

THE IMAGE OF THE LANDHOLDER IN *PEDRO PÁRAMO* BY JUAN RULFO

“I will cross my arms, and Comala will
die of hunger.”

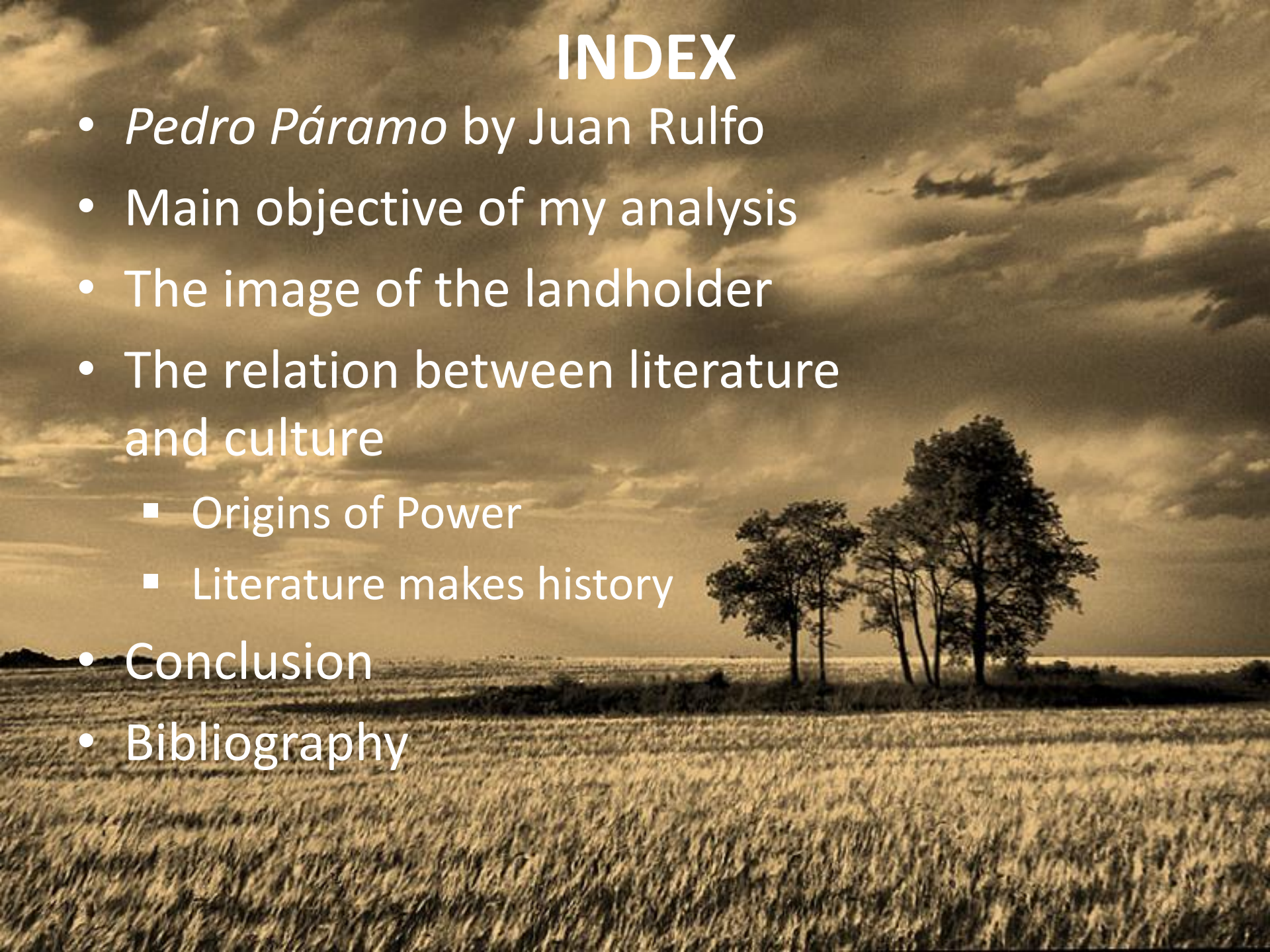
- Pedro Páramo

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PEDRO PÁRAMO BY JUAN RULFO

JUAN RULFO
(1918-1986)



- He was a Mexican writer.
- He studied in a Guadalajara orphanage because he lost his parents at an early age.
- He published two books of fiction, *El llano en llamas* (*The Burning Plain and other stories*) and *Pedro Páramo*, in Mexican magazines.
- He was the winner of *El Premio Nacional de Mexico a la Literatura* in 1970 and *El Premio Principe de Asturias* in Spain in 1983
- He died in 1986 in Mexico City.

PEDRO PARAMO BY JUAN RULFO



THEMES

- Unfulfilled hopes
- Death
- Solitude
- Guilt
- Repressed Sexuality
- Sin
- Rise of Landholder Era

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NOVEL

- Magic Realism
- Fragment Structure of short dialogs and narratives.
- Detailed description of the “caciquismo” era in the times of the Mexican Revolution (Beginning of 20th Century)



MAIN OBJECTIVE OF MY ANALYSIS

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the dominant portrayal of the landholder in the literature of Mexican Revolution (with emphasis in Pedro Paramo), and what is the purpose of this representation?

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

Is the dominant representation accurate historically?

Can we find official or historical evidence that supports or contradicts this representation?

What is the relationship between this portrayal of the landholder in literature and history?



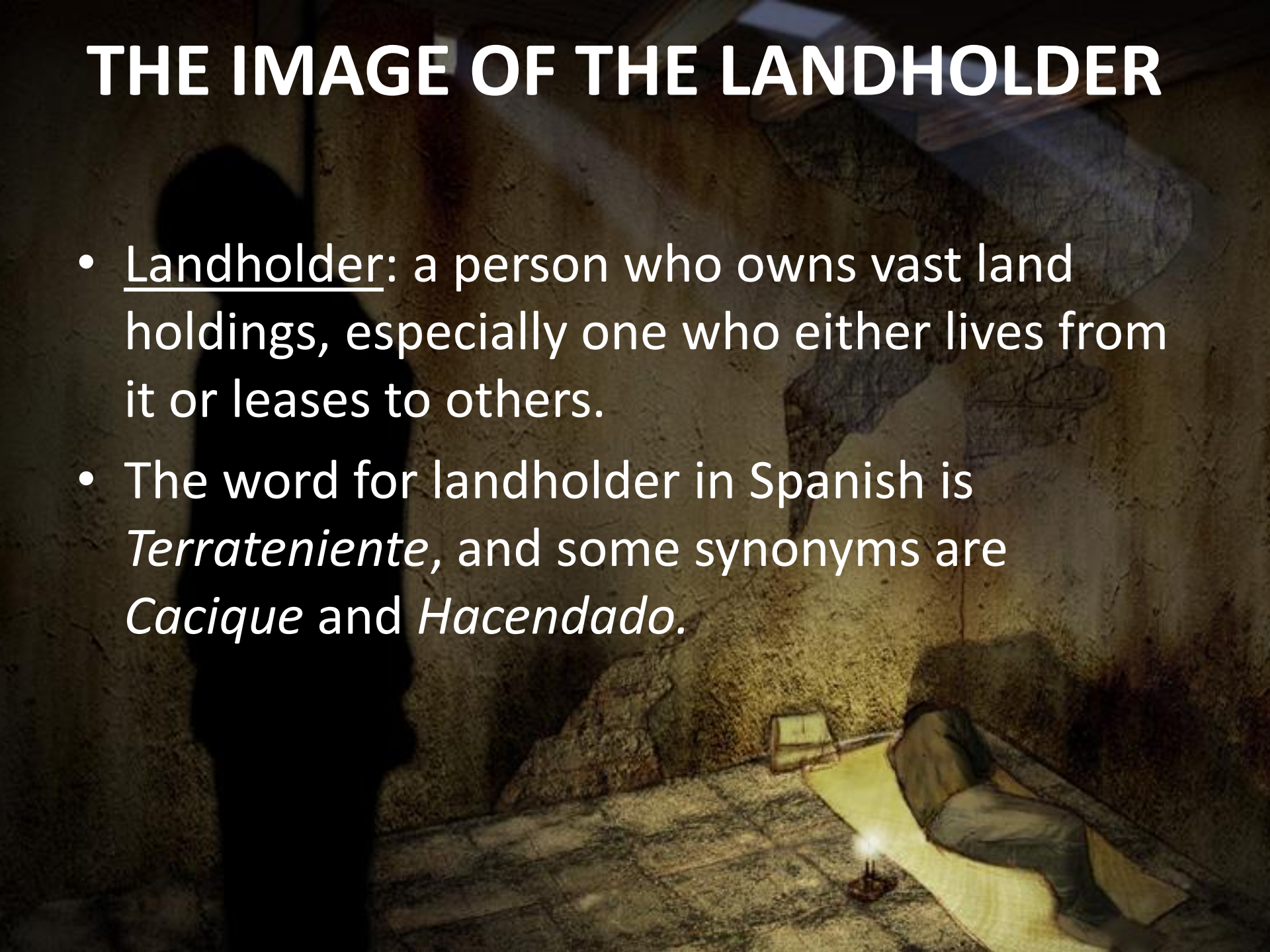
MAIN OBJECTIVE OF MY ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

The main character of the novel *Pedro Páramo*, by Juan Rulfo, is the landholder. The main objective in this project is to objectively analyze the landholder's place in literature, and to understand his psychology. Even though many literary works often portray characters with limited black and white perspectives, it is preferable to have characters with a little bit of ambiguity because that makes them more human and less fictitious. This analysis is based on historical documents and other literary and psychological studies that help us better understand the landholder's idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. Although *Pedro Páramo* is our main source, we will also refer to other literary works that treat the same subject, the ambiguity of the landholder. The goal is that the reader understand the behavior and complexity of the landholder, a very common character in the literature of Mexico and Latin America at beginning of the 20th century. In addition, the reader will understand how important literature is for enriching the historical narratives. Literature is not always completely accurate with history; however, it reveals many important characteristics of a culture. This analysis begins with the origins of the landholder's idiosyncrasies and continues with his literary portrayal so that we can discern the correlation between fiction and the true history.

THE IMAGE OF THE LANDHOLDER

- Landholder: a person who owns vast land holdings, especially one who either lives from it or leases to others.
- The word for landholder in Spanish is *Terrateniente*, and some synonyms are *Cacique* and *Hacendado*.



THE IMAGE OF THE LANDHOLDER

In México...

- Wealth in México was distributed unevenly. Just a few people control the economic power. The landholders were masters of vast extensions of land.
- The landholder's will was absolute and obeyed by everyone (by government, religious authorities, and all citizens).
- The landholder was the master and the owner not only of land, but also of everyone who lived on his territory (a very similar situation to that of the feudal lords of the Middle Ages).

THE IMAGE OF THE LANDHOLDER

In Pedro Páramo...

- The landholder uses his good-looks to marry a wealthy woman and avoid bankruptcy.
- His methods to attain his goals violated the moral and religious principles of the region.
- The narrative tells about the abuse of power that results in murders, sexual assault and the imposition of will through the use of violence and money.
- Pedro Paramo, in an unprecedented action, is able to buy off the leaders of the Mexican Revolution leaders and a priest of the Catholic Church who approves Paramo's authoritarian use of power.

THE IMAGE OF THE LANDHOLDER

- ❖ What are the origins of the power that the landholder has over the people?
- ❖ How is it possible that a whole region accepts, assimilates, and even becomes dependent on an authoritarian personality?

“Don’t you want to sit down?”

“I prefer to stand, Pedro.”

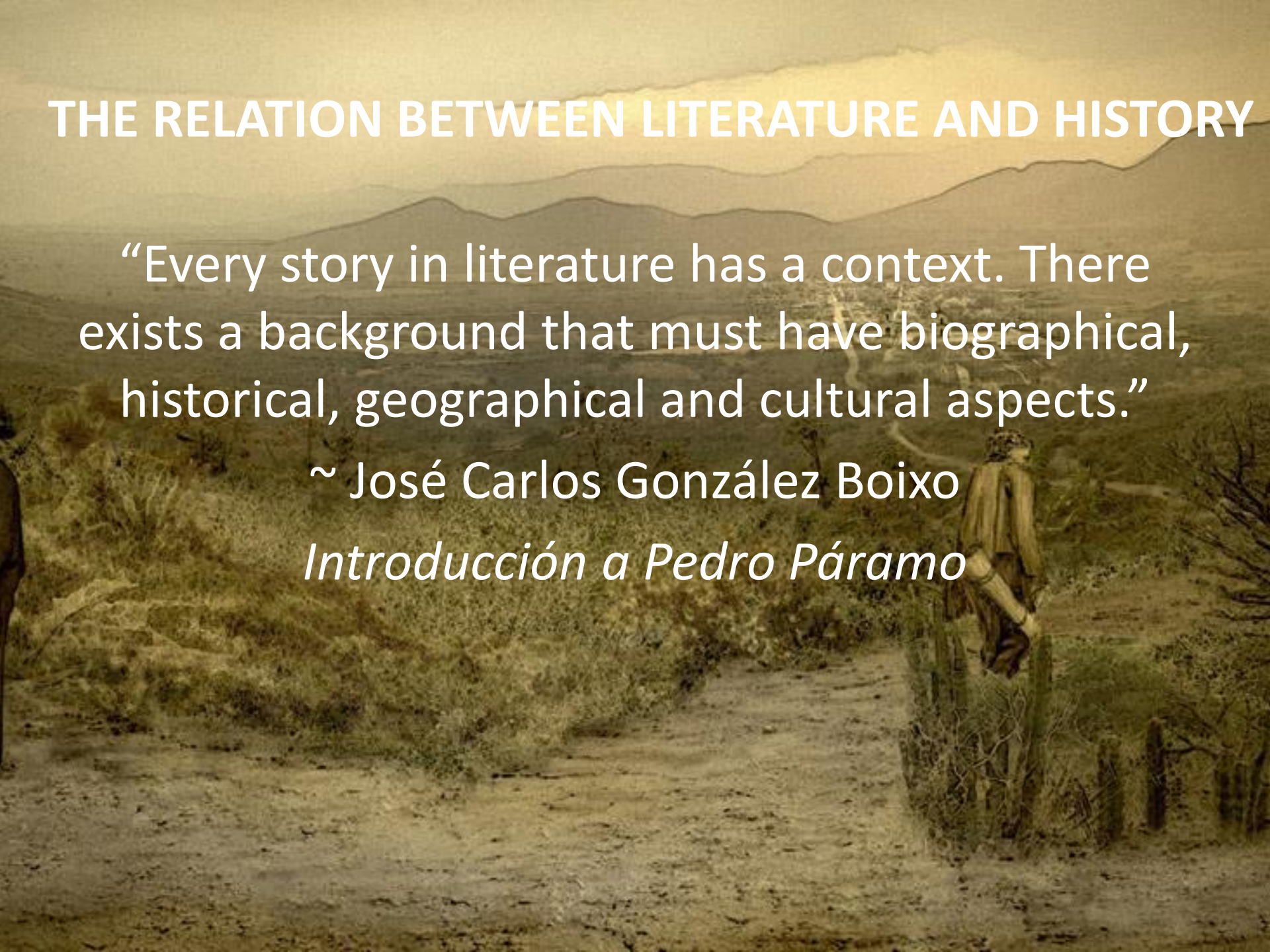
“As you like. But don’t forget the don.”

(Pedro Páramo, page 47)

THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

“Every story in literature has a context. There exists a background that must have biographical, historical, geographical and cultural aspects.”

~ José Carlos González Boixo
Introducción a Pedro Páramo



THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

THE POWER ORIGINS

➤ Pre Hispanic Influence

- ❖ The pre Hispanic cultures shared the idea of the existence of superior beings.
- ❖ There exists a prophecy about the existence of a white bearded god who would arrive to dominate all the people of Mexico (Quetzalcoatl Legend).



THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

THE POWER ORIGINS



➤ Colonial Influence

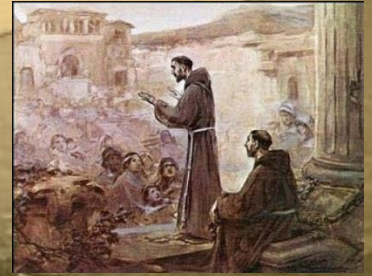
- ❖ After the conquest, Mexican people were under the subjugation of Spaniards for three hundred years.
- ❖ The highest Spanish authorities created a system called «Las Encomiendas», where the conquerors got massive extensions of land and power over the land and people. The only condition they had to fulfill was to pay tribute to the Spanish Crown and convert the inhabitants of Mexico to Catholicism.

THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

THE POWER ORIGINS

➤ Church's role as a supporter of power

- ❖ In colonial times, the Church played a role of support to those who had power because that helped in their own purposes. The Catholic Church helped to calm down any possible violent actions by indigenous Mexicans and the Church got economic support.
- ❖ After the independence of Mexico, the Church supported the landholders because they both had a mutual interest to preserve their own properties (The Catholic Church was another «landholder») and the generous landholders helped to maintain Church status through their economic support as well.



THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

THE POWER ORIGINS

“Then decedents of Spaniards considered themselves the absolute masters. They fought against any force that threatened their authority. The atmosphere of obstinacy and cumulative resentment has its origins there and was alive for centuries. That is the context in *Pedro Páramo*.”

~ Joseph Sommers

Yáñez, Rulfo, Fuentes: The Modern Mexican Narrative

THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY



“Literature is a lie. It is a lie that tells the truth.”

~ Juan Rulfo

THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

AND THE CHARACTERS BECAME ALIVE...

Juan Rulfo based his main character on some landholders from the region of Los Altos de Jalisco. He even included some characteristics of his grandfather. One of the landlords of those territories died in the same way that Pedro Paramo dies in the novel.

THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

AND LITERATURE MEETS HISTORY...

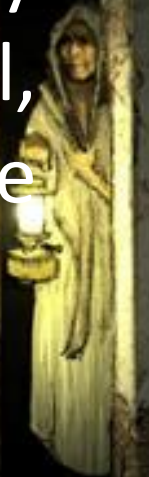
While history narrates many events and incidents from ancient times in chronological order, literature portrays the human side of the protagonists, telling us what they wish, what they feel, what they celebrate, what they suffer... what they live.



THE RELATION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND HISTORY

“The story structure of *Pedro Paramo* contributes to remove the differences between reality and unreality; then we can more deeply understand the fictional world in the novel, where many human essential problems are hidden.”

~ José Carlos González Boixo
Introducción a Pedro Páramo



CONCLUSION

A sepia-toned photograph of a man in a suit and hat riding a horse in a rural setting. The man is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a dark hat. He is sitting on a light-colored horse. The background is a field with some trees and a fence.

- The image of the landholder in the novel *Pedro Páramo* is a very accurate description of the historic landholder during the Mexican Revolution.
- History narrates how Mexicans have needed a figure of power, and this ideology was part of a heritage that helps to establish the era of the omnipotent power of the landholders.

CONCLUSION



- The capitalist system of that era was supported by the religious institution of the Catholic Church. That mutual collaboration between the wealthy and Church maintained a regime that exploited the masses for many years in Mexico.
- Literature plays a very important role in history. Literature collects the feelings of people that have lived in different ages and its narrative humanizes these characters so that we can deeply understand their life styles.

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Q & A



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