

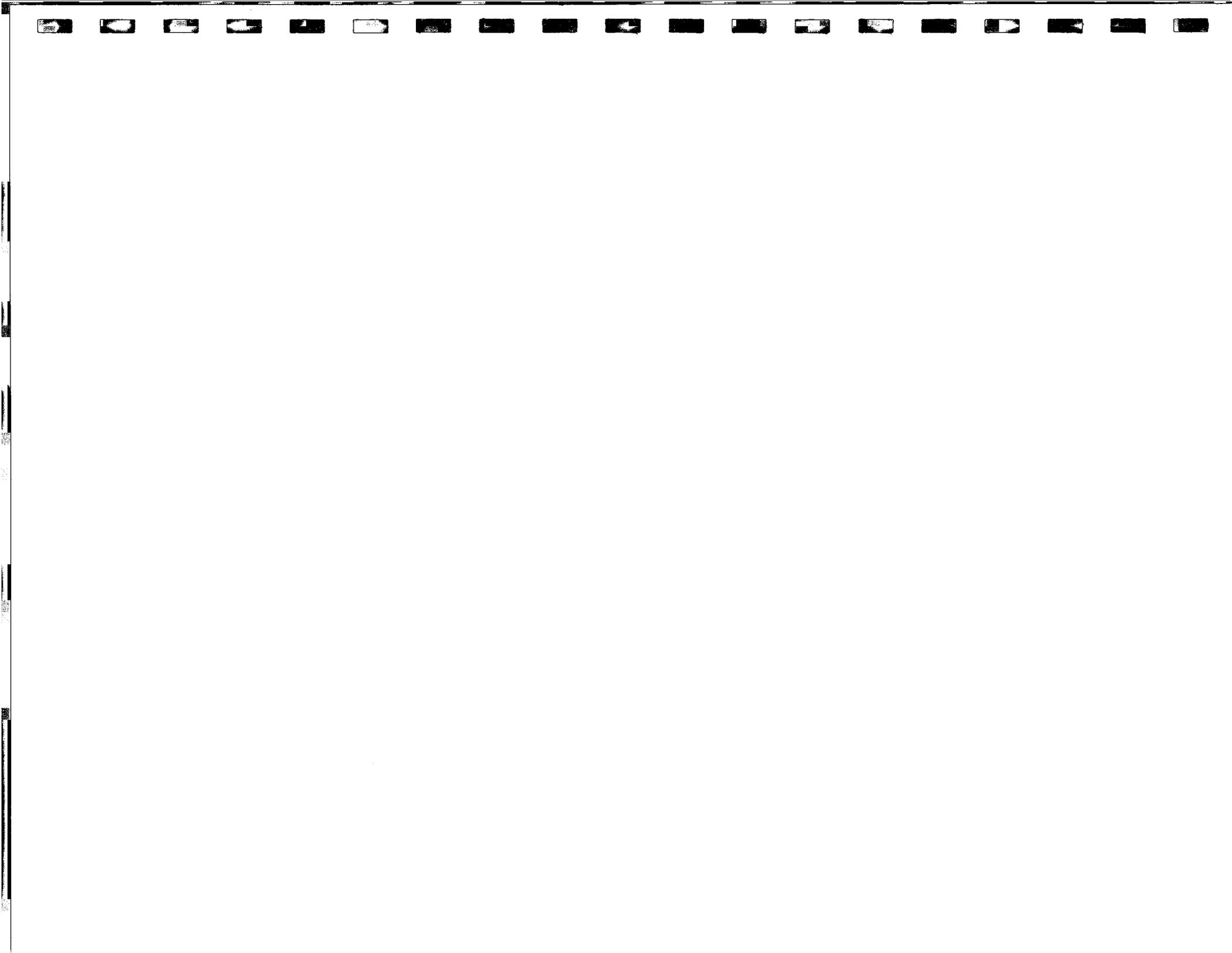
IN SEARCH OF JUAN VALDEZ

The Juan Valdez Marketing Campaign and the Construction of
Colombian Identity

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ABSTRACT

In 1959, Juan Valdez introduced the world to 100% Colombian Coffee. This fictional image, designed by the New York based advertisement agency Doyle Dane Bernbach in conjunction with the *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia* (National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia), represents the Federation itself and over 500,000 coffee growing families. The National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia was created in 1927 to unite the Colombian coffee-growing regions under one agency in order to protect Colombian coffee in foreign markets, specifically in that of the United States. About 30 years after its creation, however, the Federation ran into the problem of not having a foreign marketing campaign. With the introduction of Juan Valdez, the Federation and its product were able to distinguish itself from the products of other countries. The campaign not only created a coffee brand, but also a country brand with Juan Valdez as its representative. The image has been extremely popular and so successful among U.S. consumers that it was chosen as the most publicly recognized icon by Advertising Week in 2005.

The success of Juan Valdez and Colombian coffee in the development of Colombia's infrastructure also had an effect on Colombian identity. In a time of violence and fear, Juan Valdez became a figure that represented a tranquil countryside. The image of Juan Valdez was constructed by Colombians to meet the yearning for an imagined time when things were tranquil. The danger in partaking in this activity was that it masked the reality of the situation. Colombians used this technique to evade the reality, but in turn it cemented Juan Valdez's position in Colombia's real or imaginary historical narrative.

The image, due to its polysemic nature, has also been shaped into a symbol of modernization. Juan Valdez's contribution to the welfare of Colombians through increased returns for their coffee allowed the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros to build roads, schools, and bridges that benefited many communities. In addition, the Juan Valdez Cafes have altered the configuration of Colombian coffee culture. The opportunity to drink a latte or a *tinto* made with the best coffee in the world allowed Colombians to feel cosmopolitan and Colombian at the same time. As the image of Juan Valdez continues to exist, Colombians will similarly proceed to shape their identity through the changing circumstances of the 21st century.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1959, Juan Valdez made his way down the Colombian Andes with his mule *Conchita* and introduced the world to 100% Colombian Coffee. This fictional image, designed by the New York based advertisement agency Doyle Dane Bernbach, represents the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia and all its 500,000 coffee-growing members (*cafeteros*). The National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia was created in 1927 to unite the Colombian coffee-growing regions under one agency in order to protect Colombian coffee in foreign markets, specifically in that of the United States. About 30 years after its creation, however, the Federation ran into the problem of not having a foreign marketing campaign. With the introduction of Juan Valdez, the Federation and its product were able to distinguish itself from the products of other countries. The campaign not only created a coffee brand, but also a country brand with Juan Valdez as its representative. The image has been extremely popular and so successful among U.S. consumers that it was chosen as the most publicly recognized icon by Advertising Week in 2005.¹

Aside from being nominated as one of the best advertising icons, Juan Valdez has also been presented with several other awards, including a CLIO Award in 1982. One of its biggest accomplishments, however, was improving Colombian coffee's recognition in the United States. Towards the end of the 1950s only 4% of U.S. consumers believed Colombian coffee was the best in the world. By the end of the 1980s this percentage had

¹ Phillip Kurata, "Juan Valdez Travels the World, Sends Profits Home to Colombia," *America.gov*, April 9, 2008, accessed November 2, 2010, <http://www.america.gov/st/business-english/2008/April/20080409101828cpataruk0.7881891.html>

increased to 66%.² It is evident that Juan Valdez has done a tremendous job marketing Colombian coffee, but what social impact has he had on Colombia? What does the Juan Valdez campaign tell us about the construction of identity and the history of Colombian coffee? These are questions that I hope to have answered in my research.

In recent years, a plethora of newspaper and magazine articles have been published regarding the legacy of Juan Valdez, but no major academic research has been conducted regarding the figure's impact on society. *Juan Valdez: la estrategia detras de la marca*, written by several economists at the Universidad de los Andes, analyzes the economic and political trajectory of the image, but leaves much to be desired regarding its cultural significance in Colombian and American societies.

After analyzing a multitude of print advertisements, television commercials, and other publicity strategies undertaken by the Juan Valdez campaign, the research was not complete without a trip to Colombia which assisted me in contemplating his identity and questioning the authenticity of the image. Interviews were conducted in several cities and towns of the coffee-growing regions of Colombia to grasp the magnitude of the image's influence on Colombian identity. Thus, the thesis that follows combines archival research with oral histories to analyze the origins and re-definition of Juan Valdez over time as the image circulates through multiple locations. These include the country of Colombia, transformed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the cultivation of coffee and a very turbulent political history; an image saturated in the advertising world based in New York City, and increasingly globalized consumer markets from the 1950s to the present.

² Mauricio Reina et al., *Juan Valdez: la estrategia detras de la marca* (Bogota: Ediciones B, 2007), 178.

A visit to Colombia's *Parque Nacional del Café* located in Montenegro, Colombia demonstrated Juan Valdez's incorporation into the way Colombians remember their past. Besides an amusement park, a showcase of several Colombian myths, and a demonstration of the cultivation and maintenance of coffee, the *Parque Nacional del Café* includes a museum depicting the history, culture, and technology of Colombian coffee. In this exhibit, Juan Valdez had a strong presence in the trajectory of Colombia's coffee. In terms of representing history, an important event at the park was the *Show del café* (figure 1).



Figure 1. Taken from the Parque Nacional del Café's website.

The show takes the audience through the history of the coffee bean in Colombia's traditional cultures. The spectacle incorporates Colombia's traditional and folkloric music and dances to tell the history of Colombian coffee. One of the actors dressed as Juan Valdez makes an appearance in the segment portraying the exportation of Colombian coffee. When this occurred, the audience began clapping and cheering. This event symbolized the importance of Juan Valdez to Colombians.

In a time when Colombia was known for its violence and narcotics, the image of Juan Valdez was constructed by Colombians to meet the yearning for an imagined time when things were tranquil. The image, like all images, is polysemic and contains multiple meanings within different contexts. The success of Juan Valdez and Colombian coffee in the development of Colombia's infrastructure also had an effect on Colombian identity. The first necessary step in assessing the content and exclusions of this image involves situating it within the broad sweep of Colombian history by noting the impact of coffee cultivation on the Colombian experience of nation-state formation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

SECTION I

Juan Valdez and Colombian History

The violent context surrounding the Juan Valdez campaign is not the image Colombians want to project to the rest of the world. Instead they have adopted a figure that combines marketable attributes and historical tendencies to represent their country. The authenticity of Juan Valdez's story, the somewhat accurate depiction of the *arriero*³, the success of the image in promoting Colombian coffee, and the rich history of coffee in Colombia provide a possible answer as to why Colombians have integrated Juan Valdez into their national identity. The era of the Juan Valdez marketing campaign coincided with complex political violence in Colombia. Juan Valdez presented himself as an opportunity for Colombians to escape this reality. In the process, he was integrated into Colombians' identity as coffee growers.

Coffee has been essential to the development of the Colombian nation. The revenue that coffee sales brought to the country in the 19th and 20th centuries provided the basis for the development of international credit, foreign investments, transportation, and communications. Due to its importance in the development of the country, coffee has had a significant influence on Colombian politics. The Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia has become a government agency that negotiates and administers Colombia's various international coffee pacts. As the agency in control of the majority of Colombia's coffee stock, the Federación has had a strong position when negotiating with each successive government administration the internal price of coffee and tax rates,

³ An *arriero* is someone who transports goods using pack animals. In Colombia, the *arriero* not only transports coffee, but he also engages in its cultivation.

as well as credit, exchange, and monetary policies.⁴ The FNC represents a small piece of the national identity puzzle constructed by Colombians in response to coffee's tremendous influence on their country. A Colombian *caficultura*, or "coffee culture," had been developing throughout the years, even before Colombia's coffee growers decided in 1927 to form the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia.

When Jesuits brought coffee to Colombia in the 18th century, no one would have guessed its importance in the future of the country, though many advocated coffee as an alternative to other commodities. In 1856, Jose Manuel Restrepo reached out to the "true patriots" of Nueva Granada to replace their cacao, which was costly to maintain, with coffee, which was less expensive and easier to grow. In his short discourse titled "Cultivo del Café", Dr. Restrepo described the international coffee market, the advantages of growing coffee, which sector of society should grow coffee, and most importantly, he outlined the way coffee would be transported within the country's infrastructure. In 1856 coffee was still mainly grown in the northeastern part of Colombia, but Dr. Restrepo's description of the way coffee would be internally transported foreshadowed the manner in which coffee would economically connect Colombia in the late 19th century.

Coffee could be first grown for the consumption of every town. The next step would be its exportation. Let's not doubt ourselves that in short time this will be possible, with the increase of steam boats in the Magdalena River and the decrease in shipping costs. If this doesn't occur, coffee from Nueva Granada will never be able to compete with that which is produced on islands or near the coast.⁵

⁴ Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 270.

⁵ Jose Manuel Restrepo, "Cultivo del Café," in *Memorias sobre el cultivo del café*, edited by the Banco de la Republica. (Bogota: Banco de la Republica Press, 1952), 6.

In his essay, Dr. Restrepo acknowledged the prospects of growing coffee in Nueva Granada, but he was also hopeful in the investment of steamboats and the decrease in shipping prices. Since he doesn't mention railroads, the importance of the *arriero* and his mule is implied; the *arriero* and his mule would transport the coffee from the farm to the river dock.

Sixteen years later, Francisco Ospina was summoned by the Junta Directiva de la Exposición Nacional de 1872 to provide detailed observations about the maintenance and picking of coffee. Ospina's essay titled "Tratado Practico sobre el Cultivo del Cafeto" is a comprehensive explanation of the ways coffee, which had "provided riches to more than ten nations", could also benefit Colombia. In the article, Ospina identified himself not just as a "son of Colombia", but also a farmer. Ospina had been growing coffee for five years when he gave his discourse to the Junta Directiva. Thus, it would not have been unusual if he regarded himself as a coffee grower, but it would have been uncommon if he considered himself part of a Colombian *caficultura* since Colombia was only beginning to grow coffee. Furthermore, if he considered himself a coffee grower, coffee growers in Colombia were and continue to be a denomination of the farmer; alongside their coffee, coffee growers are also subsistence farmers who grow plantain, yucca, and other crops.

A key aspect of Francisco Ospina's essay is his section on the harvest and the inclusion of the woman in the coffee growing trade. Ospina describes coffee growing as a family affair.

Women, more so than men, are better for the purpose of picking the coffee beans, since their hands are more delicate and flexible. Adolescents are not convenient for this type of work; first, because of his stature he is not able to reach the

highest part of the tree, and second, because they are detrimental to this delicate operation.⁶

Before the FNC existed, coffee growers learned about the technological innovations from the national expositions for which Ospina was writing. No information is available showing the number of women who were picking coffee alongside men in the late 19th century or how many women joined men in the coffee fields after Ospina's essay was published, but women did become an essential component of Colombia's *caficultura*. Christened the *chapolera*, the female coffee picker is a fundamental component of Colombia's *caficultura* and identity. The name *chapolera* derives from *chapol*, which is the name given to the coffee plant during its germination stage. In 1895, the importance of coffee to Colombian identity and economy led Professor of Natural Sciences at Colombia's Universidad Nacional, Nicolas Saenz, to declare, "What would Colombia be without its Coffee industry!"⁷

The Roots of a Coffee Nation

Coffee has indeed provided Colombia with economic success and national solidarity. While Colombians have developed a sense of nation through channels directed by the State like festivals and national holidays, the coffee industry has provided an alternative way of developing a sense of nationhood. Profits earned by the coffee industry provided the means to construct roads that would physically connect the

⁶ Francisco Ospina, "Tratado Practico sobre el Cultivo del Cafeto," in *Memorias sobre el cultivo del café*, edited by the Banco de la Republica. (Bogota: Banco de la Republica Press, 1952), 37.

⁷ Nicolas Saenz, "Memoria Sobre el Cultivo del Cafeto o Guia para la Fundacion de un Cafetal en Colombia Incluyendo los Cultivos Accesorios de Platana, Cañas, y Pastos," in *Memorias sobre el cultivo del café*, edited by the Banco de la Republica. (Bogota: Banco de la Republica Press, 1952), 79.

different regions of Colombia, and the formation of the FNC brought together a regionally diverse country with the common goal of producing the best coffee in the world.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Colombia had a great deal of patriotism and regionalism, but little nationalism.⁸ In his book *Blood and Debt*, Miguel Angel Centeno argues that the State in Colombia, and in the rest of Latin America, has had trouble generating “official state nationalism” because of the “generic weakness of state authority.”⁹ State weakness has been generated by a variety of factors. First, there exist “ethnic and racial divisions that dominate most societies on the continent and which have limited the development of panhistorical legends and ethnic identifications.”¹⁰ Centeno also positions Latin American countries in a sphere void of distinct “others” that could be used to enhance common identity.¹¹ Mestizaje and common national heroes from the independence period have connected Latin American countries.

The majority of Centeno’s work focuses on the relationship between war and official state nationalism. Centeno argues that the majority of Latin American states have failed to provide protection to their populations from political violence, and this lack of security has been detrimental to the states’ legitimacy. While Latin America’s political violence pales in comparison to violence in other parts of the world, its violence has been mostly internal.¹² Aside from the independence wars and a few other conflicts (War of the Pacific, Chaco War), Latin America’s political violence has occurred within and not

⁸ Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 2002), 170.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 7.

between states. Referred to as “limited wars”, these cases of political violence impede the state from engaging in proper nation-building because they destroy internal infrastructure and break down relationships between groups with common economic, ideological, or cultural backgrounds.¹³ Thus, Latin America’s limited wars have limited the states’ abilities to engage in official state nationalism. In Colombia, coffee and the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia have been responsible for indirectly building the nation-state.

A Coffee Nation

Created in 1927 as a private organization with the sole goal of defending the interests of Colombia’s coffee growers, the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia has supplanted the state in various social and civic activities, including the funding of public works. In 1940, the creation of the *Fondo Nacional del Café*, a government trust fed by the returns of coffee sales and administered by the Federacion, supplied the FNC with the funds to subsidize projects that raised the competitiveness of the coffee grower. Even though this trust offered the finances for the advertisement of Colombian coffee, it also brought electricity to the coffee growing communities and financed the construction of roads, schools, hospitals, and other projects that benefited Colombia’s *caficultura*. In the 20th century, the growth of cities and the transportation system correlated with the expansion of the coffee industry. The revenue of the coffee industry funded the majority of this development.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coffee migrated from the northeastern department of Santander and to the western departments of modern Caldas, Risaralda,

¹³Ibid., 21.

and Quindio. In the West, the expansion of coffee contributed to the importance of many cities. Before the construction of the Panama Canal, this region, enclosed in the Western and Central Cordilleras, was located far from the Magdalena River or other navigable ways that would have provided it with an outlet to export coffee. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 altered the hierarchy of exporting channels in Colombia. The Magdalena River, with Barranquilla as its main port on the Caribbean coast, eventually lost its position as the key connection to the coffee zones. The Panama Canal opened up opportunities for the Pacific port of Buenaventura, and thus this port city became the principal exporter of coffee in Colombia (figure 7). Cali, located between Buenaventura and the coffee areas, became the “transportation node of western Colombia.”¹⁴

The government’s priorities in transportation had been railways at the start of the 20th century, but in the 1930s it shifted to highways. From 1930 to 1950, an average of 850 kilometers of highway were constructed annually, and by 1950 a total of 21,000 kilometers integrated the different regions of Colombia. Much of the modernization of the country during these twenty years was financed by a coffee stimulus.¹⁵ The highways provided a connection between regions that had developed without much contact with each other.

Historically, Colombia’s topography naturally fragmented the country, which formed distinct regional and cultural characteristics. Under Spanish rule spatial and political differences were formed between the western and eastern populations. Cultural and ethnic diversity also accompanied the different economic and political patterns of the regions. During and after the colonial period, an indigenous-mestizo agricultural

¹⁴ Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 272.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

population dominated eastern Colombia, while the populations of the Caribbean and western coasts, which engaged in gold mining and the African slave trade, developed with strong African influences.¹⁶ The coffee industry, which funded much of the transportation progress, helped connect the interior of the country to its coastal regions. Coffee as a commodity connected the regions of Colombia economically, and in 1927 the regions were brought even closer together with the creation of the FNC.

The formation of the FNC integrated the diverse cultural regions of Colombia. Connected by the common goal of increasing the benefits of the coffee grower, the members of the FNC engaged in a politically democratic organization. The Federacion is made up of 356 municipal committees and 15 committees in each department. The members of each municipal committee are assigned a position on the committee through a voting process that occurs every four years. The coffee growers who possess a *cedula cafetera*¹⁷ elect the municipal committee in their respective municipalities as well as the department's committee. Each municipal committee determines the specific needs of their communities and develops a program to meet them, which is then implemented by the department's committee located in the capital of each department. FNC departmental committees exist in each department that contributes at least 2% of the total national production of coffee.¹⁸ If a coffee-growing municipality exists in a department that does not meet this requirement, the coffee growers in that region can reach assistance at the next closest departmental committee.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷ The document that identifies a coffee grower as a member of the FNC

¹⁸ Mauricio Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 99.

The next level of the FNC above the departmental committees is the *Congreso Nacional de Cafeteros*. From each departmental committee the coffee growers elect six members to represent the department at the national coffee congress. The FNC congress meets once a year and is in charge of electing members to the *Comite Directivo* and the *Comite Nacional de Cafeteros* as well as the president of the FNC. The *Comite Directivo*, made up of representatives from each departmental committee and the president of the FNC, is in charge of dealing with the administrative and logistical aspects of the institution. On the other hand, the *Comite Nacional de Cafeteros* is in charge of administrating the *Fondo Nacional del Café*. A member of each departmental committee and four representatives of the national government – the ministries of housing, agriculture and rural development, exterior commerce and the director of the National Department of Planning – constitute the *Comite Nacional de Cafeteros*.¹⁹ The *Comite Nacional de Cafeteros* demonstrates the importance of coffee to the political and economic development of the country. The presence of the state in the affairs of the FNC illustrates the dynamic relationship between the coffee industry and the state. The strength of the FNC in Colombia is also visible in the fact that in 1946 Mariano Ospina Perez, who served as director of the FNC from 1930-1934, was elected to the presidency of the Republic of Colombia and served until 1950.

The FNC has also had moments when its legitimacy was superior to that of the State. Based on the number of voter turnout, the FNC has historically had more voters participate in the FNC elections than the government's presidential and congressional elections. In the 2002 FNC elections, which occurred during a price crisis that led to an

¹⁹ Ibid., 101.

intense debate regarding the future of the coffee industry, 59% of all coffee growers holding a *cedula cafetera* voted. More impressively, the 2006 FNC elections witnessed the election of 4,452 municipal and departmental representatives, with 64.6% of voter turnout.²⁰ These figures and the percentage of eligible voters who participated in the elections of government officials highlights the legitimacy of the FNC compared to that of the state. The democratic and participatory bond between the coffee growers and its institution has allowed the FNC to negotiate with local, regional, and even international communities, thus assuming some of the state's responsibilities.

Many services that in most modern countries would be supplied by the State have been provided by the FNC. From 1965 to 2006, the FNC administered and maintained a variety of social and infrastructural projects in the coffee growing regions. These projects ranged from the construction of aqueducts to the electrification of homes. A total of 11,244 aqueducts were built in the 40-year period; 256,067 homes acquired electricity; 17,547 kilometers of road were constructed and 147,954 kilometers were repaired and improved; a total of 444 hospitals and clinics were erected; 3,383 pedestrian bridges and 1,911 vehicle bridges were raised; and in the education sector, the FNC built 18,845 classrooms, 5,522 edifices for teacher housing, and 17,978 restrooms.²¹ These projects benefited all coffee growers and neighboring farmers, not just those registered with the FNC.

Due to the importance of the coffee industry to Colombia's economy one would expect the state to fund and administer the research necessary to develop new technologies that would improve the productivity of the coffee grower, but that is not the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 103.

case. Instead, the FNC uses part of the *Fondo Nacional del Café* to maintain and develop Cenicafé (Centro Nacional de Investigaciones de Café), a center of investigation. Cenicafé employs around 60 researchers, of which 25% hold a doctorate or post-doctorate degree in a variety of fields that include Chemistry, Industrial Chemistry, Biology, Biology of Sustainability, Agronomy, Environmental Studies, and many others that deal with the production of coffee.²² Since its creation in 1938, the center's mission has been to generate appropriate, competitive, and sustainable technologies that could raise the welfare of Colombia's *caficultores*²³. One of the most notable accomplishments of Cenicafé has been the development of a strand of coffee known originally as Colombia but which evolved into the variety now referred to as Castillo. The Castillo variety is resistant to the *roya*, or Coffee Rust plague, which wiped out large portions of Brazil's crop in 1970, but was mostly prevented from developing in Colombia. This was a memorable campaign carried out by the FNC to eliminate the parasitical fungus because it not only affected those directly connected to the coffee industry, but the collective memory of an entire nation. The word *roya* was added to the colloquial language of Colombians as a synonym expressing anything negative that could occur. It was common to hear an individual say "*le llevo la roya*"²⁴ to describe the unfortunate situation of someone else.²⁵ These campaigns administered by the FNC to combat circumstances threatening the coffee industry have had an impact not just on the coffee population but also the entire country.

²² Ibid., 105.

²³ Those belonging to the *caficultura*, or "coffee culture."

²⁴ Literally translated to "the roya is upon him"

²⁵ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 110.

A more recent accomplishment of Cenicafé was the reduction of the plague known as *la broca*, also identified as the coffee berry borer. In the 1990s, the *broca* had infested 16% of Colombia's coffee, but by 2006 the plague had diminished to 1.65%.²⁶ This achievement, however, would not have been possible without the *Servicio de Extensión*.

A key component of the FNC is its branch of *extensionistas*, who are in charge of providing the coffee growers with technical and technological assistance. Created in 1959, the *Servicio de Extensión* has contributed to the growth of the coffee grower and his community through a variety of community-building projects. One of the most influential *extensionistas* in the history of the program has been Professor Yarumo.

Juan Valdez' Counterpart

Introduced to the public in 1980, Professor Yarumo was designed to supply the coffee growers with messages dealing with technical assistance, environmental conservation, and community development. Originally, many suggested using Juan Valdez to serve as a link between the institution and the coffee growers. The FNC concluded, however, that Juan Valdez's role was designed to appeal to an international audience and the persona of Professor Yarumo was created instead. He too is a fictional personage, but his responsibilities are different. Yarumo dresses like the rest of the *extensionistas*; he wears jeans, a yellow polo, and a blue cap (figure 2).

²⁶ Ibid., 105-106.



Figure 2. Taken from Mauricio Reina et al., *Juan Valdez: La Estrategia Detras de la Marca* (Bogota: Ediciones B, 2007), 109.

Yarumo's duties have only concerned Colombia's coffee growing population; he has traveled more than 120,000 kilometers and visited at least 200 municipalities in the coffee growing regions of Colombia.²⁷ For his achievements and pedagogic originality, Professor Yarumo and the rest of the *extensionista* program have been awarded the United Nations Prize for its contribution to the "Image of the Colombian Environment", the Simon Bolivar Prize for "The Best Director of an Educational Cultural Program", and many others.²⁸

An important aspect of the Yarumo and *extensionista* campaign has been its methods of reaching the coffee communities. Composed of more than 500,000 families, the coffee growing community is large enough that not all *extensionistas* can reach and serve their needs. Various techniques such as printed media, the radio, and the big screen

²⁷ Ibid., 109.

²⁸ Ibid.

have been utilized to provide the coffee growers with support. More importantly, these mediums have helped Colombians imagine themselves as part of a coffee growing tradition.

Benedict Anderson argues that print-languages “laid the bases for national consciousness” because they “created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernacular.”²⁹ In other words, print-languages standardized the meaning of a country’s specific language, thus allowing its inhabitants to communicate and understand each other. The FNC’s *Revista Cafetera*, a magazine printed several times a year that evaluates the latest news in the coffee industry, has contributed to the development of a singular coffee language among the different regions of Colombia. In the process, those who have read the magazine have become aware of their connection to the thousands of others who are in their particular “language-field.”³⁰

Aside from the *Revista Cafetera*, the FNC has engaged in a variety of print media methods to deliver information to the coffee grower. The *historietas del profesor Yarumo* were educational comic strips that were distributed to coffee growing families and schools. The *historietas*, through their comical and astounding adventures, tried to teach the youth about the different aspects of the coffee industry. With 106 editions, and over 100,000 exemplary adventures, the *historietas del profesor Yarumo* have helped shape a community.³¹

While the print methods have had substantial impact, Latin America, especially rural Latin America, has developed its sense of nation through other mediums. In John

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 109.

Mraz's study of Mexican identity, he concludes that the construction of Mexican identity has been largely carried out through modern visual culture.³² This theory can also be applied to Colombia. Like Mexico, Colombia's literacy rate in rural areas has been fairly low. For this reason, much of the FNC's attempts to reach coffee farmers have been through visual and aural channels. In 1934, members of the Federation traveled the country with portable projection screens exhibiting a film about the growing of coffee and its benefits. According to the *Revista Cafetera*, in the span of a year the film was shown over 70 times and on one occasion attracted a crowd of 50,000.³³

Another innovative medium that redefined the way coffee growers integrate themselves into the national discourse was the development of rural radio. Since 1965, *Radio Sutatenza* and other local stations located at various *Comites de Cafeteros* have hosted an array of programs whose topics have included technical discussions concerning coffee and traditional and contemporary music. With its intrusive sound waves, radio has reached Colombia's coffee growers and the general public. Because of its invasive characteristic (it penetrates our ears without our consent), radio has forced all societal classes to interact with each other. Besides supporting the technological growth and sustainability of coffee growing communities, the radio and other aforementioned mediums that have been distributed in the countryside, cities, and towns have created an irrevocable bond between coffee growers and, more generally, Colombians. The relationship built around coffee produced a picturesque image that would be exported to the world.

³² John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 2.

³³ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 107.

SECTION II

Juan Valdez as the Picturesque

The Juan Valdez campaign's main targets were and continue to be U.S. consumers, although the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (FNC) has always looked to export its coffee to its European, and most recently, Asian markets as well. The process by which the United States became Colombian coffee's main consumer can be traced back to the 18th century. At that time, tea was the most easily accessible and cheapest beverage on the market. This all changed when the British Empire implemented the Tea Act. As a result, on the night of December 16, 1773, Samuel Adams and a group of colonists stole 342 boxes of tea and threw them into the Boston Harbor.³⁴ This act came to be known as the Boston Tea Party, and fueled the sentiment to reject anything British. Soon after, coffee, supplied by the French and Dutch at a low price, became the preferred drink of the United States.³⁵

Even though it established itself as a market for coffee in the 18th century, the United States did not become its main consumer until World War I. Before WWI, most of the coffee commerce revolved around the ports of Hamburg, The Hague, Antwerp, and Amsterdam. Europe's dominant presence in the industry occurred because Europeans were more willing to pay a better price for higher quality coffee than the United States. The coffee market changed with the start of the war, however, as the ports that held most of the coffee before the war were inaccessible and dangerous to reach. Because of its proximity to Latin America, the United States replaced Europe as the main importer of

³⁴ "December 16, 1773," Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, accessed January 28, 2011, <http://www.bostonteapartyship.com/history.asp>

³⁵ ³⁵ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 137.

Latin American coffee during the armed conflict. In 1914, the United States was importing 743 million pounds of coffee, and 121 million pounds were from Colombia.³⁶

The rise in demand for higher quality coffee changed the coffee culture in the United States as more people were drinking and demanding higher quality coffee. This was a characteristic of U.S. consumers that the Juan Valdez campaign would exploit during its product differentiation process. The differentiation method encouraged consumers to pay a higher price for a higher quality product. Additionally, Prohibition in the United States and World War II reaffirmed the United States' position as the leading consumer of coffee.

Having already established a market in the United States that sought good quality coffee, the FNC looked to establish Colombian coffee as the best in the world. Doing so meant differentiating a commodity based on the way it is grown and handled in Colombia. In the first years of the Juan Valdez campaign, the FNC informed the consumer about the higher quality of Colombian coffee through informational advertising. In this stage of the campaign, the consumer learned about the distinctive quality of the land on which Colombian coffee is grown and the characteristics of the people who grow and pick the coffee. The Juan Valdez campaign, however, was not the first attempt by the FNC to affirm Colombian coffee's place in the coffee industry.

Soon after the founding of the FNC in 1927, Colombian coffee growers were already developing ways to promote Colombian coffee in the United States. The initial attempt to differentiate 100% Colombian coffee was made in 1930 through the opening of the FNC office in New York City and the launching of the brand name Condor. Later

³⁶ Ibid., 138.

on, the New York FNC office would become heavily involved in the designing and broadcasting of the Juan Valdez advertisements. The Condor brand was short-lived due to low funding, but it provided the FNC with its first experience in the marketing and communications spheres.

After analyzing their previous advertising operation, the Federacion decided to launch a more aggressive campaign in 1934. This time, the FNC invested heavily in developing an educational and promotional campaign that would use written, radio and video mediums. Brochures and newsletters targeting housewives were printed; movies were filmed showing the manual labor behind the Colombian coffee industry; and Colombian music and narratives were broadcasted across the airwaves.³⁷ These attempts by the FNC to establish Colombian coffee as the best in the world were not very successful, but they did lay the infrastructure necessary to produce and promote a high quality product:

The *affirmation strategy's* achievements in the internal scope are undeniable. During this period Colombian *caficultura* consolidated the groundwork for the generation and transference of technology, in order to produce a high-quality product, and created a sophisticated network for its internal marketing. Elements that have given the industry great competitiveness were founded during this period: the investigation, the extension service, the communication mechanisms with the *cafeteros* [coffee growers], the quality control of the product being exported, and the creation of the cooperatives and warehouses.³⁸

These institutional developments, which will be expanded upon in a later section, were all necessary in backing up an aggressive advertisement campaign like Juan Valdez. The creation of a complex internal infrastructure would have been ineffective if the FNC had not established a network of offices in the United States and Europe. These offices were

³⁷ Ibid., 139-140.

³⁸ Ibid., 146.

in charge of gathering information about the consumer market in which they were located and to design publicity announcements based on that information.³⁹ Working together with the advertising agency Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), the New York City FNC office contributed to the design of the Juan Valdez campaign.

The development of the internal infrastructure that produced high-quality coffee set the stage for the Juan Valdez campaign. By 1959, Colombian coffee had gained recognition as a premium product within Colombia, but the rest of the world did not recognize it as such; in the minds of most consumers, Brazil held the position as producer of the best coffee in the world. For this reason, and because the coffee industry saw yet another drop in the world price for its product, the FNC designed and set in motion a new cycle known as the *differentiation strategy*.⁴⁰

The differentiation strategy, which began in 1959 and ended in 2001, was designed to raise awareness around the world about the high quality of Colombian coffee. In turn, this would raise the price of Colombian coffee and increase the *caficultor's* income and standard of living.⁴¹ Under the 100% Colombian coffee banner, the image of Juan Valdez would be in charge of positioning Colombian coffee as a superior product. The FNC optimized this project through a *pull* and *push* strategy. The FNC sought to *pull* and increase the consumer's demand for Colombian coffee, and to *push* the roasting houses to use the product.⁴² All this pulling and pushing would be done by the Juan Valdez brand.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁴¹ Ibid., 151.

⁴² Ibid., 151-152.

Juan Valdez Arrives

When the infrastructure was ready to handle and back up a new aggressive advertising campaign, the FNC hired the advertising agency and marketing experts Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) to work with the New York City FNC office in designing the marketing tool that would carry out the Federation's objectives. The name for this marketing tool that would represent Colombian coffee abroad was Juan Valdez. Everything about the image had to satisfy the consumer, including the name. The name Juan Valdez was chosen because it had a Latin American ring that was easily remembered and easily pronounced by non-Spanish speakers.⁴³ Besides the name, the Federation had to account for many other factors that dealt with the establishment of a brand.

According to the authors of *Juan Valdez: la estrategia detras de la marca*, a brand is a complex symbol that represents certain attributes, like good quality and prestige, which are translated into benefits.⁴⁴ In the case of Colombian coffee, these benefits are associated with its high quality and its guaranteed premium standard. Aside from its attributes, a brand could also generate emotions. In order for a consumer to build an emotional attachment to a brand, the brand needs to maintain a consistent quality and remain loyal to its philosophy. The following quote by former FNC director Jorge Cardenas outlines Juan Valdez' philosophy.

Juan is a man of humble origins, occupation and attitude, but his status is enhanced by his behavior. He is a dedicated expert, who produces the richest coffee in the world through hard work, dedication and the knowledge and

⁴³ "Juan Valdez, más que una campaña publicitaria", Marca registrada por la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, Accessed October 20, 2010, <http://www.juanvaldezcafe.com/procafecol/noticias/noticia43.asp>

⁴⁴ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 154.

tradition accumulated by generations (...). Due to this, Juan has become famous, an icon, a symbol of the quality of Colombian coffee, and of the richness of the land and its inheritance. Despite his fame, Juan does not see himself as a celebrity, does not want to be the center of attention, and does not seek riches or power. That is not the reason why he works so hard to produce his coffee.⁴⁵

This traditional image was redefined in the 1990s when advertisements showed Juan Valdez taking part in activities that did not relate to coffee growing, but he was able to maintain a positive emotional connection with the consumer because the quality of coffee he promised did not falter. While these key elements behind the development of a brand are fundamental for maintaining customer loyalty, the image had to also conform to the expectations of the viewer.

These expectations, based on the quality of the product promised and stereotypes, which will be analyzed in a later section, led DDB and the FNC to create a picturesque image of the Colombian peasant, the Colombian coffee industry, and Colombia. The picturesque is easily interchangeable with Edward Said's definition of Orientalism. Referred to as "Europe's collective daydream of the Orient", Orientalism can be applied to Latin America. The natural world, presented by the Juan Valdez commercials, represents an image of Colombia that the collective fantasy of the curious desires of American viewers has acquired. The way Juan Valdez is shown walking through his coffee fields is the picturesque image that many American consumers expected and desired to see. John Mraz, author of *Looking for Mexico*, outlines the problems with the picturesque:

The picturesque is first of all a political problem, because it is a strategy by which people whose skins are a bit darker are made to appear a little less human; those who take the pictures, and see them published, are somehow more human than those who are in them... The second problem with the picturesque is that it favors

⁴⁵ Ibid., 158.

nature over history, essentialism over action. People are portrayed as products of nature, passive and quiescent, incapable of acting in the world, or simply irrelevant. Hence, better a nostalgia for a past that never existed than efforts to construct a future. Third, the folkloric presents an aesthetic problem for creators, in that it offers the easy way out; great artists know that it is the difficult tasks that will bring out the best in them, and they reject the picturesque as facile.⁴⁶

While Mraz is referring to the way Mexican *campesinos* (peasants) were photographed, these ideas can also be applied to the way Juan Valdez was represented in his advertisements.

In one particular commercial from the 1980s, a picturesque image of the growth of coffee is depicted. At the forefront the germination of a single coffee bean is presented, while a shot of the Andes Mountains completes the picture. American actor Norman Rose narrates the development of the bean in English, using a would-be stereotypical Latin American accent.

One can grow coffee in many countries, but it is special when it grows in Colombia, for it grows in our high mountains in rich volcanic soil through warm sunny days and soft moist nights. No coffee grows like the 100% Colombian that is hand-picked by men such as Juan Valdez.⁴⁷

The last image the viewer is shown is of Juan Valdez immersed in deep, luscious coffee surrounded by nature. Even though Colombia's geography is ideal for the growth of coffee, its tropical and mountainous aspects are romanticized. The 3.3 million hectares that make up the Colombian coffee growing region provide an easy and exotic image for filmmakers and photographers to capture.⁴⁸ The Colombian landscape provided the filmmakers of this advertisement a fascinating image of the region, but the way it was

⁴⁶ John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 4.

⁴⁷ *Vintage 80's First Juan Valdez Colombian Coffee Commercial* [Video]. Accessed October 10, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAYyUWJD3GU&feature=related>.

⁴⁸ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 85.

photographed added a picturesque dimension. The viewer encounters the Andes Mountains from above, and the camera angle provides the viewer with a privileged position that creates a picturesque image of the scenery. The observer is placed above the mountains in a literal and metaphorical way. He dominates the mountains and oversees those who dwell there.

Even though the limited geographical description in the video of the Colombian coffee region is romanticized, it does possess some accuracy. Since Colombia is closer to the equator than the main exporter of coffee in the world – Brazil – it can grow coffee at higher altitudes. In many regions of Colombia, coffee is grown at altitudes of up to 5,000 meters above sea level, contributing to the higher acidity in the coffee. This gives Colombian coffee its unique and rich taste that the commercials emphasize.

Geography also contributes to Colombia's ability to have an ample supply of fresh coffee. The majority of the coffee growing zones are characterized by rainy and dry seasons, which allows coffee to be harvested throughout the whole year. The bushes blossom in two separate periods, therefore providing two harvests. The first flowering period lasts from January until March and the second goes from July to September. Therefore, the main harvest occurs between September and December, and a secondary harvest known in the *caficultura* as "de mitaca", takes place between April and June.⁴⁹ Also, the earth, which the narrator of the commercial described as "rich volcanic soil", does indeed derive its rich organic attributes from volcanic ash.⁵⁰ The narrator, however, highlights only the most exotic aspects of Colombia's coffee-growing regions. Part of the picturesque aspect of the Juan Valdez advertising campaign is not just what is filmed

⁴⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

and photographed, but how these actions are executed. The narration, which is said in an uncomfortably passionate way, contributes to the nostalgic aspect of the picturesque. Above all, though, the modesty and tranquility observed in the commercials mask the turbulent reality in Colombia during the second half of the 20th century.

Part of the campaign's goal abroad was to portray a positive image of Colombia and the coffee process with Juan Valdez as its spokesperson. This project would benefit the Colombian *cafetero* since a larger return for Colombian coffee growers would mean a higher quality of life, but the campaign would also promote other domestic industries like tourism. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the commercials do not fully capture the internal social, economic, and political developments occurring in Colombia during the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

The image of Juan Valdez also contains a picturesque element. When the image was presented to the *Comite Nacional de Cafeteros* (National Committee of Coffee Growers) and the Colombian government in 1959, it received negative reactions. A national debate ensued concerning the image of Juan Valdez; many rejected the image because they did not want an "underdeveloped man" who still wore *alpargates* (the sandals worn by Juan Valdez that were typically worn by peasants in the past) and whose main source of transportation was the mule, representing Colombia.⁵¹ While the critics of the image did not specifically say it, the Juan Valdez campaign was conforming to the picturesque dilemma. Juan Valdez represented the nostalgia for a past that never existed and which could not exist in modern Colombia.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

While the urban landscape of most Latin American countries is dominated by a major city, as in the cases of Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Caracas, or Mexico City, Colombia contains an ensemble of cities. Due to the topography, a more balanced urban growth occurred in Colombia that led to the establishment of large regional capitals, rather than a single megalopolis. During the course of the 20th century, Colombia went from being a predominantly rural country to a “nation of cities.”⁵² The campaign, however, focuses on the rural landscape of Colombia and the simple peasant who works it. Also, the construction of major highways in the 1930s, funded mostly by the coffee industry, led to the replacement of the mule by the automobile. By 1950, 21,000 kilometers of highway had been laid down and by 1990 the highways carried 80 percent of all freight.⁵³ The development of commercial aviation also contributed to the extinction of the mule as a viable source of transportation. By the time the Juan Valdez campaign was launched in 1959, the image of a mule transporting coffee was something of a distant past; in other words, the airplane had replaced the mule.

The tranquil state of nature presented by the Juan Valdez campaign illuminates a nostalgic attitude for an inaccessible imaginary past, but also conceals the violence shaping the countryside. The inaccuracies of the Juan Valdez image, though, are easily detectable by many Colombians. A promising answer as to why Colombians have added the Madison Avenue-born Juan Valdez to their collective memory is provided by Marco Palacios. His following analysis of a popular soap opera in the 1990s could provide some insight:

⁵² Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 302.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 273.

Consider, for example, the influence of North American popular culture in the soap operas of the last ten or fifteen years and in the incipient Colombian film industry. In the early 1990s the official acts of the Congress and of the president were scheduled so as not to conflict with a soap opera that had the highest ratings: *Café con aroma de mujer* (*Coffee with the Scent of Woman*). The story revolved around a powerful coffee-growing family from Manizales during the bonanza of the 1970s. It offered a conventional miscellany of fraud in the export of coffee, boldness in social climbing, recycled virginites, and faked maternities. The narrative, unlike the shriveled style customary in this genre, was dominated by a cynical and twisted point of view. But the program also was escapist. The most worrisome realities confronted by Colombian families – the tribulations of extortion, kidnapping, and common criminality – appeared nowhere in the program.⁵⁴

In a manner echoing the escapism of *Café con aroma de mujer*, Colombians almost certainly adopted the picturesque image provided by Juan Valdez to escape the realities taking place in Colombia.

Violence in the Countryside

Marco Palacios, co-author of *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, states that by the end of the 20th century after so many years plagued with homicides, kidnappings, personal injuries, and forced displacement Colombians felt “unprotected in life and property.”⁵⁵ Palacios describes the political violence as a national process, which was split into four phases. In the first phase of La Violencia, bloodshed occurred due for the most part to political partisanship. It began in the electoral campaigns of 1945-1946 and ended in 1953, with the amnesty and programs of pacification offered by the military government of General Rojas Pinilla.

During Rojas Pinilla’s regime, violence ensued within the countryside. The Communist Party, considered an illegal association at the time, sought to organize a

⁵⁴ Ibid., 344.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 345.

“self-defense” strategy with peasant support in its fight for agrarian issues. The peasant self-defense groups were based in the coffee zone of Cunday, Villarrica, and Icononzo (all located in the department of Tolima). When populist leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was assassinated in 1948, violence erupted. Landowners in the region saw Gaitan’s assassination as an opportunity to eliminate the self-defense peasant groups. Rojas Pinilla’s conservative government collaborated with the landowners by “using colonization programs to ‘sow Conservatives’ around the Communist-dominated zones.”⁵⁶ This process would lead to one of the worst peasant slaughters in Tolima’s history.

In 1954, the guerrillas of veteran agrarian leader Juan de la Cruz Varela were accused of intimidating landowners, collecting taxes from them, and taking over the regions’ coffee sales. In retaliation, the army launched an offensive that included aerial bombardment against the guerrilla group. Many were killed and those who fled developed bitterness towards the government. Myths, representations, and modes of behavior born during this period would be harvested in later phases. The peasant refugees became future nuclei of the Communist-linked Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC).⁵⁷

The second phase of La Violencia lasted from 1954 to 1964, and was due in part to partisan and factional networks. But the majority of the fighting was limited to the coffee slopes of the Central and Western Cordilleras and interfered with the supply of labor on coffee farms and with coffee and land markets. The authors of *Colombia:*

⁵⁶ Ibid., 323.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Fragmented Land, Divided Society describe the social conditions in the coffee growing regions during the second phase of La Violencia.

The violence sparked by conflicts over land was legitimated by local or regional political intermediaries. It also was symptomatic of the institutional weakness of the national state... This was the legacy of coffee society in the middle of the twentieth century: a clearly delineated social stratification within the middle sectors, distance from the central state, and ferocious conflict among local political networks. Beyond this, property rights were fragile, as in the shadow of partisan violence local political bosses manipulated farmers into selling land by using threats of extortion. It was, as Carlos Miguez Ortiz said in his study of the Quindio, violence as a business.

The labor and land disputes demonstrate the reality in the coffee belt that the Juan Valdez images mask. No armed bands stealing coffee or subjugating landowners to extortion are evident in the Juan Valdez commercials. However, a violent atmosphere surrounded the cultivation of coffee during this time.

Safford and Palacios also make the argument that "coffee cultivation is compatible with civil wars that are prolonged and of low intensity." Due to the predetermined seasonal harvests of Colombian coffee mentioned earlier, armed bands can select when to extort landowners and infiltrate the coffee industry. Also, since coffee bushes constantly produce coffee, they continue to blossom whether or not they are looked after. A farm's loss of productivity due to the owner's inability to maintain his coffee trees or plant new ones would only be noticed after a few years.

In the third phase, which started at the beginning of the 1960s and lasted until the end of the 1980s, the influence of the Cuban Revolution gave rise to leftist guerrilla groups like the FARC and ELN. During the third phase, the United States' Cold War agenda recreated itself in Colombia. After World War II, the United States supported international trade agreements for commodities like aluminum, cocoa, and coffee.

Through these agreements, the United States was applying its Cold War politics through a commercial medium. The United States hoped that by guaranteeing Latin America a constant market, it would help quell the communist threat.

The fourth phase of La Violencia began toward the end of the 1980s and continues through today, even though in recent years it has been significantly pacified. The fourth phase of the violent era is characterized by a “fluid combination of theaters of insurreccional war of low intensity and mafia wars.”⁵⁸ As an advertising campaign, this is not the image that the FNC wanted to promote of Colombia or of the Colombian *caficultura*.

The inaccuracies of the Juan Valdez image were easily detectable by many Colombians. The campaign gathered criticism when it was first presented to the public because of its false representations of Colombia. Also, the limited picturesque details of the Colombian *caficultura* outlined by Juan Valdez conceal the realities experienced by actual coffee growers. In order to satisfy the U.S. consumer’s expectations of a Latin American product, the FNC provided Juan Valdez, a figure based off of history and stereotypes. Keeping this context in mind, we can now examine the question of the image’s “authenticity.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 347.

SECTION III

Authenticity and the Marketing of Juan Valdez

Throughout its lifetime, the Juan Valdez marketing campaign has experienced moments of setbacks and challenges. Much of the story behind the image developed as a reaction to the different generational consumer demands of the last 50 years. In response to changing consumers' expectations, the FNC has had to redefine the Juan Valdez campaign. Over its 52 years and most recently, the Juan Valdez image has been shaped into a narrative about an everyday Colombian *cafetero*. While the actual image of Juan Valdez as a Colombian *arriero* has not changed since its inception, the individual behind the persona as well as the image's marketing goals have adjusted according to the market's demands. Within this basic framework, Juan Valdez's multiple aspects of reality were combined with a nostalgic narrative. In looking at the question of its authenticity, the image can demonstrate the way consumers in the United States and in Colombia imagine their past.

The first person to put on the Juan Valdez outfit, José Duval, was a Cuban actor living in New York. In 1969, after ten years of portraying Juan Valdez, Colombian actor Carlos Sanchez replaced José Duval. Carlos Sanchez, unlike José Duval, was Colombian, but he also did not have a background in the coffee industry. He was, however, immersed in Colombia's coffee culture. In 2006, Carlos Sanchez announced his retirement as the face of Juan Valdez, and almost immediately a campaign to find the new Juan Valdez began. After being selected from an extensive pool of candidates that ranged from actors to ordinary *cafeteros*, Carlos Castañeda became the third person to

wear the Juan Valdez outfit. This time, the Federation chose someone who picked coffee for a living.

Before becoming the face of Juan Valdez, the 38-year-old Carlos Castañeda lived, like the majority of Colombian *cafeteros*, on a small farm in rural Colombia. A third-generation coffee grower, Castañeda purchased the seven-acre farm in the village of Andes, where he was born, by selling a Renault 12 that he won in a raffle. Before flying all over the world to showcase Colombian coffee, the new Juan Valdez had never left his local region. Occasionally he would leave the farm and ride down on a Jeep taxi to the village market. Since taking over Sanchez' duties as Juan Valdez, Castañeda relinquished his farm obligations to his wife and teenage children. Nevertheless, where and when he can, he still "hand-picks his beans."⁵⁹

Juan Valdez: An Outstanding Marketing Tool

Castañeda's background as a typical Colombian coffee-grower was an important factor when the FNC had to decide who would be the face of the new Juan Valdez. The FNC recognized that the Juan Valdez campaign's trend towards a more authentic story dealt with an ever-growing demand in today's society for authenticity. Fred Cook's article, which appeared in *The Public Relations Strategist*, evaluates the nature of the consumer that marketing firms need to consider when developing an advertising campaign.

We're at the start of an era where people want authentic stories about authentic people. PR professionals are the storytellers. It's our job to help find the

⁵⁹ Matthew Fishbane, "Being Juan Valdez", *Salon Media Group*, October 16, 2007. http://www.salon.com/life/food/eat_drink/2007/10/16/juan_valdez/index.html (Accessed October 10, 2010).

authenticity at the core of our companies and clients, and to tell those stories to the world in words that will truly be heard.⁶⁰

Cook highlights the atmosphere in which the FNC and the Juan Valdez marketing image operates. In the 1980s and 1990s when Carlos Sanchez was still playing Juan Valdez, the U.S. consumer radically changed from that of previous years. Due to the economic boom of the early 1980s, U.S. consumers saw their purchasing power and standards increase. While the previous generation of consumers might have wanted to learn about what made Colombian coffee the best in the world, the new type of consumer no longer wished to know this information; this consumer only cared about enjoying the best available goods and services. The new emerging consumer – born in the 1960s – sought the best cars, clothing, and coffee. Furthermore, the FNC encountered a new challenge: studies made during the 1980s showed that the public's new generation of professionals did not consume much coffee, especially since fewer individuals were having breakfast.⁶¹

These elements influenced the context in which the search for a new individual to represent Juan Valdez operated. One of the main topics that surfaced with the 2006 election of Carlos Castañeda had also been previously witnessed and dealt with during Sanchez's and Duval's eras: Juan Valdez's authenticity. While authenticity could generally be defined in terms of genuineness or reliability, there exist several layers when it comes to defining it in the marketing and branding sphere. According to brand specialists Gilmore and Pine, brand authenticity can be broken down into five different categories: natural authenticity, original authenticity, exceptional authenticity, referential

⁶⁰ Fred Cook, "It's a Small World After All: Multiculturalism, Authenticity, Connectedness Among Trends to Match in Next 50 Years", *The Public Relations Strategist*, 13(1), 33.

⁶¹ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 162.

authenticity, and influential authenticity. Gilmore and Pine conclude that natural authenticity refers to the natural and untouched state of the commodity; a good is perceived to have original authenticity if it is the first of its kind in design and execution; people tend to recognize a product to have exceptional authenticity if it is remarkably and individually carried out by someone showing human care; referential authenticity deals with the historical or reminiscential connection to the brand; and one tends to identify a brand as influentially authentic if it “exerts influence on other entities, calling human beings to a higher goal and providing a foretaste of a better way.”⁶²

Based on existing research in the interdisciplinary marketing and branding literature, the FNC and DDB weighed Juan Valdez’s authenticity. Juan-Carlos Molleda concludes that the Juan Valdez story “permeates authenticity” according to his breakdown of the perceived definitions of authenticity.⁶³ According to Molleda the image invokes

natural authenticity in the fact that coffee is a commodity that exists in a natural state, *original* authenticity as Colombia being the first country to stamp country-of-origin to a world commodity, and *exceptional* authenticity as Colombian coffee’s production is based on human care since the moment the beans are handpicked until they are delivered to the world market by an authentic coffee grower functioning as spokesperson or international icon. The campaign also conveys *referential* authenticity, in which the background and experience of this idyllic coffee grower is a human story focused on shared memories and longings of the Colombian community of coffee growers and worldwide coffee consumers, and conveys *influential* authenticity in that the campaign calls for the preservation of the coffee culture of Colombia.⁶⁴

⁶² J.H. Gilmore & B.J. Pine, Jr. *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*, Boston, MA; Harvard Business School Press, 2007, 49-50.

⁶³ Molleda, Juan-Carlos, and Marilyn S. Roberts. “Colombia’s Juan Valdez Campaign: Brand Revitalization through ‘Authenticity’ and ‘Glocal’ Strategic Communications”, 169.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Molleda outlines the ways in which the Juan Valdez campaign demonstrates authenticity, but he is more or less referring to the authenticity of Castañeda's representation of Juan Valdez. He does not analyze the ways the personage has been represented and shaped by different men. Even though Molleda makes a good argument for the authenticity of Juan Valdez, he fails to recognize that the image is a product of the real and imagined creating a façade that conceals Colombia's reality. On the one hand, one can only imagine Juan Valdez as a simple, hard-working peasant. Those consuming his product could never picture him doing anything else but picking coffee; individuals who have seen his commercials could never see Juan Valdez taking up arms and joining any of the revolutionary groups that existed in the countryside and recruited peasants like those who Juan Valdez represents. The narrative that defines the Juan Valdez image has not changed much throughout its lifetime, but there have been instances in which new elements were added and eliminated. These changes have marked the Juan Valdez campaign and its authenticity.

The constant change of consumer preferences posed challenges for the FNC and Juan Valdez. In its attempt to accommodate and confront these changes, Juan Valdez had to redefine his authenticity. The original look for Juan Valdez as a humble, proud, committed, and persevering Colombian peasant has not changed since its inception. Just like the Duval Juan Valdez of 1959, the one portrayed by Carlos Castañeda still wears the *sombrero aguadeño* (straw hat), which is the style of hat typically worn in the coffee-growing regions of Colombia and symbolizes its peasant origin; the bag he carries, which stores his personal documents and other valuables, is referred to as a *carriel*; the leather apron worn by the arriero in his everyday labors is identified as *tapapinche* because it

protects the arriero's pants and crotch area; the sandals Juan wears are called *alpargatas* and are made of fique – a natural fiber obtained from the furcrae plant; the poncho is also fundamental for the arriero, for he uses it to warm himself in higher elevations and to cover the mule's eyes when being loaded (this helps keep the mule from moving); finally, without his mule, the arriero would not exist. The mule was chosen because it possesses the strength and versatility needed to transport coffee and goods in the mountainous regions of Colombia. All of these elements were essential to the original depiction of Juan Valdez, and continue to be a significant part of his identity.

Juan Valdez's identity alludes to the culture and inheritance Colombian coffee growers have developed throughout their history. The unique way he dresses and carries out his duty as an *arriero* demonstrates the interaction Colombian coffee growers have had with their environment. Just as the coffee industry and its members evolved to meet their contemporary challenges, Juan Valdez has also progressed to meet his consumers' demands. The Juan Valdez image known to the 1960s and contemporary viewers delivers an image of supposed authenticity by communicating aspects of the Colombian *caficultura* in a traditional *arriero* outfit. While there exist *arrieros* all over the world, Juan Valdez is representative of the traditional Colombian *arrieria* and *caficultura*.

After deciding that the representative of Colombian coffee would be an *arriero* named Juan Valdez who would be dressed in a traditional outfit, the FNC decided their next step would be to implement its marketing mission. The original campaign sought through instructive advertisements and videos to educate the consumer in the ways that Colombian coffee was unique and superior to others. This educational phase began in 1960 and ended in the mid-1980s when the FNC and Juan Valdez adopted a different

way to approach the new generation of consumers. In its first phase, Juan Valdez informed the public how coffee is planted and grown in Colombia, the agroclimatic conditions of the region, the environmental precautions taken in the industry, and even how to prepare a cup of coffee. This phase of the Juan Valdez campaign saw its educational message reach the big screen. In 1984, the FNC decided to produce an educational film titled *Pride of a Nation*, in which the Federation tried to convey the message that Colombian coffee is as rich as the history of coffee in Colombia.⁶⁵ The original film was geared towards an American consumer; British actor Peter Ustinov narrated the process the coffee bean made from sowing to exportation. Subsequently, the film was translated to Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Swedish, Ukrainian, Chinese, and Norwegian. Though the FNC wanted to reach all sorts of consumers, most of the publicity for the film was done in the United States. *Pride of a Nation* was circulated via cable and diverse television programs; the film was also shown in schools.

Transformations in the Coffee Regions

One of the characteristics that the informational advertisements highlight about Colombian coffee is that men like Juan Valdez handpick the beans. However, the fraction of the coffee-growing population he represents does not produce the majority of Colombian coffee. The distribution of labor and production in the coffee-growing regions was and continues to be unevenly balanced. The small coffee growing farms began to appear in the late 19th century, but consolidated themselves in the early 20th century with the collapse of many *haciendas*, or large landed estates.

⁶⁵ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 168.

Between the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 20th century, Colombia witnessed an increase in coffee production and exports due to the rise in the international price for coffee. During this period, Colombia transitioned from annually producing 60,000 sacks of coffee – each coffee sack weighing 60 kilos – to 600,000 sacks per year.⁶⁶ In less than fifty years, the large *haciendas* of the Santander and Cundinamarca departments witnessed an increase in their productivity by 1000%. The *haciendas* in this northeastern region of Colombia were the most affected by the rise in the international price of coffee since their owners had access to international banks and loaning institutions, which funded the various projects that helped increase production.

The end of the 19th century, however, brought to a close the era of the large *haciendas*. The drastic fall of the international coffee price at the turn of the century undermined the profitability the large *haciendas* had gained in the second half of the 19th century. Furthermore, the *Guerra de los Mil Dias* (Thousand Days War), which began in 1899 and ended in 1902, hindered the maintenance of the coffee fields in the *haciendas*. The economic situation, compounded by the civil war, prohibited the *hacienda* owners from paying back the loans they acquired in the previous decades. The coffee growing *haciendas* in the departments of Santander and Norte de Santander entered dire circumstances, and those located in Cundinamarca and Antioquia stalled in their production of coffee.⁶⁷

The *hacienda* crisis in the beginning of the 20th century led to one of the most important changes in Colombian coffee history. The fall of the coffee-growing *haciendas* allowed for the rise of the small farm and the small coffee producer; this

⁶⁶ Ibid., 79.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

change produced the typical small coffee grower with whom Juan Valdez is associated. The small coffee farm economy can be traced back to 1875 when in different regions of Santander, Antioquia, and Viejo Caldas – made up of the departments of Caldas, Quindio, and Risaralda – smaller farms began to appear. Internal migration to and colonization of the center and western regions of Colombia, principally the departments of Valle, Caldas, Antioquia, and northern Tolima, solidified the small farm's position as the model for the production of coffee. Due to the collapse of the *hacienda* model, the western region of Colombia, with its smaller parcels of land destined for the production of coffee, jumped to the forefront in the development of the country's coffee growing industry.

Coffee found a responsive audience in the peasants already living on small parcels of land and those moving into them with the flow of migration. The small farmers recognized the attractiveness of coffee production; they could grow coffee alongside their already existing crops. Compared to the traditional agricultural technique of slash and burn where the land was unproductive and useless for some years, coffee production allowed for intense farming without much technical dependability and the continuation of subsistence farming alongside coffee. Coffee prices, however, were still marginally low during this time, but since the farmers were not wholly dependant on coffee, they could maintain their livelihood through subsistence farming. In the early 20th century coffee was spreading to different regions of the country, though Colombia did not contribute a large percentage of coffee to the world market. In 1905, Colombia was only producing 3% of the world supply, while Brazil generated 75%.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ibid., 81.

Many factors helped increase Colombia's coffee contribution to the world market in the twentieth century. Coffee production steadily increased in the first half of the century thanks to Brazil and the United States. In its attempt to increase the international price of coffee, Brazil regulated its supply to the world. In response, many buyers, including the United States, searched for alternative producers who offered coffee at a lower price. Fueled by foreign investment, Colombia's coffee production increased from 1.1 million sacks of coffee in 1915 to an average of 4 million annual sacks in the years between 1935 and 1940. Production continued to expand and in the 1950s Colombia became the second largest producer of coffee in the world, behind Brazil.⁶⁹

As the population of small coffee grower expanded, a *caficultura* was developed that revolved around the peasant life. The small coffee farm, with its parcel of land that measured less than an acre, became the established norm for Colombia's coffee industry. By the time the FNC was outlining the details of the Juan Valdez marketing campaign, the small coffee grower had established himself as the largest percentage of the *caficultor* contingency. It seems almost obvious why Juan Valdez, an image representative of this sector of the industry, was chosen as the spokesperson. At around the same time that the Federation launched its publicity campaign, however, it was also determined to change the makeup of the industry.

Based on the 1932 census, the FNC praised the small coffee farmer for his ability to withstand the world market's challenges. However, the results of a survey conducted by the FNC in the mid-1950s to determine the capacity of the small farmer demonstrated the low productivity of his land. In response, the Federation began to assist and exalt the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

farmer who would break traditional routines and adopt the technological changes needed to contend in the world market. Authors Frank Safford and Marco Palacios conclude that the “heroic small farmer” had become the “villain.”⁷⁰ At the same time that the Federation was trying to come up with an image that represented Colombia’s coffee and *caficultura*, it attempted to alter the system of agricultural production that created Juan Valdez. In order to compete in the world market, the Federation insisted on a coffee farmer who was a good client of the Banco Cafetero (bank of the coffee growers) and who was more entrepreneurial and capitalist. The Federation eliminated many small coffee farmers in the western coffee belt and replaced them with larger, more corporate coffee farms that were highly productive but also highly costly.

The results of this phase are visible in the breakdown of coffee production. In 2006, there existed 513,000 coffee growing families in Colombia of which 55% cultivated less than one hectare of coffee. Even though this group made up the majority of the coffee growing population, it only contributed 8.7% of Colombia’s total coffee production. The next category, those who owned between one and five hectares and formed 40% of Colombia’s *caficultores*, produced 44.6% of Colombia’s coffee. Only 5% of Colombia’s coffee growing farmers owned more than five hectares of coffee growing land, but they supplied 46.7% of Colombia’s coffee. While Juan Valdez is supposed to represent all of Colombia’s coffee growers and all of Colombian coffee, this image obscures the reality that most of the coffee is produced by a technologically-advanced coffee farmer who may not at all resemble the Juan Valdez image. At the same time that Juan Valdez began representing a supposedly authentic image of Colombian

⁷⁰ Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 278.

caficultura, the traditional coffee grower off of which he is based had already begun to disappear. Coffee growers' way of dealing with the land had become more technologically advanced, as well as the way in which they communicated with other farmers and the Federation; the farmer that Juan Valdez represents was becoming far more sophisticated than his image suggests.

Shifts in the Marketing of Colombian Coffee

In the late 1980s and early 90s, however, the image itself also responded to a new wave of consumers by becoming more sophisticated. In 1981, the Federation designed the Juan Valdez logo that acted as the brand-ingredient representation of 100% Colombian coffee. The abstract triangular logo with Juan Valdez, his mule *Conchita*, the Andes Mountains in the foreground, and the phrase "Café de Colombia" was stamped on all products that contained Colombian coffee and guaranteed the consumer that the product they purchased was 100% Colombian coffee and not a mixture of different coffee from various countries. To familiarize the consumer with the logo, the Federation used it in a variety of Juan Valdez commercials. The logo appeared side by side with Juan Valdez, but many times the logo replaced the person altogether.

While the advertisements from the sixties, seventies, and early eighties educated the consumer about Colombian coffee, the majority of commercials after the launch of the logo deal with entertaining and humorous images. Juan Valdez was no longer illustrated picking coffee on his farm or teaching the consumer about what makes Colombian coffee different. Instead, Juan Valdez appeared in elegant and sophisticated situations; he and his mule are pictured flying on an airplane, riding on the back of a limo, or aboard a cruise ship (figure 3).

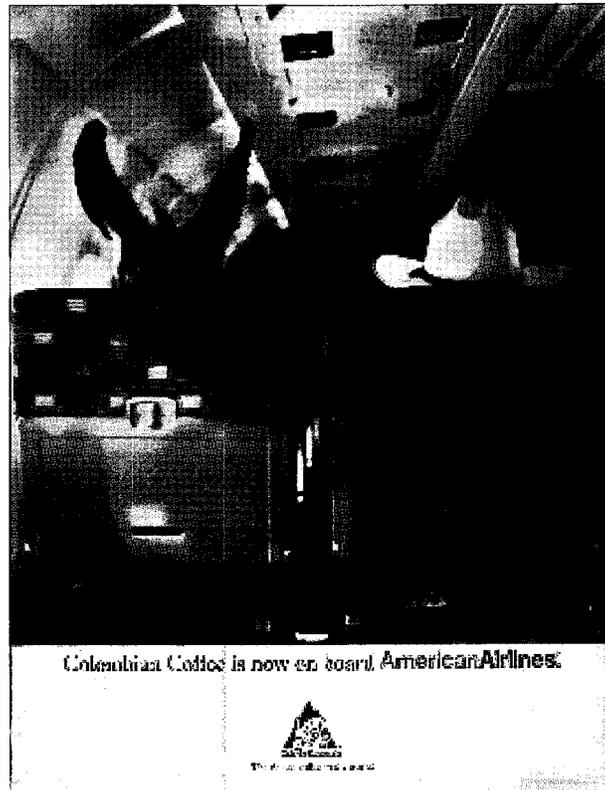


Figure 3. Taken from Mauricio Reina et al., *Juan Valdez: La Estrategia Detras de la Marca* (Bogota: Ediciones B, 2007), 165.

In the 1990s, the Juan Valdez campaign entered a similar phase using the slogan “Grab life by the beans.” This phase of the campaign looked to connect with the youth through nontraditional formats. Juan Valdez tried to make an emotional and referential connection by appearing in advertisements that dealt with emotionally exhilarating activities like sports. During the winter, when coffee is most consumed, Juan Valdez appeared as a sponsor of sporting events like skiing and figure skating. He also sponsored events that were popular amongst housewives, such as tennis’ U.S. Open. The youth’s fascination with extreme sports influenced the campaign’s decision to publish advertisements in magazines like *Rolling Stone* in which the observer witnessed Juan Valdez participating in sports like surfing.

This break from the traditional and essentialist Juan Valdez advertisements of the 1960s and 70s had its criticism. Many believed that taking Juan Valdez out of his original context and placing him in scenarios “associated with buoyant individuals” went against the essence of the character and questioned his “authenticity and the values he promotes.”⁷¹ While the Juan Valdez advertisements of the 1980s and 90s targeted a younger sector of the population, those familiar with the educational advertisements of the 1960s and 1970s viewed the more sophisticated Juan Valdez as less authentic. In their eyes, they could only imagine Juan Valdez picking coffee on his farm and not flying on an airplane or laying out on the beach. Even though the FNC was trying to respond to the changes in consumer preferences, the sophisticated Juan Valdez is a conflicting image for both the campaign and the consumer. By putting Juan Valdez outside of his domain, the Federation needed not only the image to adjust but the consumer as well. As the image moves away from its original state, the consumer questions its authenticity since his expectations of what the image should be are different from the experience. Once Juan Valdez moved away from his element, he was also shifting farther from reality. While the later commercials were comparatively less authentic or further from the reality of the Colombian coffee grower, both phases of the advertisement campaign provided an inauthentic image of the Colombian *caficultor*.

Based on the different interpretations of authenticity, the Juan Valdez marketing campaign does possess traces of authentic characteristics. The outfit Juan Valdez wears alludes to the traditional culture of the coffee grower that began to take shape in the late 19th century. Juan Valdez is supposedly a representative of this culture. Since culture is

⁷¹ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 186.

not static, however, by the time the Juan Valdez marketing campaign was initiated the traditional small coffee grower was replaced by a more technologically advanced and capitalist *caficultor*. The image of Juan Valdez also transformed in the 1980s into a sophisticated individual who participated in contemporary and modern activities. The move raised criticism from U.S. consumers who were used to imagining Juan Valdez as just a coffee grower and nothing else. Many Colombians came to identify with the image since it contained some accurate historical referents and promoted positive values of hard-working Colombians. While Colombians claimed these values as authentic, the image also needed to promote universal ideals with which increasingly globalized consumers would identify.

SECTION IV

Stereotypes and Juan Valdez

The original image of Juan Valdez presented to the public focused on the rural landscape of Colombia and the simple peasant who works it. As part of the educational phase of the campaign, Juan Valdez appeared in his usual attire walking through fields of coffee with his mule *Conchita*. The FNC's intention was to teach U.S. consumers about the unique qualities of Colombian coffee that make it superior to other brands. Later on in the campaign, in order to satisfy and relate to a more sophisticated consumer, Juan Valdez was withdrawn from his humble setting and placed in luxurious scenarios. This change sparked criticism from consumers who felt the image was not "authentic" and true to its origins. The critique raises many questions, but the one that applies to this study is: Where did the image of Juan Valdez originate?

The FNC, in collaboration with the advertising firm Doyle Dane and Bernbach, could have chosen a contemporary image to portray Colombia's coffee industry in the latter half of the 20th century, but instead the institutions selected a figure that combined historical representations of the coffee grower, the *arriero*, and Colombia's *caficultura*. While it may not have been a conscious decision to do so, Juan Valdez also reflects the stereotypes that were constructed and preserved in the collective imagination of U.S. society. These stereotypes of Latin America were shaped and re-shaped throughout the United States' relationship with its southern neighbors.

Stereotyping the Other

The clash between cultures creates two opposite reactions. The first response is to “assimilate others to ourselves” through the use of analogy, which may be done consciously or unconsciously.⁷² Peter Burke provides several examples in his book *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* of encounters between cultures – each with its own subjective lens – that produced parallel comparisons. For example, when crusaders encountered the Muslim warrior Saladin, they viewed the other as a knight. In other words, the self envisioned the unfamiliar other as a relative expression of a recognizable element. One side does not dominate this process, as Burke points out with other cases.

The explorer Vasco da Gama, entering an Indian temple for the first time, interpreted a sculpture of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as an image of the Holy Trinity (just as the Chinese, a century or so later, would interpret images of the Virgin Mary as representations of the Buddhist goddess Kuan Yin).⁷³

Burke’s examples provide evidence that the culture entering the domain of another is not the only one that formulates stereotypes; this process contains a reciprocal element. The encountering cultures transform the exoticness of each other into something “intelligible, that it is domesticated.”⁷⁴

The opposite reaction, which Burke points out, involves the construction of the other’s culture as one’s opposite. Many times these stereotypes may be positive, but for the most part they are composed of hostile, disdainful, and condescending characteristics. Instead of converting the exotic into something comprehensible, it is alienated even more.

⁷² Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 123.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Thus, the encounter between cultures generates stereotypes that may not be completely false, but in many cases “exaggerate certain features of reality and omit others.”⁷⁵ Examples include the classic ‘monstrous races’, which were imagined by ancient Greeks to exist in distant places like Ethiopia and India. These places were thought to contain cannibals, dog-headed people, and other fabricated races. Some of these tropes were transmitted to later generations, who used them to portray their “other.” During the period of contact and conquest, Europeans imagined the natives of the New World through their inherited stereotypes. Europeans believed that cannibals lived in Brazil, and that the Amazon River obtained its name from the belief that the one-breasted race of women called Amazons inhabited the region.⁷⁶ Similar stereotypes were recycled in North America to describe the Native Americans and were later refashioned to illustrate Latin America. According to Mark T. Berger, the myths generated during contact about the New World, and especially South America, as an exotic land of fantasy “has continued in literature and film, and can be found in the current exotic images used to attract North American tourists or to sell coffee.”⁷⁷ Thus, the image of Juan Valdez fits into a history of representation. Juan Valdez has been defined and redefined by the different contexts in which it has been situated.

Latin America as the Other

In his book, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*, Fredrick Pike argues that the Latin American stereotypes

⁷⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁷ Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas 1898-1990* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

constructed by Americans are born out of the clash between “civilized” and “barbaric” societies. Europeans arriving in the New World, and later on Americans expanding westward, applied similar stereotypes to the Indians as those that Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries would employ to illustrate Latin Americans. For Americans, Indians represented the “personification” of wilderness; they lived in harmony with nature rather than trying to control it.⁷⁸ In the eyes of the European, the Indians were unable to exploit their natural surroundings and thus they lacked the ability to build a civilized society. This central idea, along with their differing concepts of property, justified the Europeans’ decisions to uproot the Indians and seize their lands.⁷⁹ The United States has also utilized the stereotype of the other as uncivilized, among others, to validate its intervention in Latin America.

Americans began to wage their “cultural warfare” with Latin America in Mexico. Most stereotypes of Latin America date back to the first encounters between the cultures. By 1860, the stereotypes that would be inherited by later generations were formalized.⁸⁰ In the 1840s, after living alongside Mexicans, Anglo migrants living near the Mexican border and elsewhere concluded that Mexicans were the “degenerate, revolutionary progeny of racially different parents who had inherited not a redeeming feature of the Indian and the worst qualities of the Spaniard.”⁸¹

In the fulfillment of the nineteenth-century Manifest Destiny ideal, Anglo Protestant-Americans substituted the Mestizo for the Indian. This shift occurred largely

⁷⁸ Fredrick Pike. *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ John J. Johnson, *Latin American in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 9.

⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

due to the Native American's failure to pose a threat to the Americans' political, economic, and cultural objectives; in other words, the Indians ceased to be regarded as a "worthy foe against which to wage cultural warfare."⁸²

Generally removed from their lands east of the Mississippi, their attacks on White communities subsiding, seen as representing undefined lost values, and, according to the prevailing wisdom, doomed to extinction, the Indians, far from being an object of scorn, were rapidly becoming eligible for the sentimental nostalgia commonly accorded vanquished peoples.⁸³

After acquiring prevalence as "the other", the Mestizo also obtained the stereotypes previously assigned to the Native American; they lost any positive qualities that might have been possessed and gained features of savagery. In its dealings with the rest of Latin America, the United States would reuse the stereotypes formulated during its cultural clashes with Mexico. Due to the "historical tendency of Americans to judge all Latin America by what they think they know of Mexico," Latin America has many times been imagined as a monolith.⁸⁴

In the leading newspapers and periodicals of the United States, Latin America has usually been portrayed as encompassing feminine, childish, and barbaric attributes. Latin American countries do have many common features, but when it is depicted as a monolith its vast differences are erased and reality is ignored. The majority of Latin America's republics share a common language, religious beliefs, and political systems, but its geography, climate, indigenous peoples, and unique historical phases have

⁸² Ibid., 15.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, 12

provided different dialects to the languages spoken, varied economies, distinct sociopolitical structures, and racial compositions.⁸⁵

The nature of the stereotype also leads to the representation of a highly diverse region as a monolith. According to Burke, the word 'stereotype' – originally a plate used to print an image – is the French word 'cliché' meaning "it lacks nuances since the same model is applied to cultural situations which differ considerably from one another."⁸⁶ This in turn has caused the United States to apply similar agendas to all of Latin America, sometimes disregarding its diversity. The effects of seeing "the other" in a negative or condescending way has caused the United States' "public and private dealings" with Latin America to be the product of the "unfavorable stereotypes of their people, religion, and value systems."⁸⁷ This mentality has also affected US policy in Latin America.

The United States emerged out of World War II as one of the most important politico-economic actors in the world. During this time, and for much of the Cold War, the United States' policy in Latin America was mainly aimed at maintaining US hegemony by facilitating the "continued existence of economic and political structures complementary to transnational capitalism."⁸⁸ The Cuban Revolution caused the US government to reconsider its position in the region. The United States attempted to preserve its hegemony in the Americas by investing capital in Latin America. Fueled by cultural racial pride in the "perceived superiority of the North American historical model," US Cold War policy focused on improving the Latin American economies by applying modernization theory, which assumed that economic development would lead to

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Latin American in Caricature*, 29.

⁸⁶ Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 125.

⁸⁷ Johnson, *Latin American in Caricature*, 9.

⁸⁸ Berger, *Under Northern Eyes*, 8.

a stable democratic and capitalist society.⁸⁹ Colombian coffee and Juan Valdez were not excluded from this process.

As part of the so-called Third World, Latin America was seen as an easy target for communism, and the only way to combat the threat was to raise its income. In 1963, the countries producing and consuming coffee formed the International Coffee Organization (ICO) after the first International Coffee Agreement (ICA) was initiated in 1962. Part of the agreement between the countries involved was to create a market in which the producers would restrict supply and the consuming countries would only purchase coffee from countries in the ICO. This would give the producing countries more power in negotiations with roasting houses, which guaranteed a higher return for the economies producing the commodity.⁹⁰ The United States supported the agreement because it was believed that by raising the welfare of Third World countries it would keep communism in check, thus preserving US hegemony. By tying Latin America's economies to a superior economy, Colombia and other coffee producers were dependent on the United States.

The ICO agreements also demonstrate the way stereotypes lead to specific power relations. By viewing Latin America as undeveloped or backwards, the United States developed an aura of "missionary paternalism" with its mission to guide, educate, and reform what came to be defined as the "Third World."⁹¹ This outlook can be traced as far back as the 19th century when female teachers were sent on "civilizing mission[s]" and as

⁸⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁹⁰ Reina et al., *Juan Valdez*, 55.

⁹¹ Berger, *Under Northern Eyes*, 14.

recently as the Good Neighbor Policy or the Alliance for Progress.⁹² By casting Latin America in a negative aspect, the United States reinforced its superiority.

Juan Valdez as the Other

As an example of public and cultural relations, the Juan Valdez image alludes to many of the stereotypes constructed by both the United States and Colombia. In the United States, Juan Valdez could represent Latin America as an underdeveloped, stagnant figure. He is concurrently characterized by his tradition and diligence, which challenges the stereotype that many Americans have of Latin Americans as “unwilling or incapable of contributing responsibly to their own welfare and development.”⁹³

In Colombia, the polysemic nature of the Juan Valdez image retained its complex and multifaceted identity. On the one hand he came to represent the countryside, tradition, and the patriarch. On the other, he developed into a symbol of modernity and progress. The fact that so many Colombians – all from diverse occupations and backgrounds – competed in 2006 to become the new face of Juan Valdez highlights Colombians’ attachment to the image. He holds a place in national museums, cultural shows, and is even found on the merchandise sold at the various Juan Valdez Cafes. The image, for both Colombia and the United States, is constantly evolving along with the needs and desires of society.

The Juan Valdez image illustrates a composite plate that combines traits from Burke’s analogy and antithesis processes. In its efforts to relate to its consumers, Juan Valdez was designed to be a sincere and modest hard-working man. At the same time,

⁹² Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, 13.

⁹³ Johnson, *Latin American in Caricature*, 66.

however, he conforms to the stereotype by wearing a sombrero, growing a moustache, and appearing in humble settings. In the political cartoons collected by John J. Johnson, one of the most popular models used by cartoonists in the 19th and 20th centuries was the Mestizo with other emphasized stereotypical traits (figure 4): for example, the “diminutive and/or emaciated adults; long, stringy, black hair; unkempt dark facial hair, including moustaches; soiled clothing; bare feet; oversized huaraches; sombreros; swords; ancient rifles; bandoleers; and long cigars.”⁹⁴ This can be seen in the political cartoon reproduced below, from the Eisenhower era, when the image of Juan Valdez was first created.



Figure 4. Jim Dobbins, “Brotherhood Week!”, *Boston Herald American*, 1960. Taken from John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 279.

Juan Valdez does not possess all of the aforementioned features, but he does retain the two most popular: the sombrero and the moustache. First, the sombrero throughout the 20th century was the “one unmistakable, all-purpose cartoonists’ symbol

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

for the area."⁹⁵ The sombrero had been ingrained in the collective imagination of most Americans as an allegorical image of Latin America for a variety of reasons. The early encounters between the United States and Mexico constructed the myths that persisted and surfaced in the image of Juan Valdez. For example, the mustached peasant wearing a sombrero is the common stereotypical image that most Americans have applied to Latin America.⁹⁶ In the 20th century, the sombrero continued to be a "readily recognizable item of apparel in Mexico, the area best known to the average United States citizen."⁹⁷

In terms of public relations, however, political cartoons and marketing campaigns utilize some of the same techniques to relay their message to the public. For most viewers, the sombrero worn by Juan Valdez might have represented an extension of his Latin American identity (figure 5), but no suggestions of military aggression or class conflicts – such as the German spiked helmet of the World War I era or the hammer and sickle – have been associated with it.



Figure 5. Bill Mauldin, "High Sierra." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 1963. Taken from John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 279.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 278.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 238.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 278

The sombrero, as a “malleable, fibrous headpiece”, may have reflected a neutral, or not negative, stance on public relations between the two countries. With no harmful connotations or visible threats to the status quo, U.S. consumers accepted the sombrero as a tolerable accessory.

Other representations of Colombia – and of Latin America – have not been as favorable as that of Juan Valdez, but cartoonists have also used various techniques to portray their subjects in a positive manner; these methods are noticeable in the design of the Juan Valdez image. As the salesman of Colombian coffee, Juan Valdez needed to have desirable characteristics. He is neatly dressed and groomed, is usually portrayed with a confirmatory smile, and is characterized by his dependability and diligence when he picks coffee (bean by bean). This image contradicts, however, the stereotype that Latin Americans are reluctant or unable of providing for their own advancement. Since images are polysemic (contain multiple meanings), they, like most stereotypes, are contradictory. What could be more contradictory than Juan Valdez and his mule *Conchita* flying on an airplane, traveling on a cruise ship, or even surfing (figure 6)?



Figure 6. Taken from Mauricio Reina et al., *Juan Valdez: La Estrategia Detras de la Marca* (Bogota: Ediciones B, 2007), 171.

For most viewers, the quintessential image of Juan Valdez is the *arriero* and his mule picking and transporting coffee through the abundant coffee fields. According to Fredrick Pike, Americans viewed themselves as part of a “civilized” society. Belonging to a civilized society caused Anglos in North America to have an innate need (born out of many factors like religion, sexuality, etc.) to conquer and develop the natural effeminate world. While many of these ideas don’t seem very radical to contemporary societies – maybe since these stereotypes have been ingrained in the average American’s imagination – they might allude to the foundations as to why Americans view the Colombian coffee grower as part of or in harmony with nature.

Pike argues that part of the reason why Americans continually seek nature is to fill the identity gaps produced by a heavily “civilized” society. Beginning with the land

occupied by the native tribes in North America, Americans sought untouched nature to civilize it and immerse themselves in it. By seeking nature and confronting it, Americans “passed through the Indian stage and then returned to civilization better able to serve the cause of progress.”⁹⁸

The fascination with nature and the desire to look for it helps explain why the Juan Valdez campaign has been successful in the United States. By using stereotypes already in the American imagination (Latin America as the uncivilized, natural world) the campaign struck a chord when the commercials showed Juan Valdez high in the Andes picking coffee.

One of the greatest accomplishments of “civilization” has been the control of nature through the commoditization of time. The stereotype suggests that, unlike civilized societies, the other (a barbaric culture), “lived in utter disregard of civilized man’s concept of time.”⁹⁹ A commercial, which aired in the 1980s, contrasts the way a “civilized” society manifests its control of time, while Juan Valdez accepts time as determined by nature.

The opening shot in the commercial is of a rooster crowing in the morning. The rooster acts as a “natural” alarm clock for Juan Valdez, who is then seen getting out of bed and out the door into the abundant coffee fields. In the supposed Colombian scene, a guitar plays soothing music in the background while the off-camera narrator, with a would-be Latin accent, narrates, “This is how you pick the richest coffee in Colombia.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, 18.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ “Another Vintage 80’s Juan Valdez Colombian Coffee Commercial,” Youtube, accessed January 10, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tboiG00dAEc&feature=related>

Suddenly, the Colombian scene is replaced by an alarm clock. The modern digitalized alarm clock goes off and the voice-over states, “This is how you pick the richest coffee in America.” The second half of the commercial is completely different from the first. Juan Valdez is not present, except for on the label of the coffee jar, and neither are the coffee fields or the rooster. Everything in the American consumer’s home is neatly organized and decorated. All things that might have a connection to the natural world, such as the flowers next to the alarm clock, appear to be artificial. These images are full of stereotypes long present in the United States’ imaginary concerning Latin America. American audiences, however, were not the only ones engaging in the stereotyping process.

The Creation of Juan Valdez in Colombia

In 2006, during the FNC’s search for the new face of Juan Valdez, the 30 men who made the short list were encouraged to “start growing a mustache, if they didn’t already have one, and to dye existing ones black if any of the whiskers showed gray.”¹⁰¹ The pressure administered by the FNC demonstrated the objective not to change the image that had so much success promoting Colombian coffee. The FNC also reaffirmed the importance of the moustache to Juan Valdez as Colombian coffee’s international representative; Colombian coffee growers had indirectly adopted this attribute as their own.

In the 20th century, Colombia entered an urbanization process that augmented the dichotomy between the urban and rural spheres. With this transformation, Colombian culture experienced a similar process of “distinction and distancing” that occurs between

¹⁰¹ Matthew Fishbane, “Being Juan Valdez”, *salon.com*, October 16, 2007, 3.

distinctive cultures.¹⁰² Juan Valdez was pictured as being part of a traditional rural setting that may reflect a real or imagined past.

The growth of urban centers and other settlements contributed to the distinctions between the city and the country. The association with the land led to terms like 'country' and 'city', each with its own assigned features. The country has been linked with the "natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue."¹⁰³ On the contrary, the city has been associated with the idea of an "achieved center: of learning, communication, light."¹⁰⁴ The dichotomy between the city and the country has allowed members of both spheres to imagine a better past, present, or future than the one in which they find themselves.

In the case of Juan Valdez, nostalgia for an idyllic past in the countryside is contrasted with the chaos of war and political disturbance that occurred throughout Colombia in the latter half of the 20th century. Once again, various aspects of country life were excluded in this process; the best side of a coffee grower's life was exposed while his/her adversities were concealed. For Carlos Castañeda, who became the face of Juan Valdez in 2006, life on his seven-acre farm was "hard." He stated, "You could spend a long day starting at 5 in the morning doing nothing but weeding with a machete, up and down the rows."¹⁰⁵ This reality was rejected since it did not coincide with the tranquil ambiance that many Colombians would rather imagine.

¹⁰² Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 135.

¹⁰³ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Fishbane, "Being Juan Valdez", *Salon Media Group*, October 16, 2007. http://www.salon.com/life/food/eat_drink/2007/10/16/juan_valdez/index.html (Accessed October 10, 2010).

A more difficult, yet accurate, reality was depicted in an article that appeared in 1992 in Colombia's leading newspaper *El Tiempo*. Written by the classic *extensionista*, Profesor Yarumo, the article titled "Los últimos campesinos" (The Last/Remaining Peasants) painted the complicated conditions in the countryside. Found in the Economy section of the newspaper, the story presented a nostalgic narrative about the ways the peasant had been ostracized by politicians and put on display at their own expense.

The peasant began to disappear for being too kind and trustful. Because he was deceived, he became distrustful. Those who had the means left for the city where they acquired citizenship. Those who did not, remained rustic, but sent their children to school so they wouldn't be like them. They became rare when a day was created to remember and honor them. And they were photographed so their legacy remained in the most beautiful book in the world. In the town, they speak of a new beginning, they offer them good money for their land, but the peasants have decided to die on the land where they have lived.¹⁰⁶

By this point, the author of the article has pointed out the ways in which the peasant has been, throughout history, taken for granted until the romanticized image of him begins to disappear. In the next section, he uses Juan Valdez as the representative image of Colombia's coffee growers.

Down the muddy path come Juan Valdez and his mules. His five children are no longer cultivating coffee; some left town and others left for the big city. And the one remaining son was taken today, military style. At the *fonda*¹⁰⁷ Juan Valdez asks for a double shot of *aguardiente* so he could forget, but when he grabs the *tiple*¹⁰⁸ to sing *guabinas*¹⁰⁹, he begins to cry.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Profesor Yarumo, "Los últimos campesinos," *El Tiempo*, July 5, 1992, Accessed March 10, 2011, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-150851>.

¹⁰⁷ In Colombia, the *fonda* was an establishment where the *arrieros* would stop and rest on their long trips with their packed mules. These places served as lodging and entertainment; the travelers could enjoy a drink of *aguardiente* (liquor) and listen to popular music. In more recent times, the number of *fondas* has diminished due to the improved transportation and communication systems. The massive peasant migration to cities has also contributed to their disappearance.

¹⁰⁸ The *tiple* is a 12-string guitar that usually accompanies typical Colombian rhythms like the *bambuco* and *pasillo*. Many consider it Colombia's national instrument.

¹⁰⁹ The *guabina* is a traditional dance and genre from the Andean regions of Colombia.

There is a sense of nostalgia in Yarumo's narrative, but this feeling points to the hardships and changes with which Colombia's peasantry dealt in the 20th century. The situation with his last son alludes to the military conflict between the several Leftist groups and Colombia's military. The ambiguity in the way this particular son was drafted points to the reality faced by many younger peasants. Due to mandatory conscription, he might have been forced to take up arms by the government. The other possible outcome was that he was recruited by one of the guerrilla groups in control of the area. The other four brothers may have been displaced from their land due to the violence and lack of opportunity.

This article echoes similar melancholy and nostalgic sentiments found in a song that appeared in the 1950s. Composed by Arnulfo Briceño, "A quien engañas abuelo" ("Grandfather, who are you trying to deceive?"), it depicts the early years of La Violencia, when the civil violence that occurred in the countryside was between the *godos* (conservatives) and liberals. This is a song that the Juan Valdez of the *El Tiempo* article might have sang.

The old man lowered his head \ and caressing the boy said, \ You are right, son \ Hate has changed everything; \ the peons have gone far away \ the groove has been abandoned \ I now lack the strength \ The plow has become heavy \ And you are just a child to carry on the ranch \ Chucho, the arriero who lives by the sugarcane fields, tells me some are killed for being *godos* \ others because they are liberal \ Some whom they call caudillos appear in elections promising schools and bridges where there are no rivers \ and the soul of the peasant reaches a broken color \ He begins to even hate his good neighbor \ all because of those damn politicians.

The song lyrics do not romanticize the countryside or its past the way the *El Tiempo* article does. Instead, it undermines the picturesque image presented by the Juan Valdez

¹¹⁰ Profesor Yarumo, "Los últimos campesinos."

commercials and imagined by city-folk who visualized an easier and more peaceful time in the countryside. Nonetheless, Profesor Yarumo and Arnulfo Briceño acknowledged and tried to demonstrate the reality of the countryside.

Urbanites, however, saw Juan Valdez as the embodiment of a nostalgic past. By romanticizing the countryside, the collective memory of Colombians emphasized certain characteristics of the rural landscape and concealed others. Juan Valdez received a badge of approval from not only city-folk, but many other Colombians, due to his tranquility, which differed from the violent atmosphere that Colombians hoped to forget.

The complex and versatile nature of the Juan Valdez image has allowed it to redefine itself according to the market's demands.¹¹¹ The evolution from a Cuban actor as the face of Juan Valdez to an authentic Colombian coffee grower may not have affected the image's visual representation, but it did have underlying repercussions in the way Colombians imagine Juan Valdez. This change added a degree of authenticity to the image, which made it easier for Colombians to claim it as a real or imagined representation of the nation. Juan Valdez' success abroad and domestically has gained him a place in the way Colombians construct their national history.

Aside from being recognized as a symbol of an idealized countryside, Juan Valdez represents an image of progress. Juan Valdez's success promoting Colombian coffee has increased the returns for Colombia's coffee industry, which has contributed to the development of the country (This has been discussed in the previous sections and will

¹¹¹ Figure 3 is representative of the shift the campaign underwent in the 1980s and 1990s when it tried to connect with a younger audience through advertisements in which Juan Valdez was seen partaking in extreme sports, such as surfing.

be discussed to a greater extent in the next). In more recent times, the introduction of the Juan Valdez Cafes spurred a change in Colombia's coffee culture.

Introduced in 2002 in Colombia, the Juan Valdez Cafés resemble more of a Starbucks-like café than the traditional coffee shops of Colombia. Before the arrival of modern coffee shops, Colombians associated their coffee shops with middle-aged men, gloomy spaces, and *tinto*¹¹². Even though the modern cafes serve drinks like frappucinos, lattes, or any other coffee concoction imaginable, the cafes retain their Colombian identity. The effects of globalization are visible, but the shops maintained their Colombianness by including the *tinto* in their menu.

Much like in the United States, going out for coffee became a social event. The traditionalists, usually the older generations, kept the old-fashioned coffee shops in business. The younger generations, however, and even some traditionalists who were convinced by the quality of the coffee served at the modern coffee shops, frequent the cafes to study, have meetings, and enjoy coffee from a diverse menu. The launch of the Juan Valdez Cafés in a society rich with coffee history redefined the way Colombians drink the coffee they produce.

Colombians, aware of the negative associations with their country, saw in Juan Valdez a successful personage who represented positive aspects of their country. The authenticity of his characteristics is debatable, but Colombians have accepted Juan Valdez as their own, while disregarding the meaning or importance of the moustache. The moustache's value is only determined by the history of the image; Juan Valdez has

¹¹² In Colombia, the *tinto* is another name for coffee. It is served black and heavily sweetened. Most Colombians grow up drinking *tinto*.

had significant success, and altering the image might have consequences with its publicity efforts.

In 1959, when the Juan Valdez campaign was launched, the sombreroed peasant was still a popular stereotype of Latin America. By the end of the 20th century this stereotype may not have been as prevalent, but the “emotional underlying prejudices” may have persisted in the “we” and “they” dichotomy.¹¹³ His immersion in nature reaffirmed the stereotype, but it also created a picturesque image of Colombia that masked the harsher realities of Colombian society.

The Juan Valdez image contains multiple meanings, and many of them could be interpreted as stereotypes. The creation of stereotypes could be dangerous to both the object in observation and the entity engaging in the process since it limits the identity of the actors. The limiting factor of the process, however, may be a sensible attempt to understand the other without including superfluous or diverging information. The stereotyping processes in which Americans and Colombians have engaged constructed an image that meets their respective discourses. The popularity of the image, in both Colombia and the United States, gives one the impression that its attractiveness points to a deep source of affirmation. For Americans, the Juan Valdez image provides a therapeutic experience through images of nature and the promise of the best coffee in the world. Colombians have also engaged in stereotyping and have emerged from this process by constructing Juan Valdez into an image worthy of being part of the national rhetoric.

¹¹³ Johnson, *Latin American in Caricature*, 3.

CONCLUSION

Juan Valdez' Contribution to the Colombian Nation

In 2006, a study was conducted comparing the popularity and approval ratings of the President of Colombia, Professor Yarumo, and Juan Valdez. As an important national figure, Professor Yarumo earned an approval rating of 90% among coffee growers, 89% in the general public living in the coffee growing regions, and 88% of the national general public. Professor Yarumo may have received a higher approval rating among the general Colombian public, but Juan Valdez's contribution to the growth of the Colombian nation remains unmatched.

The Juan Valdez campaign has redefined Centeno's argument that Latin America hasn't created strong nations because wars have been fought within states and not between them. While there has been no loss of life in the international coffee market war, Juan Valdez and Colombian coffee have had the support of the majority of Colombians. With the label of *Café de Colombia* or 100% Colombian Coffee, Juan Valdez and the FNC were not just promoting a product, they were exposing a whole nation. In its battle with other coffee-producing countries, most notably Brazil, Colombian coffee has had success. After being recognized as the best coffee in the world, more Colombians identified with coffee, thus fostering a kind of solidarity that is the foundation for nationalism; who would not want to be associated with the best?

In its effort to distinguish itself from others' coffees, Colombian coffee has employed its folkloric traditions. One of the commercials that appeared in the 1980s connected Colombian coffee to the traditions of an Andean culture in order to differentiate the way coffee is picked in Colombia from the manner it is handled in other

countries. The commercial opens up with an unconventional setting for coffee: a weaving home. The viewer doesn't see Juan Valdez or coffee fields, but natives of the Pasto department weaving cloth in their traditional garments. The voice-over then begins to narrate

In the mountains of Southern Colombia, for centuries the cloth has been woven by hand. It is not the fastest way, but it is part of the heritage. The same dedication to heritage that has been passed to Juan Valdez. He picks the Colombian coffee as it has been picked for centuries: bean-by-bean, only at the moment that it is best. It is no surprise that a country so rich with tradition grows the richest coffee in the world.¹¹⁴

The commercial reaffirms the superiority of Colombian coffee by utilizing the inherited traditions of artisanship of Colombians. At the same time, coffee is used as the "national backdrop against which particular regional traditions could be highlighted."¹¹⁵ In this same process, the folkloric culture is de-contextualized and re-contextualized within a unified national coffee setting. The connection between the two practices demonstrated in the video may seem a bit stretched, but it works because coffee is indeed picked by hand in Colombia. Most importantly, coffee is grown in many Andean regions of Colombia and those same artisan hands shown threading the fiber may have also been picking coffee.

The Juan Valdez advertisement campaign celebrated its 50th anniversary in August of 2010. To commemorate the campaign's accomplishments, a variety of events took place during that month. In the midst of posing for pictures with the Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos and other prominent figures, Carlos Castañeda (the current

¹¹⁴ "Colombian Coffee commercial. 1982" [Video]. (2009). Accessed October 10, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INFjoOvGBW4>.

¹¹⁵ Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 123.

Juan Valdez) sat down to speak with the former face of Juan Valdez, Carlos Sanchez. Organized and produced by the Federación, the interview/dialogue discussed topics that included the values represented by Juan Valdez as well as Valdez' mule, *Conchita*. While the picture these two men paint of Colombia and its coffee industry seems romanticized at times, their memoirs and perspectives, especially Sanchez', shed light on the vast culture surrounding coffee.

Four years after taking the reins, we find Carlos Castañeda interviewing Sanchez to get a feel of how the Juan Valdez persona has developed in its 50-year history. Sanchez states, "That is what we...now you, are representing. You have to give off that image of honesty, modesty, and righteousness. All of those form part of the quality of Colombian coffee."¹¹⁶ In the exchange of roles, Sanchez acknowledges his retirement but also reminds Castañeda and the viewers of the qualities that Juan Valdez has portrayed. Sanchez takes his time to come up with a sincere answer. In the end he mentions honesty, modesty and righteousness. The characteristics of the *cafetero* mentioned by Sanchez display the rhetoric that has been assembled to describe Colombian coffee and the coffee growers of Colombia. These are qualities that appeal to an international audience and which would be easily adoptable by Colombians.

While Sanchez does most of the talking, Castañeda interjects his own experiences and comments concerning the coffee industry and his role as Juan Valdez. His experience of being a real *cafetero* and a witness to the coffee culture comes through in some of his answers. When describing what's behind a cup of Colombian coffee, Castañeda alludes to the culture that produced it.

¹¹⁶ *Los valores que representa Juan Valdez* [Video]. (2010). Accessed October 10, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5g1j1ImHNs>.

It's like a culture...the people – I mean we say bean by bean. It has a process and that is why [the consumer] has an excellent cup of coffee. That is why people enjoy Colombian coffee. But it's also thanks to the effort put forth by all of the Colombian *caficultores*.¹¹⁷

Here we see two representations of Carlos Castañeda: the authentic *caficultor* and the role he plays as Juan Valdez. The real Castañeda emerges when he references the phrase “*grano a grano*”, which became popular thanks to the multiple Juan Valdez commercials that aired during a 40-year span. In the commercials, Colombian coffee distinguishes itself from the rest of the coffee in the world by its uniqueness of the land and the way it is picked. Almost every time, the off-camera narrator used phrases like “hand-picked” and “bean by bean.”¹¹⁸ These phrases are expressed in the interview by Carlos Castañeda as a continuation of the rhetoric used in the campaign and the adaptation of the expression in the Colombian coffee culture.

Many Colombians share Colombia's *caficultura* as a way of life and as a representation of the Colombian nation. Through its efforts to improve the welfare of Colombia's coffee growers, the FNC promoted solidarity amongst coffee growers and Colombians. The accomplishments of Profesor Yarumo and Juan Valdez when representing *Café de Colombia* domestically and internationally have contributed to the overall construction of the nation.

With new Juan Valdez Cafés opening all over Colombia and the rest of the Americas, the future for Juan Valdez looks promising. As in the past, the marketing icon will continue to be redefined by both the market and the cultural needs of its people. As an image that fulfilled the inquisitive desires of an American public in search of new

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ *Colombian Coffee commercial. 1982* [Video]. (1982). Accessed October 10, 2010, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INFjoOvGBW4&feature=related>.

frontiers, Juan Valdez's identity was determined by the cultural context in which it was placed.

In the United States, Juan Valdez's identity was shaped by consumer expectations. Latin America had been characterized as underdeveloped and backwards since initial contact between the United States and its southern neighbors. These stereotypical images were recycled and were confirmed by the various advertisements used by the FNC to promote Colombian coffee. Due to these expectations, when Juan Valdez was placed within more luxurious and humorous settings, US consumers enjoyed the juxtaposition but many also deemed the image as inauthentic. Colombians, however, also engaged in a type of stereotyping.

US consumers were not the only ones who saw what they wanted to see in this image. Even though the face of the image transformed from a Cuban actor to an authentic *caficultor* after a nationalistic call for authenticity, Colombians ultimately were responsible for constructing Juan Valdez's identity. In a time of violence and fear, Juan Valdez became a figure that represented a tranquil countryside. The danger in partaking in this activity was that it masked the reality of the situation. Colombians used this technique to evade the reality, but in turn it cemented Juan Valdez's position in Colombia's real or imaginary historical narrative.

The image, due to its polysemic nature, has also been shaped into a symbol of modernization. Juan Valdez's contribution to the welfare of Colombians through increased returns for their coffee allowed the Federacion Nacional de Cafeteros to build roads, schools, and bridges that benefited many communities. In addition, the Juan Valdez Cafes have altered the configuration of Colombian coffee culture. The

opportunity to drink a latte or a *tinto* made with the best coffee in the world allowed Colombians to feel cosmopolitan and Colombian at the same time. As the image of Juan Valdez continues to exist, Colombians will similarly proceed to shape their identity through the changing circumstances of the 21st century.

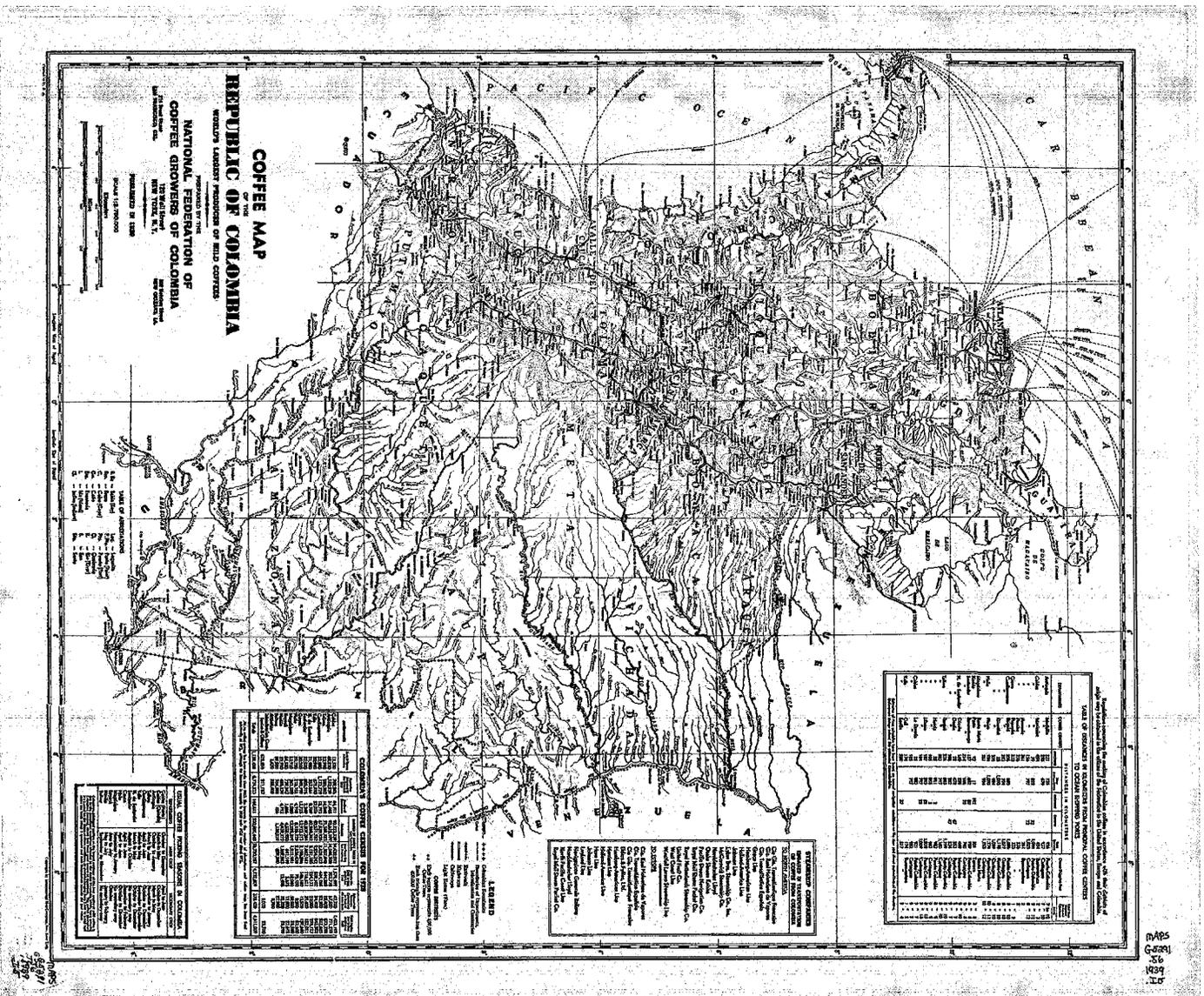


Figure 7.



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