

## YANKEE INVASION

SOLARES, IGNACIO

TRANS. BY TIMOTHY G. COMPTON

A novel of the Mexican War, when the newly born republic to the south lost half its territory to the slightly older republic to the north; the book was a bestseller in Mexico.

American chauvinists will not like the opening shot of Chihuahua-born academic and writer Solares's novel: The Stars and Stripes, "symbol of the despicable power which intended to subjugate all nations and cultures of the nineteenth century," makes it only halfway up the flagpole above the National Palace in Mexico City before its progress is halted. A spirited crowd of civilians attacks the Yankee soldiers raising it, with mild, scholarly Abelardo, the book's narrator, doing his part by stabbing one blond giant (in this novel, all Americans are giants, most are blond, all are Protestants, and all are devils). The attack affords Solares one of many moments of death porn, all squirts and spasms and twitches: "His eyes turned white, he took one last mouthful of air and then his jaw dropped, releasing a torrent of blood-tinged foam." Many more such moments follow, their memories chasing Abelardo across the decades until now, at the dawn of the 20th century, his wife is demanding that he get them down on paper or shut up. Solares is unforgiving of the gringos, but also of the leaders of Mexico at the time—in barely three decades, as he notes, the country had 50 changes of government, a fifth of them courtesy of the coup-conjuring Gen. Santa Anna, who, a Saddam of his time, could not have made a better target for the United States. Indeed, Solares imagines a U.S. diplomat urging that Santa Anna be kept around just to keep Mexico unstable, which is plenty plausible. Less plausible are some of his historical inventions and anachronisms; in 1850, for instance, it was Mexico and not the United States that was at war with the Apache Indians, though here the Americans butcher Mexicans "just like they killed off the Apaches!"

A flawed but memorable novel—one that speaks volumes about how Mexicans, or at least the Mexican intelligentsia, views *norteamericanos*.

