

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

“A Martyr for a Political Ideal”:

The Image of Maximilian I of Mexico in the Habsburg Empire

By

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**Abstract:**

Two monumental events happened for the house of Habsburg in the summer of 1867 within months of each other. The first was the ratification of the Compromise with Hungary that established a new constitution and ushered in a period of liberalizing within the empire. The second was the execution of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico, and the return of his body to the empire. Taken as individual events, the two seem to have little connection. However, in the press of the time, both were important and impacted the image of the emperor Franz Joseph. Drawing from the literature, pamphlets, art, and newspapers that were produced in the Habsburg empire in the wake of Maximilian's death, this thesis will connect the tragedy to the changing political conditions. It will especially emphasize the way that discussions of Maximilian's liberal ideals connected to the transition to a constitutional monarchy.

This study will also ask the question of how a personal tragedy impacted the image of Franz Joseph by analyzing how his grief was portrayed. As an emperor Franz Joseph was popular in his late reign, but relatively unpopular in his youth. This has been partially attributed to the shift to more liberal policies in his later years, and also to public sympathy for his personal losses. He was so closely associated with his position that his personal losses also created loyalty to the crown. This study provides a case study of one of his many losses, and how it created sympathy in the press.

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## **Introduction**

In late June of 1867, the deposed emperor Maximilian von Habsburg was charged with treason and executed in Mexico, and this marked the end of a short-lived imperial project. For Mexico, this event meant the return to a republic under the leadership of Benito Juarez. For France, who had created the regime through military intervention and had supported it militarily, it was the end of the possibility of colonial control of Mexico. However, there was also a third context that felt the impact of Maximilian's death, because he was still connected to the Habsburg empire by blood if not politically. Though he had no formal political titles in the Habsburg empire, Maximilian was still connected to the empire because he was the brother to the Austrian emperor. In the wake of the execution and the later funeral in Vienna, there was an outpouring of sympathy for the royal family as the loss of Maximilian was characterized as a great loss to them personally and to the empire politically. His death also provided a moment to reflect pressing political issues through the lens of his legacy. The published material about Maximilian's death painted him as a distinctly Habsburg figure, and his loss as a kind of tragedy for the Habsburg empire. This coverage refigured Maximilian as a martyr for the political ideology of liberalism and lamented the reactionary nature of republicanism. This portrayal of Maximilian's death bolstered the image of Franz Joseph as emperor because it both provided public sympathy for his personal loss and provided a rhetorical platform to espouse the virtues of liberal monarchy at a time when the monarchy itself was undergoing a transition to a more liberal form of government.

## **Historiography**

Maximilian's period of empire in Mexico is relatively well studied as is the long-term image of Franz Joseph, but there has not yet been a study of the image of Maximilian in the wake of his death in the Habsburg empire. Maximilian himself is an interesting figure for biography because of his exceptionally adventurous life and the tragic end, which has led to a series of works that deal with his life. The most recent work that deals with the details of his life, and the efficacy of his reign in Mexico is M.M. McAllen's *Maximilian and Carlota: The Last Empire in the Americas*. This kind of work is useful in discussing Maximilian as a figure and dispelling the idea of him as an ineffective ruler or as simply a French puppet, and it explores the political decisions he made during his reign. Empress Carlota also provides fertile ground for biographies and studies of her life, because her last attempt to save her husband's life and the years of grief and mental illness that followed it are tragic and compelling.<sup>1</sup> *The Empress of Farewell* provides an in-depth though somewhat romantic account of the life of Carlota from her marriage to Maximilian to her later years and death.<sup>2</sup> These kinds of focused works that deal with the imperial couple deal with them as people with an emphasis on the internal emotions and motivations of each. The large corpus of Maximilian's letters, travel writing, and diaries provide a wealth of information on his own thoughts, encouraging the analysis of Maximilian as a man. Even some of the few studies that have dealt with Maximilian's connection to Austria deal primarily with his internal life, like an article by Lughofer that examines his motivations in accepting the Mexican throne through the lens of his poetry.<sup>3</sup> However, these all deal with

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<sup>1</sup> In this way, I would argue that she is a similar kind of tragic and fascinating figure as her sister-in-law Empress Elizabeth. They both occupy a space in the imagination as tragic and graceful figures.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Michael of Greece, *The Empress of Farewells: The Story of Charlotte, Empress of Mexico*, trans. Vincent Aurora (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002)

<sup>3</sup> Johann Georg Lughofer, translated by Jason Blake, "Ferdinand Maximilian von Habsburg's Literary Work in the Light of his Later Assumption of the Throne in Mexico," in *Austrian Studies*, Vol. 20, *Colonial Austria: Austria and the Overseas* (2012), pp. 75-95

Maximilian as a man in his own lifetime, which falls into the tendency to write history as the story of great men making political decisions.

There is another way to approach the life and death of Maximilian which treats him as a charismatic figure whose representation reveals just as much about the political discussions in the Habsburg empire as about him as a person. The only work that deals with Maximilian as a symbol following his death is Kristine Ibsen's book *Maximilian, Mexico and the Invention of Empire* which deals with the image of Maximilian's fall and execution in Mexico following his death and also in the United States and France. Ibsen creates a kind of triangle of actors consisting of Maximilian, Juarez, and Napoleon III, which deals with the representation of each in media and the perception of their roles in the fall of the Second Empire.<sup>4</sup> In a way, the fall of Maximilian's empire provided a perfect political parable because it featured an indigenous republican president overthrowing the reign of an Austrian emperor. As Ibsen argues, drawing from Hayden White's theory about imagery, this event became a political symbol specifically because of this resonance.<sup>5</sup> This study will make a new intervention by dealing with the image of Maximilian's execution in a context that Ibsen did not examine, namely in the Habsburg empire.

There is also a dense corpus of scholarship on Franz Joseph both as a man and as a symbolic figure. Unlike Maximilian, there is no shortage of studies that approach the resonance of the image of the Kaiser. Daniel Unowsky's work deals heavily with the theme of the kaiser's image. For example, his book *The Pomp of Patriotism* deals extensively with the image of Franz Joseph and the role that public holidays like the Silver Jubilee.<sup>6</sup> He argues that Franz Joseph built up an image through these kinds of public patriotism that was unifying for the empire. Pieter

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<sup>4</sup> Kristine Ibsen, *Maximilian, Mexico and the Invention of Empire* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2010)

<sup>5</sup> Ibsen, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Unowsky, Daniel L. *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: imperial celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (Purdue University Press, 2005)

Judson also argues that by the later part of his reign Franz Joseph was perceived as a beloved and sympathetic ruler, partially because his familial losses added to deep sense of tragedy and sympathy around the kaiser.<sup>7</sup> The grandfatherly image of his late reign, as both Judson and Unowsky have argued, was a product of liberalizing politics and the deepening public sympathy for Franz Joseph. Kozuchowski also makes the argument in *The Afterlife of Austria-Hungary* that part of the appeal of the elderly Franz Joseph was the tragedies that had plagued his life. Because he had long so many of the people who were close to him, he was perceived as only living for the empire.<sup>8</sup> This highlights the role that personal losses played in showing that Franz Joseph was a tragic figure, and that the tragedy enhanced his image as Kaiser. These longer-term studies track the shift from the young unpopular absolutist monarch to the sympathetic elderly monarch of the Ringstraße period, which provides a compelling narrative of change over the period of his reign.

However, there is still significant space to examine the idea of public sympathy in specific cases of loss. In her article in *The Limits of Loyalty* Alice Freifeld argues that the death of Empress Elizabeth enhanced public sympathy for the emperor broadly, but also specifically in Hungary where the empress had been the most popular.<sup>9</sup> The widespread mourning of the empress created a greater sympathy for Franz Joseph himself. This article provides the best example of examining a case study and the way that a specific example of loss can provide a deeper understanding of the sympathy that impacted Franz Joseph's image. By taking the specific case study of the death of Maximilian, it is possible to examine how another personal

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<sup>7</sup> Judson, Pieter *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Harvard University Press (April 2016), 340.

<sup>8</sup> Adam Kozuchowski, *The Afterlife of Empire: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2013), 163-164.

<sup>9</sup> Freifeld, Alice, "Empress Elizabeth as Hungarian Queen: The Uses of Celebrity Monarchism," in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky (Berghan Books, 2007)

tragedy impacted Franz Joseph's image. The Compromise of 1867 that transitioned the monarchy from an absolutist monarchy to the Dual Monarchy with Hungarian parliament approval was ratified in May of 1867.<sup>10</sup> Maximilian's execution occurred in the end of June of the same year, so the coverage of his death and the following funeral corresponded to a transitional period in the Habsburg empire. When placed in conjunction with the context of the political discussions, this will reveal how closely the political image of Franz Joseph and personal sympathy were intertwined. This also provides a case study at a pivotal moment in the politics of the empire.

This thesis will draw upon materials published immediately after his death, which will place his death in the political context of the empire in 1867 and 1868. For the sake of focusing this analysis, these materials will only draw from those that were published in the couple years following the news. It will also deal only with the German language press, though this does not mean only those published within the German speaking heartland. For example, *Die Neue Zeit* and George Simanitsch's "Ode" were published in Olmütz and several of the poems dealing with his death were published in Lombardy-Venetia. The most important mitigating factor in this period is that there was not complete press freedom in the empire, since there were still restrictions on speech that was deemed dangerous.<sup>11</sup> However, these restrictions do not negate the commentary on Maximilian, it only precludes any direct criticism of Franz Joseph. The fact that a very similar narrative appears in all of the works is, thus, significant because it was not just the creation of imperial censors.

This thesis will employ a methodology that examines the use of Maximilian's image after his death. This study will deal with his image and the context in which it was produced, and how

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<sup>10</sup> Judson, Pieter *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Harvard University Press (April 2016), 342-344.

<sup>11</sup> Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 288.

the portrayal of Maximilian also carried political meaning. Edward Berenson refers to this form of analysis as examining “charismatic figures” as a way to understand the political discourses of the later 19th century.<sup>12</sup> Examining printed materials allows for insights about Habsburg politics and the image of Franz Joseph through the image of his executed brother. This study will also focus on a different periodization than most biographies of Maximilian, which treat the period after his death as a short epilogue. Instead of ending with his execution, this analysis will instead start with his execution and examine the posthumous representations within the Habsburg context.

### **The Image of Mexico**

When the news of the death of Maximilian broke in the Habsburg empire, there were several attempts to offer descriptions of Mexico that painted a striking image of a rich but ungovernable country. This dichotomy drew upon colonial visions of the New World and revealed the deeply colonial thinking present in the empire, which showed how the rhetoric of imperialism could be present even without any colonial holdings. It also shows how the Habsburg empire conceived of itself as part of the civilized world in contrast to the barbarism of Mexico.

As several papers and pamphlets noted, the average citizen was not familiar with Mexico or its history. As the book *Kaiser Max von Mexiko*, which was published in Graz in 1867, stated no one would have thought of Mexico before the offer of the crown of Maximilian.<sup>13</sup> The author, Eugen Netoliczka, was a professor who produced educational textbooks on chemistry and

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire : Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (University of California Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexiko. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz. 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

physics. However, he also dabbled in writing historical accounts of figures in Austrian history and the history of science, which suggests that he was primarily interested in these charismatic great men of history. His book is an attempt to provide a kind of narrative of Maximilian's life in the same vein as a historical biography. Certainly, Netoliczka is correct in stating that the political events happening on the other side of the Atlantic would have been of little importance to residents of the empire before the offer of the crown to Maximilian, because it had no bearing on their own existence. The tie between the Habsburg empire and Mexico had been politically severed by the War of Spanish Succession when the Spanish throne, and the empire by extension fell out of Habsburg hands.<sup>14</sup> So, there is some veracity to the claim that it was a country so far removed from the Habsburg imagination that the average person would have taken little interest in the war playing out in Mexico before it involved Maximilian.

This lack of context or awareness of the Mexican situation meant that writers in the Habsburg empire were in a position where they could tell a version of Mexican history, and their characterization of Mexico is significant because it reveals the image that they projected onto this otherwise unknown country. These narratives laid a heavy emphasis on the perceived disorder and disorganization of Mexico. As *Kaiser Max von Mexiko* boldly states, "The history of Mexico is built on instability and revolution."<sup>15</sup> This short and pithy statement was reflected in other writing as well, which pointed to the history of coups in the country as a sign of the inability of the country to govern itself. Or, as another account of Maximilian's reign by Georg

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<sup>14</sup> Though this Renaissance era political connection to the Spanish empire was the reasoning behind the offer of the Mexican crown to an Austrian archduke. Though somewhat tenuous given the temporal distance from the Habsburg dominion over the Spanish empire, it did provide enough reason for an offer to be made. See Johann Georg Lughofer, translated by Jason Blake, "Ferdinand Maximilian von Habsburg's Literary Work in the Light of his Later Assumption of the Throne in Mexico," in *Austrian Studies*, Vol. 20, *Colonial Austria: Austria and the Overseas* (2012), pp. 75-95.

<sup>15</sup> Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexiko. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz. 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

Simanitsch stated, “rebellion burns in the hearts of the nation.”<sup>16</sup> Simanitsch, who also wrote under the name Jürg Simani, published a variety of patriotic poems about Austria and the church, and his Ode to Maximilian fit into the pattern of glorifying the empire through poetry. Both versions of this sentiment expressed the idea that rebellion and chaos were inherent to Mexico as a country. The impression on the whole was that Mexico had been the most important part of the Spanish empire that had fallen into chaos and in some cases despotism. Netolicsza pointed to Santa Anna as an example of the kind of dictator that the Mexican republic produced.<sup>17</sup> More than one pamphlet and book laid out the ethnic diversity of the country, including the differences between the black population, the indigenous population, and the creoles, and made the claim that these groups had conflicting interests.<sup>18</sup> There is a certain irony to the way that many sources pointed to the multiethnic nature of Mexican society as a source of the tension when Mexico was arguably just as diverse as the Habsburg empire itself. *Die Neue Zeit* summed up the impression of Mexican history in one sentence, “Mexico is completely incapable of ruling itself.”<sup>19</sup> It is notable that a liberal newspaper and more conservative authors seemed to be in agreement in their vision of Mexico, which indicates a somewhat shared vision of Mexico’s history.

The figure of Iturbide, the first Mexican emperor, was particularly prominent in these narratives because his fate so closely paralleled Maximilian’s. *Kaiser Max von Mexico* laid out the way in which Iturbide took the imperial throne after the independence from Spain, and how

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<sup>16</sup> “Und aus dem Herzen der Nation entbrannte lichterloh die Rebellion.” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>17</sup> Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>18</sup> See for example, Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>19</sup> “Mexiko ist absolut unfähig, sich selbst zu regieren.”, “Mexiko” *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search:>

the republicans turned on him, which led to his execution.<sup>20</sup> Though Netoliczka does not explicitly make the comparison, it is evident that this is meant to closely resemble the way that Maximilian's reign ended. By explaining these events, he is able to create foreshadowing to the fate of the second emperor. Many of the differentiating details, like Iturbide's initial exile and the Congress that brought him to power do not appear, which further strengthens the comparison.<sup>21</sup> Because this book was published after Maximilian's execution, it would not be difficult for a reader to see the connection between the two. It suggests that there was a pattern in Mexican history that Maximilian fit into. Simanitsch's Ode to Maximilian also makes a very clear reference to Iturbide's fate when it asks of Maximilian, "Did he not have an idea of Iturbide's fate that would cause him grave concern?"<sup>22</sup> This wording makes clear what other authors imply. Other authors also went further, for example an "Enthüllungen" by Theodor Schreibe laid out the story of a country that had a history of regicide by also including Montezuma II. The book starts the history of Mexico with Cortez's conquest, and suggests that Montezuma was executed by his own people.<sup>23</sup> Then the narrative makes the explicit connection between Iturbide and Montezuma by stating, "He met the same fate at his predecessor as emperor, the last monarch of the land of the Aztecs."<sup>24</sup> Schreibe was a conservative who published about the "bloodbath" in Italy in 1848, and he similarly characterized Mexico as a country where republicans caused

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<sup>20</sup> Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> "War's etwa Ahnung die ihm überkam war's Iturbids Schicksal, dessen Schrechten des Kaisers schwere Sorge mochte wecken?" Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>23</sup> Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>24</sup> "Ihn traf mit ein gleiches Loos wie seinen Vorgänger im Kaisertume Montezuma II, den letzten Monarchen des Landes aus dem Geschlechte der Azteken." Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

destruction.<sup>25</sup> In telling the story through a lens of continuity with the fall of the Aztec empire, the piece specifically points to a pattern of regicide. It emphasized the idea that political instability and regicide were an integral part of the Mexican political fabric.

This portrayal of Mexico also extended to the republican president who had defeated Maximilian. Benito Juarez played a specifically role in the Habsburg imaginings of Maximilian's downfall, because he was often given the role of the enthusiastic executioner. Juarez had been elected president before the French intervention in Mexico that brought Maximilian to the throne. He then took up the role of the president in exile who fed the resistance to the emperor. With the backing of the United States, Juarez was able to retake Mexico in the name of the republic.<sup>26</sup> However, to the writers in the Habsburg empire, Juarez was a despicable figure for his role in Maximilian's death. Netoliczka provided a short biography of Juarez before including his role in the events.<sup>27</sup> This is one of the only publications that discussed Juarez's accomplishments as the first indigenous man to achieve a law degree. It is a rare moment of acknowledgement of the president's achievements. However, the narrative then turns to portray Juarez as the man who betrayed Maximilian.<sup>28</sup> The image of Juarez as a brutal executioner or a bloodthirsty radical appeared in many of the Austrian accounts. For example, the newspaper, *Die Neue Zeit* stated that, "[Maximilian] fell as a victim of the regicide Juarez"<sup>29</sup> This denunciation is especially interesting, because it comes from a liberal paper, which was closer to Juarez's own

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<sup>25</sup> Theodor Schreibe, "Die große Revolution von Italien, das schreckliche Blutvergießen in Mailand und die Ermordung des Kommandanten Martinowich in Venedig" (Wien, 1848), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/1083C177>

<sup>26</sup> Kristine Ibsen, *Maximilian, Mexico and the Invention of Empire* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2010), 8-10.

<sup>27</sup> Eugen Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "[Maximilian] ist als ein Opfer der Königsmörders Juarez gefallen", "Ein Königsmord," *Die Neue Zeit*, 3rd of July, 1867, ANNO, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670703&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search>

political position. Schreibe, a conservative, put it even more harshly when it described Juarez as, “The republican president Juarez, a blood-thirsty man who has Indian blood running through his veins.”<sup>30</sup> This formulation of the image of Juarez particularly drew on the colonial view of Mexico and suggests that his indigenous blood contributed to the motivation to kill Maximilian. This is especially stark in contrast to the idea that the murder of a monarch was unthinkable to Habsburg commentators, implying the superiority and rationality of white Europeans. This is further inflamed by combining it with the idea of a chaotic radical democracy. So, by employing these kinds of images, those within the Habsburg empire who commented on the execution were able to cement Juarez as the archetypal blood soaked republican.

In contrast to these descriptions of the political instability, there were also descriptions of the wealth of the country. Even while reporting on what it described as the “Katastrophe” in Mexico, *Die Neue Zeit* described in detail the way in which Mexico was a land of “magic” and riches.<sup>31</sup> It emphasized the material wealth of the country while simultaneously continuing to report on the political chaos in the country. There is a dichotomy between the descriptions of the beauty of the country and the political circumstances. This also appeared in longer pieces about Maximilian’s death. For example, as “Ode” to Maximilian makes reference to the idea that Mexico is a kind of “paradise.”<sup>32</sup> They also describe the way that Maximilian was charmed by the material wealth of the country. These kind of descriptions emphasize the idea that there was incredible charm to the country, which suggest an idealized and exotic view of Mexico. This

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<sup>30</sup> “Der republikanische Präsident Juarez, ein trotziger, blutgieriger Mann in dessen Adern Indianerblut rollt,” Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>31</sup> “Feulliton” *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search>

<sup>32</sup> Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

kind of idealized view of Mexico also appeared in art, even art that depicted the execution. One drawing of the execution sets the scene of Maximilian before the firing squad in front of a background of rolling hills and lush vegetation.<sup>33</sup> This portrayal of the setting is striking for two reasons. The first is that it is inaccurate for where the execution actually took place, indicating that the artist was working from imagination. Thus, it is the way that an Austrian artist imagines Mexico to look without referencing any images of the place of execution. The second striking impression is that this is an exotic setting but is also somewhat idealized. Though the picture itself is a scene of violence, the background reflects the lush, tropical, rich image of Mexico that is prominent in the Habsburg sources. In both art and literature dealing with the execution Mexico appeared as both incapable of self-governance and rich and exotic.

This seeming contradiction in the Habsburg sources between the violence and chaos of Mexican history and the beauty of the land itself suggests that Habsburg observers were viewing Mexico through a kind of colonial gaze. As Mary Louise Pratt notes in her study of travel writing, this balance of the beautiful landscape with the barbarity of the inhabitants was a common trope in colonial travel accounts.<sup>34</sup> The place itself was exotic and enchanting in European travel writing because it deepened the sense of exotic adventure. The descriptions of Mexico in these terms was consistent with colonial tropes about the unknown and suggests that Habsburg authors were viewing this “far away” land and Maximilian’s empire through the lens of a colonial mission. The other consistent aspect of the descriptions of Mexico also fit with tropes, because emphasizing the inability of the inhabitants to govern themselves provided a kind of justification for imperial intervention. As Edward Berenson also argues, there was a colonial

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<sup>33</sup> “Maximilian zu Tode getroffen. Heliogravüre.” (1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://digital.onb.ac.at/rep/osd/?10E1EA74>

<sup>34</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge, 2003), 7-9.

narrative connected to European men dying in civilizing pursuits, “such men found themselves eulogized as martyrs to the civilizing process of colonialism... Sacrifice signaled superiority, the demonstration of which became one of the main goals of colonialism.”<sup>35</sup> The way that Maximilian and Mexico appeared in the press very much reflected these patterns. So, characterizing Mexico as chaotic in the absence of the Spanish imperial domination serves both to offer an explanation for Maximilian’s fate. Even though the Habsburg empire did not hold any colonies, there was still a distinctly colonial tone to the writings about Mexico and Maximilian. Some made the colonial element explicit, like the pamphlet that stated that the “civilized world” would remember Maximilian as, “A victim of a civilizing mission.”<sup>36</sup> Other sources also claimed that without Maximilian Mexico would fall into “der alten Barbarei”<sup>37</sup> or “Anarchy and disorder.”<sup>38</sup> In both cases, this idea implied that only the rule of a European monarch could prevent Mexico from reverting to chaos. This is a distinctly colonial view of the events that places Maximilian firmly in the position of a civilizing influence on a barbaric country.

It is also worth noting that Maximilian himself did not hold to this idea, and in his lifetime, he worked to be a Mexican monarch not a colonizer. In his reign, he saw himself very much as a Mexican emperor, and tried to establish himself as such. Rather than imposing a European culture, he attempted to integrate himself into the cultural fabric of what he called his “adoptive country.”<sup>39</sup> He emphasized imperial continuity with the Aztecs, gave speeches in

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<sup>35</sup> Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire : Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (University of California Press, 2010), 12.

<sup>36</sup> “ein Opfer einer civilisatorischen Mission.” Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>37</sup> “the old barbarism” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>38</sup> “Feulliton” *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search:>

<sup>39</sup> M.C. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlotta*, 386-387.

Nahuatl to speak the language of the people, and adopted the grandchildren of Iturbide, the previous emperor.<sup>40</sup> Though he had a short reign, his actions still show that his goal was not to civilize Mexico, but rather to make himself Mexican. From his perspective, the people of Mexico had asked him to be emperor, and he intended to focus on the good of his people.<sup>41</sup> The insistence of the Austrian press that he was a colonial hero bringing civilization to a barbaric country ran counter to Maximilian's self-presentation.

This clear colonial tone also reflects the way that Austria positioned itself in respect to colonialism, even without having any colonial possessions. As Alison Frank argues in her discussion of the Mediterranean slave trade, Austria very much saw itself as part of the civilized world.<sup>42</sup> She also states that, "And although Habsburg Austria was peripheral to Europe's engagement with the New World, it was central to Europe's engagement with the Levant."<sup>43</sup> While this may hold true on the level of formal political policy, Maximilian's reign did create a connection to the Americas. Within this context, the Austrian press, regardless of political leaning, reproduced the colonial tropes of the period that were common in Britain and France. This reflected the perception within the empire that Austria was a part of the civilized world and was just as capable of undertaking a civilizing mission. Maximilian's death showed clearly the way that Austria had internalized the ideas of colonialism without having any colonial possessions and that the German language press was quick to paint Maximilian as an imperialist hero.

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<sup>40</sup> M.C. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlotta*, 146-147.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 207-209.

<sup>42</sup> Alison Frank, "The Children of the Desert and the Laws of the Sea: Austria, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century" in *The American Historical Review*, Volume 117, Issue 2, April 2012

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 421.

## The Image of Maximilian

The primary task that Habsburg authors had to accomplish was to memorialize Maximilian and to offer an account of his life. However, beyond the attempts at a biography, there were also several concurrent political messages and inferences because as much as it was a moment to memorialize Maximilian, it was also the prime moment to inject political meaning into his death and to discuss his political goals. The multiple goals of these authors, several different characterizations of the former Archduke emerge. In the eyes of the Austrian public, he was a martyr of idealism and liberalism who was duped by the French into believing that his reign would be secure, but also as a competent emperor whose reforms should have been welcomed. These characterizations culminated in the image of a liberal whose goals were noble but were never realized.

The first significant characterization of Maximilian was as a man who was as a man who was in love with adventure. One address from his funeral attributed his decision to him lifelong feelings of “Sehnsucht.”<sup>44</sup> The author of the edited volume, Joseph Lang, made a career of collecting and publishing patriotic poems. So, this collection shows the way Maximilian’s motivations were discussed after his death. The poem claimed that Maximilian was driven longing to travel and see the world. This idea was somewhat well grounded in Maximilian’s travels when he was Archduke. Before the offer of the Mexican crown, Maximilian’s position as the admiral of the imperial navy allowed him to travel as part of his position, and he did so extensively.<sup>45</sup> It was not necessarily unreasonable to argue that these wanderings suggested a

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph Augustus Lang, “Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)” (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

<sup>45</sup>M.M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe’s Last Empire in Mexico* (Trinity University Press, San Antonio, 2014), 8-10.

man who itched to go beyond the limits of the empire. Eduad Deutsch's biography that memorialized Maximilian spent the lion share of its pages emphasizing these voyages.<sup>46</sup> Though Deutsch is somewhat implicit with his argument, this does suggest that the desire for adventure was a driving force in Maximilian's decision to accept the Mexican crown. Shortly after his death, his accounts of his travels in Greece were also published, so that the public could read about his travels while he was admiral.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, his poems about his travels were also published in a volume that explicitly stated that it had the approval of Franz Joseph.<sup>48</sup> Though publishing a man's work as a part of memorializing his death is not necessarily strange, there is a definite way in which this would have portrayed Maximilian in the public eye. Making the accounts of his travels available to the public strengthened the image of the man as an insatiable explorer. Combined with the descriptions of his enchantment with Mexico's exoticness and wealth, this paints one picture of Maximilian as a man who gave into the siren's song of adventure. However, these accounts also include poignant scenes of Maximilian missing Austrian soil. For example, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko* portrayed Maximilian turning to look over the horizon to the East right before his execution and stating, "There lay his fatherland, from which he was snatched under false pretenses."<sup>49</sup> Another poet also imagined a moment with this kind of regret where he realized, "Mexico he dreamed of as a

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<sup>46</sup> Eduad Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko" (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>47</sup> For example see Maximilian I of Mexico, *Aus meinem Leben: Reiseskizzen II Andalusien und Granada* (Leipzig, 1867) or the publication of his poems with the blessing of his brother in *Immortellen aus einer Kaisergruft* (Leipzig, 1867) <https://onb.digital/result/108BD05C>

<sup>48</sup> *Immortellen aus einer Kaisergruft* (Leipzig, 1867) Österreichische Nationalbibliothek <https://onb.digital/result/108BD05C>

<sup>49</sup> "Dort lag sein... Vaterland, dem man ihn mit einen Vorspiegelungen entrissen." Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

land of legend - But where was his home? Where was his fatherland?"<sup>50</sup> So, though he may have left the empire for the sake of adventure, the author imagines that he ultimately regretted that decision and longed for Austria before his death. Thus, his longing for adventure could serve as a catalyst for him to go to Mexico, and still not render him unsympathetic to a German speaking audience.

This idea of Maximilian as a man who loved adventure also coincided with the idea of Maximilian as an incomparable idealist who was focused on the possibility of a liberal monarchy and reform. This concept appeared in many of the accounts of his death and carried the pathos of a kind of doomed utopianism. Remarkably, this was fairly uniform sentiment in the Austrian press. For example, *Kaiser Max von Mexiko* described Napoleon presenting his plan for Mexico as, "Endowed with a romantic sense, he went with Napoleon's plan to establish a monarchy in Mexico."<sup>51</sup> This romantic sense that he is so possessed with is the promise of building his ideal monarchy. Another author explicitly stated that Maximilian had an idea of building a utopia in Mexico.<sup>52</sup> The narrative characterizes this as a kind of political idealism where Maximilian saw himself as a reformer.

There are two elements of Maximilian's life that make this narrative believable. The first is that at the time that Maximilian left for Mexico the Habsburg empire was still primarily ruled by the reactive conservatism that followed the revolutions of 1848.<sup>53</sup> So, though the empire

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<sup>50</sup> "Mexico er geträumt als Land der Sage - Doch wo war Heimat? Wo ein Vaterland?", "Die Unheil bringenden Krone" in Joseph Augustus Lang, "Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)" (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

<sup>51</sup> "Ausgestattet mit einem gewissen romantischen Sinne, ging auf den Plan Napoleons ein, die Monarchie in Mexiko aufzurichten." Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexiko. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Bibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>52</sup> Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>53</sup> Judson, Pieter *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Harvard University Press (April 2016), 293-295.

would eventually liberalize, from Maximilian's vantage point there was very little possibility of sweeping liberal reforms. His attempts at reform in Venetia had been undermined by his brother's desire to maintain centralized control, demonstrating that there was not a way for him to implement his liberal ideals within the empire.<sup>54</sup> This meant that his chance to go to Mexico meant that he could implement liberal ideals, which many of the narratives of his death focused on. The second important contextual point is that Maximilian could have reasonably assumed when he left that he would never inherit the throne of the empire. His brother had a son who he could reasonably assume would succeed him. The later succession difficulties were a product of a series of tragic occurrences that would have been impossible to predict. From this perspective, the idea of Maximilian as wanting to build a liberal state based on his own idealistic notions of governance was at least plausible as a way to explain his decision.

This idea of Maximilian as the tragically doomed idealist appeared several times in the accounts of his life and death. As Ferdinand Ritter van Schmidt, a former officer who published patriotic poems, also stated that Maximilian saw himself, "as savior of an ailing nation, who spoke of truth, freedom, glory and luck."<sup>55</sup> Perhaps the most poetic description of this idea of Maximilian as the doomed idealist appeared in an anonymous poem written in Trieste and dedicated to him that said, "An Icarus you flew with guiding wings, and the world watched in wonder, and you scalded your wings."<sup>56</sup> However, his plan of reform also brought the favorable comparison to Joseph II, who was the great historical reformer of the Habsburg empire.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> M.M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota*, 33-34.

<sup>55</sup> "als Retter einer siecher Nation, von Wahrheit, Freiheit, Ruhm und Glück gesprochen." Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

<sup>56</sup> "Ein Icarus flogst Du mit führen Schwingen, Die Welt bewunderte, und schalt Dein Ringen." "Monumente des Kaisers Maximilian Zum 19. July 1867" (Görtz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/1042DB92>

<sup>57</sup> Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

Though this implies a kind of naive idealism, it also praises Maximilian's character as the kind of man who believed in the possibility of reform and liberalization, and who believed in creating a new kind of monarchy like his ancestor.

To support this argument about Maximilian's liberalism, many of the authors pointed to the referendum that Maximilian insisted on. He did not take the Mexican crown the first time that it was offered to him, and instead insisted on having a referendum in Mexico. Only after being presented with the result of the referendum did Maximilian accept the crown. The purpose of this was to establish that his presence on the throne was desired by the Mexican people.<sup>58</sup> This is especially striking in contrast to the Habsburg claim to the imperial throne by divine right. It demonstrated the claim that Maximilian was a liberal who cared about securing approval before he took the crown. The impression that many of the accounts of his life gave was that Maximilian had grand plans for reform when he accepted the crown with the perceived blessing of the Mexican people. Many also argued that this showed the character of Maximilian as well as his political plans in Mexico. *Die Neue Zeit*, a self-proclaimed liberal paper, argued that he was a kind of idealist, and that the tragedy was his murder at the hands of those who did not understand his vision, "One of the most brilliant princes who was a tireless fighter for rights and freedom, and who lost his life for a good cause."<sup>59</sup> To a degree this also describes the loss to the empire, because they lost an archduke who was committed to the kind of reform politics that Joseph II was beloved for. For liberals like those who wrote *Die Neue Zeit*, the loss was monumental, because Maximilian was a member of the ruling dynasty who had shared their ideals. There was

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<sup>58</sup> M.M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe's Last Empire in Mexico* (Trinity University Press, San Antonio, 2014), Prologue.

<sup>59</sup> "Einer der genialsten Prinzen der unermüdliche Kämpfer für Recht und Freiheit, hat sein Leben für die gute Sache gelassen." "Ein Königsmord," *Die Neue Zeit*, 3rd of July, 1867, ANNO, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670703&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search>

a consistent image of Maximilian as a kind of idealist who represented liberalism and intended to implement a policy of reform in Mexico.

However, there was also a distinct impression that Maximilian was so focused on his own ideology that he was blinded to the deception of either the Mexican people or the French, which would ultimately lead to his undoing. This turn in the narrative reinterpreted the plebiscite as well intentioned on the part of Maximilian, but allowed him to be deceived into believing that he was welcomed. Simanitsch questioned how Max could easily believe that he was wanted in Mexico, “what did the noble Max feel then, might he have felt in his heart that the free will of a people had prepared an imperial throne for him in a far off land?”<sup>60</sup> Some claimed that Maximilian never actually had public approval. For example, Theodor Schreiber claimed that the French had conspired to fake the referendum to convince Maximilian to be part of their plans in Mexico.<sup>61</sup> Netoliczka lamented that Maximilian found such a warm reception on his arrival in Mexico, because it duped “The naive Prince” into believing that he was truly welcomed.<sup>62</sup> In this case, the author portrays Maximilian as greeting his Mexican subjects with, “Welcome me, Judas, my betrayers!”<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, the inclusion of the plebiscite in the narrative shows Maximilian’s liberalism because it shows that he valued the consent of people he governed.

The implication in highlighting this betrayal is that Maximilian was so committed to his own idea of liberalism and creating a monarchy in Mexico that he failed to see the impending betrayal. There is a kind of tension that portrays Maximilian as noble in his intentions but

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<sup>60</sup> “Was damals wohl der edle Max empfand, das seine Brust da mochte fühlen als ihn der freie Volkswillen zum Kaiserthron bereit in’s ferne Land?” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> “The naive Prince,” Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>63</sup> “Sei mir willkommen, Judas, mein Verräther!” Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

blinded by his own idealism. As Simantisch stated, the governance of Mexico required, “Only a strong hand.”<sup>64</sup> because of its history of disunity and disorder. He continues to say, “But what can philanthropy do where fanaticism and the base passions are deep in the bosom of society, which work destructively on the mechanisms that hold the state together so that it will not be overthrown!”<sup>65</sup> This suggests that the flaw, in the eyes of the author, is not Maximilian’s approach, since his liberal goal is laudable, but rather that Mexico itself was not prepared for such a good ruler. This also appears in the form of suggesting that Mexico did not understand the benefits of Maximilian’s reign. Netoliczka stated that, “These people should be lucky to have such a noble prince hold the scepter in his hand, these people should be ruled.”<sup>66</sup> Or as another anonymous poem more spitefully declared, “Mexico only needs false Gods!”<sup>67</sup> The perceived difference between a civilized European country and Mexico was vital to this argument, because it appealed to the idea that colonial governance had to be heady handed in a way that a European liberal was not. The colonial gaze that focused on the disorder in Mexico supported the idea that Maximilian was a well-meaning liberal who had big plans for the country that ultimately failed because of the country he was ruling and that he would have done well in a “civilized country.”

The most striking part of this narrative is not what is said about Maximilian’s political goals, but rather the omission of any significant details of his reign in Mexico. For all these lamentations of the wasted potential potential of Maximilian, none of the sources actually cited

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<sup>64</sup> “Nur einer starken Hand” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>65</sup> “Doch was vermag Philanthropie wo Fanatismus und eine Menge niederer Leidenschaften tief in dem Schooße der Gesellschaften haften, die zerstörend wirken auf den Mechanismus der das Staatsgebäude aufrecht hält, das es nicht dem Umstürze verfällt!” Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> “Über dieses Volk sollte der edle Prinz sein Scepter mit glücklicher Hand schwingen, dieses Volk sollte regiert werden.” Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>67</sup> “Mexiko braucht nur Götzen!” “Die Unheil bringenden Krone” in Joseph Augustus Lang, “Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)” (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

anything that he did in the three years of his reign.<sup>68</sup> As one account concluded after detailing Maximilian's decision to leave Vienna, "Unfortunately Maximilian could not bring his grand ideas to reality. The cause of this is well known."<sup>69</sup> The story then jumps ahead to the final month of his reign, when the abandonment by the French army led to his capture. This choice to not address any of Maximilian's actions as emperor of Mexico is strikingly consistent across all of the accounts, and is somewhat perplexing in light of the desire to portray Maximilian as a competent liberal monarch. However, Maximilian maintaining and expanding on Juarez's liberal reforms and his urban planning projects in Mexico City do not appear in any of these narratives.<sup>70</sup> These details would have further cemented the idea that Maximilian was determined to build a liberal monarchy in Mexico. Netoliczka makes the claim that Mexico was always going to hate Maximilian because they had a deep dislike and distrust of foreigners, which would have been directly contradicted by his popularity in Mexico because of these policies and the calls to spare the deposed emperor.<sup>71</sup> By moving straight from Maximilian's arrival in Veracruz to his death creates the impression that the monarchy was doomed from the onset. It suggests that the downfall was because Mexico, "betrayed their emperor like Judas Iscariot."<sup>72</sup> The intermediary details of Maximilian's reign would have created nuance that undermined this kind of rhetoric. This creates the poetic idea of Maximilian as an idealist who was put in a context where he was not appreciated, and thus failed because of a lack of understanding.

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<sup>68</sup> Of the many sources that I examined, which is not to claim that there were absolutely none.

<sup>69</sup> "Leider konnte Maximilian seine hohe Idee nicht zur Verwirklichung bringen. Die Ursache hiervon ist allgemein bekannt." Eduard Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko" (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>70</sup> For further information on Maximilian's liberal reforms in Mexico, see M.M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe's Last Empire in Mexico* (Trinity University Press, San Antonio, 2014)

<sup>71</sup> Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>72</sup> [hat] seine Kaiser wie ein Judas Iscariot verraten. Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

The predominant narrative that appeared in accounts of Maximilian's death was that his conduct at the end of a life made him a hero. For example, the book *Kaiser Maximilian* declared that, "He was a dreamer and a hero at the same time, who built a new empire in the new world and who died for his illusions."<sup>73</sup> Ritter's own conservatism is apparent in his harsher characterization of these ideals, but it does not stop him from calling Maximilian a hero. This idea of the heroism of Maximilian was grounded in the idea that he had bravely faced death and died as a martyr. Others laid a heavy emphasis on his heroic choices once he was faced with the inevitability of his defeat. As one author described his defeat, "When his fate was clear to him, he wanted to leave his valley of misfortune as a hero."<sup>74</sup> His heroism was in maintain his own dignity and dying for his convictions. His death had political meaning if he was viewed as, "a noble martyr for a political idea."<sup>75</sup> This formulation of the meaning of his death was remarkably uniform across the accounts of his death, regardless of the political leanings of the author.

The motif of Maximilian as a martyr also appeared in art that depicted the execution. The same drawing that showed the exotic Mexican forest also positioned Maximilian as a martyr.<sup>76</sup> His pose is reminiscent of images of the death of saints. His face is not pained but seems to have a sense of serenity. Particularly striking is the presence of a very large cross behind Maximilian, and the only face that is clear except Maximilian's own is that of the priest. This image explicitly shows the connection between the church and Maximilian and presents him as holy. This appeals

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<sup>73</sup> "Er war der Trumer und der Held zugleich, der in der neuen Welt ein neues Reich verfundet und fur seine Wahn gestorben." Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), sterreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

<sup>74</sup> "Doch so klar kein Los ihm war, er wollt 'als Held aus diesem Thal des Missgeschickes gehen." Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmutz, 1868), sterreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>75</sup> "Der Kaiser wird fortleben in der Erinnerung der ganzen civilisirten Welt als ein edler Martyrer einer politischen Idee." Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz. 1867), sterreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

<sup>76</sup> "Maximilian zu Tode getroffen. Heliogravure." (1867), sterreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://digital.onb.ac.at/rep/osd/?10E1EA74>

to the idea of martyrdom, because it connects to the Catholic idea of sacrifice. Another series of images that showed the execution also carried this theme. The first image shows Maximilian and his generals praying before the execution.<sup>77</sup> The dignified connection of the former emperor to the altar and the cross emphasizes his holiness. This also stands in stark contrast to the Mexican guards standing at the door waiting to take the emperor to his death. These figures are intentionally in shadow, placing them in contrast to the holiness of the emperor. The next picture shows him being executed, and also places priests in the foreground.<sup>78</sup> Maximilian's pose, while less exaggerated than the other piece depicting his death, it does grant him a degree of dignity. In both images those executing him are faceless, so the viewer eyes are drawn to the face of the emperor. In both cases, the emphasis on holiness in a scene of death is reminiscent of images of the martyrdom of saints.

The idea of martyrdom makes Maximilian into a symbol in the Habsburg empire for the idea of liberal monarchy. As Ibsen argued, in North America the execution became a symbol for anti-imperialism.<sup>79</sup> Especially in the United States the incident represented the rejected of colonialism and foreign control in their sphere of interest. Juarez also became symbolic in the United States because he represented the republic wresting control from European influence.<sup>80</sup> This was especially important for a United States emerging from their own civil war, because it affirmed the strength of the United States and the Monroe doctrine to drive out European influence. However, the opposite was true in the Habsburg empire. Rather than being a moment of the triumph of the republic, it was a tragic moment when an ideal liberal monarch was cut

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<sup>77</sup> "Maximilian in der Nacht vor seiner Hinrichtung zusammen mit seinen getreuen Generälen Mejia und Miramon in der Gefängniskapelle hinter einem Priester betend. " (19.06.1867) Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://digital.onb.ac.at/rep/osd/?10E1EEAA>

<sup>78</sup> "Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko - Hinrichtung " (1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10E1EA6B>

<sup>79</sup> Ibsen, 5-6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 7.

down by a republican force. This allowed liberals in the empire to separate their goals from those of the radical left and show their continued support for a different kind of monarchy. The complex portrayal of Maximilian as a kind of liberal idealist who was tempted by the idea of creating a monarchy in Mexico who was betrayed by the state, he believed in creates a symbol for the cause of liberal monarchy.

To fully appreciate the significance of this portrayal, it is necessary to discuss the political context of the Habsburg empire. The execution and the ensuing reaction coincided with a transition within the empire, and this tragic event provided a kind of platform to make a political statement that directly applied to the political affairs of the empire. Maximilian's death came directly on the heels of the compromise that transitioned the absolutist empire into the more constitutional Austro-Hungarian empire.<sup>81</sup> In response to the loss against Prussia in late 1866 the empire changed its structure to liberalize and include Hungary constitutionally in the empire. This context is necessary, because this period of transition had opened the possibility of a liberalizing monarchy in a way that had not been possible before the compromise. Franz Joseph's form of rulership was also very much in transition in this period, which impacted how he was seen by the public. In the long term, as Kozuchowski argues, this period of liberalization created part of Franz Joseph's beloved image.<sup>82</sup> Especially in the later period of the empire, his early conservative politics were seen as the folly of youth, and the compromise was seen as a moment when he learned and began to listen to his people. So, this was an important transitional period that left a permanent positive impression on the image of Franz Joseph.

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<sup>81</sup> Judson, Pieter *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Harvard University Press (April 2016) 293-295.

<sup>82</sup> Adam Kozuchowski, *The Afterlife of Empire: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2013), 157-158.

In examining the way that Maximilian's ideals appeared in posthumous accounts of his life, it is important to establish the position of Austrian liberals. Liberalism in the Habsburg empire in the period had the stated goal of creating a constitutional monarchy. As Pieter Judson argues in *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, the form of liberalism that was predominant in the empire before 1867 focused on the creation of a constitution and a parliament.<sup>83</sup> Importantly, liberalism was not opposed to the monarchy, and only sought to limit the powers of the emperor with a constitution. It was only in 1867 that the emperor was forced to accept these kinds of limits, which coincided with the death of Maximilian.

It is within this context that these statements of Maximilian's liberalism were being made, and they served as a statement on the ideal form of rulership. The argument that Mexico was fortunate to have a liberal emperor who insisted on a plebiscite that gave him popular backing also reflects on the Habsburg empire. It suggests that the empire should also support this kind of liberalization within the monarchy, where it would be appreciated like it had not been in Mexico. Direct criticism of Franz Joseph's absolutism would not have been allowed by the imperial censors, but this served as a platform to state a preference for Maximilian's form of rule. Much like how the glorification of Joseph II's German language policies implicitly criticized Franz Joseph's rejection of German nationalism, the praise of Maximilian's liberal aims also implicitly rejected absolutism.<sup>84</sup> In the context of the newly ratified Compromise, this also rallied support for Franz Joseph becoming this kind of monarch through the liberalization of the empire/

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<sup>83</sup> Pieter Judson, "Chapter 3: The Struggle for the State" in *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914* (University of Michigan Press, 1996)

<sup>84</sup> For the discussion of Joseph II in the press, see: Wingfield, Nancy M. "Emperor Joseph II in the Austrian Imagination up to 1914" in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky (Berghan Books, 2007).

This moment also allowed liberals in the Habsburg empire to differentiate their position from that of Mexican liberals. The statement from *Die Neue Zeit* that “their liberals are not like our liberals.”<sup>85</sup> Is enlightening because it draws a firm line on where the party stands on questions like the monarchy. The argument that the article makes is that Mexican liberals are radicals in a way Habsburg liberals were not, and that their kind of radicalism did not represent the goals of liberalism on the whole.<sup>86</sup> The paper makes the argument that the most important difference between the radical liberalism of Mexican republicans and the goal of liberals within the empire is that they may want reform, but they could never imagine the deposition of a monarch.<sup>87</sup> As they state, they love their emperor, and just wish for the reform of the monarchy, so Maximilian’s fate is completely incomprehensible.<sup>88</sup> In this way, the event provided a reason for liberals within the empire to state their political position on the monarchy. It allowed them to draw this line clearly where they still professed their loyalty to the Kaiser. This presents their political goals clearly in contrast to what they see as inconceivable in the name of liberalism, which defines their own position. Statements like, “Mexico never had a president as democratic as the emperor.”<sup>89</sup> suggest two important elements the liberalism in this period. The first is to attest to the virtue of a liberal monarch, and the desirability of this form of government. Liberals could also use this moment to clearly set themselves apart from republicanism, which they considered far too radical, and to make it clear that they still supported the monarchy.

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<sup>85</sup> “Mexiko” *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search>:

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> “Mexiko habe nie einen so demokratischen Präsidenten gehabt, wie der Kaiser,” Eugen, Netoliczka, *Kaiser Max von Mexico. Ein Blatt zur Weltgeschichte* (Graz. 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/106BC03F>

On the whole, the authors and artists in the Habsburg empire characterized Maximilian as an idealist who believed in the ideals of liberalism who was ultimately martyred because the radical and chaotic political landscape of Mexico did not allow. In the specific moment of reform and transition in the empire that was occurring in the summer of 1867, this took on a kind of poetic meaning. Maximilian died because the country that he ruled could not understand his idealism or the noble nature of his goal, and in the eyes of the Habsburg commentators Mexico was the wrong place because it rejected good monarchy. However, given the political change that was happening in the empire, it could also be argued that Franz Joseph was implementing the dream of liberal monarchy that Maximilian had died for. In this way, the arguments about Maximilian's liberalism also strengthened the image of Franz Joseph, which would have a longer legacy that would establish Franz Joseph as the people's emperor.

### **Dynasty and Nation**

Along with the questions of Maximilian's political beliefs, there was also the question of where Maximilian belonged, and what countries felt the deepest grief as his loss. Another significant element in the portrayal of Maximilian was the desire to portray him as a Habsburg and an archduke returning to home, even under tragic circumstances. The press laid heavy emphasis on his house and the way in which he was an archduke who had been murdered abroad and who was returning to where he belonged. It is important to stress that at the time of his death Maximilian did not hold any of the titles of the empire beyond the name Habsburg. He had reached an agreement with his brother to abdicate all his imperial titles and his right to the throne before he left for Mexico, so on a strictly political level there was no impact in the Habsburg

empire.<sup>90</sup> This piece of information is vital because his titles and belonging in the empire played a central role in depictions of his death, even going so far as to seemingly return his imperial titles to him and mourn him as an archduke. The question of nationalism also appeared in many sources, with some praising Maximilian as a German figure. The tensions surrounding nationalism in the period and the nationality of the Habsburgs appeared clearly in the discourses around Maximilian's death.

When Maximilian was executed, writers in the Habsburg empire were quick to proclaim that all of Europe mourned the loss of such a good prince, but also that the empire had a right to mourn him the most deeply, because he had been their archduke. Many writers made the claim that the events in Mexico had saddened the whole world or the whole of Europe, naturally excluding Mexico, because of the loss of a good and honorable monarch. As Eduard Deutsch claimed, "The news of the passing of Kaiser Maximilian of Mexico has made the same impression all over the world. Everyone looks sadly to Mexico where an Austrian archduke fell as the victim of betrayal and brutality."<sup>91</sup> The theme of his betrayal by his people also plays a prominent role in this particular portrayal of the event. The execution should have been shocking and tragic to all of the world because a monarch had been betrayed and killed by the people he ruled. A pamphlet published in Brünn in 1867, about what it called "the murder of Maximilian" stated, "The murder fills all of Europe with the same pain"<sup>92</sup> These statements are suggesting the

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<sup>90</sup> M.M. McAllen, *Maximilian and Carlota: Europe's Last Empire in Mexico* (Trinity University Press, San Antonio, 2014), Prologue.

<sup>91</sup> "Die Nachrichten von dem Hinscheiden des Kaisers Maximilian hatte in der ganzen Welt einen und denselben Eindruck gemacht. Alles blickte traurig auf Mexico, wo ein Erzherzog von Oesterreich dem Verrate und der Grausamkeit zum Opfer gefallen war." Eduard Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko" Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, (Brünn, 1868), <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>92</sup> "Und des Mordes Trauerkunde füllt mit Schmerz Europa ganz." Xavier Wiederkehr, "Ein Klage-ton über den Mord des Kaisers Maximilian" (1867, Brünn), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/108D63C3>

same sentiment that the event was so inherently tragic that all of Europe would feel the pain of it. Interestingly, these sweeping statements about the widespread grief in Europe do include France, despite the country and Napoleon III arguably being at least partially responsible for Maximilian's death.<sup>93</sup> This rhetoric served to further reinforce the idea of the "civilized" world grieving the wrong that was done in a barbaric country.

However, others claimed that the Habsburg empire felt the most acute grief at his death, because they were his homeland. They made the claim that while the whole world or the whole of Europe, there was a special kind of grief in the empire. *Die Neue Zeit* made the distinction in an article that was also printed in *Die Tyroler Zeitung* that Europe mourned him, but the Habsburg empire mourned him the most.<sup>94</sup> As the article claimed, "When the facts of this terrible events became known, the ... tragic end of this grand archduke creates the same tragic terms by the local population."<sup>95</sup> Others made even more specific claims to grief based on their level of connection to Maximilian. For example, an anonymous poem published in Trieste claimed that, "The city is wrapped in deep sadness, the city that he chose to call home."<sup>96</sup> Because of Maximilian's connection to Trieste as the former governor of Lombardy-Venetia, and his former residence in the city, the publication in Trieste claimed that they had a connection to "unsern Max."<sup>97</sup> The author laments that when he died Maximilian was so far away from those who loved him, which means both his family and those in the city that he had once ruled. As another

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<sup>93</sup> The removal of French troops and Napoleon's failure to intercede arguably contributed to Maximilian's downfall

<sup>94</sup> "Mexiko" *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-](https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search)

[content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search:](https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search)

<sup>95</sup> "das Faktum in der schrecklichen Art zum Vorschein gekommen, ...dem tragischen Ende dieses hohen Fürsten gibt sich in den verendtesten Ausdrücken bei der hiesigen Bevölkerung fund." "Mexiko" *Die Neue Zeit*. 12th of July, 1867, ANNO Zeitung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-](https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670712&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search)

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<sup>96</sup> "Und die Stadt hüllt tiefe Trauer, die zur Heimat er erwählt." "Monumente des Kaisers Maximilian Zum 19. July 1867" (Görtz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/1042DB92>

<sup>97</sup> "Our Max" Ibid.

author claimed, Maximilian was deeply beloved in Venetia as a good governor, and the deep affection expressed by the writer in Trieste.<sup>98</sup> This is a somewhat romanticized memory of Maximilian, because his time as governor was also marked by a dislike of the Habsburg empire even if the people personally liked him. Though he was charismatic and well-meaning, he was still seen as part of an empire frustrating the hope of a unified Italy.<sup>99</sup> The coverage after his death emphasizes the love of his subjects and does not touch on some of the conflicts that occurred when Maximilian was governor. The striking element of these declarations of the wide-ranging grief after Maximilian's death is the way that they claimed that the empire had a special position of being the most aggrieved, because it points to the idea that, as Maximilian's homeland, the empire felt a particularly deep grief.

Another interesting element of this return of his Habsburg connection through his death is also the tendency to emphasize the titles that he no longer had in the empire, and to mourn him as an archduke. For example, the pamphlet that contained a number of speeches from the period after the return of his body lists all of his imperial titles on the cover, despite many of them no longer applying to him. Other sources referred to the fact that an "archduke" had been murdered and was returning home.<sup>100</sup> This is worth noting specifically because it functions as a half-truth, but one that is compelling because it reminded people of where Maximilian had belonged in the empire. It reminded them not of the man who had left to rule Mexico, but rather of the archduke who had once been a part of ruling the emperor, and who had been much beloved. The pamphlet "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko"

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<sup>98</sup> Eduard Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko", Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, (Brünn, 1868), <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>99</sup> Gene Smith, *Maximilian and Carlota: A Tale of Romance and Tragedy* (William and Morrow, 1973), 74.

<sup>100</sup> "Novaras Heimkehr aus Mexiko" in Joseph Augustus Lang, "Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)" (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

demonstrates this idea clearly both in its title and in the way that it was structured.<sup>101</sup> The structure of the narrative itself also focuses heavily on his time in Austria and Venitia with the period where he ruled Mexico only taking up the last two pages of the twenty-three-page pamphlet.<sup>102</sup> The art associated with this period of mourning also reflects this desire to reconnect Maximilian to the empire after his death. A painting that depicted the return of his body to Trieste shows his funeral barge surrounded by the imperial symbols.<sup>103</sup> The painter, Tito Agujari, was an Italian portrait painter living in Trieste, and the painting was a departure from his usually apolitical art. The painting is full of Austrian flags, both the red and the white and the older imperial black and gold, which conveys the image of a distinctly imperial mourning. There is also a number of other flags, including one for the church and one for Italy, which enforce his connection to both the church and to the empire. This visually demonstrates the desire to connect Maximilian back to the empire and to mourn him as an archduke. The sketch for a memorial statue of Maximilian also demonstrated an attempt to connect him to the empire. The sketch surrounded the statue with coats of arms that represented all of the composite parts of the empire.<sup>104</sup> Notably missing from either of these depictions is the Mexican flag, or anything to represent his Mexican title. This clearly shows the way in which in mourning Maximilian, the empire affirmed his connection to him and simultaneously disregarded his Mexican connections. In effect, this allowed them to mourn “their Max,” which meant the archduke they remembered before his failed Mexican adventure.

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<sup>101</sup> Frontispiece of Joseph Augustus Lang, “Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)” (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

<sup>102</sup> Eduard Deutsch, “Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko” (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>103</sup> Agujari, Tito, “Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko - Überführung seines Leichnams,” (1870), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10DF3BF2>

<sup>104</sup> “Denkmal” Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://digital.onb.ac.at/rep/osd/?10F91340>

The most significant element of the mourning around Maximilian's death was emphasizing the way that his conduct reflected his status as a Habsburg and how that emphasis glorified his brother proving the virtue of the ruling house. On one hand, they lamented the loss of a member of their royal house. For example, Eduard Deutsch's "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian" stated that, "There are painful memories that the name 'Mexico' evokes in every Austrian. He thinks with great sadness about this faraway land where a son of the the house of Habsburg-Lothringen was arrested by the victorious republicans and shot."<sup>105</sup> Similarly, another pamphlet introduced the entire tragic event by proclaiming that, "His name will be eternally engraved in history. The love, the tears, they decorate the crown that was worn by the man of the Habsburg dynasty."<sup>106</sup> The author of the pamphlet, Rudolph Pernitsch, was a patriot and a poet who had once written a poem that praised the Austrian performance in the war against Denmark.<sup>107</sup> His sentiments about Maximilian also matched this deep sense of patriotism. Some also viewed Maximilian as consciously aware of representing the dynasty. For example, Simantisch imagined that in the moment Maximilian realized that he would be defeated that he said, "The Max on the throne of Mexico died as a true son of the house of Habsburg."<sup>108</sup> This was a strikingly common motif in all of the accounts of his death. As another author stated, "Max, the well-known image of Habsburg loyalty, decided to stay in the land and bear the price

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<sup>105</sup> Es sind schmerzliche Erinnerungen, welche der Name "Mexiko" in jedem Österreicher wachruft. Mit inniger Wehmut denkt derselbe an dieses überseeische Land...wo ein hochbegabter Sprosse aus dem Hause Habsburg-Lothringen von den siegreichen Republikanern zum Tode verurteilt und erschossen wurde" Eduard Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko" (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>106</sup> "Unsterblich prangt in der Geschichte sein Name, Die Liebe, die Thränen, sie Schmücken die Krone, Die getragen ein Man von Habsburger Stamme." Rudolph Pernitsch "Nachruf für weiland Se. Majestät den Kaiser Max von Mexiko, verblichen zu Queretaro den 19. Juni 1867" (Wien 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10905E5B>

<sup>107</sup> Rudolph Pernitsch, "Oesterreich's neue Lorbeerkraenze," (Wien, 1864), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [https://digital.onb.ac.at/OnbViewer/viewer.faces?doc=ABO\\_%2BZ219284407](https://digital.onb.ac.at/OnbViewer/viewer.faces?doc=ABO_%2BZ219284407)

<sup>108</sup> "der Max am Throne Mexikos der starb als echter Habsburgsproß" Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

of his own life.”<sup>109</sup> The choice to face his death and remain loyal to his cause was heroic in itself, but the rhetoric of his Habsburg virtue has larger implications. He stands in as a representation of his dynasty, and the tragedy in his end is partially connected to a loss of the part of the royal house. The dynasty served as a unifying factor for the empire, so this kind of loss had strong resonance. Even without a formal title, he was still a member of the royal family. This also implicitly suggested that his brother, who was also the image of the dynasty, possessed these same virtues.

This idea of Maximilian’s family legacy also appeared in an object that was created after the death of Empress Elizabeth, which showed two paintings as objects of mourning.<sup>110</sup> The painting of Maximilian shows him in his uniform as archduke rather than the regalia of the Mexican emperor. It also shows him surrounded by the other generations of Habsburg emperors. This shows the connection between Maximilian and his family, and the way in which he was part of a family tradition. From the perspective of Maximilian’s earlier loss of his titles, this seems to be a reconnection to the dynasty after his decision to go to Mexico, which essentially returned to his beloved image before his departure. So, the idea of Maximilian returning home as a “true Habsburg” was something that was not just perpetuated by commentators on the events, but also by the choices made regarding his burial. So, the connection was a part of the public rituals of mourning and burial. As Daniel Unowsky argues, these kinds of public events and the choices made in planning were a part of a political strategy that reflected on the emperor.<sup>111</sup> In this case, this rhetorical move to emphasize Maximilian’s virtue as a Habsburg connects his death to the

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<sup>109</sup> “Max, den bekannten Character der Habsburger getreu, entschied sich dafür, im Lande zu bleiben und selbst um den Preis seines Lebens anzubarren.” Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>110</sup> Luigi Bartegazo, “Trauer- oder Memorialobjekte für Kaiserin Elisabeth und Kaiser Maximilian von Mexiko” (1898), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10F40D9C>

<sup>111</sup> Unowsky, Daniel L. *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: imperial celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (Purdue University Press, 2005)

continuation of the monarchical structure in the empire. Given the central importance of the dynasty as a foundational part of the empire, this focus on Habsburg virtue in Maximilian's case also bolstered Franz Joseph and the institution of the monarchy.

However, there is also the difficult question of nationality, since the image of the dynasty was not national, but some of those who wrote about the events chose to focus on Maximilian's Germanness. The Habsburgs were faced with the rising tide of nationalism within the empire in this period, and German nationalist did look for a representation of their ideals within the dynasty. As Unowsky argues, Franz Joseph's non-national image was intentional and part of his appeal as an emperor.<sup>112</sup> Because Franz Joseph remained a figure outside of nationalism who appealed to most of the empire specifically because of this non-national stance, German nationalists focused instead on the figure of Joseph II to find Germanness within the monarchy.<sup>113</sup> In the case of Ferdinand Ritter von Schmidt, he saw the figure of a German monarch in Maximilian. While others called him a true Habsburg and used his death as a opportunity to praise Habsburg heroism, nationalists took the moment to focus on his Germanness. For example, von Schmidt pointed out the discontinuity of, "A German duke on Montezuma's throne."<sup>114</sup> which in national terms seemed incorrect. It implies that part of the disconnect between Maximilian and the people that he ruled was this difference of nationality. Another anonymous poet was also quick to emphasize Maximilian's Germanness in their tributes to him, like the author who stated that, "Nothing will glimmer on the other side of the Atlantic

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<sup>112</sup> Unowsky, Daniel L. *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: imperial celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (Purdue University Press, 2005)

<sup>113</sup> Wingfield, Nancy M. "Emperor Joseph II in the Austrian Imagination up to 1914" in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances, and State Patriotism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy*, ed. Laurence Cole and Daniel Unowsky (Berghan Books, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> "Ein deutscher Fürst auf Montezuma's Thron," Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

anymore. The German Max is returning home to us.”<sup>115</sup> This insistence on classifying Maximilian as German when the dynasty was carefully removed from nationalism is interesting, because it seems to be a part of the German nationalist desire to find heroes in the ruling dynasty. It also suggests that the right place for a German monarch is in a German speaking country, not far away in the Americas.

Others attributed his heroism to his Germanness, which was decidedly nationalist because it was a chance to profess German virtues. For example, Simanitsch’s declaration of, “But we cry for you, you heroic German son!”<sup>116</sup> This is a particularly national formulation of mourning. Schreibe described the moment of Maximilian’s death as, “The charge fell and the German heart that beat for everything good and glorious - was pierced!”<sup>117</sup> Ritter attributed the good qualities that so many praised him for to his Germanness. In a poetic sense, the idea of his German heart placed his national identity at the core of his being. As *Kaiser Maximilian* also proclaimed, “A blonde Cesar was a hero; but when the suffering ends, tears will accompany the news of the new Golgotha...in the heart of the German people.”<sup>118</sup> The focus on Maximilian’s European features produces a kind of striking image of a fair German monarch falling at the hands of Mexican republicans, which is replete with nationalism. The author further deepens the nationalism of the statement by suggesting with allusion that Maximilian was a martyr for the German nation. This

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<sup>115</sup> “Nicht über’m Atlantik wird er mehr schimmern, Der deutsche Max ist uns ja heimgekehrt.”, “Novaras Heimkehr aus Mexiko” in Joseph Augustus Lang, “Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko)” (Wien, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

<sup>116</sup> “Doch wehe dir, du deutscher Heldensohn!” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>117</sup> “Die Recharge fiel und das deutsche Herz, das für alles Gute und Herrlich so hoch geschlagen - war durchbohrt!” Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>118</sup> ein blonder Cäsar sich als Held erprobt; doch wenn die Leidenschaften ausgetobt, dann werden reine Thränen nur die Kunde begleiten von dem neuen Golgotha...in des deutschen Volkes Munde.” Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

parallels the claims about Maximilian's virtue coming from the connection to the dynasty, and ultimately, they fill the same rhetorical role of bolstering and glorifying an idea be it the idea of the dynasty or the idea of the German nation. However, the claims of German nationalists of Maximilian's German virtue serve as a kind of implicit rejection of Franz Joseph's non-national image. Though the reigning emperor refused to be associated with German nationalism, German nationalists could create the image of a tragic German prince out of Maximilian's narrative.

Upon the return of his body to Austria, Maximilian underwent a kind of symbolic transformation from Mexican emperor back to Habsburg archduke. The portrayal of Maximilian and his belonging in the empire used the symbolic moments of his death and funeral to reaffirm his position as a part of the empire and the dynasty. The distance that had been created by Maximilian renouncing his titles and his right to the imperial throne was effectively erased, and Maximilian was mourned as a Habsburg archduke. This also allowed authors to attribute the heroism of Maximilian's actions to the virtues of the Habsburg dynasty, which also intrinsically strengthen the reign of his brother. However, the opportunity for German nationalists to portray Maximilian as an ideal German monarch, which allowed for them to see a version of Germanness even in a dynasty that was attempting to maintain a non-national image.

### **Franz Joseph and Public Sympathy**

The most important facet of the reaction to the death of Maximilian was how it allowed the public to see the personal mourning of the imperial family, and to express sympathy for the loss. This was the first of a long line of personal tragedies that allowed the public to see Franz Joseph as a man who had suffered a personal loss, and who bore his sadness with a sense of dignity and duty. It also allowed public grief to be directed at the female members of the family,

who could stand in to represent a kind of more emotive grief, because the gendered ideas of mourning allowed the female members of the family to more openly mourn. This event created a public sympathy for Franz Joseph in a way that would carry through his reign as he also experienced other personal tragedies. This first one set a pattern of how the public would view the losses of the kaiser for the rest of his reign.

The image of Franz Joseph at the time of the Compromise was in transition, because his earlier absolutist policies had been deeply unpopular. The positive reputation of the people's emperor that characterized his later reign had not yet emerged. As Daniel Unowsky argues, Franz Joseph focused on the dignity of the dynasty and restoring the central role of piety in the Habsburg identity.<sup>119</sup> His image in this early period was that of a serious and pious young emperor. This was still a relatively distant and impersonal image. However, the death of Maximilian was the first instance when the emperor publicly grieved a loss.

In the aftermath of the execution, people who wanted to tell the story of Maximilian's life put an emphasis on his bond with his brother, which emphasized how the loss of Maximilian was also a personal loss to the kaiser. In telling the story of Maximilian's early life Eduad Deutsch put a heavy emphasis on the bond with his brother growing up.<sup>120</sup> He asserts that the two brothers had a strong and loving relationship in their early life. Putting an emphasis on these years and the bond between them deepens the sense that Franz Joseph lost a brother that he loved dearly. One episode that the authors used to demonstrate the strong bond between the brothers was the assassination attempt against Franz Joseph early in his reign.<sup>121</sup> Following this attempt,

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<sup>119</sup>Daniel Unowsky, "Reasserting Empire: Habsburg Imperial Celebrations after the Revolutions of 1848-1849," in Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past. The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe* (Purdue University Press, 2001)

<sup>120</sup> Eduad Deutsch, "Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko" (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>121</sup> For the details of this attempt, see Judson, Pieter *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Harvard University Press (April 2016).

Maximilian took part in a crusade to bring those responsible to justice, and who also raised funds to create a church on the spot of the attempt. In an address given in the Votivkirche, the church that Maximilian built, the speaker stated that, “The worth of the imperial brothers will always bloom at Max’s grave. The Votivkirche is his life.”<sup>122</sup> In emphasizing Maximilian’s reaction to the attempt on his brother’s life, they also emphasized his love for his brother as a central part of his life. By painting him as a loving brother, these authors both pointed to a reason for Franz Joseph’s grief. This was also something of a fiction, since the reality of the brothers’ relationship was strained by the time that Maximilian left for Mexico. The difference between Maximilian’s liberalism and Franz Joseph’s conservative politics caused considerable discord, which led to Maximilian being removed from power in Venetia.<sup>123</sup> The assertion that the two were very close was not grounded in the reality of their relationship, but rather in the desire to show the loss to the emperor.

In telling the story of Maximilian’s life, Franz Joseph was also portrayed as a supportive brother, who was saddened by his brother’s decision but who supported him regardless. For example Deutsch states that, “Kaiser Franz Joseph, who approved reluctantly of his illustrious brother’s decision, had a touching farewell to him. It was the last time that he saw him.”<sup>124</sup> There is a sense that Franz Joseph was somewhat aware that the decision his brother was making could lead to his ruin, but still understood and supported his brother’s goal. This is again a rosy view of the relationship. The reality was that Franz Joseph forced the abdication of all Habsburg titles at

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<sup>122</sup> “Des kaiserlichen Bruders wert wird das Grab des Max stets blüh’n, Die Votivkirche ist sein Leben.” “Votivkirche und Kapuziner-Graf in Wien” Cypressen-Kränze zur Europäischen Todtenfeier im Kaiserhause Oesterreich für weiland Ferdinand Max Josef von Habsburg (Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10670D19>

<sup>123</sup> M.M. McAllen, 33.

<sup>124</sup> Kaiser Franz Joseph, welcher mit Widerwillen den Entschluss seines erlauchten Bruders billigte, nahm in rührender Weise Abschied von ihm; er hatte ihn zum letzten Mal gesehen.” Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

one of their last meetings and, “Maximilian...exploded with rage and accused his brother of putting him in a helpless position.”<sup>125</sup> In reality, the relationship between the brothers was deeply strained by the time of Maximilian’s departure. However, the scenes of Maximilian’s last time that he visited his brother in these texts are clear scenes of brotherly love. They emphasize the way that Franz Joseph loved his brother and had one last loving farewell. For example, in the Ode to Maximilian, the author describes Franz Joseph taking his brother’s hand and wishing him luck.<sup>126</sup> Deutsch imaged a even more emotional scene, “The brothers fell into each other’s arms and kissed warmly, clearly having a good relationship.”<sup>127</sup> The tragedy and the pain for Franz Joseph is self-evident in these scenes, because his last contact with his brother was so loving. It also states that Maximilian left “with a heavy heart” because he was leaving the brother and family who he loved dearly.<sup>128</sup>

There were also those who imagined that the bond lasted until Maximilian’s last moment, when he thought of his brother before his death. Simanitsch's Ode imaged that Maximilian spoke about all of the people in his life before he died, and he said, “And you Franz Joseph, home on the banks of the Donau, who is loved by a Million Austrians and who won strength through hard trials...O live well and lay my bones in the ranks of my ancestors!”<sup>129</sup> This was unlikely in Maximilian's last moments, since he had a complicated relationship with his brother and the

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<sup>125</sup> M.M. McAllen, 122-123

<sup>126</sup> Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Bibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>127</sup> “Die beiden Brüder fallen einander in die Arme und küssen sich herzlichst, sichtlich in größter Beziehung. “Theodor Schreibe, *Enthüllungen über Maximilian I., Kaiser von Mexiko, und dessen tragisches Ende* (Wien, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104CF8F2>

<sup>128</sup> Eduad Deutsch, “Erinnerungen an Ferdinand Maximilian, Erzherzog von Oesterreich, Kaiser von Mexiko” (Brünn, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104DF7F6>

<sup>129</sup> “Auch du Franz Josef Heim am Donaustrand, der du geliebt von Oestrichs Millonen durch schwere Prüfung neue Kraft gewonnen...O lebe wohl und gönne dem Gebein des Bruders Platz in seiner Ahnen Reih'n!” Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

empire, and his last words were wishing that his death would bring peace to Mexico.<sup>130</sup>

However, the question present in these portrayals of the strong brotherly bond is not whether this was an accurate portrayal of their relationship, but rather how it impacted the idea of Franz Joseph. The emotionally charge image of a loving brother who had supported his brother's liberal vision supported two images of the emperor. Firstly, that he was able to see the liberal dream, which was important in the transition in the wake of the Compromise. Secondly, it produced sympathy for a man who had lost a close family member. This tied the political commentary of Maximilian's liberalism to his brother's grief.

Franz Joseph's reaction also played a prominent role in the narrative, because he is faced with the grief of losing his brother and handled it with the grace of a monarch. In a narrative where the bond between Maximilian and Franz Joseph was deeply important, it was natural that the Kaiser would be portrayed grieving. However, the form of this grief is particularly interesting, because it shows Franz Joseph as grieving in a way that was dignified. For example, the Ode described the way that, "the grief of his brother's fate makes Franz Joseph's soul heavy and makes it so he cannot have any rest."<sup>131</sup> This showed him as grieving, but without an outward expression of grief. Another author described him receiving the news stoically. It then describes the way that he notes that this was another betrayal by the French.<sup>132</sup> This emphasizes the way that he is grieved by the news, but also handles it with dignity. His stoicism is at the mark of a masculine ruler who keeps his duty in mind, and the idea that he calmly notes the affront by the French also reflects the idea that he holds the political fate of the empire.

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<sup>130</sup> M.M. McAllen, 386-387.

<sup>131</sup> "Und Kummer um des Bruders Los umzieht Franz Josefs Seele schwer und gönnt ihm keine Ruhe mehr." Georg Simanitsch, *Maximilian I. Kaiser von Mexiko: Ode* (Olmütz, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/104AFD8A>

<sup>132</sup> Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

However, he does not act out of anger, and only shows a kind of calm grief. The imagery associated with Maximilian's death also emphasized Franz Joseph's stoic grief. A sketch of Franz Joseph viewing the statue of his brother in Trieste also shows him as a kind of dignified figure while still emphasizing his love for his brother.<sup>133</sup> It also demonstrates his piety, which was an integral part of his image as an emperor. Thus, the accounts of Maximilian's downfall also clearly showed Franz Joseph's reaction and emphasized his dignified grief.

The female members of the royal family also appeared as figures of grief, but they were allowed a kind of deeply emotive grief in these narratives. His mother appeared as one of the most aggrieved people in the family, because of the pain of losing a son. In a poem mourning his death, his mother is portrayed as crying to stop his execution, though it falls on deaf ears.<sup>134</sup> This is not the only poem that focuses on the grief of his mother, as another also mentioned her pain at losing a son.<sup>135</sup> This appealed to the natural bond between a mother and a son, and her pain at losing her son. Carlota became the focal point of the public sympathy, because she had lost her husband. At the time of his death, her travel across Europe to try to save his life ended with her in Miramare castle.<sup>136</sup> Upon receiving the news of Maximilian's death, *Die Neue Zeit* immediately extended their sympathy to Carlota, and said that they prayed for her and the recovery of her good health.<sup>137</sup> While there was sympathy for the family, Carlota was in a particular position as his widow. Another poem portrayed her as an angel who had done her best

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<sup>133</sup> "Kaiser Franz Joseph bei der Enthüllungsfeier des Denkmals Kaiser Maximilians von Mexiko in Triest" Xylografie nach Skizze von L. Straß. (1875), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10FE3599>

<sup>134</sup> Rudolph Pernitsch "Nachruf für weiland Se. Majestät den Kaiser Max von Mexiko, verblichen zu Queretaro den 19. Juni 1867" (Wien 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10905E5B>

<sup>135</sup> "Monumente des Kaisers Maximilian Zum 19. July 1867" (Görtz, 1867), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/1042DB92>

<sup>136</sup> Prince Michael of Greece, *The Empress of Farewells: The Story of Charlotte, Empress of Mexico*, trans. Vincent Aurora (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002)

<sup>137</sup> "Ein Königsmord," *Die Neue Zeit*, 3rd of July, 1867, ANNO, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=dnz&datum=18670703&seite=1&zoom=33&query=%22Mexiko%22&ref=anno-search>

to intercede for her husband.<sup>138</sup> Carlota is portrayed as being driven to illness by her grief at the loss. One author made the comparison of her to Ophelia, who was also driven mad by love and grief.<sup>139</sup> This is a particularly gendered view of grief, because the female members of the family are allowed loud and “hysterical” grief, while Franz Joseph’s grief was portrayed as stoic and rational. Carlota, as the grieving widow was the focus of public sympathy, but the whole family also earned public sympathy through the portrayal of their very human grief.

On the longer term, this was part of a pattern of public sympathy that enhanced his image. The idea of a tragic man who had nothing left but the empire was common in the later period of the empire and was part of the deep love for the emperor.<sup>140</sup> The double portrait of Maximilian and Empress Elizabeth created after the death of the latter demonstrates the way in which these tragedies persisted in the public memory. This object effectively displays the idea that there were a number of losses in the Kaiser's life, and the first of these was the loss of Maximilian.

## Conclusion

In the mid 19th century, monarchs functioned both as people and as symbols of their empire or nation, which happened either through the distinct efforts of the monarch or through popular image in the rapidly emerging press. The execution of Maximilian functioned as a clear moment to convey political ideas and sympathies through the tragic events. The public grieving of the royal family and, to an extent, larger society also provided a platform to discuss issues that

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<sup>138</sup> Rudolph Pernitsch “Nachruf für weiland Se. Majestät den Kaiser Max von Mexiko, verblichen zu Queretaro den 19. Juni 1867” (Wien 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10905E5B>

<sup>139</sup> Ferdinand Ritter von Schmid, *Kaiser Maximilian* (Raab, 1868), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/10908FCF>

<sup>140</sup> Adam Kozuchowski, *The Afterlife of Empire: The Image of the Habsburg Monarchy in Interwar Europe* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2013)

were relevant to the political context of the empire refracted through the lens of mourning an Austrian archduke.

The way that authors within the empire portrayed both Mexico and Maximilian created a commentary on the benefits of liberal monarchy and the dangers of unfettered nationalism combined with republicanism. The image of Maximilian as the idealist set on the idea of a liberal monarchy who was betrayed and executed by nationalist republicans sends a clear political message. It employs a colonial view of the inferiority and chaos of Mexico to state that Maximilian's goal was noble, and could have succeeded somewhere else, but that it was never appreciated or understood in a state that habitually fell into political unrest and revolution. Put in the context of the reforms that were occurring in the wake of the Compromise of 1867 and the transition to a more constitutional monarchy, this can also be read as an attestation to the virtues of this kind of monarchy and the desirability of one in Austria. It also meant that authors within the empire could provide a bloody and tragic example of the dangers of republicanism, further cementing the virtue of the monarchy. In a political sense, this strengthened Franz Joseph's positive public image as a reforming emperor.

On the question of nations Maximilian's heroism in his final days made an appealing element to attribute to his inborn virtue either as a Habsburg or a German. Authors who primarily wanted to venerate the monarchy praised Maximilian for dying as a true Habsburg. However, those who rejected Franz Joseph's non-national stance on the monarchy could also project national German ideals on Maximilian. They could praise him as a German, even if this stance contradicted the way that Franz Joseph chose to portray the dynasty. This points specifically to the resonance of the image of the House of Habsburg and the ongoing tension over the desire of German nationalists to claim the Germanness of the dynasty.

Finally, it also produced sympathy for Franz Joseph and the royal family in a way that humanized him. People could imagine the pain that the kaiser felt receiving the news of the death of his beloved brother and could sympathize. The image of Carlota's hysterical grief at the loss of her husband, who she had tried in vain to save, was especially poignant and sympathetic. This image of a grieving family was humanizing, and it allowed the people to also see their emperor as a man who felt love for his family and sadness at the loss of them. In retrospect, Maximilian's death was the first of many personal tragedies that would befall Franz Joseph and create the image of him as a sad and lonely man who worked tirelessly for the good of the empire until his death.

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