and his wife had accrued after fifteen years of work in the United States weren't enough to allow them full autonomy from his parents. In other words, in Michoacán patriarchy faces a double problem: absent fathers, in some cases, and the returning migrant's difficulty in achieving the patriarchal ideal, in others. Eldredge's book proposes the occupation of the position of the father as a core goal and suggests the adoption of an ordered Christian masculinity as a way of achieving it.

In his glorification of the "wild" as male space, Eldredge suggests another route to this end. Frequently portrayed in hunting scenes in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains or Alaska, for instance, Eldredge argues that the wilderness is a space for the replenishment of American manhood. The suburbs, on the contrary, are not a good place for masculinity. Men need to replenish their strength and their sense of freedom in the wild.

This is a sensitive issue for Michoacán's ranchero migrants, because all Mexican men who decide to get involved in the illegal drug economy do so against the backdrop of alternative jobs that are sometimes experienced as demeaning: either extremely underpaid jobs in Michoacán or (feminized) service jobs in the United States. Moreover, Michoacano migrants from Nazario's Tierra Caliente region come from a ranch culture in which there is no dictatorship of the clock and no paying rent. Furthermore, staying in Michoacán eliminates the risk and worry of being an "illegal." In the United States, on the contrary, these men have bosses, toward whom they must behave as subservient "humble Mexicans," and they work in jobs that are not very different from those of their wives.

On the positive side, these developments have led to greater equality between women and men in ideas about love, marriage, and family, as Jennifer Hirsch's work on companionate marriage among Mexican migrants has shown, but they also have given rise to a poetics of humiliation.[32] I cite an example from one corrido, a token from an ample catalog of work that

elaborates on the theme of migrant humiliation, "*La tumba del mojado*" (The tomb of the wetback), by Paulino Vargas:

No tenía tarjeta verde	I didn't have a greencard
Cuando trabajé en Luisiana,	When I worked in Louisiana
En un sótano viví	I lived inside a basement
Porque era espalda mojada,	Because I was a wetback
Tuve que inclinar la frente	I had to bow my forehead
Para cobrar la semana.	In order to get my weekly pay.[33]

For the Templars who have been migrants, the equivalent of Eldredge's masculinist romance with the West is their connection to Michoacán. Their return to home villages and ranches is imagined as a double completion, since it involves both recovering a fully blown version of masculinity (patriarchal and autonomous) and full and unchallenged belonging. It is there, in a Michoacán that is filtered through Eldredge-inspired imagery, and thus figured as *monte* or wild, that a new man is born, a man who bears arms and can dispose of wads of cash. A man with ranches, thoroughbred horses, and prize-winning fighting cocks. A man with a new SUV, good clothes, and a gun.

Templar ideology proposes a double move away from emasculation: first, a refusal of abject working conditions in Michoacán—represented profusely in corridos and storytelling—and second, an attempt to limit denigrating work in the US service sector to a passing phase. Because this second move has become increasingly difficult to realize, the Templars make their bid for full patriarchal status and belonging instead through their practice in crime, steeled and tempered by their self-conscious moral code.

Three Kinds of Men

Only fragmentary data exists as yet on the beliefs of the soldiers recruited by the Knights Templar—or on the devotions of those members who worked as administrators and accountants, couriers and scouts, those who cooked meth and planted poppies or marihuana—but I can offer some tentative ideas on the key moral dilemmas they might face, based principally on the ethnography and journalistic reportage on devotions that have developed in Mexican prisons and so-called annexes (*anexos*) where drug and alcohol addicts are locked up.

Sociologist Victor Payá has shown the ubiquity of drug consumption in his ethnographies of Mexico City prisons. "Drugs," he writes, "are the optimal companion for enduring reclusion. As the prisoners say, 'a jail with no drugs doesn't work.'"[34] It is a bitter cruelty that Mexico imprisons drug users, where they are likely only to deepen their habit.

Although there are certainly collective devotional practices in Mexico's prisons, principally Catholic and Evangelical, psychological isolation and the paranoia that stems from poor conditions leads to a strong emphasis on the individual. This fact is reflected in the long tradition of tattooing, a practice that has been general for at least a century before becoming widely fashionable, and probably much longer.[35] In prison, marking the body is important. Prisoners often experience reclusion as a process of being forgotten by dear ones on the outside. In Mexico, this is especially true for female prisoners, but is also very often the case for men.[36] The tattooed names of loved ones and markings that are reminders of a life's key events on the prisoner record the past indelibly in the face of oblivion.[37]

The tattooing of individual devotional symbols, though, has the added value of serving as protection within the prison itself. Prison tattoos are fetishes. Indeed, Victor Payá writes that many prisoners relate to their tattoos as if they were animate beings with whom they speak and communicate, to whom they can pray, and who have powers of their own—which is why devils, saints, mythical beasts, and wild animals are commonly chosen. Prisoners sometimes slap their tattoos to wake them up, and when one's life is in danger, having an image of the virgin, of Jesus, or of the Santa Muerte on his back might offer protection from being stabbed, for instance. A man who has a dragon or a tiger on his arm may inspire caution in others.[38]

As for the annexes for alcoholics, we know from the studies of Angela García in Mexico City, and Kevin O'Neill in Guatemala City, that the people who get locked up there—often by their families and against their own will—receive intense, regimented daily doses of religion.[39] To save themselves from deadly addictions (and to "find God") they must submit to a tireless routine of confession, discussion, and prayer.

The moral innovations and codes of conduct of the Knights Templar were from their beginnings part of a recruitment strategy carried over from the days of La Familia Michoacana. It is meaningful that La Familia, and then the Templarios, began recruiting soldiers in the *anexos* amongst drug addicts and alcoholics. Their idea was to offer a way out of addiction in exchange for membership in the organization. George Grayson has described the process as consisting of a two-month course coordinated by a pastor who was part of the organization, Rafael "*El Cede*" Cedeño Hernández, who claimed to have brought nine thousand young men out of their addiction and, presumably, into the organization. The process of transformation was depicted in posters that represented the three stages of the neophytes' rite of passage. The first portrayed anger and deception ('*Así venía*'); the second revealed interest [in changing one's life], ('*Me interesé*') and the third depicted total joys ('*Así salí*').[40]

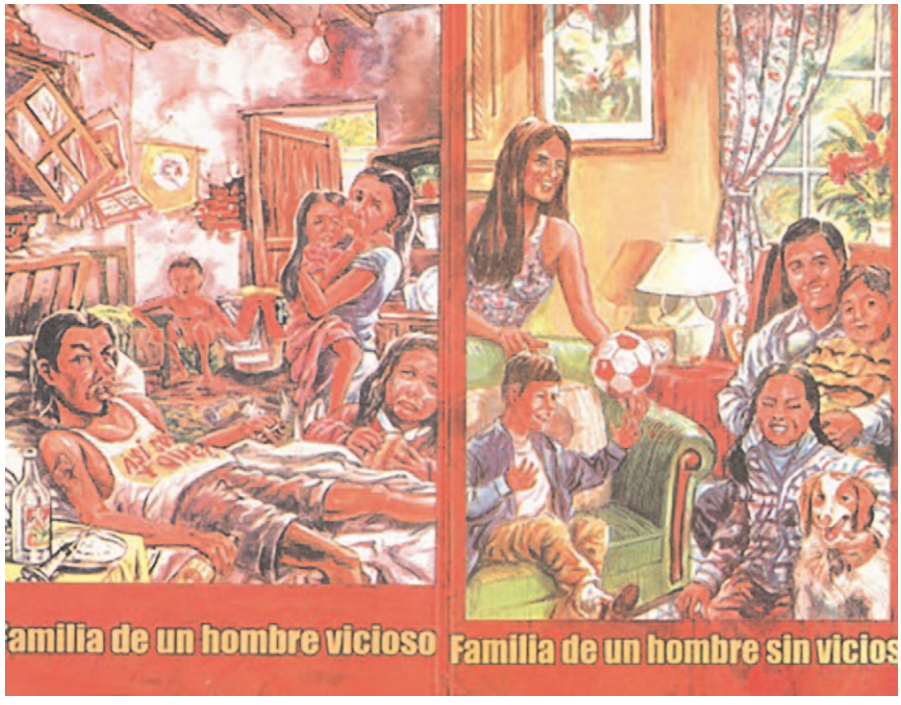

FIGURE 6. Inside flap of the cover (left) and back cover (right) of Nazario Moreno's memoir. The image on the left, which you see when you open the book, portrays "the family of an addict" and the image on the right, which you see upon completing the book, portrays "the family of a man without vices." Tellingly, the latter image is very much that of the American suburban family ideal.

Thus, adherence to the Templar code of ethics would move recruits from the abject dispossession that is addiction to serving in the "Order of the Temple." It thus transferred its subjects from servitude to positions of manly power, from the feminization denounced by Eldredge to living like a man, and from being a slave of addiction to being a drug lord (fig. 6). Indeed, according to Grayson and several journalistic accounts, the transition away from addiction and into soldiering required proof that one was capable of killing, then butchering, victims and, according to one imprisoned member of the organization, even of cooking them and handling their butchered bodies.[41]

Thus, to rehabilitate an addict and give him a spot in the organization is to rob Death of someone who had already given himself up to her. This substitution is carried out in exchange for other lives. Here we find traces of an ideology that resembles Foster's idea of the limited good: the life

regained by the newly recruited Templario, stolen away from Death, shall be paid back to Death with that knight's first victim. This exchange is also at times figured as an act of divine justice, wherein the man who was humiliated and slighted, and is now resurrected as a knight, takes his vengeance on those who had humiliated him.

The drug culture's gun fetishism is also illustrative of this way of figuring recruitment as a process of personal transformation, since the drug culture recurrently portrays three kinds of men: the addict, the upright campesino or rancher who minds his own business, and the hypermasculine *gallo bien jugado* (fighting cock), who is dangerous, exploitative, and best left alone. These are divergent life choices represented by the poison of the drug, the plow, and the AK-47, which is known in Spanish as *cuernos de chivo*—goat horns. This expression refers to the gun's shape but also resonates with demonic images. There are important connections between these three types of men.

Thus, in her study of heroin use amongst Hispanos in New Mexico, Angela García shows that heroin is seen by addicts as a medicine for the feelings of being disposessed of land, home, or family. The loss of the land and home is compensated by one's possession by the drug. The addict serves the drug, as her or his ancestors once served the land: addicts give themselves to it, and the drug cures, just as the earth cures, except that the earth cure is life giving, while heroin is a harbinger of death.[42] Addiction is thus a fall from the kind of full personhood that could be achieved through familial reproduction in farming. García's New Mexican ethnography features images of crosses made with syringes placed on addicts' graves by friends or family.

The plow is a symbol of an upright but modest and god-fearing existence, as in the corrido cited earlier from Sinaloa, but it is increasingly difficult to live the farmer's life of modesty and respect without failing. Finally, the *cuerno de chivo* belongs to a man of substance, a *gallo bien jugado*, but it also has associations with a devil's bargain or, at the very least, with the subaltern tactics of the trickster, which are always provisional and performative. In the end, whatever is taken by means of the gun has a foretaste of a death postponed.

In one of his reports, Padgett records a chilling narcocorrido from Nazario's part of Michoacán, one that speaks of decapitating victims. It is cast in a language of negative reciprocity as a response to a curse that cannot be lifted:

> I'd fall and pick myself back up
> No one inquired after me
> An orphan since birth
> My blood is poisoned.

Everything is bad in this life
We enjoy what is not ours
The rich man lives off the poor one
And pretends to be very good.

If they attack you, you defend yourself
One must wrestle with death
And the one who once turned his back on you
Should be killed face to face.

The narco's consumer fetishism is thus part of a raging cycle of negative reciprocity, where guns are used to flip a world of exploitation and turn it on its head.[43]

The Annunaki Fortress

The telos of the Knights Templar has an insoluble contradiction at its core. The Templars' alleged reason for existing is the defense of a sacralized land of origin, defense of the honor of its women, and preservation of the masculinity of its men. Meeting these goals requires accessing or acquiring the desired form of patriarchal plenitude and fulfillment that has become so difficult to achieve today, either by staying in Michoacán's rural economy or by way of the traditional scheme of return migration to and from the United States. At the same time, the Templars' very process of recruitment, which favors work amongst meagerly paid workers and dispossessed addicts, unleashes a cycle of negativity and murder that may well be considered acts of divine justice by the Templars themselves, but that requires the cultivation of an unhinged sadism that is at odds with traditional ideals of manhood.[44]

Indeed, it is not difficult to find evidence of tension between actual on-the-ground sadism and the post hoc legitimation of the violent man as the mere servant of divine justice. So, for instance, when Nazario and his allies first created the Familia Michoacana in 2006, they orchestrated the organization's first public appearance with an act of terror, throwing the decapitated heads of six members of the Zeta cartel on the floor of an Uruapan discotheque. The message that accompanied these heads vindicated the sadistic act as a defense of the honor of Michoacán's women, declaring that "the Familia does not kill for money, it does not kill women, it does not kill innocent people. Only those who deserve to die, die. Everyone should know that this is Divine Justice."[45]

Being the arm of divine justice is in fact a key form of sublimation amongst the Knights Templar, which is why the stanzas of the Templarios' hymn are brimming with vows of rectitude and righting the wronged, which

are claims that fly in the face of their ghastly record of assassination, rape, torture, and extortion.

Día a día voy a luchar	I will fight day after day
Actuando siempre con honestidad.	Always acting with honesty.
Si en el camino de este destino	If in the course of this destiny
La muerte me llegara a encontrar	Death were to find me
Podré morir satisfecho	I can die satisfied
Mi sacrificio contribuirá	For my sacrifice shall contribute
Para que mis hermanos hagan justicia	To my brother's justice making
Y haya igualdad.	And for there to be equality.

Indeed, when new members are recruited, the Templarios swear to obey a code that declares in its very first article that the aim of the organization is "to protect the inhabitants and the sacred territory of the free, sovereign and secular [*laico*] state of Michoacán."[46]

Nevertheless, the defense of the family and the "sacred territory" is achieved, as an earlier-cited corrido recognizes, "enjoy[ing] what is not ours," and specifically, enjoying money extracted through extortion, and from sucking the life out of drug addicts, either as foot soldiers or as clients. Thus, the protection of the land not only involves taking revenge against those who once humiliated the newly self-fashioned avengers, it also involves indulging in the *jouissance* of vengeance, which requires excessive terror tactics with their affinity with sadism rather than with traditional forms of rural manhood or *hombría*, which emphasize a low-key but firm ability to defend what is yours and otherwise to mind your own business. I continue, in order to illustrate the prominence of sadism, with words from the same corrido:

> When I tear their soul from them
> They look at me in horror
> With a terrifying grimace
> And a smile on my lips.

The Templars created a morality that was meant to emancipate them from poverty and emasculation by exploiting their own local economy and a transnational circuit of which they have long been a part. Its ideology of masculine protection, though, has been used routinely to justify immediate gratification and outright supremacy. The Templars' efforts to resolve and transcend the aporia of Michoacán's migrant circuit, which involves destroying the family in order to preserve it, is key to understanding how the defense of the family became an ideology of innate privilege. It also helps explain the curious name that Nazario Moreno bestowed on the ranch from which he governed the region of Apatzingán: the "Annunaki Fortress."

The Annunaki were a group of Sumerian deities—children of Anu—mentioned in the epic of Gilgamesh, although, as often occurs with ideas that appealed to the Templar order, the reference is from popular culture: from the best-selling author Zecharia Sitchin, who claimed that Sumerian culture was created by extraterrestrials from a twelfth planet, called Niburu.[47] According to Sitchin, the Annunaki had rebelled against working conditions on Niburu and had come to earth to create a race of slaves, Homo sapiens, who would do the hard work of mining the gold needed for the Annunaki's reproduction.

That race of slaves was from the result of a cross between Homo erectus and the genes of the Annunaki extraterrestrials. For this reason, there are amongst humans people who can mediate between the quasi divine and superior force of the Annunaki and the rest of the slaves. Those superior beings are kings by divine right. Sitchin's books sold by the millions and gave rise to offshoots in television and film.

The idea of calling his castle, ranch, and home base the Annunaki Fortress suggests that at some point Nazario and his companions began to see themselves as members of a superior caste that enjoyed the divine right to enslave others. Indeed, there is a distinctly aristocratizing streak in the whole ethos of the Templario order—including a clear-cut boundary between masters and slaves, knights and foot soldiers—and at the head of that delirious concoction, a saint-king, like Richard the Lionheart or Arthur. This aristocratic ideology seems to have been ritually performed, judging from the little we know about life in the Annunaki Fortress before Nazario's second and final death, in 2014.

The magazine *Proceso* reports on these events, attended by Knights Templar, politicians, and selected local dignitaries:

> The appointments took place in a ranch owned by El Chayo known as the Fortaleza Annunaki, with an extension of seven hectares, located near Guanajuatillo, Apatzingán. . . . The templar head of the plaza whose business would be treated that night would be present, along with the leaders of the Knights Templar such as Servando Gómez La Tuta and Enrique Kike Plancarte, who were El Chayo's main executives. . . .
>
> These business encounters also included spectacles for the "guests": rodeo, magic acts, table games, bull-fighting, and sporting events. A variety of alcoholic beverages and a buffet of regional dishes were served.
>
> At the rodeo, El Chayo would make his appearance sitting on a throne that was carried on the shoulders of his subalterns, dressed in a red tunic, or in a tunic of some other color, and with a bejeweled crown on his head.[48]

Born from the desire for personal vindication and for the rescue of family and the community, the morality of the Knights Templar became the ideology

of murderous warlords who considered themselves the rightful rulers of Michoacán.

Notes

1. Claudio Lomnitz, *La nación desdibujada: México en trece ensayos* (Mexico City, 2016).
2. See Salvador Maldonado, *La Ilusión de la seguridad. Política y violencia en la periferia michoacana, Zamora* (Michoacán, 2018) and *Los márgenes del estado mexicano. Territorios ilegales, desarrollo y violencia en Michoacán, Zamora* (Michoacán, 2010); Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, "Self-defense Groups, Cartels and Territorial Reconfiguration in Michoacan," *Noria: Network of Researchers in International Affairs*, September 30, 2013, https://www.noria-research.com/self-defense-groups-cartels-and-territorial-reconfiguration-in-michoacan/; Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, "From Political to Criminal Intermediation: The Structuring of Criminal Organizations in Michoacán, Mexico," in *Handbook of Organised Crime and Politics* (Cheltenham, UK, 2019); and Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, "'Vigilar y limpiar': Identification and Self-Help Justice-Making in Michoacán, Mexico," *Politix* 3, no. 115 (2016): 103–25. See also, US Defense and State Department consultant George W. Grayson's book *La Familia Drug Cartel: Implications for US-Mexican Security* (Washington, DC, 2010); the documentary film *Cartel Land* (2015), directed by Matthew Heineman et al., offers remarkable footage on the decline of the Templarios. For a useful overview of the drug war in the region, see Raúl Zepeda Gil, "Violencia en Tierra Caliente: Guerra criminal e intervenciones federales de 2000 a 2014" (master's thesis, El Colegio de México, 2016).
3. Natalia Mendoza Rockwell, *Conversaciones en el desierto: Cultura y tráfico de drogas* (Mexico City, 2017), 218–33. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
4. Grayson, *La Familia Drug Cartel*, vii.
5. Salvador Maldonado, *Los márgenes del Estado mexicano: Territorios ilegales, desarrollo y violencia en Michoacán* (Zamora, 2010), 294–95.
6. *Código de los Caballeros Templarios de Michoacán* (2011), https://www.academia.edu/37919887/C%C3%B3digo_de_los_Caballeros_Templarios_de_Michoac%C3%A1n.
7. "'La Tuta' era un ratero mugroso: 'El Chapo Guzmán,'" YouTube, March 3, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXGtoTps5BQ.
8. Francisco Castellanos, "El Chayo, santo patrono de la tierra caliente," *Proceso* 4 (August 2012).
9. Grayson, *La Familia Drug Cartel*, 27.
10. "Cuídate Felipe Calderón, reza a tu santo porque nosotros traemos la bendición de nuestro Dios. Nuestro Dios Nazario, que Dios lo tenga en su gloria"; Blog del Narco, *Muriendo por la verdad: Clandestinos dentro de la violenta narcoguerra mexicana, por los Periodistas fugitivos del Blog del Narco.* Printed clandestinely in the US (n.p., 2012), 302. In English: Blog del Narco, *Dying for the Truth: Undercover Inside Mexico's Violent Drug War* (Port Townsend, WA, 2013).
11. "Murió nuestro jefe, pero sus ideales nunca morirán mientras haya pobres e injusticias en este México nuestro"; Nazario Moreno González, *Me dicen: "El más loco"* (Mexico City, 2011).

12. "A veces yo lo llegué a descubrir platicando con los animales como si estos fueran gentes. Pareciera como que se entendía con ellos"; ibid., 93.
13. Eduardo Ferrer, Ernesto Martínez, and Gustavo Castillo, "Michoacán bajo estado de sitio," *La Jornada*, December 11, 2010.
14. "Para él todos sus ahijados eran iguales sin importarle quiénes fueran sus padres"; González, *Me dicen*, 96.
15. Humberto Padgett and Dalia Martínez, "La propaganda y la ocupación Templaria," *SinEmbargo*, October 10, 2013, https://www.sinembargo.mx/10-10-2013/779731.
16. Full text of the hymn is in ibid.
17. "Para mí no ha muerto. Para mí sigue viviendo en la montaña o en los barrancos, pero para mí no ha muerto"; González, *Me dicen*, 96–97.
18. See Claudio Lomnitz, "Mexico's First Lynching: Crime, Moral Panic, Dependency," *Critical Historical Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 85–123.
19. The original formulation that inspires this interpretation of "transnational circuits" is from Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 8–23.
20. Gabrielle Oliveira, *Motherhood Across Borders: Immigrants and Their Children in Mexico and New York* (New York, 2018).
21. Alvaro Ochoa Serrano, "Michoacanos in Los Angeles: US-Mexican Transnational Culture 1920–1970" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1998).
22. In 2014, Michoacano remittances represented 10% of Mexico's overall remittance income. See http://www.migrante.michoacan.gob.mx/index.php/comunicados/280-dia-migrante-2014. (This information has since been removed.)
23. For discussions of some of these factors, see John Gledhill, *Neoliberalism, Transnationalism and Rural Poverty: A Case Study of Michoacán* (Boulder, 1995). More than 9 percent of the state's population moved to the United States during the 1990s alone.
24. George Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 2 (1967): 293–315.
25. Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration to the United States: Family Relations in the Development of a Transnational Migrant Circuit," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1989), 183.
26. Full lyrics in Miriam Díaz González, *Perspectiva sociocrítica del narcocorrido en México* (Morelia, 2010).
27. Falko Ernst, "Sicario" (unpublished manuscript).
28. González, *Me dicen.*
29. John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (New York, 2001).
30. Humberto Padgett, "Nazario, el apóstol del crimen," *Revista Emeequis*, April 16, 2012.
31. Rouse, "Mexican Migration to the United States," 203.
32. Jennifer Hirsch, *Courtship After Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Berkeley, 2003).
33. Ibid.
34. Victor Alejandro Payá Porres, *Vida y muerte en la cárcel: Estudio sobre la situación institucional de los prisioneros* (Mexico City, 2006), 157.
35. The earliest work of reference on this subject is Porfirian criminologist Francisco Martínez Baca's fascinating work *Los tatuages: Estudio psicológico y médico-legal en delincuentes y militares* (Mexico City, 1899).

36. On gender inequalities surrounding both unequal justice, prison conditions, and differentiated impact on family members, see Elena Azaola, *El delito de ser mujer: hombres y mujeres homicidas en la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City, 1996), and Catalina Pérez Correa, "Los valores del derecho penal moderno y la equidad de género" (unpublished manuscript, 2017).
37. Victor Alejandro Payá Porres, "Cuerpo rayado, cuerpo significante: El tatuaje en prisión," in *Vida y muerte en la cárcel: Estudio sobre la vida institucional de los prisioneros* (Mexico City, 2006), 283–308.
38. Victor Alejandro Payá Porres, "Reflexiones etnográficas en torno al tatuaje en prisión," *Id@as CONCYTEG* 4, no. 45 (2009): 529–30.
39. Angela García, "Regulación repensada: la necesidad de nuevas políticas y normas en el tratamiento de las adicciones" and "Serenity: Violence, Inequality and Recovery on the Edge of Mexico City" (unpublished manuscripts, 2016); Kevin O'Neill, "On Hunting," *Critical Inquiry* 43 (2017): 697–718.
40. Grayson, *La Familia Drug Cartel*, 38.
41. Ibid., 40.
42. Angela García, *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande* (Berkeley, 2010), 113 and *passim*.
43. Claudio Lomnitz, "Acerca de la reciprocidad negativa," *Revista de Antropología Social* 14 (Madrid, 2005): 311–39.
44. The original formulation of the distinction between traditional forms of manhood (*hombría*) and hyperaggressive forms is by Américo Paredes, "Estados Unidos, México y el machismo," *Journal of Interamerican Studies* 9 (1967): 65–84. Paredes's idea was taken up in an acute and productive way by Rouse, *Mexican Migration to the United States*, 132. Matthew Gutman's *Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley, 1996) also turns on this distinction.
45. Grayson, *La Familia Drug Cartel*, viii.
46. *Código de los Caballeros Templarios de Michoacán*.
47. Zecharia Sitchin, *The 12th Planet* (New York, 1978).
48. "Con trono y corona, 'El Chayo' daba órdenes a autoridades en 'El Cerro,'" *Proceso*, April 20, 2014.