

TEHUANA URBANA:

HOW CULTURAL MESTIZAJE SHAPED THE REVOLUTIONARY PERSONA OF  
AURORA REYES, MEXICO'S FIRST FEMALE MURALIST

AN ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED ON THE SECOND DAY OF APRIL 2013

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

OF TULANE UNIVERSITY

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OF

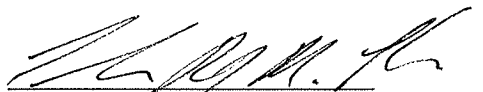
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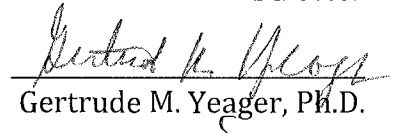
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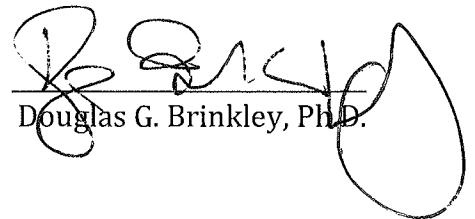


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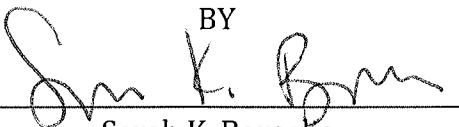
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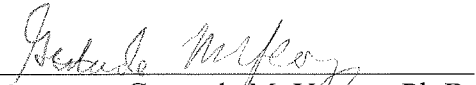
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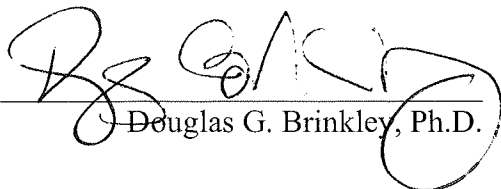
  
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## **ABSTRACT:**

The connection between the visual arts and revolutionary social change is the inspiration for this dissertation. In a 1953 interview, Aurora Reyes, Mexico's first female muralist, declared, "Art is the medium with the greatest potential to penetrate human emotions, and therefore functions as a powerful weapon in the fight for the rights of the common man." In the following chapters, I identify the ways in which the officially sanctioned visual narrative of Mexican history evolved during the transition from the Porfirian to the Revolutionary State. By tracing the artistic precursors of the revolution, I attempt to illuminate the role of cultural *mestizaje* and material culture in achieving sustainable social change in early twentieth century Mexico.

The transition from Porfirian to revolutionary Mexico did not happen overnight. It required the committed efforts of several generations of artists and intellectuals. This creative cohort worked diligently to construct an alternative form of cultural nationalism that valued the nation's indigenous legacy. By simultaneously tracing the artistic and familial provenance of revolutionary artist Aurora Reyes, I provide a glimpse of the social balancing that defines revolutionary change. In addition to traditional archival sources, this interdisciplinary investigation required an analysis of "alternative documents." I consulted photographs, works of art, song lyrics, and poetry in an attempt to describe and

explain the effects of cultural *mestizaje* as a formative influence on Reyes and her cohort. Their attraction to indigenous culture was not cultivated via written communications; therefore, my analysis of the process required a broad range of sources. I hope this work will inspire more historians to look to visual elements of the historic record to help explain social change.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

This project has occupied nearly a decade of my time and efforts, and bringing it to its current state has required much assistance, support, and above all, patience from a number of individuals and institutions. My parents, Eileen Rowe and Dr. J.D. Rowe, have repeatedly reminded me that anything is possible with hard work and dedication. This seemingly simple bit of advice has stayed with me over the years, and fortunately, I have yet to see it disproved. I am grateful for the responsible, ethical, brave, and happy example they have shown me through their own life choices. My sisters, Nancy Lovewell and Meg Rowe, are hilarious and heartwarming women- I am lucky to share all of my successes and shortcomings with them. They continually offer fresh perspective on life's twists and turns.

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The members of my dissertation committee have dedicated a great deal of time and effort to help me see this through to completion, and I am thankful for the guidance, faith and inspiration they have so generously provided. Professors Colin M. MacLachlan, Gertrude M. Yeager and Douglas G. Brinkley continually offered interesting and valuable suggestions, perspective and feedback. Together, we have worked through some turbulent times in both New Orleans and Mexico; managing to nurture our collective sense of direction throughout. My relationship with Tulane is most clearly personified by my professional relationship with Professor MacLachlan, the director of this dissertation, who has served as an anchor in various periods of unanticipated extremes. With his help, I manage to stay above the fray more often than not. His unfailing confidence in and guidance of my intellectual development facilitates my orientation not only as a Visual Historian, but as an aware and responsible member of the global community. I appreciate his long-term support more every day. Also at Tulane, Donna Denneen has been an incredible ally in my corner- our friendship is one that I value immensely. She always manages to see the bigger picture and regularly brings it more into focus for me. Fellow graduate students who have helped me with the finer points of this juggling act include Charles Heath, Meg Allen Kareithi, Martin Kareithi, Richard Conway, Cynthia

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Institutional support for this project came from Tulane University's History Department, the Stone Center for Latin American Studies, the School of Liberal Arts, the Middle American Research Institute, the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching, and the School of Continuing Studies. Early in the process of conceptualizing the work, a pair of exploratory research grants from the Conference on Latin American History and the Tinker Foundation made it possible for me to spend an extended period of time in Mexico. During this trip, I realized that being in the field truly activates my historical imagination. Thanks to generous and ongoing support from the entities listed here, I have been able to devote regular intervals to exploring archival documents and resources in Mexico City, Oaxaca City, and Juchitán.

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led me through the labyrinth of Tepito on many occasions, and every time I believed more fully that these unpredictable jaunts into the *centro* made it possible for me to focus when I was pouring over documents in more traditional “research” settings.

I must also thank the patient and good-humored staff of the *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN), who entertained my early guesses and kept my spirits high as I worked with them in the sometimes frigid former cell blocks of the Palacio Lecumberri, long since converted into the current galleries that house so many mysteries. In contrast, working with the Manuel Gamio archive at the Library of the National Museum of Anthropology with its sunlit rooms and airy terraces hugging Chapultepec Park was a dream come true. With the help of the excellent staff of archivists and librarians, I spent idyllic hours reading detailed correspondences left behind by a man whose vision made it possible for that institution to achieve international prominence. Valerie-Anne Lutz at the American Philosophical library in Philadelphia later helped me access additional information on Gamio’s professional relationship with Franz Boas, whose theories of cultural relativity have been instrumental in shaping my thesis.

In Oaxaca, Nelson Medina at the Centro de las Artes in San Agustín Etla generously shared his research on Miguel Covarrubias with me. When he pronounced Covarrubias a “*todólogo*,” I realized the importance of viewing the revolutionary generation of artists and intellectuals in this light- since they excelled in so many areas. I quickly learned to emulate that status, feeling like it loosened the sometimes constricting parameters of academic life. Guillermo Fricke, whom I first encountered at the Archive of the *Centro Fotográfico Álvarez Bravo*- and later at

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Though my research in the United States has been limited, with the support of Tulane's history department I spent a stimulating week at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. I became fascinated with the magic of film as I had the luxury of immersing myself in some of the earliest moving images ever captured in Archaeological sites and urban locations throughout Mexico. Josie Walters-Johnston and the staff of the Motion Pictures & Television Reading Room offered patient and supportive guidance as I worked with reels of 16 and 35 mm film lovingly

preserved for decades in cool metal canisters. As I watched Manuel Gamio lead early cinematographers on a tour of some unidentified ruins, I felt closer to my subject matter than ever before.

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Through Susannah I met the photographer Beatriz Díaz, who subsequently joined me on several adventurous outings to capture the elusive images of Aurora Reyes’s murals. Our friendship/collaboration transcended to another level when I brought her a collection of the photographs of famed New Orleans photographer E.J. Bellocq, and we have not stopped trading images since. We have shared the pleasure of art exhibits in many cities, and her home has often become my own during the years I have dedicated to this project. Our hours of conversation and laughter have continually helped me organize my thoughts and edit my ideas. David Franco inspires me with his work ethic and the good humor he brings to every situation. He

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## INTRODUCTION



*FIG. 0.1: Line Drawing by Aurora Reyes (Humanos Paisajes, 1953)*

We must dedicate ourselves to observe and compile what can be called “living historical material.” This is information based not on documents, but on the direct and experiential observation of life. Afterward, the history of the revolution can be written. ... More importantly, we must begin to write objective history, smudge fewer pages with biased description, and include more illustrations. Most of all, this history that we write must bring us closer to the diverse objects, clothing, architecture, and sculpture preserved in museums and other places.<sup>1</sup>

My introduction to Aurora Reyes and her murals came from a brief mention of the artist in journalist Elena Poniatowska's fictionalized biography of the photographer Tina Modotti, one of Reyes' peers in the Mexican Artistic renaissance of the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> When I visited Mexico City in 2002, the summer before beginning the Masters program in Latin American Studies at Tulane, my friend and mentor Susannah Glusker helped me to make contact with the investigator Edwina Moreno Guerra at the *Centro Nacional de Investigaciones de las Artes Plasticas* (CENIDIAP). Maestra Moreno graciously introduced me to Reyes's grandsons, Hector and Ernesto Godoy, who provided me with unprecedented access to the artist's personal papers and collections, which they lovingly preserve in a private archive located in their Coyoacan home.

As I dove into the Reyes collection, I began to piece together a vague idea of the multiple roles Reyes played in the overlapping realms of art and education. In a 1953 interview published in *Excelsior*, she declared, "Art is the medium with the greatest potential to penetrate human emotions, and therefore functions as a powerful weapon in the fight for the rights of the common man."<sup>3</sup> Reyes repeatedly defined artists as the true Mexican revolutionaries, becoming a spokesperson for the social responsibility of the artist, stating: "*México's Revolution is not yet consummated, and it is the responsibility of the artists to continue the struggle.*"<sup>4</sup> The connection between the visual arts and revolutionary social change is the inspiration for this dissertation. In the following chapters, I identify the ways in which the evolution of the visual narrative of Mexican history during the transition from the Porfiriato to the Revolutionary State may help us to understand the

function of cultural mestizaje in the institutionalization of revolutionary change. The transition from Porfirian to revolutionary Mexico did not happen overnight- it required the committed efforts of several generations of artists and intellectuals who worked diligently to construct an alternative form of national identity that valued the nation's indigenous legacy. What are the social forces that inspired such a change, and where did the revolutionary generations acquire the tools and confidence required for such a massive undertaking? Stated another way, how, and where, did the revolutionary generation learn to rethink the national cultural paradigm, revaluing its indigenous components in the process?

While I have encountered several studies of the evolution of the nation's education system and its relationship to modern Mexican identity, many seem to focus quite narrowly on either "History" or "Art History," rather than attempting an interdisciplinary analysis that unites the two closely related fields. Josefina Vazquez de Knauth examines the evolution of the national history curriculum in Mexico from Independence to the 1960's in *Nacionalismo y Educación en México* (Colegio de México, 1975). Augusto Santiago Sierra and Rafael Tovar, et. al. examine the "educational missions" of the so-called "postrevolutionary" state in a couple of interesting books that highlight attempts to bring an urban perspective of the value of arts and letters to rural Mexicans in *Misiones Culturales: los años utópicos 1920-1938* (CONACULTA-INBA, 1999); and *Las Misiones Culturales, 1923-1973* (SEP: 1973).

Jean Charlot offers an incredibly personal analysis of the evolution of arts education in a pair of complementary texts, *Mexican Art and the Academy of San*

*Carlos, 1785-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962) and *The Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920-1925* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979). Laura González Matute has written a history of the *aire-libre* schools and the *centros populares de pintura* based on a socio-political analysis of the context in which they emerged (first, briefly, in 1913, and then in fits and starts from 1920-1937) and disappeared. She refers to their genesis as a break from the more established Academy, but does not discuss the legacy they left on Mexican society via the students and teachers who worked in the alternative spaces. There have been many academic analyses published about the Mexican muralists, but most of them stick to the biographies of the “big three” (Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros); reflecting fleetingly, if at all, on other artists and students who embraced the art form as a means of re-imagining national history.

As historian James Cockroft traced the intellectual precursors of the Mexican revolution<sup>5</sup> in an attempt to understand the intellectual history of that event, I have been inspired to trace the artistic precursors of the revolution in hopes of understanding the role of aesthetics and material culture in achieving sustainable social change. Many times people understand the Mexican artistic renaissance of the early twentieth century to be a byproduct of the revolution. However, I think that changes in the “national” artistic style, which accompanied the liberal ideological shift affecting the mid-nineteenth century academy, actually facilitated the political transition that began in 1910.

Nestor Garcia Canclini has written extensively about the role of popular culture in defining modern Mexico. His classic, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for*

*Entering and Leaving Modernity*, discusses the ways in which culture-based politics may help to mediate the effects of globalization. In *Transforming Modernity: Popular Culture in Mexico*, he expands upon his analyses of the intersection of global and local worldviews, concluding that in many cases, the hierarchical perspective of the more omniscient view ends up influencing the more local perspective in ways that reinforce their differences as a matter of development. He discusses the cultural missions of state-sponsored educators in a way that assumes the missionaries dictated preferable cultural norms without being influenced by the individuals they set out to “educate.”

I believe that cultural interactions are rarely, if ever, such one-dimensional transactions- and that by looking at the lives and work of individual missionaries, we may be able to broaden our perspective to include a more symbiotic view of these cultural transactions. I hope that my analysis of the life and work of Aurora Reyes and her cohort of cultural elites will help to fill a void in the historiography by providing details about the way these missionaries internalized and eventually reproduced the indigenous worldview they came into contact with through their work as missionaries of the modern state. Garcia Canclini concludes that the future of popular cultures depends on society as a whole, stating:

We must reorganize institutions devoted to artistic and artisanal promotion and distribution, construct an alternative history of art and an alternative theory of culture, alternative schools, and alternative mass media so that those cultural processes locked up in the exhibit cases of Art can be relocated within the myriad of facts and messages amid which we learn to think and feel.<sup>6</sup>

My analysis of the revolutionary generation of artists and educators is designed to build on these ideas; to show that their work in the cultural realm changed them in



ways that enabled them to effect real and lasting change in the way outsiders view Mexico.

As a frequent visitor to Mexico City, I notice the overwhelming amount of cultural tourists who are inspired to visit the country because of its indigenous character rather than its Spanish Iberian legacy. The majority of my friends who have come to see me during my extended stays in Mexico City are shocked to find that architecturally, the city center resembles many of the European capitals with which they may be more familiar. Guilermo Bonfil Batalla discusses the persistence of Indigenous Mexico in the modern era, giving it the name "*Mexico Profundo*." He argues that this "deep" version of Mexico coexists in perpetual conflict with the more superficial façade constructed by citizens of European descent, whose ancestors arrived with the idea that everything predating their arrival had to be uprooted. This insightful analysis of two cultures coexisting in tense, if dynamic, equilibrium, goes a long way toward explaining many of the more complex negotiations that comprise modern Mexican identity. While I agree with Bonfil Batalla's classification of *Mexico Profundo* as "*una civilización negada*," I think that it is possible to identify specific historical moments when a critical mass of citizens committed their efforts in an attempt to reconcile the two cultural traditions in a way that would transcend their differences. Perhaps if we can shed light on the particular form in which these efforts materialized, we might be able to bring about a more sustainable reconciliation in the future. I believe that the cultural education programs of the revolutionary SEP are worth studying for this reason.

By simultaneously tracing the artistic and familial provenance of revolutionary artist Aurora Reyes, I can provide a glimpse of the social balancing that defines revolutionary change in terms of cultural mestizaje. As I progressed with my research, I realized that the project would require an analysis of “alternative documents” in addition to the standard written record usually housed in traditional archival records. I have consulted photographs, works of art, song lyrics, and poetry in an attempt to describe and explain the effects of cultural mestizaje as a formative influence on Reyes and her cohort. Their own attraction to indigenous culture was not cultivated via written communications; therefore, my analysis of the process required a much broader range of sources than is usually employed by a historian. I hope this work will inspire more historians to look to visual elements of the historic record to help explain social change, as economic trends and political science have been employed in a similar way. The bulk of this investigation has been inspired by materials I housed in the former home of artist and educator Aurora Reyes.

The Reyes archive<sup>7</sup> includes a large number of drawings, paintings, and photographs, which illuminate the written record of newspaper clippings and correspondences among Reyes and her artistic-intellectual cohort. In many of the photographs, Reyes and her female friends appear dressed in the traditional *traje*<sup>8</sup> of the *Tehuana*.<sup>9</sup> The *Tehuana traje* evolved over the course of centuries of use by the Zapotec Indians in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, a thin strip of land that bridges the southern states of Oaxaca and Vera Cruz, and includes small portions of Chiapas and Tabasco. The evolution of the local *traje* of Tehuantepec is documented in this

table by Mexican artist and anthropologist Miguel Covarrubias in his epic ethnographic work, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec*:



FIG. 0.2: Chart by Miguel Covarrubias.

Although the *Tehuana traje* has been modified over the centuries, the basic shape and function of the garments exhibit a continuity of form and function that transcend the various phases of modern history that have wracked the Mexican nation with violent transitions.

The two main pieces of the garment are the cropped *huipil*,<sup>10</sup> embroidered with geometric patterns and or flowers, and a long skirt known as an *enagua*. The ensemble is accessorized with jewelry made from gold coins, and a hairstyle featuring braids arranged atop the head in a halo-like pattern, and are often decorated with flowers and ribbons. In revolutionary Mexico City, the muralist and poet Aurora Reyes, the painter and educator Frida Kahlo, and the musicologist Concha Michel (among other female members of the revolutionary elite) became well-known for their appropriation of the twentieth century incarnation of the *traje* and hairstyle of the *Tehuana*.<sup>11</sup> Their affinity for indigenous fashion is tangible evidence of their role in the ongoing process of cultural mestizaje that played a role in the institutionalization of revolutionary change. The value of the nation's indigenous cultural legacy, long denied by colonial and neocolonial governments, resurfaced in the revolutionary era- when it was excavated and resurrected by artists and intellectuals like Reyes. The desire to identify with aesthetic elements of pre-Hispanic societies enabled these cultural elites to become highly visible representatives of indigenous rights as an extension of human rights in the development of modern Mexico.

Some photos from the Reyes archive are obviously from costume events, like this snapshot from a party sponsored by the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) around 1940, which features Aurora Reyes dressed in full *traje* with the addition of a common mask, which she grasps in her left hand.



*FIG. 0.3: Aurora Reyes and masked friends at a SEP-sponsored party, circa 1940.*

But the visual record shows that these women also donned the region-specific attire for more quotidian urban affairs ranging from luncheons and meetings to political rallies. The following image from around 1970 shows Reyes and her lifelong *camarada* Concha Michel dressed in elements of the *Tehuana traje* (Michel wears a huipil with a popular pattern from the city of Juchitan, and Reyes has braided her hair in the halo-style common among *Tehuanas*) at a meeting surrounded by colleagues dressed in more traditional western professional attire.



*FIG. 0.4: Aurora Reyes and Concha Michel at a meeting circa. 1960-1970.*

Reyes's correspondences lend the impression that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec held a special place in the hearts and minds of these urban cultural elites. The following series of images demonstrate intimacy between Reyes and the other members of her creative cohort, including lifelong friends Kahlo and Michel. As I studied these photos as historic documents, I began to realize that the *Tehuana traje*, when worn by this group of artistic intellectuals at a particular transitional moment, became the uniform of a special sisterhood.



*FIG. 0.5: Unidentified male, Aurora Reyes and Frida Kahlo.*



*FIG. 0.6: Aurora Reyes and her lifelong confidante, Concha Michel.*

As I continued to learn about these urban *Tehuanas*, I realized that they all participated in the realm of aesthetic education in Revolutionary Mexico. Aurora Reyes and Frida Kahlo belonged to the first generation of girls to be educated at the National Preparatory Academy (commonly referred to as the *Prepa*), and all three worked as teachers in the widespread campaign to expand the reach of public education to the farthest regions of the republic. Together, they waged many battles in their fight for social change dressed in the *traje* of the Isthmus. I recognized the elements of the *traje* in the Reyes photos because many of the most famous artists of the Mexican Artistic Renaissance of the 1920's featured the women of Tehuantepec in their work. However, it is one thing to see *Tehuanas* represented as static and often exoticized representatives holding court in galleries of "national" art.

It is a decidedly different exercise to consider the *traje* as a politicized fashion statement made by women on the vanguard of social change. Although I realized there must be some tangible connection between the two phenomena, I asked myself how and why did these urban women decide to appropriate the indigenous *traje* from the remote Isthmus of Tehuantepec? Where did the inspiration and ideology come from? What did *Tehuana* fashion represent for these women who were proponents of visual culture as a means of defining modern Mexican identity? I theorized that by dressing like indigenous members of the republic in the revolutionary era, these women exhibited the courage to reinvent or reimagine an alternative version of national identity, or *Mexicanidad*, in a way that privileged "local" traditions over "global" influences. The inclusion of indigenous



aesthetics in the national cultural narrative helped shift the definition of *mestizaje* from a racial denominator to a state of mind.

Through their roles as artists and educators, Reyes and her peers became revolutionary bridges<sup>12</sup> by influencing an entire generation on the importance of indigenous cultural heritage as a valuable resource for development. The reevaluation of aboriginal traditions in the modern nation helped rebalance a society that suffered greatly from unequal access to education and resources. When the Spanish arrived in the Americas, centuries of indigenous cultural development suffered destructive blows dealt by an Iberian juggernaut of redemption. The Spanish colonists, fresh from their seven hundred year *reconquista* of the Moors, sought to prove their cultural superiority by converting the thousands of indigenous inhabitants to Catholicism. Emboldened by the *Patronato Real* issued by the Roman Catholic Church, the Spaniards unleashed a project of cultural, spiritual, and economic domination that laid the groundwork for a colonial experiment that scarred the nation and its peoples for generations. Western European immigrants declared Indigenous peoples their cultural and social inferiors, and the latter suffered great injustices despite vastly outnumbering their oppressors. By the end of the tumultuous nineteenth century, it became obvious that the unbalanced society neared the tipping point. Artists and intellectuals would be among the first to formulate a collective cry for social change.

According to anthropologist Manuel Gamio, the key to national redemption lay in resurrecting aboriginal artistic impulses, which lay dormant in the souls of its

people. In an undated essay titled “Possibilities of the Indigenous Art of Mexico,”

Gamio states:

The population of Mexico is composed of two ethnical [sic] groups. The first and most numerous is made up of individuals of indigenous race, while the second is composed of members of the white race. The conditions under which these two social groups exist are very badly balanced, the white minority possessing the official power, the territorial wealth and the diverse advantages of modern civilization, while the indigenous race exists in passive misery, in a backwardness of at least four hundred years. The indigene, nevertheless, has managed to preserve a treasure not possessed by the white. That treasure is the autochthonous art which in centuries past produced the famous architectural works of Yucatán and Teotihuacán and which is seen, today, in the ceramics, textiles, lacquers, mattings, basket work and the thousand other articles produced by the indigene. And this indigenous art, profoundly original and attractive as it is, is altogether natural and spontaneous. It is the result of a psychological process which, originating thousands of years back, has come down the centuries without interruption, since the conquistadores who stripped the indigene of almost everything, could not deprive him of his art.<sup>13</sup>

In this dissertation, I argue that the aesthetic education programs promoted by the SEP between 1921 and 1924 cultivated a visual grammar by which Mexican students, including Aurora Reyes and her peers, could begin to recognize their personal connections with *Mexico Profundo*.<sup>14</sup> The groundbreaking architects of this visual grammar included archaeologists who extrapolated it from aesthetic elements of Indigenous artifacts unearthed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century archaeological excavations. During the conquest, Spanish forces destroyed much pre-Hispanic architecture and many indigenous codices,<sup>15</sup> which might have functioned as historical “documents” useful for constructing a continuous socio-cultural narrative. The symbolic decoration of both quotidian and ritual objects uncovered by modern archaeologists offers a cache of information that students of

revolution would be taught to recognize as cultural capital for an investment strategy of alchemical proportions.

As the fossilized remains of plants and animals from another millennium fueled our modern industrial revolution, the refuse of *Mexico Profundo* became the fuel for formulating the unique brand of cultural nationalism that would define *Mexico Moderno*. The national education system, which emerged in the opening decades of the twentieth century, became the gateway for decoding and then transmitting the long-buried knowledge of ancient civilizations to the next generation. Revolutionary educators translated the freshly excavated raw materials into didactic weaponry based on visual sources. In the early nineteen-twenties, the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) functioned as an institutional clearinghouse through which this aesthetic grammar would be disseminated to both students and teachers, including Reyes and her cohort. The lessons they learned would be internalized and reproduced in a way that affected lasting change in Mexican society by revaluing indigenous aesthetics to become a source of pride in the complex matrix of Mexican national identity.

In 2007, the contents of a secret room in the home and studio of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (commonly known as the *Casa Azul*, or “Blue House” for its distinct color) premiered to public acclaim in an internationally significant exhibition in Mexico City. More than fifty years after the room was sealed off by order of the artist and her husband, Diego Rivera, the extent of Kahlo’s collection of *Tehuana* fashion was revealed to the world.<sup>16</sup> The items stored for half a century in Kahlo’s secret room included her most intimate possessions- clothing

and jewelry, letters and photographs. Kahlo's tumultuous, decades-long relationship with the painter Rivera is well documented, as is his fascination with the women of Tehuantepec, who are immortalized in his murals at the headquarters of the SEP, in downtown Mexico City. Although it has been suggested that Kahlo's affinity for Tehuana style may be attributed to her desire to please Rivera, items preserved among her most cherished personal affects suggest that there is more to the story.

Among the treasures found in the secret room is a group photo of Kahlo's maternal ancestors dating from 1890. Of the eleven women who appear in the photograph, Kahlo's mother, Matilde Calderon, aged seven years at the time of the photo, is among six of the total who appear dressed in formal *Tehuana traje*. Hayden Herrera's 1983 biography of Kahlo mentions that Calderon was born in Oaxaca, but leaves it at that. Frida remembered her mother "like a little bell from Oaxaca...when she went to market, she gracefully cinched her waist and carried her basket coquettishly."<sup>17</sup> Other than these brief points of convergence, I have encountered few mentions of Frida's personal connections to the state of Oaxaca in the written record. However, the visual record is punctuated by full color documentation of the artist's affinity for the cultural traditions of that southern state.

In the same year that the exhibition from the secret room in the Casa Azul opened, (August of 2007), journalist Elena Poniatowska accepted the Romulo Gallegos Literary prize in Mexico City dressed in the traditional *traje*, gold coin jewelry, and blooming braids of the Tehuana.

The caption printed with the photo in the Mexican daily *La Jornada* read: “Poniatowska accepts an award in the traditional Frida style blouse.” Poniatowska appeared publicly in the same *traje* a year later when she accepted the International Women's Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award in New York City. Despite the simplified caption presented by the Mexican media, the *traje* of Tehuantepec has provenance that precedes and transcends Frida Kahlo's affection for them, and continues to inspire their use by members of the female cultural vanguard. This dissertation includes an analysis of why the *Tehuana traje* was initially adopted by female members of the revolutionary elite in the early twentieth century as a visual manifestation of cultural mestizaje, and to help contemporary readers understand why it continues to hold symbolic meaning for artistic intellectuals in the twenty-first century.

The Casa Azul and the Aurora Reyes archive are within walking distance of each other in the pleasant green center of Coyoacan. Once located some distance from downtown Mexico City, the pueblo-like artistic enclave is today connected to the *centro historico* by urban sprawl. Reyes often visited her friends Rivera and Kahlo in the Casa Azul, then a private home where Frida took her first breath as well as her last.<sup>18</sup> Among the books preserved on a shelf in Kahlo's bedroom is a copy of Reyes's book of poetry called *Humanos Paisajes*. This collection of poetry, which contains many symbolic and direct references to the value of indigenous culture, was published the year before Kahlo's death.<sup>19</sup> Rivera rocketed to international fame with the completion of a series of murals that included larger than life representations of Tehuanas in the downtown SEP compound, which housed the

*Prepa*, in the early 1920's. Reyes and Kahlo studied there together from 1921-1923, and they brought the total number of female students to thirty-five, out of a total of two thousand.

Several of the clippings in Reyes's personal archive identify her, as did Poniatowska, as Mexico's first female muralist. Reyes believed that of all forms of artistic expression, muralism represented the most potent force for inspiring social change. She defined her own mural projects as her highest calling. Therefore, early on in my investigation of her life and work I theorized that the answers to many of my research questions likely resided within the matrix of monumental historical narratives adorning the public spaces of Mexico City. I had seen Rivera's murals in the *Palacio Nacional*, as well as the collective projects housed in such landmark sites as the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* (Fine Arts Palace), and the SEP compound, I had not yet seen Reyes's work, which is not as well known, nor as accessible.

### **Exploring the visual record of Mexico's first female muralist**

Through my initial investigations in the Aurora Reyes archive in Coyoacan, I learned that three locations in contemporary Mexico City house Reyes's murals. My quest to find them led me on an interesting tour through some of the oldest parts of the city. In a twist that mirrors the cyclical nature of Mexican history, Reyes's last mural proved to be the most accessible, and my investigation began only a few blocks from the archive. Appropriately titled, *El Primer Encuentro* (1977-1978), is well preserved in a meeting room of the *Antiguo Palacio del Ayuntamiento de Coyoacán*. The colonial era compound is located on the North side of plaza Hidalgo.

The mural tells the story of the Spaniards' arrival to Coyoacán, where the conquistador Hernán Cortes lived in 1521 and 1522. When I visited this mural in 2004, one of the guides who worked in the municipal space told me a story about the mural that illustrates Reyes's vindictive sense of humor, as well as her desire to utilize the medium as a means of re-imagining previously documented historical events from a "popular" perspective.

Apparently the municipal delegate at the time of the mural's painting granted the artist permission to use the wall space with the condition that Reyes use his wife as a model. Reyes, eager to begin her work, agreed to the terms. With the completion of the mural, it became evident that Aurora had used the model imposed upon her for the sickly looking Spanish wife of Cortés. Reyes preferred to use her best friend, Natalia Moguel, as a model for the empowered Malinche.<sup>20</sup> Reyes' prominent positioning of Malinche in the foreground clearly illustrates that the indigenous woman is in complete control of the encounter, and is an empowering representation of this often-maligned historical figure.



FIG. 0.7: Photo of "El Primer Encuentro" (Aurora Reyes, 1978) Beatriz Díaz, 2004.

Reyes's full color, graphic interpretation of this historic event whet my curiosity to the point where I became brave enough to venture farther into the labyrinthine center of Mexico's capital in search of her earlier works.

In 1936 Aurora Reyes received her first mural commission, which earned her the distinction of becoming Mexico's first female muralist at the age of 28. At the time, Reyes belonged to the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (*Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarias*, or LEAR). Artists who joined the LEAR did so as an expression of their commitment to contemporary social issues. Members devoted themselves to the fusion of art and politics, effectively declaring the social function of art as a powerful approach to the institutionalization of revolutionary goals.



Reyes had previously become acquainted with many of the LEAR's most prominent members during her tenure at the National School of Fine Arts (formerly and persistently referred to as the Academy of San Carlos, or simply San Carlos), where she attended evening art classes from 1921-1923. The members of the LEAR helped Reyes realize her full artistic potential. "Yo me formé en la LEAR," she proudly declared in numerous interviews.<sup>21</sup>



*FIG. 0.8: Reyes (third from left) at a meeting of the LEAR, ca.1938. (Note the preparations for a mural on a wall in the background).*

Reyes's groundbreaking mural, *Atentado a las Maestras Rurales* (*Attack on the Rural Schoolteachers*), addresses the murder of a rural schoolteacher during the Cristero Rebellion of 1926-1929, and is one of eleven pieces that fill the vestibule of the *Centro Escolar Revolución*, a primary school located near the Balderas metro

station at the bustling intersection of Niños Heroes and Chapultepec in downtown México City. With this commission, Reyes showcased her work alongside more established Mexican painters Raúl Anguiano, Everardo Ramírez, Gonzalo de la Paz Paredes, Antonio Gutiérrez, and Ignacio Gómez Jaramillo. This series of murals contains powerful images that date from a period of Mexican history when public space represented a valuable forum for artistic expression that coincided with the State's experiment in socialist education. Each fresco measures approximately two meters by four meters. Notably, Reyes's piece is the only one of the group that specifically addresses the role of women in the national education campaign.



*FIG. 0.9: "Atentado a las Maestras Rurales," (Aurora Reyes, 1937). Photo by Beatriz Díaz Zurita, 2004.*

Reyes's remaining murals proved to be much more elusive. Grouped together in an imposing complex that houses the National Teachers Union headquarters (in Spanish this building is called the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*-its acronym is SNTE) in Mexico City's *centro historico*, they perform as a collective panorama covering more than 326 square meters of wall space. In several newspaper clippings collected by Reyes during her lifetime, the murals of the Auditorium are described as "*murales encarcelados*" because it is nearly impossible to gain access to the auditorium unless you are on official union business. After a series of frustrated attempts, I somehow managed to talk my way into the auditorium to see the infamous murals.

Walking off of the bright bustling streets of downtown Mexico City into the cool, concrete corridors of the SNTE complex is disorienting. When the kind security guard who finally granted me access to the auditorium flipped a series of light switches, the electric bulbs cracked and hummed, gradually illuminating the spacious room. I found myself surrounded by dynamic, full color scenes from Mexican history. As a visual learner struggling through graduate studies in a discipline focused on the written word as the ultimate testimony of the past, I breathed a sigh of relief. I realized that the images locked away in this room contained the answers to my research questions; or, at the very least, could function as a roadmap for the investigative process before me. In order to fully comprehend the visual narrative, I stepped slowly through a three hundred and sixty degree revolution. As I gazed at the images surrounding me, I began to understand that the catalyst that enabled Reyes to recognize and develop her own personal connection

to *Mexico Profundo* could be traced directly to her experience with the revolutionary educational institutions that emerged in the opening years of the twentieth century.

Through persistent and persuasive communication with various levels of caretakers, I obtained permission to return at a later date with photographer Beatriz Díaz. Díaz worked under rushed and poorly lit conditions to produce a series of color photographs of the work Reyes originally completed between 1959 and 1961 (with several additions and modifications made in the 1970's). The elusive images we captured on that day are a testament to one artist's desire to contribute to aesthetic education on a transcendental scale. Reyes completed the murals simultaneously with her retirement from a lifelong career in public education, and they draw attention to a series of individuals and events that had a formative and lasting impact on Reyes's professional, personal, and artistic evolution. Together, they help illuminate the process of cultural mestizaje that enabled sustainable revolutionary change in the modern nation.

Reyes reproduced selective elements of her educational adventures in these murals, and this dissertation utilizes the people and events portrayed therein as a visual guide for examining the evolution of a national education system and its impact on society in revolutionary Mexico. Reyes's collective body of work in the SNTE compound is made up of panels that are individually titled: *Trayectoria de la cultura en México*, *Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales en México*, *Los Grandes Maestros en México*, and *El Libro abierto del espacio*. Together, they fill the Auditorium located at number 32 of Belisario Domínguez street, just a few blocks from the Zocalo, which houses the National Cathedral, the Administrative offices of

the National Government, and the ruins of the Aztec ceremonial complex known as the Templo Mayor.

In Chapter one, I place specific emphasis on the arts-heavy curriculum Reyes encountered as a student of the National Preparatory School (*Prepa*) and the nearby National School of Fine Arts (the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* is popularly known as the “Old Academy of San Carlos”) as the foundation for her life’s work as a revolutionary artist and intellectual. The revolutionary SEP, under the direction of liberal intellectual José Vasconcelos from 1921 to 1924, defined the curriculum for both entities, which stimulated the aesthetic capabilities of a generation of students by encouraging them to self-identify with their nation’s indigenous past. Aurora Reyes studied in both the Prepa and the Academy of Fine Arts during this dynamic interval, which coincided with both the Mexican artistic renaissance and the evolution of Brazilian modernism. The Latin American emphasis on the visual arts in during the early nineteen twenties is represented in the Mexican revolutionary schools by the following innovative elements: open air art classes, the Best Maugard method of drawing (known in Spanish as the *Metodo Best*), and such monumental didactic tools as muralism and cinematography. Aurora Reyes and Miguel Covarrubias are two members of the Mexican cultural elite who came from families whose identity had been intertwined with Porfirian order and progress, yet they matured in a dynamic environment that enabled them to identify with indigenous elements of society marginalized by that very limited version of “order.” To counterbalance their experience, I offer the example of Andres Henestrosa, an indigenous member of the revolutionary elite who took advantage of SEP-defined

curriculum to transcend his Zapotec ancestors' relatively marginal role in the formation of national identity. All three are members of a generation who took it upon themselves to translate vague ideological currents into practical social reform via cultural *mestizaje*.

Educated in this environment, Reyes and her artistic peers armed themselves with an effective toolkit to re-imagine problematic moments in Mexican history from an alternative perspective. As a student immersed in the SEP defined curriculum at both the *Prepa* and the Academy of Fine Arts, Reyes viewed the earliest cinematic portrayals of technological progress that included images of the isthmus, as well as monumental renderings of Tehuanas realized by Rivera and the other muralists on the walls of the historic center. As an apprentice of the *Metodo Best*, Reyes developed an empathetic understanding for the symbolism inherent in the lines and colors of the pre-Hispanic aesthetic. Under the tutelage of the nation's pre-eminent artists and intellectuals, students helped forge an alternative cultural narrative designed to bridge the chasm between tradition and modernity. Reyes came of age in a period when national and international currents converged to affect lasting change in Mexican society. As a student of revolution, she joined a chorus of previously marginal voices that rose up to play a fundamental role in the elaboration of national consciousness. The revolution in education facilitated the formation of a more balanced version of the modern Mexican experience. Of course, the seeds of revolution are not sewn overnight, and the radical curriculum of the 1920's SEP did not appear out of thin air.

The next few chapters are designed to explain the evolution of these “radical” didactic methods and how they came to be incorporated into modern revolutionary institutions. I will show that over the same period of time, the traditional group of “movers and shakers” in Mexican society expanded from political and military men (personified most specifically in this work by General Bernardo Reyes and his firstborn son, Leon Reyes) to include artists and intellectuals (examples include Manuel Gamio, Alfonso Reyes, José Vasconcelos, and Diego Rivera) who recognized cultural *mestizaje* as a useful means of balancing society via sustainable, practical reform. These early students of revolution realized that a cultural approach to social equilibrium had the potential to accommodate conflicting voices within the national narrative that had heretofore coexisted without being reconciled. This new generation of cultural elites benefitted from advances in technology and the expansion of the academy to include liberal arts and humanities, which together made it possible for them to recognize the value of visual components of the historical record that had been edited out or scaled back by previous generations.

In Chapter two, I elaborate on the evolution of the Mexican Academy from a Spanish colonial institution to an innovative and collaborative workshop that gave rise to a national style based on the aesthetic continuum interrupted by the arrival of the Spanish in the late fifteenth century. I argue that the adoption of liberal reforms in the mid-eighteenth century Mexican academy paved the way for the traditional written narrative of national history to include visual representations of popular experience that had previously been confined to the margins. The onset of liberal reforms by the Juarez government in the 1860’s placed traditional Spanish

cultural norms on the backburner, and change ricocheted through the Academy. A renewed emphasis on Republican ideals led to the creation of public works of art designed to inspire the liberal evolution of Mexican society. When President Porfirio Díaz seized the reins of the modern nation, he continued to prioritize education, while investing heavily in the concurrent development of communications and transportation infrastructure.

During the *pax porfiriana*, national railroads connected the farthest reaches of the nation to its capital, consolidating the population like never before. Increasingly mobile citizens found it easier to share ideas and experiences, and thanks to the popularity of motion pictures, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec became a symbol for the merging of global and local energies. Images of *tehuanas* and trains represented Mexico's move into modernity as they permeated the emerging visual narrative of the nation. While radical members of the increasingly educated population who expressed dissent via the written word earned swift retribution from Díaz, the fine arts represented a relatively safe place for radical intellectuals to express their differences with the dictatorial regime, since the government counted on artists to help define the national style that would become representative of Porfirian progress among global audiences.

Chapter three is designed to help readers understand the role of Aurora Reyes's extended family in the transition from the Porfiriato to revolutionary Mexico. Aurora Reyes, like many of her artistic-intellectual cohort, was born into the Revolution and with that came the responsibility of navigating the vast and unprecedented social opening that accompanied the denouement of the old regime.



Bernardo Reyes, the paternal grandfather of Aurora Reyes, went from being a respected member of Díaz's inner circle to a popular contender for his presidential post, and then into political exile. As a particularly well-read member of a dying generation, General Reyes exhibited humanistic tendencies that motivated an increasingly educated population to rally behind him.

This chapter also includes a look at the ways in which the aging dictator attempted to merge his persona with the advances he had engendered in transportation, communication, and education by planning an elaborate series of events to commemorate the centennial of Mexican Independence (1810-1910). However well intentioned Díaz may have been, the costly pageantry only served to highlight the disparity between the president's version of modern Mexico and the bleak reality lived by the majority of its citizens. The work of invited scholar Franz Boas helped solidify the role of Anthropology in the expanded curriculum of the renovated National University. This emerging discipline ultimately functioned as an ideological means for dismantling the façade of European superiority the President had cultivated for more than thirty years. The increasing acceptance of "cultural relativity" paved the way for a new generation to revalue indigenous worldviews, and to redefine "*mestizaje*," initially understood as a racial phenomenon, in increasingly cultural terms. In the few years he spent in Mexico, Boas had a profound effect on his colleagues, including Mexican intellectuals Manuel Gamio and Adolfo Best Maugard, who went on to become architects of the revolutionary SEP alongside José Vasconcelos in the early nineteen-twenties.

Chapter four continues to tell the story of the aesthetic revolution in the academy, and links it to the more widespread changes affecting Mexican society. As the practical pursuit of education literally overflowed the walls of the outdated institutions designed to contain it, ideas nurtured by liberal artists merged with the desires of the general population; both were buoyed by their confluence with international trends that validated the quest to reclaim tangible evidence of the continuity inherent in collective human evolution. As a series of restorationists jockeyed for political control of Mexico, international artistic and intellectual currents converged with the desires of the masses. The world became relatively smaller through shared experiences and emerging transnational perspectives.

While Bernardo Reyes died a tragic death brought on by a botched military operation in the capital, it is telling that his sons, Léon (Aurora's father) and Alfonso (her uncle), would learn from his mistakes. In their own ways, each recognized the value of the humanities in the evolution of modern society. Distinguished representatives of Mexican arts and letters took advantage of their European residencies to inform foreign nationals about the practical and humane concerns of Mexican citizens. They became representatives for the masses whose voices had been too often lost in the chaos of traditional diplomacy, with its reliance on economic and military concerns. The formal nineteenth century concept of "instruction" gave way to a more holistic approach to "education" that valued practical knowledge acquired in multiple venues, both formally and informally defined. As the federal army basically abandoned Mexico City, the inhabitants of the capital banded together in their struggle for survival, cultivating a collective

consciousness that formed the foundation on which an alternative national identity might be constructed.

Chapter five is an examination of the confluence of factors that enabled the *centro historico* to function as a forge for the formation of collective national identity based on popular cohesion in the face of government neglect. This accelerated the process of cultural *mestizaje*, as the nineteenth century concept of “imagined communities” fell short of explaining Mexican national identity. In the visual arts, this process is best represented in the prolific work of printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, whose satirical images breathed life and legitimacy into the popular experience. As an artist, Posada represents the merging of formal and informal education as he developed into a legitimate “voice” for a generation that would be further fleshed out by students of revolution. Prominent members of the Mexican artistic renaissance, including Aurora Reyes, consistently credited Posada as the precursor of their revolutionary art. Aesthetically, Posada’s work bridged the pictorial tradition of pre-Hispanic chronicles with more modern forms of expression enabled by advances in communications technology. Simultaneously, ongoing archaeological excavations in the *centro* validated its designation as a vortex of cultural *mestizaje* where the revolutionary generation might draw energy for their quest to define a more inclusive version of national identity. As a center of both foundational mythology and massive immigration, the *centro historico* hosted fluid and dynamic processes of transculturation, which enabled modern Mexicans to recognize their shared connections with one another. When Aurora Reyes first entered the Mexico City public education system as an immigrant to the *centro*

*historico* around 1914, she became a member of a generation that collectively benefitted from this unprecedented confluence of energy and ideas with the capability of uniting *México Profundo* and *México Moderno* via cultural mestizaje.

In Chapter six, I argue that as a budding urban intellectual, Aurora Reyes recognized her own connections with *Mexico Profundo* and learned to embrace her “inner Tehuana” initially cultivated during her formative years in downtown Mexico City. Although Reyes made her first “pilgrimage” to Tehuantepec in the 1940’s, she had developed an affinity for the image and persona of the Tehuana as a student of revolution years earlier, coming of age in the chaotic confluence of the *centro historico*. As discussed in previous chapters, Reyes gained both a formal and informal education surrounded by visual narratives of national history. In many cases, these narratives featured scenes from the isthmus of Tehuantepec presented as “authentic” examples of the Mexican experience.

In Tehuantepec, Reyes recognized tangible, contemporary expressions of this aesthetic, and she also drew a parallel between the imported communal ideals of her modern, radical cohort, and the traditional gendered “duality” manifest in the complementary gender norms of Zapotec society. It is therefore not surprising that Reyes and her colleagues adopted elements of the traditional *traje* of Tehuantepec into their urban lives. As members of the revolutionary cultural elite, they embraced indigenous fashion in a manner that may be understood as both representational and aspirational<sup>22</sup> - reflecting both who they were, as well as who they wanted to become.

Chapter seven describes the practical application of revolutionary lessons internalized by students of revolution. I focus on the work of Aurora Reyes, while I also draw attention to the activities of her peers in an attempt to show the lasting effects of cultural *mestizaje* in defining reproducible change among a generation of Mexican artists and intellectuals. The group of students educated in the Revolutionary programs of the SEP in the early nineteen-twenties managed to forge “indigenous souls” for themselves, and helped ensure that the aesthetic continuum unearthed in the name of the Revolution would not be reburied under the pressures of North American capitalist influence. While the State may have shifted toward a neocolonial model, Reyes and her cohort remained strong in their beliefs that the nation must not lose sight of its origins- since therein lay the key to its sustainable development in the modern era.

As an artist, an educator and a social activist, Aurora Reyes rode the roller coaster of twentieth century Mexican politics with the clear conscience of a revolutionary fully committed to her cause. Although her ideals and her commitments never wavered, the fluctuations in the political perspective of the State rendered her variously a privileged descendant of the Porfirian elite, an innocent victim of the politics of power transfer, a legitimate member of the revolutionary vanguard, and a radical anarchist blacklisted by the government. Independent of outward classification, Reyes remained focused in her intent, never faltering in her love of and faith in the Mexican people and their artistic energies.

In this investigation, I examine the role of her predecessors as a means of understanding the context in which Aurora Reyes internalized the dynamic ideology

of social revolution for her own personal and professional development, and, ultimately, for the benefit of her country. Although Reyes found herself comfortable in the elite urban circles of México City, she never lost sight of the importance of reclaiming México's indigenous heritage as a vital component for developing a modern national identity for the Mexican people. This approach to modernization represents a major goal of the Revolution of 1910 enabled by the multifaceted processes inherent in cultural *mestizaje*: rebalancing modern Mexican society by granting Indians and their descendants the land, education and respect they sacrificed to the Spanish colonial paradigm. While the principle of western-based development models relies on a linear conceptualization of time and events, Aurora Reyes aligned her beliefs with those of the great native civilizations that came before her. She recognized the utility of a more cyclical conception of time, which linked her personal evolution in the twentieth century to a continuous cycle of change anchored in the deep past and projected infinitely into the future.

**CHAPTER ONE: VISUAL EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

*FIG. 1.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes*

The artistic curriculum promoted by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education (SEP) between 1921 and 1924 had a formative affect on a generation of Mexican students. Aurora Reyes studied in both the Prepa and the Academy of Fine Arts during this dynamic interval, which coincided with both the Mexican artistic renaissance and the evolution of Brazilian modernism. The culture-based curriculum of the SEP included non-traditional didactic tools such as muralism, cinematography, open-air arts education, and the Metodo Best, which collectively functioned in the development of an alternative socio-cultural grammar. This

approach relied on the recognition of indigenous aesthetics and cultivated a more inclusive version of national identity while promoting the social benefits of cultural *mestizaje*. Revolutionary artists and intellectuals lent their efforts to re-editing the country's national narrative, trusting that a new generation of students would internalize and then reproduce their ideals. One of the main goals was to place the colonial experience in relative context.



### **Cultural Currents Converge**

In revolutionary Mexico, emerging institutions developed the potential to mold and refine the newly awakened collective consciousness gleaned from a decade of shared chaos. With an overhaul of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) spearheaded by José Vasconcelos, educators became revolutionaries with a focus on equipping their students as representatives of and advocates for social equality. The revolutionary generation who came of age in civil war-torn Mexico City and studied in the arts-heavy atmosphere of the SEP between 1920-1924 developed a unique cultural perspective. Select members of this generation, including Aurora Reyes, increasingly self-identified with the nation's indigenous heritage as they became students of revolution and promoters of cultural mestizaje. Identifying and valuing indigenous elements of modern Mexican society became one way of proving that they had successfully cultivated their own "indigenous souls."<sup>1</sup>

The resurgence of pre-Hispanic forms of cultural expression that relied on the use of symbols and public space to transmit information is evidence that the Revolution enabled Mexicans to reclaim a particular form of historical consciousness that had been muted by the colonial experience. For the first time in modern history, Mexican artists communicated to the rest of the world the passionate, prideful, and sometimes painful parameters of *Mexicanidad*<sup>2</sup> on their own terms. This cultivation of cultural nationalism would prove to be a successful way of uniting the nation under a recognizable set of symbols that effectively rewrote the Mexican historical narrative from a popular perspective.

Whether or not the Mexican Revolution of 1910 realized its full potential in the sense of other 20<sup>th</sup> century political revolutions has been a topic of ongoing scholarly debate. However, it did pave a definitive path for the re-valuation of the native aesthetic in the world of Mexican art, and the inclusion of that aesthetic in arts education in Mexico City. Jean Charlot, a French born painter who would assume a prominent position in the Mexican artistic vanguard of the early twentieth century, asserts: "Whereas the term [revolution] can be questioned in its political implications, its meaning remains impeccable on the aesthetic level."<sup>3</sup> In the years following the armed phase of the revolution, the Mexican Artistic Renaissance gained global recognition as a unique and powerful cultural manifestation of a people firmly in touch with their aesthetic precursors.

Mexico was not the only Latin American nation to recognize and promote the intersection of art and politics as a catalyst for achieving social balance in the opening decades of the twentieth century. A brief examination of contemporary events in Brazil strengthens my argument that the visual arts provided modern American intellectuals with the means to re-edit and re-imagine the legacy of the colonial era. In both Mexico and Brazil, modern artists and intellectuals appropriated European ideas and techniques to reaffirm the concurrently universal and unique nature of their local experiences on American soil. On a global scale, this process, which may be traced through the visual historical record, facilitated the recognition of autochthonous American cultures as valuable components in the global human narrative. Within the Americas, it helped reconcile the contradictory nature of the Latin American socio-cultural experience.

Over the course of roughly a decade (1917-1928) near the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazilian intellectuals offered many valuable contributions to the global artistic and literary movement now known as Modernism. Their efforts punctuated the larger process of reconstructing Brazilian cultural memory in the modern era. The emergence of the Brazilian modernist aesthetic parallels like-minded efforts in Mexico. When considered as complementary parts of a collective hemispheric awakening, the events in both countries enrich the visual and written record with evidence of the desire to reconcile the contradictory nature of the Latin American socio-cultural experience on several levels.

On the macro level, politically motivated artists and intellectuals addressed the disjuncture between the region's colonial and paternalistic past, as well as its ongoing awareness of its geopolitical positioning in the global economy. Interestingly, the denouement of the Porfiriato roughly coincides with the fall of the Second Brazilian Empire, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, when social inequality reached its breaking point in both Mexico and Brazil.

After the end of the Second Brazilian Empire in 1889, social disjuncture in that nation became manifest in the intensely contradictory reality of "disproportionate wealth and poverty and flagrant regional differences in terms of development and quality of life."<sup>4</sup> From its founding as a Portuguese colony, the nation we now know as Brazil has been an overwhelmingly economic creation, an assertion supported by the economically driven approach of the Portuguese merchants and traders who sought quick gains from the export and consumption of

raw Brazilian resources such as exotic hardwoods and gold, and its early reliance on African slaves for the labor intensive production of sugar.

Throughout these developmental stages, the Western world looked upon both Mexico and Brazil with an extractive approach that privileged European cultural norms and standards for measuring “development” and “civilization” on a decidedly linear track that failed to take the pre-colonial historical narrative into account. It seems as if this narrow focus failed to consider the possibility of readjusting the view of the Americas to both reflect and refract a more locally defined perspective. As successive generations of artists and intellectuals matured with roots firmly planted in the New World, their curiosity must have grown exponentially stronger about exactly what type of culture had grown in that same soil before their own lives took hold. Transplanted Iberian norms only go so far toward explaining Latin American identity that has traditionally relied heavily on the notion of *mestizaje / mestizagem*, and a truer understanding of such a hybrid cultural identity requires a readjustment of the colonial experience to more authentically reflect its influence in proportion to the pre-colonial history and anthropology of the geographical region.

As in Mexico, it was a group of like-minded artists and intellectuals who took up the task of rewriting Brazil’s cultural memory to include the riches of its pre-colonial past. They were aided in this pursuit by several notable European intellectuals who helped to validate and revalue indigenous Brazilian culture by positioning it on par with other, more accepted early civilizations such as those of China and Egypt. Rather than focusing on the ways in which Brazilian culture

deviated from Western European norms, these intellectuals focused on the ways in which it intersected with civilizations that predated those norms. From the modernist point of view, becoming “Modern” represented an alternative developmental path with the potential to defy traditional linear dependency schemes typically represented by the classification of “Old World” vs. “New World.”

To be modern is neither “old” nor “new,” instead it assumes a more abstract conceptualization perhaps more accurately expressed with words such as “timeless,” or “authentic.” For Brazil’s artistic and intellectual vanguard, becoming modern represented the potential to leapfrog past the underdevelopment that facilitated the many juxtapositions of the Brazilian experience. These juxtapositions failed to translate into European norms, and therefore relegated the younger nation to dependent status, preventing it from assuming its proper place in the pantheon that is the geopolitical world order.

Rather than placing both feet firmly in the New World context to examine the worldview from a different perspective, the European minded individuals instead contented themselves with fitting the Brazilian reality into a pre-existent European social and cultural paradigm. For centuries, countless manifestations of the tactile reality of life on the ground in Brazil failed to qualify for inclusion in this process because they simply did not resonate with key cultural elements of Western European experience. The sights, shapes, sounds and smells of Brazil had to be re-evaluated before they would be acceptable for both domestic and international consumption, and it is the language and aesthetic of Modernists that enabled this process to assume a tangible and translatable form of expression.

As both Mexican and Brazilian cultural memory took on a more decidedly local flavor in the 1920's, they became more palatable by European cultural elites, who helped invert the traditional conceptualization of cultural hegemony whereby the core dictates to the periphery. Through their radical visions, Brazilian modernist artists and intellectuals of the early twentieth century successfully emerged as a new and authentic form of cultural expression that enabled the "periphery" to inform the core with unprecedented resonance. The aggressive and confident manner in which they did so enabled the process which may have previously been labeled "Calibanesque," to assume the almost frighteningly more authentic label "Cannibalesque." Brazilian intellectual Oswald de Andrade outlined this process of cultural consumption and reproduction in his "Manifesto Antropófago" in 1928, which marked a high point of international awareness for the work of the Brazilian modernists. A series of catalytic events and publications emerged in the years leading up to the publication of this landmark manifesto, which formally outlined a revolutionary and cannibalistic approach to cultural assimilation.

In 1917, Brazilian literary modernist Mário de Andrade (no relation to Oswald de Andrade) published his first collection of poetry under the pseudonym Mário Sobral, which he titled *Há uma gota de sangue em cada poema* (*There is a drop of blood in every poem*). Although the work isn't explicitly modernist, it does reflect a growing national consciousness among Brazilian writers and intellectuals that their cultural production functioned as an extension of their "selves," as part of a process increasingly conceptualized in nationalist terms. If the poet is Brazilian, and the

poem contains a drop of his or her blood, then the poem is therefore Brazilian as well.

That same year painter Anita Malfatti (1889-1964) offered a one-woman show of modernist work that inspired mixed reactions from its Brazilian audience. Born in São Paulo to an immigrant family of Italian and American descent, Malfatti traveled to Germany in 1910 to study with painter and printmaker Lovis Corinth. When World War One broke out Malfatti traveled to New York City and continued her studies in the modernist vein with American painter Homer Boss.<sup>5</sup> Her studies at New York's Independent School of Art took shape in an environment marked by the reverberations of the Armory Show of 1913, the first international exhibition of modernist art in the Americas.

The Armory Show proved to be both scandalous and extremely influential, a landmark event in the acceptance of modernism as a legitimate art form in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>6</sup> Malfatti returned to Brazil in 1916, and mounted her first solo show in São Paulo less than a year later. The revolutionary show featured “fauvist” works showing total freedom of creation and expression”<sup>7</sup> previously unseen by Brazilian audiences. The show prompted a host of responses among the intellectual and artistic elite. Well-known nationalist writer José Monteiro Lobato attacked the show for its blatant deviation from internationally accepted norms of fine art, stating in his article “*Paranóia ou mistificação? A propósito da Exposição Malfatti*” that there are essentially two types of artists, which he defines in the first three paragraphs of the essay.<sup>8</sup>

Lobato's preferred artistic "species" is the artist who look at things and as a consequence of his or her vision, creates pure art that guards the eternal rhythms of life and offers a concrete manifestation of esthetic emotions, as in the processes of the great masters. Lobato goes on to name artists of this type who are all male natives of nations that might rank high on a scale of "geopolitical significance," if such a list could be compiled. Lobato references Praxiteles of ancient Greece (390-330 B.C.), Raphael of Italy (1485-1520), Reynolds of Great Britain (1723-1792), Dürer of Germany (1471-1528), Rodin of France (1840-1917), and Zuloaga of Spain (1870-1945). Lobato declares that this group of immortal masters has an excess of talent with the power to hold successive generations of artists in their influential orbit.

Lobato's second species of artist is comprised of those whose form of creative expression falls just outside the gravitational pull of the aforementioned canon. This "deviant" species of artist is made up of those who view nature in an abnormal way, interpreting the world around them in a manner illuminated by ephemeral theories and bursting forth onto the scene "like blisters of excessive culture."<sup>9</sup> Lobato goes on to declare that such artists are products of the weakness and the sadism typical of particularly decadent periods of history, and dismisses them as shooting stars that may shine brightly for a moment with the flashiness of a scandal, but are destined to burn themselves out as they fade into obscurity. Although Lobato goes on to acknowledge Malfatti's technical ability as a painter, he considered her to be the personification of this inferior species.



Despite Lobato's damning review of her show, Malfatti's work on the edge of the artistic envelope earned her copious amounts of praise from emerging literary personalities Oswald and Mario de Andrade (no relation), who positioned her work at the vanguard of the renovation of Brazil's modern artistic scene. Although Malfatti's esthetic had traceable international influences, it was also decidedly modern, and definitively Brazilian. In fact, many of its harsher critics disapproved of the show for its portrayal of immigrants and other marginalized figures, which had not previously been recognized as legitimate subject matter. Two other young Brazilian artists, the sculptor Victor Brecheret and the painter Emiliana De Cavalcanti, also voiced unwavering support for Malfatti's show. This influential and like-minded group of five began the initial preparations for Modern Art Week, an event modeled after European events but designed to be catalytic rather than definitive in nature. "The participants' primary goal at the time was to show themselves opposed to pretentious, conventional styles and in favor of change."<sup>10</sup> The task would not prove to be an easy one, given the conventional wisdom of the era with regards to the formally dictated "value" of art as evidenced in Lobato's scathing review, and in the emerging institutional world of Brazilian art in general.

The dramatic reception that Malfatti's show received in Brazil may be partially attributable to the mixed messages it sent. Malfatti is an artist whose aesthetic is obviously informed by her access to international stimulation, yet produces a product that is exceptionally Brazilian. Until this point European artistic norms had influenced Brazilian art in a way that prompted imitation rather than interpretation. From 1918 to 1919, Oswald de Andrade and a group of his friends

and colleagues created what would come to be known as “*O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo*” in a bachelor-pad type apartment he kept at 67 Rua Libero Badaro in São Paulo. This experimental publication (sometimes referenced as a “newspaper”) took the form of a communally written and alternatively formatted novel that expressed the modernist tendencies of his generation. An examination of the beautifully reproduced facsimile of the original text<sup>11</sup> prompts the reader to liken it to a scrapbook of sketches, ramblings and mementos that collectively represent the evolution of social consciousness among a cohort intent upon redefining the world in which they lived, worked and played. The parameters of that “world” could be simultaneously as small as the walls of Oswald de Andrade’s *garçonniere*, or as expansive as the farthest reaches of the universe. What mattered was the idea that familiar limits imposed by a traditionally linear evolution of history and measure of development could be transcended, and the transcendental tool arrived in the form of modernism.

The founding of Brazil’s first University in Rio de Janeiro in the year 1920 helped legitimate the idea that valuable and quantifiable knowledge could be acquired within Brazilian borders. Brazilians could earn advanced degrees on their own soil for the first time in modern history. Malfatti and the two Andrades represented a generation of artists and intellectuals more rooted in Brazil than any previous generation, a point emphasized by the approaching centennial (this event would coincide with Modern Art Week in 1922) of Brazil’s independence from Portugal. This important historical watershed most likely inspired far-reaching psychological effects on artists and intellectuals who studied in Brazil and abroad.

Also in 1920 Brazilian artist Vicente do Rego Monteiro created additional waves in both Rio and São Paulo. Monteiro capitalized upon Malfatti's brave depiction of various "marginalized" members of Brazilian society with a show that highlighted indigenous themes.<sup>12</sup> In 1921 Oswald de Andrade officially proclaimed the arrival of Brazilian Modernism in a speech he gave at a banquet held in the Trianon palace in São Paulo.<sup>13</sup>

By the time the centennial of Brazilian independence arrived in 1922, modernism had taken a comfortable seat at the front of the philosophical toolkit of artists and intellectuals working to reconstruct Brazilian cultural memory from a decidedly local point of view. Paralleling the much-anticipated centennial, Modern Art Week arrived on February 13, 1922, and featured conferences, art and architecture exhibits, poetry readings, and musical events.<sup>14</sup> The take-away message of the week's activities hinged on a "desire for change", represented by movement away from stifling "academic tendencies" and a hierarchical approach to cultural aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> After one hundred years of independence, Brazil's cultural elites emerged onto the international scene with a proud and vibrant splash that resonated around the world.

Within a year, several of Modern Art Week's seminal participants, Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro, helped realize an inversion of traditional cultural flows by introducing his socially relevant Brazilian interpretations of modernism to European audiences. Oswald de Andrade partnered with Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral, and the couple traveled to Paris together in 1923. De Andrade gave a talk at the Sorbonne titled, "*L'Effort intellectuel du Brésil*

*contemporain.*” During the same year the Parisian publisher Tolmer produced Rego Monteiro’s *Légendes, croyances et talismans des indiens de l’Amazone*. This beautifully illustrated text about the legends and beliefs of the native tribes of the Amazon illustrates the increase in interest and validation of native “New World” cultures by European audiences.

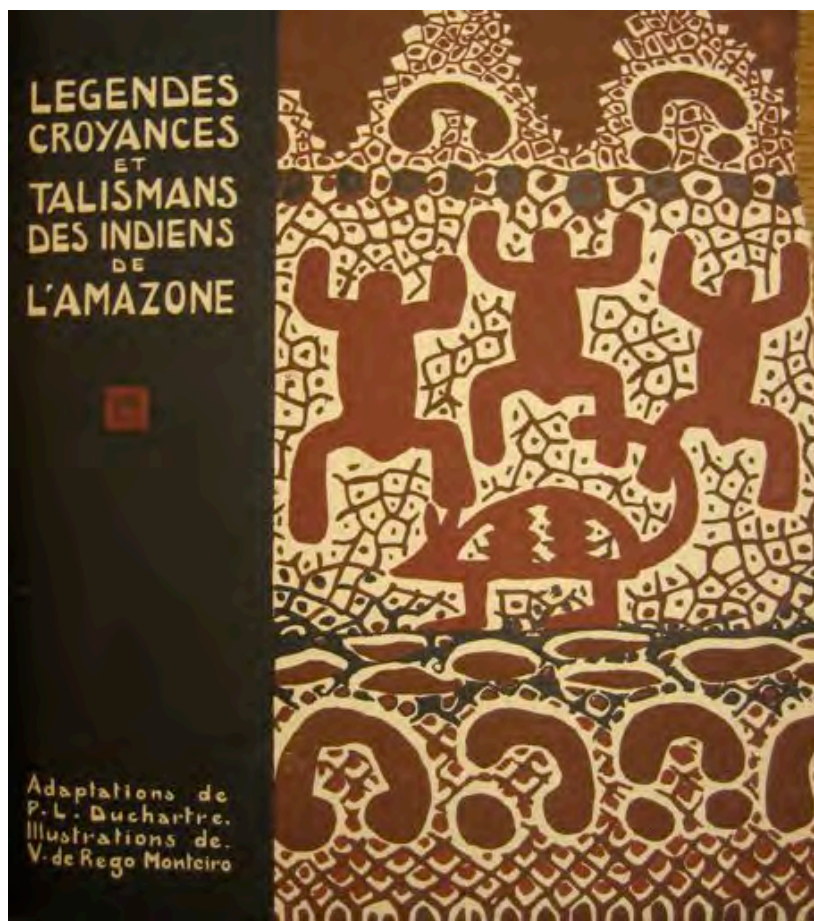


FIG. 1.2: Photograph of Rego Monteiro cover by Sarah Borealis.

The text includes a series of tables that show the startling similarities between symbols utilized by the Amazonian natives and their Mexican, Chinese and Egyptian

counterparts. The net effect of this exercise is to align the early civilizations of the “New World” with other primordial civilizations already valued by “Old World” academics. Credit for the images is given to the archives of the *Museu Histórico Nacional in Rio de Janeiro*, an institution founded only one year prior to the publication of Rego Monteiro’s book. Significantly, the fledgling museum achieved international recognition in only its first year of existence.

**CARACTÈRES SYMBOLIQUES COMPARÉS (Suite)**

Sens supposé et analogies	BRESIL MARAJO	MEXIQUE	CHINE	EGYPTE
29 - Étendue d'eau limitée? Lagune ou lac.				
30 - Eau courante ou agitée. Exfil, le sang (Mexique).				
31 - Cheminsûr?				
32 et 33 - Endroit difficile à défricher.				
34 - Une colline, algue renversé, un tombeau, vase (Mexique). Un homme (Egypte)				
35 - Endroit montagneux? Sens voisin (Chine, Egypte).				
36 - Chaîne de collines se reflétant dans l'eau?				
37 - Monument sacré ou habitation souterraine? On retrouve ce signe dans la tête d'une fourmi, ce qui semble confirmer le sens d'habitation souterraine.				
38 - Même sens que 37??				
39 et 40 - Habitation? Même sens (Chine Egypte).				
41 - Habitation sur pilotis?				
42 - Feuille. Symbole du soumbou (Chine Egypte).				

D'après les archives du Musée national de Rio de Janeiro, Brésil.

FIG. 1.3: Photograph of symbol comparison table from Rego Monteiro text by Sarah Borealis.

While the colonial hierarchies labeled Brazil, and the rest of Latin America, as an extractive mine of raw materials to be exported to the “Old World” for production and refinement, Rego do Monteiro’s ingenious tables offered evidence

that the region had been producing fully defined cultural riches of export quality since long before the arrival of the Spanish and the Portuguese. These symbolic illustrations, when viewed next to corresponding symbols from other parts of the world, functioned as evidence of the advanced communication and artistic value of autochthonous American cultures. The acceptance of this argument by Western European academics went a long way toward validating the continued “export” of modern Latin American aesthetics.

Oswald de Andrade offered his insight on this revolutionary form of export based dependency in his Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil (Brazilwood Manifesto), which appeared in the pages of the Rio based newspaper *Correio da Manhã* on March 18, 1924.<sup>16</sup> The title of the manifesto refers to Brazil’s earliest and most profitable export of the colonial era, the strong and beautiful Brazilwood. The manifesto functions as social commentary on the Brazilian rejection of European cultural dependency as a step toward a declaration of cultural independence. A particularly enlightening section of the text reads as follows:

...constructive innocence. Opportunistic Brazil. Learned Brazil. And the coincidence of the first Brazilian construction with the general movement of reconstruction. Brazilwood Poetry. Since this is a miraculous era, laws were born from the dynamic rotation of destructive factors itself:

Synthesis

Equilibrium

Carriage-shop finish

Invention

Surprise

A new perspective

A new scale.

Any effort in this direction will be good. Brazilwood Poetry.

The work against naturalistic detail – for *synthesis*, against romantic morbidity – for geometric *equilibrium* and technical *finish*. Against the copy: for *invention* and *surprise*. A new perspective.

The other one, Paolo Uccello's, created the naturalism of the apogee. Distant objects did not get smaller. It was a law of appearance. Then, the moment was one of reaction against appearance. A reaction against the copy. Substituting the naturalistic and visual perspective with a perspective of another order: sentimental, intellectual, ironic, naïve.

A new scale...

The equivalent of physical surprise in art. A reaction against invasive matter, not belonging to finality. The theater of thesis was a monstrous arrangement, and the novel of ideas a hodgepodge. The historical picture was an aberration, and eloquent sculpture a senseless dread...

Our age announces a turn toward *pure feeling*. A picture is lines and colors... No formula for the contemporary expression of the world. *See with free eyes.*<sup>17</sup>

Oswald de Andrade dismisses centuries of Western European hegemony over New World aesthetics as a matter of perspective, and eloquently describes the point of epiphany when the “dependent” cultures gain the ability to invert that perspective. This alternative reference point liberated Latin American cultural expressions from the erroneous classification as imitative copies of Western norms.

Brazilian modernists looked to the myth-historical promised land of *Pindorama* to guide their efforts, as their Mexican counterparts focused in on the legacy of *Anahuac* in an attempt to trace the connections between their modern lives and their ancient roots. In Mexico, a new generation was poised to become the ideological and social architects of the visual arts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century nation. Educational visionaries took advantage of the social opening that appeared as a product of political change. The collective goal included forging an alternative version of Mexican cultural history that included the indigenous majority and their contributions to Mexican development as a means of rebalancing society. As anthropologist Manuel Gamio has argued, evidence of those contributions is embedded in visual components of the historical record. Students trained to identify



symbolic markers would be able to bridge traditional and modern aesthetics; eventually recognizing themselves in the process. Manuel Gamio outlined the broad scope of the endeavor:

It will be necessary to faithfully reconstruct and portray, by pictorial, plastic, architectural, cinematographical, and theatrical (dramatic) methods, the most important aspects of the pre-Hispanic civilizations. In addition to the aesthetic and educative results which such portrayal would produce, it would serve to uplift the indigene from the spiritual apathy and discouragement into which he has fallen.<sup>18</sup>

Revolutionary change, defined by an accelerated push to rebalance society by granting Indians the land, education and respect they sorely lacked, would finally gain sustainable momentum around 1920. Institutions emerging at this time capitalized on the collective energy of artists and intellectuals who combined forces as missionaries of nationalism.<sup>19</sup> Under the aegis of the Secretary of Public Education they helped develop and deploy didactic weaponry that inspired lasting change in a generation of re-educated citizens. The production of visual materials in support of the revolution enabled the state to appeal to its citizens regardless of their preferred language or level of literacy. The artistic renaissance that emerged as a continuation of the revolution functioned as a visual and visceral manifestation of one group's desire to reclaim an older development path. As in the case of the Brazilian Modernists, the Mexican artist-educators who led the movement very purposefully called upon indigenous images, symbols and methods to channel this primordial significance into their contemporary work. Their students internalized these lessons and eventually reproduced materials that helped further the process.

The desire for measurable change took the form of a collective movement away from stifling academic tendencies and reconsidered the hierarchical approach

to cultural production. As in Brasil, the movement for artistic and social liberation coincided with the centennial celebration of Mexican independence. Determined to mark the passage of this latest century with an aesthetic shift, Mexico's cultural elite emerged onto the international scene with a proud and vibrant splash that resonated around the world. They began to draw, sculpt, paint, film and photograph their environment from a perspective informed by their indigenous heritage, previously considered inferior to imported European aesthetic norms. Educators working with the SEP in its debut helped resituate the colonial period and its residual effects within the larger context of the Mexican experience. Mexican painter and sculptor Juan Soriano describes the practical motivation for many artists to lend their skills to SEP projects: "*todos en ese tiempo estábamos enrolados con el gobierno en algunas clases de dibujo para poder sobrevivir.*"<sup>20</sup> International audiences marveled at the independent spirit emanating from the Latin American nation.

Mexican artists of the 1920s through the 1950s had a huge impact on art throughout the Americas as they strove to reach the Mexican people through legible, immediate imagery, moving away from avant-garde abstraction to realistic portrayals of Mexican life. The muralists were more interested in pre-Cortesian art and native imagery than in impressionism, cubism, surrealism or any of the other European art concepts of the time, aiming instead for a regaining of Mexican consciousness and a tying together of Mexican roots and contemporary culture.<sup>21</sup>

Aurora Reyes, who came of age in this revolutionary milieu and eventually assumed a post among the revolutionary elite, describes the role of indigenous culture in the process of defining Mexican national identity: "that which gives a magical and eternal character so that by passing through our own steps, we will be launched to the conquest of the future."<sup>22</sup> By anchoring themselves simultaneously in the past and the future, the artists and intellectuals of the revolutionary era

helped define Mexico's modern identity as one that valued cultural mestizaje. This emerging cultural consciousness remains faithful to ancient worldviews predicated on a circular conception of time and space, and is logical when viewed in light of emerging scientific theories. In addition, it functions independently of more temporal events comprising the national historical narrative. Technological innovations made it possible to bridge tradition and modernity in the re-definition of Modern Mexico. The revolutionary educational toolkit included color, symbols, words, and for the first time, moving images. The elements came together to produce sustainable change in Mexican society that would enable the nation to ascend to a position of relative advantage in the global socio-economic order.

Archaeological sites excavated by Boas and Gamio concurrently with the educational revolution offered indisputable visible evidence of the grand aboriginal cultures that had sited and built the ancient urban centers of Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan. In 1910 Gamio became the first to apply the stratigraphic method to New World archaeology. When Gamio made a deep cut in the soil at a site close to Mexico City, he revealed the first stratified record of pre-Aztec inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico. This discovery marked the first step toward establishing a *relative* chronology of the ancient civilizations that occupied the area prior to the arrival of the Spanish.<sup>23</sup> The expanding archaeological record facilitated the definition of a new social paradigm by re-contextualizing Mexico's national historical narrative. The depth of the indigenous past held the potential to eclipse the more "shallow" colonial era in hope of overcoming the shame associated with the latter.

Approaching modern Mexican History through the context of the artistic and

intellectual renaissance that bloomed with the Revolution facilitates a better understanding of the role that Mexican artists played in the development of a unique and revolutionary national identity.

Intellectuals sought the aesthetics of the ancients as a redemptive force, determined to reorient the population by converting bustling public spaces of the increasingly urban capital into virtual classrooms. They translated the intangible goals of the armed uprising into visual representations and performance designed to educate future generations of Mexicans about their rich cultural heritage, and to inspire national pride rooted in the Mexican experience. Modern expressions of this process included open-air art schools, muralism, and documentary film. Artists utilized emerging global technologies to excavate the past and project it into the future<sup>24</sup>

In their attempt to “re-write” modern Mexican history and resituate the colonial period in relative perspective, revolutionary educators utilized alternative historical documents to supplement the more traditional written record. The written sources proved problematic, since it excluded most native accounts. Native contributions to national history took various forms and included information communicated through indigenous languages and symbolic systems. Pictorial codices, signs and symbols sculpted, engraved or painted on archaeological artifacts, and local *traje* facilitated the transfer of information between various ethnic groups. However, for hundreds of years, these forms of communication went unrecognized by the powerful Spanish-speaking groups representing the hegemonic colonial perspective. The professionalization of anthropology and the simultaneous

development of Gamio's approach to integral education helped validate this body of materials as relevant "documentation" of distinct cultural groups in the Americas.

Gamio describes the way in which the archaeological record relates to modern Mexican history:

We should be concerned about deficiencies in the histories that we have written of colonial and independent Mexico. But the lack of concern that we have shown for the pre-Hispanic age is even more deplorable. This is a history that we have not even begun to write, in spite of the richness of the relevant material. This situation is inexcusable, given that pre-Hispanic history should constitute the base of colonial and contemporary history.<sup>25</sup>

Gamio believed that Archaeology should be considered an applied science, not only to understand the deep past, but to apply the lessons learned to promote a better understanding of contemporary indigenous peoples.

This more inclusive discourse on Mexican history inspired the use of alternative educational media, also rooted in the visual transfer of information. As more individuals began to consult and reference the Pre-Hispanic cultural record, they produced work that helped the broader population recognize connections between *Mexico Profundo* and *Mexico Moderno*. Students who attended Mexico's revolutionary schools between 1920 and 1924 benefitted from the most radical evolution of didactic materials. The schools functioned as laboratories for the dissemination of an alternative approach to cultural nationalism that gained international notice, and in turn, influenced international norms. The emerging arts curriculum included Adolfo Best Maugard's *Metodo Best*, or "Best Method," for drawing, the return of open-air arts education, a muralism campaign undertaken by a collective of Mexican artists spearheaded by a rather opportunist Diego Rivera and the more mutualist Fernando Leal, and a series of ethnographic films produced by

the SEP, inspired by Gamio's innovative work with film at the archaeological site of Teotihuacan. The multifaceted approach functioned as a visual grammar designed to help modern students connect with their nation's indigenous legacy. I have identified Aurora Reyes, Miguel Covarrubias, and Andres Henestrosa as three students of revolution who internalized this visual grammar promoted by the SEP. Each of them eventually produced a series of "alternative" multi-media documents that continue to illuminate our perspective of Mexican history in the twenty-first century.

The principle architects of the visual-arts approach to rebalancing Mexican society found encouragement under the presidency of General Álvaro Obregón, a former farmer and one-time schoolteacher who occupied the Presidential office from 1920 to 1924. As president-elect, Obregón read Gamio's *Forjando Patria*, and offered this praise, which hints at the social potential of cultural mestizaje:

*Me dediqué a la lectura de su libro "Forjando Patria"... un estudio profundamente científico del verdadero origen de nuestros grandes males, he querido dirigirme de Nuevo a usted para felicitarlo con toda sinceridad y manifestarle mi pena porque a su obra no se le da la circulación que yo deseara para que fuera conocida de todos los hombres que saben leer en esta República."*<sup>26</sup>

Diverse projects came together under the umbrella of cultural nationalism facilitated by Obregon, who understood that revolution is waged most effectively through institutions that tackle social unrest from a practical perspective. In revolutionary Mexico, this included recognition that the republic struggled with high rates of illiteracy- and a successful education campaign would include creative means of surmounting such an obstacle. A curriculum placing emphasis on the didactic potential of the visual arts proved to be a successful strategy in these

circumstances. In several undated essays expressing gratitude for the teachers and students who contributed to his intellectual formation, Manuel Gamio acknowledged President Obregon's personal support during the most trying moments of the revolutionary era.

[Obregon] triumphed over political obstacles and reactionary revolutionaries...[because he] really understands the sociological conditions of the Mexican people, and subsequently understands the means of governing the masses most adequately to achieve the equilibrium and the fluorescent evolution of the social classes and ethnic groups that compose those masses.<sup>27</sup>

### **Education = Revolution**

On July 8, 1921, President Obregón signed the decree creating the Ministry of Public Education (SEP).<sup>28</sup> This revolutionary institution replaced the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts; the latter considered obsolete because of its dependence on the positivist concept of "instruction" promoted during the *Porfiriato*. From this point forward, the fine arts would be more integrated as a valuable component of public education. The SEP promoted the revolutionary concept of "education" as a preferred methodology to achieve the highest level of development possible under pre-existing conditions. Many of Mexico's finest artists returned from their studies in Europe to aid the revolutionary State in constructing a new visible paradigm for national identity that would include indigenous elements. Dr. Atl helped organize an exhibition of popular arts, and Adolfo Best Maugard worked on the *Noche Mexicana*, a multi-media event held in Chapultepec park.<sup>29</sup> Obregón and his foreign relations minister Alberto J. Pani hoped to capitalize on the popular momentum generated by the artistic renaissance and convert it into legitimate political capital. Their

centennial celebration emerged as the antithesis of the shallow Porfirian celebrations held a decade earlier.

On October 10, 1921, Obregón named José Vasconcelos, formerly rector of the National University, leader of the SEP.<sup>30</sup> Vasconcelos continued in the tradition of liberal Oaxacan intellectuals who made a lasting impression on the national political scene. Vasconcelos had received a basic liberal education before specializing in Law. A contemporary of Alfonso Reyes, the two liberal humanists helped found the *Ateneo*; a precursor to advanced liberal arts education in Mexico. Members of the *Ateneo* believed that the responsibilities of the revolutionary State included providing an accessible education to Mexican citizens regardless of class, race, or gender. The illiteracy rate in Mexico hovered around eighty percent when he assumed control of the newly overhauled Ministry of Education, and Vasconcelos immediately embarked on a crusade to prove the utility of education as a means of emancipation in an unbalanced society. One student described the enthusiasm Vasconcelos brought to his new post in a quote that references the role of cultural *mestizaje* in the process:

...Vasconcelos had pointed to the scars of illiteracy [and] he called upon us to fight against it with the same zeal and the same disinterestedness as the old Spanish missionary who went out to the most distant and humble dwelling places to save the pagan native's soul.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to literacy, the new Minister of Education ranked aesthetics among the key elements for liberating the mind.<sup>32</sup> He promoted arts education as a means for encouraging Mexican citizens to develop an aesthetic appreciation of indigenous elements of their national identity, which had been too narrowly defined during the colonial era and throughout the Porfiriato. In an attempt to help both



citizens and students break free from the stifling European norms that had heretofore been imposed upon them, Vasconcelos named Mexican artist Alfredo Ramos Martinez as Director of The Fine Arts Academy. He chose Adolfo Best Maugard, the Mexican painter who made extensive studies of patterns and symbolism derived from potsherds excavated by Boas and Gamio and creatively applied them to the sets for the *Noche Mexicana*, as the SEP's director of Arts Education.<sup>33</sup> Best's responsibilities included the promotion of open-air art schools, which initially appeared in 1913 only to fold a few years later due to economic strain and a disorganized federal government. As part of the cultural toolkit disseminated by the revolutionary SEP, the second coming of the *aire libre* schools counted on full government support.<sup>34</sup>

Members of the artistic and intellectual avant-garde joined forces under the leadership of Vasconcelos in an unprecedented campaign for aesthetic redemption. The Secretary of Education employed the nation's leading artists and intellectuals as missionaries of the new culture-based nationalism, which declared Mexicans ideally situated to tackle the challenges of modernity by virtue of their hybrid cultural heritage. By combining the best attributes of the Spanish European tradition with the unique knowledge of the aboriginal peoples of the Americas, Vasconcelos believed modern Mexicans would forge an advantageous position in the global world order. Aligning the indigenous cultures of ancient Mexico with other great world civilizations like the Chinese, Greek, and Egyptians helped recontextualize the nation's colonial experience.

Evidence of this effort may be found in *El Maestro* (The Teacher), a publication of the SEP overseen by Vasconcelos. Published between 1921 and 1923, *El Maestro* featured articles about local indigenous cultures placed alongside articles on other global manifestations of popular culture. *El Maestro* functioned as a small manual of general culture, with fixed sections on national and universal history, literature, practical knowledge, poetry, and “diverse themes” (*temas diversos*), a section that hosted a wide range of essays by the leading international literary minds of the era. Each section contains a series of illustrations realized in the Best Method, featuring geometric and floral patterns that add dynamism and continuity to the information contained therein. The following images and accompanying titles are examples of content included in the first issue of *El Maestro*, a publication distributed among the nation’s public schoolteachers and geared toward artists and intellectuals:



FIG. 1.4: *El Maestro* masthead (1921).



UNA DECLARACION DE  
INDEPENDENCIA INTELECTUAL  
POR ROMAIN ROLLAND

*FIG. 1.5: El Maestro Masthead, Romain Rolland (1921).*



A LOS ESTUDIANTES MEXICANOS  
POR CARLOS PELLICER

*FIG. 1.6: El Maestro Masthead, Carlos Pellicer (1921).*



BREVES PLATICAS SOBRE ARTE NACIONAL

Veneremos Nuestro Solar

POR AGUSTIN LOERA Y CHAVEZ

Este periódico está y estará libre de la fórmula, libre de la moda, libre de la retórica y del estilo, sin más norma que un inmenso anhelo de regeneración y de bien....

José Vasconcelos.

FIG. 1.7: *El Maestro Masthead, Agustin Loera Y Chavez (1921).*



PAGINAS INFORMATIVAS  
Nueva Orientación del Arte Nacional

POR ALFREDO RAMOS MARTINEZ  
Director de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes

FIG. 1.8: *El Maestro Masthead, Alfredo Ramos Martinez (1921).*

*El Maestro* contained sections oriented toward both children and adults, making it useful and entertaining for the entire household. Vasconcelos elaborates on the

driving force behind the publication: “[The publication had] as its purpose the moral and political resurgence of the Latin world in the face of more powerful nations...”<sup>35</sup>

*El Maestro* printed the first known Spanish language article on Albert Einstein’s theory of Relativity. Sotero Prieto’s “*La teoría de la relatividad*” appeared in July of 1921.<sup>36</sup> Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, proved by the total solar eclipse witnessed on May 29, 1919, facilitated the modern process of re-editing Mexican history by proving that time, like space and size and distance, is relative. Three hundred years of colonialism becomes a *relatively* brief amount of time when considered within a longer perspective of Mexican history that takes into account archaeological evidence of civilizations that are thousands of years old! The theory popularized the idea of time as the fourth dimension, and Mexican intellectuals realized the practical potential of this scientific breakthrough.

French literary theorist Claude Fell described *El Maestro* as a highly original publication simultaneously informative, cultural, and practical; a powerful resource for analyzing the pedagogical and educational struggles of revolutionary Mexico. The publication functioned as a practical organ of the intellectual desire to regenerate the Mexican people through their culture, and unlike the post-1929 writings of Vasconcelos, which are marked by spite and bitterness, his contributions to *El Maestro* are illuminated by enthusiasm and animated by the desire to construct an ideal. The publication may be understood as a sort of prologue to Vasconcelos’ later classic, *The Cosmic Race* (1925).<sup>37</sup> If pre-Hispanic cultures could be incorporated into the emerging revolutionary mythology, by extension their modern

Mexican descendants would also ascend to a more valued position in Mexican society.

### **The Best Method**

The Aire Libre schools reopened in 1920. Around that time the sixteen year old Miguel Covarrubias finished his formal education at a private school with a bang. The Covarrubias family's upper middle class status gave them access to private educational institutions, and Miguel Covarrubias had attended the Horace Mann School, The Alberto Correo School, and eventually a French preparatory school run by French Priests.<sup>38</sup> Frustrated with the formal confines of a Catholic education, the young "Chamaco" (Covarrubias earned this nickname from the older artists he spent time with) repeatedly struck one of the priests with a large stick, fracturing the teacher's cranium in the act of rebellion.<sup>39</sup> From that point forward, Covarrubias would continue his now self-directed education in less formal settings. Like his predecessor, the muralist Fernando Leal (who had benefitted from the earlier incarnation of the *aire libre* schools), the young Covarrubias responded in an extraordinary way to the freer approach to education unfolding in the nation's capital.

Adolfo Best Maugard recalls Covarrubias as "a very headstrong and impetuous boy. He started coming to my studio when he was just sixteen [Best would have been 34 then], and we became good friends."<sup>40</sup> Best Maugard and Covarrubias spent a lot of time together in Mexico City in the early 1920's. In addition to working side by side in the *aire libre* schools, the two cut a memorable path through the Mexico City social scene, and collaborated on the storied "*Noche Mexicana*" in Chapultepec

Park on September 27, 1921. The event punctuated a series of cultural events in the capital in commemoration of the centennial year of Independence.<sup>41</sup>

As director of Arts Education, Adolfo Best Maugard developed a drawing method known as the Best Maugard Method (*Metodo Best* in Spanish), which contributed to the international discourse of art theory. Like Diego Rivera, Best Maugard had studied art formally in Europe while the initial armed phase of the Revolution unfolded in his native Mexico. In 1913 Rivera painted Best's portrait in the urban Parisian landscape of industry and diversion, where the two artists refined their technical skills and aesthetic ideology while the revolutionary generals fought for political control of Mexico.

In 1919 Best had a one-man show in New York. The catalog for that show featured a Tehuana executed in the graphic style for which Best would become most well-known. It is interesting to note that Best's Tehuana echoes the lines and posture of Rivera's rendition of the artist in Paris. The *Metodo Best* advocates the use of seven basic patterns to graphically represent both organic and inorganic compositions independent of scale and perspective. The patterns are derived from the decorations Best studied on ceramics encountered in his work on archaeological sites with Boas and Gamio. He drew upon this experience to create a systemized series of forms and lines (all contained in seven interchangeable patterns) that offered structure to the otherwise impressionistic approach to art. Students learned what might be labeled "the alphabet of Mexican art," which includes the basic elements (lines, curves, dots, patterns) from which they are able to compose "any

drawing of Mexican character."<sup>42</sup> These seven basic elements are included in the following table, originally printed in a SEP bulletin from 1922.<sup>43</sup>

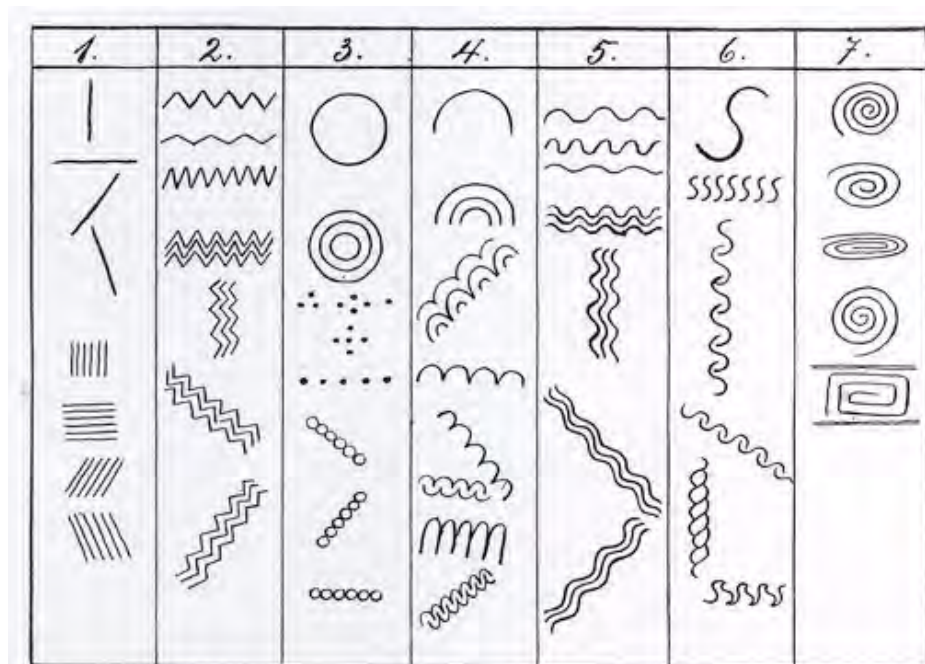


FIG. 1.9: Table featuring seven basic elements of the *Metodo Best*

The creative use of dots and lines to convey information both symbolic and figurative represents the revolutionary educators' desire to provide a visual grammar that would grant modern students access to knowledge laid down by their artistic ancestors via historical "documents" such as potsherds and pictorial codices. The aesthetic continuum derived from the archaeological record and implemented in the urban classroom via the *Metodo Best* encouraged Mexican students to draw upon basic and universal theories of design inspired by the work of their indigenous ancestors to define their unique modern existence. It helped shrug off the colonial



hangover in favor of an alternative paradigm with both local and universal characteristics. In July, 1923 the editorial department of the SEP published the textbook *Metodo de Dibujo: Tradicion, Resurgimiento y evolucion del Arte Mexicano* authored by Adolfo Best Maugard. By 1926 the New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf published an English translation as *A Method for Creative Design*, illustrated by Miguel Covarrubias. Since its initial publication, the English-language text has never been out of print.<sup>44</sup>

This essential approach to drawing became a key component in the arts curriculum of the SEP; utilized in traditional courses for drawing in the Academy as well as the *aire libre* (open-air) art schools.<sup>45</sup> The *Metodo Best* synthesized freedom of expression with the analysis of visual culture derived from the nation's indigenous arts. Students like Aurora Reyes learned to utilize basic elements derived from the logarithmic spiral, which appear in archaeological materials representing many of the world's earliest civilizations. Jean Charlot asserted that with this drawing method, "Best had raised his own sights from the physical types to the mental archetype."<sup>46</sup> The English version of the textbook is illustrated with examples of potsherds bearing representative patterns from places as varied as Italy, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and, of course, the Valley of Mexico. In support of the pervasive nature of these patterns as common expressions of human development, the text also includes reproductions of more modern items bearing familiar patterns. These include colonial French and North American textiles, early twentieth century Nigerian ornaments, Romanian painted eggshells, Liberian leatherwork and modern Mexican pottery. In the September 1, 1922 bulletin of the SEP, Fernando

Best Pontones praises the Best Method for its patriotic and educative aspects. Of the seventy exercises delineated in the Mexican version of the textbook, the majority of them involve the creation of *greças* (geometric designs), *cenefas* (borders), and floral patterns, all of which are recognizable in the traditional designs embroidered on the characteristic *huipiles* from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which had, by this time, found their way into the visual record of the revolution.

Drawings and paintings produced by Mexican children and adolescents in the open air achieved international recognition through exhibitions in Madrid, Paris and Berlin.<sup>47</sup> An early twentieth century gallery in Mexico City's National Museum of Art (MUNAL) features several paintings realized with the *Metodo Best*. The *aire libre* schools offered unprecedented free and public access to the process of artistic production, and helped to inspire a re-valuation of art among the popular classes. Covarrubias alluded to the type of inspiration he witnessed from his students in a 1924 interview: "They don't try to copy from nature – they create from within themselves."<sup>48</sup>

During this particularly dynamic period in the history of public education in Mexico, Aurora Reyes studied at both the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (the Preparatory School, or *Prepa*), and the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* (National School of Fine Arts; formerly and commonly known as the Old Academy of San Carlos), which she attended from 1921 to 1923. She supplemented her daytime courses at the *Prepa* with evening art classes at San Carlos.

The following images are reproductions of sketches housed in the Aurora Reyes Archive. The first three documents likely date from her tenure at the Prepa and San Carlos, where she first received instruction in the Best Method as a part of the drawing curriculum.



*FIG. 1.10: Uncatalogued sketches from the collected papers of Aurora Reyes*



*FIG. 1.11: Uncatalogued sketches from the collected papers of Aurora Reyes*

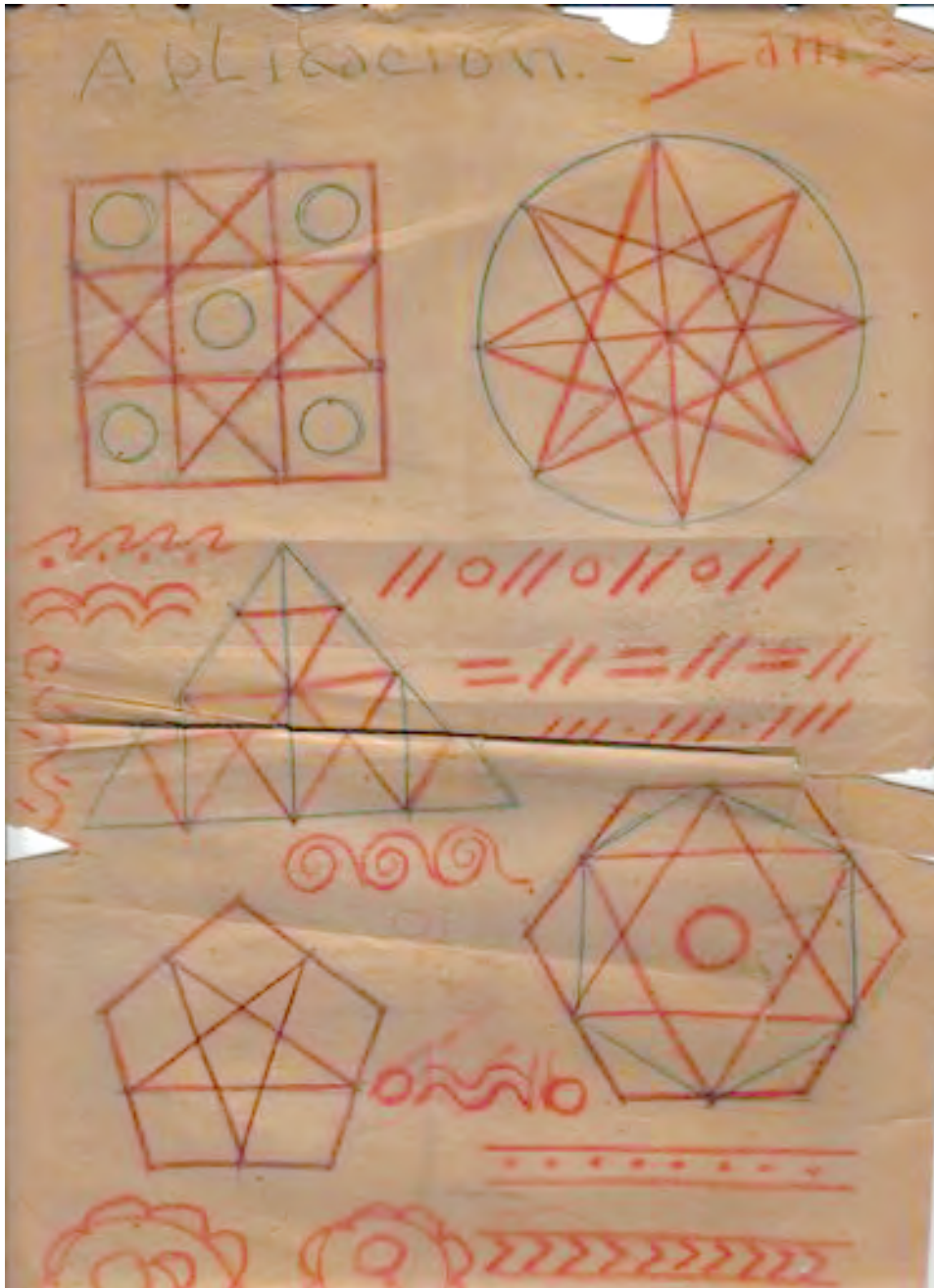
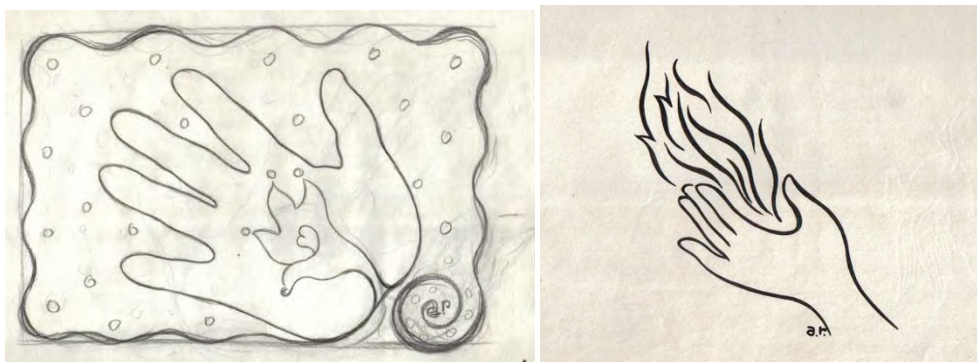


FIG. 1.12: Uncatalogued sketches from the collected papers of Aurora Reyes

The following images show Reyes's practical application of graphic elements of the Best Method in her work as an illustrator of textbooks, articles and pamphlets.



*FIGS. 1.13, 1.14: Uncatalogued drawings from the collected papers of Aurora Reyes*

Like graphic artists of the pre-Hispanic era, Reyes and her academic cohort learned to manipulate lines and curves to convey information and emotion that transcended traditional barriers of language and literacy.

While studying at the Prepa and San Carlos, Reyes befriended a young Frida Kahlo. The inquisitive and creative pair became fast friends and lifelong confidantes. As members of the inaugural class of female students welcomed to the school, they naturally spent much of their free time with the boys in their classes. They spent as much time as possible watching the muralists who filled the hallways and vestibules of both institutions with larger than life renderings of national history.

Unimpressed by the amount of time Aurora Reyes spent in the mostly male audience at San Carlos, the prefect of the *Prepa* accused her of sustaining illicit

conversations with Rivera and other “radical” art teachers, threatening that this type of behavior destined her to the life of a “*libertina*.”<sup>49</sup> These accusations, meted out by a woman who obviously didn’t understand the value or potency of Reyes’s “street smarts,” provoked a violent response from the young girl. Reyes lashed out at her superior, striking her in the face and breaking her glasses. The two tumbled to the ground with their fists flying, and Aurora later recalled losing count of the number of blows she dealt the older woman.<sup>50</sup> This violent incident led to the expulsion of Reyes from the *Prepa*. Her aggressive manner, compounded by her paternal legacy as the daughter of León, or “lion,” earned her the nickname “*La Cachorra*.” This aggressive but endearing title, which translates as “the lion-cub,” stayed with her throughout her adult career as an artist, a poet, and an activist.

Reyes’s expulsion from the *Prepa* did not please Papa León and Mama Luisa. However, the resourceful Reyes already had an alternative plan in mind: she would enroll full time in the Fine Arts Academy. She entered the Academy with the support of her parents, and she responded well to the stimulating environment and artistic curriculum.

The Ministry of Education, under the direction of Vasconcelos, commissioned a group of muralists that included the “three greats,” Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siquieros and José Clemente Orozco, to fill the public spaces in the capital with highly politicized imagery designed to reinforce the ideals of the Mexican Revolution. The walls of the Academy provided the ideal forum for educating the next generation of Mexican artists and intellectuals in the social and political function of Mexican art.

Under the direct tutelage of the muralist Fernando Leal, Reyes became a member of the next generation of Mexican artists to use their work to advocate for social change. The regular presence of the muralists supplemented the curriculum with tangible examples of the power of public art. As Reyes came and went from her classes, she found herself immersed in the scaffolding and plaster that transformed the school into a practical arena for the cultivation of cultural nationalism. One day she came upon the one-armed painter Orozco struggling to maintain balance as he descended the scaffolding around one of his monumental works, and offered to help him with his easel and brushes. Orozco took great offense at the innocent offer; his pride would not allow him to accept help from a woman.<sup>51</sup>

### **Monumental Methods**

Many of the muralists who helped cover the walls of the SEP compound with scenes from Mexican history would eventually assume prominent positions in Reyes's "pantheon of educators" in her murals at the SNTE. Other artists who answered the challenge of creating monumental interpretations of Mexican history on public walls included Jean Charlot, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Xavier Guerrero, Carlos Mérida, Gerardo Murillo (Dr. Atl), Roberto Montenegro, Rufino Tamayo, Jorge Enciso, Fermin Revueltas, and Fernando Leal. Under Vasconcelos's guidance, the SEP granted these painters small salaries that had to be camouflaged because of the public's initial opposition to expenditures on "experimental" didactic materials. Jean Charlot, for example, received a salary of eight pesos a day for being an "Inspector of



Drawing in the Public Schools of Mexico City Transferred to the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Education.”<sup>52</sup>

The re-emergence of muralism exemplified the didactic potential of the visual arts in revolutionary Mexico. The murals occupied prominent spaces in the urban capital, accessible to curious onlookers and coloring the imaginations of passersby. The modern emergence of this ancient art form reflects the growing confidence in Mexican national identity. The beautiful frescoes realized in the revolutionary era combine social fervor, passionate convictions, and a highly politicized approach to the function of visual art produced and displayed in public spaces. Reyes drew much of her inspiration and love of the mural form from its deep roots in pre-Hispanic society. The resurgence of this native art form as a part of the revolutionary project illustrated the revolution’s quest to bring equality to all Mexicans, through a reevaluation of the social and cultural contributions made by the original inhabitants of the land.<sup>53</sup>

In an interview with Jean Charlot, Fernando Leal (who then worked in the Coyoacan branch of the open air art schools) recalled the first buzz about Vasconcelos’s desire to fill the interior walls of the Preparatory School with murals. Alfredo Ramos Martínez brought the news to Coyoacan, inviting the students there to submit proposals for the monumental undertaking. Shortly thereafter, Leal began work on a large-scale painting of the Zapatistas. Leal recalled that his rendition of the Zapatistas represented a break from the more impressionistic mood then nurtured in the open air schools. Ramos Martinez, in particular, could not

understand “why anyone would paint an Indian with a cartridge belt and pistol [rather than] a folk vase.”<sup>54</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Vasconcelos then made an unannounced visit to the Coyoacan school. Upon seeing Leal’s portrayal of the Zapatistas, he immediately invited the young artist to visit him at the downtown SEP to plan for his participation in the muralism campaign. At the meeting, the minister of education told Leal he could choose his walls, theme, and technique; and urged the artist to invite any of his colleagues he felt would be up to the assignment. Months earlier, Vasconcelos had commissioned Rivera for the mural campaign, but Rivera failed to invite any additional collaborators. This inspired Vasconcelos to recruit additional painters on his own. Leal, perhaps less selfish and opportunist than Rivera, immediately enlisted Revueltas, Alva de la Canal, Cahero, and Charlot to add their energy to the collective undertaking. The first phase of the mural project unfolded between 1921 and 1924 on the walls of the SEP and the National Academy of Art.<sup>55</sup> Preparations for including murals in the alternative arts curriculum had been ongoing since the 1910 strike in the Academy forced administrators to recognize the utility of visual didactic methods for an increasingly popular approach to the arts. As Orozco states in his autobiography, “*La pintura mural se encontró en 1922 la mesa puesta.*”<sup>56</sup>

In July of 1921, Diego Rivera enthused about the artistic state of affairs in his home country:

The search that European artists further with such intensity ends here in Mexico, in the abundant realization of our national art. I could tell you much concerning the progress to be made by a painter, a sculptor, an artist, if he observes, analyzes, studies, Mayan, Aztec, or Toltec art, none of which falls short of any other art in my opinion.<sup>57</sup>

Rivera would soon add Zapotec cultural traditions to his laundry list of invaluable native influences. As Rivera began work on the “Creation” mural in the auditorium of the Prepa in 1922, he applied the lessons and techniques he had acquired in Europe, specifically research he had undertaken in Italy regarding an encaustic recipe for painting on walls. A watchful Vasconcelos stepped in to interrupt the work in progress, insisting that Rivera needed to cultivate a more local reference point to supplement the European perspective he brought to the task. Although there must have been ample inspiration to be had in and around the capital, Vasconcelos had other ideas. He told Charlot: “Diego heard Best [Adolfo Best Maugard] lecture on Mexican art. This perhaps inclined him toward national themes. To strengthen this tendency, I suggested and financed a trip to Tehuantepec.”<sup>58</sup> The inhabitants of the isthmus proved quite resilient in the face of outside cultural influences throughout the colonial era and played a pivotal role in expelling the French army in 1866. Vasconcelos conceptualized it as an ideal place in which to gain inspiration for the forging of an autonomous national identity that incorporated Mexico’s indigenous roots into the nation’s modern cultural narrative. Rivera returned from his trip awed by the experience, and images of Tehuanas immediately began to appear in his work.



*FIG. 1.15: Detail of Rivera's mural at the SEP building featuring the women of Tehuantepec, 1923. Photo by Sarah Borealis (2010).*

The re-emergence of muralism in the aftermath of the Revolution is another example of the way that modern Mexican art echoes the graphic legacy of communication that dates back to the pre-Hispanic era. Archaeological excavations had uncovered evidence of murals in various sites of the republic by this time, including several extraordinary full color visual narratives at Teotihuacan. These murals, realized by an ancient civilization notable for its lack of writing system, are dedicated to an unknown female deity known as “the great goddess” and a male storm god known as Tlaloc. In the absence of more traditional written sources, the ancient murals “constitute a primary source for understanding the city's religion and social organization.”<sup>59</sup>

The modern muralists' appropriation of public space for executing a large-scale cultural education campaign maintained historical continuities while representing

the revolutionary desire to elevate previously marginalized members of Mexican society (e.g. Indians and women). Another important function of the mural project was to help contemporary inhabitants of the city re-imagine the national historical narrative through a revolutionary lens. "On Mexican walls were written the life of the people and the history of the nation, the silent tragedy of the humble and the sordid ambition of the wicked. Shining above all was the hope of a better world."<sup>60</sup> The monumental renderings helped institutionalize the overarching hope for a more balanced society. Early cinematic expressions containing moving images of Mexico's indigenous heritage would also be projected onto the walls of the capital city in this era. The subject matter represented in both endeavors often overlapped.

### **Moving Images**

In 1921 Gamio's seminal study of the Population of the Valley of Teotihuacan<sup>61</sup> included a SEP-sponsored ethnographic film staged and filmed in the ruins located just outside of Mexico City. Gamio used local Indians to reenact key scenes from the codices-effectively connecting the modern population living among the archaeological ruins to the original inhabitants of the site. His original screenplay for the piece, titled *Tlahuicole*, in homage to an ancient indigenous figure, holds interesting clues for his visionary approach toward bridging the vast gap between tradition and modernity in the Mexican context.<sup>62</sup>

*Tlahuicole* was a warrior from the pre-Hispanic city-state of Tlaxcala. Tlaxcala, one of the few areas not conquered by the Aztec empire that dominated central Mexico for three hundred years prior to the arrival of the Spanish, is an example

that defies the myth of the totality of conquest. The Tlaxcalans actually fought with Cortez against the Aztecs, who had long been their aggressors. By joining forces with the Spanish, the Tlaxcalans helped ensure the fusion of Spanish and Indigenous cultures, which became a critical component of modern Mexican identity. Gamio's screenplay adds a twist- Tlahuicole is eventually accepted into Aztec society by proving his virtue through a series of herculean feats. While budget constraints prohibited the full-scale cinematic production Gamio hoped for, he staged and filmed theatrical scenes from his *Tlahuicole* script at the archaeological site of Teotihuacan. The expanded version of the screenplay features a love story involving Tlahuicole and Ixcaxochitl, who is a daughter of the Aztec emperor, Moctezuma. The action includes political intrigue and marriage alliances between the Isthmus Zapotecs and the central Mexicans. The king of the Zapotecs, Cosijoeza, asks for the hand of Ixcaxochitl, who, in a dramatic turn of events, eventually becomes his queen.<sup>63</sup>

The short films excerpted from the longer screenplay eventually complemented Gamio's more traditional anthropological work at Teotihuacan and received rave reviews in the national and international press.<sup>64</sup> Projecting a revolutionary version of Mexico's historical narrative through larger-than life images in public spaces enabled Mexican walls to become lithochronic surfaces<sup>65</sup> on which the nation's deep past and its revolutionary present could be reconciled.

On November 30 of 1921, two men named Calderón y Manrique submitted a proposal to President Obregon regarding the creation of a *sociedad Cine-educadora* (society of cinema-education) in Mexico.<sup>66</sup> Their plan urged the importance of

coordinating the efforts of the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, and War and Development to implement a cohesive plan to develop cine-education for students, workers, and military personnel. Educational films dealing with international subjects would be obtained through various consular services that would arrange for subscriptions from foreign purveyors of educational films. The various national secretaries would produce films on domestic topics as deemed relevant. Calderón and Manrique argued that their plan had the enthusiastic support of the nation's professional class, since cinema-based education offered an extremely high return on the initial investment required.

Educators would be able to present *more information with less effort*. This last part of the argument must have carried a lot of weight at a time when the government struggled to balance its budgets after an expensive decade of war. In an accompanying memo, the President's secretary notes that the project could be quite beneficial in the promotion of popular culture considering that the SEP had recently announced its intent to purchase cinematic apparatuses with the intent of giving exhibitions in its primary schools. Although this attempt at establishing a society to coordinate cinema-education efforts across the various State ministries seemed to stall, each ministry did eventually develop its own program for the production and projection of educational films.

The SEP bulletin of September 1922 contains information about the inclusion of cinematography in the fine arts curriculum. The bulletin states that no matter how inclusive a textbook or how adept an instructor may be, supplementing the existing curriculum with visual education in the form of fixed and moving images

would vastly improve upon existing didactic methods. In evidence of the commitment to the program, the SEP acquired twenty professional De Vry brand projectors (type E, 110 volts) and stereopticons<sup>67</sup> (also 110 volts) for use in the schools. The majority of the devices went to the department of fine arts, but the department of primary schools, the National Museum, school for builders (*maestros constructores*), the delegation of the State of Colima, the professor of public relations representing the State of Mexico, and the University faculties of Medicine and Dentistry also received projectors. The De Vry equipment required very little manipulation by the instructors, who would be trained in its use by señora Carolina S. de Pachón, named to the post of equipment inspector.<sup>68</sup>

On March 11, 1922 the SEP named Ramón Díaz Ordaz director of its new cinematography workshops. On April 24 Francisco del Río became the official technical manipulator, with Luis Márquez as his assistant.<sup>69</sup> The SEP allotted \$5,890.00 for the purchase of essential equipment including a professional Pathé camera and all of the materials to expose and print the film. Although the workshops and laboratories had not yet been installed, Díaz Ordaz consulted with Miguel O. Mendizábal, then director of the Department of Ethnography at the National Museum, about films destined for use in the SEP classrooms. Díaz Ordaz acquired from the museum a film of the ritual dances commemorating the fiestas dedicated to the *Señor de Chalma* performed by members of the indigenous community in the State of Mexico (which neighbors the Federal District).

Chalma is an ancient site of spiritual pilgrimages since pre-Hispanic times, when believers traveled miles to venerate the god *Oxtotéotl*, or “señor of the cave,” with



rituals, dancing, and even human sacrifice. In concert with the Spanish desire for spiritual conquest of what is now Mexico, the sixteenth century Augustinian evangelizers of the region oversaw the transformation of the local devotion to one honoring Jesus Christ in a process of cultural and religious syncretism.<sup>70</sup> In 1783 the Church completed construction of what is now known as the *Real Convento y Santuario de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo y San Miguel de las Cuevas de Chalma* (*The Real Convent and Sanctuary of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Saint Michael of the Caves of Chalma*). Religious pilgrims from all parts of Mexico visit the Sanctuary every year in hopes of gaining divine intervention from Our señor of Chalma in their petitions for help or guidance. A popular saying maintains that miracles are more likely to occur when the petitioner accompanies his or her request with dancing at Chalma.<sup>71</sup>

In 1922, Díaz Ordaz authorized 500 feet of film to record the religious festivals in the pueblo of Santa Cruz in the municipality of Xochimilco. In addition, he produced a series of short films documenting various cultural festivals sponsored by the SEP in and around Mexico City. He designated 500 feet of film for the inter-school athletic competition held in Union Park. He filmed the young female students of the Ignacio M. Altamirano school as they twirled their batons at a festival produced by the Department of Physical Culture. He also filmed the highlights of the eminent Spanish Artist Margarita Xirgú's performance with the Barcelona Film Institute in a production of Sophocles's *Elektra*. The performance, staged in Chapultepec park's open-air amphitheater on the morning of May 11, 1922, was part of a festival organized by the Department of Aesthetic Culture. This collection of footage collectively represents the first program to be screened as part of the SEP's

cinematography workshops. Díaz Ordaz also obtained aerial footage of Mexico's volcanoes Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl, and planned another short-form documentary to include various additional views filmed in and around Mexico City.<sup>72</sup>

The SEP collaborated with the Department of Libraries to organize the first exhibitions of educational films in the various public libraries of the Federal District. This approach allowed educators to pursue the double objective of stimulating the public to develop a higher level of literacy by visiting the libraries, and to explore the aforementioned idea that visual education packed a weighty punch as an emerging didactic method. The library of Santa Julia in the Tacuba neighborhood and the library in "La Corregidora de Querétaro" school held weekly film screenings attended by more than 300 people. An additional 400 people attended the screenings held in night school number 31 featuring programming for workers under the direction of Profesor Cirilo Mendoza. The evening programming represented the first of 10 biweekly conferences to be held in other night schools in hopes of recruiting the largest number of workers possible.<sup>73</sup>

In collaboration with various groups including the feminist cultural association, the civic culture association, and the solidarity group of the workers movement, the SEP organized various Sunday afternoon cinema festivals held between February and May of 1922. The SEP volunteered a contingent of artists, speakers, regional troubadours, and chorale students to help stage and promote the events. As the months progressed, attendance grew exponentially, granting additional exposure for the SEP and its rising stars.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the twenty-four rolls of educational film<sup>75</sup> acquired at the cost of \$1,319.25MXP through Luis G. Peredo (which included topics as varied as “Popular theater in Arabia,” “The aquatic flea,” “Holy villages of Japan,” and “The collection and preparation of tea”), the SEP spent \$896.41 on 12 rolls of educational films produced by the Ford company (distributed through The Commercial Distributing Company), and American Harvey Sheahan of United Artists donated various comedy pictures, which the SEP screened with goodwill at a local orphanage. In addition, the department of Fine Arts consulted with various German and North American production houses to acquire the majority of the films to be used in its broad plan for new media educational propaganda outlined in its first official report.<sup>76</sup> While the city became enamored with the merging medium of cinema, artists and writers continued to organize. The multifaceted approach to visual education in the early 1920’s helped define the role the Arts would play in the institutionalization of revolutionary ideals.

### **Manifesting Cultural Mestizaje**

The Manifesto of the Union of Writers and Artists (*Sindicato de Obreros Tecnicos, Pintores y Escultores*), originally published as a public broadside on the walls of Mexico City in 1922, summarizes the collective motivations and objectives valued by an influential cohort of educators in the SEP. The group made a lasting impression on a critical mass of young and impressionable students, including Aurora Reyes, Frida Kahlo, Miguel Covarrubias and Andres Henestrosa.

Manifesto issued by the Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors:

Social, Political, and Aesthetic Declaration from the Union of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors to the indigenous races humiliated through centuries; to the soldiers converted into hangmen by their chiefs; to the workers and peasants who are oppressed by the rich; and to the intellectuals who are not servile to the bourgeoisie:

We are with those who seek to overthrow of an old and inhuman system within which you, worker of the soil, produce riches for the overseer and politician, while you starve. Within which you, worker in the city, move the wheels of industries, weave the cloth, and create with your hands the modern comforts enjoyed by the parasites and prostitutes, while your own body is numb and cold. Within which you, Indian soldier, heroically abandon your land and give your life in the eternal hope of liberating your race from the degradations and misery of centuries.

Not only the noble labor but even the smallest manifestations of the material and spiritual vitality of our race spring from our native midst. Its admirable, exceptional, and peculiar ability to create beauty — the art of the Mexican people — is the highest and greatest spiritual expression of the world-tradition which constitutes our most valued heritage. It is great because it surges from the people; it is collective, and our own aesthetic aim is to socialize artistic expression, to destroy bourgeois individualism.

We repudiate the so-called easel art and all such art which springs from ultra-intellectual circles, for it is essentially aristocratic.

We hail the monumental expression of art because such art is public property.

We proclaim that this being the moment of social transformation from a decrepit to a new order, the makers of beauty must invest their greatest efforts in the aim of materializing an art valuable to the people, and our supreme objective in art, which is today an expression for individual pleasure, is to create beauty for all, beauty that enlightens and stirs to struggle.<sup>77</sup>

The reformed public education system became the catalyst for institutionalizing change among Mexican citizens, and all of Latin America began to take note. As the arts education programs in Mexico gained momentum, Vasconcelos made time to travel as an ambassador for the spread of cultural nationalism. On September 16, 1922 (Mexican Independence Day), he delivered a speech on Flamengo Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The speech, recorded in its entirety in several Brazilian publications, punctuated a full day of ceremony that reached its apex in the dedication of a monolithic bronze statue of Cuauhtemoc, the last native

emperor of Tenochtitlan (the site where modern Mexico City is located) from 1520 to 1521. The statue is an exact replica of the Cuauhtemoc gracing the *Paseo de la Reforma* in Mexico City, and represents the flow of alternative ideas about cultural capital from revolutionary Mexico to the rest of Latin America. Vasconcelos spoke about the birth of a new culture at the dawn of the second decade of Latin American Independence. This new culture reached cosmic mythological proportions as it drew upon the ethnic mixing that took place from the moment the Spanish conquistadors set foot in the ancient valley of *Anahuac*:

...It was the new civilization that advanced, the race of the strong ones, the race of the semi-gods, which invaded without remedy and annihilated forever the that which had come before. This is the proud conquering Mexican race! ... it is the invincible race of the children of the sun... and since that moment there remained written in the legacy of Anahuac<sup>78</sup> not just one victorious race, but two races in perennial conflict. The Republic would eventually address that conflict, declaring that the land of Mexico is not and was not ever the sole property of those with one complexion, nor of two races alone, but of all those who would populate the earth, forever raising their voices in a collective, secular, indo-hispanic rhythm... The first century of our national life has been a century of spiritual servitude, of an arrogantly exacting imitation, and this is not the hour of regression, but instead of the original consciousness. Of an originality that although it was conquered in this land, sought refuge in the mind, where it grew, because there it would never perish, continuing to struggle because it was animated by a sacred impulse.<sup>79</sup>

The publicity surrounding Vasconcelos's educational reforms reached his home state of Oaxaca. A young man named Andres Henestrosa, a would-be student from the isthmus of Tehuantepec, traveled to Mexico City in 1922 search of an education that would lead him to a better life. Like many of his generation, the chaos and momentum of revolution heightened his senses for survival. In a particularly bold move, Henestrosa approached Vasconcelos to petition him for a

place in the emerging national educational program. In their initial meeting the practical potential of that reformed system became incarnate. Henestrosa told the story to Caleb Bach, who reported it in his *Americas* article from 2005:

I could barely express myself in Spanish because I'd grown up speaking Zapotec and Huave, but I found a countryman to serve as translator when, a few days later, I went to see José Vasconcelos, who directed the Secretariat [Ministry] of Public Education. I told him it was his fault that I had come because he had declared the Revolution would mean education for the poor, the Indians, and orphans. I was all three! When he said the deadline for scholarships had passed three months earlier and all funds had been spent, I accused him of being a liar. This word must have bothered him because then and there he arranged for me to attend the Normal Teachers' School, where I could sleep and eat as well. He also gave me copies of the classics, eighteen volumes he himself had edited: works by Homer, Plato, Dante, and Tolstoy. And so my self-education began.<sup>80</sup>

In the capital Henestrosa stayed in the home of Antonieta Rivas Mercado, the daughter of the Porfirian architect and a friend of both Gamio and Best. Rivas Mercado had witnessed Rivera and his cohort at the National Academy rebel against her father's traditional approach toward arts education, and grew up to become an affirmed patroness of the artistic renaissance of the 1920's. Perhaps her own maternal lineage, which connected her to the Isthmus, played a role in her decision to mentor Henestrosa during his first years in the urban capital.

Aurora Reyes attended the National Preparatory School and the Academy of San Carlos from 1920 to 1924, where she thrived in the arts heavy curriculum during the formative years that would define her transition to adult life.



FIGS. 1.16 and 1.17: Aurora Reyes's student ID cards, 1920, 1921.

At the age of fifteen (1923), Reyes became romantically involved with an older man named Manuel de la Fuente. When she became pregnant with his child, Reyes accepted de la Fuente's marriage proposal, and the two wed in a civil ceremony. Three months after she gave birth to their son, Hector, the new family experienced a dramatic turn of events. A woman emerged with a public declaration that her own marriage to de la Fuente preceeded his union with Reyes, making it clear that she did not like the idea of sharing her husband with another woman. When de la Fuente's first wife found out about Reyes and young Hector, she had the three of them thrown into jail on charges of bigamy. "Papa" León Reyes went to the jail, where his military rank helped him convince the authorities to release his daughter and her young child, leaving de la Fuente to his own devices. León brought

Aurora and the infant to live with the rest of the family in La Lagunilla, on Calle Comonfort, next to a paper flower market.<sup>81</sup>



*FIG. 1.18: Aurora Reyes with infant Hector, half-brothers Chacho and Horacio, and Mama Luisa Reyes, circa 1923. Photo courtesy of Hector and Ernesto Godoy Lagunes.*

In 1923 Reyes resumed her studies full time at the Academy of San Carlos, where the teachers encouraged her artistic ability and revolutionary ideals. Motivated by the fear that Manuel de la Fuente would eventually lay claim to their son Hector, Aurora Reyes remarried in 1926 to the Mexican writer Jorge de Godoy. Godoy was born in the villa of Popotla, where he lived with his parents don Vicente Godoy and Sra. Juana Cabral de Godoy. Popotla eventually became part of Tacuba in the Federal District. A successful writer and journalist for various Mexican publications; Godoy's column "*Poliedro*" appeared regularly in "*La Prensa*." His best known works are *El Libro de las Rosas Virreinales* and *El Puñado de Rubies*. Upon



marrying Reyes, Godoy adopted her young son Hector and gave the boy his name; a move designed to thwart de la Fuente's patrimonial claims to the boy. Reyes and her son moved into the Godoy estate in Coyoacán, an artistic enclave where they enjoyed a luxurious existence that offered bold relief from the struggles of La Lagunilla. Godoy and Reyes eventually had a second son together, Jorge Godoy Reyes, before their union began to crumble.



FIG. 1.19: *The Reyes Godoy family on vacation. From the collection of Hector and Ernesto Godoy Lagunes*

Godoy's struggles with alcohol and gambling contributed to his mistreatment of Reyes, which eventually escalated to the point of physical abuse. After one

particularly frightening episode that left Aurora with a broken nose, young Hector vowed that if he saw his stepfather lay another hand on his mother he would kill him; and produced a small pistol from the pocket of his short pants to emphasize the sincerity of his intent.<sup>82</sup> Shortly thereafter, Reyes filed for divorce and left the luxuries of the Godoy estate in favor of more modest, but more peaceful lodging. After divorcing Jorge de Godoy in a move that reinforced her public persona as a revolutionary and independent woman, Aurora Reyes found herself free to devote more time to the Union activities she had begun in the 1920's. Like many elite women who took advantage of Mexico's increasingly liberal divorce laws, Reyes began to commit herself more fully to a career in arts education, reproducing the lessons she learned during the revolutionary years of the SEP and the National Academy of Fine Arts.

Mastering an alternative visual grammar through immersion in the SEP projects enabled a generation of Mexican students to re-contextualize Mexican history in a way that emphasized their own contributions to an aesthetic cultural continuum. By excavating their nation's past, they defined its future. As students of revolution, Reyes, Kahlo, Henestrosa and Covarrubias all cultivated an appreciation for indigenous aesthetics and learned to recognize themselves as the modern personification of the uniquely Mexican experience. The alchemical process of unearthing the splendors of ancient Mexico functioned as the catalyst for the cultural redemption of the modern nation. This process represents one more revolution in the continuous spiral of Mexican history.

Reyes and her cohort worked within the social and political margins opened by the revolution to inspire the popular sector to reclaim its cultural heritage through a reevaluation of the cosmic legacy outlined by pre-Hispanic civilizations. The artists of the Mexican Renaissance worked with color and symbols to illustrate their interpretation of Modern Mexican History, and the social-realist murals that currently grace the internal walls of the old Academy of San Carlos, the new headquarters of the SEP, the National Palace, and the Palace of Fine Arts (Bellas Artes) are a visual testimonial to this process that unfolded through the 1920's and 1930's. Through the institutionalization of revolutionary imagery and ideals, the modernization of Mexico became inextricably linked to the cultivation of pride and nationalism among its people, who had been mobilized by the (un)common experience of their Revolution.

**CHAPTER TWO: REBELLION IN THE ACADEMY: ARTISTS AS REVOLUTIONARIES**

*FIG. 2.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes*

The Mexican artistic renaissance of the nineteen-twenties represents a visual and visceral manifestation of social change. The artists at the forefront of the movement purposefully called upon pre-Hispanic images, symbols and methods in an attempt to bridge Mexico's deep history with its modern future. Although many

scholars identify the renaissance as a product of the revolution, I argue that the roots of the artistic renaissance predate the Mexican Revolution of 1910. In this chapter, I describe how the adoption of liberal reforms in the mid-eighteenth century Mexican academy paved the way for the traditional written narrative of national history to include visual representations of popular experience that had previously been confined to the margins. Cultural renaissance doesn't happen overnight- it is the result of a confluence of factors, in this case an aesthetic revolution in the formal Mexican Academy enabled Artists to become Revolutionaries. Indigenous citizens quietly entered the visual narrative of the nation via the rebellious work of radical artists in painting and sculpture. However, the euro-centric State does its best to keep them from participating in any real and lasting reform that would substantially improve their quality of life.

### Artistic Precursors to Revolution

Under the Bourbon Reforms (1754-1810), the colonial government in New Spain took the first steps toward establishing free and compulsory primary school as a way to modernize its citizenry. The increased value of education helped encourage a generation of Mexican students to broaden their existing worldview, which eventually enabled them to rethink the colonial paradigm and its socio-cultural implications.<sup>1</sup> The artistic renaissance of the early twentieth century owes much to the Bourbon infusion of enlightenment thinking parlayed into liberal educational reforms enacted throughout the nineteenth century. Mary Kay Vaughan tells us that after the colonial government expelled the Jesuits in 1767, “teachers experimented with new and more efficient methods of instruction.”<sup>2</sup> This methodological shift produced a more educated society. The artists and intellectuals who benefitted from educational reform would eventually facilitate the social change by which we now recognize the Mexican Revolution. Although nineteenth century liberals in general showed a lack of respect for the nineteenth century Indian, by the early twentieth century a generation of educated citizens shaped by cultural mestizaje began to recognize their indigenous *paisanos* as equals.

According to Jean Charlot, Spanish colonial authorities founded the San Carlos Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1785 to “inculcate better manners in colonial artists who champed dangerously at the royal bit, it meant to lure independents to its fold with the rank of “Académico de Mérito,” which entails privileges of hidalgo, *hijo-de-algo*, son of something.”<sup>3</sup> Colonial authorities recognized the normative influence of art and artists in society. The Academy of San Carlos was a space

designed to mold new-world artists with a European sensibility. It would have a lasting impact on the arts scene in the Americas, though perhaps not quite the absolute effect sought by its initial founders. In its first thirty-six years of existence, several directors came and went from the Academy, which struggled to imprint a “civilized” perspective on the Creoles, Indians, and mestizos who sought formal artistic training therein.

Mexico won political Independence from Spain in 1821, but sovereignty came with crises of food, infrastructure, and governance. This led some intellectuals to vacillate on the forging of a new form of government. Conservative elements of society focused a nostalgic glance on the colonial past, concluding that the Spanish Catholic legacy represented the most orderly framework for Mexican development. The liberal faction completely disagreed. From their perspective, three centuries of Spanish colonial rule had retarded the development of the nation by degrading its indigenous members, and secular reform was the best option for embracing modernity. While they often disagreed on the role of the Catholic Church in the education of sovereign citizens, “politicians from various factions viewed education as a mechanism for achieving national unity.”<sup>4</sup> Different sectors of society understood the value of education in differing terms, but the majority accepted the enlightened view that education improves society. The colonial project had been predicated upon a symbiotic relationship between the church and the state, and in the messy aftermath of Independence these two institutional actors continued their commitment to education. Vaughan argues that implicitly, “both church and state fostered the emergence of a more open society.”<sup>5</sup>

With Independence the Academy of Fine Arts gained autonomy, but lost the royal annuity that had kept it in the black. Conventional wisdom among the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Mexican intelligentsia required the director of the Academy of Fine Arts to be trained in one of the traditional European cultural epicenters such as France or Italy, since no formal program for higher education in the arts yet existed in the Americas. Wealthy citizens raised funds to lure the Catalonian painter Pelegrín Clavé across the Atlantic to take charge of the floundering school. Clavé occupied the director's chair for several decades between 1846 and 1868. Clavé's time in Mexico coincided with the political posturing of Liberals and Conservatives as they jockeyed for control of the nation.

In his history of the Academy, Charlot references a "duel of murals" fought between the Mexican artist Juan Cordero and the Catalan Pelegrín Clavé. The artists, aptly named, represented two sides in an aesthetic duel tangled in national identity. The Spanish born Pelegrín Clavé (loosely translated, the name means "key pilgrim") represented an imported version of aesthetics grounded in the western European tradition. Although the Mexican born Cordero (*Cordero* translates to "lamb") received his formal training in Italy, he represented a departure from the established canon. Clavé directed Bellas Artes in 1853 when the young Mexican artist Cordero returned from Italy with his critically acclaimed masterpiece, "The Redeemer and the Woman Taken in Adultery." Notably, Cordero has been identified as the first artist to represent the pre-Hispanic past of the Mexican nation in a painting accepted by the European Academy. His 1850 painting, *Colón ante los Reyes*



*Católicos*, features submissive looking Indians as shadowy subjects of the Catholic kings Isabel and Ferdinand.<sup>6</sup>

The subjects of Cordero's work offer interesting themes juxtaposed with his nation's struggle with its own mythology of origins, tangled in a complex web of *mestizaje*, or cultural mixing. Because of the acclaim earned by Cordero's innovative work, he became a contender for the sub-directorship of the fine arts school. However, Cordero refused the coveted position in a letter that alludes to the ongoing battle of aesthetics and its geographical implications: "I must admit that I did not sacrifice the best years of my life in foreign countries," Cordero stated, "to come back to my own *patria* to serve under Señor Pelegrín Clavé."<sup>7</sup> Cordero refused to play the "sacrificial lamb" to the "pilgrim" Clavé who adhered to what the younger man likely considered a stifling version of aesthetics. A new generation of artists and intellectuals firmly rooted in the Americas understood the problematic nature of applying imported models to emerging Mexican institutions. As early as 1842, moderate liberal Mariano Otero wrote, "we have erred...in not recognizing that our society had its own features, and that it was in no way similar to the European societies with which we are always comparing ourselves."<sup>8</sup> When the Liberals gained political advantage in the wars of the reform, President Benito Juárez interrupted Clavé's tenure at the Academy of San Carlos, relieving the Catalanian of his post for several years.

The conservatives continued to fight back, and with the support of Napoleon III, influential European conservatives sent Maximilian of Austria to rule Mexico. They banked on the idea that his Hapsburg lineage brought with it the ability to

unite and further consolidate European political fortunes along the lines of the Holy Roman Empire. This connection earned the respect and support of pro-Catholic Mexican conservatives. Emperor Maximilian renamed Clavé as director of the Academy of San Carlos, where he resumed his work from 1864 to 1867. The Second Mexican Empire, as Maximilian's foray into Mexican politics is known, eagerly embraced the opportunity to modernize Mexico City following the European model for urban development. Maximilian designed the *Calzada de la Emperatriz* (Promenade of the Empress)- which united various sections of the ever growing capital in a diagonal thoroughfare. Reminiscent of the Parisian Champs-Élysées or the Viennese Ringstrasse, the 12 kilometer-long boulevard also paralleled the function of pre-Hispanic causeways in its ability to simultaneously connect and divide the city's various quadrants. In Maximilian's day the *Calzada* connected Chapultepec Castle, the imperial residence then located on the outskirts of the city, with the National Palace in the Historic Center.

Regardless of Maximilian's intentions, the majority of Mexican citizens took offense to the idea of a European monarch so soon after gaining independence from Spain. Though forced to leave the capital, Juárez refused to fade fully into the background. He continually called for the restitution of a legitimate and democratic government from undisclosed locations, as he spent his time on the lam traveling the far reaches of his beloved Republic in a stagecoach. Despite famously whitening his indigenous skin with rice powder and dressing in a European style black wool frockcoat, (regardless of its functionality in the Mexican climate) Benito Juárez personified the utility of the republican model for Mexicans of indigenous descent.

His own political fortune hinged heavily on the liberal education he received because of secular reforms carried out in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. This Zapotec president would not rest until the autonomy of the Mexican republic had been restored. It is important to note that the idea of dynastic rule did not enter the Americas with the Spanish conquistadors. The indigenous world that predated European contact had its own local legacies of empire and royal bloodlines. With developments in modern Mexican Anthropology, the Zapotec culture from which Juárez descended would eventually be recognized as one of the most ancient and developed civilizations in the Americas. However, the urgency of including indigenous representation in Mexican politics to achieve a more sustainable form of development would not be fully comprehended for several decades. In the meantime, political leaders of indigenous descent found it useful to adopt more “continental” habits in their quest to affect change through political representation.

Benito Juárez and his Republican army successfully repelled Maximilian and re-established the autonomous Mexican Republic in 1867. The grand *Calzada de la Emperatriz* became known as the *Paseo de la Reforma*, and Juárez stripped Chapultepec Castle of its European decadence, ostensibly to give the palace a more “republican” feel.<sup>9</sup> The liberal government’s approach to modernity reinforced the patriarchal norms of the Spanish colonial cultural legacy with the tenets of a particularly Mexican brand of Positivism, which was imported from France and interpreted in the Mexican cultural setting by men like Gabino Barreda. Barreda, the “Prophet of Positivism,”<sup>10</sup> attended Comte’s lectures in Paris in the late 1840’s and returned to Mexico to incorporate positivist principles into the courses he taught in

the national medical school. In 1867 Juárez appointed Barreda to head up a committee to reorganize the national education structure and to revamp public education in accordance with Liberal philosophy. Barreda believed that incorporating Positivism into the public school curriculum “would establish an intellectual order capable of preventing anarchy in all its forms, and thereby lead to the regeneration of society.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1868, with the Republic firmly restored and Juárez back at the helm of the government, the Spanish artist Pelegrin Clavé once again left San Carlos and opted to return to Europe.<sup>12</sup> About his tenure in the Americas Clavé offered this blunt judgment: “In Mexico I found no school of art, either good or bad.”<sup>13</sup> His rival Cordero likely would have considered Clavé and his stifling European perspective as part of the problem.

As a member of the post-Clavé generation, Cordero called for change in the American Academy as he worked within the established parameters of aesthetic tradition. He began a series of murals with socially conscious themes on the walls of public institutions. Muralism is an often politically charged medium with deep roots in both the American and European artistic traditions. This is illustrated by large-scale wall paintings uncovered among the ruins of ancient archaeological sites across Mexico as well as thirteenth century Italian frescoes attributed to artists trained at the height of the Roman Empire. As an artistic advocate for social change, Cordero called attention to the active role that education would play in the process of human evolution in his work titled “Triumph of Science and Study over Ignorance and Sloth.”<sup>14</sup> Realizing such a modern theme through a traditionally accepted

medium visually bridged the gap between ancient and modern Mexico, a catalytic function that would prove quite valuable as the modern republic developed. Artists and intellectuals with the ability to construct these visual and ideological “bridges” became an integral part of Mexican society as architects of a new order.

The art critic López López, a longtime friend of Cordero, elaborated on the function of murals in public spaces as the repository of institutional perspective: “The schools of medicine, law, mining, agriculture and commerce...the palaces of the government and of justice, the city halls, and other buildings that house the administrative sovereignty, all need distinctive marks and wait for the brush and chisel of Mexican artists dedicated to the study of the fine arts, so that such places be spared the trite appearance of private dwellings.”<sup>15</sup> The large-scale visual narratives proved to be a practical way to promote national identity among citizens of the republic.

Benito Juárez maintained the presidency under constitutional provision and executive interpretation for more than a decade before winning controversial re-elections in 1867 and 1871. By then Juárez governed by inertia. His long, embattled tenure at the helm of a dynamic electorate derived more from a sense of entitlement than from fair and democratic elections. In a turn of events illustrative of the force of a political generation gap, the denouement of Juárez’s political career included “friendly fire” from his former protégé, General Porfirio Díaz.

Díaz, like Juárez, came from Oaxaca, where his indigenous mother raised him to the age of sixteen years. Widowed in 1833, when young Porfirio was only three years old, Petrona Mori Cortés worked long hours and sacrificed much so that her

children could learn to read and write.<sup>16</sup> Inspired by Juárez's rise to political prominence, Díaz studied law before volunteering as a soldier during the Mexican American War. Education Historian Anne Staples has argued that the most notable changes in nineteenth century Mexican education took place in the study of constitutional law, where a new generation of political actors re-examined the relationship between government and those being governed. Both Juárez and Díaz benefitted from the enhanced legal curriculum in the state of Oaxaca. The legacy of liberal education reform includes the development of a generation of literate citizens with a propensity for questioning the status quo. Vaughan refers to the concurrent development of a written language of rebellion and ideological dispute that complemented the oral tradition.<sup>17</sup> I would expand this definition of a new "language" to include visual semiotics of rebellion simultaneously fostered in the National Academy of Fine Arts. Literacy rates in Mexico hovered around twenty percent throughout the nineteenth century,<sup>18</sup> and thus visual forms of communication remained crucial for the molding of collective consciousness.

In the mid-nineteenth century, educators and students in the Mexican Academy of Fine Arts waged an aesthetic rebellion that took the form of color, technique, and subject matter. By the 1850's work produced in the Academy diverged from the pale imitation of European norms then typical of fledgling American institutions of higher learning. The Western European tradition in the fine arts failed to express the depth of the Mexican experience, which included centuries of autochthonous aesthetic traditions that predated trans-Atlantic contact. After more

than three hundred years of colonial experience, painting and sculpture began to more accurately reflect the reality of Mexican daily life.

Under Díaz, it became apparent that although the capital presented an outwardly modern appearance designed to attract foreign investment, Mexican development disproportionately benefitted elites at the expense of the majority. As Díaz extended his time in office via Presidential decrees and rigged elections, the chasm between these groups of citizens began to seem insurmountable. While the majority of citizens in the capital struggled to carve out a meager existence in the horrid conditions of the multi-family homes known as *conventillos*, a privileged few commissioned opulent residences along the storied *Paseo de la Reforma* (formerly the *Calzada de la Emperatriz*), which became known as an elite residential enclave. Mexico City was abuzz with “liberal reform,” but how inclusive were the changes?

On the national level, a main goal of the reform was to unify the far reaches of the republic by extending transportation infrastructure. One example of Porfirian progress in transportation is the expansion of railway routes. This modern network, financed by the Mexican government with the support of British and American interests, helped ensure the efficient and timely extraction of resources through routes that connected port cities and regional capitals with the increasingly urban Federal District. While in office, Díaz oversaw the completion of the storied trans-continental stretch of the national railroad. This track united the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans via the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in his home state of Oaxaca. Although the Mexican Isthmus railway did not open until January of 1907, its laborious construction occupied the better part of fifty years. Sustained efforts to build the

inter-oceanic track drew international attention and resources to the Isthmus, whose abundant markets hosted a confluence of intellectual, artistic, and economic capital. The women of Tehuantepec visually personified this fusion of global and local. Their distinctive and alluring sense of fashion included the selective appropriation of foreign components, perhaps most obvious in the creation of jewelry that incorporated gold coins from the United States, England, and Guatemala as well as the national currency.

The Tehuantepec railway had the potential to facilitate faster global shipping routes. The United States, which had failed to capitalize on earlier concessions for the construction of the Mexican route, expressed concern over who would benefit most directly from its traffic. Despite having an obvious interest in the Isthmus route, in 1904, the United States had committed its resources and energies to the construction of the Panama Canal, not scheduled for completion until 1916. John F. Wallace, a chief engineer of the Panama project, offered the following testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Inter-oceanic Canals. It illuminates the competitive and entitled nature of the United States regarding its role in the increasingly global economy:

I do not think that you can over-appreciate the importance of protecting our future trade by heading off the possible development of the route by way of Tehuantepec. It goes without saying that it is much easier to hold a line of traffic than to get it away from somebody else after they get it once. I do not think that there are very many people that appreciate what the Tehuantepec route means if they get it established once.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously the Mexican and British governments, as well as international passengers who experienced the “delightful sensation” and comforts of modern travel across a previously impenetrable tropical zone appreciated the Tehuantepec route. After



reading Wallace's comments, we are left with the feeling that these "outside" opinions didn't factor into the calculations of the United States government. A prerequisite for participation in the global economy is an educated population, and Díaz recognized the role of education in sustainable development. Positivism permeated the political climate, which helped recast the norms of traditional Iberian Catholicism as detrimental to the progress of a modernizing nation. Secular education became a priority for instilling progressive virtues in the next generation. The Mexican writer and intellectual Justo Sierra posited that emancipation from the vestiges of the colonial regime with its Ibero-Catholic education model represented the most efficient approach for developing Mexican citizens into autonomous national individuals.<sup>20</sup> Although it was somewhat ironic that Sierra, a self-declared leader of the secular charge, would employ religious metaphors to reinforce the zeal with which he planned to re-define the nation's identity, that was precisely his strategy. "Justo Sierra thought that the school would be converted into a new church, founded on the textbook, erasing a past which, in Mexico, was the history of a special society, the Catholic Church, dedicated to the conservation of ignorance."<sup>21</sup>

During the Porfiriato, the search for national identity through secular education reached a culmination in the First and Second National Congresses on Public Instruction held in 1889-90 in Mexico City.<sup>22</sup> Sierra presided over the Congresses whose most fundamental output was the founding of the *Escuela Nacional Mexicana* (National Mexican School) The school would be formed with the intent of "consolidating the unity won on the battlefield," <sup>23</sup> *thus personifying the ideals of Independence in future generations.* The elevation of pride and social status

engendered by unprecedented levels of military participation in the battles for national autonomy that scarred the nineteenth century did not automatically translate into corresponding privileges in civilian life. However, the status soldiers and officers acquired *within* the institutional structure of the military introduced them to the concept of being rewarded for merit and virtue, which undoubtedly inflated their expectations on a civilian level. The creation of the *Escuela Nacional Mexicana* assured the “intellectual and moral independence of the whole country, which would convert the most humble person into a free citizen.”<sup>24</sup> This evolution from peasant to citizen is crucial for the evolution of the middle classes, and relates directly to the social dynamism and popular consciousness taking shape at the end of the nineteenth century.

The quest to define a more unified national identity that legitimated national sovereignty provided the rationale for an unprecedented level of Mexican social cohesion. According to Sierra, such unity could only be fully realized if every citizen was educated, and subsequently, achieved the agency to self-define his or her respective place in the social order. National public education engendered the confidence and foresight required to carve out an alternative to the traditional divisions of “elite” and “peasant” status- making it possible for Mexicans to imagine themselves as part of a third layer of Mexican society, regardless of their station at birth.

The Porfirian government agreed that the national school should have universal requirements, but the difficulty lay in adopting the right amount of foreign education models while taking into account the unique cultural complexities of the

Mexican situation. The Spanish “conquest” of American territory included a high dose of cultural fusion. Pre-contact social and economic networks retained their utility in the organization of colonial order in New Spain. Colonial authorities subordinated rather than dismantled the pre-existing hegemonic order and corresponding tribute schedule of the Aztec empire in central Mexico. Although Indians became integrated into the colonial experiment in varying degrees, it was not uncommon for indigenous individuals to make the transition to colonial citizen while preserving their pre-conquest worldview, language, and sense of aesthetics. The process of transculturation that ensued left its mark on all members of colonial society and their descendants- producing a population with an unprecedented breadth of cultural provenance tangled in the hybrid “imagined community.”

Although Justo Sierra was a follower of the *Americano-europeizante* current, it is important to note his propensity to warn against the dangers of North American influence. “According to Sierra, Mexico’s mistake came in believing that American institutions were good, in abstract terms, for all countries.”<sup>25</sup> Carlos A. Carillo, a member of the National Educational Congress, states the importance of isolating the “essence” of the U.S. model rather than transferring it directly:

And what would happen if here in Mexico we copied slavishly every detail of the American school system without dealing with the great many differences that separate us from these accomplished people? ... I think there is much that could be transplanted to our soil with suitable modification, but only within a Mexican national system in harmony with our particular needs and our state of affairs. We should not modify our own set of circumstances to fit the mold imported from our neighboring nation. Above all, what we should strive to appropriate is not the “body,” but the “spirit” that animates the American educational system. As in all American institutions, this spirit is one of self-government imbued with respect for the personality, freedom and autonomy of every individual.<sup>26</sup>

In order to be effective, a national Mexican education system would have to draw heavily upon foreign examples, but the process of translating an external paradigm to fit the Mexican context proved elusive. Something was missing. To formulate an accurate and productive national identity, the majority of the people living in that nation must feel included in and represented by the process. In the case of Mexico, inclusive and effective educational reform had to include semiotics of visual communication. The indigenous population had relied for centuries upon a complex arrangement of symbols, lines and spaces that together formed a visual means of communication that simultaneously affirmed their individuality and transcended their differences. Before the arrival of the Spanish, historical “texts” in the Americas were pictorial documents- visual roadmaps of history now known as codices. The conquistadores, threatened by the information contained in these pictorial documents, destroyed many of the codices in their zeal to introduce a new paradigm in the Americas. However, symbolic and aesthetic means of communication persisted in society, and imported European traditions continued to dominate in the leadership of the Academy.

In 1905 Díaz appointed Justo Sierra, a member of the Mexican Academy of Language since 1887, to the position of Secretary of Public Education. Sierra’s commitment to liberal education reform overshadowed any doubts he harbored about Díaz’s dictatorial tendencies. Sierra, whose educational jurisdiction included the National Academy of Fine Arts<sup>27</sup>, imported another Catalan painter, Don Antonio Fabres, to fill the post once occupied by Pelegrin Clave.<sup>28</sup> Jean Charlot addresses the particular repertory form that artistic education took under the Díaz appointees:

“Under Díaz the halls of the Academy were hung with lithographic charts of the Julien system<sup>29</sup>, ears, noses, feet, and eyes that the beginner was bidden to duplicate neatly in charcoal.”<sup>30</sup> A student of the Academy in the late 1800’s, Mexican artist Jose Clemente Orozco refers to the repetitive and laborious process of copying the Julien lithographs as oppressive and unnecessary discipline. It must have been somewhat disorienting for Mexican students to focus so intently on mastering the art of drawing classical European facial features that differed from those they saw on people in the street.

Upon satisfactorily completing these stringent preparatory steps for dealing with the human body, students earned the right to work with live models, who posed on an elaborate stand that elevated and rotated in alternating layers of light manipulated by bulbs and screens. Charlot states that “each pose lasted a month, and a photographer was called in to take a picture from which the students could correct any deviations from nature in their drawings.”<sup>31</sup> Orozco recalls the wide array of imported costumes utilized by the live models- who would dress as a variety of picturesque types including musketeers, odalisks, pages, nymphs, Spanish manolas, and bullfighters; as if they had stepped out of the great works of the eighteenth century European masters and into the Mexican Academy.<sup>32</sup> Viable subject matter had to be imported, already fully formed, from the pages of European history. The Mexican students were allowed to paint, but they had to paint in strict adherence to the Roman or Parisian models established in the last century.<sup>33</sup> As outlined in the official bulletin for Public Instruction, there was no direct route to painting: “No student may enter advanced painting courses who has not successfully

completed the course in life drawing.”<sup>34</sup> However, landscape *painting* differed from landscape *drawing*, since the former took place in a natural, outdoor environment, although still heavily mediated by instructors:

The choice of subject will correspond to the degree of progress of each student, beginning with the study of rocks, followed by that of tree trunks, foliage, water; culminating toward the end of the term in the study of backgrounds.<sup>35</sup>

As we will see, this process of aesthetic awakening as meted out in the sacred halls of the Academy differed greatly from the liberal philosophy of the open air art schools that would emerge less than five years later. However, many of the great masters of Mexican modern art came of age in the Porfirian Academy, which developed a slightly more liberal agenda under Sierra’s guidance and a broader range of instructors. As a young student in the Academy, painter Diego Rivera responded to the teachings of Felix Parra, a nineteenth-century “apostle of Indianism,” while rejecting the tutelage of the Catalanian Fabres as “unworthy.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the Eurocentric tone set by Díaz, individual artists and educators in the Academy worked together to develop a distinctive “Mexican” style that included Indigenous design elements, eventually transcending the barriers carefully designed to contain it. Since course offerings only extended to an intermediate level, outstanding students competed for scholarships to continue their studies in more established European schools. In 1907 the Parisian trained Mexican architect Rivas Mercado secured funding for Rivera, who studied in Spain and then Paris, where he became affiliated with the Académie Julien and modernist trends of symbolism and cubism practiced in that liberal institution. The revolutionary structure of the

Académie Julien shifted authority from professors to students, which it attracted from all over the world.

The increasing availability of International travel had an invigorating effect on the Arts worldwide. While Rivera painted in Paris with an international cohort at the Academie Julien, the Mexican public became enamored with the creation and projection of moving images. Thomas Edison used his somewhat clunky Kinetoscope to project the first moving images in Mexico in 1895. Mexicans drew inspiration from the innovative work of France's Lumiere Brothers, whose more reliable *cinématographe* reached Mexico in 1896. Frenchmen Gabriel Veyre supposedly established Mexico City's first "movie theater" at number 9 Plateros Street in the historic center. The space became known as "*Cinematógrafo Lumiere*," and the inaugural program of one-minute shorts included titles like *The Card Players*, *Arrival of a Train*, and *The Magic Hat*, all of which arrived in Mexico shortly after their premiere in Paris less than a year earlier.<sup>37</sup> Mexicans quickly began to produce their own versions of the Lumiere brothers' *realites*, and early documentary filmmaking in Mexico gravitated toward scenes representing technological innovation and local color. The Oaxacan Isthmus of Tehuantepec proved to be an expansive and vital subject for early filmmakers lured to the nation's photogenic deep south by the completion of the Mexico-Tehuantepec railroad. The lush tropical environment and its resourceful inhabitants resonated visually with more urban Mexicans treated to fixed and moving images circulated via the expanding transportation and communications infrastructure. The practice of collecting and trading picture postcards featuring the images of notable people

and places became quite fashionable among late nineteenth century women. The most sought after images included series of ethnological types produced by photographers who traveled the far-reaching expanses of the Republic. These early photo-ethnographers, including Henry Jackson, Winfield Scott, Frederick Starr, Lorenzo Becerril, and C.B Waite, artistically employed imported technology to reproduce images of Istmeños that instantly became part of the national cultural narrative.<sup>38</sup> Cultural historian Rick Lopez asserts that by the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the Tehuana attracted urban interest as a symbol of race, indigenous heritage and regional identity that bridged modern Mexico with its mythical past.<sup>39</sup>

In 1904 the Porfirian government awarded a contract for architectural photography to a Hungarian immigrant named Guillermo Kahlo. Kahlo's father in law, a Oaxacan studio photographer named Antonio Calderón, helped him establish a small portrait studio in downtown Mexico City where he worked to support his growing family. Proceeds from the government contract made it possible for Kahlo to construct the now famous *Casa Azul* in the artistic enclave of Coyoacan, where his famous daughter Frida lived and died.

In February of 1907, Porfirio Díaz inaugurated the opulent "Palacio Postal" (postal palace) in Mexico City's historic center. Kahlo produced a collection of photographs to commemorate that event. The publication of these photos was part of a publicity campaign waged by the regime in anticipation of the centennial of Mexican Independence. In an effort to court foreign investment in Mexican infrastructure, Díaz employed photographers to show the world just how modern



Mexico had become under his guidance. The images highlight the linear progression of iron and marble meant to promote the Porfiriato's solid foundation of order and progress. It is interesting to imagine the ratio of living Indians who utilized the services offered in the postal palace in relation to the indigenous "type postcards" that traveled through the building en route to domestic and international collectors.<sup>40</sup> By this point photography had become more than a mechanism of representation. "It became a medium in the modern sense: an instrument of communication and knowledge."<sup>41</sup>

Later that same year (1907), the Mexican brothers Alva brothers filmed and projected "*Inauguración del tráfico internacional por el Istmo de Tehuantepec*," ("Inauguration of international traffic through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec") drawing attention to the region's bustling ports of Salina Cruz and Coatzacoalcos (connected for the first time by railroad) as well as the most picturesque scenes along the way.<sup>42</sup> Several other filmmakers produced informative views of the unprecedented inter-oceanic railway commerce, including the great Salvador Toscano. Toscano's "*Las Fiestas con motivo de la inauguración de la ruta de Tehuantepec*," ("The celebrations commemorating the inauguration of the Tehuantepec route") projected in March of 1907, garnered a glowing review in Mexico City's *El Diario del Hogar*, which referenced the film's "animated portraits" of the distinguished Presidential committee inaugurating the railway, as well as *the customs and clothing of the region's native inhabitants*.<sup>43</sup> The film established a visual link between technological progress represented by the inter-oceanic Tehuantepec railroad and locals who conducted their lives in its midst.

The inauguration of the Mexican Isthmus Railway in 1907 became symbolic of Díaz's push for progress that simultaneously benefitted his political and personal agendas. After more than twenty-five years as President, they dovetailed quite seamlessly. Díaz began his military career as a volunteer in the US-Mexican war, in defense of the North American fantasy of "Manifest Destiny." The ugly outcome of that war would be the U.S. seizure of half of Mexico's territory. By successfully negotiating with British industrial interests for the trans-continental railway, Díaz made a powerful play against North American dominance of Latin America's economy. True to the nature of the patronage politics defining his leadership style, the Mexican Isthmus Railway had the potential to transform the economy of Díaz's home state of Oaxaca by linking it to modern global shipping routes. Rumors abounded that Díaz derived particular satisfaction from the railway because it passed directly by the house of one of his many lovers: the Tehuana Juana Catarina Romero, also known as "the Caçica of Tehuantepec."<sup>44</sup>

Effective suffrage did not exist under Porfiro Díaz, and protests against unfair elections, corruption, and political repression often earned protestors jail time, as revolutionary activist Juana Bélen Gutiérrez de Mendoza discovered. This journalist, poet, and political radical exemplifies the intellectual contributions of women to the modern nation, and her activism inspired the next generation to continue the struggle for social equilibrium in Mexican society as the twentieth century unfolded.<sup>45</sup>

Born Juana Bélen Gutierrez on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, 1875 in the state of Durango, this early Mexican feminist taught herself to read and write before

marrying an illiterate miner named Cirilio Mendoza in 1897. She helped Mendoza to become literate and quickly became an activist in defense of the unjust exploitation of the miners. Her participation in a strike for their cause led to her first stint in prison, which she spent in Minas Nuevas, Chihuahua.<sup>46</sup> In 1901 Gutierrez de Mendoza established the anti-Díaz newspaper *Vesper*<sup>47</sup> in Guanajuato.<sup>48</sup> Speaking through the publication, she called for an anti-capitalist revolution by peasants and workers who were suffering great injustice under the regime. Fearless and uncompromising in her political stance, Gutierrez de Mendoza defended the persecuted miners of Guanajuato with the same passion that she used to attack the clergy of one of the most conservative states in México.<sup>49</sup>

Gutierrez de Mendoza's actions defied the stereotype of the timid and religious Mexican woman, and her aggressive style led fellow subversive publisher Ricardo Flores Magon to praise *Vesper* as "a virile colleague" in his own publication *Regeneración* on the 23 of August, 1901.<sup>50</sup> Gutierrez de Mendoza continued to write even when Díaz had her incarcerated at the Prison of Belem several times between 1903 and 1920, where she produced poetry, short stories and essays from the confines of her cell.<sup>51</sup> During her time behind bars, Gutierrez de Mendoza met and befriended her admiring colleague Ricardo Flores Magon and his brother Enrique, Santiago de la Hoz, Juan Sarabia, Santiago de la Vega and other revolutionaries.<sup>52</sup> As conventional criminals refined their skills through a communal curriculum developed behind bars, so too did these political prisoners hone their revolutionary ideologies.

In August 1900 Ricardo Flores Magon had debuted a periodical titled “*Regeneracion*” that quickly established itself with an anti-Díaz bent. Over the next several years, Oaxacan brothers Ricardo, Enrique, and Jesus Flores Magon took turns at the helm of the paper, struggling to keep it alive as they alternated exile in the United States with stints of incarceration meted out by the regime for charges variously detailed as “insulting the president” and “ridiculing public officials.”<sup>53</sup> In the notorious prison of Belem the dissidents met their radical female counterpart, Juana Bélen Gutierrez de Mendoza. After 1903 the brothers found it necessary to leave Mexico, since the Díaz government prohibited the publication of any articles associated with the *magonista* cause. Enrique and Ricardo moved the enterprise to the United States, where they continued to advocate for an end to the repressive Díaz regime on the grounds that the elitist agenda of the *cientificos* crippled the inclusive modern development of the republic.

Juana Bélen Gutierrez de Mendoza remained in the republic, where she continued to serve sporadic sentences behind bars on the whims of an increasingly annoyed Díaz. Her prison writings contain both overt and veiled references to the situation of Mexico’s women and their potential to contribute to society as politicized citizens. In an issue of *Vesper* dated May 15, 1903, Gutierrez de Mendoza published a scathing commentary of then-President Porfirio Díaz that denounces the dictator as a coward for imprisoning two women, Elisa Acuña y Rosete (Gutierrez de Mendoza’s colleague at the publication) and herself, in Belem. It is unclear whether Gutierrez de Mendoza was imprisoned at the time she wrote this, or if she wrote this in anticipation of that event. However, she refers quite clearly to

the fact that Díaz ordered her to be apprehended for publishing criticisms of the dictatorship, which she fearlessly continued in full stride. She employs classic irony in framing the piece as a laudatory proclamation on the deeds and actions of the President, while referring to herself in a very self-effacing manner- echoing the humility and servility expressed centuries earlier by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz in her allegorical criticisms of the Catholic Church.

In a clearly calculated use of the President's own preferred approach, Gutierrez de Mendoza employs what may be described as "Positivist jargon" to denounce his actions as inhumane and irrational, when Díaz prided himself on following the maxims of this imported philosophy to the letter. She also offers the observation that perhaps Díaz is afraid that the two women (notably devoid of political rights at this juncture in Mexican history) may usurp his power, a clear attack on his manliness.

#### ECCE HOMO!

In war, a deserter; in peace, schemer. As a man, a monster, as a politician, a coward. Here we have described Porfirio Díaz. Applause from the audience! Here is your man.

The previous is demonstrated in the most evident manner.

Everybody knows about the *asonadas* and desertions led by this caudillo, everybody knows and we don't have to reiterate these historical episodes.

In the fictitious peace that we enjoy, we have all seen his scheming, failing in the most rudimentary obligations as a governor and as a friend.

Upon seeing these attacks, upon feeling the dawn of his permanence in power, to all who have been told that he will not vacate office even after the most monstrous crimes he has committed to destroy his enemies.

A man doesn't do all of these things, therefore he must be a monster. The unjustified desertion, the coarse and ruinous scheming, the killing in the shadows, have to be the work of a moral monster, deprived of every humanitarian sentiment, *carente* in the absolutes of human consciousness.

After all this comes the unchecked cowardice, from that which has brought shame since primitive man, unaware of human dignity.

The dictatorship does not linger yet nor behind the ridiculous. He has denounced *Vesper* and has dictated orders for the apprehension of Señorita Elisa Acuña y Rosete and for the director of this publication. If that is not a cowardly act, let God come and tell me.

Poor Mexico, my poor country! You will be the first nation where they imprison women for the indiscretion of writing in defense of the people.

In addition, Porfirio Díaz will be the first man who is afraid of women, and in his fear he forgets that until now he has hidden this cowardice behind wicked displays of force.

And what would this caudillo think if Elisa Acuña y Rosete would occupy the Presidential Chair?

And what would Porfirio Díaz suppose if his very humble servant Juana B. Gutierrez de Mendoza wanted to take over the killing?

Poor man! What delirium!

We don't have rights, but if we did have them, we would renounce them to occupy the post of Porfirio Díaz. It is just so sad the way he is!

I have here a note, an action that calls attention to the personal, civil and moral value of General Díaz. Audience Applause! This is the way your man is.

ECCE HOMO! Applause!

-*Juana B. Gutierrez de Mendoza*<sup>54</sup>

During a stint in St. Louis, Missouri, in September of 1905, the brothers Flores Magon helped found the Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) the group motto being "reform, liberty, and justice." Among other things, the PLM called for the abolition of the death penalty, the suppression of compulsory military service, complete secular education for children, a maximum working day of eight hours, a ban on child labor, cancellation of all peon-debt to the landowners, the restitution of communal lands to the villages and the protection of the Indian peoples.<sup>55</sup> This far-reaching, liberal, humanist agenda reached Mexico via the international mail service, and then traveled from hand to hand among those sympathetic to the cause within the increasingly agitated republic. Even revolutionary general Emiliano Zapata is said to have been influenced by the ideas contained in the publication.<sup>56</sup>

In September of 1906 Ricardo Flores Magon used *Regeneracion*, which had become the official organ of the PLM, to agitate for armed insurrection along the US Mexican border. He intended to capitalize on the increasing mobilization of Mexican workers in the wake of the government's repressive handling of labor strikes. The United States authorities wanted to avoid openly antagonizing the Díaz government, and began to crack down on the radicals who called for revolution from the northern side of the border. When the gringo government bowed to Porfirian pressure and placed Flores Magon and his elusive cohort under arrest in Los Angeles for violating neutrality laws, they managed to smuggle out a "Manifesto to the American People" in an attempt to clarify their intentions.

In March of 1908 North American journalist James Creelman sat down with an enthusiastic Díaz for a series of interviews on the balcony of Chapultepec Castle. The article would eventually do more to facilitate his political denouement than any he had previously attempted to suppress. The President appointed the historic residence in a level of grandeur that coordinated perfectly with such extravagances as the Pompeian mosaics installed on the ceiling of the outdoor walkway.<sup>57</sup> Such worldly details may be attributed to the castle's former occupants, Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota. They somehow escaped the redemptive wrath of Benito Juárez, who auctioned off the castle's furnishings when he reclaimed the Republic from the imported monarchs.<sup>58</sup> Early in the interview, Creelman alludes to the idea that Díaz may have inherited more than these decorations from the Castle's formal royal inhabitants. "For twenty-seven years [Díaz] has governed the Mexican

Republic with such power that national elections have become mere formalities. He might easily have set a crown upon his head.”<sup>59</sup>

The Creelman interview garnered international attention for breaking the news that after nearly thirty years of uninterrupted rule, Díaz would not seek another Presidential term in the upcoming election of 1910. The President even expressed his support of the formation of opposition parties as evidence that the nation had achieved political maturity on his long watch. The interview is an interesting juxtaposition of Díaz’s personal admiration for democratic processes as indicators of sustainable development, and his overarching conviction that Mexican citizens are a childlike group that justifies his use of the patriarchal fist implied in his “*pan o palo*” philosophy. When he is not reflecting upon his own superior leadership style, Díaz pontificates on the potential of the masses- whom he refers to as a “gentle and affectionate people, following their hearts oftener than their heads.”<sup>60</sup> We can assume that it is this marked “flaw” in their character that requires his firm guidance, admittedly “harsh to the point of cruelty.”<sup>61</sup> Díaz subscribes to the philosophy that the end justifies the means in the realm of politics and development:

It was better that little blood should be shed than much blood should be saved. The blood that was shed was bad blood; the blood that was saved was good blood. Peace was necessary, even an enforced peace, that the nation might have time to think and work. Education and industry have carried on the task begun by the army.<sup>62</sup>

In a mestizo nation preoccupied with royal bloodlines and racial mixing throughout its long and violent history, we are left wondering exactly how the President defines “bad” vs “good” blood. In addition, he identifies workers and educators as militant forces for social change and modern development. Herein lies the key to the liberal



reforms set in motion by Benito Juárez and tirelessly continued by Díaz during his thirty plus years in the Presidential palace.

Throughout the article, Creelman repeatedly emphasizes Díaz's ethnic and political connections to the state of Oaxaca, from the President's Mixtec-creole heritage to his civil service record in the State. Visually, Oaxaca is represented in Pearson's magazine by one of C.B. Waite's photographs of a woman dressed in the recognizable *traje* of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.<sup>63</sup> Notably, the tehuana image printed in the interview is likely one produced in Waite's Mexico City studio rather than on site in the Isthmus.<sup>64</sup>



*FIG. 2.2: "A typical Tehuantepec beauty" by C.B. Waite (1904), included in the original publication of the Creelman interview in Pearson's magazine.*

Waite and other late nineteenth century photographers capitalized on the popularity of their Tehuana portraits by offering urban clients the opportunity to experience the exoticism of the *traje* in the comfort of their Mexico City studios. These studio portraits can often be differentiated from field portraits by details such as the complexity of the embroidery in the huipiles and skirts, the type and positioning of the accessories, the backdrops utilized, the poses assumed, and also the skin color of the women featured.<sup>65</sup> The Tehuana *traje* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a clear representation of the aesthetic fusion of Mexico past and Mexico present. The traditional lines of the indigenous *huipil* (blouse) and *enagua* (long skirt) are complimented by starched lace imported from Europe, giving its wearer an aura of both local and global awareness.

Like the photographers who have abstracted the Tehuana from her native context in order to satisfy their clients, Díaz gives the impression that he values indigenous traditions as a critical part of Mexican identity. Inherent in this juxtaposition is the crux of the matter at hand. Díaz, like many influential politicians and intellectuals of the era, romanticized the elite elements of Mexico's aboriginal past while leaving the oppressed indigenous majority out of the modern development of the nation. Although Díaz commissioned a statue of the great Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc to be placed on the modern Paseo de la Reforma, the president's liberal reforms did not reach the majority of the nation's modern indigenous inhabitants.<sup>66</sup>



*FIG. 2.3: Photo of Cuauhtemec monument by C.B. Waite (1904), included in the original publication of the Díaz interview in Pearson's magazine.*

The President seems to think of his country in distant, theoretical terms. His viewpoint is fostered by the surreal grandeur of a castle elevated above a city teeming with poverty and poor sanitary conditions. This disconnect represents his weakness. By his seventy-eighth year, Díaz had become completely divorced from

the realities of daily life for the millions of citizens whom he governed. As the majority found themselves left out of their nation's rise into the modern era, they developed a collective social consciousness, fortified by increased access to education.

The *Escuela Nacional Mexicana* represented the most inclusive of Porfirian institutions. During the Porfiriato the number of citizens who received at least a primary education increased exponentially. The number of public primary schools increased from about five thousand in 1878 to about ten thousand by 1907. Enrollment tripled over the same time period, to include nearly six hundred thousand students, and public spending on education increased by a factor of ten.<sup>67</sup> When asked if the army or the schoolhouse represented the greater force for peace in modern Mexico, the President replied:

The schoolhouse. There can be no doubt of that. I want to see education throughout the Republic carried on by the national Government. I hope to see it before I die. It is important that all citizens of a republic should receive the same training, so that their ideals and methods may be harmonized and the national unity intensified. When men read alike and think alike they are more likely to act alike.<sup>68</sup>

Díaz may have underestimated the influence that previously marginalized members of society would bring to the normative equation. From his privileged position in Chapultepec Castle, he had a distorted view of the masses. Illustrative of the cyclical nature of Mexican history, Chapultepec Castle and the surrounding area is loaded with layers of historical significance that predates European expansion in the Americas. Ancient Toltecs chose Chapultepec hill, ("hill of the grasshopper" in the central Mexican indigenous language of Nahuatl) as the site for an altar honoring their gods.

Around 1428 the prince of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl, popularly known as the “poet king,” ordered a palace to be built near the area’s abundant natural springs. For many years only members of indigenous nobility enjoyed the abundant green spaces we now know as Chapultepec Park. These ancient elites honored their deceased rulers by depositing their ashes among the green expanses. In 1521 the Aztecs struggled against Cortez and his conquistadors on Chapultepec Hill, and upon their defeat the Spanish Emperor Carlos the Fifth opened the park to the public. The castle itself, constructed by the Spanish colonial government in the eighteenth century, housed various Mexican presidents as well as Emperor Maximilian. Today the National Museum of History occupies the historic building, which is once again open to the public. The sprawling park surrounding the museum hosts several active archaeological sites. “This is a garden and forest that belongs to all Mexicans,” said the park’s former director, Antonio Maldonado y Huerta. “It is the lungs of Mexico City, but it contains the heart and soul of Mexico.”<sup>69</sup>

Widespread liberal education reforms during the Porfiriato included citizens previously marginalized from academic institutions. Many female and indigenous students lent their unique voices and individual perspectives to the increasingly plural pool of ideas and methods nurtured in the national schools. As literacy levels rose among the general population, increased demands for respect, education and land assumed a more “orderly” and “progressive” manner. As the most concentrated site of educational reform in the early twentieth century, the schools in Mexico City became the breeding ground for a new and authentic form of cultural nationalism that enabled the “periphery” to inform the “core” with unprecedented resonance.

Not only did indigenous students learn to express themselves through the Spanish grammar required in the schools, many students learned to express themselves through the indigenous aesthetics that increasingly became part of the visual arts curriculum. The aesthetic revolution in the National School of Fine Arts reflected the social discontent of the society at large. The illusion of Porfirian permanence faced its biggest test to date: the aggressive and confident manner in which the oppressed learned the language of their oppressors, molding and adopting it for their own purposes.

The dramatic fallout from the Creelman interview, published in the United States in March of 1908 and quickly translated into Spanish, had far-reaching effects on both Díaz's supporters and his enemies. The President's own assertion that he may not run for re-election in 1910 inspired a flurry of activity that capitalized on years of speculation. Since the late nineteenth century, Díaz had devoted increasing amounts of energy to suppressing radical dissent to his political agenda, much of which emanated from the relatively remote Northern reaches of the republic. Distance from the centrally located capital insulated the brave individuals who dared speak out against Díaz. In addition, proximity to the border with the United States afforded the option of self-imposed exile in the event of retribution. For an increasing cohort of politically active rebels, Díaz had pushed the limits of their tolerance as a Liberal leader who distorted the intentions of midcentury reforms under an autocratic mantle.

Later that year Francisco Madero's inflammatory text *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (*The Presidential Succession of 1910*) helped stoke the

revolutionary fires. An initial printing of three thousand copies initially destined for journalists and members of the intelligentsia helped draw even more attention to the fragile nature of the Porfirian façade of unsustainable development in Mexico, which virtually ignored the horrific living conditions of the majority of Mexican citizens. Real wages had declined 25 percent in the years between 1898 and 1910, and the suffering nation demanded change. Madero's text stressed the need for a civilian president, active suffrage and no reelection, and the author emerged as a frontrunner in opposition to Díaz. Although the educated northerner helped ignite the flame of collective mobilization for political change, he belonged to the oligarchic class of large landholders. His personal motivation for change hinged upon political ideals and theoretical paradigms rather than more basic motivations like hunger or disease, which ravaged the urban poor.

Regardless of what Díaz had stated in his interview with Creelman, few believed political transition would come without a struggle. Francisco Madero recognized the enormity of the task. In a letter to one of his military confidantes dated April 20, 1910, Madero writes: "Porfirio is not an imposing chief. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to start a revolution to overthrow him. *But who will crush it afterwards?*"<sup>70</sup> Madero, like Gutierrez de Mendoza and the brothers Flores Magon, astutely recognized that deposing the long-standing dictator would require a national armed insurrection. Furthermore, whoever took the reins in the chaotic aftermath would be faced with the daunting task of creating an alternative political agenda to address decades of dysfunction.

Alternatively, a new leader or leaders might be content to “restore” order under a newer “revolutionary” façade. In the latter case, the task of institutionalizing revolution in a practical and sustainable manner would fall upon the members of society trained by Díaz’s liberal institutions to take over from the military- workers and educators. Rather than “crush” the revolutionary mobilization required to oust Díaz from his presidential stronghold, these actors would channel the momentum into productive and sustainable reform, eventually becoming the architects of a revolutionary society. This shift would engender a society that more accurately reflected its individual members. To achieve a more balanced relationship between “individual” and “*patria*,” the national narrative needed to include indigenous representation.

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### CHAPTER THREE: THE DENOUEMENT OF A DICTATORSHIP



*FIG. 3.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes (Humanos Paisajes, 1953).*

The fallout from the Creelman interview had serious ramifications on the Mexican political scene, as citizens began to actually imagine a future without Díaz. A more educated and mobile population began to form collective consciousness based upon the realization that their paternal president had become irretrievably

disconnected from the reality of their day-to-day difficulties. Perhaps the most visible representation of the chasm that had developed between the “two Mexicos” could be found in the Centennial celebrations planned years in advance for the epic year of 1910. As millions of pesos were dedicated to new monuments, academic conferences, and historic parades, the majority of the population suffered in unsafe and uncomfortable conditions. As a prominent member of a dying generation that still believed in politics and war as the means of generating change in society, General Bernardo Reyes realized that change was in the air. However, he was too entrenched in the old order, and ultimately decided that to go against Díaz would be risking too much. He left the country just as the centennial celebration came to full crescendo. The State-sponsored activities included a series of international conferences and exhibitions that drew attention to the complexities of the Mexican cultural matrix. Increasing access to foreign ideas and energy encouraged prominent members of Mexican arts and letters that their increasingly “local” definition of cultural mestizaje, which more accurately reflected the daily lives of the national majority, would not only benefit the local population, it would be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the global community.

### The Illusion of Porfirian Permanence Begins to Fade

The octogenarian Díaz must have realized that he could not maintain his exclusive grip on the presidency forever, and his way of dealing with the succession echoed his personalistic take on the office itself. In the elections of 1904, the office of the Vice Presidency gained added significance, since the order of succession stated that the Vice President would succeed the President in the event he could not fulfill the appointed six-year term. Díaz chose Ramon Corral of Sonora for the post, in an attempt to ensure political continuity. In 1903 Díaz had named Corral Secretary of Gobernación, after he had previously served as Governor of the state of Sonora (1896-1899) and then the Federal District (1900-1903).

As Vice President, Corral became one of Díaz's preferred confidantes and encouraged the use of brutal repression in putting down the labor strikes of 1906-1908. These strikes benefitted from the organization of workers inspired and educated via the PLM. More than a political party, the PLM then functioned as a point of confluence for many radical anti-Díaz activists. In advocating for brutal suppression of the strikes instead of negotiating with the workers, Corral had proven his unwavering loyalty to the cause of Porfirian order. Corral personified Díaz's heretofore winning philosophy of "pan o palo" and the dictator seemed determined to ride out his political career guided by the mantra.

With the elections of 1910 on the horizon, three main contenders emerged from the field of potential candidates for the vice presidency. The incumbent Ramon Corral, the *científico* José Yves Limantour, and General Bernardo Reyes, whose

supporters in Nuevo Leon had organized the first *reyista* clubs back in 1903, in hopes of promoting Reyes for vice president in the 1904 election.

Limantour, publicly recognized as the leader of the *científicos*, had served an uninterrupted tenure as Díaz's finance minister (Secretaria de Hacienda y Crédito Público) since 1893. He owed the base of his incredible wealth to the legacy of his family's business interests, which included dealings in arms and real estate speculation. Limantour added to that fortune as he profited handily from the Liberal reforms of the late nineteenth century, which stripped the Catholic church of many of its urban properties in the capital city. He also forged alliances with international interests, particularly with North Americans. He became instrumental in negotiating deals for Porfirian infrastructure projects such as railroads, ports, and parks, as well as for banking reform and the creative negotiation and restructuring of the nation's internal and external debt. In short, this money man had powerful allies in the world of international business and finance. In a climate of domestic scarcity and public fear of threats to national sovereignty, Limantour made an inflammatory choice for a running mate. His known association with North American capitalists did not sit well with the increasingly nationalist Mexican population.

General Bernardo Reyes, Governor of the prosperous northern state of Nuevo Leon, also emerged as a vice-presidential hopeful. Though more radical liberals condemned Reyes for the level of force he used to quell attempts at popular rebellion against the Díaz regime, the avowed military man had a good track record for fiscal development, worker's rights, and educational reform in the state he had governed almost continually since 1885. In his brief stint as Minister of War, (1900-

1903) Reyes earned public admiration and working class support for his unsuccessful bid to form popular militias in lieu of the draft. Reyes's proposed volunteer reserve showed his confidence in the population's capacity for patriotism and self-discipline at a moment when the military lacked professionalization.<sup>1</sup> As this action ran counter to the then dominant *científico* agenda, he did not remain long in Díaz's cabinet.<sup>2</sup> Although an avowed member of the Porfirian political machine, Reyes' independent leadership of the northern state, sympathetic view of labor and brief attempt to shake up the national military encouraged his supporters to promote him as a viable candidate for change while the *científicos* considered him a threat. When Reyes left the cabinet, Limantour's influence increased. It became clear that the support of the *científicos* was a prerequisite for rising in the realm of national politics.

Reyes became the first high-ranking official of the Díaz administration to comment on the infamous Creelman interview. In a July, 1908 interview with Heriberto Barrón of *La República*,<sup>3</sup> Reyes underlined the importance of Díaz's continued leadership of the nation. He argued that the President's patriarchal cultivation of the nation's social and political evolution should be allowed to run its full course, and seemed assured of the fact that political evolution toward "a real democracy" would logically follow. He agreed that the formation of political parties would play a critical role in the process, with the following caveat: "mere political theories will not create a free nation."<sup>4</sup> General Reyes adamantly denied rumors that he intended to capitalize on his military prestige to promote revolution. He criticized the radical activities of the *magonistas* and the PLM in the north, observing

that “ ‘the true principles of democracy’ could best be attained through the ‘serene evolution of progress but never through revolutionary movements...’”<sup>5</sup> As he publically opened the door for Díaz to renege on his stated intent to opt out of the 1910 election, Reyes affirmed the importance of the vice presidency as the mechanism by which the government could successfully ensure “the orderly and peaceable succession of power.”<sup>6</sup>

As the vice presidential “race” heated up, Reyes’s popularity soared. *Reyista* clubs infected the entire nation with the idea that this popular and qualified military man was the right one for leading modern Mexico in the inevitable transition from the Porfirian era, recognizably in its twilight. In his unpublished dissertation, Anthony T. Bryan examines the role of Reyes in the transition from Porfiriato to Revolutionary regime and concludes, “Reyes played a pivotal role in conditioning the nature of both the Díaz and Madero regimes and he was the nucleus of much controversy during both.”<sup>7</sup> Despite Reyes’s significant role in the political transition, he is most often remembered for an unfortunate series of political miscalculations that brought his life to a bitter and untimely end.

However, in an era of personalistic politics, it is critical to recognize the cohesive influence of Reyes the would-be candidate, and the catalytic effect it inspired among a population eager for change. Perhaps the importance of the man’s actions pales in comparison with the pervasiveness of the popular mythology constructed around him. *Reyista* clubs in the capital became more and more vocal in support of their namesake. One pro-*Reyista* editorial in a Mexico City publication explained the popular stance against the *científicos* and summarized the deep divide

then dominating Mexican society. “The people that you threaten and insult daily *señores científicos* can never walk by your side. [General Reyes is]... the only public figure who ha[s] shown concern for the people.”<sup>8</sup>

The privileged *científicos* oversaw a capital city fragmented by income disparity and poor distribution of wealth. A slim minority of capitalinos (many if not all of the *científicos* fit into this group, as well as the prosperous Madero family) made their homes in luxurious enclaves like the colonias named for Cuauhtemoc and Juárez, which ran along the south and west side of Paseo de la Reforma, while the majority survived in the overpopulated and disease-ridden tenements concentrated on the eastern edge of the historic center. Many of the tenements were concentrated just to the southeast of the Zocalo near the Merced market and to the northeast near the plaza Tepito. Tepito/Lagunilla was formerly the site where goods and tribute destined for the Aztec emperors would be unloaded upon entering the ancient lakeborne city of Tenochtitlan. “By 1910 the Indian communities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatlelolco had lost their centuries long battle against the encroaching city,” asserts John Lear.<sup>9</sup> Many of the rural migrants to the Porfirian city settled in tenements located in the historic footprint of these ancient sites.

Between 1884 and 1910, Mexico City grew from 300,000 to nearly 500,000 inhabitants. “The railroad system further facilitated the movement of massive numbers of poor and middle class migrants from Mexican provinces to work in the rapidly growing bureaucracy and urban economy.”<sup>10</sup> At this point, almost half of the people who lived in the capital had been born elsewhere. The federal district boasted a literacy rate of fifty one percent – far greater than the national average,

which hovered around twenty one percent.<sup>11</sup> Díaz's glittering capital beckoned to citizens of the republic who wanted to be a part of the modern, urban transformation. This led to the unprecedented sharing of public and residential space by rich and poor, whites, mestizos, and Indians alike.

Reyes supporters included a broad cross-section of Mexican society. Some were simply addicted to the General's *personalismo*; some advocated for political, economic, and social principles they hoped Reyes would respect. Another contingent became *reyistas* by default. Their hatred for the *científicos* and Corral inspired them to support Reyes.<sup>12</sup> The *reyista* movement appealed greatly to "bold, ambitious, younger men – in the military and in civilian life – who desired reform and personal opportunity, but with a minimum of disorder."<sup>13</sup> In summary, precisely the cross- section of society presenting the greatest threat to the aging leader and his tightly managed regime.

The emerging middle classes showed much support for Reyes. They viewed the governor's alliance with anti-*científico* industrialists in the north and his record as an advocate of workers rights as a sign that if allowed to expand his influence as vice president, Reyes might eventually attract new talent to the increasingly stagnant national bureaucracy. Due to ongoing liberal education reforms, more and more students lent their voices to the *reyista* chorus. Jesús Acuña, the representative of a *reyista* group convened from the National Law School, expressed his understanding of the catalytic role students would play in the political transition:

Those of us who belong to the middle class form the nerve of modern society... in our country we are the element which makes its influence felt in the other classes... The student element which until today has observed passive conduct in all public manifestations will be the first to give a lesson to



the people on election day... we ought to appear as the initiator and educator of the people.<sup>14</sup>

Although General Reyes carefully avoided any political action that might be considered a threat to his President and mentor, *reyistas* seized the power gradually meted out to them via Liberal reforms over the past half decade. They continued to mobilize, clinging to the idea that if they could generate enough popular momentum they would convince their namesake to accept the mantle they carefully crafted and carried from the Northern reaches of the republic to the increasingly contentious capital city. On July 18, 1909, the thirty-seventh anniversary of the death of Benito Juárez, thousands of *reyistas* visited Juárez's tomb in the panteón de San Fernando. The show of solidarity effectively conflated the legacy of the nineteenth century liberal reformer with the candidacy of General Reyes. One of the *reyista* leaders in attendance described the gathering, which "*más que un grito de admiración a la obra juarista fué un himno de simpatía al general Bernardo Reyes.*"<sup>15</sup>

Reyes, for his part, continued to disappoint his supporters, seemingly wary of playing too big a role in what all acknowledged might become a descent into chaos with no pre-determined escape route.<sup>16</sup> If the country devolved into active political revolution, all individuals and parties involved would sacrifice much to the expensive and exhaustive processes of rebuilding. Reyes knew the Porfirian system well. He must have realized the effort required to construct and maintain formal and informal networks that kept "order" in the modern nation.

Porfirio Díaz and his *científicos* had an internationally recognized monopoly on "order and progress" at this historical juncture, and any individual(s) or group(s) who would deviate from the Porfirian model had their work cut out for them. When

the armed phase of the revolution finally did break out, it would be more than a decade before the chaos would abate. For a mature governor like Reyes, it would have been a difficult decision to rebel against the very machine that had facilitated his political ascent. Such a risky endeavor would have effectively compromised his entire family's economic and physical well-being at the apex of his professional career.

The outpouring of support for Bernardo Reyes spooked Díaz. He didn't like the idea that popular momentum threatened to overtake his personal preference in the naming of a viable vice presidential running mate for the 1910 election. The president's vanity, inflated by the dominance of the political machine he had personally cultivated for decades, got the best of him. Díaz chose the incumbent Corral as his running mate in an attempt to mediate between the publicly disdained *científico* Limantour and the overly popular Reyes. Perhaps if Díaz had factored the public desire into his choice of running mate, a smoother transition out of the Porfirian era might have been possible. But the president's personal constitution made no provision for such "weak" behavior.

Since the turn of the century Díaz had planned to cement his role in modern Mexican history by presiding over a series of centennial celebrations that would solidify him as the personification of a century of liberal reforms (1810-1910). Though his own statements in the Creelman interview had opened the door to his exit from politics, Díaz would not go down without a fight. The dictator fought dirty. In a series of calculated blows designed to render his opposition impotent, Díaz struck hard and to the quick. As the summer of 1909 continued, his regime stepped

up its offensive via yellow journalism, arrests, and the transfer of professed *reyistas* who served in the military to hardship posts in the farthest reaches of Yucatan, Sonora and Quintana Roo.<sup>17</sup> On September 13 the *reyistas'* Comité Directivo agreed to disband in the face of insurmountable pressures.<sup>18</sup>

Reyes, who had been a loyal member of the Porfirian guard for many years, had to be handled more diplomatically. Despite repeated public assertions that he fully supported the Díaz-Corral ticket and had no intention of subverting the national welfare, the national government kept Reyes under surveillance. The regime feared that the general might eventually concede to popular pressure and use his military connections to organize an armed rebellion. As Reyes retreated to the city of Galeana, Nuevo Leon, supposedly to recover from a bout of malaria, Díaz sent General Jerónimo Treviño to systematically dismantle the Reyes power structure in the state.<sup>19</sup> In October Díaz requested Reyes' resignation, and the brow-beaten Governor conceded control of the state to General José María Mier before traveling to the capital to meet with the President.<sup>20</sup> Díaz offered Reyes an appointment he could not refuse, if he valued his own life and the safety of his family and his supporters. Reyes accepted a mission to study military recruitment systems in Europe, his departure imminent. He left the country on November 5, 1909.<sup>21</sup>

Although Reyes left the country repeatedly claiming that he would not, under any circumstances, seek to disrupt the "natural" political evolution of the nation, Reyismo lived on. Many key members of the various *reyista* organizations parleyed their political energies into the formation of the Partido Nacionalista Democrático (PND), formed in September of 1909. The founding members of the party

envisioned it to be anchored more on principles than on personalismo.<sup>22</sup> The election manifesto of the PND included a range of complaints against the Díaz government. These included: the exploitation of Mexico by foreign companies, the Guggenheim monopoly of the metallurgic industry, the Cananea copper concessions, American management of the Mexican railroad system, and the mistreatment of the Yaqui and Mayo Indian tribes. Together, this platform illustrates the increasingly nationalist outlook of the emerging party.<sup>23</sup>

Díaz's choice of Corral pleased few, but the timing coincided perfectly with the continued preparations for the centennial celebration, now solidified as the ultimate campaign event for the perennial president and his unpopular running mate. It became obvious that Díaz had no intention of following through on his plan to bow out gracefully from the Presidential election, as stated in the Creelman interview.

By the summer of 1909, *La Sucesion presidencial en 1910* had been reprinted due to the demand of an increasingly literate population. The text called for a return to respect for the law, an end to *personalismo*, and the re-establishment of the political principles set forth in the Constitution of 1857. *Maderismo* gained momentum as *reyismo* stalled under government persecution. No love was lost between the respective leaders of each movement, who stood for unique and at times opposing approaches to change. However, it is possible to identify specific elements of each platform that would have encouraged politicized members of the community to elide their differences in hopes of overcoming Díaz and his team of *científicos*. Although Madero made little effort to disguise his pleasure when Reyes

departed for Europe, he understood the importance of capitalizing on the momentum of the *reyistas*.<sup>24</sup>

Madero toured the nation to promote his book and the democratic tenets promoted therein. *Maderismo* gleaned plenty of support in the state of Chihuahua, but in the rest of the republic the movement continued to lag behind both the *reyistas* and the *reeleccionistas*, who supported the Diaz/Corral ticket for the 1910 election.<sup>25</sup> With many of the viable political figures of the era reluctant to expose themselves as openly anti-Díaz for fear of repercussion, the major conflict driving the political intrigue was Reyes vs Corral for the vice presidency. However, a seemingly tireless Madero continued to cultivate a political following organized around his narrow platform of effective suffrage and no reelection.

In June a group of *antireeleccionistas* in the capital founded a newspaper aptly titled *El Antireeleccionista*, under the direction of a young lawyer and philosopher named José Vasconcelos. As a member of the *Ateneo de Juventud* (*Ateneo*), Vasconcelos worked with Dominican intellectual Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Alfonso Reyes (Bernardo Reyes's son), Antonio Caso, Diego Rivera, and other intellectuals convinced that sustainable national development required a population versed in the humanities as well as the sciences. In this regard, their orientation diverged from the prevailing attitude of the positivist-científicos, who continued to view cultural deviance as an impediment to evolution. Horacio Legrás has argued that the *Ateneo* may be understood as a preview of the cultural solidarity that would emerge in the form of a modern and inclusive revolutionary State in the 1920's.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the group is well known for promoting the validity of pan-Latin American

identity and aesthetics at a moment when the regime maintained the superiority of a Eurocentric orientation. The members of the *Ateneo* reaffirmed the value of art, literature, and imagination to national development while the positivists continued to underestimate the humanities.<sup>27</sup>

In August of 1909 Madero advised Vasconcelos that “he was prepared to adopt the tactics which Reyes’s men had used for attracting public support.”<sup>28</sup> Many former *reyistas* disoriented by the quick exit of their namesake transferred their allegiance to Madero. The group of avowed *reyistas* who lent their support to Madero included Juan Sánchez Azcona, Dr. Francisco Vázquez Gómez (Díaz’s personal physician) and Venustiano Carranza. It became clear that in the absence of General Reyes, Madero and his *antireeleccionistas* would benefit from the structure and the brains of the *reyista* organizations, which infused their movement with a new potency.<sup>29</sup> The PND and the *Partido Antireeleccionista* temporarily joined forces in October, in hopes of presenting a united front for the upcoming elections. Though the groups’ combined intentions may seem obvious in hindsight, they did not publicly declare against Díaz and Corral until December of 1909, with the publication of the *Manifiesto del Centro Reeleccionista*. The Municipal elections of December 1909, obviously rigged by the *científicos*, disappointed the opposition and inspired a fresh round of protest and persecution of the same. Prominent officers of the PND imprisoned in Belém on charges of sedition issued a final manifesto calling for the temporary suspension of the party.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Porfirian threats that included prison time for Madero and economic intimidation of his family, in April 1910 the Anti-Reelection party named Francisco

Madero as its presidential candidate. When not campaigning around the republic during the homestretch leading up to the election, the presidential hopeful utilized the Madero family residence in the swanky colonia Juárez. From this privileged position in the capital he could keep his finger on the pulse of increasing discontent among the urban intelligentsia, courting both economic and ideological support for the difficult task ahead.

As a member of the Porfirian oligarchy, Madero may have been out of touch with many critical elements of the popular struggle. However, on the issue of the unfair distribution of wealth as a consequence of the *científicos* management of the economy, Madero could find at least familiar, if not entirely common, ground. After decades of Porfirian rule the domestic economy stalled. Even members of the oligarchy had to rethink their income strategies. Under the stimulus of mid nineteenth century liberal reform an “oligarchy of achievement” expanded through hard work, calculated investment, and the assumption of risk. By the turn of the century the generation inheriting the wealth shied away from risk, evolving into an “oligarchy of entitlement.” This privileged group developed a preference for wealth consolidation. They prioritized the conservation of their economic and social status over the generation of income through investment and expansion. The shift restricted the distribution of wealth and the pace of positive change in Mexican society, and widened the already deep gap between the “haves” and the “have nots.”

Agitation increased among the middle classes whose fortunes stagnated under the tight fist of oligarchy. Limantour’s policies enriched the few members of Díaz’s inner circle who parlayed political appointments into international contracts

for development. The *científicos* increased their holdings at the expense of would be entrepreneurs who found that their ideas for growth stagnated in the absence of investment. Modernity clashed with tradition as Mexico became more open to foreign models of economic growth. The Madero family offers an example of the resulting inter-generational tension. While Francisco Madero's younger siblings supported his radical stance, his parents did not find his rebellious behavior amusing.<sup>31</sup>

In anticipation of the June primary elections, the Porfirian government began to imprison members of the anti-reelectionist movement by the thousands, including Madero. The regime arrested the candidate in Monterrey, and subsequently jailed him in the regional outpost of San Luis Potosi. With Madero imprisoned and Reyes in virtual exile, tainted elections favored Díaz with a surprisingly close electoral vote, likely manipulated to give the illusion that the will of the people actually factored into the outcome.

Despite earlier indications to the contrary, Díaz appeared poised to seek yet another term in office. As mentioned earlier, the presidential election of 1910 coincided neatly with the centennial of Mexico's independence from Spain. Of course, preparations for the centennial year had been underway prior to the publication of the Creelman interview, and upon further reflection, a man with an ego the size of Díaz's would be hard pressed to walk away from such an elaborately set political stage. The *centenario* provided the perfect opportunity for the leader to solidify his union with the State itself, and it became obvious that he had no true



intentions of stepping out of the spotlight that he had labored for decades to focus in upon himself.

Spanning three decades, Díaz's repressive regime (1876 to 1911) became virtually synonymous with the state. However, the "official" Mexico did not resonate with "popular" Mexico. The diverging experience between the minority of elites who benefitted economically and socially from Porfirian development strategies and the majority of Mexican citizens excluded from them highlighted the reality of two Mexicos struggling to co-exist. Opposition to the regime simmered under the surface as the nation approached the centennial of its independence from Spain.<sup>32</sup> One hundred years of political autonomy had failed to silence the collective cry for social equilibrium in a land marked by violent cultural encounters.

Díaz viewed the centennial as an opportunity to more completely fuse the identity of the nation with that of his regime, and he committed vast amounts of resources to the various projects of the *Centenario* while the majority of the population lacked access to basic resources. Years of preparation preceded the celebratory year. "The Centennial's planners delivered their message through a variety of visual statements, such as parades, monuments, public buildings and commemorative stamps, as well as academic conferences, speeches, and official publications."<sup>33</sup> 1910 dawned as the year of the much-anticipated *Centenario*, and would be remembered as the year revolutionary change swept across the republic.

México found itself at a definitive cultural crossroads. For Mexican artists and intellectuals cognizant of México's pre-Hispanic heritage, it seemed that the nation languished on a fractured detour from its predestined path of development. The

breaking point came when the elite minority's vision of national progress failed to take into account the reality lived by of the majority of Mexican citizens. Renewed efforts at liberal reform hinged on re-contextualizing past and present to more accurately reflect the *hybrid* nature of twentieth century Mexico.

Imported European norms did not resonate with the nation's *mestizo*<sup>34</sup> reality; informed as much by indigenous traditions as by Spanish legacy. After all, a comprehensive view of Mexican history includes evidence of the ancient Olmec culture that dates at least to 800 BC and inspired the development of successive indigenous civilizations that persist all the way to the modern era. When Fernando Cortez arrived in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, more than two hundred indigenous groups speaking fifty distinct languages occupied the area that he claimed in the name of the Spanish monarchs.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, four hundred years of western European influence is a relatively brief amount of time. To complicate matters, many Porfirian elites rendered the nation's hybrid ethnicity an impediment to its development. As Díaz and his *Científicos* oversaw preparations for the lavish centennial celebration of Mexican Independence to take place in September of 1910, the officially sanctioned value of Mexico's indigenous legacy was limited to the static representation of an ancient royal Indian rendered atop a pedestal strategically located along the main *Paseo de la Reforma* (Boulevard of the Reform).<sup>36</sup> Cuauhtemoc's likeness became part of the urban landscape in an attempt to recognize that indigenous citizens also played a role in the officially sanctioned national narrative. The last Aztec emperor was a useful symbol for the Díaz government, which had a vested interest in reminding indigenous citizens of the

most “heroic” traits of their ancestors. Stated more clearly, the empowered minority found it useful to remind the subjugated majority of the virtue of maintaining strength and determination in the face of adversity.

In 1877 Díaz’s Minister of Development, Mariano Riva Palacio, had announced a competition for the “best monument dedicated to Cuauhtemoc and the other leaders who distinguished themselves in defense of the nation...”.<sup>37</sup> In his proposal, the sculptor of the winning design made reference to the role of indigenous aesthetics in the formation of national identity:

...no style of architecture would be more suitable than a rebirth which would include those beautiful details which today are seen in the ruins of Tula, Uxmal, Mitla, and Palenque, conserving as much as possible the general character of the architecture of the ancient inhabitants of this Continent, architecture which contains richness and detail so beautiful and appropriate that they can be borrowed to develop a characteristic style which we can call the national style.<sup>38</sup>

Although aesthetically appealing, colossal renderings of ancient indigenous leaders did little to affect the social disequilibrium that had become endemic by this point in Mexican history. However, the sculptor Francisco M. Jiménez y Arias justifies his stylistic choices in a way that aligns his officially sanctioned work with the wave of aesthetic rebellion spreading throughout the Academy. He alludes to a “rebirth” of “appropriate detail” that lends unprecedented legitimacy to a “national” Mexican style at a moment when the nation struggled to back up its hard earned political sovereignty with unique and visible representations of the nation.

The occasion of the centennial meant that the Statue of Cuauhtemoc would soon be joined by other heroic figures along Reforma, which hosted a series of monuments designed to function as an interactive history lesson. The visual

narrative condensed 400 years of modern history into a linear progression of symbols chosen for their ability to distill and communicate the essence of particular historical moments. Reforma connected the historic center with Chapultepec park, and by 1910 the symbolic tour included a monument to Spanish King Carlos the Fourth (ca. 1852, popularly known as *el Caballito*), representing the apex of Spanish civilization prior to the encounter; a statue commemorating Christopher Columbus (ca. 1860's), representing the great cohort of explorers who brought the old and new worlds together; and the aforementioned representation of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor who defended his great people in the face of unsurmountable odds. At the opposite end of Reforma, a new monument representing Independence would be inaugurated in September, 1910.

Mauricio Tenorio Trillo argues that together, these monuments enable the *Paseo de la Reforma* to function as a "path of power, the representation of the course of the nation towards supreme order and progress."<sup>39</sup> Naturally, the most extravagant of the centennial parades made use of the thoroughfare, complementing the static trajectory with live participants who donned historical costumes, including traditional indigenous dress, for their march toward modernity. The careful construction and maintenance of this visual narrative represents the government's desire to edit Mexican history for its own purposes. By singling out specific events and actors to be immortalized on such a grand scale, they practiced an early form of non-linear editing and "projected" their version of events for public appreciation. The process would be repeated and refined by future generations.

The centennial inspired the addition of two major monuments in the capital; in an attempt to further flesh out critical moments in the nation's history via the urban landscape. Along the southern edge of the Alameda Park that once served as Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota's private gardens, the Porfirian government immortalized the indigenous president Benito Juárez in imported white marble. The aforementioned Angel of Independence, designed to be a "universal symbol of Mexico's modernity and sovereignty," occupied a position of honor on the stretch of Reforma that connected the last indigenous emperor, Cuauhtemoc, with the entrance to Chapultepec Park, where his royal ancestors retreated from their ancient capital to commune with nature. A brief discussion of these monuments may help unravel the complex semiotics of public art at a historical moment when two Mexicos converged.

"Unlike the monument of Cuauhtemoc that was meant to honor a mythical Indian past, the monument of Juarez was dedicated to an Indian and sought to honor the present."<sup>40</sup> Juárez represents the Porfirian ideals of liberal reform and defense of the patria; a Zapotec Indian who successfully "passed" in the modern world by offering his services to the nation. In his case, patriotism trumped racism. More than thirty years had passed since Juárez's death, and immortalizing him with a monument enabled the Porfirian government to have a hand in the way the former president would be remembered. Designs proposed for the Juárez monument purportedly included a version in Zapotec style, which the Porfirian centennial committee judged "brave" but "improper."<sup>41</sup> Arguably, the white marble utilized in the winning design is reminiscent of the former President's preoccupation with

whitening his skin, a habit shared by President Díaz.<sup>42</sup> Flanked by bronze lions and allegorical women dressed in Hellenic robes, sculptor Guillermo Heredia's design reinforced the idea that by appropriating the correct aesthetic, an Indian might assume a formative role in the history of the nation. This was the conventional wisdom of men who came of age in the political and military ambience of Díaz's generation, which, by 1910, proved "almost obsolete."<sup>43</sup>

While the centennial commission honored the nation's first indigenous president as a hero of political reform, its treatment of contemporary Indians revealed the persistence of ethnic prejudice. As the *Centenario* reached its peak in the month of September, Díaz ordered all male Indians to trade their traditional attire for western-style shoes and clothing. He wanted those who refused to comply with the dress code removed from public view. Like so many of the liberal laws in Mexico, this proved impossible to enforce. Exceptions to the rule included those Indians specially recruited for the official *Desfile Histórico*, or as living mannequins in museums. In other words, Indians would be integrated into the national centennial narrative, as long as they remained in the space allotted them by the modern regime. Their participation would only be sanctioned in the proper context. The centennial parade included allegorical portrayals of watershed moments in the nation's history, interpreted through the lens of Porfirian progress. An estimated fifty thousand people turned out to watch as hundreds of participants marched along Reforma costumed as major players in the conquest, the colonial era, and the epic battle for independence.<sup>44</sup> The parade treated the massive audience to "a conscious pedagogic and visual nationalistic lecture, specifically meant to target the

special needs of illiterate Mexicans, but in allegorical language understandable to the world at large.”<sup>45</sup> As in the Reform-era Academy under the trained hand of muralist Juan Cordero, large-scale visual narratives of national history in public spaces proved useful for cultivating cultural nationalism.

Porfirian architect Antonio Rivas Mercado understood the allegorical language of the fine arts from an international perspective. At the age of eleven, Rivas Mercado’s father sent him to London. In an interesting twist, the boy sailed for Europe in the same year Emperors Maximilian and Carlota arrived in Mexico for their fated experiment in neo-colonial politics. Under the close watch of his father’s business associates and extended European family, Rivas Mercado received his primary education at a catholic school in England before moving to Paris for professional formation in architecture at the Parisian school of fine arts, and courses in engineering at the Sorbonne. He specialized in the Parisian beaux-arts style.<sup>46</sup> Upon returning to Mexico in 1879, Rivas Mercado taught architecture and cultivated a Porfirian clientele that appreciated his continental perspective. His skills did not escape the notice of President Díaz, who awarded the architect with the contract for designing the monument to Independence, which would be formally dedicated at the height of the *Centenario* on Mexican Independence day, September 16, 1910.<sup>47</sup>

The planning and preparation for the monument required Rivas Mercado to return to Europe and conduct research in France and Italy, where he eventually decided on a design that incorporated a representation of “winged victory,” the “quintessential representation of republican liberty throughout the nineteenth century.”<sup>48</sup> The iconic “Angel of Independence,” as it is popularly known, would

become an enduring and recognizable symbol of Mexico's modern and sovereign status. When the architect traveled to Paris in April of 1909 to inspect the foundation and molds for the monument, he made the trip in the company of two of his daughters: Alicia and Antonieta. At age 9, the younger Antonieta agreed to make the trip to France under one condition. She wanted to cut her hair in a short bob- a la "*Juana de Arco*," so that she would not have to waste time with the complicated hairstyles her mother, Matilde Castellanos Haaf, regularly forced upon her.<sup>49</sup>

Antonieta and her mother had been at odds for years. Though her youngest daughter exhibited an exceptional intelligence and quick wit, Matilde lamented the relative darkness of Antonieta's skin- of the four Rivas Mercado children, only Antonieta lacked the pale skin that her mother judged to be a sign of aristocracy.<sup>50</sup> Ironically, Antonieta likely inherited her "dark" skin from her mother, whose ethnic roots could be traced to Oaxaca's isthmus of Tehuantepec. Matilde's Zapotec great-grandmother, Pepilla Mexia, married the German immigrant Guillermo Haff, who worked in the coffee industry on the isthmus. Antonieta's mother grew up in the city of Juchitan. She left Oaxaca as a child to study in Mexico City in the custody of an English uncle. The girl's parents eventually joined her in the capital, where her father pursued a career in business related to the theater and opera, and her mother dedicated herself full time to their children. Matilde later adopted the same approach to motherhood, insisting that her daughters acquire the correct skill set to assume their appropriate position in Porfirian society. Though she appreciated the value of educating her daughters, the conventionally beautiful Alicia always pleased Matilde more than the intelligent and creative Antonieta. The younger sister



routinely placed more value in a well-played practical joke than donning the proper accessories for an outing in the country.<sup>51</sup>

Enamored with the idea of travel and adventure, Antonieta must have viewed the trip to France as a chance to escape her mother's constant disapproval and simultaneously emulate a female historical figure legendary for her bravery and martyrdom. Although Antonieta and her sister led relatively sheltered lives as the daughters of the Porfirian elite, their father entertained a wide array of interesting people in their family home at number 45 Heroes street in downtown Mexico City. There the family often dined with Antonio Rivas Mercado's professional colleagues, including their "adopted uncle," Italian architect Adamo Boari. Boari's designs include both the national post office and the Palace of Fine Arts. In addition to international artists and intellectuals, dinner guests often included struggling students from the Fine Arts Academy, which don Antonio directed during the turbulent years of 1903 to 1912. Thanks to her father's prominence in the world of arts and letters, Antonieta did not lack for examples of "seductive and interesting alternatives to the simultaneously formal and frivolous code of conduct expected of Porfirian women."<sup>52</sup> In the years leading up to the centennial celebration this proved to be particularly true, as an unprecedented number of foreign dignitaries and intellectuals poured into the city, many of whom enjoyed the hospitality of the Rivas Mercado family.

"The Mexican Centennial, viewed as an attempt to fashion historical memory for political objectives, reflected an international trend in Europe and its former colonies."<sup>53</sup> For the Porfirian elite enamored with European culture, the centennial

offered an opportunity to heal old political wounds between Mexico and Spain. Delegates from both countries participated in a ceremonial reconciliation designed to confirm that the sovereign nations stood on equal footing in the modern era. In a calculated gesture of goodwill, the Spanish used the occasion of the centennial to return the uniform of Mexican independence hero José María Morelos. The official chronicler of the *Centenario* wrote, "Morelos is the legendary figure par excellence. He is also the mestizo who symbolizes the new race with all the greatness of the others, and, for this reason, Morelos is the genuine representative of Mexican nationality."<sup>54</sup> In its reassessment of national history, the creole priest turned revolutionary personified the Porfirian goal of diluting perceived negative ethnic traits by encouraging racial mixing.

Liberal minded educator Justo Sierra explained one way "to convert the native into a social asset":

We need to attract immigrants from Europe so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race... for only European blood can keep the level of civilization that has produced our nationality from sinking, which would mean regression, not evolution.<sup>55</sup>

It seems as if a century was not long enough for the *Científicos* to mourn the loss of European influence that came with political Independence. They continued to believe that unless Mexico stepped up imports of foreign development models, the nation would succumb to decadence. After all, the French Revolution had inspired the formation of the liberal republic, Comte's positivism was the bedrock of Porfirian ideology, and Mexican sculptors commissioned on the occasion of the Centennial continued to seek Old World inspiration and techniques.<sup>56</sup> However, not

all residents in the capital agreed with the prominent role Spain played in the celebration.

As the nation grappled with the enormous task of becoming “modern,” echoes of ideological arguments between liberals and conservatives of earlier generations haunted twentieth century intellectuals. With the break from Spain, nineteenth century conservatives like Lucas Alamán believed the newly independent nation had condemned itself to internal anarchy and external weakness by foresaking its Spanish past and accepting alien institutions and principles in place of the familiar Iberian Catholic paradigm.<sup>57</sup> More radical intellectuals believed that the Porfiriato perpetuated the problem by failing to value indigenous elements of the nation’s heritage and continuing to favor imported social and cultural norms over more autochthonous models. They posited that the Mexican struggle for Independence represented a resurgence of the pre-Contact nation of Anahuac from beneath the weight of three centuries of Spanish domination.<sup>58</sup>

While Díaz allotted a budget of 35,000 pesos to import an exhibition of Spanish art to further illustrate the advantage of maintaining cultural ties with his country’s former colonizer, an incredulous group of students and teachers in the Mexican Academy (including Atl, Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros) petitioned the Secretary of Public Instruction and won a meager 3,000 pesos to mount their own show. The “Show of Works of National Art” that hung in the colonial-era hallways of the Academy under Rivas Mercado’s watch in September, 1910 included vibrant expressions of an emerging national style that had diverged from the European canon. Painter Saturnino Herrán, who made himself known in the Academy for

painting *criollas* that he knew instead of imported Spanish *manolas*,<sup>59</sup> exhibited “The Legend of the Volcanoes,” a triptych based on Indigenous mythology. Jorge Enciso showed “Anahuac,” featuring a life size Indian clad in a loincloth with outstretched arms that parallel the branches of the nopal cactus rising like a shadow behind him.<sup>60</sup>

Although the officially sanctioned Spanish show proved to be a success, it lacked the dynamic spontaneity of the national show, which inspired the participating artists to continue pushing for reform in the Academy. Doctor Atl led the charge among artists to establish a society called the “Centro Artístico,” with the goal of convincing the government to grant the artists walls in public spaces to paint murals that would reflect the emerging national style. The Secretary of Public Instruction granted the artists permission to paint the amphitheater of the Prepa, and the elated group began preparations for the murals.<sup>61</sup>

Beginning in 1825, the *Grito de Dolores*, or *Grito de la Independencia* (*Grito*) has been performed annually near midnight on September fifteenth. The event commemorates Father Hidalgo’s initial proclamation of Independence on September 16, 1810 in the small town of Dolores Hidalgo. In 1910, the annual *Grito* coincided with a lavish celebration in honor of Díaz’s eightieth birthday. The New York Times reported on the political significance of the simultaneous events:

Mexico’s celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of martyred Father Hidalgo’s proclamation of independence has been coupled with an equally impressive celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the birth of that wonderful old man, Porfirio Díaz. Who can doubt that the supposedly lesser includes the seemingly greater? Mexico’s centennial of independence is unquestionably another manifestation of the power of the president.<sup>62</sup>

A brave group of protesters crashed the painstakingly orchestrated event by carrying a large portrait of would-be revolutionary Francisco Madero and belting out support for the anti-reelectionist platform.<sup>63</sup> Anthropologist and photographer Frederick Starr witnessed additional demonstrations along *Paseo de la Reforma*. The remarkably peaceful protesters carried banners identifying themselves as representatives of several distinct anti-reelectionist groups. These included the *Daughters of Cuauhtemoc*, the *Benito Juárez anti-reelection league*, and a group united under a white banner that simply read: "*Ley Constitucional de 1857.*" (Constitutional Law of 1857).<sup>64</sup> It is telling that porfirians and protesters invoked the same symbols (Cuauhtemoc, Juárez, and the 1857 Constitution) in support of their opposing causes.

The centennial functioned as an international spectacle designed to attract attention and capital to the developing republic. Díaz and his *científicos* believed in the continual modernization of the country through educational reforms and foreign investment including economic, cultural, and intellectual capital. In addition to courting Spanish support, the centennial commission extended invitations to a wide range of foreign intellectuals in an attempt to jump-start an additional wave of educational reforms. The focus on reform in the early twentieth century centered on the professionalization of scientific knowledge. As early as 1906, key intellectuals including Justo Sierra and Limantour had been instrumental in the promotion of anthropology as a professional discipline. Under their guidance, the Secretary of Education established chairs in physical anthropology, ethnology, and linguistics at the National Museum.<sup>65</sup> This represents the guarded but steady increase of

recognition afforded to indigenous elements of society in the careful construction of the “official” version of the national narrative.

While the regime continually criticized Mexico’s contemporary Indigenous inhabitants as a drain on the citizenry’s collective potential, it did place some priority on the study of ethnic and linguistic variations as a means of overcoming perceived obstacles to development. Long before the Spanish arrived, various indigenous groups with distinctly different cultural traditions interacted with varying degrees of complicity. The juxtaposition of Spanish Catholic cultural norms further agitated already muddy waters. After more than three hundred years of colonization and a century of independence with a colonial hangover, Mexico lacked a functional paradigm through which to comprehend its complex cultural hybridity. Díaz’s Positivist-minded advisors advocated a modern, scientific approach to the study of human evolution that required additional investment in public education at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Justo Sierra oversaw the founding of a new incarnation of the national university on September 22, 1910. This reinvigorated institution would be grounded in very different ideals than its precursor, the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, founded in 1551 by the Spanish king Charles the first. In 1867 Benito Juárez shuttered the doors of the former locus of higher education, considering it a threat to the Liberal agenda. Nearly fifty years later, the new University occupied the same space as its predecessor. Justo Sierra promised that the secular University “would distribute science, like the Eucharist, to all souls.”<sup>66</sup> Its re-opening in 1910 reflected the regime’s faith in Comtean Positivism as an

appropriate means for developing rational and scientific minded citizens, and complemented the federal education system designed for younger students. For the first time in modern history, the constitution and the government guaranteed Mexican students free access to secular education at all levels.

The simultaneous increase in access to education and decrease in real wages and quality of life proved to be explosive factors in a volatile equation. As more people developed the ability to think rationally about issues such as social justice, democratic elections, and the reach of sustainable development, the shortcomings of the regime became more difficult to ignore. Members of the *Ateneo* agreed with the *científicos* regarding the need for higher education, but urged for the inclusion of humanities in the evolving curriculum. In addition, they recognized that many Mexican citizens continued to experience practical barriers to the “free and unbiased” education promised by the liberal government. The avowed humanists called for more creative and interpretive approaches to learning, which need not be confined to the traditional classroom setting and methods. Alfonso Reyes elaborates:

*La escuela primaria no puede satisfacer las necesidades espirituales de ningún hombre actual. Para colmar este anhelo de mayor cultura, los privilegiados de la sociedad cuentan con escuelas superiores y profesionales. Mas los no privilegiados, que forman el pueblo, como tienen que atender de preferencia al diario sustento, no van a la escuela. Si el pueblo no puede ir a la escuela, la escuela debe ir al pueblo. Esto es la Universidad Popular...<sup>67</sup>*

Meanwhile, the government committed its energy to attracting foreign professors to help with the “rejuvenation of the university.”<sup>68</sup> Perhaps in an effort to double down on its investment to attract international intellectual capital, the re-opening of the University would coincide with other school openings and various

educational congresses to solidify the Porfirian regime's commitment to cultivate a more educated and informed population. Obsessed with professionalizing the discipline of Anthropology, German-born Anthropologist Franz Boas eagerly accepted the invitation to travel to Mexico as a visiting intellectual, likely looking forward to reconnecting with his doctoral student, Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio.<sup>69</sup>

Boas understood his professional mission as an Anthropologist to include the instruction of government officials "in the culture of foreigners," arguing "it was essential in dealing with alien groups to have a thorough grasp on their way of life."<sup>70</sup> His perspective dovetailed with the Mexican government's desire to better understand the "alien groups" (Indians) living within its borders. Boas advocated publicly and privately, through passionate correspondences with international colleagues, for an International School of American Archaeology and Ethnology to be established in Mexico and administered by a cadre of international intellectuals.<sup>71</sup> He knew that the key to succeeding with this plan lay in his ability to convince a critical mass of interested parties to convene in Mexico. As early as 1907, Boas began encouraging influential academics and officials to write to President Díaz and his Inspector of Archaeological Monuments, Leopoldo Batres, about the possibility of holding the 1910 Congress of Americanists in Mexico City.

In his appointed position, Bartres focused his professional efforts on excavating the monolithic Pyramid of the Sun in the Valley of Teotihuacan between 1902-1908. The Porfiriato appropriated the Pyramid, along with other ancient monuments, as symbolic representations of its comprehensive strategy to reinforce



its permanence on the Mexican political landscape. This phenomenon is not limited to the Mexican case- as Benedict Anderson tells us in his classic treatise on nationalism. Both colonial regimes and former colonies often attach “themselves to antiquity as much as conquest ... [with] less and less openly brutal talk about right of conquest, and more and more effort to create alternative legitimacies.”<sup>72</sup>

President Díaz attempted to etch his image more permanently into the nation’s cultural continuum as rescuer and purveyor of a complex assortment of cultural symbols. He may have been drawing a parallel between the ancient architectural feats of the former inhabitants of Teotihuacan and his modern construction projects, which included the Venetian elegance of Italian architect Adamo Boari’s designs for the national postal building and Fine Arts Palace in downtown Mexico City. These modern monoliths appeared on the urban landscape concurrently with the excavation of the Pyramid at Teotihuacan, the archaeological site was located only about 40 kilometers from the nation’s capital. Díaz intended to educate the population about the benefits of cultural synthesis. The buried treasures of Mexico’s aboriginal heritage would indeed prove to be the cultural capital that fueled Mexico’s march into modernity, though not quite in the manner Diaz intended. In 1908 the Congress of Americanists accepted Bartres’s formal invitation to convene the 1910 meetings in Mexico.<sup>73</sup>

President Díaz and his *Científicos* failed to recognize the disconnect between institutional reverence for the indigenous inhabitants of “*México Profundo*”<sup>74</sup> and disdain for contemporary Mexicans of indigenous descent. However, conventional

wisdom fostered “a consensus on the perfectibility of Indians through education.”<sup>75</sup>

At the inauguration of the 1910 Congress of Americanists, Justo Sierra stated:

*Todo este mundo pre-cortesiano...es nuestro, es nuestro pasado, nos lo hemos incorporado...[a] nuestra verdadera historia nacional, la que data de la union de conquistados y conquistadores para fundar un pueblo mestizo que (permitidme esta muestra de patriótico orgullo) está adquiriendo el derecho de ser grande.*<sup>76</sup>

Attempts to re-claim and re-value the indigenous legacy of the modern nation hinged upon the successful promotion of *mestizaje* as a development strategy. While the Congress of Americanists generated many papers purporting to prove the racial inferiority of Indians based on the anthropometry of their bones and skulls,<sup>77</sup> Boas arrived in Mexico armed with an epistemological axiom that inspired a generation of anthropologists to reconsider the utility of racial prejudices and rethink the relationship between man and his environment. The anthropologist first articulated the ideological framework for his emerging theory of human development in 1887, arguing that “...civilization is not something absolute, but ... is relative, and ... our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes.”<sup>78</sup> Though the term “cultural relativity” would not be popularly used until after Boas’s death in 1942, his work in Mexico helped further the cohesion of the concept that solidified Boas as the father of American Anthropology.

Cultural relativity is the view that it is impossible to assign qualitative values to cultural beliefs. Instead of employing a linear continuum of development that privileges Western European models as the “most advanced,” cultural relativity posits that the development path of a particular culture is highly dependent upon its environment. A proponent of cultural relativity would assert that all cultural beliefs

are equally valid and truth itself is relative, depending upon the environment in which it is defined. The central valley of Mexico is a unique location for the development and application of Boas's theories, which revolutionary intellectuals embraced in their quest for social and institutional reform.

The concept of "relative truth" proves quite useful when imagining the situation in Mexico 1910. While the majority of Mexicans suffered unprecedented shortages, the elite minority prepared to celebrate a century of independence. Boas brought innovative perspective to a population rooted in competing cultural norms and poised for social revolution. Cultural relativity helped the intelligentsia to rework the dysfunctional binary regarding the nation's "indian problem." Contrary to conventional wisdom, indigenous members of society could not be neatly classified as "barbaric" nor "loyal children."<sup>79</sup> They were, however, a product of their environment; as were the Liberal Mexicans who mobilized and united around the cause of social equality.

Throughout the academic year 1910-1911, Boas delivered a series of lectures at the Mexican National University that changed the face of American Anthropology.<sup>80</sup> Concurrently, he oversaw the founding of The International School of American Archaeology and Ethnology (hereafter referred to as the International School), where he worked to develop and implement a rigorous and systematic approach to the ethnology of the Americas.<sup>81</sup> Anthropological investigations undertaken in the Valley of Mexico under Boas's guidance helped facilitate the long overdue re-valuation of Pre-Hispanic aesthetic traditions. Long buried cultural capital became an integral part of the visual narrative of cultural nationalism that

has become synonymous with the first social revolution of the twentieth century. Boas expanded upon Batres's archaeological work at Teotihuacan, and with the help of Mexican intellectuals Manuel Gamio and Adolfo (Fito) Best Maugard, compiled information from various central Mexican sites that would eventually become the most definitive ceramic sequence to further the study of Mesoamerican archaeology. Number twenty-one in a series of thirty-seven publications and manuscripts compiled by the International School, The *Album de Colecciones Arqueologicas*<sup>82</sup> represents the collective efforts of Boas, who selected and organized the sequences; Best, who painstakingly reproduced thousands of potsherds with artistic integrity; and Gamio, who authored an intuitive text that brought the project together as a whole worth exponentially more than the sum of its parts.

In an undated handwritten document in the Gamio archive of the *Museo Nacional de Antropologia* in Mexico City, Gamio describes the events leading up to his professional formation in Anthropology. Born into an upper middle class family descended from Spanish immigrant laborers, Gamio lost his mother, Marina Martinez de Gamio, at the age of only seven years. Her premature death widowed her husband, Gabriel Gamio, who made a series of poor business decisions as he struggled to care for their five children. The family's modest fortune dwindled in the 1890's as Porfirian social and economic policies made "middle class" existence more and more difficult. Gamio experienced firsthand the luxuries of the Porfirian inner circle as he spent a lot of time in Colonia Juárez at the mansion of his childhood friend, Mariano Leon Ortiz, the son of the Diaz family notary. In an attempt to please his father, Gamio entered the Preparatory School to study Civil Engineering. When

the elder Gamio's economic situation continued to worsen, Manuel Gamio confessed that he did not want to become an engineer. Disgusted by this admission, his father sent Manuel to work on the *chicle* hacienda he had purchased in the remote Papaloapan basin with the sale of his last remaining properties in the capital.<sup>83</sup>

Though Manuel Gamio refers to the purchase of the hacienda as his father's "*última y definitiva tontería*,"<sup>84</sup> the unanticipated trip to the hacienda near the border shared by the states of Oaxaca, Vera Cruz, and Puebla would change his worldview. During his interactions with the *chicleros* who worked his father's land under excruciating conditions, Gamio began to learn Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec empire still spoken in many parts of Mexico today. Gamio recalls:

I learned Nahuatl, the language of the aborigines of that place, and above all, I began to wonder, think, and meditate about the great drama of the indigenous population marginalized within in the country [Mexico]. Upon returning from that live nightmare, I made contact with other people interested in Mexican culture with the intention of working as an investigator of archaeological monuments for the Secretary of Agriculture.<sup>85</sup>

Thus began Gamio's lifelong study of indigenous language and culture. When he returned to Mexico City after two years in the rainforest, Gamio studied Anthropology with Zelia Nutall at the National Museum in Mexico before continuing his graduate work in 1909 under Boas's direction at Columbia University in New York City. He earned a PhD from that institution, and, as a co-founder of the International School with practical experience in Mexican archaeology and cultural studies, helped Boas with his efforts at consolidating the efforts of professional anthropology in the Americas. Because of his family's financial flux, Gamio gained first-hand experience with the divided nature of Mexican society in both urban and the rural areas. As a starving student in the glittering Porfirian capital, he resorted

to covering the holes in the soles of his shoes with matchbooks. In the countryside, he learned new depths of suffering as he lived and worked alongside his indigenous *paisanos*.

The professionalization of American Anthropology enabled the mining of the indigenous past and the investigation of the indigenous present. Culturally sensitive intellectuals began to re-evaluate the cultural capital that had been dismantled and discarded by the Spanish in their bloodthirsty quest for gold and souls. Native Mesoamerican peoples considered gold to be the excrement of the sun, and the Spanish conquerors considered archaeological artifacts the refuse of underdeveloped civilizations. In an interesting turn of events, artifacts unearthed during archaeological excavations led by anthropologists Boas and Gamio in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would prove to be the raw materials for an alchemical process designed to rebalance modern Mexican society. They helped inspire the revolutionary artistic renaissance that assigned new value to these artifacts and ideas, forging a modern Mexican identity based on the re-contextualization of its history.

Gamio eventually outlined the scope of the project thus: “We must forge for ourselves – even if temporarily – an Indian soul. Then, we may work for the advancement of the indigenous class.”<sup>86</sup> With the establishment of the International School, increased attention on Mexico’s indigenous legacy and its scientific value to the international community helped throw the Porfirian illusion of “order and progress” out of focus. As the theory of cultural relativity permeated the Mexican intellectual landscape, the psychological weight of a century helped stoke embers of

popular protest that would eventually recast the *centenario* as the denouement of a regime that had outlasted its legitimacy.

Although the centennial celebration went largely as planned, the amount of public resources dedicated to the elaborate program highlighted the disparity between the “official” and “popular” Mexico. Just months after the dedication ceremony for the Angel of Independence, the *científicos* oversaw an election that granted Díaz and Corral another six years of political control. Having escaped from San Luis Potosi on October 5, Madero protested the results from the relative safety of exile in the United States. In a plan named for the place where he sacrificed his freedom, Madero’s *Plan de San Luis Potosi* called for revolutionary armed uprising to begin on November 20, 1910. The Centro Artístico placed its mural plans on hold, and the world’s first popular social revolution would soon be underway.<sup>87</sup>

The carefully constructed illusion of “order and progress” continued to benefit select members of the oligarchy who enjoyed direct connections with the Porfirian inner circle. However, the middle classes were growing. More and more citizens felt the sting of being excluded from “national” development programs that consolidated the wealth beyond the reach of the working and artisan classes who helped generate it.

Students educated around the turn of the century became the first Mexican citizens born with the right to free and unbiased education at all levels, and they made the most of it. Social imbalances inspired the collective demand for modern institutions designed to meet the diversified needs of a more educated and informed population. Citizens everywhere mobilized in preparation for a catalytic series of

events that would liberate the modern nation from the weight of its recent past. A growing cohort of modern artists and intellectuals became purveyors of the idea that the historical depth of the Mexican cultural continuum had the potential to eclipse recent crises of underdevelopment. Like a dark shadow that muted an otherwise illustrious palate, the painful legacy of colonialism had to be overcome in order for Mexicans to ascend to their full human potential. The realm of education, where liberal reforms had been set in motion over a century earlier, represented the most recognizable and accessible manifestation of institutional change.

Nineteenth century nationalisms, what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined communities,”<sup>88</sup> built on common myths of belonging including shared religion, language, and geography, had worn thin. These three denominators in particular fell short of encompassing the reality of Mexican daily life, with its syncretic brand of folk Catholicism, multiple languages, and relatively new border with the United States.



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5 *Ibid.* P. 220. The interview was held in Monterrey and Reyes' comments were published in *La Republica* on August 1, 1908.

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11 *Ibid.* P. 53.

12 Bryan, Anthony T, "Mexican Politics in Transition, 1900-1913: The Role of General Bernardo Reyes." Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1969. P. 228.

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14 *Ibid.* P. 231. Original document in AEM, IV, 342-359.

15 Bryan, Anthony T, "Mexican Politics in Transition, 1900-1913: The Role of General Bernardo Reyes." Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1969. P. 236.

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19 *Ibid.* Pp. 246-249.

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22 *Ibid.* P. 254.

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59 Orozco, p. 22. (A *manola* is a typical woman from Madrid, often dressed in the flamboyant zarzuela style.)

60 Jean Charlot. *Mexican Mural Renaissance*. P. 43.

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83 AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, pp. 1-8.

84 AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, pp. 8.

85 AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, p. 4. (translation Borealis)

86 Gamio, Manuel. Forjando Patria. P. 39.

87 See Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.

88 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

## CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENTS OF REVOLUTION



*FIG. 4.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes*

Aesthetic rebellion and political revolution merge seamlessly in the capital city. The original “Revolutionary generation” of artists and intellectuals solidifies its commitment to social change via cultural redemption predicated upon a large-scale reevaluation of indigenous aesthetics. Public institutions that fail to meet the needs of the mobilized masses begin to more faithfully reflect their desires. As a series of “restorationists” jockey for political control in an echo of the Porfirian model, international intellectual currents converge in a way that grants avant-garde representatives of Mexican arts and letters a more influential role in the

international community. Bernardo Reyes loses his bid to play a transitional role in the changing government, and the lives of his sons are drastically changed in the process. In the absence of a cohesive and sustainable government, artists and intellectuals parley their revolutionary identity into international diplomacy, and previously marginal voices begin to realize the power of collective consciousness inspired by a more inclusive version of cultural nationalism.

### Sustainable change and a bit of Soul Searching

When Díaz fled the country, the Fine Arts Academy remained under the direction of architect Antonio Rivas Mercado, who fielded increasing numbers of complaints from the students about the shortcomings of the curriculum. Part of the problem hinged on a rift that developed between students of architecture and students of painting and sculpture. According to some accounts, this rift had class-based conflict at its root. The Architecture students overwhelmingly came from economically privileged, politically conservative families, and the more proletarian painters and sculptors represented the working class. Rivas Mercado favored the former group, dismissing the latter as troublemakers who contributed less to society.<sup>1</sup> Though his tenure as director bridged the changing of regimes, Rivas Mercado's grip on the Academy seemed more tenuous with every passing day. Under the influence of Dr. Atl, the students had begun to suspect that the "colonial" situation stifling free expression in the Academy was simply a trick perpetuated by international dealers who benefitted from the status quo.<sup>2</sup>

Artistic and political rebellion merged with smooth complicity as Francisco Madero triumphantly entered Mexico City on June 7, 2011. Though Dr. Atl left the Mexican Academy for another stint in Europe, the mobilized painters and sculptors he left behind declared a general strike on July 28. They rebelled against yet another imported drawing method, the French *Pillet* system (also known as elemental imitation drawing) and called for Rivas Mercado's immediate resignation.<sup>3</sup> When police locked striking students out of the school, they showed their defiance by sketching in the open, prompting unprecedented interaction between the artists and



the public at a moment when political change engulfed the nation. One of the local newspapers printed a photo of the young artists working in the gardens of the *Ciudadela* accompanied by an empathetic caption identifying the students as productive members of society:

A worthy example – Students from the Academy work in public parks, their school having locked them out... Breathing an air purer than that of the Academy...young artists sketch unusual types, landscapes and sundry scenes; passers-by stop to look and to praise the facility with which all of it is transferred to paper.<sup>4</sup>

This unplanned foray into the open air proved to be a precursor to the *Aire Libre* schools, which would eventually become an elemental part of the fine arts curriculum in the revolutionary schools.

Muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, who studied with José Clemente Orozco at the Academy in the midst of the revolution, recalled that in addition to filing formal written complaints, the young painters adopted a more tactile outlet for expressing their discontent. On one day in particular, Rivas Mercado arrived at the school only to be assaulted by a messy barrage of raw eggs, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, turnips and carrots launched mercilessly by students who waited patiently for his arrival. “Alas, some of our missiles landed on the beautiful daughter of the director [Antonieta Rivas Mercado], who rushed to the defense of her maker.”<sup>5</sup>

During this tumultuous period, the strike in the Academy led to the creation of an alternative school for the arts. The “Academy of Painting and Sculpture,” emerged as an outgrowth of the ongoing argument for separating the painters and sculptors from the architects. As in other aspects of Mexican society, the ongoing divide between official and popular led to the creation of alternative institutions

designed to better meet the needs of Mexican citizens. The unprecedented political opening meant increased opportunities for artists and intellectuals to make an impact on society. When the artists outgrew the institution designed to contain them, they took it upon themselves to design a new one.

The resurgence of pre-Hispanic forms of cultural expression that relied on the use of symbols and public space to transmit information is evidence that the Revolution enabled Mexicans to reclaim a particular form of historical consciousness that had been muted by the colonial experience. For the first time in modern history, Mexican artists communicated to the rest of the world the passionate, prideful, and sometimes painful parameters of *Mexicanidad*<sup>6</sup> on their own terms. This cultivation of cultural nationalism would prove to be a successful way of uniting the nation under a recognizable set of symbols that effectively rewrote the Mexican historical narrative from a popular perspective.

While students of the traditional arts lent their voices and creative efforts to the struggle for a more balanced society that more accurately reflected the experience of being “Mexican,” modern technology enabled Mexico’s social revolution to be the first armed conflict of its scale documented in moving images. The celluloid narratives produced as the action unfolded contributed to the Revolution’s pervasive resonance in the collective cultural memory of an increasingly global community. The Mexican Academy hosted a multifaceted campaign to develop a cohesive form of national identity that would bridge tradition and modernity, once and for all displacing the colonial paradigm that had deeply damaged the Mexican psyche. *Seeing is believing*, and new media, materials, and

methods offered the magic effect of bridging language and ethnic barriers that had previously been insurmountable.

Mexican born painter Alfredo Ramos Martinez, who had been studying in Europe from 1900-1910, served as sub-director under Rivas Mercado before taking leave to direct the offshoot of the national Academy. The draconian Rivas Mercado condemned the formal split of the arts curriculum, threatening that any students or teachers who chose to attend the “Free Academy” would not be considered for pensions, foreign scholarships, or educational materials.<sup>7</sup> These threats wielded little weight with the cadre of Mexican artists poised and ready to assume leadership positions in the Academy. Fresh from studying alongside European artists enamored with American aboriginal aesthetics, many now developed a new appreciation for their nation’s deep past.

Since the colonial period, promising artists and intellectuals from the Americas often continued their formal studies in more established European institutions. Though the members of the *Ateneo* advocated for the inclusion of the humanities in the national University, High-level arts education did not yet exist in Mexico. The government provided promising students with European pensions on the understanding that upon completing their European tenure they would return to teach in the Mexican Academy. In this way, both educators and students benefitted from the flow of ideas that circumvented national borders and the prejudices contained therein. In revolutionary Mexico the comings and goings of artists and intellectuals proved particularly critical- as domestic conditions continually deteriorated and inspiration became harder to come by. Among the

expansive list of former students of the Mexican national academy of fine arts who took advantage of government grants to continue their studies in Europe are painters Adolfo Best Maugard, Alfredo Ramos Martínez, Diego Rivera, and Gerardo Murillo (popularly known as Dr. Atl).

Like many of their cohort, these artists personified the aesthetic rebellion begun in the nineteenth century Mexican Academy. In many cases, they polished both their artistic and political skills in the European café scene before returning home to apply their new skills to the revolutionary effort. In Europe, Mexican artists intermingled with a like-minded set of international intellectuals united in their pursuit of truth and beauty in the face of the military buildup preceding the First World War. The oft-referenced “Parisian scene” of this era encompassed a variety of international perspectives, including the Mexican point of view as expressed by Atl and other standouts from the Mexican Academy who offered valuable non-Western perspective.

Russian born artist Wassily Kandinsky is among a group of painters whose theories regarding the role of art in human evolution gained influence on the European scene. A member of the Moscow based Symbolists, Kandinsky initially published his treatise *Concerning the Spiritual in Art, and painting in particular* around 1912. Kandinsky published the essay after traveling extensively through Europe and Africa, and becoming enamored with “primitive” art, in which he recognized a common language of aesthetics that transcended modern political borders. The text influenced a generation of artists in European circles with the idea that modern art need not adhere to classical parameters of form and function to

make an impact on society. Kandinsky maintained that even the most abstract images contained symbolic elements with the potential to incite a collective emotional response capable of bridging social and cultural differences. Not unlike the concurrent theories of Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung regarding the collective unconscious, Kandinsky maintained that human responses to symbolic stimuli might function as a unifying force in modern society.

Kandinsky went further with his theory- stating that through emotional and psychological responses to color, form, and symbolism, unconscious connections are formed between the artist and the observer. These unconscious connections function independently of traditional barriers like time and space. In other words, by developing an appreciation for a work of art through emotional response, observers in a specific temporal location (example: Revolutionary Mexico City) might view a work of art containing symbols representative of another time and place far removed from the contemporary sight of interaction (example: a pre-Hispanic ceramic vessel decorated with glyphs). The resulting “spiritual dialogue” functions as a bridge between the material (the artist and his or her work) and the immaterial (the emotion in the soul of the observer). The sequence offered by Kandinsky in support of this process looks like this:

**Emotion (in the artist) → (sensed) → the art-work → (sensed) → emotion (in the observer)**

The artist elaborates:

When there is, as sometimes happens, a similarity of inner direction in an entire moral and spiritual milieu, a similarity of ideals, at first closely

pursued but later lost to sight, a similarity of “inner mood” between one period and another, the logical consequence will be a revival of the external forms which served to express those insights in the earlier age. ... Like ourselves, these pure artists sought to express only inner and essential feelings in their works. ... This great point of inner contact is, in spite of its considerable importance, only one point. ... The two kinds of resemblance between the forms of art of today and of the past can be easily recognized as diametrically opposed. The first, since it is external, has no future. The second, being internal, contains the seed of the future.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, by developing an “appreciation” for the aesthetics of our human ancestors based on the emotional resonance with the art objects they left behind, we, as modern human beings, should be able to cultivate a connection to them.

Kandinsky wasn't the only European master to be influenced by “primitive” or aboriginal aesthetics in the early twentieth century. As he studied in Paris, Diego Rivera followed Spanish-born painter Pablo Picasso's lead as both artists became enamored with the self-taught artist Henri Rousseau's depictions of lush, tropical scenes. A large selection of Rousseau's canvases were exhibited in 1911 at the *Salon des Indépendants*, and became a component of Kandinsky's Munich based Blue Rider movement (1911-1914). Seeking liberation from formal academic confines, both the *Indépendants* and the Blue Rider group sought to close the gap between “high” and “popular” art, which rendered the first exclusive, and the latter of little value. Not surprisingly, their goals coincided with the ongoing rebellion in the Mexican Academy.

With the overthrow of Díaz, several viable presidential candidates jockeyed for control of the nation. Although Madero advocated for civilian leadership as an antidote to the absolute rule of the Porfirian regime, he and other would-be leaders who lacked military experience proved to be no match for the Revolutionary

Generals in the chaotic years of 1911-1917. In the initial push to declare order in the absence of Díaz, the political machinations of dissatisfied members of the oligarchy necessarily included negotiations with the regular troops as well as those innumerable men and women who picked up arms in support of one or various regional factions. Madero welcomed General Reyes back to Mexico in 1911, and his experience and popularity proved both invaluable and threatening to the revolutionary regime.

While many career military men who became key players in the violent transition out of the Porfiriato may not have benefitted from private education or formal political training, Madero relied on their experience with arms and battlefield intrigue to help guide him through the chaos. Francisco Madero, General Bernardo Reyes, General Felix Díaz (nephew of Porfirio), General Victoriano Huerta, General Venustiano Carranza and General Manuel Mondragon emerged as restorationists. They struggled to pacify the masses and parley whatever shreds of social, economic and political advantage they accumulated under Díaz into the emerging revolutionary order. Although the former Porfirian generals counted on extensive military experience to help them navigate the treacherous political terrain unfolding before them, their connections to the old order proved problematic. Each had experienced Díaz's oppressive reach, and in the dictator's absence their individual aspirations intensified.

Perhaps the civilian Madero represented the best chance for sustainable change in the eyes of a population plagued by mistrust of the old order. Mexicans elected Francisco Madero as their first post-Porfirian president in October of 1911.

Madero, an educated member of the northern oligarchy, earned the position by virtue of his 1909 publication. *La Sucesion Presidencial en 1910* convinced a majority of his countrymen that the time had come for Díaz to follow up on his widely publicized vow to renounce control of the nation. When he refused, they mobilized to demand political change. Madero had dared challenge Díaz in writing at a moment when the written word and published communication gained more influence in an increasingly literate society.

Though well versed in the language of liberal democratic reform, as a member of the oligarchy Madero lacked empathy with the all too common struggle to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. The Maderos, like many of the Porfirian oligarchy, had been negatively affected by the credit crisis brought on by the *científicos'* management of national resources. However, their accumulated assets insulated them from the shortages of basic commodities suffered by the vast majority of their fellow citizens. Scarcity became the norm under a national agenda that appropriated the overwhelming majority of its resources for use by a privileged minority. Madero's erudite promotion of democratic political ideology may have facilitated the demise of the Porfirian regime, but endemic social inequality demanded practical institutional change. The fragmented struggle gained momentum as the heavily armed lower middle class controlled large sections of the nation under the leadership of revolutionary generals.

Madero proved to be an essential intellectual leader in the transition out of the Porfiriato, but his disconnect from the harsh realities of the oppressed masses would render his leadership obsolete when it came time to effect real and lasting



social change. Raised as part of the oligarchy traditionally privileged by the institutional order, as president Madero continued to “play by the book”- not recognizing that the book did not resonate with the daily reality experienced by the majority of Mexican citizens. Although Madero recognized that removing a thirty-year veteran from political control would create a dangerous political vacuum, it may have been humanly impossible to prepare for the level of chaos that ensued.

Four major revolts occurred in the first year of Madero’s presidency. Although Madero had tenuous control of the capital city, danger threatened on all sides. In the southern state of Morelos, General Emiliano Zapata, doubtful that a President representing the oligarchy would enact the far-reaching land reform that his contingency demanded, led a revolt that began in November 1911. Federal forces managed to contain the uprising, but resistance smoldered on.

In the capital, the cultural revolution in the Academy gained momentum. Several prominent journalists recommended that Rivas Mercado be relieved of his position. In an article published on November 27, 1911, journalist Rafael Vera de Córdova nominated Alfredo Ramos Martínez as a viable candidate to replace the aging architect. He argued that the younger painter had the ability to

...develop the Mexican art that palpitates latently in the most intimate spaces of our soul, departing from the routine customs of the worst teachers, who nullify the originality and the talent of our young students with their absurd inclinations... We would be proud to have a true director who knows how to direct us as he has directed himself, to become true men, artists, teachers, and patriots...elevating our national art, as is our destiny.<sup>9</sup>

The population had been conditioned by liberal reforms to think for itself and Mexican citizens demanded more than ever before from the men who would attempt to lead them, in both academic and political arenas.

On April 19, 1912, the beleaguered Antonio Rivas Mercado finally resigned as director of the Fine Arts Academy, making way for Ramos Martínez to lead a younger generation of artistic intellectuals determined to breathe new life into the stagnant institution. The Porfirian architect, like many of the old order, survived the initial transition from Díaz to Madero. However, a simple “changing of the guard” would not satisfy the growing demand for sustainable reform; either in the Academy or in the government. The ideological coup in the Academy would not be considered a success until its repressive curriculum was routed and replaced with one more representative of the unique form of cultural nationalism beginning to take root among its members. Plastic representations of, by, and for the people began to replace the static imported canon; in a process that paralleled the political evolution unleashed by the armed revolutionaries.

In the north central state of Chihuahua, Madero’s former ally Pascual Orozco also became dismayed at Madero’s failure to act quickly on promised social reforms. Orozco had a personal fortune that he used to finance a revolt against Madero’s federal troops in the spring of 1912. Madero sent forces to stop Orozco’s uprising, which stalled by August of the same year due to lack of supplies and ammunition. Orozco sought refuge by exiling himself across the United States border, but popular support for his movement, rooted in demands for social change, could not be extinguished. In November of 1912 Porfirio Díaz’s nephew Félix Díaz led a revolt in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz. General Bernardo Reyes instigated a second movement in Nuevo Leon. Both rebellions came to a halt with the imprisonment of their respective leaders.

Madero held generals Félix Díaz and Bernardo Reyes prisoner in Mexico City amid rampant rumors that his fledgling government would soon be overthrown. Only a year into his presidency, Madero's own military officers, among them General Manuel Mondragón, planned and carried out an attack designed to remove him from office. With the assistance of traitorous members of Madero's inner circle, generals Reyes and Díaz plotted their escape in the midst of the intrigue. The drama escalated because of missed cues, largely blamed on Reyes. The general insisted on carrying out a fastidious and prolonged grooming routine before diving into the fray. Meanwhile, a changing of the guard spelled disaster as enemies took the place of allies.<sup>10</sup>

Reyes lost his life in the early phases of the attack on the National Palace, without making the political impact for which he had prepared in vain. His death sparked off ten days of unchecked violence from February third to thirteenth, 1913. It eventually became known as the *Decena Tragica*, or Ten Tragic Days. The rebels gained advantage as they took the *Ciudadela*, a military fort where the government stored its munitions, just blocks from the infamous Porfirian prison of Belem. The battle became the first of its kind to infect the capital with the extreme levels of violence routinely plaguing the rest of the republic. Civilian casualties mounted, and people watched in horror as large numbers of bodies had to be burned before they could be buried, in an attempt to stop the spread of disease.<sup>11</sup> It must have been difficult for capitalinos to reconcile the recent pageantry of the centenario with the carnage now unfolding in the same public spaces. The incident helped forge

collective consciousness among citizens who found common cause as they witnessed unprecedented atrocities in the city streets.

General Victoriano Huerta, a ruthless man who joined Madero's camp after escorting his former commander Porfirio Díaz out of the country, vowed to "help" Madero put down ongoing threats of rebellion from Zapata and Orozco. Huerta, while supposedly in charge of Madero's defense, secretly conspired with Félix Díaz and United States ambassador Henry Lane Wilson to restore order in another way. The violent chapter opened by the *decena tragica* culminated with the mysterious assassination of President Madero and his vice President Pino Suárez on the evening of February 22, 1913, near the walls of the Penitentiary of the Federal District.<sup>12</sup> This postscript to the *Decena Tragica* enabled the scheming Huerta to gain control of the nation through a series of political maneuvers that took full advantage of the laws of succession outlined in the Constitution of 1857. Huerta applied his military experience to the governing of the nation, quickly establishing a dictatorship of repressive means. Many citizens resented the reappearance of absolute rule, so soon after Díaz's long anticipated exit.

In the midst of the Huerta debacle, the Mexican daily *El Imparcial* published an editorial written by José Covarrubias, a civil engineer who enjoyed a long career in public service and a series of lucrative government commissions under both Díaz and Madero. These commissions included consulting posts relative to immigration policy and the directorship of the elegant national post office. Covarrubias wrote:

What makes men weak and inferior, what makes them fearful and without initiative is oppression and poverty. The cruelty of conquerors from every epoch is that by abusing their power, they take from the people their rights, including the freedom to choose the manner in which they earn their living

and their right to be satisfactorily compensated for their work. When the environment is one of freedom, every man is free and prospers but, when the contrary is true, the atmosphere is one of slavery and everyone is in danger of falling into chains.<sup>13</sup>

Although economically and politically privileged, José Covarrubias instilled basic human values in his family, making sure that “his children would never feel superior to anyone because of it.”<sup>14</sup> As a staunch advocate for civil rights, he believed indigenous peoples to be among the nation’s most valuable natural resources. Covarrubias taught drawing at the National School of engineers, and his son Miguel, born in 1904, showed artistic aptitude from an early age.

As the era of restorationists wore on (1911-1917), it became evident that political change would not be sufficient to restore social equilibrium to Mexican society. None of the candidates who sought control of the nation in the wake of Díaz’s departure proved committed enough to social and land reform to inspire a level of confidence in the population that would translate into political legitimacy. Meanwhile, the *decena tragica* brought revolutionary violence into the modern capital, and the shared experience of chaos and destruction went a long way toward forging a new type of collective identity among *capitalinos*.

Bernardo Reyes’s role in the *Decena Trágica* had serious implications for his surviving family members. Huerta and Reyes knew each other well, since they had worked together on various Porfirian military campaigns that included suppressing indigenous rebellions in the farthest reaches of the republic. There is no doubt that Huerta considered his former mentor’s anticlimactic departure from the restorationists’ playing field fortuitous. Reyes’s popularity and reputation for humanistic compromise would have posed a threat to Huerta’s power grab. Huerta

likely recognized that Reyes's death in front of the National Palace had the potential to render him a political martyr, and dormant Reyistas might look to one of his sons in hopes of continuing his legacy. Huerta proved his political prowess in the way he handled León and Alfonso Reyes in the aftermath of their father's death.

As a member of the *Ateneo*, Alfonso Reyes had established himself as a man of arts and letters. Madero's vice president, Pino Suárez, appointed Reyes as a secretary in the new *Escuela de Altos Estudios* (School of Higher Education) in the new secular University before the would-be liberal artist completed the requirements for his law degree. However, Bernardo Reyes's untimely death changed everything for the young humanist. The ascendant intellectual instantly became disillusioned with the revolutionary government, and renounced his coveted academic post.<sup>15</sup> The day after he graduated from law school, Huerta urged Reyes to accept a post in the Mexican delegation to Paris. Reyes sailed for Europe on August 12, 1913 in the company of many other Mexicans either voluntarily or forcibly exiled from their nation by the dictator's maniacal desire to dominate the political scene.

In European exile, Reyes became part of the Spanish literary scene, and established what would become close, lifelong friendships with Unamuno, Valle-Inclan, Jimenez, and other Spanish writers from the literary generation of 1898. The humanistic outlook Reyes had cultivated as a young idealist in the Mexican *Ateneo* lent a universal quality to his writing on Mexican nationalism, the roots of which he traced to Spain. Like many intellectuals of his era, Reyes developed a working definition of "*Mexicanidad*" reliant on the recognition of cultural continuities.

However, unlike many of his *paisanos* who cultivated their cosmogony on Mexican soil, the exiled writer recognized his cultural inheritance in the complexities of the Spanish colonial legacy. No doubt geo-politics played a formative role in his unique worldview, as they did for his *paisanos* who remained in the Americas. In his collection of essays titled *Mexico in a Nutshell*, Reyes reflected on the effect exile had on his worldview: going to Spain was a way for him to learn more about Mexico. Like his global intellectual contemporaries, Reyes utilized the concept of cultural relativity to help disentangle the complex web of formative influences affecting his worldview. By cultivating the Spanish roots of his Mexican national identity, Reyes began to comprehend the responsibilities inherent in his nation's mestizo identity.

During his initial years in Europe, Reyes wrote what would become one of his most famous essays, *Vision de Anahuac*. The essay, composed while Reyes studied and taught at the Madrid based *Centro de Estudios Historicos* in 1915, is a poetic examination of the central valley of Mexico in the year 1519, then known to its native inhabitants as the valley of *Anahuac*. In the opening phrases of the concise, detailed essay, the author describes the effect that cultural encounters in the Americas had on the traditional European discipline of History. "*La historia, obligada a descubrir nuevos mundos, se desborda del cauce clásico, y entonces el hecho politico cede el puesto a los discursos etnográficos y a la pintura de civilizaciones.*"<sup>16</sup> In the pages that follow, Reyes utilizes thick, colorful description to convey the abundance, beauty and tradition of that place as the Spanish conquistadores found it.

The pictures he paints border on the cinematic at a historic moment when images made their presence known in the collective consciousness of mankind. In an attempt to draw humanist parallels between the indigenous civilizations and the European explorers, Reyes describes the “unified municipal trinity” of *Anahuac’s* temples, markets and palaces, three familiar features of quotidian life among both Spaniards and Indians. He reminds contemporary readers that the initial cultural encounter between two civilizations took place at a moment of artistic florescence for the indigenous inhabitants of the valley- who recorded the details of their development in glyphs composed of lines derived from the flora and fauna of their natural environment.

Reyes laments the destruction of the majority of that visual record by overzealous Spaniards who failed to grasp the value of the information contained in such symbolic communication, while acknowledging that an echo of it lives on in the oral histories preserved piecemeal by the modern inhabitants of the valley. He mourns the sacrifice of Indigenous poetry that did not survive the translation into Spanish arts and letters. By valuing the ancient knowledge of that place, Reyes validates the contemporary argument for cultural relativity- recognizing that every local worldview has a complex and dynamic relationship with its natural environment. Reyes acknowledges that while elements of indigenous mythology may not “belong” to the Spanish, modern Latin Americans are responsible for its preservation. After centuries of shared geography, the modern, mestizo descendants of the Spanish conquistadores and the last indigenous empire share the history of that place, as well as the responsibility to preserve its cultural continuities.



Reyes alludes to the myth of the quetzal as a point of confluence between the two peoples. The ancient rainbow colored bird gained immortality by morphing into a feathered serpent, becoming a prophetic symbol of learning and knowledge announcing the arrival of a new age. Reyes states: “*El quetzal, el pájaro iris que anuncia el retorno de este Nuevo Arturo, ha emigrado, ahora, hacia las regiones ístmicas del continente, intimando nuevos destinos.*”<sup>17</sup> In this phrase, the author locates the shared history at the initial point of contact- Cortes and his men entered the American continent on the coast of the Isthmus, and it was there where he met his cultural translator Doña Marina. In this historic, unlikely partnership lies the key to understanding the hybrid history of modern Mexico.

*Cualquiera que sea la doctrina histórica que se profese (y no soy de los que sueñan en perpetuaciones absurdas de la tradición indígena, y ni siquiera fío demasiado en perpetuaciones de la española), nos une con la raza de ayer, sin hablar de sangres, la comunidad del esfuerzo por domeñar nuestra naturaleza brava y fragosa; esfuerzo que es la base bruta de la historia. Nos une también la comunidad, mucho más profunda, de la emoción cotidiana ante el mismo objeto natural. El choque de la sensibilidad con el mismo mundo labra, **engendra un alma común.** Pero cuando no se aceptara lo uno ni lo otro – ni la obra de la acción común, ni la obra de la contemplación común --, convéngase en que la emoción histórica es parte de la vida actual, y, sin su fulgor, nuestros valles y nuestras montañas serían como un teatro sin luz.*<sup>18</sup>

In these lines, Alfonso Reyes recognizes the importance of an aesthetic continuum for shaping a comprehensive worldview. In a deft stroke of diplomacy, the exiled writer minimizes the aftershocks inherent in the postcolonial condition by calling attention to the beauty to be found in transculturation. It is not surprising that for many years Alfonso Reyes served as a popular and productive cultural ambassador between Mexico and Spain.

Bernardo Reyes's oldest son, León, may have posed more of an immediate threat because of his role in the military. As the *decena tragica* unfolded, León lived with his wife, Luisa, in a rural home on the edge of the Chihuahuan desert. Luisa, born in the state of Veracruz, came from a family that employed Chinese domestic workers who migrated to México to work on the ambitious Porfirian railroad projects. At two o'clock on the morning of September Ninth, 1908, twenty year-old Luisa Flores gave birth to their first child, Aurora Reyes Flores. The young family spent several peaceful years in the north before Bernardo Reyes's political miscalculations would draw them into the revolutionary chaos.<sup>19</sup>

Aurora Reyes's childhood in Jimenez left a lasting impression on her. The family lived in a mineral-rich zone of northern Mexico that housed an abundance of lead, copper, silver and gold mines. The area is known for the large number of meteorites discovered by the Spaniards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many of which are now on display in the School of Mines in México City. The night sky over the desert beckoned with shooting stars and other celestial phenomena that fueled the curiosity and imagination of amateur observers like young Aurora. As a child, Reyes often escaped to explore the natural wonders of her environment, despite being repeatedly punished by her mother for wandering off alone. She later recalled hours spent playing with snakes and tarantulas amid the dramatic shadows and light that swept through the wind-whipped desert, as well as the constant sense of struggle cultivated by living in such a hostile environment.

*Nuestra casa emergía, con sus blancas paredes, a las orillas mismas del desierto, sirviéndole de apéndice a la última calleja de aquel pueblo. Todos los días había que estarse defendiendo de la invasión constante de la arena que como gris ceniza todo lo cubría. El inmenso desierto, en lucha contra el hombre, alargaba*

*insaciable sus estériles formas, se nos metía a diario por la calle, invadiendo las casas y las almas.<sup>20</sup> ...Mi admiración para el desierto creció y creció pues me daba el regalo de la belleza; los atardeceres ahí no tienen comparación con los del mar, ni con los de la montaña, ni del valle.<sup>21</sup>*

When León traveled to the capital to attend his father's funeral in 1913, Luisa and Aurora remained in Chihuahua, anxiously awaiting details of the situation as it unfolded. Though his father's political connections had once been the reason for León's rapid ascent in Porfirian society, they would have the opposite effect in the emerging revolutionary order.



FIGS. 4.2, 4.3: Luisa Flores and León Reyes (both circa 1897).

Upon seizing power, Huerta declared Bernardo Reyes's descendants political subversives in punishment for the patriarch's participation in the bloody coup that led to Madero's demise. It became unsafe for León Reyes's family to continue their public existence, and after nearly a year of waiting in Chihuahua, they fled their

home in the north to join him in the capital.<sup>22</sup> Their bittersweet reunion took place in a climate of fear and poverty as León and Luisa hid themselves and their children in the tenement district on the perimeter of Lagunilla market in the popular barrio of Tepito. Although their new neighborhood must have been shockingly different from the farmhouse in Chihuahua, young Aurora embraced the changes that would have a formative effect on her social and cultural outlook.

*'Era una vecindad espantosa, llena de promiscuidad. Mi padre me compró el silabario de San Miguel y me llevó con una viejecita que tenía una escuela en el Mesón de Burros. Quedaba a media cuadra de la casa, en la calle de Estanco de Hombres.' Ahí [Reyes] aprendió también 'la gramática parda, con palabras de color fuerte, que serían la delicia de una antología de la leperada Mexicana.'*<sup>23</sup>

Since the pre-Hispanic era, Tepito/Lagunilla has continually played host to a confluence of people, products, and ideas. The ancient gateway to the extensive markets of Tenochtitlan maintained its commercial function throughout the nineteenth century. Despite commercial modernization, the area is still known as one of the best marketplaces for antiquities and used objects in the twenty first century. In the revolutionary era, the Lagunilla market specialized in the sale of fruits, vegetables, eggs and seeds- as well as sections devoted to the sale of meat and fish. The streets bordering the market hosted stalls that sold both new and used furniture, books, fabric, clothing and other domestic accoutrement. Immigrants could purchase or barter for anything they might need to equip their modest homes upon arrival in the city.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the marketplace offered enterprising citizens a means of subsistence. Because León found himself unable to work outside the home for fear of being recognized by Huerta's henchmen, his family had to improvise to support themselves. The extremity of the situation dictated a variation on the

traditional gendered boundaries of public and private space, which had a lasting effect on five-year-old Aurora Reyes. "*La pobreza fue mi gran maestra, ahí aprendí a amar el pueblo tan lleno de color y verdad,*" she later recalled with pride.<sup>25</sup>

During more peaceful days, Doña Luisa Flores Reyes learned to make an exotic type of bread from her Chinese domestic servants. Luisa baked this bread daily in their modest urban home, which Aurora then sold in the Lagunilla market to help support the family. Reyes's early entrance into the rough streets proved very influential on her identity. As she had developed an unlikely rapport with the inhospitable desert landscape of Chihuahua, so too did she learn to love the harsh raw energy of the urban market and the characters who frequented it. She went daily into the market to sell her mother's Chinese bread, enjoying her necessary forays into the public space normally off-limits to young girls from "good" families. Her half-brother Chacho, who would eventually become a prize-fighter in the grand tradition of Tepito barrio, taught Reyes to defend herself with her fists, and she carried stones in her pockets as an additional line of defense against would be thieves eager to rob the young girl of the fruits of her labor.<sup>26</sup>

Resistance to the Huerta regime transcended national borders. General Huerta understood the risks of maintaining alliances with members of the military who played the political game well enough to survive the transfer of power from one regime to the next. Although former Porfirian General Manuel Mondragon initially served the Huerta dictatorship as Secretary of War and of the Mexican Navy, Huerta considered the artillery expert a "loose cannon." Amid rumors that Mondragon planned to use his Military experience to usurp power from the dictator,

Huerta exiled him to Europe. Mondragon traveled across the Atlantic with most of his family. His daughter Carmen remained in Mexico with her new husband, Manuel Rodriguez Lozano, a young cadet with artistic tendencies. The newlyweds joined the rest of the family in Paris about a year later.<sup>27</sup>

In an undated essay titled “The Mexican Revolution and the Mexicans in Paris,”<sup>28</sup> Atl describes the critical role of Mexican artists and intellectuals in renouncing the Huerta regime from abroad. When the news of Huerta’s bloody machinations reached Paris in March of 1913, Mexicans in European residence felt intense pressure to align with one revolutionary faction or another. Mexican diplomatic representatives Miguel Díaz Lombardo and Alfonso Reyes helped mobilize members of the Mexican community to reject the legitimacy of the coup. Simultaneously, José Yves Limantour, Porfirio Díaz’s former Minister of finance and leader of the *científicos*, organized another group of Mexicans in favor of Huerta. Huerta, no doubt emboldened by his alliance with the United States representative Wilson, began to issue propaganda designed to court international support for his objectives in Mexico.<sup>29</sup> It soon became known that he sought financial backing from the international community to solidify his political control with economic muscle. The deck appeared stacked in favor of the Limantour group, as he had extensive contacts in the world of International banking and politics. However, Atl partnered with Octavio G. Barreda to capitalize on their collective influence in literary, artistic and intellectual circles.

Atl and Barreda formed a committee that began to publish a French language daily titled “La Revolution au Mexique” with the express goal of informing members

of the political and financial world about the particulars of Huerta's methods, including his alleged role in the assassination of President Madero and Vice-president Pino Suarez.<sup>30</sup> The committee petitioned French intellectual and former prime minister Georges Clemenceau for support with their cause. Clemenceau agreed to help, and published an editorial in his journal "The Free Man." According to Atl's account, when presented with the collective evidence and the personal pleas of the committee, French finance minister Charles Dumont refused to loan Huerta the 83 million pesos he had solicited.<sup>31</sup>

Back in Mexico, anthropologist Manuel Gamio continued to lead the crusade to connect *Mexico Profundo* with *Mexico Presente* as a critical part of the revolutionary process. Gamio directed the International School in his mentor's absence, since Boas, like many other visiting intellectuals, left the country due to the threat of revolutionary violence. Concurrent with the directorship of the International School, Gamio worked as inspector general of archaeological monuments of the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts from 1913 to 1916. During this time, he developed a course for students of the fine arts academy, which he titled "*Antecedentes Artísticas Prehispánicas*," (Pre-Hispanic Artistic Antecedents).

The syllabus for this course outlines the anthropologist's approach for studying the continuity of pre-Hispanic aesthetics in the evolution of Mexican art since the conquest.<sup>32</sup> At the conclusion of the document, Gamio tells students that the course will remove them from the traditional confines of the Academy. They will visit the salons of the national museum as well as various active archaeological sites and colonial monuments that hold clues to the enduring nature of pre-Hispanic

aesthetics. Finally, Gamio references the works of select authors that may prove useful for the students, with the following caveat:

*No se han mencionado aqui autores clásicos en arqueología europea y artística por que deben preferirse las orientaciones de aquellos autores que se compenentran más de ambientes semejantes y comparables al artístico americano anterior a la Conquista, pues si se considera de preferencia a los otros, los clásicos, se recaerá en prejuicios al juzgar nuestra producción artística prehispánica y al crear obra de arte Nacional, resultaría un producto híbrido de formas americanas e ideas europeas, como ha sucedido hasta hoy.<sup>33</sup>*

Gamio is instructing his students to depart from the classic canon of European archaeology, and to rely more on direct observations of their environment. By breaking the Academic mold that doesn't fit the complex reality of Mesoamerican aesthetics, the students will participate, as true revolutionaries, in the formation of alternative "texts" that reflect practical experience and the investigation of local evidence.

Eventually Mexican artists Dr. Atl, Adolfo Best Maugard, and Diego Rivera would return to Mexico and lend their talents to this tangible institutionalization of revolutionary goals. The ongoing revolutionary struggle sought to rebalance Mexican society by including indigenous citizens in modern development projects. For these elite artists and intellectuals returning from studies in European institutions with an increasingly global perspective, there was only one option: they aligned themselves with the underdogs in the social revolution. To prove they were on the "correct" side of the struggle, many became proponents of including indigenous aesthetics in the emerging "national" culture.

Those who played the game correctly found themselves rewarded on several fronts. They gained the admiration of their European counterparts in the chic



Parisian art scene, the favor of the emerging revolutionary government, and perhaps most significantly, the respect of the popular classes, whose interests they increasingly represented. Many artists became educators in revolutionary Mexico. They took on the monumental task of forging connections between modern Mexicans and their aboriginal ancestors. The rebellious art students who began to paint in the open air as a consequence of their desire for change in the Academy proved to be the vanguard of social change, giving tactile nature to the more nebulous political process.

After an interim period that coincided with Huerta's military dictatorship, the painter Alfredo Ramos Martínez returned to the National Academy as Director.<sup>34</sup> In September of 1913 Ramos Martínez wrote a letter to the Secretary of Education in which he proposed several changes for the Academy curriculum:

It is the wish of the Direction of the Academy that its students of painting work from the model and in direct contact with nature, in locations where the foliage and perspective effects are true to the character of our patria. The aim is to awaken the enthusiasm of the students for the beauty of our own land, and to give birth to an art worthy of being truthfully called a national art...<sup>35</sup>

About a month later, Ramos Martínez received approval to sign a lease for a house on the outskirts of the city in the neighborhood of Santa Anita Ixtapalapa. The property, which included a large garden, became Mexico's first officially sanctioned "open-air" art school.<sup>36</sup> The first group of students included David Alfaro Siqueiros and Fernando Leal. Both men later became well-known for their contributions to Mexican muralism. Leal, a virtual outsider to the academic world of art before studying in the open air, describes the ambiance of the Santa Anita School:

I had peeked at the classes of the Academy [before Ramos Martínez's time]... To visit Santa Anita was by contrast a revelation...The students were the same ones who had disoriented me in the dark buildings of San Carlos, but the open-air light transfigured them. I felt such enthusiasm...that I asked to be allowed to paint. To my intense surprise I was given an enormous canvas...and a set of colors... This was my first picture. I marveled at the confidence shown in me, as materials were handed out without my having attended any class of drawing or of painting, or even being an enrolled student of the school. ... I will always remain grateful to Alfredo Ramos Martínez for having confronted me with the most fantastic problems that a painter can face, without attempting to humble me with the pedantry of an academic teacher.<sup>37</sup>

Through the establishment of the *Aire Libre* (free air) schools for painting and sculpture, artists assumed the role of educating the public by rendering the Academy more accessible to young artists like Leal, who may have been intimidated by the austerity of the downtown colonial building where more traditional classes continued to be held. Art historian Ana Mae Barbosa identifies the *Aire Libre* schools as “the only modernist trend in the teaching of art that deliberately and programmatically integrated the idea of art as free expression and as culture.”<sup>38</sup> The Santa Anita School also hosted clandestine political meetings where artists helped plot Huerta's demise,<sup>39</sup> working in concert with the European cohort despite geographic distance.

When the Constitutional Army overthrew Huerta's military regime in July of 1914, Venustiano Carranza, formerly governor of the state of Coahuila, assumed control of the nation. Carranza's Plan of Guadalupe, which attracted the support of revolutionary generals Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elias Calles, served as justification to usurp Huerta's power by declaring the latter's actions illegal and unconstitutional. The Plan called for Huerta's resignation, and a transfer of power to Carranza until an official election could be held. This paved the

way for a new constitution that would outline social reforms with the potential to breathe life into the anaerobic revolution. As head of the pre-constitutional government, Carranza had political debts to repay.

Carranza rewarded Atl, who had lobbied the European intellectual and financial community to reject Huerta's coup, by naming him Director of the National Academy. Ramos Martínez, relieved of his post, devoted his energies to organizing an exhibition of the work realized in the Aire Libre school in Santa Anita, which closed later that same year.<sup>40</sup>

Carranza's assumption of power brought amnesty for enemies of the Huerta regime, enabling the Reyes family to resume a more visible presence. León Reyes became reinstated as a military engineer, and the family readjusted to a more conventional existence. Doña Luisa enrolled Aurora in a small Primary school in the heart of the bustling capital. Reyes refers fondly to the primary school *Escuela Republica de Cuba*, where she studied for several years while learning "the feeling of friendship" for the first time.<sup>41</sup>

Aurora Reyes and her peers educated through the efforts of the revolutionary SEP gained a distinct advantage over those who came before them. They benefitted from a more practical approach to education that included the traditional classroom complemented by a crash course in street smarts and humanity. As students of revolution, Aurora Reyes and her peers developed a collective cultural conscience that bridged the changing of regimes as they struggled to define their own "place" in the emerging order of society. The granddaughter of Bernardo Reyes entered the public school system at a moment when education and

revolution converged as catalysts for social change. She and many of her peers witnessed planes of privilege and necessity elide in survival. An alternative social order appeared on the horizon as every person who became embroiled in the chaos of the Revolution experienced its leveling effects. Aurora Reyes believed so strongly in her destined role within it that on several versions of her *curricula vitae* she altered her birth date from 1908 to 1910, effectively declaring herself literally *born with the Revolution*.

Her friend and colleague, the painter Frida Kahlo, would do the same. Though Kahlo's father benefitted from photographic commissions from the Porfirian government, when full-scale violence arrived in Mexico City, the young girl saw her parents express empathy for the Zapatista troops. Kahlo recalled that her mother shared the family's meager food supply with the starving Zapatistas who appeared at the door of their family home in Coyoacan. Both Kahlo and Reyes came of age in an era when daily life offered practical lessons regarding the value of human empathy that picked up where the literary and artistic humanism promoted by the *Ateneo* became abstract.

It proved attractive for the "revolutionary generation" of artists and intellectuals to ally themselves directly with the practical processes of social opening. They committed themselves fully to fleshing out the gaps wrought by the rupture from Porfirian continuity. As they re-imagined the westernized historical narrative developed under colonial pretense, they forged tangible and practical connections with Mexico's deeper past; simultaneously excavating the indigenous narrative that had been silenced but not erased.

The cast of revolutionary actors remained united in their call for change, but deeply divided in how that change would become reality. Carranza continued with his constitutionalist agenda, expanding the Plan of Guadalupe to include specific laws of reform that addressed issues related to land, labor judicial reform and access to natural resources. Meanwhile the persistent Generals Francisco (Pancho) Villa and Emiliano Zapata continued their attacks on Carranza's government, justifying their actions with the argument that change was not coming soon enough.

Between 1913 and 1917, various revolutionary factions took turns invading, occupying, and abandoning the city, but none seemed to want to take on the huge responsibility of managing it. The constitutionalist forces, led primarily by men from the north, including Venustiano Carranza and Álvaro Obregón, are known to have expressed disdain for the capital, preferring to concentrate their energy and resources at the arguably more strategic port city of Veracruz.<sup>42</sup> General Álvaro Obregon led the constitutional army in a struggle to stamp out threats continually raised by the incorrigible Villa and Zapata, whose revolutionary fervor had reached near mythological status. Years of upheaval and chaos had taken their toll on the national infrastructure, in desperate need of fortification.

In February of 1915 Carranza announced that under Constitutionalist command, the capital would be relocated to Veracruz, and he outlined a plan to move the various secretaries of state east. Carranza's secretary of development charged Ing. Ezequiel Pérez with the dismantling of the offices and departments of the secretariat, including the primary schools, the university, various dependencies of the Executive, and any other entities determined to be "enemies of the

revolution.” Carranza also called for the firing of all employees not resigned to “*oportunamente seguir la suerte de la Revolución.*”<sup>43</sup>

One member of the commission described Mexico City in this era as a sad, morally bankrupt, anti-revolutionary place. If the *capitalinos* identified with the Zapatistas, he said, it was due to the fact that the Zapatistas entered the city in a humble, non-violent manner. He declared the urban hordes incapable of comprehending the supposed ideological basis of the constitutionalist cause.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps he was correct, since hunger trumps politics as a motivating force in many instances, and the *capitalinos* had little faith in the ability of the *norteño* army to ensure their prosperity. By some accounts, the northern forces more closely resembled their gringo neighbors than the indigenous base.<sup>45</sup> The *norteños* affirmed the mutual nature of the dislike when referring to Mexico City as “*la ciudad maldita.*”<sup>46</sup> General Obregon’s constitutionalist army abandoned the suffering city in March of 1915. Despite this formal neglect, or perhaps inspired by it, a critical mass of *capitalinos* developed a collective consciousness with which any legitimate leader of the revolutionary regime would eventually be forced to reckon.

In 1916 Manuel Gamio published his informative and groundbreaking work *Forjando Patria* (Forging Patria). The book culled information from his formal education as well as his practical experience. It made a lasting imprint on the socio-cultural landscape of the nation; advocating for the development of a visual grammar to help modern Mexicans access its indigenous cultural legacy. Gamio argues that in order to heal the social inequalities plaguing the revolutionary nation,

citizens must concern themselves with connecting the deep past with the modern present.

We must dedicate ourselves to observe and compile what can be called "living historical material." This is information based not on documents but on the direct and experiential observation of life. Afterward, the history of the revolution can be written.<sup>47</sup>

Gamio's applied theory of integral education drew upon Boas's cultural relativism as well as his own hands-on experiences excavating the pre-Hispanic sites of Teotihuacan, Tenochtitlan and various locations in Oaxaca and Yucatan. The theory postulated that objective knowledge of the past held didactic potential in the present because of its ability to generate an emotional response in members of modern Mexican society.<sup>48</sup>

In September 1916, in an attempt to appease the various revolutionary factions still eager to be somehow included in the emerging State, Carranza organized a constitutional convention in the city of Queretaro. Despite the General's conservative bias, the delegates collaborated on a document designed to address popular demands in writing, if not in practice. The new Mexican Constitution took effect on February 5, 1917. It increased the powers of the executive branch of the government, and is the earliest in the world to address social rights in a wide reaching way. Articles three, twenty-seven, and one hundred and twenty three went farthest at guaranteeing the basic tenets collectively understood as critical to the success of the revolution. Article three addresses education, guaranteeing every Mexican citizen a free secular education without bias. Article twenty-seven addresses land ownership, and is designed to protect Mexican nationals by ensuring domestic privilege regarding natural resources. Article one hundred and twenty

three guarantees the rights of workers, including the establishment of an eight-hour workday, the right to strike, a six day work week, just reason for termination, and equality in the workplace that transcends both race and gender.<sup>49</sup>

Although the face of the emerging political regime rotated quickly in the opening decade of the revolution, the motivation for lasting institutional change remained constant. Perhaps frustrated attempts to attach a frontman to the emerging nation enabled the chorus to refine its demands through repetition. The intellectual and artistic community remained steadfast in its objectives and picked up momentum as more of their colleagues returned from Europe. The powerful potential of *Mexico Profundo* lay in its permanence. Any modern regime that sought legitimacy in the revolutionary era would merit such status by virtue of its ability to connect the past with the present. In the words of Manuel Gamio, the various factions that attempted to lead the nation between 1911 and 1920 failed because

...they established artificial and inadequate political platforms and attempted to force the population to morph to those artificial demands- something that would never happen because it is by nature illogical and unreasonable.<sup>50</sup>

The future of *Mexico Moderno* hinged upon its leaders' abilities to incorporate *Mexico Profundo* into its institutions and cosmogony. The artistic community understood the indigenous citizens of Mexico as the contemporary link to the richness of the nation's deep past. They became the architects of a campaign of cultural nationalism designed to revalue the indigenous factor in the complicated equation of Mexican national identity.

Despite the social "guarantees" spelled out in the 1917 Constitution, the decade between 1910 and 1920 failed to address the deep-seated grievances of the

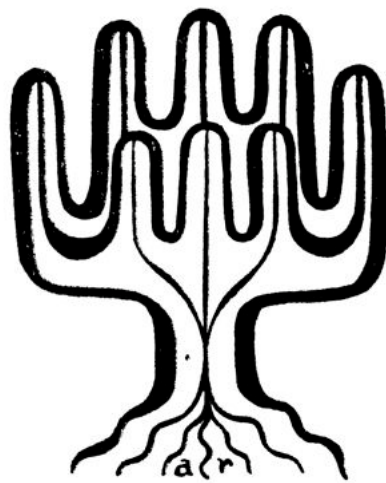


newly mobilized population. Instead, a succession of military generals juggled power in what might be described as an era of restorationists. Their main objective was to restore order along the unbalanced but familiar lines of the Porfirian example. Practically, this played out as narrowly defined order and progress for a small percentage of elites, and empty promises for the rest. Meanwhile, the Mexican people suffered irreconcilable loss- loss that could be quantified in physical, economic, and psychological terms.

The chaotic interregnum had a formative effect on young people born into the violence, rendering them naturally empathetic as collective witnesses of suffering and injustice. A major side effect of revolution is social aperture. Artists and intellectuals who lived through the opening decade of the revolution on Mexican soil realized quickly that survival hinged on being able to shift alliances while maintaining focus. Those with a good sense of balance took the lead in reconciling the distance between planes of privilege and planes of subsistence in Modern Mexico. Luck also played a bigger role than many care to admit.<sup>51</sup> Adult members of the population who had the luxury of being removed physically from the violence as it engulfed their countrymen returned with guilty consciences that could only be assuaged by joining the side of the downtrodden. Regardless if they had traveled to Europe on colonial fortunes or Porfirian stipends, they returned to a country that traded in a different type of cultural currency.

When various regional factions rose up against strongman Porfirio Diaz in 1910, it took only months to drive him into European exile. However, the fighting dragged on for nearly ten years as the masses struggled to forge a workable

consensus on the form that an alternative government should take. Twentieth century artists and intellectuals believed the destiny of the nation to be tied up in its cultural history. From their perspective, the revolution of 1910 had the catalytic potential to get things back on track by inspiring the development of a national identity based on pride in the Mexican experience.

**CHAPTER FIVE: FORJANDO PATRIA IN THE CENTRO HISTORICO**

*FIG. 5.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes, Humanos Paisajes, 1953.*

As the Porfiriato ground to its bitter end, more and more rural individuals found their lifestyles in the provinces disrupted by the State's lopsided investment in developing the city. Immigration to the capital soared from 1890 on, and by 1910 a critical mass of citizens crowded into the *centro historico*. This historically and energetically loaded space had formerly been the ritual center of the Aztec empire, which the Spanish razed to construct their colonial cathedral. Innovations in archaeology enabled twentieth century anthropologists to begin to decode the

layers of symbolism added by various occupations of that cultural vortex. Artists and intellectuals drew inspiration from the visible and visceral processes of cultural mestizaje evidenced in and around the Zocalo. Printmaker José Guadalupe Posada illustrated the popular news of the era with line drawings that proved the value of combining formal education with informal observation. Restorationist minded generals did not want to deal with the overwhelming task of addressing the uneven development that rendered the area uniquely problematic. When left to their own devices, the population of the *centro* developed a collective and popular demand for social balance informed by the realization that the depth of their national history transcended the relatively brief period of Euro-centric political domination that had denied the value of *Mexico Profundo* for several hundred years. The push to value the indigenous contributions to cultural mestizaje that had been simmering in the academy and visual arts now expanded to the general population, who realized its potential to render them viable participants in the emerging revolutionary order. Aurora Reyes and her family moved to the *centro historico* in 1914, and the experience shaped the woman she would become by enabling her to forge an intensely personal connection with the nation's indigenous legacy.

## The Value of Experiential Education in Forging a Cultural Continuum

In Mexico, as in most developing countries experiencing rapid social change introduced by new economic forms ranging from Capitalism to Socialism, the word “intellectual” came to have a far broader connotation than it was to have in an established capitalist society like that of the United States. Historically, the noun “intellectual” might better be understood to mean an “educated” person, rather than a professional “educator”; a member of the intelligentsia, rather than of a select group of academics or authors. Mexican intellectuals, then, may be viewed as persons who possess, and continually make use of, an advanced education and relatively high standards of logic, criticism, and sustained ideological or technical conversation, acquired through either university instruction, professional training, or self-education (auto-didactos). Among Mexico’s intellectuals have historically been found professionals, university personnel, clergymen, high-level bureaucrats, artists, writers, philosophers, and some journalists.<sup>1</sup>

Radical intellectuals in the Academy of Fine Arts made it clear that they had outgrown the institution designed to contain them. Simultaneously, intellectual purveyors of revolution worked to broaden their movement’s appeal to include social reforms designed to meet the demands of workers and peasants.<sup>2</sup> Modern printing technology enabled the fusion of words and images, making ideas more accessible to the masses. When the armed political revolution caught up with the ongoing ideological revolution in education and the fine arts, sustainable social change began to seem more feasible. For an illustrated account of the social ambience of the popular classes during this transitional period, it is useful to consult the work of Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada.

Posada’s popular portraits offer an insider’s perspective of the leveling effects of violence in Mexican society during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a time when social injustice wreaked havoc on the lives of millions. *“Posada captó y desarrolló artísticamente los sucesos que ocurrían a su*

*alrededor sin discriminar temas o personajes. Todo lo que veía era motivo para él, todo era digno de ilustrarse y mostrarse al mundo,"* states historian Agustín Sánchez.<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to a monograph published as a posthumous homage to Posada in 1930, artist Diego Rivera describes the printmaker as “the interpreter of the pain, the joy, and the angst-ridden aspirations of the Mexican people.”<sup>4</sup>

On February 2, 1852 homemaker Petra Aguilar and baker German Posada welcomed a son named José Guadalupe Posada into their humble home in a popular barrio of the regional outpost of Aguascalientes. As a child Posada worked with his brothers in their uncle’s pottery workshop and completed elementary school with the help of his older brother, Cirilio, who worked as a tutor. Posada began to draw at the age of twelve, and by fifteen the neighborhood census identified him as a painter by trade. In the Academia Municipal de Dibujo de Aguascalientes, Posada briefly studied classical European techniques, before becoming an apprentice to master printmaker Trinidad Pedrozo at the age of eighteen. Pedrozo’s printshop, called “El Esfuerzo, functioned as a nexus of art and politics in the region. There Posada learned engraving, photography and lithography as well as being exposed to bookbinding, foundry, blacksmithing and coachwork. Pedrozo encouraged critical discussions of contemporary social issues in his *taller*, often attracting the attention of government censors charged with maintaining the illusion of Porfirian progress in the face of popular dissent.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1870’s Pedrozo’s satirical publication, *El Jicote*, included criticism of then governor Jesus Gomez Portugal, accompanied by Posada’s illustrations. The government cracked down on the publisher and his staff. Under pressure to cease

and desist with the inflammatory editorials, Posada helped Pedrozo move the publication to Leon, Guanajuato, where the two continued their work under cover of less subversive types of printed matter. While there, the self-taught artist expanded his repertoire to include book illustrations, religious stamps, and cigar book covers. On January 15, 1884, Posada accepted a position as technical instructor of printmaking and bookbinding at the *Escuela de Instruccion Secundaria de Leon*, where he worked for four years. With his lithography press and his thirteen year old son in tow, Posada left Leon for Mexico City in 1888. Upon arrival, he opened his own small print shop in the historic center at number five on *callejon Santa Teresa* (known today as *calle Republica de Guatemala*). Posada's workshop occupied part of the ground floor of one of the colonial buildings of the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico before its indefinite closure by the liberal regime in 1867.<sup>6</sup> Draftsman Ruban M. Campos recalls meeting Posada in the Santa Teresa studio, describing the artist as "a big stout man, of pure Indian type."<sup>7</sup> Posada accepted freelance work as an engraver and lithographer for various employers before eventually joining forces with the editorial house of Antonio Vanegas Arroyo, at number one Santa Teresa, in 1890.<sup>8</sup>

Posada produced his most well known work during his tenure with Vanegas Arroyo, which placed him at the center of political and artistic circles in the Porfirian capital. Like thousands of his *paisanos* who simultaneously immigrated to the downtown neighborhoods of the capital, Posada drew motivation from the urban milieu. When rebellious capitalinos demonstrated against Díaz's continued

domination of the presidency in the spring of 1892, Posada related the uprising as he might have witnessed it through the windows of the studio.

In 1893 a ten-year old student named Jose Clemente Orozco passed by Posada's workshop, gazing through the windows on his way to and from school. Orozco's family, originally from the state of Jalisco, moved to the capital in 1890. That same year the seven year old began his studies at a primary school annexed to the Normal school for teachers. "I would stop and spend a few enchanted minutes in watching [Posada] on my way to and from school... This was the push that first set my imagination in motion and impelled me to cover paper with my earliest little figures; this was my awakening to the existence of the art of painting."<sup>9</sup> Orozco eventually attended night classes in drawing offered at the Academy of San Carlos, just a few blocks from the Normal school, where he met the artist Gerardo Murillo, popularly known as Doctor Atl. Atl encouraged Orozco and his peers to develop confidence in themselves and their unique perspective of the events around them.

To be sure, inspiration flowed both ways, as Posada developed a knack for representing the quotidian in a way that resonated with his audience. Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and other students of the Academy recognized themselves and their own experiences in the images produced by the popular printmaker. In addition to giving plastic expression to current events, Posada participated in the centennial trend of re-evaluating watershed moments in the national consciousness. His interpretations gave fresh aesthetic perspective to the more traditional written history of the nation.



Posada's reliance on lines and symbols to convey information makes it possible to consider his work a natural extension of the pictorial tradition of pre-hispanic peoples, who narrated their own histories through images recorded in the codices. In reference to Posada's work, art historian Antonio Rodríguez asserts "This is not the first time in Mexican art that an artist who has had no contact with Archaeology has incorporated into his work – by *spiritual osmosis* – the most powerful of pre-Hispanic forms."<sup>10</sup> Though Posada may not have had any practical experience with Archaeology, his workspace in the offices of Vanegas Arroyo was located only a few blocks from the site of the Aztec ceremonial center now popularly known as the *Templo Mayor*.

Porfirian archaeologist Leopoldo Batres began a series of exploratory excavations under and around the Metropolitan Cathedral in the late nineteenth century, and it is difficult to imagine Posada not being aware of the work being conducted in such close proximity to his *taller*. The excavation of the *Templo Mayor* has continually presented a challenge because of its central location in the modern city. When Manuel Gamio replaced Batres as Inspector General of Monuments, he continued exploratory work on the site in the early twentieth century as the discipline of Mesoamerican anthropology gained international significance.

Concurrent with his investigation of the downtown site, Gamio worked at the site of Tlatilco, the site of a brickyard that had previously hosted some of the Valley's earliest inhabitants. At the Tlatilco site Gamio became the first archaeologist to use stratigraphy for establishing a relative chronology of the aboriginal inhabitants of the area. By making a deep cut, Gamio revealed the first stratified record of the site's

inhabitants for the past fifteen hundred years. Sherds from the Aztec civilization rested near the surface, as expected. The lower layers (descending) revealed evidence of artifacts with aesthetics corresponding to the established Teotihuacan style, followed by small figurines that Gamio and his colleagues could only identify as “archaic,” since they obviously predated the items from Teotihuacan.<sup>11</sup> This discovery rocked the world of Mesoamerican archaeology, and the stratigraphic method was quickly adopted by professional archaeologists. By exposing this tactile, visual record of civilization in the central Valley of Mexico, Gamio verified the visual history of the Aztecs as related in their codices. He simultaneously validated the argument for cultural continuity as a viable development strategy in the modern nation. Not coincidentally, Gamio eventually formulated a model for identifying the aesthetic continuum of autochthonous forms of artistic expression in the Mexican context.

Posada’s lines echo many of the basic design elements commonly encountered in decorative elements of pre-Hispanic ceramics. Like his ancient artistic predecessors, Posada often populated his graphic environments with two-dimensional representations of individuals rendered in profile surrounded by native forms of flora and fauna. Additionally, the backgrounds of Posada’s woodcuts generate depth of field through the use of cross-hatching and the illusion of movement generated by intertwining and spiraling curves. The overall effect of a scene is sometimes punctuated by intricate geometric borders, which enable them to exist independently of explanatory text. Each of these design elements may be

found in the visual record of the pre-Hispanic era, as recorded in ceramic vessels and murals throughout the valley of Mexico.

Posada's visual narrative sometimes illustrated "news" items published by Vanegas Arroyo. However, his images often functioned independently, introducing a separate dialogue based on information expressed through gracefully executed line drawings. Though traditional art critics ignored Posada's prolific body of work in the late nineteenth century, thousands of people "read" his images regularly-hanging on every line created by the printmaker for the popular press. Relative to the written word, line drawings were less likely to incite government censorship on the grounds that the artist simply recorded events as they unfolded before his own eyes; scenes faithfully expressed from memory in the absence of judgment. In addition, Posada's images transcended traditional communication barriers of language and literacy, reaching a much larger audience than information conveyed in writing. Jean Charlot summarizes Posada's perspective in this way:

*Posada trabajaba a la vista de los transeúntes: criadas de regreso del mercado, descansando del peso sus canastas llenas, escolares sin prisa de llegar a la cercana primaria, estudiantes de la vecina Academia de San Carlos hastiados de enfrentarse a los vaciados polvosos de la escuela. Aunque casi toda su obra data del tiempo de don Porfirio, Posada necesitaba la llegada de la Revolución para lograr la plena justificación de sus temas y de sus estilos.<sup>12</sup>*

During his time at Vanegas Arroyo, Posada illustrated a series of "*hojas volantes*" (often referred to as broadsides in English), which narrated the turn of the century from a decidedly popular perspective. No topic was out of bounds for the penny press, which included sensational tales of human interest with detailed illustrations to render the "news" accessible to all sectors of society.

*Ilustró noticias generadas por la política de Porfirio Díaz, en forma crítica, destacando las estampas en las que se ven indígenas, mestizos y obreros llevados por fuerza a trabajos esclavizantes al Valle Nacional y las escenas del antirreeleccionismo. Entonces ilustró noticias derivadas de los acontecimientos de cada día: crímenes sangrientos, robos, asaltos, accidentes e incidentes naturales, bajo encabezados y textos tremendos. Además ilustró corridos que han llegado hasta nuestros días.<sup>13</sup>*

The broad range of Posada's work solidifies his reputation as a true artist of the Mexican people and their experiences, reaching across social barriers of race, class and ethnicity, to play a formative role in the growing national consciousness.

In Spanish language journalism, the "*calavera*," or "skeleton," is a satirical verse related to the death of an important person. Vanegas Arroyo, like many of its publishing contemporaries, utilized this genre to glorify both famous and anonymous figures of the past and present. With clever innuendo, Posada interpreted the journalistic form literally as he illustrated the humorous lines with skeletal figures engaged in familiar scenes of daily life. His *calaveras* featured bony protagonists who rode horses and bicycles, danced, drank tequila, smoked cigars, played music, wielded guns and machetes and mourned their dead just as any living Mexican would. He found *capitalinos* particularly receptive to his skeletal figures; they embraced his lively *calaveras* through humor and recognition, finding temporary levity in a difficult time. Posada's *calaveras* invite another parallel to the work of indigenous sculptors and painters, who also made regular use of the human skeleton as a potent and timeless symbol. Whether an individual self-identifies as Indian or European, a laborer or a politician, a domestic servant or a socialite, every human being is basically the same at the core, and Posada's *calaveras* drove this point home.<sup>14</sup>

Posada's most well known skeletal figure, commonly referred to as "*La Calavera Catrina*," provides an example of the layers of meaning encapsulated in a few thoughtfully rendered lines. Though the image is often abstracted from its original context, it first appeared around 1910 and again in 1913 as an illustration accompanying a classic "*calavera*" published by Vanegas Arroyo.<sup>15</sup> This particular *calavera* is dedicated to the "*garbancera*," as referenced in this translation of its title:



*FIG. 5.2: VIGNETTE OF HAPPY CALAVERAS – AND SANDUNGERAS – Those whom today are well-powdered GARBANCERAS will eventually end up as deformed calaveras. (José Guadalupe Posada, circa 1913)*

In order to understand the motivation behind this particular *calavera*, we must address the terms "*sandungera*" and "*garbancera*" as utilized in early twentieth

century Mexico. The term *sandungera* generally describes an elegantly dressed partygoer. It is derived from the *sandunga*, a traditional Mexican dance and the unofficial anthem of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Though the *sandunga* has roots in the Spanish *jota* (a locally interpreted dance in Spain that relies as much on visual representation as upon musical accompaniment), the *sandunga* contains elements of indigenous rhythm and melody. It is regularly performed at the regional fiestas, or *velas*, in the isthmus, which are an amalgam of Indigenous and Spanish traditions.

“*Garbancera*” is a term originally used to refer to a woman (usually of rural, indigenous origin) who came to the city to sell beans in the market or on the street. The word developed a particular social significance in the Porfirian climate. Popular use of *garbancera(o)* came to denote a person ashamed of her (or his) Indian origins who chooses to dress in the French style as a means of social mobility. Many indigenous residents of the capital emulated the standards of Porfirian elites, who venerated European culture as the ultimate marker of civilization. As discussed earlier, Díaz and the *científicos* even attempted to enforce laws prohibiting indigenous dress in favor of imported European fashions in anticipation of the 1910 centennial.

Posada’s *calavera india garbancera* poked fun at indigenous citizens who powdered their dark skin and donned imported fashions in an attempt to conceal their ethnic roots. The irreverent image and satirical text reminded them that regardless of their efforts they would end up a pile of bones. The complexity of the humorous broadside becomes evident when we recall that many illustrious members of Mexican society fit the bill of the *india garbancera*. Among them are

Oaxaca-born political and military figures Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz, who famously powdered their skin and dressed exclusively in European tailored suits in order to “pass” as respectable members of society. However, the humorous and popular nature of the penny press made it possible for this type of social criticism to evade censorship, since on the surface the *calavera* poked fun at members of the lower classes with social pretensions. Despite encouraging indigenous members of society to conform to European cultural aesthetics, members of the Porfirian elite likely found their attempts to do so laughable. This would have been particularly true as the *india garbancera* was parodied in a Vanegas Arroyo publication, which many *científicos* considered the “ultimate in plebian vulgarity.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1977, Rodríguez described Posada as a representative of an “unusual phenomenon,” whereby a man who meets all the qualifications to become a “cultured,” “academic” artist capable of gaining acceptance in elite circles “lowers himself” to an “inferior” level by self-identifying as an “artist of the people.”<sup>17</sup> From his earliest experiences in Aguascalientes, Posada managed to overcome circumstances that threatened to keep him down. His brother worked as a tutor, and he therefore had access to educational materials. He apprenticed himself to an accomplished publisher and became self-educated to a level that enabled him to teach others. Not content with the relative comfort afforded by his employment as a secondary level instructor at a technical school in a regional outpost, Posada pressed on, leaving his comfort zone with the intent to make his work known on a national level. I argue that within the context of turn of the century Mexico, the phenomenon described by Rodríguez is not so unusual. Rather, Posada represents

the first generation of a critical mass of “cultural elites” who found this type of revolutionary acculturation quite natural. This particular type of self-directed social flux became more and more plausible as the *pax porfiriana* crumbled under radical and then popular dissent. The momentum generated by radical intellectual and artistic precursors to revolutionary nationalism turned the hegemonic order upside down, and those individuals most familiar and comfortable with the “lower” classes would facilitate the complex processes of rebalancing society from the “bottom” up.

Although Posada managed to cultivate a skill set that many lesser men might have used to jump-start a career of social climbing, he maintained the elegant perspective of an individual who is comfortable in his own skin. In the final years of his life, Posada made his home at number six on *calle* La Paz, (today known as Jesus Carranza), in one of the largest *vecindades* in the barrio of Tepito.<sup>18</sup> The artist passed away in January of 1913, just weeks before full-scale revolutionary violence engulfed Mexico City. Posada’s few friends only managed to collect enough money for a communal burial in a sixth class tomb. After the pre-arranged period of seven years, his bones were removed to make room for the next paying inhabitant.<sup>19</sup> His memory lives on in the more than 20,000 images he produced, which function as a particularly vibrant chapter in the visual narrative of his nation’s history. Many twentieth century participants in the Mexican Artistic Renaissance identify Posada as a formative influence on their own work. His prolific career helped them to better comprehend the social function of art: to inspire change in society by expanding and revising the visual narrative of the nation.



When access to basic necessities is compromised for a broad cross section of society, socially construed divisions between individuals tend to blur. In times of crisis, it becomes easier to recognize the similarities between human beings occupying different social roles, particularly when difficult times draw them into closer emotional and physical proximity.

Prominent revolutionary intellectuals including Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos built upon anthropologist Franz Boas's nascent theory of cultural relativity to become purveyors of alternative perspectives regarding ethnicity and development in the Mexican context. Notably, these two individuals on the vanguard of culture-based development theory belonged to families whose fortunes fluctuated with the whims of Díaz's *científicos*. Gamio's cultural awakening came during the time he spent on his father's hacienda in the Papaloapan basin. His tenure with manual labor alongside indigenous workers was predicated by his family's dwindling fortune after 1890, in the midst of the nation's credit crisis. His temporary urban to rural migration opened his eyes to the inequalities faced by indigenous citizens of the republic. Vasconcelos, an attorney born in the overwhelmingly indigenous state of Oaxaca, had attended primary school in the United States before returning to Mexico, where he eventually found his professional advancement in Mexico City circles capped by the *científicos*, who proved more interested in advancing their own fortunes than facilitating the ascent of a younger generation of meritorious intellectuals. Vasconcelos struggled to support his family on the meager salary of a junior partner in a Mexico City based American law firm. He resented the economic motivations of United States interests

in Mexico, and became convinced that the extractive mentality of the gringos actually hindered sovereign Latin American development. As the revolution unfolded, Vasconcelos traveled extensively throughout the Americas, honing his philosophical perspective on cultural nationalism as he gained and lost favor with the series of military generals who took turns at the helm of the social upheaval.<sup>20</sup>

Collective frustration with the stagnant society fueled a desire to turn the existing order on its head. For the first time, theoretical development models valuing indigenous contributions to the national narrative began to emerge and find favor among the growing intelligentsia. Gamio and Vasconcelos are only two examples of cultural elites who would build upon liberal education reforms by extending the visual narrative of the nation to include indigenous aesthetics and traditions.

In his examination of intellectual precursors of the Mexican Revolution, James D. Cockroft argues that although intellectuals form a recognizable social group that functions like the “working class,” “the peasantry” or the “middle class,” intellectuals “are unique in the breadth of their social background.”<sup>21</sup>

Intellectuals come from distinct classes, ranging from “low” to “high” in both economic resources and social status. Their education, rather than their economic or social status, unifies them into a group. Consequently, ***intellectuals can be more flexible than other groups in determining their loyalties to specific social or economic causes.*** This does not mean that social environment has only a minor effect on intellectuals. On the contrary, a study of intellectuals would be obviously incomplete if it did not take into account the influence of social background. In this context, a revolutionary intellectual, as distinguished from a revolutionary nonintellectual, may be examined in three particularly important respects: (1) in his shift, or occasional failure to shift, in personal identity, weak or strong, from one class to another; (2) the nature, cause, and timing of his shift, or failure to shift; and (3) the impact of his shift on the particular class with which he newly

identifies, as well as the impact of the class and its values on the intellectual himself.<sup>22</sup>

Both Gamio and Vasconcelos developed a sentient understanding of cultural relativity through practical experience. Forced from their comfort zones by political and economic circumstances beyond their control, each man began to appreciate the value of a more equitable society for sustainable national development. Through their exposure to alternative perspectives (that of Indian laborers in Gamio's case, and of the frustrated mid-level bureaucracy in Vasconcelos's), each man became radicalized to an extent that they underwent a form of cultural *mestizaje*. This enabled them to self-identify with citizens of different classes and ethnicities, and ultimately, become revolutionary bridges who paved the way for more equality in Mexican society. Their ideas would be reflected and refined by those who inherited the revolutionary mantle by studying under them. As educators, Vasconcelos and Gamio influenced a generation of urban students who came of age in the midst of a heady mix of industrialization, immigration, and revolutionary violence. This crash course of "revolutionary acculturation" produced a critical mass of artists and intellectuals committed to social change.

Throughout the Porfiriato, President Díaz and his *científicos* promoted the city as the locus of modernity. Economic crisis compounded by industrial growth spurred rural to urban migration to unprecedented heights. The capital exerted a drawing force on rural citizens displaced by advances in industry and transportation that altered the demand for unskilled labor in rural areas. By 1910 nearly half of Mexico City's five hundred thousand residents had moved there after

being forcibly uprooted from the countryside by railroad projects and the expansion of large landholdings increasingly dedicated to corporate production models.<sup>23</sup>

Massive immigration into the city taxed the existing infrastructure. Stately colonial residences in the historic center that formerly housed elites underwent renovation to become *vecindades*, or multi-family residences with shared common spaces that often lacked sewerage and access to potable water. As the revolution unfolded, citizens who inhabited the increasingly mixed downtown neighborhoods developed a collective cultural consciousness based on the redefinition of historically loaded spaces and their shared experiences therein.<sup>24</sup> The tenement district overwhelmingly occupied by new immigrants (including Aurora Reyes and her immediate family) overlaps the ancient footprint of the Indian communities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatlelolco. In addition, both areas exist in close proximity to colonial landmarks including the National University, the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, as well as ostentatious showpieces of Porfirian progress like the National Post Office and the construction site of the Fine Arts Palace. The *ciudadela* and the notorious Prison of Belem are within walking distance of the tenement district. Even closer are the Zócalo, the central plaza that fronts the Cathedral and the National Palace, and the ruins of the Templo Mayor. In the opening decades of the twentieth century, the densely populated historic center of Mexico City functioned like a pressure cooker in which a generation of immigrants and revolutionary intellectuals performed rituals of self-examination. The process included a dissection of national history and their respective roles in it, facilitated by an abundance of visual stimuli (both living and representational) on

the busy urban streets. This encouraged the development of alternative perspectives regarding the hybridity inherent in the Mexican experience. Throughout the nineteenth century, conventional wisdom emphasized the utility of such “neat” and supposedly distinct ethnic categories as “Indian,” “Spanish,” and “Mestizo.” Such categorization is predicated upon division rather than confluence, and tends not to take into account the fluid and dynamic processes of transculturation. While the colonial “ordering of society” and subsequent Porfirian “order” were to some extent predicated upon such divisive categories (with built-in economic or loyalty-based concessions offered by the Church or the State to allow for minor slippage between them), I argue that modern citizens converging in the ancient capital in the midst of revolutionary social upheaval were in effect “liberated” from pre-existing ethnic categories designed to “keep them in their place.”

By this time the social category of “Indian” implied far more than ethnicity- it functioned in many cases as a “mentality” or worldview developed in response to the ongoing interpretation and application of imported cultural hegemony. As early as the late eighteenth century, “the term ‘Indian’ ... meant more as a fiscal category than as an ethnic one.”<sup>25</sup> After a century of development complemented by political independence and liberal reforms, ethnic identification expanded to include multiple social factors that functioned independently of biology. Alan Knight has argued that language, dress, religion, social organization, culture and consciousness; all social rather than biological ethnic attributes, are capable of change. Therefore, in

revolutionary Mexico, “the ethnic status of both individuals and communities was not immutable.”<sup>26</sup>

According to Knight, education, migration, and occupational shifts are three examples of processes that function as catalysts for the type of acculturation through which both individuals and groups might elide their biological ethnic identity in favor of one that is more socially comfortable. Although traditional nineteenth century development theories identified this process as one whereby the “Indian” must sacrifice his or her traditions in favor of becoming more “European” in his or her ways, the process of transculturation is more circular than linear. The assignment of “Indian” identity began with the conquest. “‘Indian,’ as a term either of abuse or praise, was conceived and applied by non-Indians.”<sup>27</sup> No concept of pan-Indian identity existed prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. The concept of “Indian” emerged and evolved in negative relief from the more dominant European cultural legacy and helped define its byproduct, the mestizo.<sup>28</sup> Neither “indian” nor “mestizo” as a racial category takes into account the vast array of distinct ethnic groups who lived and died in the Americas before the conquest. Neither does the term “Spanish” take into account the wide variety of ethnic groups who occupied the area we now know as the modern nation of Spain. *Mestizaje*, or “mixing” has both racial and social components, and is predicated upon larger processes of transculturation, which is an integral part of human evolution. Therefore, “indianness” may be understood as a relative term that fluctuates with social, political and economic tides.

In revolutionary Mexico, citizens resented the favor that had been shown to foreigners during the porfiriato. President Díaz and the científicos routinely courted approval and investment from the United States and Europe at the expense of its own citizens, who, in turn, developed an increasingly xenophobic view of foreign influence. Having lived with the Indian – (Mestizo) – European cultural continuum for four hundred years, it is perhaps not unusual that many citizens alienated by the científicos must have felt relatively more Indian than European as they struggled for survival in the face of socio-cultural oppression.

Although the Mexican revolution has become deeply ingrained in the collective memory of Mexicans as a reference point for national pride and unity, a unanimous call to action did not inspire the original revolutionaries. The absence of a cohesive and well-defined ideology made it possible for the public to identify with the movement for any number of reasons, and the armed phase of the struggle proceeded in the absence of ideological bridges. Distinctly different men with limited and regional aspirations led the Revolution in the name of such overlapping goals as land reform, human rights, and equal access to resources. Cultural Historian Eric Zolov notes that the most recognized leaders of the revolutionary effort – Madero, Zapata, Villa and Carranza – often fought contradictory battles against common enemies and against one another.<sup>29</sup> The gaps between the various motivating factors didn't pose a threat until the reconstruction of the nation and its intricate social and political networks began around 1917-1920.

Only then did the emerging government recognize the need to develop a legitimate voice with the potential to bridge the ideological gaps between the

various sectors. If this could be accomplished, the revolutionary regime had a much higher likelihood of obtaining the respect and cooperation of the newly mobilized masses. Although many historians refer to the years after 1917 as “post-revolutionary,” I argue that the reforms instituted after 1920 function as a critical part of the sustainable social change inherent in the definition of “revolution.”



**CHAPTER SIX: TEHUANTEPEC, OAXACA: AN ARTISTIC PILGRIMAGE**

*FIG. 6.1: Line drawing by Aurora Reyes for Tradiciones y Leyendas del Istmo de Tehuantepec, 1946.*

As a point of entry for applying their newly acquired cultural perspective, Reyes and her cultural cohort found themselves drawn to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. This regional outpost in the State of Oaxaca represented an obligatory place of pilgrimage for testing out the aesthetic grammar designed to facilitate their

personal connection with Indigenous Mexico. Aurora Reyes, like many students of revolution, recognized the image of the *Tehuana* as an “authentic” representative of one indigenous group that successfully parleyed its traditional aesthetics into active participation in the modern cultural economy. *Tehuana*s appear in many of the murals at the SEP compound, are featured in the earliest representations of cinematic modernity, and the symbolic content embroidered on their distinctive and beautiful huipiles parallels the forms and patterns featured in the *Metodo Best*. I argue that the *Tehuana* became an attractive icon for emulation by modern cultural elites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because she embodied several key attributes that rendered her representative of a particularly revolutionary form of cultural nationalism. By virtue of her ability to reaffirm her own unique identity while selectively incorporating foreign ideas that passed through her markets, the *Tehuana* reinforced the value of local experience in the face of overwhelming pressure to conform to international norms.

### ***Tehuana*s Urbanas Gain Inspiration on the Isthmus**

During his tenure as Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos urged Mexican artists to look within their country's borders to develop a truly national aesthetic. In an attempt to "de-europeanize" muralist Diego Rivera (who had studied extensively in Europe on a scholarship awarded by the Porfirian government), Vasconcelos sent him to Tehuantepec. Rivera began to incorporate the image of the *Tehuana* in his work of the 1920's,<sup>1</sup> around the same time *Tehuana*s began to appear regularly in the work of sculptors, painters, photographers, poets, and writers in Mexico and abroad.<sup>2</sup>

As the intersection of global and local ideas, peoples, and energies, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec represents an interesting location to apply and probe theories of cultural relativity. The Isthmus has been a cultural crossroads since the arrival of the Spanish on its northern shores in the fifteenth century. Efforts to construct an inter-oceanic canal attracted the interest of international businessmen, and the legendary "Caçica of Tehuantepec," Juana Cata de Romero, proved early on that women could also take advantage of the global markets converging in the narrow strip of land. Romero successfully modernized the indigenous *traje* in the Isthmus through the inclusion of European lace she imported from Europe, in a move that drew attention to the garment's adaptability. The inclusion of starched European lace earned her economic gain and increased her reputation as a woman of refined taste, while helping solidify the garment's persistent role in ongoing processes of transculturation.<sup>3</sup>

The Isthmus is a natural frontier between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and therefore an ideal location for imagining the intersection of different worlds represented by different ethnic groups. This isthmus not only hosts the meeting of European and American cultural norms, but interactions between different groups within the Americas. Such crossroads generally cultivate more open societies, due to the constant flow of people, ideas and traditions, and in that regard Tehuantepec lives up to its billing, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.

In 1977 Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska conducted a four-part interview with musicologist and educator Concha Michel that appeared in the Mexican newspaper *Novedades*. In one installment, Poniatowska describes Michel physically: “Concha Michel sits with her legs apart, as *tehuanas* are allowed to sit, with a hand on each knee, professing like ancient goddesses, goddesses of the earth who know everything about life, the flowers, love, and human suffering.”<sup>4</sup> When Poniatowska likens the tehuana to an ancient goddess who is exempt from modern Mexican society’s acceptable female gender norms, the journalist positions her interviewee (Michel) as an exceptional being connected to and representative of an alternative, powerful cosmogony.

When Poniatowska asked Michel directly if she self-identified as a *tehuana*, Michel shares the story of the first time she donned the regional traje, while living in Espinal, in the district of Juchitan, Oaxaca. During her childhood, Michel’s merchant father took advantage of the booming international trade on the Isthmus, and moved his family from the state of Jalisco to Oaxaca. Michel recalls the process of acquiring her first *traje*: “[I] wanted to get a good outfit to wear to a big party like

the ones they throw there – a really nice getup with good embroidery – and I couldn't find anything." Michel's search ended at the house of her friend, Arnulfa Pineda. Pineda said: "Concha, I have what you want. Put on this WOMAN's outfit and take off that streetwalker's dress." Michel told Poniatowska that although fifty years had passed since that seminal event, she still dressed tehuana.<sup>5</sup> Although Michel's career as a missionary of Mexican culture took her around the world, she worked most diligently in Mexico as a key participant in various projects of the SEP. As a member of the SEP's cultural missions, Michel shared her ideas about the value of pre-Hispanic culture with members of rural communities across the republic. In Mexico City she worked with Aurora Reyes in the Confederación Campesina Mexicana (Mexican Peasant Confederation) and League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR). She also modeled for one of the LEAR's most prominent members, muralist Diego Rivera.<sup>6</sup>

Historian Rick A. Lopez glosses over the significance of the Tehuana as a commonly represented figure in Mexican society in opening decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century—declaring that she was a "safe" image of Indian identity since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the nineteen twenties had little connection to race or ethnicity.<sup>7</sup> However, I think the Tehuana "passed" in modern Mexican society relatively early because strong men vouched for her. As I have shown in earlier chapters, a succession of politically prominent Oaxacan men made a lasting imprint on the formation of national consciousness through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I believe that Aurora Reyes and her cohort, who actively cultivated personal connections with indigenous members of Isthmus society, did so precisely because the Tehuana represented a

vibrant contemporary connection with *Mexico Profundo*; inextricably linked to both race and ethnicity as self-identified social categories.

Deborah Poole has also written about the Tehuana's allure for urban cultural figures, referencing attempts by nineteenth century Oaxacan historians to make genealogical connections between contemporary Zapotec peoples and the ancient King Cosijoeza, a protagonist in Gamio's groundbreaking screenplay. The value in creating such connections supposedly lay in the then popular belief that "the Zapotec were the sole autochthonous race in Oaxaca."<sup>8</sup> Poole goes on to state that "women – the seemingly universal markers of locality and place – played a particularly important role in this genealogical vision of Zapotec civilization."<sup>9</sup> She argues that the Tehuana represented an indigenous culture simultaneously autochthonous and aristocratic.<sup>10</sup> While I agree that this particular combination of identity traits would have meshed well with the revolutionary government's plan for redeeming indigenous citizens from the colonial paradigm, it is important to add the Zapotecs successful evasion of conquest to the equation.

The inhabitants of the Isthmus have enjoyed relatively continuous political sovereignty since before the arrival of the Spanish, and played key roles in expelling foreign occupations throughout the nineteenth century.

Although the revolutionary government promoted the inclusion of the *Tehuana* in its "official" iconographic pantheon, urban women who dressed like her (including Aurora Reyes, Concha Michel and Frida Kahlo- all of whom had close interactions with the SEP's visual education projects) may have been appropriating more "personal" traits in addition to those that directly paralleled the myth of

cultural nationalism orchestrated in the 1920's and 1930's. By adopting the traje of the *Tehuana*, urban women expressed political identity at a historical juncture when political participation depended on gender. Dressing and accessorizing in this way counter balanced the draconian nineteenth century Porfirian decree prohibiting indigenous dress in the urban capital, helping generate political momentum in an era when the State denied women the right to vote. In addition, the silhouette of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Tehuana popularized by Juana Cata Romero and distributed throughout the republic on type photographs and picture postcards<sup>11</sup> (with her boxy top, extravagant headpieces and dangling jewelry) resembled that of the flapper (*pelona*), an internationally recognized symbol of women's liberation.



FIG. 6.2: One of C.B. Waite's tehuana photographs superimposed over an illustration of flappers that appears in *Women's Dress in the Jazz Age*.

As Gamio explained in his course on pre-Hispanic aesthetics, evidence of indigenous cultural transcendence existed in modern Mexico despite Spanish efforts to stamp it out. The revolutionary generation educated by the SEP developed a visual grammar that enabled them to recognize these continuities, discovering their own creative potential in the process. Evidence of this process may be seen in a cohort of politically active female elites in Mexico City who appropriated the regional fashion of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as a means of expressing their connection with indigenous aesthetics and traditions. Through their roles as both educators and artists, they influenced an entire generation of Mexican youth on the importance of the indigenous element as a valuable resource for development. By dressing like indigenous members of the republic, they exhibited their ability to re-imagine their own national identity, or *Mexicanidad*, in a way that privileged “local” traditions over “global” influences.

In an essay titled “*La Indumentaria Nacional*,” (National Attire) Gamio praises the various indigenous groups in Mexico that have fought successfully to maintain their native attire against an onslaught of European “looks” imported from Paris or London. He states that it is not impossible to develop a functional middle ground by utilizing garments and styles derived from both native and imported aesthetic traditions, giving the example of Japan as an industrialized nation that managed to preserve its brilliant and artistic traditional clothing while adopting the technological advances exported by Western European and North American markets. Gamio goes so far as to propose that in the near future the beautiful variety of indigenous Mexican *trajes* rich with color, embroidery and symbolism will make



their mark on the fashion landscape of North American cities. “New York based fabric manufacturers will adopt the decorations and embellishments of both archaeological and modern indigenous fabrics from Mexico and South America.”<sup>12</sup>

Alfa Rios, a beautiful *Tehuana* who would become the wife of the writer Andrés Henestrosa, played a role in the spread of *Tehuana* fashion among the international cultural elite. Henestrosa said that Frida Kahlo’s reverence for *Tehuana* fashion had its genesis in her friendship with Rios.<sup>13</sup> Notably, Kahlo’s mother came from an indigenous family in the State of Oaxaca. However, not every woman who adopted the stylings of the *Tehuana* had a personal connection to someone from the Isthmus. Gamio advocated the utility of producing artistic representations of indigenous culture to promote its diffusion on a greater scale: “as it is impossible to know *de visu* all the individuals we desire to study, we must obtain from pictorial and plastic portrayal what science is not capable of giving us.”<sup>14</sup>

Projecting their personal connections to the indigenous community in a form of reverential imitation,<sup>15</sup> Kahlo and her cohort symbolically stated their desire to appropriate cultural and social characteristics of a specific ethnic group. Whether these cultural elites had traceable ancestral connections to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was of secondary importance to their desire to promote revolutionary change. They utilized indigenous fashion in a creative attempt to expand the confines of gender roles traditionally assigned to Mexican women in accordance with the Spanish patriarchal model.

Sociologist Herbert Blumer argues that fashion is responsive “to developments in the fine arts, to exciting events that catch public attention such as the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen, to political happenings, and to major social shifts such as the emancipation of women or the rise of the cult of youth.”<sup>16</sup> Mexico’s revolution of 1910 coincided with large-scale archaeological excavations that offered tangible evidence of the pervasiveness of Mexico’s aboriginal artistic legacy. Members of the intellectual avant garde lent their energies to a cultural renaissance that revalued indigenous contributions to modern society. Dressing in indigenous fashion proved to be one way of exhibiting their personal commitment to the process.<sup>17</sup>

The allure and independent spirit attributed to the women of Tehuantepec helped them assume a prominent role in emerging revolutionary iconography which sought to unite Mexican citizens under a more inclusive form of cultural nationalism. The emerging model emphasized the utility of transculturation as a survival mechanism; contrasting with the Eurocentric acculturation model promoted throughout the colonial and Porfirian eras. In Revolutionary Mexico, it became possible to identify beneficial characteristics of both Indigenous and European traditions, and for the first time in Mexican history, the whole of that equation became more valuable than the of its individual parts. held mythical status for their exotic allure and independent spirit. Andrés Henestrosa’s *Retrato de mi madre* (portrait of my mother) states that the women of the Isthmus “walk in verse... their movement is poetry in motion.”<sup>18</sup> In the following passage, Henestrosa describes the hybrid nature of his matriarchal lineage, as represented by his mother,

with whom he lived in the Isthmus before coming to the capital to participate in the SEP projects:

[She] was Zapoteca--Martina Henestrosa--everyone called her Tina Man. As a young woman it was said she was the most beautiful woman in Juchitan: como flor del pueblo [like the flower of the town]. She had very pale skin. Until her death at age 101 she always wore a huipil with skirts and the traditional ribbon threaded through her braids. ... The Isthmus has always been a crossroads. My maternal grandmother also had pale skin and blue eyes. My grandfather on that side--Fernando Henestrosa--came from Spanish stock, perhaps originally from Extremadura. His father was German Henestrosa, hence the appellation 'Man,' used by succeeding generations. My paternal grandmother was Huave, but her husband was mixed blood. I consist of at least five races: Huave, Zapotec, Spanish, black, even a little Jewish. Each has been worth nearly twenty years of life, although I know that's not very scientific. ... That my mother made it past the century mark I admit also may have influenced my longevity. She outlived two husbands. I took my mother's name, a not uncommon practice in the Isthmus, ... also because because you know who your mother is, but you can never be sure about your father!<sup>19</sup>

For modern Mexican women, the *Tehuana* may be considered a female cultural icon who helps flesh out the problematic patriarchal paradigm by occupying an intermediate and comprehensive place in their gendered social continuum flanked by the Catholic virgin on one end, and the native Malinche<sup>20</sup> on the other. Like all living breathing women, the women of Tehuantepec personify both the virgin and the whore. *Tehuanas* are more than the cliché one-dimensional representation that has become part of the cultural iconography of modern Mexico. An excerpt from Miguel Covarrubias's *Mexico South* alludes to the alternative nature of gender in the Isthmus:

The sexual life of the Isthmus Zapotecs is as simple as their general mode of life and as direct as their character. The relations between the sexes are natural and uninhibited, free of the puritanical outlook on sex of the Indians of the highlands, and of the Spanish feudal concept of the inferior position of women, so characteristic of other parts of Mexico. Outside of the conventions

observed by the upper classes of the larger Isthmian towns, sex does not represent the mysterious taboo that weighs down the provincial, conservative, and intensely religious communities of the Mexican plateau. Children grow up with a frank knowledge of sexual matters; women of all ages are accustomed to work from childhood, going everywhere unaccompanied and relying upon their own discretion and strength to cope with an emergency. Once we asked a girl who had to go home alone, at night, on a lonely road, if she was not afraid of being attacked. She replied that there were enough rocks on the road to take care of anyone who dared!<sup>21</sup>

It is likely that Reyes and her fellow *tehuanas urbanas* would have been drawn to the relatively open sexual and gender norms they encountered on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In addition, Reyes, who admired the ethnographic work of Covarrubias, must have felt an intense connection between her own childhood experiences working as a vendor in the Lagunilla market, and the above anecdote from a young tehuana on the Isthmus.

Not only does the formal traje of the early twentieth century *Tehuana* physically echo the common forms of traditional Catholic iconography; less formal versions of the costume resonate with the most contemporary stylings of the Jazz Age, as seen in the boxy fit of the huipil and the layered necklaces, dangling earrings and elaborate headpieces. It is worth mentioning that both Jazz and Indigenous fashion travelled a geographical trajectory counter to the established hierarchical norms of cultural diffusion. That is, both “art forms” originated in locations considered to be on the periphery of normative culture in a global context. New Orleans (the birthplace of Jazz) and Tehuantepec (the site of the world’s first inter-oceanic railroad) are both considered influential cultural crossroads of early twentieth century social mores. However, neither would have been classified as a

“cultural center” within the 1920’s global economy. This distinction would have been reserved for such global nodes<sup>22</sup> as New York, London, or even Mexico City.

Deborah Poole states that the Tehuana *traje* adopted by urban intellectuals “acquires a symbolic life of its own independent from the body of the woman who wears it: a “look” that is uprooted from place and, as such, accessible to women in many different places as an icon of national identity.”<sup>23</sup> I believe it is also important to consider the *traje* as a bridge between modern Mexican women and the legacy of their indigenous ancestors. I argue that when donned by urban cultural elites in Mexico and abroad, the *traje* has maintained and even fostered additional connections with the place from which it originated.

Market activity has always been an important part of daily life in Tehuantepec. Notably, women play a very active role, which may account for their relative mobility and independence in contrast to many women living elsewhere. The revolutionary regime understood that its modernization campaign hinged on the participation of Mexican women, and the *Tehuanas* set an imitable example of modern gender relations and community involvement. Several scholars have gone so far as to declare the Isthmus community of Juchitan matriarchal.<sup>24</sup> However, I argue that in Tehuantepec, gender duality is privileged over either matriarchy or patriarchy as a guiding force within society. Each gender has its relative strengths, weaknesses, and particular contributions, and neither is fully functioning without its complementary half.

Sylvia Marcos has written about prevailing ideas of balance and complementarity in Mesoamerican gender ideology by sampling various

manifestations of this belief as it is exhibited in the archaeological record of several regional cultural groups.<sup>25</sup> She describes the effects of the colonial imposition of Catholic morality, which marginalized women and associated their erotic desires with shame. While Marcos does not differentiate between specific ethnic beliefs (Maya, Aztec, Zapotec, etc.) on gendered duality, it is likely that Aurora Reyes and the other *tehuanas urbanas* would also have developed a “communal” approach (synthesizing information from various indigenous belief systems) in their adoration of indigenous social models in an attempt to counterbalance the weight of the Spanish catholic paradigm. As students of revolution, they became enamored with the collective components of indigenous societies when the discipline of Anthropology was in its formative years. At that time, professional anthropologists like Manuel Gamio and Miguel Covarrubias had just begun to tease out the subtle differences between various pre-Hispanic ethnic groups via the stratigraphic record, and an increasingly systematic approach to the study of ethnic beliefs and cultural identity.

At a time when many of her peers believed that Communism might hold the key to an alternative developmental path for Mexican society, Reyes recognized that this imported political system fell short when it came to establishing equilibrium between the sexes. In an era of vast social inequalities, she argued that the Mexican Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Mexicano*, or *PCM*) treated women worse than more bourgeois sectors of the population. In an interview with Renato Leduc, Reyes said that after attending PCM meetings daily for four years she left “vomiting blackness” because although the bourgeoisie objectified women as “private

property,” the comrades of the party objectified women as “group property” that could be passed from hand to hand for its collective use.<sup>26</sup> For Reyes, the latter was decidedly worse.

In a handwritten letter addressed to her friend Frida Kahlo, Reyes describes her impressions of the women of Tehuantepec in a way that attaches political significance to the “sisterhood” of the Isthmus. Reyes first traveled to the Isthmus with her lover, the istmeño poet Nazario Chacon Pineda, whom she likely met at the normal school for teachers in Mexico City. Chacon is related to Andrés Henestrosa’s wife, a Tehuana from Juchitán named Alfa Rios.<sup>27</sup> In the letter, Reyes observes Isthmus society as representative of a more viable, culturally appropriate alternative to communism as a means of establishing social equilibrium in Mexican society:

Juchitán, Oaxaca, December 24, 1946

Frida, Frida, from this other land, from this other country, or more specifically, from this other planet, I think of you, Frida, now more intimately and closely than ever before, upon seeing women dressed so much like you, in full bloom, as they move within this marvelous reality... Here there is not time to dream or to remember... It is impossible to describe it to you Frida. Perhaps, just perhaps, when I return you will be able to see this tremendous human landscape recorded in my pupils, this pueblo of present and intense awareness, manifested in happiness, affinity and grace. I have not received a single bitter gesture from the sisterhood nor the community, and the effect adds up to an entirely new experience... If only communism had been, if only...<sup>28</sup>



*FIG. 6.3: Photo of Frida Kahlo dressed in traditional tehuana traje, seated near a work of modern art.*

It seems that Reyes understood the duality based gender norms that she experienced firsthand in the Isthmus as a viable and preferable alternative to the imported ideas of communal living she experienced during her time in the Mexican Communist Party. She recognized that other modern Mexican women could benefit from this indigenous, Mexican model for gender relations more than they might benefit from imported communist social ideology. Reyes's commitment to disseminating this idea is evident in her own work, which variously takes the form of teaching, painting, illustrating educational and cultural texts, writing poetry, and obviously, through her choice of clothing. According to her grandsons, Reyes often utilized Tehuana traje as she went about her daily routine.





*FIG. 6.4: Photo of Aurora Reyes dressed in Tehuana traje with an image of a Zapotec tehuana superimposed over her image during printing.*

The Mexican State rendered the *Tehuana* a suitable icon in its cultural nationalism campaign for several reasons. Through the auspices of the SEP, the revolutionary regime undertook the goal of re-editing Mexican history to emphasize the enduring contributions of indigenous peoples to the formation of a modern, autonomous State. The indigenous heritage of the Isthmus Zapotecs functioned as valuable cultural capital for that process. Of the various indigenous groups who preceded the Spanish as inhabitants of the area currently known as Mexico, the Aztec (Nahuatl) and Maya are perhaps the most recognizable by name. These two groups led the most sedentary and “urban” existence at the time of the conquest, and therefore represented the most immediate threat to the colonial exercise of

cultural subjugation. Over time, each of these groups dwindled in numbers and suffered forceful cultural assimilation at the hands of the Europeans.

Although the Spanish did occupy areas of the isthmus in the colonial era, there was never a “conquest” of the Zapotecs, which makes them an outstanding exception from the rest of Mesoamerica’s ethnic groups. Their geographic isolation shielded them to some extent from the full brunt of the colonial experience, and they maintained many of their traditional customs and habits over time. The vibrance of their cultural continuities rendered them an ideal group for inclusion in the cosmic race paradigm, which posited that the key to Mexico’s modern development lay in the fusion of the most advantageous aboriginal cultural norms with the most positive aspects of the Spanish cultural legacy. The Isthmus Zapotecs managed to hold their own against the onslaught of foreign cultures for centuries, and thereby proved their ability to resist the type of foreign cultural domination that threatened Mexico as the nation emerged into the twentieth century global economy.

Historical evidence of the isthmus’ resistance to western imperialism includes its legendary role in expelling the French imperial army from Tehuantepec in May of 1866. In 2006 the state congress of Oaxaca formally recognized the lasting significance of that event when it renamed the isthmus city of Juchitan as the “Heroica Ciudad de Juchitán de Zaragoza.”

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tehuantepec became known as a cosmopolitan and commercial crossroads. Before the Panama Canal opened in 1913, the quickest way to transport goods and materials overland from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans was through the port of Salina Cruz on the south side of the

isthmus. The isthmus hosted an amalgam of American culture, representing “a broad and lush corridor where the blood of all seven of the American races ran together.”<sup>29</sup> The *Tehuano*s or *Tehuana*s had become quite adept at cultural appropriation- that is, they appropriated many foreign customs and materials that passed through their markets. Instead of sacrificing cultural autonomy through this process, they utilized external elements and ideas in creative ways to help reinforce their own unique identity.

Visual evidence of this selective appropriation can be seen in the traditional *traje*, of the *Tehuana* women, and how it has evolved over the years. The most spectacular garment of the *Tehuana*'s *traje* is a headdress of starched, pleated lace that is only worn for important ceremonial occasions. This garment is called a “head-*huipil*” or “great-*huipil*,” and according to popular mythology, it originates from a priest's surplice. According to this local legend, the catholic garment washed up on the beach, and the resourceful and fashion conscious *Tehuana*s adapted it as a headdress to complement their existing garments. Other sources maintain that the headpiece evolved from the influence of Spanish fashion during the colonial period.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not the legend is accurate, the *traje* of the *Tehuana* resembles that of the Catholic Priest in other aspects. Its long layers and flowing form are reminiscent of an ecclesiastical garment, and vest its wearer with a certain authoritative air. With priests having been stripped of their robes through anti-Clerical reforms in revolutionary Mexico, it is easy to imagine that the population was nostalgic for the familiar gliding strides of authoritative figures. The flowing skirts of urban *Tehuana*s would have garnered a due amount of respect when

donned by cultural elites like Reyes and Kahlo in the capital city. Aída Sierra alludes to the spiritual symbolism of the traje when it is extrapolated from its geographic origins and worn in an urban setting: "...she stands out as an "archaic" effigy that brings material/spiritual nourishment to the people."<sup>31</sup>



*FIG. 6.5: Photo of Tehuana Estela Ruiz*

In addition, the gold coin necklaces that are the pride of every *Tehuana* as an indispensable part of her carefully arranged dowry, contain specie that flowed into circulation through foreign merchants who came and went from the isthmus marketplace to trade for the region's abundant tropical resources. After the foreign merchants left, the coins eventually became part of this people's declaration of

independent identity. Rather than melting the precious metal down to recast it into designs of their own preference, the resourceful Tehuanas artfully wove the whole coins into their own mosaic of adornment.<sup>32</sup>

This type of selective cultural assimilation has been noted as a component of the aesthetic history of the Nahuatl (Aztec) empire in the central valley of Mexico. The Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, occupied the same location where the Spanish conquistadores sited the modern day capital of Mexico City in the late fifteenth century. As the Aztecs “conquered” surrounding ethnic groups in the era preceding the arrival of the Spanish, the appropriation and modification of those respective groups’ artifacts was commonplace. In effect, the Aztecs used the more aesthetically extraordinary objects to fortify their own position of cultural and economic dominance. So too did the Isthmus Zapotecs integrate foreign fashions and currency into their own particularly concentrated local identity. They are an example of an indigenous group that has embraced the introduction of foreign cultures and used it to reaffirm their own identity in the modern era.<sup>33</sup>

The racial heritage of Tehuantepec is majority Zapotec “with a good measure of blood from practically every race in the world.”<sup>34</sup> Covarrubias praises the *Istmeños* as freer, prouder, more enterprising and vivacious than any other indigenous group. “Women are as self-sufficient as the men, if not even more so. A man who “gets fresh” with a girl on the street will be put in his place with a vengeance – *Tehuanas* do not mince words...”<sup>35</sup>

The *Tehuana’s* strength and pride have arrived at mythical proportions in the minds of Mexicans. An abbot who lived on the Isthmus once compared them to Isis

and Cleopatra.<sup>36</sup> Appropriating the image of the *Tehuana* provided a way for urban Mexican women to create their own national allegory of matriarchal power. The *Tehuana* functioned as a substitute for the catholic “madre dolorosa” (suffering mother) with that of the “matrona poderosa” (powerful matron),<sup>37</sup> having tremendous implications on a nation whose own national origins mythology included the painful eponym “*hijos de la chingada*” (children of the raped one – in reference to Cortez’s relationship with Malinche).

Elite urban women began dressing as *Tehuanas* in the 1920’s, completing the appropriation of the *Tehuana* as a symbol of national pride. The appearance of indigenous clothing in the ultra-modern capital was representative of Mexico’s desire to reconcile its historical legacy. Women who dressed as *Tehuanas* channeled the splendors of ancient Mexico into their quotidian routines by adopting the *traje* into their modern wardrobes. This emulation of an indigenous type enabled urban women to reinvent themselves in a way that resisted the dominance of Western European and North American culture at a pivotal moment in the formation of the modern global economy.<sup>38</sup>

All of these cultural strengths position the *Tehuanas* as an outstanding symbol of national pride in a period notable for its quest to forge a sense of nationalism inclusive of indigenous culture, yet not exclusive of modern global influences. The population of the Isthmus demonstrated the ability to successfully navigate between cultural relativism and cultural assimilation. In a nation marked by numerous “local nationalisms,” the variant of national identity forged on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec offered a valuable example to be reproduced on a larger

scale. The Isthmus Zapotecs' appropriation of specific elements of foreign cultures while maintaining a strong sense of self resonated with the ideology that the revolutionary government wanted to instill in the Mexican people.

The deliberate appropriation of the *Tehuana* by urban Mexican women functioned as a tangible expression of their desire to be considered both beautiful and powerful. The women of the isthmus were legendary for their strength of character and for their clearly defined cultural identity. Dressing *Tehuana* was a visible affirmation of *Mexicanidad* that helped identify enthusiastic participants in the national agenda at a glance. Aurora Reyes, María Izquierdo, Concha Michel, Chabela Villaseñor, and Frida Kahlo all incorporated the *Tehuana* into their wardrobes and their political agenda. The period of 1920-1940 was a time when Mexican women functioned as a bridge between Mexico's past and Mexico's future. The *Tehuana* is a visual manifestation of their ability to bridge the two worlds. This indigenous female archetype became so popular that she adorned the Mexican ten-peso bill in 1937, assuming a lasting place in the cultural capital of modern Mexico.<sup>39</sup> Reyes's close friend, the Tehuana educator Estela Ruíz, earned the right to model for the "ten-peso tehua" in a beauty contest designed to find the most beautiful Tehuana in Mexico. Estela and her sister, Elvia Ruiz, spent a lot of time with Reyes at her home in Coyoacan throughout the nineteen thirties and forties, and likely influenced Reyes on her adoption of the Tehuana *traje*.<sup>40</sup>



*FIG. 6.6: Mexican ten-peso note featuring Estela Ruiz, circa 1937.*



**CHAPTER SEVEN: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS**

*FIG. 7.1: Illustration by Aurora Reyes. Humanos Paisajes, 1954*

The poet sees, when the moon glimmers on the snow of the volcanoes, Doña Marina's ghost silhouetted against the sky, pursued by the shade of the Archer of Stars. Or he dreams of the copper axe whose edge upholds the heavens. Or thinks he hears, in some lonely wild, the doleful weeping of the twins that the white-robed goddess bears on her back. Let us not scorn the evocation; let us not flout the legend.<sup>1</sup>

As students of revolution, artists and intellectuals Henestrosa, Covarrubias and Reyes did not feel the pressure to devote all their time and energy to one discipline. The ongoing revolutionary struggle demanded total participation- and they became something like “*todólogos*”- combining their knowledge and skills in a way that enabled them to reach large audiences with their multifaceted message of social equilibrium. These three, like many of their artistic-intellectual cohort, began to apply their practical experience with revolutionary education for consumption and reproduction by the next generation. In this chapter I will describe the ongoing contributions of Reyes and her peers, as they support my argument of the central place the Isthmus of Tehuantepec held in the formation of revolutionary Mexican identity via the programs of the SEP. My analysis culminates in the education-themed murals Reyes painted in the Auditorium 15 of May in the national teachers’ union. These murals, which cover roughly 335 square meters of wall space, commemorate Reyes’s career in public education, as she completed them concurrently with her retirement from the SEP. By analyzing Reyes’s contributions to Mexican arts and letters alongside her peers’ reflections on her work, it becomes evident that she personifies Gamio’s recommendation that in order to revalue indigenous members of society, cultural elites had to forge indigenous souls for themselves.

### Reproducing Revolution for Mass Consumption

In 1924 Álvaro Obregón's Presidential term came to an end. His successor, Plutarco Elias Calles, drove José Vasconcelos from his position with increasing and catastrophic cuts to the education budget. The former Minister of Education once again took to the road. He traveled extensively in Europe and the Americas, spreading his ideas about the utility of cultural mestizaje for inspiring social change through a series of lectures at academic and cultural institutions. Vasconcelos became more and more vocal about the stifling role of North American economic policy on social growth in the Latin American republics. Although members of the Calles administration vowed to continue with the educational projects begun by Obregon, their practical focus shifted from the institutionalization of revolutionary goals via innovations in cultural education to the re-consolidation of power and privilege.

Mural commissions became harder to come by, and many established muralists left the capital. The more conservative political climate brought persecution of younger artists whose "revolutionary" understanding of the role of artists in society did not fit within the narrowing confines of the *Maximato*.<sup>2</sup> Calles asked Gamio to serve in the Ministry of Education, but in 1925 Gamio resigned the coveted post, citing widespread corruption that made it impossible for him to do his job. After emigrating to the United States, Gamio continued his work as a cultural anthropologist, focusing on issues of migration and labor involving Mexicans in the United States.

As the new ruling party emerged from the still burning embers of the Revolution, it distanced itself from the artistic momentum that had initially made it viable. It is not coincidental that the high point of México's struggle to institutionalize revolutionary ideals coincided with the emergence of a particularly dynamic period of education reform; between 1920 and 1940. By 1940 the official party (the PRM, or Partido Revolucionario Mexicano), which subsequently became known as the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucionalizado) in 1946, proved more revolutionary in name than in deed. This specific historical juncture may be conceptualized as a "fall from grace" in which revolutionary fervor succumbed to the overwhelming influence of Western capitalist imperialism. Aurora Reyes and many of her peers eventually became disillusioned with a government that preferred to carry on the revolution in increasingly opportunist terms. Fortunately their practical experience in the revolutionary schools had taught them the transcendental value of cultural mestizaje, which they continued to apply in their collective quest for social change. Their work would continue with or without official government support.

In the 1929 classic *Idols Behind Altars*, Anita Brenner, who studied with both Boas and Gamio, alludes to the role of art in the evolution of modern Mexico:

In the span of one generation Mexico has come to herself. Her first and definitive gesture is artistic. While the government shifts and guerillas still battle for Cristo Rey and other interests, the builders, necessary as the destroyers, refound the nation. It is a nation which establishes a school for sculpture before thinking of a Juvenile Court, and which paints the walls of buildings much sooner than it organizes a Federal Bank. Sanitation, jobs, and reliably workable laws are attended to literally as a by-product of art; for the revolution is a change of régime, because of a change in artistic style, or, if one wishes a more usual description, of spirit.<sup>3</sup>

This emergence of a tangible and accessible representation of *mexicanidad* inclusive of Indigenous aesthetics and traditions went a long way toward validating the unique cultural hybridity of the Mexican people. Art became less about high museum culture imitative of European museum norms, and more about expressing the daily realities of the Mexican experience.

After surviving a childhood defined by political intrigue and vengeance, Reyes emerged as a legitimate member of the revolutionary elite who initially defined their radius of action by their participation in the cultural education programs of the SEP. This group took it upon themselves to translate vague ideological currents into practical reform in an attempt to institutionalize the Revolution. Some historians maintain that although the armed phase of the Revolution ended in 1917, the movement only became institutionalized in the 1930's, and the process continues to evolve with each successive generation.<sup>4</sup>

From 1922 until 1929, *istmeño* Andrés Henestrosa studied insatiably in Mexico City under the SEP programs with the mentorship of Antonieta Rivas Mercado. In 1929, Henestrosa published *Los Hombres que dispersó la danza* (The men who dispersed the dance). This collection of Zapotec legends and folktales derived from Isthmus popular legends has remained in print since its initial publication. It is one of many valuable products of the collective desire to mine the riches of Mexico's indigenous past to increase the nation's cultural capital in the modern era. Henestrosa's experience represents the cyclical form of cultural exchange fostered by the revolutionary approach to education. In the revolutionary

era, educational reforms enabled a generation of Mexicans to value their local cultural heritage as a relatively valuable component in the global human experience.

Henestrosa would go on to edit the literary journal *NEZA: Organo Mensual de la Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos* (NEZA: Monthly Organ of the New Society of the Students of Juchitan), *NEZA/NESHA* derives its name from the Zapotec word for water or river- symbolically it denominates a “path to follow”- and it also parallels the name of the indigenous educator Nezahualcoyotl- a poet-warrior from the city-state of Texcoco. A group of students from Juchitan, Oaxaca (a prominent city on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec) published *NEZA* in Mexico City from 1935 to 1937.<sup>5</sup> The content of *NEZA* parallels that of *El Maestro* in its objective to elevate Mexican aboriginal traditions alongside more established global cultures, liberating them from the outdated colonial qualitative analysis that privileged western European development models. This revolutionary application of cultural relativity may be seen in a December 1935 issue of Neza that includes an article comparing traditional Zapotec burial practices and attitudes toward death with those of the ancient Greeks.<sup>6</sup>

In 1924 Miguel Covarrubias earned a scholarship to advance his formal anthropology studies in New York, following the Academic path of Manuel Gamio. Covarrubias and Best continued their collaborative friendship there, where they lived together in the apartment of Mexican intellectual Octavio G. Barreda. A dedicated member of Mexican arts and letters, Barreda had worked in Paris with Dr. Atl to invalidate Huerta’s coup in 1913, and tirelessly promoted awareness of Mexican cultural matters on the international scene. During his time in New York,

Covarrubias collaborated on a ballet with Zapotecan motifs from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. When describing his inspiration for the project, Covarrubias spoke of the artistic energy of his indigenous *paisanos*: “Theirs is a religion of color,” he explained.<sup>7</sup>

Upon returning to Mexico in the nineteen thirties, Covarrubias joined the *LEAR*, which counted Rivera, Kahlo, and also arts educator and would-be muralist Aurora Reyes among its members. Covarrubias spent increasing amounts of time in Tehuantepec, which inspired him as a place on which to re-focus his creative and intellectual energies in a manner that echoed the experience of his friend and mentor Diego Rivera. Covarrubias traveled to the isthmus under the guidance of his friend Andrés Henestrosa. Henestrosa and his wife Alfa Rios emerged as the cultural ambassadors for Tehuantepec among artists and intellectuals in nineteen-thirties Mexico City. The Tehuana found her way into the work of Covarrubias as she had found her way into the conscience of so many Modern Mexican artists concerned with the nation’s indigenous legacy. Covarrubias began to compile his travel notes from Tehuantepec for inclusion in an epic cultural analysis of the Isthmus. The project would occupy his efforts for more than a decade.

Aurora Reyes solidified her role as an active participant in the process of institutionalizing revolution through education when in 1927 the SEP named her Professor of Portraiture in the Primary Schools. This marked the beginning of her thirty-seven year professional affiliation with the SEP. During this time she held various titles that together represent her broad commitment to education, which she considered the key to Mexican development. Upon educators “*depende el*

*porvenir de México; son los encargados de modelar la conciencia de los futuros ciudadanos,”* Reyes commented.<sup>8</sup> In addition to teaching drawing in the traditional primary schools and open-air drawing in the pre-vocational schools, Reyes worked as an inspector of teachers and generously offered her expertise to curriculum development. *“Su didactismo es ágil, capaz de llevarse mil alumnos a los salones de un museo y de hacerles apreciar lo mayor entre lo bello.”*<sup>9</sup> In 1930 Reyes participated in the first collective exhibition that drew attention to the work of the city’s art teachers, held at the SEP compound in the *centro histórico*. During this era Reyes became an active member of the Communist Party, where she befriended the singer and musicologist Concepcion (Concha) Michel, another cultural figure who personified cultural mestizaje through her deep appreciation for the traditions and aesthetics of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Born into a prominent family in the state of Jalisco in 1899, at the age of nine, Michel entered the convent of San Ignacio de Loyola in the town of Ejutla. However, she was soon expelled for orchestrating an escape plan with a group of novices that included a bonfire fueled by *santos* (religious figurines). Michel had discovered her vocation for singing while performing with the choir in the convent, and participated in state-sponsored cultural missions with her voice and her guitar. Her performances took her all over the world. At the age of fourteen she earned \$1,200 singing for John D. Rockefeller at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, which she used to finance a trip through Europe and the Soviet Union, where she observed firsthand the role of women under socialism. When Michel returned to



Mexico she was widely known as the premier writer and performer of anti-clerical revolutionary *corridos* (ballads).<sup>10</sup>

At the age of 20, Michel became the life partner of Hernán Laborde, the secretary general of the Mexican Communist Party.<sup>11</sup> While serving as the secretary of *Acción Femenil* (feminine action) for the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (National Confederation of Peasants) Michel remained a vocal member of the Marxist minority within the women's movement. She and her comrades eventually persuaded the more moderate members of the women's movement that it was in their best interest to align themselves more closely with the socialist ideology of the official party. By the 1930's, the movement had made a decided move to the left, and presented a united front under the name FUPDM (*Frente Unico Pro Derechos Mujeres*),<sup>12</sup> which was able to successfully ingratiate itself with the socialist minded government. "The political platform of the FUPDM went beyond purely feminist interests and promoted a broad program of political reform and democratization."<sup>13</sup> Ironically, in 1938 Michel published a critique of the Marxist view of women<sup>14</sup> that contributed to her expulsion from the Communist Party.

Aurora Reyes described the power of Michel's presence in her 1963 essay titled "Mexico en sus Cantares: Significación de Concha Michel en el Arte de Mexico."

*La fuerza autoritaria de su ademán y de su palabra, la definían rápidamente como una lideresa en pleno ejercicio de su apostolado. Su personalidad apabullante dejaba mudos a quienes, como yo, la conocieron en aquella época inolvidable, en que el gobierno de Lázaro Cárdenas abría paso, sin titubeos, al camino señalado por la Revolución...*<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of her lifetime, Concha Michel compiled a collection of more than five thousand popular Mexican songs. Regrettably, the collection has never

been published.<sup>16</sup> According to Reyes, Michel's collection included sacred indigenous poetry, songs from the vice-regal period, songs about Independence, Reform, the epoch of the Emperor Maximilian; in addition to popular songs from the countryside, the cities and the neighborhoods. Michel guarded all of these songs in her memory, "*Y en su pecho, el tiempo fue ordenándolas y haciendo con ellas geografía nacional e historia patria.*"<sup>17</sup> Michel's mutual admiration for Reyes is recorded in the corrido she composed in 1984 to honor her dear friend:

*Aurora Reyes, artista, compañera, amiga, hermana,  
revolucionaria, luchas por la dignidad humana.*

*Del árido Norte fuiste el fruto más venturoso,  
los pajarillos alegres te dieron su canto hermoso.*

*Del Norte a la Capital te trajeron muy chiquilla  
y la escuela que tuvista fue el barrio La Lagunilla.*

*La lección fundamental que en ese ambiente aprendiste  
fue la terrible miseria que a nuestro pueblo le aflija.*

*De Buena mata naciste, tu abuelo Bernardo Reyes  
fue el principio y la derrota de Don Porfirio y sus greyes.*

*En toda nuestra Nación fue popular Don Bernardo  
y si él hubiera querido la asceienden a lo más alto.*

*Vinó la Decéna Trágica que tánto muerto causó  
hasta que Porfirio Díaz del poder se retiró.*

*En esa Decéna Trágica murió Don Bernardo Reyes  
y luego vino Madero a unir los nuevos poderes.*

*Que haya SUFRAGIO EFECTIVO, sin ninguna reelección  
fue el norte que dio Madero para orientar la Nación.*

*Entre tanto, Aurora Reyes, esa lucha presenciando  
quiso defender al pueblo, al que siempre sigue amando.*

*Siendo hija de Don León Reyes LA CACHORRA le llamaron  
en la Escuela de San Carlos, y así la siguen llamando.*

*Fue Femenil Secretaria en la Central de Maestros,  
dío directivas muy buenas para resolver denuestos.*

*Abrió brecha a la mujer: comenzó a pintar murales  
en el año tiente y seis, por los Maestros Rurales.*

*Y comenzó su poesía, siempre revolucionaria,  
que lo diga HOMBRE DE MEXICO, ASTRO EN CAMINO, Y ZAPATA.*

*En el SNTE de Maestros, en Belisario Domínguez,  
cuatro murales pintó que entre todos se distinguen.*

*Y así, distinguida y única, pintora, poeta, artista,  
Aurora Reyes señala camino antimperialista.*

*En la casa de Cortés, Delegación Coyacán,  
el Delegado le pide que un muro venga a pintar.*

*Pinta la historia de México desde tiempo muy lejano,  
Códices y el gran encuentro entre Cortés y el Indiano.*

*La Conquista fue tragedia, que Cortés y sus soldados  
segaron a los nativos que iban major orientados.*

*Ahora todos divididos en clase rica y esclavos  
vamos sin rumbo preciso y todos equivocados.*

*Los ricos en el poder dicen resolver los males  
mas la realidad es otra y el pueblo sigue con hambre.*

*La OME-TEOTL es la mujer-Diosa que al pueblo orientara,  
sigámosla con lealtad y la humanidad se aclara.*

*Y así quedamos unidas, compañera, amiga, hermana,  
en la lucha que nos une por la dignidad humana.*

*Ya con ésta me despido de Aurora, grande poeta,  
que con su pintura llena una misión completa.*

Reyes became well-known for her love of the *corrido* as a particularly “Mexican” form of cultural expression inextricably linked to the ongoing revolutionary struggle.

Together Reyes and her comrade Michel urged participants in the Mexican women's movement to alter their ideology by grounding their demands for full citizenship not in the radical concept of "equality," but in the more revolutionary "duality." This ideology, based on pre-Hispanic gender norms and represented in central Mexican mythology by the Mexica's supreme, dual-gendered god Ome Teotl, is based on the idea that men and women are not "equal" but, instead, "complementary." Both Reyes and Michel understood the women of Tehuantepec to be closely aligned with this alternative approach to gender roles rooted in Indigenous beliefs.



*FIG. 7.2: Ome-Teotl line drawing by Aurora Reyes, Humanos Paisajes, 1953.*

The duality model is especially applicable in the Mexican context because it addresses the private/public binary, which shapes so many aspects of Mexican culture and social interactions. Rather than advocating the destruction of this binary, which draws a clear distinction between masculine and feminine space, the

Duality model calls for a re-valuation of the private (feminine) sphere as a means to achieving full citizenship for Mexican women. The concept is sensitive to cultural continuities, and faithful to the collective pre-Hispanic memory of the culturally hybrid nation.

As students of revolution these women yearned for a civilization based on a gendered duality model in which both sexes contributed to the achievement of a more balanced society. This specific evolutionary path represents the recognition of México's cultural mestizaje. Reyes's personal experiences in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec led her to conclude that the concept of gender duality thrived in this exceptional cultural enclave, and she and Michel dressed like Tehuanas as a way of expressing their solidarity with the Tehuana sisterhood. Concha Michel is one of only a few women featured in Reyes's pantheon of educators at the SNTE, where she is immortalized with her characteristic Tehuana hairstyle and gold jewelry.

The Cardenas sexenio (1934-1940) became known for its experiments in socialist education, which encouraged the re-valuation of indigenous traditions and aesthetics begun in the 1920's, but with an increasingly class based perspective that aligned communal indigenous traditions with the evolution of modern socialism. The efforts of artists and intellectuals launched them fully into the political arena as they helped the government solidify its legitimacy among the Mexican people after the missteps of the Maximato. Notably, mural commissions and funding for other arts-based programs initially curtailed under Calles and the *maximato* experienced a bit of a resurgence under Cárdenas.

In August of 1935, Reyes submitted a list of suggestions designed to help the SEP function in a way that might be more reflective of the ideals of the revolution.<sup>18</sup> In this document, Reyes criticizes the patronizing manner in which the directors of the schools address the educators employed therein. She declares this “frank hostility” to be counterintuitive to the goal of a more socialist themed educational system. Reyes petitions for formal teaching contracts with concrete directives to be issued from the SEP, which are to be enforced by visiting inspectors such as herself. She pleads the case for a group of inspectors to work with the schools on a rotating basis, rather than designating a single person with the responsibility; in an attempt to prevent the institutionalization of favoritism and systematic corruption. Reyes closes her petition with a reference to the pervasive nature of the Catholic church, which continued to influence Mexican education despite the anti-clerical policies of the revolutionary government.<sup>19</sup>

That same year (1935), two of Miguel Covarrubias’s paintings, an oil titled “*El Hueso*” (The Bone) and a gouache titled “*Rio Tehuantepec*,” (Tehuantepec River), showed at the Carnegie Exhibition of Modern Painting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Covarrubias represented Mexico alongside Orozco, Siqueiros, and Carlos Merida at the exhibition. Notably all of these men had participated in the SEP’s cultural education campaign in the early 1920’s. The Carnegie Institute purchased *Rio Tehuantepec* for \$300.<sup>20</sup> *El Hueso*, with its alternative title “*El Maestro Rural*,” (The rural schoolteacher) referenced the rural education campaign José Vasconcelos unleashed on the Mexican countryside beginning in the early 1920’s, while also

alluding to the widespread corruption threatening the Secretariat of Education as an extension of the national government.

Vasconcelos aspired to use education as an instrument of social reform and thus to elevate the general welfare of the Mexican people. Introducing education into rural areas was a prime goal of this reform, and because women constituted over half of all rural teachers, they were key participants in the rural education program.<sup>21</sup>

In 1936 Aurora Reyes earned her first mural commission as a member of the LEAR. The LEAR, co-founded in 1934 by Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma, Leopoldo Mendez, Pablo O'Higgins, Juan de la Cabada (among others), represented a continuation of the efforts of the recently disbanded *Sindicato de Trabajadores Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores*. In February of 1936, LEAR's president, Juan de la Cabada, described the league as "a broad-based cultural front organization of intellectual workers focused on the struggle against fascism, imperialism and war...". The organization vowed "to make culture available to the working masses, study their problems, help them in their struggle for better living conditions, [and to] capitalize on the government's progressive tendencies..."<sup>22</sup> The LEAR maintained that "the basic social function of a revolutionary intellectual is to be an active militant, a skillful guide capable of pointing out the dangers that culture confronts at this time."<sup>23</sup> When the organization issued a call for proposals destined to become murals on the walls of a primary school, Reyes responded. She initially chose the theme, "Lucha de los Maestros Contra los Cristeros,"<sup>24</sup> (Battle of the teachers (masculine) against the Cristeros (also masculine), which accurately

represented the anti-clerical stance of the revolutionary government, and referenced the contemporary popular uprising against secular education in the countryside.<sup>25</sup> A committee composed of LEAR members approved her proposed theme, likely influenced by the plight of rural schoolteachers who answered Vasconcelos's call to spread revolutionary education to rural areas.

Reyes earned the right to execute her mural in the Vestibule of the Centro Escolar Revolución, a pilot school for socialist-themed education in downtown Mexico City. Once Reyes completed the piece, she titled it "*Atentado a las Maestras Rurales*," (Attack on the Rural Teachers (feminine)). It is interesting to note the subtle gendered evolution of the project's title, as well as the shift in the action described therein. In its proposal stage, the theme represented the educators as participants in the aggressive action, and in its final incarnation, the title refers to the educators as the subject of an action meted out against them. The mural itself portrays a female teacher succumbing to violent blows dealt by male Cristeros.

Both the subject and the location of her mural possess an incredible amount of significance for the evolution of the modern Mexican woman. Just as the Spanish conquistadors constructed Catholic churches on the sites of indigenous temples, the government of the *Maximato* commissioned this primary school on the site of a Porfirian prison.<sup>26</sup> En route to becoming a center for the dissemination of revolutionary education, the site of Reyes's first mural had been a communal home for women, a primary school for girls, and a prison that housed several prominent nineteenth century activists, including the brothers Flores Magon and Juana Belen Gutierrez de Mendoza.<sup>27</sup> A steadfast revolutionary who had helped provide written



justification for social upheaval in the final years of the Porfiriato, Gutierrez lent her efforts to the institutionalization of those same ideals in the 1930's by working as a rural schoolteacher.

With this project, Reyes earned the honorable and coveted distinction of being the first Mexican woman to conceive of and complete a mural in the capital city, despite the fact that mural commissions from the government had become much harder to come by. Though other women had acted as assistants or executors of mural projects in the 1930's, Reyes became the first to claim a project completely hers from start to finish.<sup>28</sup> She received critical praise for both its content and its execution, and seventy years after its completion, the color and composition of the work still tells the story of the martyred teachers who worked selflessly to educate the rural masses in the institutional phase of the Revolution.



*FIG. 7.3: "Atentado a las Maestras Rurales," (Aurora Reyes, 1937). Photo by Beatriz Díaz Zurita, 2004.*

By representing the plight of the rural schoolteacher (who is female) in such a graphic manner complete with a wide-eyed witness (also female), Reyes contrasts the limits of existing gendered archetypes with the potential that lies within the next generation of Mexican women. Reyes may be suggesting that there are heroic girls among México's youth who have not yet assumed the passive, silent expression dictated by the Spanish Catholic patriarchal legacy. Covarrubias's contemporary interpretation of the male rural schoolteacher, *El Hueso*, stands in sharp contrast to Reyes's dynamic mural.

The figure occupying Covarrubias's painting is a sedentary being. He is comfortably seated in a corner, with the view out of an adjacent window blocked by potted plants. The man with recognizable indigenous features has cultivated western European style markers- he wears closed-toe shoes tightly laced and a dark suit, white shirt and tie. He wears a hat neatly placed over closely cropped hair and sports a trimmed moustache as he complacently rests his folded hands on a closed umbrella. Everything about the image oozes complacency- and when we notice the partially gnawed bone at his side, we realize that he sits in waiting, like a loyal dog who has already received his bone/handout. "*El Hueso*" is a slang term in Mexican Spanish referring to an easy government job that requires little initiative or effort.

Covarrubias's male teacher has been co-opted by the State. His lapel pin is a clearly identifiable symbol of loyalty to the PRI. By the late 1930's, the official party initially created by Obregon and Calles had consolidated enough power to declare itself synonymous with the State- as represented by its official paraphernalia, virtually indistinguishable from the national tri-colored flag. Just two decades after

the Porfirian era crumbled under social pressure, a new generation of opportunistic politicians engineered an alternative “order” to take its place.

Meanwhile, the international reach of the LEAR enabled Aurora Reyes to show her work outside of México for the first time. She participated in group exhibitions in Cuba, New York, Chicago, and Brownsville, Texas, while continuing to showcase her work within México’s borders as well. Despite earning critical acclaim for her portraiture, Reyes believed muralism to be of utmost importance to the continuation of the Mexican Revolution, with its focus on educational as well as aesthetic purposes. She elaborates on the relationship between art and society: “[L]a pintura debe ser la manifestación de los anhelos, aspiraciones y realidad del hombre (...) debe ser el espejo fiel de su tiempo.”<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately for Reyes, the political evolution of the modern nation meant that she would have to wait twenty-four years to secure another mural commission. In the meantime, she doubled down on her efforts to promote the value of cultural mestizaje and its potential to elevate Mexican society.

In 1938 Reyes earned an appointment as the Secretary of Women’s Action for the Executive Committee of the National Teachers’ Union (SNTE). In this capacity she continued working alongside her friend Concha Michel. In 1939 Reyes attended the National Women’s Congress in Havana, Cuba, where she represented the Executive Committee of the Mexican Teachers’ Union. At the Congress she delivered a paper titled “*La Mujer y la Cultura.*” This document calls for the active participation of women in the formation of national identity through the realignment of cultural and economic initiatives. Reyes argues that although “culture” is the most superior

product of humanity, it has been conditioned by economic circumstances since its initiation. In addition, she declares that patriarchal traditions, with their stern-based conceptualization of private property, have negatively affected cultural development.<sup>30</sup> Reyes argues that in order to encourage a more authentic form of cultural evolution, emphasis must be placed on restoring the original duality model of gender alignment derived from Indigenous belief systems, where male and female are considered complementary forces that work together to produce a symbiotic form of culture. In the essay, Reyes attributes slavery, feudalism, monarchy, and capitalism all to the triumph of patriarchy, and argues that these institutions have led to the present state where a capitalist approach to economics outranks autochthonous cultural norms in Mexican society.

Reyes goes on to declare that the resulting disequilibrium in the Mexican context, or distinctly “national” identity crisis, has its genesis in a society whose imported economic model does not correspond to its indigenous cultural heritage. She asserts that the revaluation of feminine contributions to society in both the economic and artistic realm will lead to the realignment of culture within the present social and historical context. Acknowledging the enormity of this call to action, she states that the global systems of codes and laws, constitutions and statutes (devised and institutionalized overwhelmingly by men), all circumscribe the actions of women in a small radius of action. In order to rectify the pervasive shortcomings of cultural production and enable culture to reach its full potential, Reyes calls for the complete revaluation of female gender roles as equivalent and complementary to their male counterparts. She states that if this is achieved, it will

promote the much needed leveling of the currently disproportionate stages of cultural and economic evolution impeding the formation of an authentic and cohesive national identity.<sup>31</sup>

By late 1940, Miguel Covarrubias was deep in the process of researching *Mexico South*, the title he would eventually give to his epic anthropological treatise on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. His quest for answers and connections between Mexico past and his own present led him to become a frequent visitor to the National Museum of Anthropology. There he consulted with the director of the museum, Ruben de la Borbolla. De la Borbolla eventually convinced Covarrubias, whose infectious enthusiasm and self-taught anthropological perspective lent themselves well to the art of education, to agree to teach a course on pre-Columbian art at the museum's School of Anthropology. Covarrubias had not taught Mexican students since his tenure in the Open Air arts schools in the early 1920's, and his new appointment ensured that another generation of Mexican students would be exposed to the cultural traditions of *Mexico profundo*.

Concurrent with Covarrubias's anthropological research in the isthmus, archaeologists converged on the Gulf Coast of Tehuantepec, lured by a series of discoveries that hinted at a culture pre-dating the ancient Maya, which we now know as the Olmec civilization. Several threads of historical inquiry converged in Tehuantepec, which proved useful for the consolidation of a national identity myth designed to cultivate an additional wave of cultural nationalism. First, the geography of the isthmus located it precisely between the ancient pre-Hispanic empires recognized at that time. The narrow Isthmus of Tehuantepec represented a land

bridge connecting Aztec territory in the central valley of Mexico with the footprint of the Maya empire, rooted firmly in the Yucatan peninsula. The discovery of an advanced civilization predating these two lent itself well to the government's desire to anchor modern Mexican identity to the knowledge and artistic traditions of the "ancients" in a way that transcended the problematic history of violent cultural encounters between the Spanish conquerors and their Aztec and Maya contemporaries.

Second, The Spanish colonial experiment had taken hold when Cortés landed at the port of Veracruz and initiated his drive to overtake the great Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. If the revolutionary government could link modern Mexican identity to a great race of advanced peoples who lived and prospered at precisely that location long before the advance of Western European civilization, the argument for cultural relativity and the persistence of indigenous culture would be strengthened. Although the Olmec civilization resided in antiquity, the present-day inhabitants of the Isthmus could function as their proxy in the emerging equation that strove to reconcile the painful cultural clashes of previous centuries. The living Zapotec culture that Covarrubias encountered on his visits to the Isthmus might be recognized as "close enough to count" for the purposes of developing revolutionary mythology. Finally, the experiment in cultural nationalism required a re-examination of the outdated view of mestizaje, traditionally entangled in the womb of a woman named Doña Marina, more popularly referenced as "*la malinche*." Doña Marina, an indigenous woman from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (her precise place of birth has been identified as Jaltipan de Morelos, near the Coatzacoalcos River in

the State of Veracruz), became the personification of Mexican mestizaje by virtue of giving birth to the Conqueror's son, Martín Cortés. Throughout the nineteenth century México struggled to contextualize its colonial legacy of shame and underdevelopment, and Doña Marina became known as *La Malinche*, who "symbolize[d] the humiliation – the rape – of the indigenous people and the act of treachery that would lead to their oppression."<sup>32</sup> Mexican writer Octavio Paz credits *La Malinche* with the irreversible evolution of character that changed the stoic, impassive, and closed indigenous archetype into the open, raped, and shamed mestizo race destined to struggle with the eternal identity crisis elaborated in his essay *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950).<sup>33</sup>

Jean Franco maintains that the Mexican identity crisis outlined by Paz is primarily defined by a masculine struggle that is a result of a feminine fall from grace. According to Paz's synopsis of the Mexican character, Mexican men are destined to struggle and suffer from the sins of *La Malinche*. *Marina/Malinche* is problematic because she does not fit neatly nor exclusively into just one of four principal male-defined female archetypes of Spanish Catholic patriarchal tradition, which Franco identifies as the prostitute, the goddess, the *grande dame* or the mistress.<sup>34</sup> Instead, she represents a composite female identity, one that may be reinterpreted as an early example of cultural mestizaje. It is critical to point out that Doña Marina is not a product of the Spanish patriarchal tradition, but a participant by default. By functioning in the margins of two long and established cultural traditions, she helped pave the way for an alternative definition of mestizaje that transcended race and drew upon both Spanish and indigenous cultural norms. Not

until the revolutionary era did a new dialogue take shape with the goal of re-valuing cultural mestizaje as a valuable survival mechanism in the modern era.<sup>35</sup>

Appropriately enough, Aurora Reyes and other artists and intellectuals emerged onto the public scene to reinterpret *Malinche's* legacy and to play a formative role in the renegotiation of México's national cultural identity.



*FIG. 7.4: Detail of Reyes' Mural, "El Primer Encuentro." Photo by Beatriz Díaz de Zurita, 2004.*



Archaeologist Franz Blom later elaborated on the history of “*la malinche*” and her birthplace, Jaltipan de Morelos, in an essay with the working title: “Various notes on the northern section of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec”<sup>36</sup>

The town itself is located at some distance from the railway station and just before reaching the town one passes a large artificial mound called “Cerro de Malinche,” the hill of Malinche, the famous interpreter and friend of Cortez. It is told that Malinche was born in Jaltipan and that it was from there she was sold by her stepfather into Tabasco. Here she learned the Aztec language in her youth, and later she learned the Maya dialect in Tabasco. The natives of Jaltipan own a tract of land on the island of Tacamichapa, an island formed by two branches of the Coatzacoalcos River, and they maintain that this property was given to Malinche by Cortez in recognition of her great services to him.<sup>37</sup>

In revolutionary Mexico, artists and intellectuals worked to overcome the troubling binaries that stained their cultural heritage, and in the process identified alternative myths and interpretations of their own history, editing it, as each generation tends to do, to serve their present set of challenges. What better way to counteract the negative legacy of *la malinche* than to identify her as an early example of the inherent advantages of cultural mestizaje? Vasconcelos’s Cosmic Race theory was the first to postulate that ethnic mixing was actually beneficial for the development of modern Mexican identity by revaluing the indigenous portion of the equation, and the women of the Isthmus were certainly a primary resource of that nation.

Notably, many architects of the revolutionary government and its education system had close personal connections to the state of Oaxaca, which contains within its borders the southern half of the Isthmus. The Tehuanas that became institutionalized in the revolutionary mythology of modern Mexico served to counterbalance the negative legacy of their ancient sister *Doña Marina*. Both

*Malinche* and the *Tehuana* successfully navigated the complex terrain of the cultural crossroads they were born into to assume a visible and viable place in Mexico's revolutionary mythology. Their multifaceted identity encompassed both sides of the gendered binary (virgin and whore), and in the early twentieth century the *Tehuana* became institutionalized as a recognizable part of the national pantheon of cultural icons symbolizing the hybrid nature of modern Mexican identity.

Again similar themes may be observed in the contemporary work of Aurora Reyes and Miguel Covarrubias. While Covarrubias published the painstakingly researched and self-illustrated epic *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* with distinguished North American publisher Alfred A Knopf (1946), Reyes illustrated Gilberto Orozco's contemporary Mexican publication *Tradiciones y Leyendas del Istmo de Tehuantepec* (also 1946). Both volumes contain line drawings, photographs, and musical appendices to help transmit the multifaceted cultural energy of the Isthmus to curious readers. Covarrubias, by this time a darling of the New York cultural scene, published excerpts of *Mexico South* in U.S. fashion magazines *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle*. The excerpts appeared alongside illustrations and photographs of the region's increasingly fashionable *traje*, fulfilling Gamio's prediction that the intricate and symbolic work of the indigenous artists would eventually make a global impact. While Covarrubias began to channel his artistic energies to film production, Reyes maintained her focus on poetry and illustrating.

After more than a decade of diplomatic and intellectual development in Europe, Alfonso Reyes had returned to Mexico in 1938. Upon arrival, he assumed the Presidency of the Colegio de Mexico. His homecoming coincided with Aurora

Reyes's ascendance onto the national art scene. She drew inspiration from his work- and from their shared family history. In a letter to her uncle, the younger Reyes praises his contributions to the evolution of universal consciousness while expressing gratitude for their shared national perspective:

*Yo sé que cuando este planeta sea "la casa del hombre," tú seras uno de sus heroes mayores. Y te doy gracias por haber nacido en México, por haber estrechado la mano con que escribes y por llevar una corriente viva de tu sangre en el pulso que late entre mis venas.<sup>38</sup>*

In 1947-48, Reyes composed a poem that would bring both praise and criticism for its sincere analysis of Mexican national identity and the evolution of the nation's political culture since the revolution. The first stanza of *Hombre de México* alerts us that the following verses may diverge from the standard flowery phrases that glorify revolutionary "ideals" without critical examination:

*Algo oscuro ha pasado por el cielo de México.  
Está herida la tierra  
y en los labios del viento  
silba el agudo filo de Antigua profecía.<sup>39</sup>*

As the poem unfolds, Reyes elaborates on the ongoing threat of foreign cultural influence. By the late nineteen forties, it became clear that Mexico's "good neighbor" to the north had its eye on infiltrating the Mexican market in hopes of forging a western block of influence against the looming "red scare" represented by the Eastern European bloc of nations. For Reyes and other leftist artists, the looming shadow of the United States represented a neo-colonial paradigm that included economic, cultural, and political components that threatened to eclipse the cultural continuities Mexicans had painstakingly excavated and preserved throughout the revolutionary era. *Hombre de México* may be read as a warning of the imminent

danger associated with ceding political power to the right, and succumbing to the capitalist model of development. In precise language, Reyes reminds her *paisanos* what might be sacrificed in the process.

Reyes maintained her faith in the arts as a means for generating social change, and became recognized among cultural elites for her poetry, much of which contains clear references to the indigenous legacy of the modern nation. Alfonso Reyes took notice when his niece expanded her repertoire to include the autochthonous art form so highly praised in his epic essay *Visión de Anáhuac*. Upon the publication of her first self-illustrated collection of poetry, he offered this praise: “*Considero ‘Humanos Paisajes’ un libro precioso en su calidad poética, en su ilustración y su edición, donde se percibe la grande alma de Aurora.*”<sup>40</sup>

The first edition, published by *Ediciones Amigos del Café Paris*, contains forty line drawings that illustrate her work and serve as visible evidence that Reyes has inherited the aesthetic mantle forged by the artists who came before her in the canon of Mexican indigenous aesthetics. This pantheon of visual artists includes the anonymous indigenous artisans who decorated ceramics with symbolic graphic information; the printmaker Posada who helped define collective consciousness by distilling the energy of quotidian events and social conflict in his lithographs, the open-air artists and muralists who realized larger than life portrayals of watershed events in Mexican history; Manuel Gamio, who made moving images to help students of revolution understand the connection between Mexico Profundo and Mexico Moderno; Adolfo Best Maugard, whose drawing system made the entire exercise accessible to the least formally educated student of the arts; and the

women of Tehuantepec, who embroider their *traje* with the timeless symbols of antiquity that resonate in the modern era.

In an interview published in the same year as the release of *Humanos Paisajes*, Reyes describes her poetic motivations:

*Escribo sin saber nada de poética, ni de métrica ni de reglas de ninguna especie. Lo hago por inminente necesidad de manifestar lo que siento y creo que es la sensibilidad lo que me ha guiado. Me convertí en poeta porque me desesperé que la mayoría de las poetas hablaran de su lágrima interior ... yo toco los problemas de México ... hago notar que la Revolución no ha llegado a su término; que el pueblo sigue cada vez más hambriento y más saqueado.<sup>41</sup>*

German Pardo García, a Colombian born poet and the founder of the literary magazine *Nivel*, praised Reyes as the most important indigenous poet of her generation.

*Como Othón, el ya broncíneo maestro de las estepas del Nazas, en la estrofa de Aurora Reyes se encuentra, con respalde austere y fuerte, la forma como en indio mexicano contempla, vive y ama su paisaje hostil, árido, estremecido por sacudimientos incensantes de sus formaciones geológicas, por la rebellion de que sus volcanes, que han transmitido al hombre una enseñanza de fuego y de oposición a los extraños poderes, venidos de afuera y de aquí rechazados.<sup>42</sup>*

In the opinion of her intellectual peers, Reyes personified Gamio's prophecy: she forged, for herself, an indigenous soul that linked her integrally to the ongoing processes of social revolution on a global scale. When Reyes finally secured another mural commission in 1959, she devoted years to developing a series of images that might be referred to as her "*magnum opus*." Finally given the opportunity to make her contribution to the visual record of Mexican history on a monumental scale, the muralist did not want to waste a moment. She lived a Bohemian existence in a

makeshift “apartment” in the auditorium throughout the completion of her expansive vision.

On the walls not far from the SEP compound and the National Academy of Fine Arts where she studied as a student of revolution, Reyes paid homage to many of the educators and intellectuals who contributed to the formation of the collective cultural conscience with which she self-identified. Through her undying commitment to cultural education, Reyes helped to more clearly define the nation’s aesthetic connection to its indigenous past and also its commitment to the future. The imagery and symbolism in the murals Reyes painted in the SNTE auditorium illuminate the continuity inherent in this process.

The auditorium hosting the murals may be conceptualized with the familiar orientation of four cardinal directions and a center. Reyes filled three of the four walls of the auditorium with a full color narrative of the history of education in Mexico, from the pre-Hispanic era to visionary future conquests. In one corner of the composition, Reyes makes a visual reference to the *cuicacalli*, *calmécac*, *teoyocalli*, and *telpochcalli*, the four levels of education recognized in the Mexica civilization. In an opposite corner, she locates the imposing figure of an Indigenous archer whose arrow passes through archaeological sites while morphing into the hand of a modern artist. This hand deftly employs a loaded paintbrush that gives form to her rendering of modern educational institutions like the National Autonomous University, the Normal School for Teachers and the National Polytechnic Institute. The pantheon of educators realized on the front of the balcony include many of the revolutionary artists and educators mentioned in this dissertation- with the “poet

king” Nezahualcoyotl in the central position as an omniscient guide gesturing toward the cosmos.

An elevated stage framed by heavy drapery occupies the remaining wall of the room, functionally representing the practical legacy of Reyes’s open-ended worldview. The “empty” space of the stage is designed to host modern contributions to the inertia unleashed by the original inhabitants of the land upon which the SNTE headquarters rests. Living educators as well as moving images projected from the rear of the room complete the cycle of information.<sup>43</sup> As participants in the constant evolution of Mexican culture, both lecturers and audiences situated within the space are inclined to consider the auditorium as evidence of a larger process in which they too have a role to play. By occupying the center of the room, the latter are immersed by the visual narrative of education and cultural continuity. As recipients of the energy and ideas spiraling around them, they become the modern incarnation of the creative inertia unleashed by their indigenous ancestors.



FIG. 7.5: Detail of "Trayectoria de la cultura en México," (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.6: Detail of "Trayectoria de la cultura en México," (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.





FIG. 7.7: Detail of "Trayectoria de la cultura en México," (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.8: Detail of "El Libro abierto del espacio," (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.9: Detail of "El Libro abierto del espacio," (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.10: Detail of "El Libro abierto del espacio, and "Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales " (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG 7.11: Detail of "Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales" (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.12: Detail of "Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales" (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.13: Detail of "Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales" (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.14: Auditorium stage flanked by the edges of "Presencia del Maestro en los movimientos sociales" (left), and "Trayectoria de la cultura en México," (right), (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970's). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.



FIG. 7.15: Detail of “, Los Grandes Maestros en México” (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961; 1970’s). Photo by Beatriz Diaz Zurita, 2004.

Appendix nine contains a list of the individuals who appear in Reyes’s pantheon of great educators in the SNTE Auditorium. The majority of them are featured in the narrative of this dissertation, though several remain unidentified. Perhaps the words of revolutionary artist Dr. Atl, no stranger to the power of naming, best express Aurora Reyes’s place in the ongoing spiral of Mexican history:

*Aurora: tu nombre es tu propia alma, y tu apellido es la denominación de todas las dinastías del mundo... “Reyes” – reyes. Cuántos, cuántos han enfilado (o desfilado) en la Historia, pero tu eres la Reina de todos, la única Reina – y eres, por encima de todo, la emperatriz de la passion y de la inteligencia...<sup>44</sup>*

**CONCLUSION: REVOLUTION= RE-EVOLUTION**

*FIG. 8.1: Line Drawing by Aurora Reyes. (Humanos Paisajes, 1954).*

Aurora Reyes parlayed the momentum and prestige associated with the honor of being Mexico's first female muralist into a long and fruitful career of social activism that spanned decades of political upheaval. Through it all, she maintained her steadfast goal of faithfully re-interpreting the cultural continuums of Mexican history on a practical level. Reyes benefited from a rich revolutionary heritage- her grandfather, Bernardo Reyes, her father, León Reyes, and her uncle, Alfonso Reyes,

all played significant roles in the trajectory of modern Mexican history. Aurora Reyes assumed her position in this familial pantheon and devoted her life to help Mexico navigate the latest turn in the spiral of its turbulent modern history.

Many historians locate the Mexican Revolution in the period from 1910 to 1920, referring to the institutional reforms which came thereafter as “post-revolutionary.” However, I argue that revolution is not defined by an isolated decade of intense violence and political change. I understand revolution as an alternative form of human evolution that represents a measureable divergence from normative conditions. Emerging perspectives are framed by fresh interpretations of socio-cultural context. Therefore, tangible and sustainable manifestations of revolution may be identified in the lives and work of people dedicated to rebalancing society by re-editing the national historical narrative. Aurora Reyes was a member of a generation of Mexican citizens who benefitted from institutional changes that came in the wake of massive social upheaval. They parleyed their shared experiences into a new definition of *mestizaje* that transcended the outdated racial concept by incorporating the more dynamic realm of shared cultural memory.

Taking full advantage of the catalytic convergence of national and international factors (change of regime, artistic currents, technological innovation, and scientific awakening), the Mexican government funded a revolutionary set of educational initiatives in the SEP, which were concentrated in a period of about four years- from nineteen twenty to nineteen twenty-four. The experimental programs of this era included the Best Method, open-air art courses, the Mural renaissance, and Cinematography workshops. Each undertaking relied on excavating and

perpetuating Indigenous aesthetic traditions for their potential to elevate the indigenous elements of revolutionary society.

If it is possible to imagine and then trace the various threads of cultural influence contributing to national identity as constructed by artists and intellectuals in revolutionary Mexico, we must recognize the epidemiological disaster of the initial encounter, the large scale forced conversion of the surviving native population to Spanish Catholicism, and the simultaneous imposition of a national (romance) language, all of which paved the way for Mexico's full scale inclusion in European-defined economic and institutional frameworks. If we then attempt to assign a ratio to explain the sum of those parts, we might conclude that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the influence came from Spanish cultural traditions, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  from indigenous traditions. This dissertation draws attention to the ways in which students of revolution internalized and reproduced lasting social change. They did so by re-editing and amplifying the visual record of Mexican history to include a larger proportion of indigenous aesthetics, in an attempt to counterbalance the disproportionate ratio that left so many citizens robbed of the advantages and productivity engendered by national pride.

While Aurora Reyes ranked the renewed interest in the social function of muralism among the greatest accomplishments of the Mexican Revolution, the government's enthusiasm for funding such projects waned in direct proportion to its assumption of legitimacy. As the official party became more comfortable with its neo-authoritarian stronghold on Mexican politics, its emphasis on the social function of public Mexican art took a backseat to more powerful western economic



pressures. Meanwhile, the emerging regime continued to reap the benefits of the cohesive national identity these artists helped forge; determined to parlay it into a new Mexico that would mimic the North American development model. Reyes, like many artists of her generation, didn't stop working toward the institutionalization of the Revolution, but once Lazaro Cardenas left office in 1940, they had to look a lot harder to find allies for their cause among government officials.

Unfortunately, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, the official party, which derived its name from the revolution, did not remain committed to its "revolutionary" origins. For Calles, the founder of the party, the revolution consisted precisely in pacifying the country and stimulating its economy. Calles defined "revolution" and "progress" as one and the same.<sup>1</sup> Reyes became disillusioned with the government's pseudo-revolutionary stance, and she never succumbed to the attractive and persuasive powers of opportunism and greed that caused so many of her revolutionary heroes to fall from grace. Reyes internalized the revolutionary fervor of her formative years in Mexico City's historic center, and made a lasting impact as a social and cultural warrior of the twentieth century. Her life is an example of the way in which the socio-cultural context in which we live and work has the power to affect our collective and continuous struggle to evolve.

In the 1940's México found itself struggling to maintain an individual cultural identity in the face of western influence, this time under the guise of North American neo-imperialism. As the century wore on, globalization threatened to accelerate the irreversible process of western assimilation once and for all. For Aurora Reyes, the looming shadow of the North American capitalist development

model represented a dangerous path for the Mexican people. It threatened to eventually eclipse the ancient knowledge she prized so much, divorcing Mexicans from the cosmic legacy they had worked so hard to define as students of revolution.

As the twentieth century unfolded, Reyes saw many of her fellow revolutionaries lose their momentum. She witnessed the transformation of Josef Stalin, Mao Tse Tung and Fidel Castro from heroes of the common man to desperate authoritarian dictators. Even the once-fervently anticlerical Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos had a change of heart as the century wore on. Perhaps owing to the unjust and barbaric treatment of his friends and supporters during his disastrous presidential campaign in the late nineteen-twenties, in the 1940's Vasconcelos formally rejoined the Catholic Church under the influence of Jesuit intellectuals.<sup>2</sup> Reyes depicts this drastic change in his personality by including a split version of his image in her mural in the auditorium of the SNTE. She justified her two-faced representation of Vasconcelos to her friend, journalist Juan Garcia Jimenez, in 1962: "I have painted Vasconcelos with his two faces: the first, 'Maestro de la Juventud' (master of the young people), and the other, the traitor of their principles!"<sup>3</sup>



FIG. 8.2: Detail of José Vasconcelos from mural “*Los Grandes Maestros en México.*” (Aurora Reyes, circa 1959-1961, 1970’s). Photo by Beatriz Díaz Zurita, 2004.

In the late 1950’s, the city government made plans to tear down part of the *Centro Escolar Revolucion* (the site of Reyes’ first mural) to make room for a parking lot for use by the stars of a local television station. The demolition project started during a break in the school’s schedule, and it quickly became obvious that the crew had little regard for the murals housed therein. When Reyes and her friend Estela Ruiz (the ten-peso *tehuana*) found out about the impending destruction of the murals, they mobilized a group of parents and mounted a protest. Reyes, Ruiz and the concerned parents stood vigilant guard over the school. Concha Michel remembered it this way: “...it seemed like a page torn from the Revolution. The women stood guard all night long to defend their school. In the passageway at the front of the school they lit small fires, and more than one woman was armed with a cartridge belt.”<sup>4</sup> When President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines happened to pass by in his car and saw the action unfolding, his curiosity prompted him to stop and inquire about the women’s activities. Upon hearing of the plans to destroy the school and its murals, he lent his influence to their cause and helped save the school.<sup>5</sup>

This event only fueled Reyes's undying belief in the idea that the Mexican Revolution did not end with the ceasefire of 1920. She had faith that it lived on in the lives and work of Mexican artists and intellectuals. In 1954 Reyes explained the artist's ongoing role in the Mexican Revolution in an interview with Elena Poniatowska:

You have to remember that in México the precursors of the Revolution were the popular printmakers, who are ultimately represented by José Guadalupe Posada, who inspired modern Mexican painting... Fortunately, México had an integral Revolution, but it has not yet been totally consummated... and it is the artists who are the ones who have to consummate it.<sup>6</sup>

While many of her revolutionary peers found it advantageous to evolve in concert with the PRI-dominated state, Reyes repeatedly refused to compromise her integrity. The results of this are interesting: while her more opportunist friends and colleagues have achieved iconic status in the annals of Mexican history, Reyes has all but been written out of the official narrative. In 1952 Reyes clarified her political stance in an interview with journalist Maria Luisa Ocampo.

*Nunca he actuado en ningún partido político. Mi afán es actuar por el pueblo y dentro de él, especialmente el indígena, al que considero como una fuente de inspiración en todos los aspectos del arte y cuyos problemas y su resolución me interesan profundamente.*<sup>7</sup>

Reyes became so disillusioned with the endemic corruption of the Mexican government that she refocused her energies on less official projects.

In the early nineteen fifties, Reyes joined forces with a group of artists and intellectuals who frequented the Café Paris on the *Avenida 5 de Mayo* in the *centro histórico*. Reyes described the space as one of “grand exploits, both drunken and crazy.”<sup>8</sup> The group included Juan de la Cabada, José Muñoz-Cota, Pita Amor, León Felipe, Concha Michel, Manuel González Serrano, Adela Palacios, Andrés Henestrosa,

Estela and Elvia Ruiz (known within the group as “*las tehuanas*”), Germán Lizt Arzubide, Josefina Vicens, Paco Levat, and Luis Echeverría Álvarez, who would later become President of the republic. Reyes describes the scene in four parts: “*los yosemas (los que todo lo saben), los ballinche<sup>9</sup> (exclamación muy Mexicana), los penquipur (penitentes Químicamente puros), y las yoyoyas (los que hicieron de todo),*” adding that the collective represented “the best and the worst of the country, but all were rebels of the norms and standard paths of society.”<sup>10</sup>

According to Adela Palacios, the longtime wife of Mexican positivist Samuel Ramos,<sup>11</sup> the group didn’t talk about politics, nor the presidency, preferring instead to focus on “more enlightening topics of conversation.”<sup>12</sup> She described Reyes as a talented and hard-working woman who was both mother and father to her two children. Juan Soriano, another member of the group, remembered Reyes as a brave woman known for constantly pushing the limits society attempted to impose upon her. “*En tanto, resultaba una camarada asombrosa, de esas mujeres que rompieron el esquema tradicional de mujer abnegada y sometida.*”<sup>13</sup> Reyes’s art would continue to play a potent, if indirect, role in Mexican politics, as evidenced by the following anecdote, which dates from her tenure with the Café Paris cohort who lent their creative energies to the bohemian element of Mexico City society, which reached its zenith in the 1950’s.

As a young man, Luis Echeverría (who would eventually parlay his bohemian existence into an oft-maligned political career) wanted very much to be considered a member of the artistic-intellectual subset Reyes refers to as “*Los Pavorosos*”. In all probability he harbored the idea of eventually leveraging his relationships with

prominent cultural figures into political capital. He begged Reyes to bring him to their meetings, and to ingratiate him with the group. She finally conceded, on the condition that he would only be a “trial” member, their “*mascota*,” or “pet.” At this time, Echeverría worked as the private secretary to General Rodolfo Sanchez Taboada, who served as the President of the PRI from 1946 to 1952.<sup>14</sup> Samuel Schmidt comments on Echeverría’s innovative path to the Mexican Presidency:

It is clear that Echeverría, as part of the generation of youth that rushed to the coattails of General Rodolfo Sánchez Taboada, followed a political career that carried him through the labyrinthine bureaucracy to important posts. The fact that he never had been elected to office did not make him obscure. Rather, it demonstrates that there were many roads to the presidency of México and that it is dangerous to claim that there was only one formula or career path for reaching that position.<sup>15</sup>

Before he reached the pinnacle of his political career, a young Sanchez Taboada had traveled to Tehuantepec with Lázaro Cardenas, where the breathtakingly beautiful Tehuana Estela Ruiz caught his eye.



*FIG. 8.3: Estela Ruiz posing for what would become the “ten-peso Tehuana,”(1937). Ruiz dedicated this print of the photo to Aurora Reyes in 1957.*

Sanchez Taboada fell deeply in love with Ruiz, and he proposed marriage. However, when their wedding day arrived, Taboada had a change of heart and left his lovely Tehuana waiting for a groom who would not arrive. Reyes eventually convinced Ruiz to pose for her in the traditional white and gold of a Tehuana bride. Reyes intended the painting she produced from this sitting, titled the *Novia de Oro* (Golden Bride) to fulfill a commission of 8,000 pesos she had received from Bellas Artes. As Reyes neared the completion of the brilliant canvas, Luís Echeverría came to visit her studio in Coyoacán. The luminous beauty of the painting prompted him to ask Reyes for the name of the woman who modeled for the portrait. When she

identified her model as Estela Ruiz, Echeverría recognized the name and immediately realized the Tehuana's significance to his boss, General Sanchez Taboada. Always over-eager to please his superiors, Echeverría begged Reyes to sell him the painting, so that he could present it to the general as a surprise gift. She refused on the grounds that it had already been promised to *Bellas Artes*.

The arrogant Echeverría demanded to know the amount of the commission, paid her the same amount, and instructed her to paint something else for *Bellas Artes*. Echeverría took the painting from her studio that very day. Because the oversized canvas did not fit in a conventional car, he enlisted the help of a friend who owned a convertible to transport the gift, carefully wrapped in one of Reyes's sheets to protect it during the trip across town. Echeverría took the piece directly to Sanchez Taboada's house. A servant allowed Echeverría to place the canvas in the General's office, where he left the *Novia de Oro* in wait, still veiled by the borrowed sheet. The following morning Echeverría became nervous when Sanchez-Taboada, well-known for his punctuality, didn't show up at the designated place and time for the military parade scheduled for that day.

After a series of inquiries, Echeverría made the surreal discovery that upon arriving home and unveiling the canvas, Sanchez Taboada suffered a fatal heart attack. The sight of his former love, dressed in full regalia as she might have been on their wedding day, proved too much for him to bear.<sup>16</sup> Echeverría eventually regained possession of the painting, and has since loaned it to the Reyes family several times for national exhibitions, including a 1992 show at the *Museo Nacional de Arte* titled *Del Istmo y sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*.<sup>17</sup> Echeverría



eventually re-gifted the painting to Teodoro Carrasco, the former Governor of Oaxaca, with the idea that it belonged there, closer to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.<sup>18</sup>



FIG. 8.4: *La Novia de Oro*, Aurora Reyes, 1955.

In a 2002 interview, Reyes' grandson Hector stated that many people feared his grandmother during her lifetime because she refused to conform to societal norms. Perhaps her relatively deep perspective of Mexican society enabled her to see the shortcomings of normative influences that lacked legitimacy in practical terms. The "order" supposedly maintained by such imposed "norms" failed repeatedly to guarantee the popular majority the basic quality of life they deserved. In the 1930's

Reyes contributed much needed female perspective to the modern mural renaissance designed to render the visual narrative of national history more inclusive of previously marginalized protagonists. In the nineteen-forties the artist-educator embraced *Istmeño* culture by bathing naked in the rivers of Tehuantepec and promoting gender duality among cultural elites in Mexico City. Although she resigned from the Communist party in disgust over its poor treatment of women,<sup>19</sup> in 1954 the *Union Nacional Sinarquistas* included her name on its list of communist enemies of the state. Eternally sympathetic to social revolution on a global scale, in the late 1950's Reyes hid arms in her house in Coyoacán in preparation for the Cuban Revolution. In 1968 she helped students from the Academy of San Carlos produce propaganda to protest the increasingly authoritarian government, and she witnessed the massacre of unarmed protesters at Tlatlelolco, commonly known as the plaza of the three cultures.<sup>20</sup>

Reyes's old "friend" Luis Echeverria's participation in the horrific events at Tlatlelolco must have affected her deeply. Not long after that landmark moment in Mexican history, immigration authorities in New York detained Reyes for hours due to her supposed membership in the communist party. When informed of her pending arrest for participating in the student led protest movement, Reyes became enraged. Finally allowed to return to Mexico, she made the clever decision to check herself into La Castañeda psychiatric clinic to avoid arrest. According to her grandson, Hector, Reyes knew the director of the clinic well, and he helped her to register under an assumed name in hopes of eluding the authorities.<sup>21</sup>

Reyes struggled financially for years to support her sons on the meager salary of an employee of her beloved SEP. In 1970 President Luis Echeverría offered her a cabinet-level position as the director of *Bellas Artes*, which carried the promise of financial security, not to mention “official” recognition of her work on the Mexican cultural battlefield. Had Reyes accepted the appointment, she would have become the first woman to assume such a high-ranking position in the Ministry of Education. Instead, she refused on the grounds that her acceptance would require the compromise of her personal integrity, and signal her compliance with a brutish and authoritarian government. When her old friend Echeverría traveled to her home in Coyoacán to offer her the position in person, she reportedly slammed the door in his face while shouting, “I don’t make deals with murderers, so fuck off.”<sup>22</sup> Echeverría, like so many prominent friends of Reyes, had fallen under the intoxicating spell of the power and opportunism endemic in Mexican politics. Reyes could not reconcile the fact that her former bohemian friend had been directly involved in the unforgettable massacre of students at Tlatlelolco in 1968.

Although many of her peers fell victim to the opportunism that inevitably develops as a part of any redistribution of political power, Reyes remained true to herself and never lost sight of her belief that the key to México’s future lay in re-establishing a continuum with its past. She believed in the elemental nature of native Mexican culture: that the *Mexicas* and their forefathers deserved to be recognized alongside the great civilizations of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. Like her predecessors Gamio and the young Vasconcelos, Reyes recognized that the wisdom of the earliest inhabitants of the Valley of Anahuac held the key to an

alternative development path for Modern México. In Reyes's mind, the Revolution of 1910 had the potential to bring equality to the Mexican people by inspiring a re-valuation of their indigenous past that would inspire pride in the *mestizo* present. Her generation made the lasting contribution of redefining *mestizaje* in terms that transcended race, and encompassed the wide and heterogenous range of cultural experiences that together define modern Mexico.

Near the end of Reyes's life, the Delegation of Coyoacan published an anthology of her poetry titled *Espiral en Retorno* (Spiral in Return). The title alludes to the eternal and dynamic motion represented by the spiral- a potent symbol for understanding the fractal nature of Mexican history. Reyes understood that the majority of Mexico's modern inhabitants had to recognize themselves in an inclusive and collective historical narrative before the nation could achieve cultural equilibrium. Firm in this belief, Reyes became a staunch and vocal advocate for the re-formation of México's cosmic consciousness. In the classroom as in life, she taught by example in the work she produced: as an artist, a poet, and a human rights activist. She dedicated her life to educating others in this belief, and fought for the consummation of the Revolution until her death in 1985.

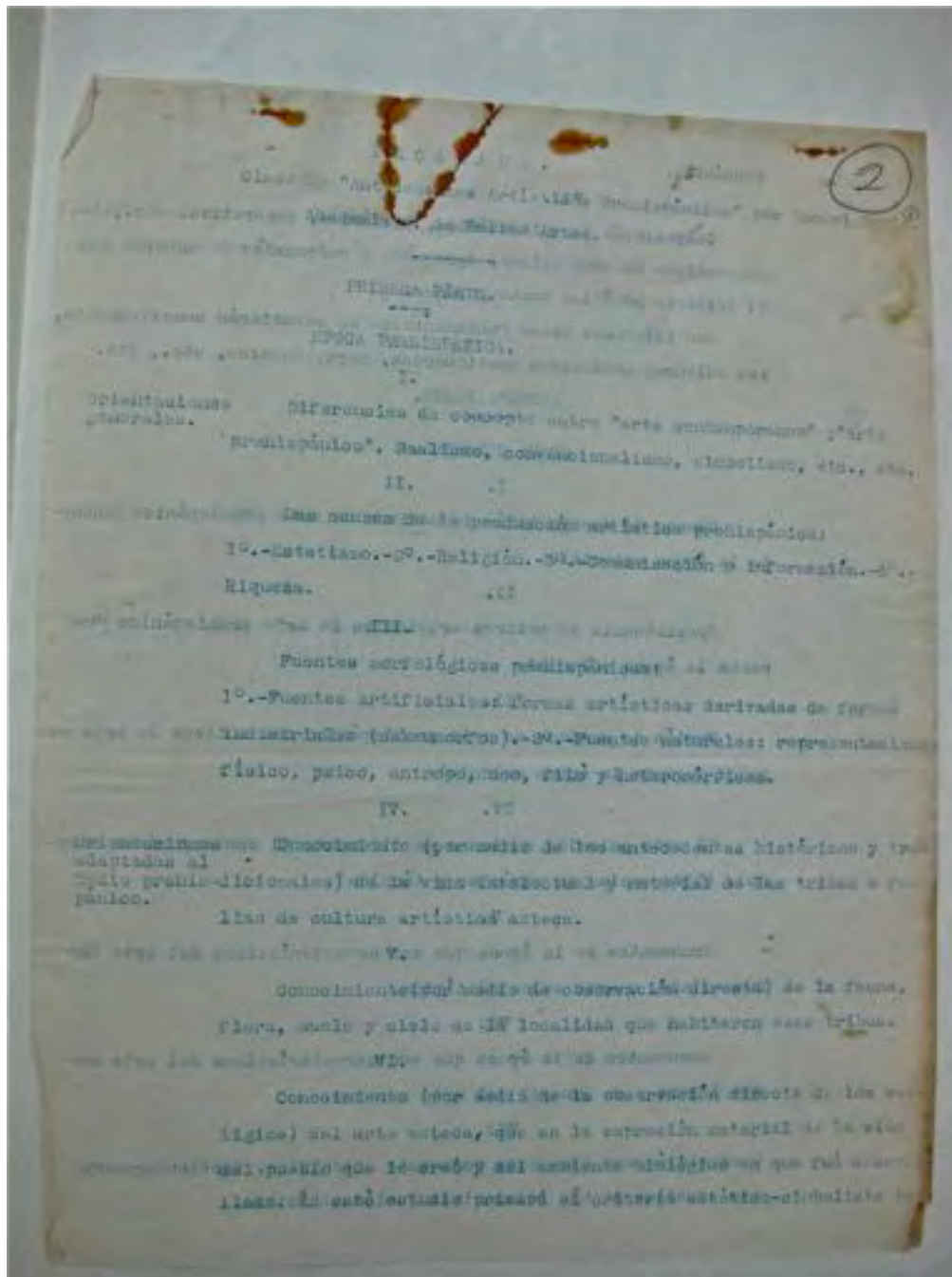
As the PRI has evolved to its present incarnation as the dominant force in Mexican politics, opportunism and corruption have become institutionalized as a part of its formerly revolutionary identity. With the onslaught of new forms of media and communications technology, it becomes more and more difficult to decipher the motivating forces within the labyrinth of Mexican politics. Much of the symbolic imagery employed by Reyes and other artists and intellectuals to construct

a landscape of national pride and unity has continually been co-opted by the party as symbols of its proprietary version of *Mexicanidad*. In this way, the indigenous symbolism that Porfirio Díaz co-opted in hopes of legitimizing his Presidency in the opening decade of the twentieth century has come full circle. The twenty-first century PRI has been known to produce campaign propaganda with its party logo superimposed onto images of México's great pyramids, and has even commissioned a representation of the sacred *Piedra del Sol* that features the tricolored logo of the PRI in its center.

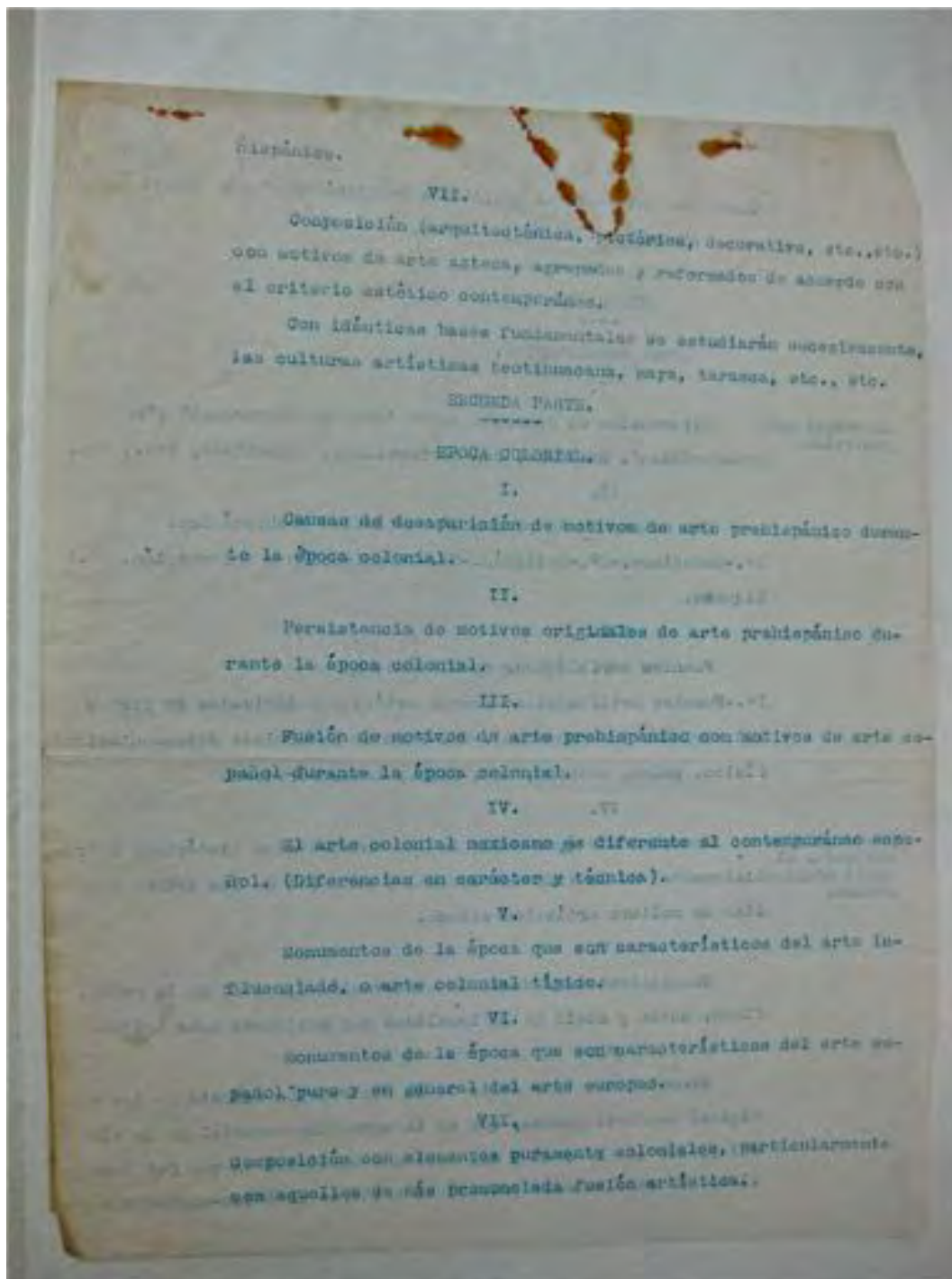
The same political party that once upon a time commissioned murals as a symbolic use of public space to form a cohesive and revolutionary national identity is now utilizing billboards to conflate the party with the most primordial of Mexican symbols; in effect co-opting the momentum generated by the revolutionary generation who redefined the value of cultural mestizaje. From murals to billboards, the party's juggernaut campaign to equate itself with *México Profundo* has helped it dominate the urban political landscape since its inception.

**Appendices:**

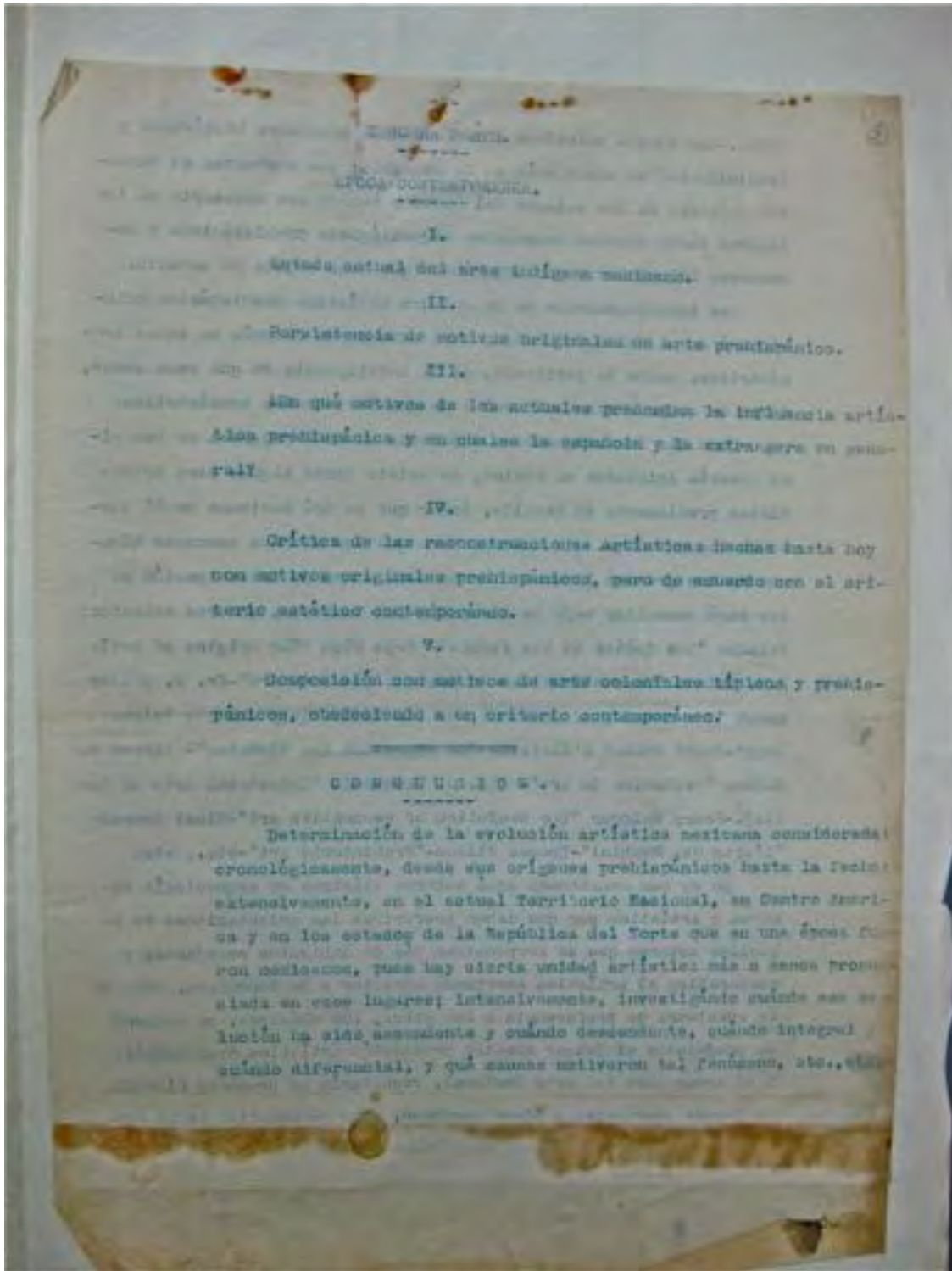
**Appendix One: Gamio Syllabus (1914)**



## Appendix 1. Gamio Syllabus (1914)

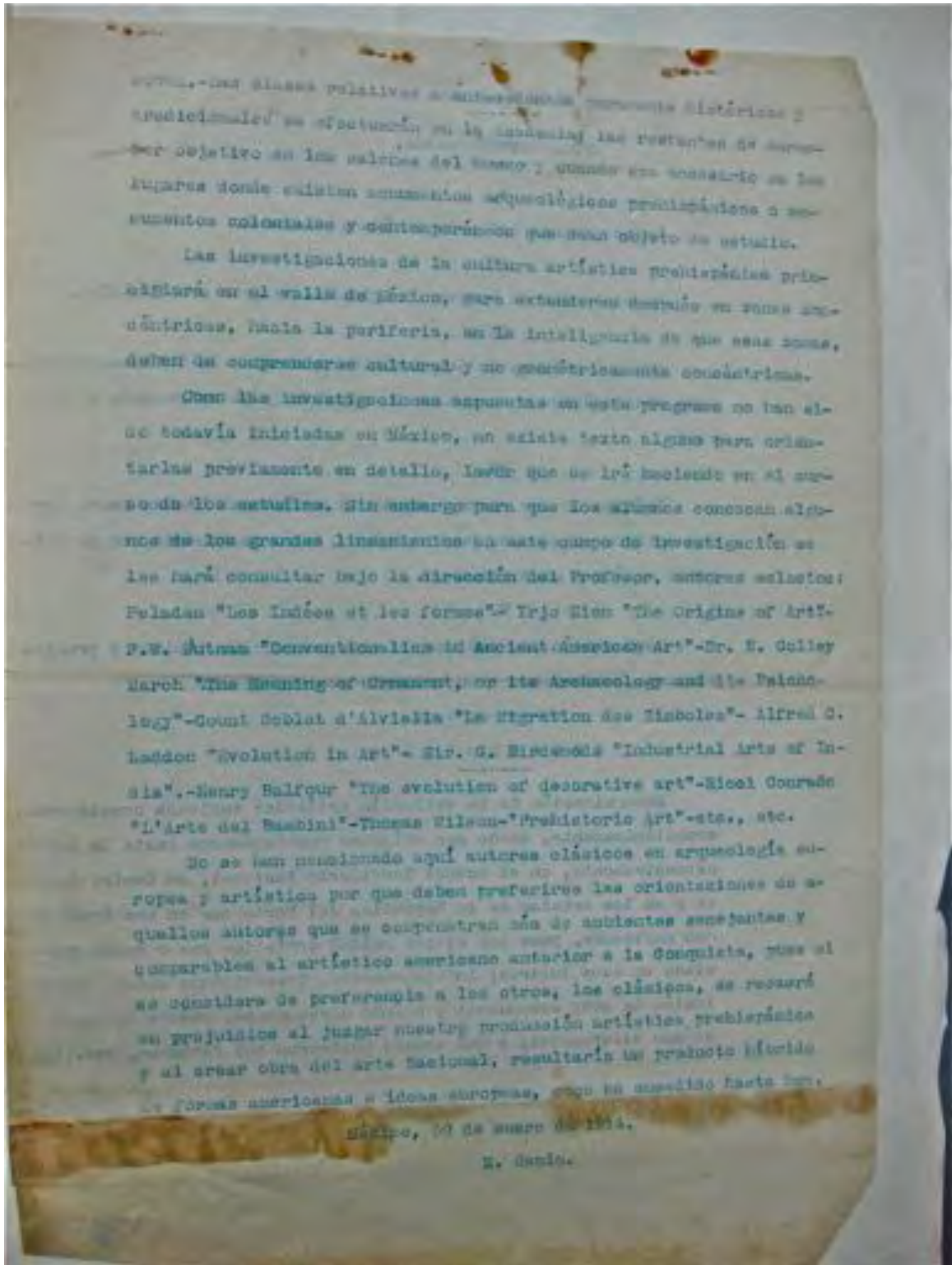


Appendix 1. Gamio Syllabus (1914)

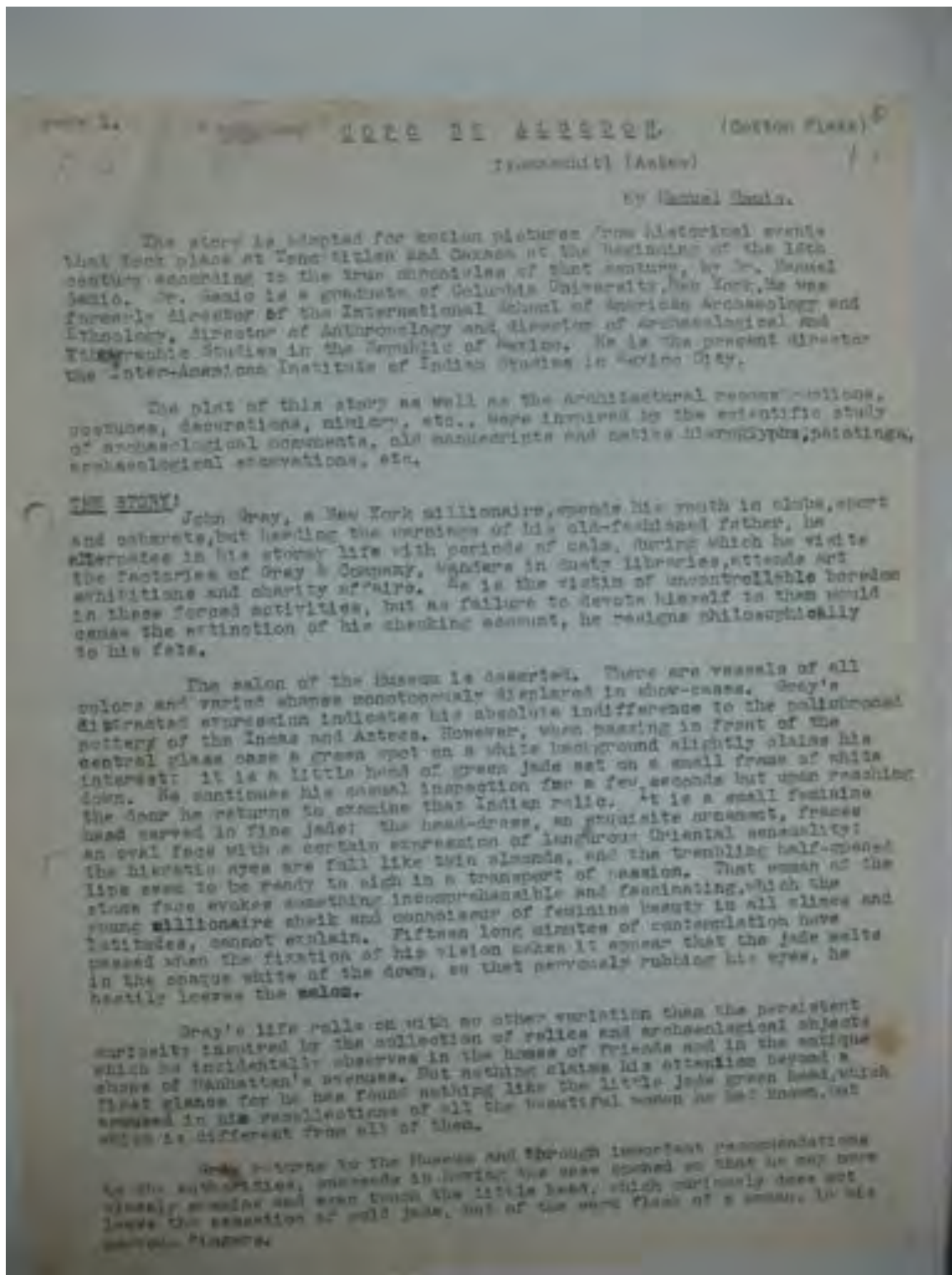




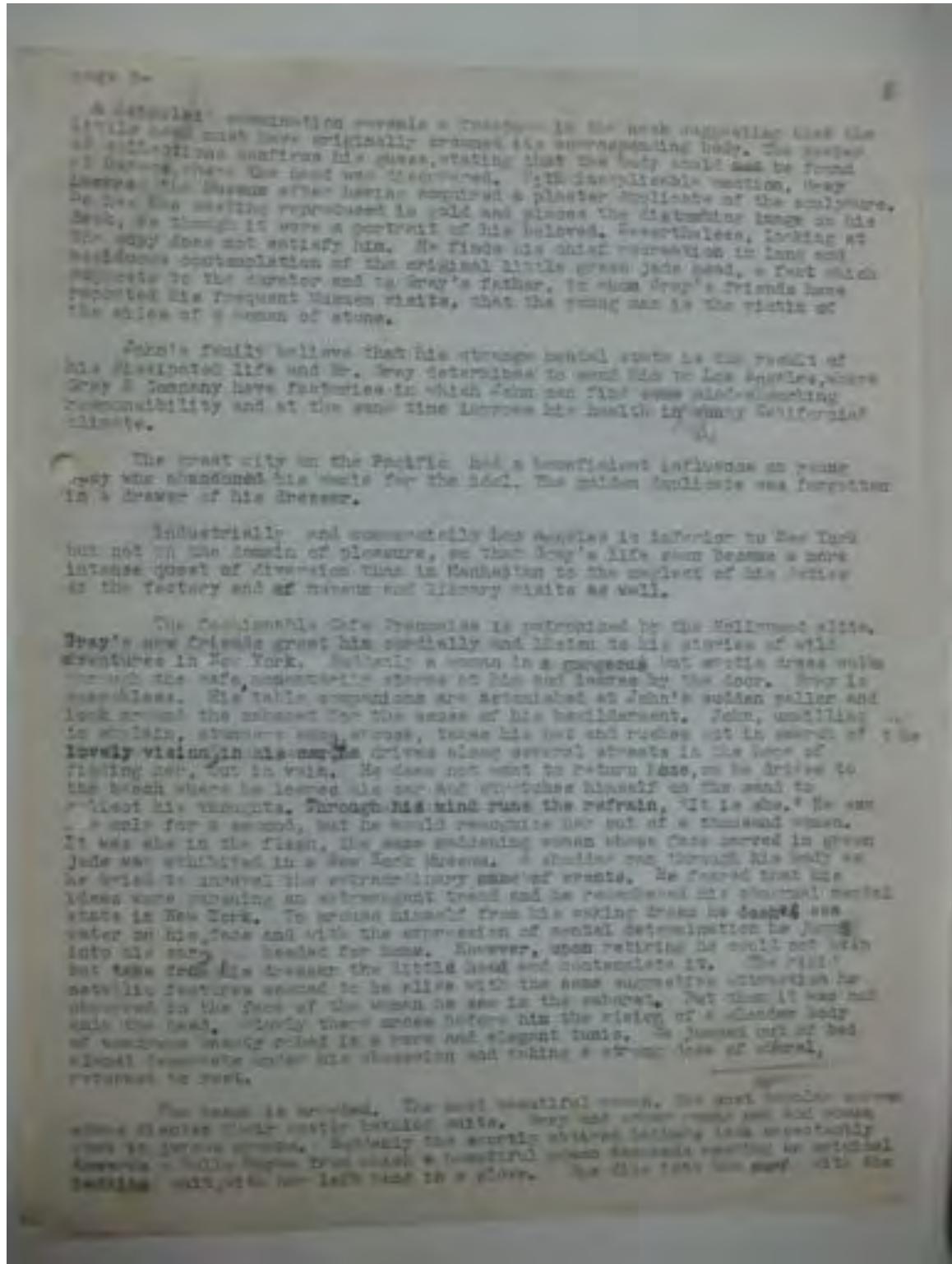
Appendix 1. Gamio Syllabus (1914)



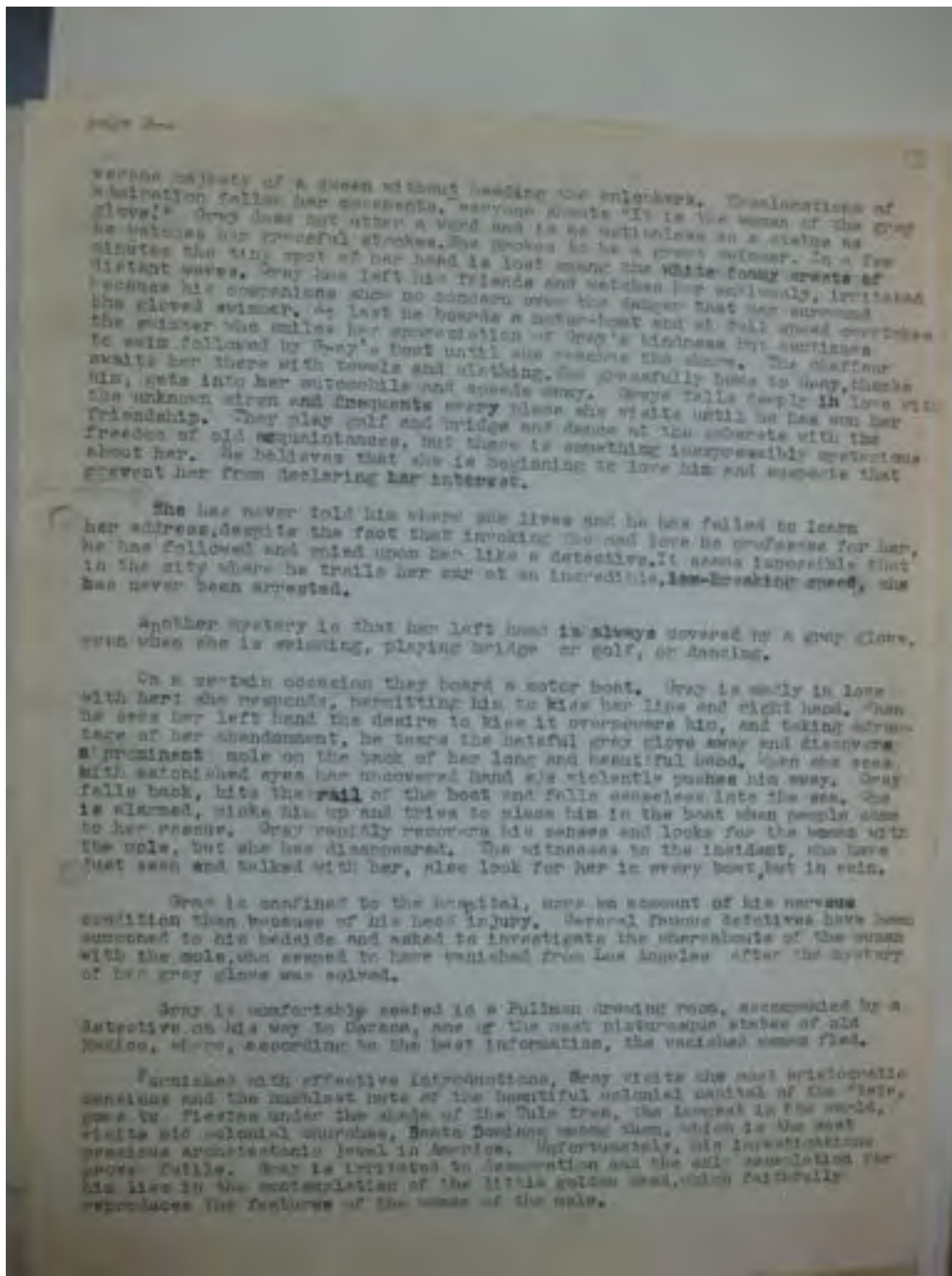
## Appendix Two: Gamio Screenplay

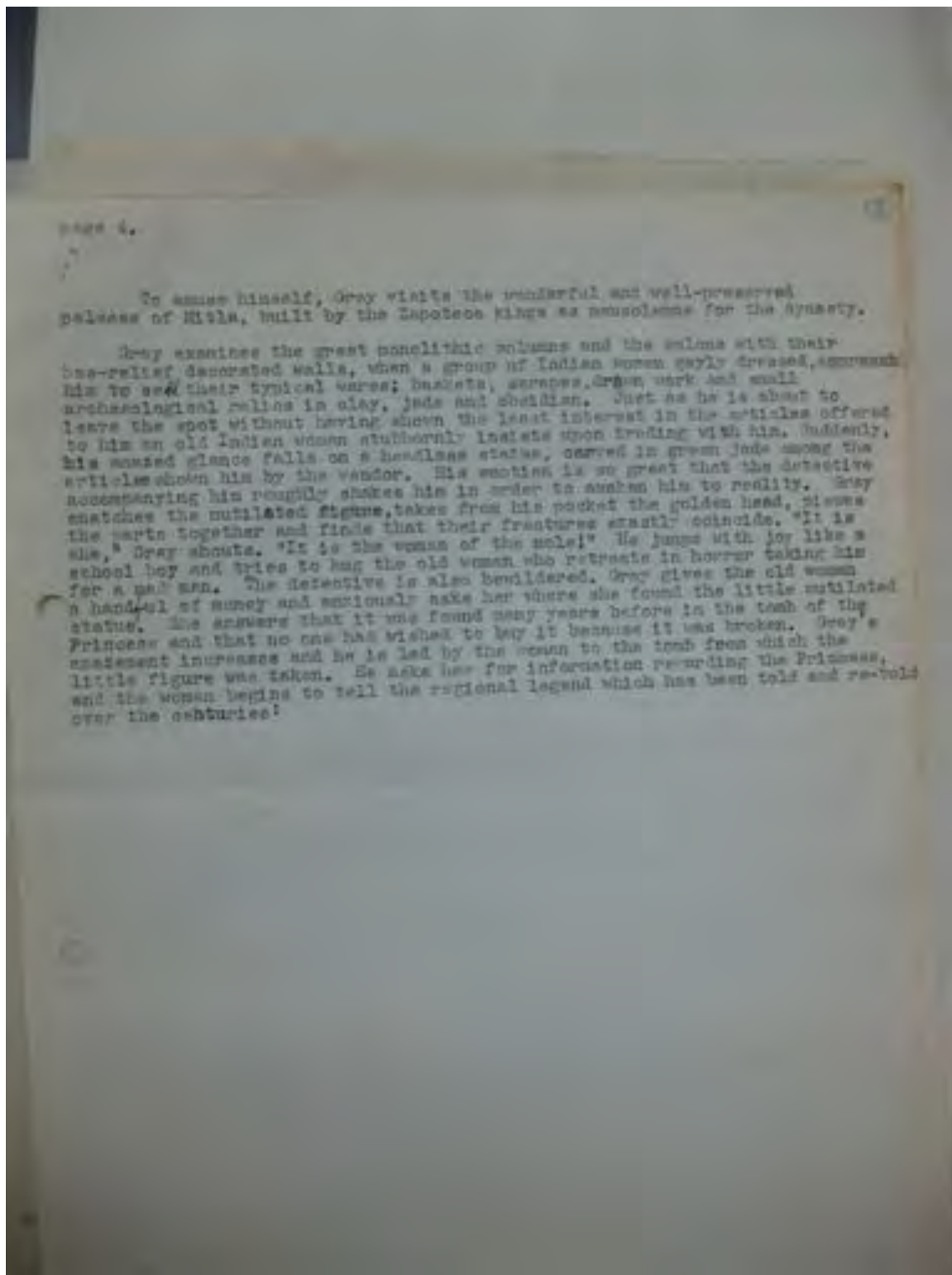


## Appendix 2. Gamio Screenplay



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### The Legend.

A delegation of the most prominent people of Tezcuiccan (now Mexico City) to seek Emperor Moctezuma's aid against the Tlaxcaltecs, who, under the leadership of the brave and gigantic warrior, Tlahuiccole, were devastating their territory. Moctezuma grants aid to the Tezcuiccanes.

The Aztec warriors meet with defeat in various encounters against the Tlaxcaltecs, mainly through the valor and might of the Tezcuiccan Tlahuiccole, who is finally over-come and vanquished by the ever increasing number of his enemies, who succeed in capturing him when he accidentally falls into a swamp.

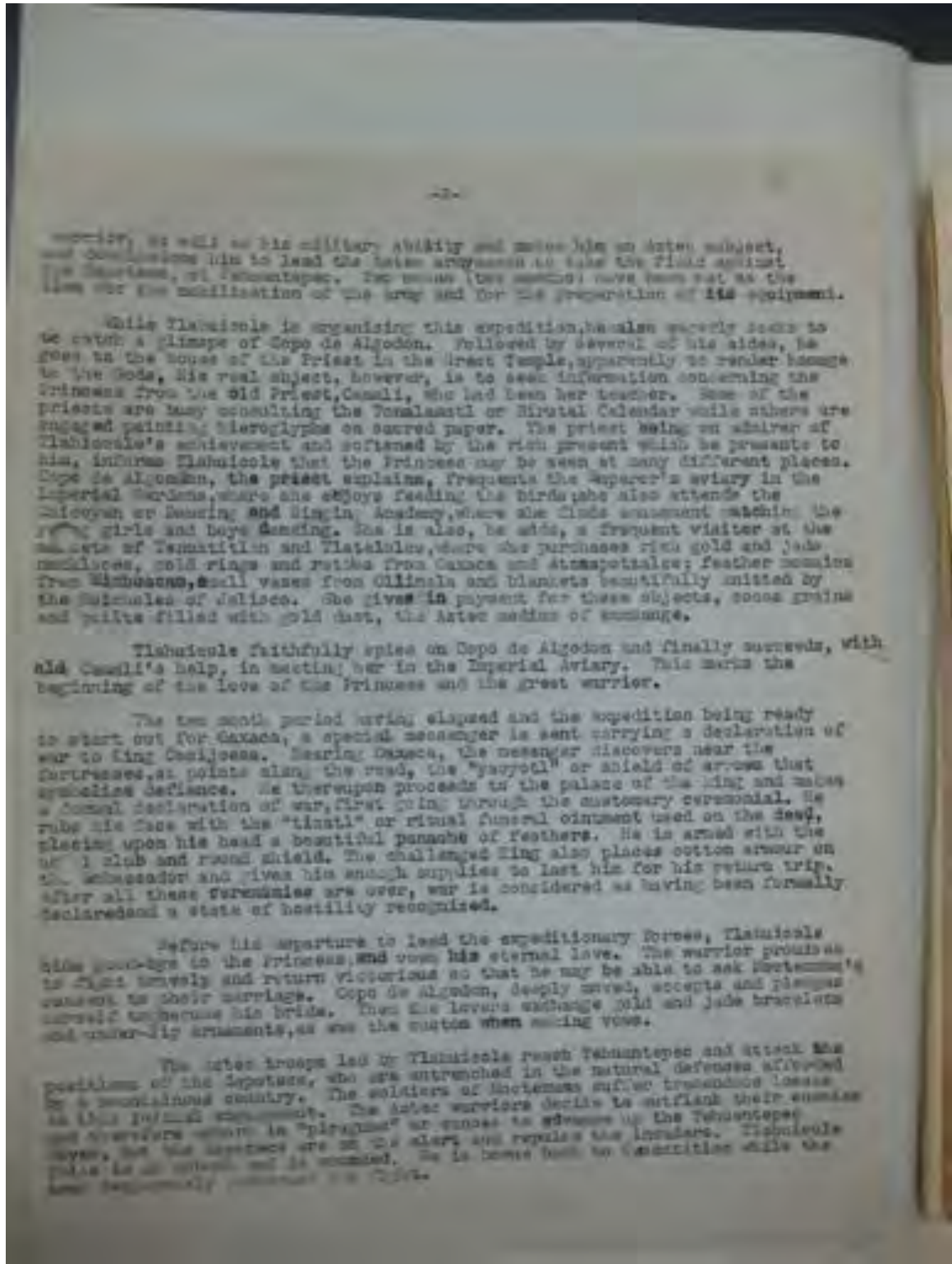
Tlahuiccole is taken to Tenochtitlan, where he is granted the sacred privilege, according to which he may recover his liberty if he succeeds in vanquishing several warriors armed with various weapons, in a gladiatorial fight which takes place before Emperor Moctezuma and the court. Tlahuiccole is permitted only blunted and pointless weapons and his movements are restricted by the tying of one of his feet. Tlahuiccole conquers his opponents despite all these handicaps, but one of the last warriors to face him succeeds in wounding him slightly, for his attention has been diverted from the combat to a beautiful young girl of the Emperor's court--Princess Cope de Algodon, favorite daughter of Moctezuma. His emotion passes and he defeats his opponent together with several others, thereby gaining his freedom. Cope de Algodon has followed the combat with deep emotion and great admiration, and the expression in her eyes indicates the profound impression made on her by the warrior of Tlaxcala.

Everybody including Moctezuma and his nobles and warriors praise the valor and might of Tlahuiccole, who absorbed in contemplating the rare beauty of the Princess, seems unaware of their admiration. Tlahuiccole is set free by Moctezuma, who gives him weapons, rich sandals and a flaring pancehâ bearing the royal coat of arms that will serve him as a passport when he reaches the frontier of Tlaxcala.

Tlahuiccole crosses the Lake of Texcoco in a royal canoe, accompanied by a guard of honor. But as he heads for Tlaxcala the image of Cope de Algodon still fascinates his mind. He cannot forget the beautiful young Princess and sad and heartbroken, he turns back toward Tenochtitlan. He is saddened by the thought of his wife and children who weep while they await his return. Depressed, and perturbed by many conflicting emotions, he seeks consolation in the peaceful calm of a small island where the canoe is moored. Aware that it is impossible for him to remain away from the lovely and noble virgin, he decides to return to Tenochtitlan to the hope that Moctezuma will consent to his becoming an Aztec subject and permit him to remain in the capital of the Empire.

Moctezuma is advised that a number of his troops had been attacked at the hill of El Tigre (Tehuacan) while on their way to Cuauhtlan (Guatemala) by the subjects of the King of Canaan, Chaljees. A Council of war takes place, attended by the military leaders, nobles and the King's favorite. At this moment Tlahuiccole begs for an audience with the Emperor, who receives him with surprise and after consulting with the nobles and the Council, decides to receive him. After listening to Tlahuiccole's plea, the Emperor grants him an Aztec subject and permit him to remain in Tenochtitlan. The Emperor then commends the mighty achievements of the brave Tlaxcala

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The people of Texcoco are greatly aroused at the news that Tlahuicole, the famous warrior, is back in town and wounded. Copo de Algodon through great cunning and with the whole-hearted help of Camali finally succeeds in visiting him. Prostrated by a high fever, Tlahuicole is delirious and imagines himself at Texcoco with his wife and children. This incident greatly displeases the Princess. Tlahuicole's wounds are not speedily cured by herb doctors and witches who slowly succeed in restoring his health.

Some of the troops that fight in Texcoco return, all shattered and demoralized. Their lieutenants inform Montezuma that victory against the Mexicans is a difficult enterprise to achieve. They then tell him that they have learned through later spies of an extraordinary incident that occurred to King Cosijoes and relate the following: while bathing in the beautiful Lake Cozaco, a woman of marvellous beauty emerged from the water and told him that she was Montezuma's daughter and that he would marry her, as this was the desire of the gods. And then ennobled her body with aromatic herbs as was the ritual of the Aztecs before the wedding ceremony and before disappearing under the water, she raised her hand and disclosed a large mole on its back.

Montezuma, the most diplomatic of all the Aztec Kings, realizes that his soldiers will at the end be annihilated by the fierce enemy and the treacherous tropical climate. So, shrewdly profiting by Cosijoes's credulity in the apparition of one of his daughters, dispatches several messengers to the king of the Aztecs and offers him peace through a blood alliance between the two kingdoms. This offer having been accepted by Cosijoes, Montezuma consults with his imperial daughters upon the power of Cosijoes, the Aztec King, and tells them of the apparition of Lake Cozaco. On hearing this, Copo de Algodon is deeply moved realizing that her beauty and the mole on her hand correspond to those of the beautiful apparition of Cozaco.

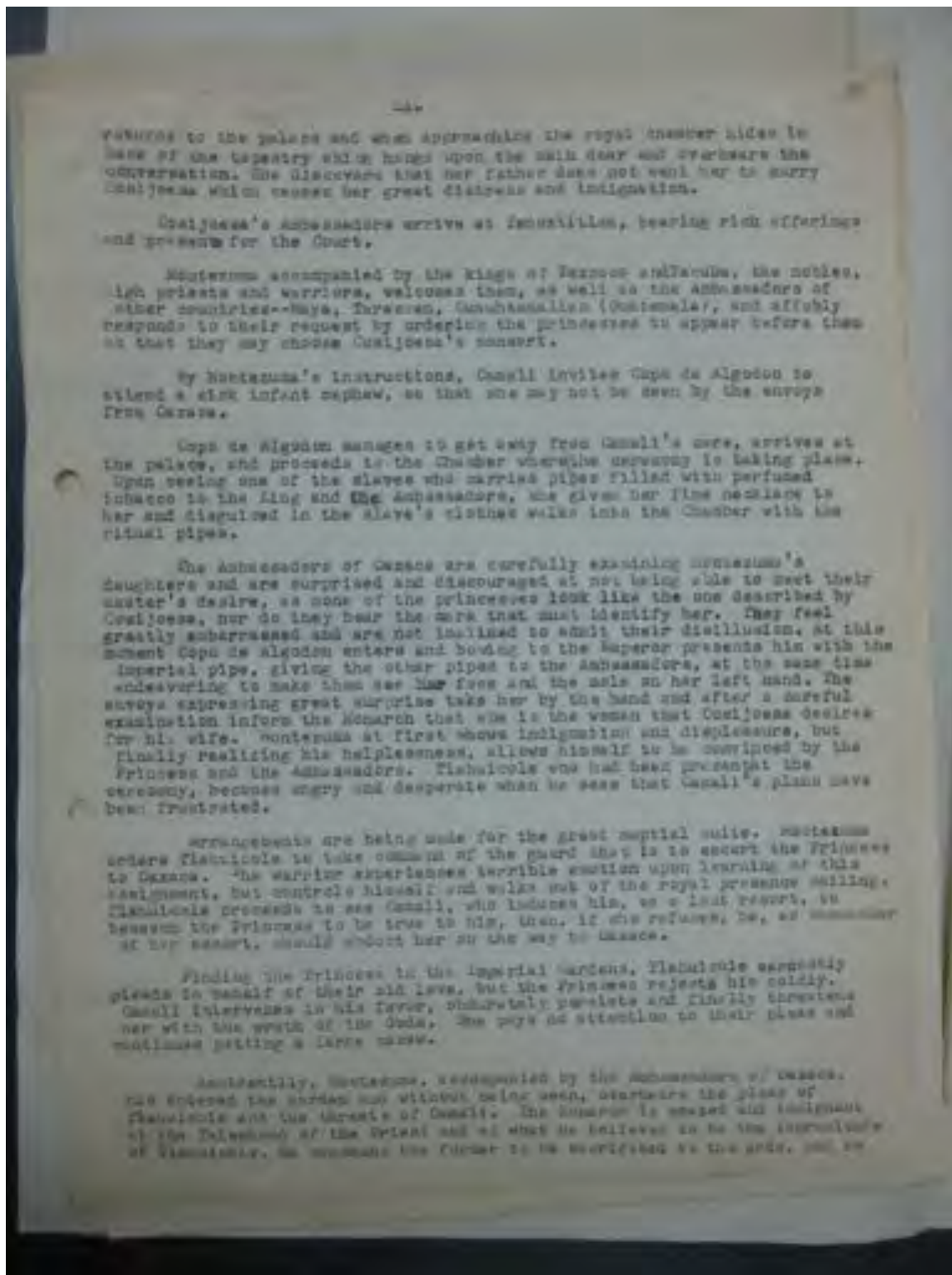
While Tlahuicole goes to visit Copo de Algodon, he notices a great change in her attitude and he knows also that Cosijoes is to marry one of Montezuma's daughters. He begs her to remain loyal to him. The Princess does not respond as her mind is absorbed with dreams of the Prince of a faraway country where sumptuous palaces, rich jewels and tiger and puma skins abound.

Greatly worried, Tlahuicole calls upon Camali and offers him gifts such as quilts filled with gold dust, cocoa grains and rich tapestries if he will intercede with Copo de Algodon and influence her to forget the hated Cosijoes. The old priest tries to convince the Princess, but in vain. Copo de Algodon is silent and melancholy but at intervals her face and eyes brighten when she imagines the great Cosijoes smiles at her lovingly. Without being discouraged Camali goes to see Montezuma and tells him that a revelation of the Gods shows that one of his daughters, the one with a mole on her hand, is destined to marry a great King, richer and mightier than the King of Texcoco. Being very superstitious and having great respect for Camali's wisdom, Montezuma is greatly impressed upon hearing the prediction and tells the priest that Copo de Algodon will not be present when Cosijoes's envoys arrive to choose the one that is to become Cozaco's queen.

The arrival of the matrimonial ambassadors is at hand and Montezuma uses some pretext to send Copo de Algodon away from the palace. He informs his eldest daughters of the date when they should assemble so that one of them may be chosen as the wife of Cosijoes. Copo de Algodon goes to the gardens of the palace but suddenly a strange inspiration tells her that her father and others are deliberating upon something that directly concerns her. Her



## Appendix 2. Gamio Screenplay



## Appendix 2. Gamio Screenplay

His enemies forbid him to go forward to the warrior on account of his slowness of the diabolical fight, he declares his on the east and negative side of his command and nobility, at the same time ordering all his subjects under the death penalty, to ridicule and mock him as he commonly does to persons who lose their senses under the influence of liquor.

The sacrifice of Casali takes place after the customary ceremonial in the Great Temple, before Huetzama, the Ahuacatl and the Acostlers.

Ridiculed and humiliated by the subject populace, Tlahuicole is thrown out of his fine residence and obliged to roam in rags about the streets of the capital and compelled to do work unworthy of a famous warrior. In order to obtain even a tortilla (corn cake), he is forced to carry enormous burdens upon his shoulders to market; in the ball games he gives up the little ~~marbles~~ balls which fall at a distance; he finds the games that have run aground in the canals and pulls the cords that serve to carry the enormous swallows to the temple. At sight of all this marvellous strength displayed by Tlahuicole during his plebeian labors, public anger comes to an end, the abuse stops, and everyone contemplates with admiration and fear this forlorn valiant, who could in a moment of rage, crush a whole neighborhood of Tenochtitlan.

The sumptuous nuptial suit of Cempo de Algodon departs from Tenochtitlan and Huetzama, the Court and the people bid the Princess an affectionate farewell. Hidden in one of the temples, Tlahuicole watches her departure.

King Cuauhtemoc ~~with~~ Cempo de Algodon at the Great Palace of Mitla (Oaxaca), the mausoleum of the Aztec Kings, where the marriage takes place with elaborate ceremonial.

Tlahuicole's life gradually becomes more difficult and embittered; he now employs him now at the markets and canals. For days at a time he lives on herbs and reptiles and finally, he is compelled to beg in the streets, but is so rudely refused that he has to resist.

A soldier just returned from Caxaca, recognizes in Tlahuicole his former commander, and taking him home with him, describes the gorgeous ceremonials of the marriage of Cempo de Algodon. Before reaching his home, the soldier stops at the Temple to pray for his happy return. When he goes into the temple, Tlahuicole waits for him on the steps of the pyramid. A priest saying on the soldier, severely reprimands him when he joins Tlahuicole, telling him that the warrior is anathematized by the ~~superior~~ and the Gods, and that whoever talks to him or helps him, will incur severe penalty. The soldier flees in fright and the priest returns to the sanctuary.

Heart-broken for his family and country, and humiliated and vilified by the Aztecs, he curses Cempo de Algodon and proclaims that she will never live in peace. Finally Tlahuicole ends his life by throwing himself headlong from the top of the Temple of Huetzama.

Several years after the suicide of Tlahuicole, the Queen of Caxaca, Princess Princess Cempo de Algodon, dies and her body is cremated and buried with the state funeral rites of her fatherland. Afterwards the ashes are placed in a vault at the royal mausoleum of Mitla. Precious vessels, gold and jade ornaments, figurines representing the Gods are placed with the ashes in the vault as well as a jade statuette which looks like the Princess.

The End.



Appendix Three: List of educational films utilized by the Mexican Secretary of Public Education between March and September of 1922

A.) Films acquired through Señor Luis G. Peredo, 24 rolls of film @.15 a foot (total: value: \$1,319.25)

1. Una ciudad que fué
2. Sobre el Bósforo
3. Construcción de Arcas
4. Teatro popular en Arabia
5. Los Lagartos
6. Cómo se construye un aeroplano
7. Alvernia pintoresca
8. Villas Santas del Japón
9. El Dítico
10. Las Salamandras
11. Costumbres y hábitos en Australia
12. Lozas artísticas de Nevers
13. Observaciones de un viajero en China
14. La vida en las Indias
15. La Síntesis del Diamante
16. La Pulga Acuática
17. Mimikri
18. De las tinieblas a la luz
19. El escarabajo
20. El Escorpión de Languedoc
21. La vida de las Indias (2)
22. En el país de los Beduinos
23. Costumbres en China
24. Recolección y preparación del the

B.) Films acquired through the Commercial Distributing Company, 12 rolls of educational films produced by the Ford Company with a value of \$896.41 (TITLES UNIDENTIFIED)

**Source for A. and B.: AHSEP Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, p. 203.**

C.) Films produced in the cinematography workshops of the Fine Arts Department during the year of 1922 (Spanish title first, English translation, then length in feet of each film):

1. Las fiestas de Chalma (the fiestas of Chalma) (3,000 feet)
2. Xochimilco (a section of Mexico City with canals- where flowers are cultivated) (500 feet)
3. Juegos Atléticos de Mayo (May athletic games) (500)

4. Edipo (Oedipus) (*sic*- I believe the play that was actually performed was Elektra, not Oedipus) with Spanish actress Margarita Xirgu in Chapultepec Park (500)
5. Ejercicios de la Escuela Ignacio M. Altamirano (Exercises in the Altamirano school) (500)
6. Fiesta de Cultura Estética, en Chapultepec (fiesta of aesthetic culture in Chapultepec park) (1200)
7. El Volcán Popocatepetl (Popocatepetl volcano) (400)
8. Inauguración del edificio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (inauguration of the Secretary of Public Education) (2000)
9. Fiestas de San Juan Teotihuacan (fiestas of San Juan Teotihuacan-pyramids) (400)
10. Desayunos escolares (school breakfasts) (1200)
11. Festival español organizado por Cultura Estética (Spanish festival organized by aesthetic culture) (500)
12. Fiesta en honor del centenario del Brasil (fiesta in honor of the Brazilian centennial) (400)
13. Fiesta del Arbol, por el Dept. Escolar (fiesta of the tree, by the education department) (200)
14. Puebla Colonial (colonial Puebla) (2400)
15. Edificio y interiores de Cultura Estética (the building and interiors of aesthetic culture) (300)
16. Décimo encuentro interescolar de Cultura Física (10<sup>th</sup> inter-scholar encounter of physical culture) (400)
17. Exhibición Atlética (Athletic exhibition) (2000)
18. Bailes en la escuela "José M. Iglesias" (dances in the José M. Iglesias school) (250)
19. Llegada de Gabriela Mistral a Mexico (the arrival of Gabriela Mistral in Mexico) (600)

Additional titles produced by the SEP:

1. Fabricación de loza (300)
2. La industria de la lana (200)
3. Islas del río San Lorenzo
4. Problema de las habitaciones (300)
5. Industria del salmon (200)
6. Las Escuelas modernas (200)
7. Copia de la película El Mundo, El Sol y La Luna (800)

**Source for C.: AHSEP Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 3, 1922, p. 413.**

## Appendix 4: Aurora Reyes to Frida Kahlo (1946)

Pochitlan, Oax. 24 IX - 1946

Frida, Frida.

Desde esta otra tierra, desde este otro país o país, me voy a despedir de este planeta, de ti recuerdo Frida, ahora + entonces y cercano y lejano, al ver morirse en esta realidad maravillosa voy a ser como si estuviera tan regocijando en tu irrealdad de flor.

Aquí no hay tiempo para el sueño, ni para el despertar, solo tres, cuatro gotas que lloran en mi cuerpo sobre presentes: Tía, Hector, Pepe, Cops... lo demás se ha perdido.

Ahora conozco a Diego y a lo que se va a hacer. Recuerdo que en el momento de llorar aprendiendo la lección de la vida y el amor ha concluido.

¡Nada hay parecido sobre la tierra! Y es esta tierra y en la noche el que definitivamente llega la noche del insomnio: ¡fuerza como adios abiertos, frutos maduros para la cosecha de hoy! - Nazario con sus raíces de infinito, expulso en una semana maternal, viene cerca de mí en silencio + tocado con zapoteca.

Al mont ayote los árboles tendidos con sus ramas agazapadas como venas gigantes.

El alcazán canta las 4 con un grito fuerte y se va del lado en cada hora.

¿Cuánto tiempo me quedará mi sueño, este momento de mi vida? ¿o es posible descubrirlo, Frida, que sea cuando vuelva quedo en este momento preciso, cuando se te vaya en mis palabras. ¡Quiero de presente! Representa a figura, a figura y gracia. Me voy a irme con mi familia y a irme a

## Appendix 4. Aurora Reyes to Frida Kahlo (1946)



COMITÉ EJECUTIVO NACIONAL

 Insurgentes Norte No. 59.  
 México 3, D. F.

y la comunidad y el afecto cobren nuevo sentido  
 ¡Si el comunismo hubiera... Si el comunismo!...

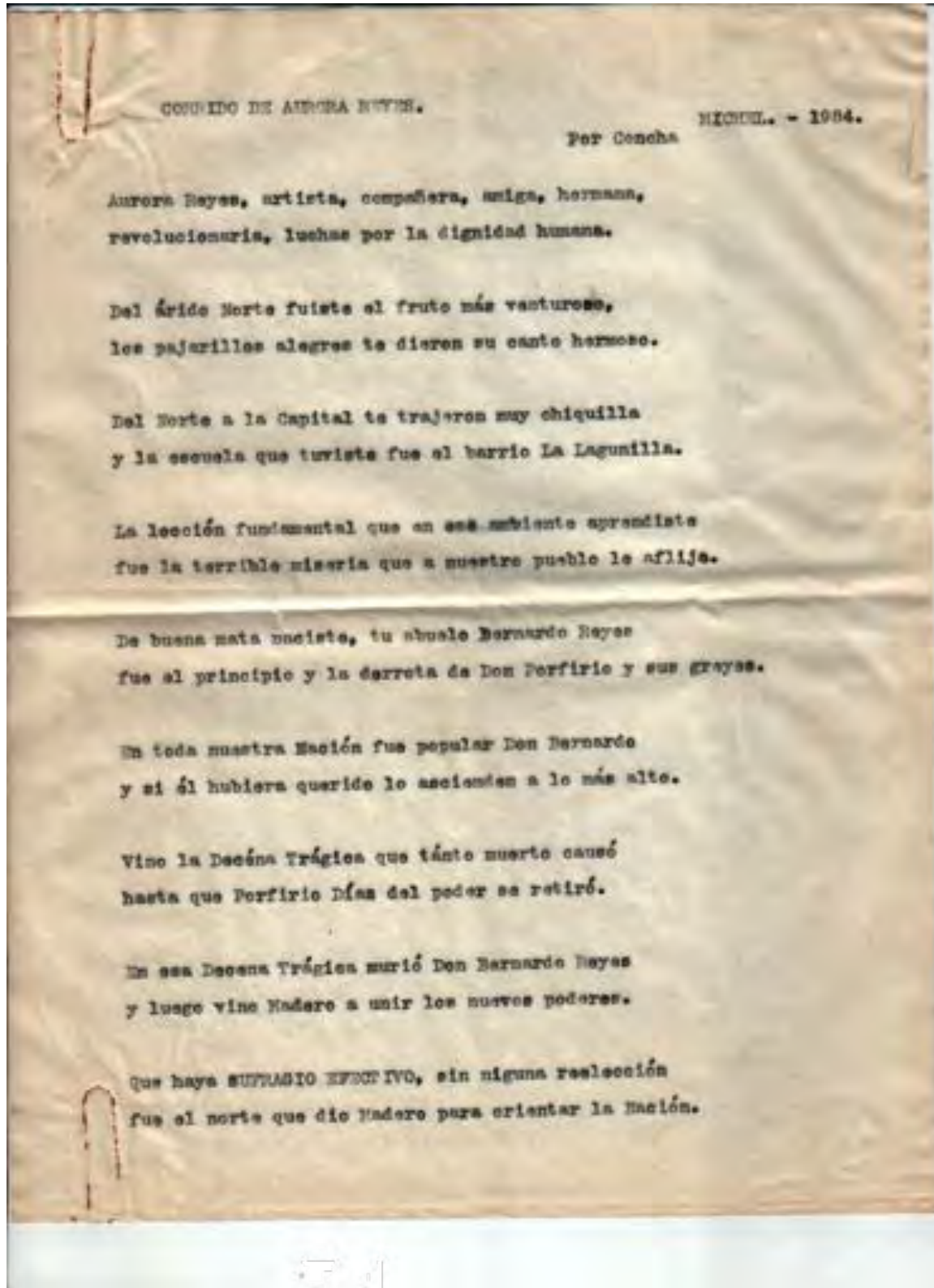
Me alimento de iguanas y cornedillos, de comecón,  
 de sal y de totopos. Bebo orchata de maíz, guanábana de la  
 coronosa y dulce, entregada en amor con su perfume  
 como el jugo de una boca mordida.

Por favor Frida, háblele a Héctor, dile que por favor  
 me envíe a Bellesartes o a la Propocional, que los cont.  
 y envíe un giro postal telefónico a nombre de "Miguel Chea"  
 Pineda - Unión Sección, Dominio conocido, pues ya se acaba  
 lo que trabajamos y ahora vivimos de la caridad pública.  
 No podré regresar si no lo hace; si no quiere perder a su  
 madre que escribiré.

Soy amiga y amiga ya ~~todo~~ habra mucho hablado  
 y ayúdame en lo que pueda sin marcaciones y gotas  
 de los nada. Pensar y todo copia, despecto en la  
 mascota. No perd despidiendo de ellos pues ~~no~~ fui a  
 Tehuantepec. ¡Habla a prima, me recuerden. Deseo  
 un beso, un beso.

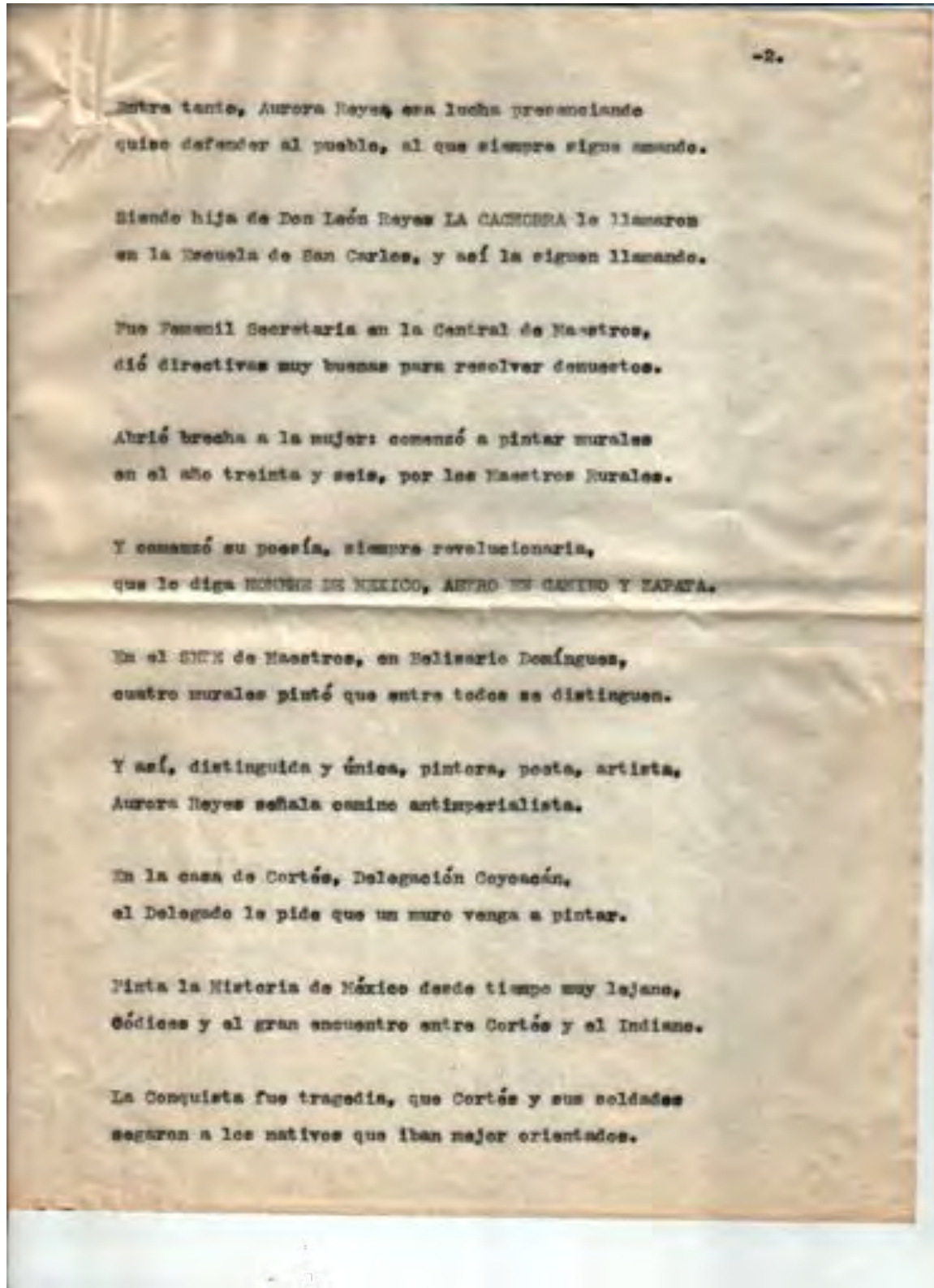
Aurora

Appendix Five: Aurora Reyes Corrido by Concha Michel

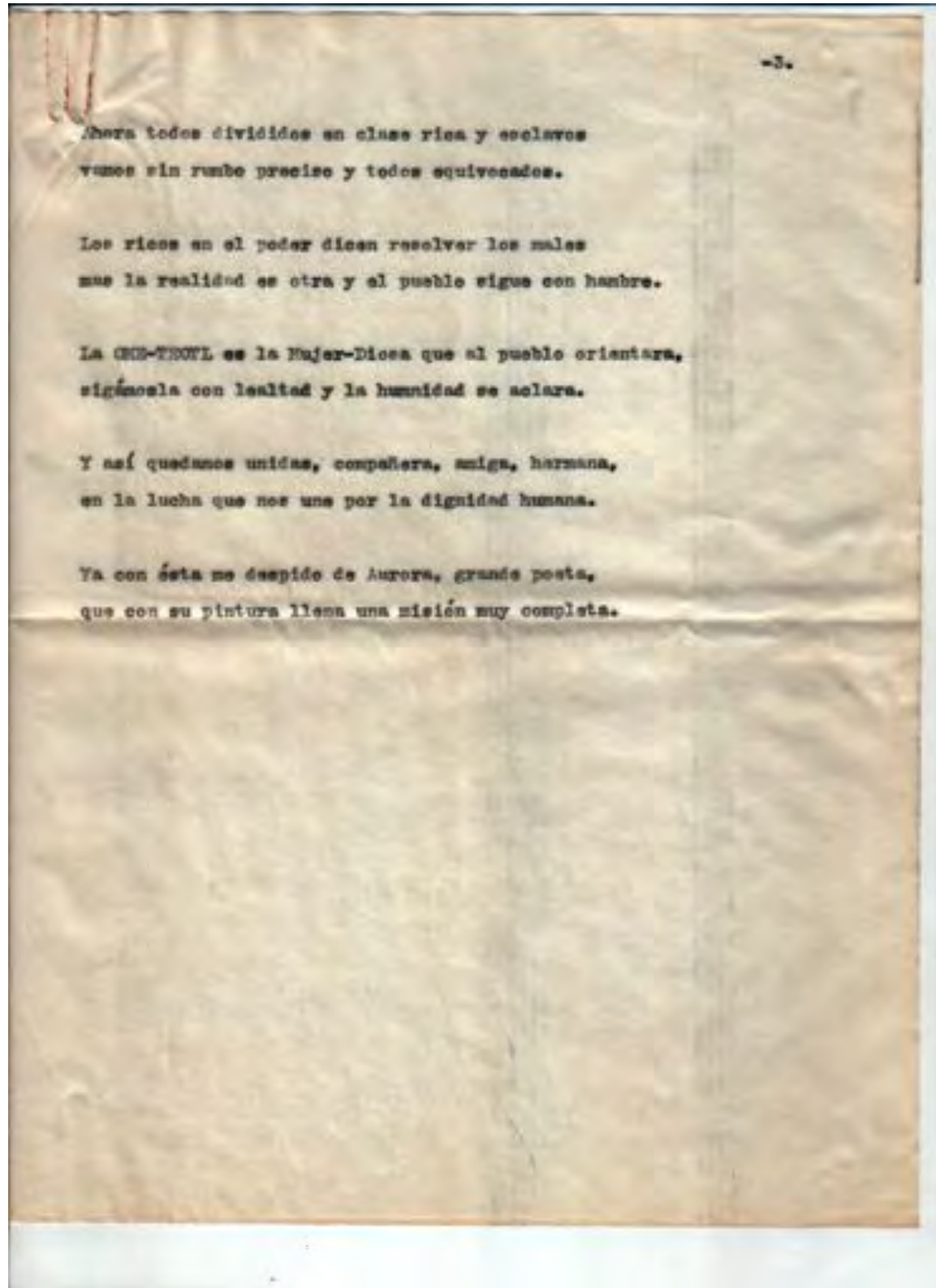




Appendix 5. Aurora Reyes Corrido by Concha Michel



Appendix 5. Aurora Reyes Corrido by Concha Michel



Appendix 6. "Escuelas Particulares" by Aurora Reyes (1935)

LAS ESCUELAS PARTICULARES.- SU ACTUACION.- SITUACION DEL PERSONAL ESPECIAL  
DOCENTE GUBERNATIVO.- UNAS CUANTAS SUGERIONES.

Ya en artículo anterior --entregado al Departamento de Bellas Artes de la Secretaría de Educación Pública-- referente a las escuelas particulares, en el ramo de Dibujo, que es el que me atañe y aunozco, pinté a grandes rasgos la psicología de esos establecimientos, su ambigua orientación, y el carácter de los educandos de uno y otro sexo, que reflejan lógicamente los deseos y modos de ser de las familias acomodadas, que buscan para sus hijos centros docentes contrarios a los métodos e ideología del Gobierno.

Posiblemente, no todas las escuelas privadas sean del mismo tipo que aquellas donde he prestado mis servicios. Tal vez en otras, varíe la disciplina docente y tenga otros matices la mentalidad juvenil, pues por determinadas referencias, no se llevan idénticos sistemas en los planteles españoles, que en los franceses, los ingleses, los alemanes, los norteamericanos. Pero, la situación para el profesorado especial impuesto por el Gobierno, es la misma en todos esos establecimientos.

Lo primero que encuentran los profesores --de dibujo, de gimnasia, de canto-- es una sorda o franca hostilidad por parte de los Directores de escuelas particulares, que ven con recelo la posible penetración de la enseñanza socialista mediante nosotros.

En seguida, nuestra posición es muy insegura, pues la Secretaría de Educación, o ignora todas estas cosas, o las disimula. Necesitamos, pues, un apoyo firme oficial, para poder cumplir nuestros programas, inclusive por encima de las maniobras que los Directores o empresarios de los planteles oficiales, intenten por diversos conductos.

El servicio de Inspectores, ha sido, si no propiamente desatendido, sí al menos mal organizado, ya que hasta la fecha, en lo que se refiere a Dibujo, ha estado concentrado en una sola persona, la cual, o se pliega a ciertas recomendaciones de las direcciones particulares, o se convierte en dictador

Appendix 6. "Escuelas Particulares" by Aurora Reyes (1935)

ra del profesorado gubernamental, explotándolo a veces y amenazándolo otras, pudiendo hacerse estas anomalías por la audacia o "influencia" del Inspector único o de la Inspectora única.

Como opinión propia, creo que el mal podría evitarse con la designación de varios Inspectores, dado que así, por una parte terminaría el centralismo de ese cargo, y por otra, podría imponerse la influencia socialista del Estado en los numerosos planteles particulares --que no pueden ser inspeccionado por una sola persona. Además, ese grupo de Inspectores, convendría que fuera actuando en rotación, por zonas escolares, a fin de que no crearan intereses en un mismo lugar.

Garantizada la estabilidad del profesorado oficial en las escuelas donde les ha sido impuesto, cada profesor o profesora podrá desarrollar confiadamente su labor, no únicamente en un sentido técnico o artístico, sino también social. Y si a eso se agregase que los representantes de la Secretaría observaran una conducta armónica con los propósitos del Gobierno, y carecieran de medios para erigirse en caciques-inspectores, ya estaría andada la mitad del camino para la penetración de la ideología revolucionaria.

Por lo demás, el Estado debiera preocuparse por tener un control mayor y más directo en las escuelas particulares, que son semilleros de reacción, de fanatismo, de hostilidad a las nuevas ideas. La incorporación oficial de ellas, su apego a los programas oficiales, son engaños y actitudes más que dudosas que fácilmente --si el Gobierno quiere-- podrían dilucidarse y corregirse.

Appendix 6. "Escuelas Particulares" by Aurora Reyes (1935)

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que a pesar de sus amenazas, prefieran los Directores (elásticos ya de por sí), plegarse a los métodos educativos oficiales totalmente y no se verá al maestro en el caso vergonzoso de retirarse, o simplemente de cambiar la temática de su enseñanza.

Como consecuencia de lo dicho se impone que aunque los Profesores enviados por la Secretaría de Educación, esto no les ha afectado a los Directores absolutamente en nada por lo ya dicho; todo lo que se ha hecho o pretendido hacer ha sido inútil, y es que se ha hecho a medias; porque así el oleró seguirá actuando subterráneamente a espaldas del Estado Revolucionario, y exhibiéndose como afirma él, mediante las Escuelas Particulares, donde la nueva educación no ha podido llegar.

Atentamente.

México, D.F., 24 de agosto de 1935.

*Aurora Reyes*  
Aurora Reyes.

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

PONEENCIA QUE SOBRE EL TEMA "LA MUJER Y LA CULTURA" PRESENTA LA DELEGADA PRATERIAL DE LA SECCION IX, DISTRITO FEDERAL, DEL SINDICATO DE TRABAJADORES DE LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA REPUBLICA MEXICANA, A ESTE CONGRESO NACIONAL FEMENINO.

LA MUJER Y LA CULTURA.-

El ser humano tiene como principal móvil en su vida el de la subsistencia, esto lo conduce a explicarse los fenómenos del mundo que lo rodea y le impulsa a investigar y a hacer acopio de experiencias, ya sea para facilitarse los medios de vida necesarios o para adquirir los conocimientos que sirvan de base a sus relaciones con el mundo exterior.

Como la humanidad no es un ser que pudiera conservar y superar sus conocimientos sino un conjunto de seres que nacen y mueren y los conocimientos personales se perderían con la muerte del individuo, este transmite el resultado de sus experiencias en forma de enseñanza a quienes lo siguen en su paso por la vida y el legado de dichos conocimientos a sus sucesores es lo que constituye la Cultura, que es, pues, el producto superior de la Humanidad.

La Cultura ha estado condicionada desde su iniciación por las circunstancias económicas del momento, de manera que una etapa de la Cultura corresponde a una etapa de la Economía, aún cuando generalmente vá más de prisa la mutación económica (que es el resultado de las relaciones de producción, y, por lo tanto, sólo un factor aunque muy importante- de la Cultura) que la Cultura misma, que es producto de ese y otros factores.

Los factores que han integrado la Cultura (Económica, Ciencia, Arte, Moral, Religión, Civilización, etc.) tuvieron su origen en las

Appendix 7. "*La Mujer y la Cultura*" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

2.

relaciones de los individuos que por primera vez se unieron entre sí en forma organizada, o sea el matriarcado, cuya estructura económica era Comunal.

La principal característica de esta época es la división de actividades condicionada por las cualidades especiales de cada sexo y - la Cultura es iniciada por el concurso recíproco de mujeres y hombres.

Con el mejoramiento de los medios de producción hubo un excedente de riqueza en los grupos, a la vez que los recursos naturales geográficos, listaban en un sentido y aumentaban desproporcionadamente en otro la producción (en recolección de frutos, cacería, pesca, etc.) motivos por los que se determinó la necesidad de intercambio de productos en los grupos, actividad de la que se ocupó el hombre debido - a que la mujer, ligada a su sistema de organización estaba absorbida en tiempo y energía a la administración de los intereses materiales del grupo.

✓ Fue así como se constituyó el Patriarcado, en que el hombre fue elaborando con su actitud el concepto de Propiedad Privada, y, paralelamente, una nueva forma de administración económica que al fin - abarcó todos los aspectos de la organización social, administración de la cual quedó excluida la mujer.

✓ Queda, pues, truncada la participación de la mujer en la Cultura y esta pierde su desarrollo integral, creciendo monstruosamente en - forma unilateral en relación exclusiva con las facultades y necesidades del hombre. Pero aún cuando todos los hombres contribuyeron a la - caída del matriarcado, el poder quedó en manos de una minoría de - ellos, que, con el desarrollo de la Propiedad Privada afirmó su fuerza y se dedicó a explotar y a oprimir a la mayoría, lo que a través del ✓ tiempo ha traído como consecuencia la **Lucha de Clases.**

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

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El desenvolvimiento de la Cultura se ha visto desde entonces entorpecido por la Esclavitud en el Patriarcado, el Feudalismo y la Monarquía, así que durante estas épocas haya logrado la mujer la exteriorización de sus facultades características, habiendo pesado sobre ella la explotación comercial de la organización masculina, que traficaba en compra-venta de mujeres ya fuera para el trabajo o para el placer y en el mejor de los casos para la consolidación de las familias en Feudos y Reinados por medio del matrimonio.

A veces llegó la mujer a manifestar su inconformidad, en algunos casos como nos lo revela la literatura Griega, también en el de las Amazonas y otros casos en la Historia, además de las personalidades femeninas que esporádicamente surgieron en relación con el poder como fué Catalina de Rusia, Isabel de Inglaterra, etc., y algunas otras mujeres dentro del ambiente cultural esencialmente romántico de las Cortes, influyendo en el destino de las Naciones.

Abarcando estas últimas épocas, el Cristianismo dió a la mujer posibilidades de propia expresión colocándola teóricamente en un nivel de ser humano, teóricamente, porque la realización de este derecho nunca se llevó a cabo, transformándose en una enclaustración mística. Dos caminos quedaron marcados para que la mujer eligiera: la disipación en las Cortes o la concentración estéril en los Conventos, prolongándose estas dos rutas a elegir hasta el seno mismo de la familia.

La revolución Industrial que se consolida por medio de la Burguesía en el Capitalismo hace surgir nuevos factores de Cultura siendo combatida la servidumbre de tipo Feudal y liquidados los vestigios de esclavitud en la forma entonces entendida. Para la mujer trae también horizontes de liberación y se presentan personalidades de la talla de Luisa Michel en la Comuna de París, así como en otros países, casos aislados de mujeres intelectuales en diferentes aspectos de la Cultura, en Arte como Jorge Sand, y las primeras Doctoras y Profesionistas en Francia, Inglaterra y Alemania.



## Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

4.

✓ El desarrollo industrial <sup>por</sup> a medio del Maquinismo aporta nuevas mo-  
 ✓ dalidades a la Cultura en general; en cuanto a la mujer, revolucionaria sus  
 formas de vida arrancándola del hogar y convirtiéndola en un factor de pro-  
 ducción. El sistema Capitalista llega a su desarrollo máximo, comienza su  
 decadencia y aparece el impulso organizado hacia la modificación de la estruc-  
 tura <sup>tura</sup> social; en este estado de transición se marca claramente un desenvolvimiento  
 muy violento de la Cultura, en el cual la mujer actúa cada vez con mayores  
 posibilidades y en mayor número, dadas las circunstancias de organización  
 ✓ que han impuesto las necesidades/los trabajadores <sup>de</sup>. A pesar de lo anterior, -  
 en esta época se produce el fenómeno a que al principio se hizo alusión, de  
 que la etapa de la Economía ha avanzado más aceleradamente que la etapa de  
 la cultura, por lo que hay un desequilibrio al llevar a costas una Cultura  
 ✓ que ya no corresponde a nuestras formas de Economía en relación con la Época.

Es por esto que a pesar del rápido proceso de transformación eco-  
 nómica que en el mundo se efectúa, el individuo actual tropieza con enormes  
 dificultades de adaptación cultural, lo que se revela con mayor precisión en  
 las actividades artísticas que son la más elevada manifestación de la cultu-  
 ✓ ra; provocándose así un choque entre la necesidad de salir de los límites -  
 marcados por un tipo de cultura que retiene la posibilidad de adelanto, co-  
 rrespondiente a pasadas generaciones, y el empuje que las nuevas modalidades  
 económicas ejercen sobre la sociedad. Choque del cual se origina un movimien-  
 to de superficie, que aparentemente es de proceso cultural pero que en el  
 ✓ fondo no es más que una lucha de adaptación y que en ligeros pasos de avance  
 ✓ y retroceso no ha logrado sacudir el yugo impuesto por los falsos valores -  
 ✓ que hizo suyos la cultura de otra época, cuyos hombres no veían más que su  
 ✓ propio interés. Cabe pues marcar la trascendencia de estos factores que impi-  
 den el adelanto de la humanidad y que son los falsos valores que indebidamen-  
 te aparecen como integrantes de la cultura.

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

✓ Sin embargo, la mujer <sup>surge</sup> /Intellectualmente y ya con claros perfiles se manifiesta en todas las ramas de las Ciencias y de las Artes, se destacan también mujeres capacitadas en las Industrias y en el Comercio, además llega a ocupar puestos de significación en la Política y administración del Estado. Esta intervención de la mujer en la vida social de todos los Países está más claramente marcada en su participación en la lucha económica por la subsistencia, llegando a suplir en muchas ocasiones al hombre en cuanto al sostenimiento de la familia.

✓ Haciendo un análisis del proceso de la cultura a través de la Historia de la Humanidad, encontramos que a la altura de esta época el conjunto de valores que la forman son, a pesar de su importancia, insuficientes para llenar las necesidades de una humanidad compuesta por mujeres y hombres, ya que hasta hoy, la Cultura en general, tiene caracteres exclusivamente masculinos, puesto que ha sido elaborada por ellos y para ellos quedando la mujer en mayor o menor grado, y en todas sus actividades en calidad de tutorada, esto es, esclava y explotada del hombre explotador o esclava y explotada del hombre esclavo y explotado.

✓ Excepto en la primera época de organización social, los esfuerzos de la mujer por manifestarse en la Cultura han sido estériles, pues las dos formas a que ha recurrido no han sido suficientemente eficaces. Una de estas formas empleadas ha consistido en influenciar en lo personal al hombre, ya sea conscientemente dirigiendo desde la intimidad su obra, o en abstracto, como fuerza generadora de inspiración, llevando a través de éste su aportación a la Cultura; pero sucede que el hombre, que, como es natural, tiene una diferente sensibilidad, le da una interpretación también diferente, así que, cuando la aportación femenina llega a la Cultura, va deformada en idea y en aplicación a través del recorrido hecho. La otra forma empleada es la asimilación de la mujer a la Cultura existente; la Historia nos muestra con toda claridad

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

6.

que las mujeres que han logrado sobresalir en cualquier aspecto de la intelectualidad, especialmente en el arte, han tenido éxito, sólo porque han copiado al hombre en sus creaciones, o aplicado su técnica, pues si analizáramos una por una las obras de las mujeres célebres encontraríamos que carecen de calidad femenina; porque se ha hecho una confusión lamentable con los términos con que se califica la obra, al decir que lo débil es así por ser femenino y lo fuerte es así por ser masculino, como si la delicadeza tuviera a go que ver con la debilidad y la consistencia implicara siempre varonilidad y juzgando con este criterio, sólo la obra de caracteres masculinos y de técnica y contenido visiblemente "fuerte" hecho por hombres o por mujeres ha sido tomada en consideración. Ejemplos claros tenemos en la obra femenil literaria, poética musical, pictórica, escultórica y artística en general, que nos demuestran palpablemente que la crítica ha menospreciado y hecho el vacío a valores artísticos que no coinciden con las normas dadas por aquellos que han marcado límites estrechos a la producción y difusión de estos valores.

Así pues, la mujer que quiere "hacer Cultura" se ve obligada a sacrificar su propia personalidad, todo para encontrar a la postre que lo único que ha logrado es multiplicar las formas ya establecidas por el hombre en la Cultura unilateral.

Derivados de estas causas fundamentales surgen una serie de escollos que impiden a la mujer realizar (aún en esta forma impropia) culturalmente, tales como la mayor explotación que hace el capitalista de su trabajo al enfrentarla como instrumento de competencia a la explotación del trabajo del hombre, trascendiendo esto hasta a las actividades superiores de la mujer. También de encontramos la consabida y sistemática oposición en cuanto al desempeño de puestos de responsabilidad cultural, aún en los casos de manifiesta eficiencia de la mujer.

En cuanto a la adquisición de medios que faciliten su cultura ha

Appendix 7. "*La Mujer y la Cultura*" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

7.

✓ muchas restricciones de parte de aquellos a quienes corresponde dar cumplimiento a algunas leyes ya estatuidas, y por cuya oposición no son llevadas a la práctica, y solo como resultado de esfuerzos y de sacrificios enormes logra la mujer abrirse paso tan lentamente que en ello se le vá la mejor parte de su vida.

Otro motivo de limitación es la poca atención de los Gobiernos en lo que se refiere a estimular y ayudar de manera efectiva a la mujer intelectual y especialmente a la artista, a quien se ha tenido en un completo olvido, y lo que dá por resultado que en muchas ocasiones sus capacidades se pierdan o se opaquen al verse obligada a trabajar generalmente en empleos o actividades que nada tienen que ver con sus facultades, repartiendo así su atención y su esfuerzo, dando como resultado a la postre un mínimo rendimiento en su obra cultural.

Entre la mujer trabajadora encontramos como obstáculo para su desenvolvimiento cultural el de que lleva a costas el doble esfuerzo en la adquisición de su propia subsistencia fuera del hogar y la dirección y a veces también el sostenimiento de la familia dentro del hogar, lo cual absorbe su energía y su tiempo por completo.

En cuanto a la mujer de hogar, aún sujeta al tipo de organización familiar atávico, sus limitaciones en todos los aspectos son cada vez mayores, ya sea por los prejuicios legados o porque la atención de la humanidad está cada día más absorbida en la lucha por violentar el advenimiento de la etapa que ha iniciado a su marcha.

Aparte y por cuenta doble tenemos que en la vida social, el desarrollo de la cultura de la mujer tiene como problema una limitación jurídica que establecida por las Constituciones y Códigos, en Leyes y Estatutos, la circunscribe a un pequeño radio de acción en sus derechos cívicos.

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

8.

Así, pues, resumiendo en pocas palabras los anteriores conceptos tenemos:

I.- Que la Cultura actual es incompleta, porque no responde a las necesidades de una Sociedad compuesta por mujeres y hombres.

II.- Que la Cultura actual no está en consonancia con el ritmo que marca el desenvolvimiento de la Economía.

III.- Que la Cultura actual tiene valores positivos que serán base de una Cultura superior, pero tiene también falsos valores que la tienen y estancan sus posibilidades de desarrollo.

IV.- Que estas deficiencias de la Cultura actual en su mayor parte provienen de que la mujer no ha participado directamente en su formación.

Ahora, que teniendo en cuenta que no pueden darse normas precisas, de las modalidades de un nuevo tipo de Cultura que está aún por crearse, - pero cuya existencia ya se hace palpablemente necesaria, la lucha de la - mujere para lograr que se estructure una Cultura Integral, debe enfocarse, como tarea inmediata a lograr su completa libertad de acción, que será - la garantía del desenvolvimiento de las posibilidades que todas llevamos en nosotras mismas para hacer una Cultura que satisfaga a los intereses - y los anhelos de superación de la humanidad entera.

Para el logro de lo cual y como tareas generales, propongo que se luche:

I.- Por la organización y unificación total de la mujer, pues unidas lograremos tener la fuerza necesaria para analizar debidamente nuestros problemas y llevar a cabo la solución de éstos.

II.- Paralograr toda clase de facilidades en igualdad de las que el hombre tiene en cuanto a su acceso a todo Centro Cultural.

III.- Por lograr que los Gobiernos aumenten para la mujer becas, pen-

Appendix 7. "La Mujer y la Cultura" by Aurora Reyes (1939)

9.

siones, organización de exposiciones, conciertos, giras culturales, etc., en el propio País y en el Extranjero, para que el intercambio cultural aumente su acervo de conocimientos y experiencias.

IV.- Porque se formen comisiones de estudios e investigaciones de las distintas especialidades, en las cuales participe la mujer de una manera directa para lograr así la revisión y selección de valores culturales, que se hace indispensable.

V.- Porque se liquide el absurdo prejuicio de que la mujer no puede ocupar cargos de responsabilidad cultural, para lo cual es necesario que se luche por la igualdad jurídica con el hombre y por la sanción oficial de aquellos que violen estas leyes.

VI.- Porque esta lucha de la mujer no se desvincule de la lucha que el hombre ha emprendido en la transformación de la actual sociedad acelerando con su participación la nivelación de la etapa cultural con la etapa económica actual, pues no podría lograrse un resultado satisfactorio sin la cooperación de todos los componentes de la humanidad.

VII.- Por la defensa y protección de la Cultura, para lo cual es necesario que la mujer apoye la PAZ, la LIBERTAD Y LA DEMOCRACIA, única forma de garantizar la elaboración definitiva de la CULTURA INTEGRAL.

Habana, Cuba, a lo. de abril de 1939.

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AURORA REYES.

Appendix Eight: "Hombre de México" by Aurora Reyes

HOMBRE DE MEXICO

Algo oscuro ha pasado por el cielo de México.  
 Está herida la tierra  
 y en los labios del viento  
 silba el agudo filo de Antigua profecía.

El horizonte ahoga un paisaje de alas  
 ceñido en ondulantes anillos de serpiente.  
 ¡Aguila deshojada!  
 Un sueño de poetas llora un sueño de heroes.

Algo ha sabido el agua de litorales libres;  
 la nave de la espuma  
 hace viajes de alarma entre azules y grises.

Inmóviles metales conspiran en la sombra.  
 Batallones de árboles manifiestan sus brazos.  
 La noche vigilante se apresta para el alba.

¿En dónde estás creciendo, silencioso gigante?  
 ¿Qué paisaje florece distancia en tu Mirada?  
 ¿Que sombras te transitan? ¿Qué verdades te hablen?

Nutrido de hambres públicas,  
 de olvidos de ceniza,  
 de espinas colectivas,  
 de muchedumbres-lágrimas.  
 Ya levántante y surge!  
 Ya congrega y trasciende  
 esta imposible angustia panorámica.

Múltiple voz eleva sus hojas verticals  
 clamando por el fruto maduro de tu frente.  
 ¡Desolada bandera! Otra vez Patria suave...  
 Ya vienen otra vez los mercadered.

II

Ya vienen a llevarse tu riqueza,  
 tus cándidos tesoros,  
 tu color solferino,  
 tu morado rabioso

y únicos en el mundo, los ojos de tus niños.

Se acabarán tus pueblos de gardenia,  
 tus provincias de nardo,  
 tus novias de amapola,  
 tu cempazúchil de oro  
 y los intensos campos de tu flor madreSelva.

Ya no tendrás esquinas con vueltas de cilindro,  
 ni jardines de mantos,  
 ni ventanas en cello,  
 ni serenata tierna.  
 Ni habrá más lotería de cartoncitos.

Apagarán tus júbilos de cohete y chinampina,  
 la deslumbrada luz de tus "castillos",  
 aquella verde danza de tu ancestral amiga  
 y tu alucinación de maguey líquido.

Se romperá el hechizo de tus sirenas,  
 centro de zapateado y de conquián,  
 los irisados gallos de las peleas  
 y los viernes de cabala y copal.

En mecánico ritmo tornarán la armonía  
 del ardiente prodigio que modela tu mano,  
 la magia de tu lenta caricia, la alegría  
 de los florecimientos de tu amor artesano.

Tus veneros de azul seran segados  
 en el color caliente de tu sangre.  
 Envolverán en dólares tus huesos,  
 y en humo celofán tu joven aire.

### III

Escucha cómo crecen las tinieblas del odio,  
 oye cómo caminan los desiertos del hambre,  
 cómo construye firmes paraísos la fiebre  
 y murmura cuchillos la prisión de la sangre.

Ven a ver cómo lloran las escuelas.  
 ¡Qué cielos de amargura filtran las vecindades!  
 Las mujeres con alma de montaña  
 amasan en su rostro silencios vegetales.



Ven a cumplir tun entero destino, sombra clara;  
 te invocamos anónimo y auténtico,  
 hermano sin ayer y sin mañana.  
 ¡Ven a morirte, Hombre de México!

Te espera la impaciencia,  
 los encuentros te buscan,  
 arden las multitudes,  
 se queman las palabras.  
 Surge ya, ¡capitán de la angustia!  
 Te llama la voz verde de las cañas.

## IV

Por este barro en marcha que somos,  
 por el amor del agua,  
 por la muerte del árbol inocente  
 y su cosecha trágica.

Por tu serena dignidad de cacto  
 erguido en los desiertos de la sed,  
 tu corazón de tuna colorada  
 y tu canción de miel.

Por el incomprendido desorden de tus sueños  
 allí, de donde parten los caminos de sal,  
 por la lluvia vendida,  
 por el pan traicionado,  
 por los ojos nocturnos del jacal.  
 Por el sol,  
 por la nube,  
 por la flor.  
 Por la palabra "Tierra",  
 por la voz "Libertad",  
 por los dioses de elote del cañaveral.

## V

México, abre tus brazos, ¡crécelos!  
 - mar que has purificado los ríos de otras aguas -  
 acoge nuestra voz.  
 ¡Recíbela! ¡Levántala!  
 Y coloca tu cifra de justicia  
 en el cielo más alto del amor.

Abre tu antiguo rostro golpeado de infinito,  
el volcán de tu entraña,  
tu potencia de abismo azul.

Alcanza los contornos morenos de la raza,  
desnuda las tinieblas,  
multiplica las flechas de la luz.

Crece los brazos, ¡crécelos más!  
y en un himno de cumbres liberadas que crisper el huracán,  
irrumpan el espacio de Indoamérica  
las palomas de azúcar de la paz.

Appendix Nine: List of Educators featured in Aurora Reyes's SNTE Mural  
(from left to right)

1. Valentin Gomez Farias
2. *Unidentified*
3. Ignacio Ramirez (El Nigromante)
4. Gabino Barreda
5. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano
6. *Unidentified*
7. Jose Vasconcelos
8. José Joaquin Fernandez de Lizardi
9. *Unidentified*
10. Alfonso Reyes
11. Orozco
12. Posada
13. Siqueiros
14. Diego Rivera
15. Eulalia Guzman
16. Nezahualcoyotl
17. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
18. Juan Ruiz de Alarcon y Mendoza
19. *Unidentified*
20. *Unidentified*
21. Silvestre Revueltas
22. Julian Carillo
23. *Unidentified*
24. Justo Sierra
25. *Unidentified*
26. Concha Michel
27. *Unidentified*
28. *Unidentified*
29. *Unidentified*
30. Samuel Ramos
31. Lazaro Cardenas

Appendix Ten: List of Archival Sources and their Abbreviations, as used in this document:

AAR: Archivo Aurora Reyes (Aurora Reyes Archive in Coyoacan, Mexico).

AGN: Archivo General de la Nación (National Archives in Mexico City, Mexico).

AHSEP: Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría Pública de Educación (Historic Archive of the Secretary of Public Education, Mexico City, Mexico).

AMG: Archivo Manuel Gamio (Archive of Manuel Gamio, housed in the Library of the National Museum of Anthropology and History, Mexico City, Mexico).

Casa de la Cultura: (House of Culture in Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico).

LOC: Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

## ENDNOTES

### Notes to Pages 1-34

### INTRODUCTION

1. Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria* (Colorado: University Press, 2010), 78-79.
2. Elena Poniatowska, *Tinisima*, Translation by Katherine Silver. (New York: Penguin, 1995), 139.
3. Bambi, "Los Problemas de Mexico: De Poetisa a Pintora," *Excelsior*, 24 February, 1953. (Translation by Sarah Borealis).
4. Elena Poniatowska, "Mexico Necesita una Revolución?: Habla Aurora Reyes," *Novedades*, 24 August, 1954, 1. (*italics in original text, my translation*)
5. James D. Cockroft. *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).
6. Nestor Garcia Canclini. *Transforming Modernity: Popular Culture in Mexico*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).
7. While investigator Edwina Moreno painstakingly reviewed and photocopied many of the documents from this collection for inclusion in several thick files maintained in the public archive of the CENIDIAP, Hector and Ernesto Godoy Lagunes (grandsons of Reyes) lovingly preserve additional materials that include books, artifacts, photographs, letters, and articles. The latter have not been transferred to the CENIDIAP, which is primarily concerned with the preservation of materials directly related to the *artes plasticas*. The bulk of the materials still housed in Aurora Reyes's former home are not available to the public. However, Hector and Ernesto have graciously made the collection available for this investigation, which is an interdisciplinary analysis of the artist's life and work. Unless identified otherwise in the list of figures, all of the photographs in this dissertation are housed in the Aurora Reyes Archive, and are used here with permission of her grandsons, Hector and Ernesto Godoy Lagunes.

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8. *Traje* may be literally translated to mean “suit” or “costume.” In this dissertation, *traje* is used to describe the traditional indigenous wardrobe used by women in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Extending beyond the familiar American English definition of “costume,” *traje* includes symbolic representation as a regional

9. “Tehuana” refers to the women of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the Mexican state of Oaxaca.

10. A huipil (from the Nahuatl *uipilli*, meaning “blouse”- “dress”) is a form of textile, tunic or blouse worn by indigenous Mayan, Zapotec, and other women in central to southern Mexico and parts of Central America. The elaborate design and patterns of a traditional woman's huipil may convey the wearer's village, marital status, and personal beliefs.

11. These three are not the only female artists of the early twentieth century to appropriate the Tehuana *traje*, I have also identified artists Maria Izquierdo, Chabela Villaseñor, and Lola Alvarez Bravo as members of this artistic cohort. I assume that as more attention is paid to female figures in Mexican history, the list will expand.

12. For more on this idea, see Julia Denise Shayne, “Gendered Revolutionary Bridges: Women in the Salvadoran Resistance Movement (1979-1992).” *Latin American Perspectives* 26 (May, 1999): 85-102. Shayne’s essay explores the role of Salvadoran women in that country’s revolutionary movement. Shayne theorizes that women leveraged their position within the complex matrix of class and gender to “bridge” the gaps left between the revolutionary movement and the masses, and to translate the revolutionary ideology into more populist and practical terms.

13. AMG Seccion: Produccion intelectual, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 249 (1) “Possibilities of the Indigenous Art of Mexico.” (translated into English by Anita Brenner).

14. The idea of *Mexico Profundo*, which translates literally to “Deep Mexico,” is attributed to Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (For more detailed information, see his 1987 book of the same name: *Mexico Profundo: una civilización negada*. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública : CIESAS, 1987).

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15. A codex (plural codices) is the technical name for an ancient book or manuscript, specifically one that was published before Joseph Gutenberg's invention and popularization of the printing press in the mid-15th century. The most famous codices are those of the Mesoamerican civilizations, including the Maya and Aztec. Pre-Columbian codices differ from European codices in that they are largely pictorial; they were not meant to symbolize spoken or written narratives. The colonial era codices not only contain Aztec pictograms, but also Classical Nahuatl (in the Latin alphabet), Spanish, and occasionally Latin.

16. For further reference to Kahlo's collection see: Rosenszweig, Denise, *El Ropero de Frida*, (Mexico: Oceano De Mexico, 2007), and *Frida Kahlo: Her Photos*, (Mexico: Editorial RM, 2010).

17. Hayden Herrera *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 6.

18. In Mexican popular culture, it is considered a sign of good fortune to be born and to die in the same space, exhibiting the local belief in the power of cyclical continuity.

19. Aurora Reyes. *Humanos Paisajes*. (Mexico: Ediciones Amigos del Café Paris, 1953).

20. Borealis interview with Natalia Moguel in Coyoacan, 2004.

21. Lopez Moreno, Roberto and Leticia Ocharan. *La Sangre Dividida*. (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, Programa Cultural de las Fronteras, 1990), 62.

22. I owe this idea of fashion as simultaneously "representational" and "aspirational" to a Tulane student named Lisa Williford. Lisa had studied costume design before registering for my class on Modern Mexico, and when we discussed urban women's appropriation of indigenous dress in the revolutionary era, she offered this valuable observation.

Notes to pages 35-94

**CHAPTER ONE: VISUAL EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

1. The idea of cultivating indigenous souls among the general population was initially presented by Manuel Gamio in his groundbreaking work *Forjando Patria*, first published in Mexico in 1916.

2. La mexicanidad, lo mexicano, or “mexicanness,” is a term used to describe the sense of cultural nationalism that emerged in the post-revolutionary era. Claudia Schaefer defines “mexicanidad” as “the unchanging philosophical essence of the Mexican” that is recognizable in the nation’s art, politics, and social structures. See Claudia Schaefer, *Textured Lives: Women, Art, and Representation in Modern Mexico*. (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1992), 9. Eric Zolov defines “lo mexicano” as “a heralding of folkloric culture and the racial valorization of a mestizo-driven “Cosmic Race.” Zolov goes on to state that one of the goals for this project was to rewrite the historical memory of the revolutionary experience as a symbol to unify the nation. See Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3.

3. Charlot, Jean. *The Mexican Mural Renaissance, 1920-1925* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), 1.

4. Aracy Amaral, translated by Kim Mrazek Hastings. “Stages in the Formation of Brazil’s Cultural Profile,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 21, Brazil Theme Issue. (1995), 8-25. Amaral notes that “The Canudos rebellion against the liberal republic, which began in Bahia in 1893, exemplifies the political climate of the Northeast, steeped in both social and mystical problems.”

5. Amaral and Hastings, 14.

6. Amaral and Hastings, 14. (Fauvism is the style of *les Fauves* (French for “the wild beasts”), a loose group of early twentieth-century Modern artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong color over the representational or realistic values retained by Impressionism.)

7. For the complete text of Lobato’s article in its original Portuguese, see <http://www.pitoresco.com.br/brasil/anita/lobato.htm>. (Accessed on April 22, 2007, translation Borealis).

8. Lobato, 1.

9. Amaral and Hastings, 16.



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10. Oswald de Andrade, *O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo...Diário coletivo da garçonniere de Oswald de Andrade, São Paulo, 1918*. Edição fac-similar, (São Paulo: Editora Ex Libris, 1987).
12. Génesse Andrade, "Chronology," in IVAM: Institut Valencia D'Art Modern. *Brasil 1920-1950: De la Antropofagia a Brasilia*. (Valencia, Spain: IVAM Centre Julio González. 2000), 528.
13. Génesse Andrade, "Chronology," 528.
14. Neide Rezende, *A Semana de Arte Moderna*. (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1993.), 7.
15. Amaral and Hastings, 17.
16. Génesse Andrade, 529.
17. An English translation of excerpts from Oswald de Andrade's "Brazilwood Manifesto" is published in the *Documents* section of the catalogue from the show "Utopias Inverted: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America," a show at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Texas, 465.
18. AMG Seccion: Produccion intelectual, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 249 (3) "Possibilities of the Indigenous Art of Mexico." (translated into English by Anita Brenner)
19. This term, "missionaries of nationalism," appears in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. The author uses it to describe the means by which the European cultural elites brought nationalism to the masses in an attempt to institutionalize revolutionary models and ideology. He concludes that the product of this process is a distinctly populist form of nationalism. I argue that Mexico's emphasis on "cultural nationalism" after the Revolution of 1910 produced a similar effect. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 67-82.
20. Angelica Abelleira, "Aurora Reyes: ser pájaro o pez," 6. (AAR)
21. Janet Bishop, associate curator of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, quoted in the Culture & Arts section of Mexconnect. Available online at: <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/1311-diego-frida-and-the-mexican-school>
22. Aurora Reyes, "Interview with Renato Leduc," in *Renato Leduc y sus Amigos*, (Renato Leduc and his friends) Ed. Oralba Castillo Nájera, (Mexico: Editorial Domés, 1987), 25.

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23. Michael D. Coe. *America's First Civilization*. (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1968), 19.
24. In this case, "emerging technology" refers to the applied use of archaeological stratigraphy for excavating the past, and Italian fresco techniques for painting murals, as well as German cinematography equipment and filmmaking techniques brought to Mexico by the French Lumiere brothers in the late 19th century.
25. Gamio, *Forjando Patria*, 40.
26. President-elect Álvaro Obregón, "Review of Forjando Patria," part of the AMG. Seccion sin nombre, Serie: Correspondencia sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 396 (1).
27. AMG Serie: Correspondencia sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 563 (3).
28. "Decreto presidencial que se promulga hoy," (Presidential decree that was promulgated today) *Excelsior*, viernes 8 de Julio de 1921, p. 1. (cited in Aurelio de los Reyes, *Cine y Sociedad en México, 1896-1930: Bajo el cielo de México, vol. II (Cinema and Society in Mexico, 1896-1930: Below the Mexican sky, vol. II) (1920-1924)* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993), 136.
29. For more on the *Noche Mexicana* and the popular arts exhibition, see Rick A López. "The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts: Two Ways of Exalting Indianness," in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, Eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.), 23-42.
30. "Fue nombrado secretario de Educación Pública el señor licenciado José Vasconcelos", (Mr. José Vasconcelos was named Secretary of Public Education) *El Universal*, Martes 11 de octubre de 1921, 1.
31. Rosario Encinas. "José Vasconcelos (1882-1959)." *PROSPECTS: quarterly review of comparative education (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, XXIV, no. 3-4, 1994)*, 2. Originally in José Vasconcelos, *Discursos: 1920-1950*. (Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1950), 9.
32. Encinas, 2.
33. Adriana Williams, *Covarrubias* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 41.

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34. Williams, 12.
35. José Vasconcelos, *El Desastre (The Disaster)*. (Mexico: Ediciones Botas, 1938), 160 (Translation by Sarah Borealis).
36. Sotero Prieto "La Teoría de la Relatividad" *El Maestro: Revista de Cultura Nacional*, no. 4 (Mexico: SEP, July 1921), 397-401. Cited by María de la Paz Ramos Lara in "The Reception of Relativity in Mexico," *Synthesis Philosophica* 42 2006, 299-304.
37. "Presentación," (Presentation) from *Revistas Literarias Mexicanas Modernas, El Maestro, 1921-1923, El Maestro: Revista de Cultura Nacional*, I: Abril-Septiembre, 1921. (Mexico: Fonda de Cultura Económica, 1979), IX.
38. Williams, 4.
39. Elena Poniatowska. *Miguel Covarrubias Vida y Mundos* (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 2004), 23, 74.
40. Williams, 11-12.
41. For more information on the *Noche Mexicana* see William H. Beezley and David E. Lorey, *Viva Mexico! Viva la independencia!: celebrations of September 16* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc. 2001).
42. Barbosa, Ana Mae. "The Studies in Art Education Invited Lecture: The Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre in Mexico: Freedom, Form, and Culture." *Studies in Art Education, A Journal of Issues and Research*, 42, no. 4 (2001), 285.
43. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922*, p. 227.
44. The English translation of Best's text is currently available via amazon.com, for example: <http://www.amazon.com/Method-Creative-Design-Adolfo-Best-Maugard/dp/048626436X>
45. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922*, 227-229.
46. Charlot, 63.
47. "Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre," ("Open air Schools of Painting"), Grove Dictionary of Art, accessed online February 24, 2011 at <http://www.artnet.com/library/02/0266/t026679.asp>

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48. Miguel Covarrubias, *El Universal Ilustrado*, 21 de febrero de 1924.
49. Patricia Cardona, "Aurora Reyes ingresó a la Academia de San Carlos por una golpiza que dio a una prefecta de la *Prepa*." *Unomásuno*, (December 30, 1985), 20.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Borealis interviews Hector Godoy Lagunes in Coyoacán, México, February 15, 2005.
52. Charlot, 141.
53. Borealis interviews Hector Godoy Lagunes in Coyoacán, México, February 15, 2005.
54. Charlot, 163-166.
55. Charlot, 163-167.
56. Orozco, José Clemente. *Autobiografía de José Clemente Orozco*. (México: Ediciones Era, segunda edición, 1981), 59.
57. Charlot, 10-11, originally in Roberto Barrios, "Diego Rivera, pintor," *El Universal Ilustrado*, July 28, 1921.
58. Charlot, 143.
59. "Teotihuacan: Mural Painting," Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teot4/hd\\_teot4.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teot4/hd_teot4.htm) (accessed December 3, 2012).
60. Antonio Castro Leal, "Introduction," *Centuries of Mexican Art/20 Siglos de Arte Mexicano* (Mexico: Museum of Modern Art and the Instituto de Antropología e Historia de México, 1940), 16.
61. Gamio's work at Teotihuacan would be accepted as fulfillment of the requirements for earning a PhD in Anthropology at Columbia University, where he studied with his mentor and colleague, Franz Boas.

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62. An English translation of this screenplay (translated by Anita Brenner) is part of the Gamio archive at the library of the National Museum of Anthropology and History. It is included as an appendix to this dissertation.

63. AMG Sección: Producción Intelectual. Serie: Artículos sin fecha. Caja: 2, Exponente 254, 1-9.

64. Aurelio de los Reyes, *Manuel Gamio y el Cine* (Manuel Gamio and the Cinema)(89-94). Also "Propaganda pro-Mexico por medio del cine" El Universal, Domingo, 21 Octubre 1923.

65. Surrealist artists explored the concept of lithochronic surfaces in the opening decades of the twentieth century to liberate their aesthetic endeavors from the constraints of the traditional three dimensions. The highly symbolic "fourth dimension" relies heavily on the physics of relativity, and, when achieved, permits the re-contextualization of time, and by extension, history. In 1942 Oscar Dominguez published more about the function of lithochronic surfaces in his article, "*La petrification du temps*," in *La conquete du monde par l'image*, (Paris: Editions de la Main à la Plume, 1942); trans. In Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Surrealists on Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 109. (cited in Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art," *Leonardo*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1984), 205-210. The article directly preceded what became known as Dominguez's "cosmic" period. The artist explains: "Let us imagine for a minute any three dimensional body, an African lion for example, between any two moments of his existence. Between the lion L0, or lion at the moment  $t=0$ , and the lion L1, or final lion, is located an infinity of African lions, of diverse aspects and forms. Now if we consider the ensemble formed by all the points of lion to all its instants and in all its positions, and then if we trace the enveloping surface, we will obtain an *enveloping super lion* endowed with extremely delicate and nuanced morphological characteristics. It is to such surfaces that we give the name *lithochronic*." (Lippard, 109). If we substitute "Mexican society" for "African lion" in this theoretical equation, it is possible to conclude that the projection of pre-Hispanic Mexican history on a lithochronic surface (represented by a film screen or a wall painted with a mural) paves the way for the viewer to re-imagine the time that has elapsed between the action represented and the contemporaneous instant in which he or she interacts with the image of that action. This intensely personal process delivers the observer at the realization of his or her own role in the definition of an "*enveloping super society*" (or modern nation) of cosmic proportions.

66. AGN (711-C-84) (1921) "Cinematograficas, implantacion e intensificacion ensenanza objetiva en escuelas y cuarteles por medio de proyecciones." (The introduction and intensification of objective cinematography lessons and locations for projecting educational films.)

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67. A stereopticon is an enclosed viewing apparatus with two lenses, usually one above the other, used for viewing slides of still photographs projected on glass. The device offered a popular form of entertainment and education that dates back to the mid 19th century, before the advent of moving pictures. (Photographer CB Waite produced images of *Tehuanas* that were formatted for use on the stereopticon around the turn of the twentieth century. These images are in the AGN.)

68. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 202.*

69. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 201.* (Luis Marquez is better known for his photography of ethnic types and their distinctive *huipiles* and other clothing throughout the Mexican republic. See MacLachlan and Beezley, *Mexicans in Revolution*, p. 112 for more information.)

70. See Anita Brenner's *Idols Behind Altars* (New York: Payson and Clarke, Ltd, 1929) for more on this process of religious syncretism.

71. In Spanish this phrase is: "*No se alcanzará el milagro ni yendo a bailar a Chalma.*"

72. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 202.*

73. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 203.*

74. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 209.*

75. See appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of the films acquired by the SEP at this time.

76. AHSEP *Boletín de la SEP, tomo I, número 2, 1 de septiembre de 1922, 203.*

77. David Siqueiros, et al., originally published as a broadside in Mexico City, 1922. Published again in *El Machete (The Machete)*, no. 7 (Barcelona, June 1924). English translation from Laurence E. Schmeckebier *Modern Mexican Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1939), 31.

78. Anahuac is the ancient name of the central valley of Mexico, where Mexico City is located today.

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79. AGN- Excerpt from Vasconcelos speech, published in its entirety in the Brazilian periodical *Jornal do Comercio*, September 17, 1922. (translated by Sarah Borealis)

80. Caleb Bach, "Andres Henestrosa from fables to fame: this self-taught Mexican writer captures the folktales and lore of his indigenous heritage, lifting them to new heights as literary works." *Americas*. (English edition) March-April, 2005.

81. Borealis interviews Hector Godoy in México City, February 15, 2005.

82. Borealis interviews Hector Godoy in México City, February 15, 2005.

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**CHAPTER TWO: REBELLION IN THE ACADEMY: ARTISTS AS REVOLUTIONARIES**

1. For a clear and concise summary of the role of education and literacy in nineteenth century Mexican society, see Mary Kay Vaughan's historiographical essay "Primary Education and Literacy in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Research Trends, 1968-1988," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1990), 31-66. (see especially pp. 31-33).

2. Vaughan, "Primary Education," 33.

3. Charlot, 40.

4. Vaughan, "Primary Education," 35.

5. Ibid., 38.

6. Claudia Agostoni. *Monuments of progress: modernization and public health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Boulder, CO : University Press of Colorado, 2003), 98

7. Charlot, 22, originally Manuel G. Revilla, *Obras*, 1 (Mexico, 1908), 260.

8. Mariano Otero, "Ensayo sobre el verdadero estado de la cuestión social y política que se agita en la república mexicana (Mexico, 1842), 36.

9. Colin M. MacLachlan and William H. Beezley. *Mexico's Crucial Century, 1810-1910: an introduction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2010), 103.

10. Raat, W.D. (Ed.) *Mexico: From Independence to Revolution, 1810-1910*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

11. Melanie D. Hutto, "Barreda, Gabino: Prophet of Mexican Positivism," accessed via the internet on the Historical Text Archive, <http://www.historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=130>.

12. <http://www.centenarios.org.mx/Clave.htm> Originally published in Musacchio, Humberto. *Gran Diccionario Enciclopédico de México Visual*. Tomo I, p. 363. México, 1989.

13. Charlot, 41.

14. Charlot, 24. (See Charlot ch. 9 for more details).



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15. Charlot, 24-25, originally "Pintura al temple ejecutada por el distinguido artista Juan Cordero en el cuadro mural de la meseta superior que da paso a los corredores principales de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria," *El Federalista*, no. 1347; reprinted in *Poesias y Discursos leidos en la festividad en que la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria laureando al eminente artista Don Juan Cordero le dio un testimonio público de gratitud y admiración, por el cuadro mural con que ha embellecido su edificio*, Mexico, 1874.

16. Vaughan references Diaz's mother's sacrifice in "Primary Education," 37. Vaughan refers in her footnotes to François Javier Guerra's biographies of Mexican political figures as the original source of this information. See Guerra, *México del Antiguo Régimen a la Revolución, t. 1-2*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988.

17. Ibid, 39.

18. Ibid, 43.

19. Max Müller. "Report on the Mexican Isthmus (Tehuantepec) Railway: Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, April, 1907" No. 658 Miscellaneous Series. Diplomatic and Consular Reports. Mexico. London: Printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office, by Harrison and Sons, St. Marten's Lane, printers in ordinary to His Majesty. (Original housed in the Cornell University Library)  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924010453102/cu31924010453102\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924010453102/cu31924010453102_djvu.txt) (accessed September 1, 2011), 14-15.

20. Mora, *Mexican Cinema: Reflections of a Society, 1896-1988*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2.

21. Edgar Llinas-Alvarez, Edgar. "Revolution, Education, and Mexicanidad: The Quest for National Identity in Mexican Thought." PhD diss., Columbia University, 1977, 64.

22. Ibid., 50.

23. Abraham Castellanos. *La Reforma Escolar Mexicana, vol. 1*. (Mexico: A. Carranza y Compañía, Impresores, 1907), 20.

24. Castellanos, *La Reforma Escolar*, 16-18.

25. Llinas-Alvarez, 66.

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26. Carlos A Carillo. *Articulos Pedagógicos*, 1. (Mexico: Herrero Hnos. Sucesores, 1907), 137-38 (translation by Sarah Borealis).

27. The National Academy of Fine Arts is the same school formerly known as the Academy of San Carlos. , Benito Juárez renamed the school as part of the wide-sweeping Liberal reforms that affected national institutions when the Republic was re-established in 1867.

28. Charlot, 41.

29. The lithographic charts mentioned here most likely came from the French Académie Julien. The Académie, founded by Rodolphe Julien in 1868 with the intention of preparing students for entry into the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, challenged the art establishment of the nineteenth century. The Académie Julien had very liberal enrollment policies and though it received no subsidies, soon became recognized as a rival to the more established *Ecole*. The revolutionary structure of the Académie Julien shifted authority from professors to students, which it attracted from all over the world. It was the first professional art school to accept men and women on equal terms. Gabrielle Réval, a former student of the Académie, stated: "Julien was a revolutionary in art education. He should be honoured as a father of the feminist movement." Catherine Fehrer, "Women at the Académie Julien in Paris." *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 136, No. 1100 (Nov., 1994), 752-757.

30. Charlot, 41-42.

31. Charlot, 42.

32. Orozco, José Clemente, 17.

33. Ibid, 21.

34. "Bases para inscripciones en la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes," *Boletin de Instrucción Pública*, 5 (1905), 371.

35. Ibid., 1059.

36. Charlot, 43.

37. Carl J. Mora, 5-6.

38. For more information on the specific roles these men played in the early history of Mexican photography, see Stella de Sá Rego's English translation of Olivier Debroyse's classic *Mexican Suite: A History of Photography in Mexico* (Hong Kong: University of Texas Press, 2001).

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39. Rick A López. *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans and the State after the Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 36.
40. For a summary of Guillermo Kahlo's work as a photographer of Porfirian progress, see Chapter 7: "Capricho," in *Fuga Mexicana*, 109-111.
41. Olivier Debroise, 29.
42. Francisco M. Peredo Castro, "Oaxaca y el cine: una relación centenaria," in *Acervos: Boletín de los Archivos y Bibliotecas de Oaxaca*, 7, Otoño-Invierno del 2004, 7.
43. Ibid, 8. (italics added)
44. For more information on the story of "Juana Cata," see Francie R. Chassen-López. "A Patron of Progress: Juana Catarina Romero, the Nineteenth-Century Cacica of Tehuantepec," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 88:3. Duke University Press, 2008, 393-426.
45. Anna Maciás, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 25-49.
46. Angeles Mendieta Alatorre, *Juana Belen Gutierrez de Mendoza: extraordinaria precursora de la revolucion mexicana*. (Mexico: Universidad Mexico, 1982), 63.
47. The periodical *Vesper* had four distinct epochs: 1901, 1903, 1910 and 1932. There are no copies to be found in libraries, except a few in private locations. The only copies that the Hemeroteca Nacional of Mexico possesses have been photocopied and published in Mendieta Alatorre, 1983. (Mendieta Alatorre, 1983, 123)
48. Macias, 26.
49. Ibid.
50. Mendieta Alatorre, 31.
51. An unpublished collection of Juana B. Gutierrez de Mendoza's work from this period is included in the Aurora Reyes Archive, Coyoacán Mexico.
52. Mendieta Alatorre, 64.

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53. Brian Morris, "Flores Magon and the Mexican Liberal Party." Originally published in "Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed" #40 Spring/Summer '94, 14, No. 2. Accessed online via: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/brian-morris-flores-magon-and-the-mexican-liberal-party> on July 8, 2012.

54. Mendieta Alatorre, 130-131. (translation by Sarah Borealis)

55. Morris, "Flores Magon."

56. Ibid.

57. These mosaics are referenced both visually and in print in the electronic version of the Creelman interview available online at: [http://www.emersonkent.com/historic\\_documents/creelman\\_interview\\_1908\\_original\\_02.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/historic_documents/creelman_interview_1908_original_02.htm), 232. The interview originally appeared as: James Creelman. "President Diaz: Hero of the Americas." Pearson's Magazine, Vol. XIX, No. 3. March, 1908. Pearson Publishing Company, 231- 277.

58. MacLachlan and Beezley, *Mexico's Crucial Century*, 103.

59. Creelman, 232.

60. Ibid., 249.

61. Ibid., 244.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., 264.

64. I have made this conclusion based on the model's light skin and western features, as well as the submissive, pious pose she assumes.

65. For more information about Waite's studio portraits, see Debroise, *Mexican Suite*, 148; See also Deborah Poole. "An Image of "Our Indian": Type Photographs and Racial Sentiments in Oaxaca, 1920-1940" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 84:1, February 2004, 63-64.

66. For a detailed analysis of the disconnect between glorification of the elite indigenous past and the impoverished indigenous present in the nineteenth century context, see Barbara A. Tenenbaum, *Mexico and the Royal Indian-The Porfiriato and the National Past* (College Park, MD: Latin American Studies Center, 1994).

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67. Vaughan, "Primary Education," 42.
68. Creelman, 245.
69. Larry Rother. "Chapultepec Park: Mexico in Microcosm," New York Times, December 13, 1987.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/13/travel/chapultepec-park-mexico-in-microcosm.html?src=pm> (accessed September 2, 2011)
70. Stanley Robert Ross, *Francisco I. Madero: Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 100.

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**CHAPTER THREE: THE DENOUEMENT OF A DICTATORSHIP**

1. Alfonso Reyes, "*Oración del 9 de febrero*," Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1963, 12-13. Cited in Bryan, Anthony T, 104.
2. John Lear. *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 127.
3. Bryan, 220.
4. Bryan, 219. The interview was held in Monterrey, and initially published in *La Republica* on August 1, 1908.
5. Ibid., 220. The interview was held in Monterrey and Reyes' comments were published in *La Republica* on August 1, 1908.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 8
8. John Lear. *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 126.
9. Lear, 28.
10. Ibid., 23.
11. Ibid., 53.
12. Bryan, 228.
13. Ibid., 235.
14. Ibid, 231.
15. Ibid., 236.

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16. For an insightful and empathetic analysis of Reyes's struggle to navigate the potentially turbulent political waters at the end of the Porfiriato, see Bryan's dissertation. Bryan offers insight into the personal, as well as political motivations of a man who both "affected and was affected by" the political climate in which he lived and worked.

17. Bryan, 242.

18. Ibid., 250.

19. Ibid., 246-249.

20. Ibid., 250.

21. Ibid., 250.

22. Ibid., 254.

23. Ibid., 254-255.

24. Ibid., 268.

25. Ibid., 239.

26. Horacio Legrás. *El Ateneo y los orígenes del estado ético en México*. *Latin American Research Review*, 38, no. 2 (2003), 34-60.

27. Legrás, 39.

28. Bryan, 269.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 271.

31. MacLachlan and Beezley. *Mexico's Crucial Century*, 231.

32. Mexico's struggle for independence from Spain unfolded between 1810 and 1820.

33. Michael J. Gonzales. Imagining Mexico in 1910: Visions of the *Patria* in the Centennial Celebration in Mexico City." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 39, 497.

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34. *Mestizo* is term traditionally used in Latin America for people of mixed European and Indigenous heritage or descent.
35. Tenenbaum, 3-4.
36. For more information, Tenenbaum.
37. Tenenbaum, 15.
38. Ibid., 15-16.
39. Mauricio Tenorio Trillo. 1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the Centenario. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 28, no. 1, 86.
40. Tenorio Trillo, 97.
41. Ibid.
42. Claudio Lomnitz. *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 51.
43. Tenorio Trillo, 96.
44. For a detailed analysis of the *Desfile Historico* and the *Centenario*, see Tenorio Trillo, 75-104. See also Michael J. Gonzales, 495-533.
45. Tenorio Trillo, 98.
46. For a concise, but insightful account of Antonio Rivas Mercado's formative experiences in Europe, see the opening chapters of Fabienne Bradu's biography of the architect's daughter, Antonieta Rivas Mercado. Fabienne Bradu. *Antonieta (1900-1931)* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991).
47. Tenorio Trillo, 95.
48. Ibid.
49. Bradu, 32.
50. Promo flier for Kathryn Blair, *A la Sombra del Ángel*, (Alianza Editorial, no date or page number).



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51. Bradu, 30-31.

52. Ibid., 30.

53. Michael J. Gonzales. Imagining Mexico in 1910: Visions of the *Patria* in the Centennial Celebration in Mexico City." *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 39, pp. 495-533. (500)

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54. *Ibid*, pp. 495-533. (520)

55. *Ibid*. pp. 146-147.

56. Michael J. Gonzales. Imagining Mexico in 1910, P. 532.

57. Hale, p. 16.

58. Hale, p. 21.

59. Orozco, p. 22. (A *manola* is a typical woman from Madrid, often dressed in the flamboyant zarzuela style.)

60. Jean Charlot. *Mexican Mural Renaissance*. P. 43.

61. Orozco, p. 28.

62. *New York Times*, 16 September, 1910. Quoted in Michael J. Gonzales, 521.

63. Michael J. Gonzales, 521-522.

64. Frederick Starr. *Mexico and the United States. A Story of Revolution, Intervention, and War* (Chicago: The Bible House, 1914), 50-51.

65. Ricardo Godoy. "Franz Boas and his Plans for an International School of American Archaeology and Ethnology in Mexico." *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*. 13 (1977): 228-242. (232).

66. Llinas-Alvarez, 69.

67. Home page of "Alfonso Reyes virtual chapel," <http://www.alfonsoreyes.org/index.html> (accessed January 12, 2013).

68. Godoy, 233.
69. Ibid., 228.
70. Ibid., 230.
71. Ibid., 228-242.
72. Cited in Gonzales, 525. Originally Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1991), 181.
73. Godoy, 233.
74. For more information on this concept, see the work of Mexican Anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla: *Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* (Austin TX: UT Press, 1996).
75. Tenorio Trillo, 100
76. *Actas del XVII Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Sección Mexico*. Mexico: 1910. P. 8. Quoted in Tenorio Trillo, 100
77. Ibid.
78. Franz Boas. "Museums of Ethnology and their classification" *Science*, 9, 1887, 589.
79. For an analysis of the competing but connected discourses of the "Indian" developed in nineteenth century Mexico, see Rebecca Earle. "Creole Patriotism and the Myth of the 'Loyal Indian'." *Past & Present*, No. 172 (Aug. 2001), 125-145.
80. These lectures are collected and published as Boas, Franz. *The Mind of Primitive Man: A Course of Lectures delivered before the Lowell Institute, Boston, Mass., and the National University of Mexico, 1910-1911* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911).
81. For a comprehensive synthesis of the work undertaken under the auspices of the International School, see: Franz Boas. Summary of the Work of the International School of American Archaeology and Ethnology in Mexico, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1915), 384-395.

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82. Franz Boas, Adolfo Best, and Manuel Gamio. *Album de Colecciones Arqueológicas* (México: Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1921). (Though much of the fieldwork for this volume was conducted during Boas's tenure in Mexico (1910-1912), its publication would be delayed until 1921, due to economic and logistical roadblocks owing to the revolutionary years.)

83. AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, 1-8.

84. AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, 8.

85. AMG Seccion: Série: Correspondencia sin fecha. Caja 2, Exponente 590, 4. (translation by Sarah Borealis)

86. Gamio, Manuel, *Forjando Patria*, 39.

87. See Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

88. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

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**CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENTS OF REVOLUTION**

1. Laura Gonzalez Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura (Colección Artes Plásticas, Serie Investigación y Documentación de las Artes)* (México: Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas (CENEDIAP) 1987), 31. See also Jean Charlot, 45.

2. Orozco, José Clemente, 22.

3. Orozco, José Clemente, 30.

4. Charlot, 45.

5. *Ibid.*, 46.

6. *La mexicanidad, lo mexicano*, or “mexicanness,” is a term used to describe the sense of cultural nationalism that emerged in the post-revolutionary era. Claudia Schaefer defines “mexicanidad” as “the unchanging philosophical essence of the Mexican” that is recognizable in the nation’s art, politics, and social structures. (Claudia Schaefer, *Textured Lives: Women, Art, and Representation in Modern Mexico*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1992, 9.) Eric Zolov defines “lo mexicano” as “a heralding of folkloric culture and the racial valorization of a mestizo-driven “Cosmic Race.” Zolov goes on to state that one of the goals for this project was to rewrite the historical memory of the revolutionary experience as a symbol to unify the nation. (Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 3).

7. Laura González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, Colección Artes Plásticas, Serie Investigación y Documentación de las Artes (México: INBA, 1987), 42.

8. Wassily Kandinsky. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art, and painting in particular*. (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1947), 23-24.

9. González Matute, 49.

10. Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution*, 21-22.

11. *Ibid.*, 22.

12. Ross, 328.

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13. Williams, 104.
14. Williams, 105.
15. Alicia Reyes. *Genio y figura de Alfonso Reyes* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1976), 55-56.
16. Alfonso Reyes, "Visión de Anáhuac," *Visión de Anáhuac y otros ensayos*. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Edición conmemorativo 70 años, 2004), 11.
17. Alfonso Reyes, "Visión de Anáhuac," 36.
18. Alfonso Reyes, "Visión de Anáhuac," 37. (emphasis added).
19. López Moreno and Ocharán, 8.
20. "La poesía, tan indefinable como la vida y muerte." Publicación *DF*, 1 de marzo de 1953.
21. Patricia Cardona. "Aurora Reyes, feminista y pionera del PCM, pasó su infancia entre tarantulas y animals del desierto," *Unomásuno*. Domingo 29 de diciembre de 1985. (no page number) AAR.
22. Abelleira, "Aurora Reyes, ser pájaro o pez," 1.
23. Patricia Cardona. AAR.
24. "Barrio de Tepito online," <http://www.barriodetepito.com.mx/pajaro/Barrios/lagunilla/lagunilla.htm> (accessed January 12, 2013).
25. "Homenaje de *Mujeres* a Aurora Reyes." Revista *Mujeres*, no. 300, noviembre de 1975.
26. Borealis interviews Hector Godoy, Coyoacán, Mexico. February 15, 2005.
27. Adriana Malvido. *Nauhi Olin: la mujer del sol* (Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1993), 19, 25.
28. Gerardo Murillo, aka Dr. Atl, "La revolución mexicana y los mexicanos en Paris," Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional. Archivo de Gerardo Murillo Coronadó (Dr. Atl). Documento de ocho páginas sin fecha, caja 2a, exponente 94, 1.

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29. Ibid., 1.
30. Ibid., 2.
31. Ibid., 4.
32. AMG Seccion: Produccion artistica, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 286, 1-2. This document has been reproduced as an appendix to the dissertation.
33. AMG Seccion: Produccion artistica, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 286, 4.
34. González Matute, 42-43.
35. Jean Charlot, *Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos, 1785-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 160. (translation by Sarah Borealis)
36. Ibid.
37. Charlot, *Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos*, 161.
38. Barbosa, 285.
39. Charlot, *Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos*, 162.
40. "Chronology," Alfredo Ramos Martínez Research Project, <http://www.alfredoramosmartinez.com/pages/chronology.html> (accessed September 25, 2011).
41. Patricia Cardona, *Unomásuno*, 20.
42. Jorge H. Jiménez Muñoz. *La Traza del Poder: Historia de la Política y los Negocios Urbanos en el Distrito Federal, de sus orígenes a la desaparición del Ayuntamiento (1824-1928)* (Mexico: Dedalo Codex, 1993), 129-149.
43. Ibid., 134-135.
44. Ibid., 135.
45. Interview from "The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo," documentary film, PBS, 2005.
46. Jiménez Muñoz, 130.

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47. Manuel Gamio. *Forjando Patria*, 78.
48. Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria*, 72-79.
49. The Mexican constitution of 1917 may be found online at the following URL: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mexico/1917-Constitution.htm>
50. Manuel Gamio, *Revista Ethnos*, May, 1920. (Translation Borealis)
51. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Colin MacLachlan, for encouraging me to think about the role of “luck” in the evolution of history, as well as the history of evolution.

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**CHAPTER FIVE: FORJANDO PATRIA IN THE CENTRO HISTORICO**

1. James D. Cockroft. *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution: 1900-1913* (Austin: UT Press, 1968), 3.
2. Cockroft, 5.
3. “Guadalupe Posada murió en el olvido y abandono: Historiador asegura que el creador de las populares calaveras falleció de alcoholismo, solo, en un cuarto en el barrio de Tepito y sus restos fueron enterrados en una fosa común.” *El Universal*. Mexico City. Miércoles 08 de junio de 2011. Accessible online: <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/771257.html> (accessed January 20, 2013)
4. Posada: Monografía. Mexico: Mexican Folkways, 1930.
5. Sylvia Orozco, “A Chronology,” José Guadalupe Posada: The Jean Charlot Collection, University of Hawaii Library, <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/charlotcoll/posada/posadachronos.html> (accessed January 20, 2013)
6. Antonio Rodríguez. “*Posada: el artista que retrató a una época*” (Mexico: Editorial Domes, SA, 1977), 148.
7. Ibid.
8. Sylvia Orozco, “A Chronology,” <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/charlotcoll/posada/posadachronos.html>
9. Orozco, José Clemente, 14. (translation by Sarah Borealis)
10. Rodríguez, 184 (italics added).
11. We now know that the “archaic” forms Gamio unearthed at Tlatilco are evidence of the Olmec civilization’s presence (physical or influential via trading routes) in the central valley. This account of Gamio’s contribution to the field of modern Archaeology is found in Michael D. Coe’s book *America’s First Civilization* (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1968), 19.



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12. “Guadalupe Posada murió en el olvido y abandono: Historiador asegura que el creador de las populares calaveras falleció de alcoholismo, solo, en un cuarto en el barrio de Tepito y sus restos fueron enterrados en una fosa común.” *EL Universal*. Mexico City. Miércoles 08 de junio de 2011  
<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/771257.html> (accessed January 21, 2013).

13. Abel Santiago. “Posada, interprete del sentimiento artístico de México.” Viernes, 6 de Abril, 2012.  
[http://oaxacaprofundo.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2082&Itemid=156](http://oaxacaprofundo.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2082&Itemid=156) (accessed January 21, 2013).

14. Much scholarship has been devoted to Posada’s use of the skeletal form and its function as a counterbalance to the skewed perspective of Porfirian progress. Some works I find particularly useful are: Anita Brenner, *Idols Behind Altars*. (See especially the chapter titled “Posada the Prophet,” 185-198) Frances Toor, Paul O’Higgins, Blas Vanegas Arroyo, Eds. *Monografía. Las obras de Jose Guadalupe Posada, grabador mexicano, con introduccion de Diego Rivera* (México: Mexican Folkways, 1930); also Carlos Macazaga Ramirez de Arellano y Cesar Macazaga Ordone. *Las Calaveras vivientes de Posada* (México: Editorial Innovacion, 1979); and Antonio Rodríguez. *Posada: el artista que retrató a una epoca*. (Mexico: Editorial Domes, SA, 1977).

15. Vanegas Arroyo often utilized Posada’s block prints multiple times, due to their popularity and mutability. Because the images often functioned independently from the text, the publisher enjoyed the freedom to reproduce them repeatedly in different contexts.

16. Rodríguez, 152.

17. Ibid.

18. Tepito Barrio has continued to be a vortex of cultural mestizaje into the twenty first century. On the first day of every month, thousands of faithful individuals visit the barrio seeking access to the first public altar to Santa Muerte, a skeleton saint with roots in the pre-Hispanic deities Mictecacihuatl and Mictlantecuhtli. In the year 2010, archaeologists working near the site of the Templo Mayor unearthed remnants of Mexica sculpture representing Miquixtli, another female goddess of death. According to their conclusions, in the sixteenth century, these sculptural remnants were reused in the foundations of homes built for the Spanish conquistadors.

19. “Guadalupe Posada murió en el olvido,”  
<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/771257.html>

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20. Ronald Hilton. "José Vasconcelos," *The Americas*, 7, no. 4 (Apr., 1951), 395-412.
21. Cockroft, 3.
22. Cockroft, 3-4 (emphasis added).
23. Michael Johns. *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* (Austin: UT Press, 1997), 32. Also William Beezley. *Judas at the Jockey Club and other episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 99-100.
24. See Michael Johns and John Lear on the "democratization" of the historic center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
25. Alan Knight. "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940. In Richard Graham, Ed. *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 72.
26. *Ibid.*, 73.
27. *Ibid.*, 75.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (University of California Press, 1999), 4.

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**CHAPTER SIX: TEHUANTEPEC, OAXACA: AN ARTISTIC PILGRIMAGE**

1. Leticia Reina, "Historia del Istmo de Tehuantepec," (History of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec) in *Del Istmo y Sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*, (Mexico: INBA, 1992), 45.
2. Andrés Henestrosa, "La Tehuana: Oro, Coral Y Bambú," (The Tehuana: Gold, Coral and Bamboo) in *Del Istmo y Sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*, (Mexico: INBA, 1992), 23.
3. For an insightful look at Juana Cata's leadership role in Isthmus society, see Francie Chassen-López, "A Patron of Progress: Juana Catarina Romero, the Nineteenth Century Cacica of Tehuantepec," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 88:3. Duke University Press, 1988.
4. Originally Elena Poniatowska, "Concha Michel Abandonó los Escenarios Elitistas y se Refugió en el Folklore," *Novedades*, 14 August, 1977. An English translation is included in Jocelyn Olcott, "'Take off that streetwalker's dress': Concha Michel and the Cultural Politics of Gender in Postrevolutionary Mexico," *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 21 No. 3, 2009, 44; however, I have made slight alterations to that translation.
5. Olcott, 44.
6. Olcott, 52.
7. Lopez, 36.
8. Poole, 52.
9. Ibid.
10. *Ibid*, p. 53.
11. See Deborah Poole's article for more detail on the Tehuana as a symbol on type photographs and postcards. Poole, 37-82.
12. AMG Seccion: Produccion Intelectual, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 285 (5-6) Gamio would be proved correct in this prediction. In 1942 the North American women's magazines Vogue and Mademoiselle each featured photographs of women in Tehuana traje.

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13. Caleb Bach, "Andres Henestrosa from fables to fame: this self-taught Mexican writer captures the folktales and lore of his indigenous heritage, lifting them to new heights as literary works." *Americas*. (English edition) March-April, 2005, 7.

14. AMG Seccion: Produccion Intelectual, Serie: Articulos sin fecha, Caja: 2, Exponente 249, 6.

15. Elizabeth Hurlock defines "reverential imitation" as "imitation of a person or group for whom one has a deep feeling of respect." See Hurlock, *The Psychology of Dress: An Analysis of Fashion and its Motive*. Salem (New Hampshire: Ayer Company, 1929), 39.

16. Herbert Blumer, "Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective selection," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 10, No. 3 (Summer, 1969), 283.

17. In the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Edward Sapir's entry for "fashion" states that "especially under conditions which impair the integrity of the ego, the sense of oneself is regained and heightened through novel yet socially sanctioned departures from prevailing social forms." Dressing like indigenous members of the modern nation may have helped revolutionary elites assuage any guilt generated as a result of the privilege and comfort conferred upon them by the Porfirian social order. If they managed to look more like the "underdogs" (members of society rendered marginal or deviant by the old regime, indigenous women being one example) they would gain legitimacy as the architects of a more equitable society as part of the revolutionary process. "Fashion," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences VI*. New York, Macmillan, 1931, 139-141.

18. Adolfo Castañon, "Cien Años de Andrés Henestrosa, El Hombre que dispersó su sombra." *Revista de la Universidad de Mexico*, No. 33 (2006), 53 <http://www.revistadelauniversidad.unam.mx/3306/pdfs/48-58.pdf> (Accessed October 10, 2012).

19. Bach, "Andres Henestrosa from fables to fame: this self-taught Mexican writer captures the folktales and lore of his indigenous heritage, lifting them to new heights as literary works." *Americas*. (English edition) March-April, 2005.

20. *Malinche* is the nickname given to an indigenous woman who became the personification of mestizaje by virtue of giving birth to the Conqueror Hernán Cortez's son, Martín. As México struggled to contextualize its colonial legacy of shame and underdevelopment after gaining independence from Spain in the 19th century, Doña Marina became known as *La Malinche*, who "symbolize[d] the humiliation – the rape – of the indigenous people and the act of treachery that would lead to their oppression."

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21. Mexican writer Octavio Paz credits *La Malinche* with the irreversible evolution of character that changed the stoic, impassive, and closed indigenous archetype into the open, raped, and shamed mestizo race destined to struggle with the eternal identity crisis elaborated in his essay *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950). Notably, Aurora Reyes re-interpreted the character of *Malinche* in her 1973 mural located in the former home of the conqueror Cortéz. In Reyes's mural, Malinche's role is reprised as that of mediator rather than traitor for the Mexican people, perhaps representing the contemporary evolution of feminism as well as a more positive interpretation of ethnic mixing.

22. Covarrubias. *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (New York: Knopf, 1946), 338-339. Notably, this passage, originally published in English as it appears here, was at some point translated into Spanish, enlarged, and is currently mounted on one of the walls in the bustling public market in the center of Juchitan. I photographed it when I was there on a research trip in 2009.

23. For clarification on the concept of "global nodes" of culture, commerce, and ideas, see Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: London, New York, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

24. Poole, 68.

25. See Beverly Chiñas, *The Isthmus Zapotecs; women's roles in cultural context* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973). Also Tom DeMott, *Into the hearts of the Amazons : in search of a modern matriarchy* (Madison, Wis.: Terrace Books/University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). Also Bennholdt-Thomsen, Veronika. *Juchitán, la ciudad de las mujeres*. (Oaxaca, México: Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas: Fondo Estatal para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997).

26. Sylvia Marcos. *Taken from the Lips: Gender and Eros in Mesoamerican Religions* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2006).

27. Castillo Nájera, 16. (translation by Sarah Borealis).

28. Borealis interview with Hector Godoy, Mexico City, Mexico, June 14, 2012.

29. AAR Letter to Frida Kahlo, Dec. 24, 1946. The entire letter is included as an appendix to this dissertation.

30. Castañon, 48.

31. Covarrubias, *Mexico South*, 263.

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32. Aída Sierra Torre, "Geografías Imaginarias II: La Figura de la Tehuana," (Imaginary Geographies II: The Figure of the Tehuana) in *Del Istmo y Sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*, (Mexico: INBA, 1992), 47. (translation by Sarah Borealis)

33. The Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein devoted a sequence in his epic film *Que Viva Mexico* to the function of these gold coin necklaces in isthmus traditions. Eisenstein's official government escort during his time in Mexico was Adolfo Best Maugard, originator of the Best Maugard Method discussed in Chapter five of this dissertation.

34. Reina, "Historia del Istmo de Tehuantepec," 25, 34.

35. Covarrubias, *Mexico South*, 243.

36. Covarrubias, *Mexico South*, 246.

37. Andrés Henestrosa, "La Tehuana: Oro, Coral Y Bambú," (The Tehuana: Gold, Coral, and Bamboo) in *Del Istmo y Sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*, (Mexico: INBA, 1992), 22.

38. Aída Sierra Torre, 55.

39. Ibid., 50.

40. Ibid., 40.

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**CHAPTER SEVEN: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR REVOLUTIONARY LESSONS**

1. Alfonso Reyes. "Vision of Anahuac," 98.
2. The *Maximato* was a period in the historical and political development of Mexico ranging from 1928 to 1934. That period was named after Plutarco Elías Calles, who was known as the *Jefe Máximo* of the Revolution. Elias Calles was president in the period 1924-1928, but in the next six years, there were three presidents, all of them subordinate to a lesser or greater extent to Calles.
3. Brenner, 314.
4. For more on this argument, see Stanley R. Ross (ed.) *Is the Mexican Revolution Dead?* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).
5. Castañón, 52.
6. "Los entierros en el Istmo." *NEZA: Organo Mensual de la Sociedad Nueva de Estudiantes Juchitecos*, 1, no. 8. (1936): 1, 5.
7. Williams, 51.
8. "Homenaje de *Mujeres* a Aurora Reyes." *Revista Mujeres*, no. 300, noviembre de 1975.
9. P. Fernández Márquez, "Los murales del Auditorio 15 de Mayo, SNTE," Suplemento de *El Nacional*, (sin fecha), 14. AAR.
10. Erika Cervantes, "Cantadora de corridos revolucionarios anticlericales, Concha Michel," 1. <http://www.cimacnoticias.com/noticias/03abr/s03042904.html>. (accessed December 8, 2004).
11. Cervantes, 1.
12. United Front for Women's Rights.
13. Ramos Escandón, 95.
14. Macías, 129.

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15. Aurora Reyes "Mexico en sus Cantares: Significación de Concha Michel en el Arte Mexicano," 1. This essay was written on August 8, 1963 for the Institute of Mexican and Czechoslovakian Cultural Exchange, and was photocopied from the archives of the CENEDIAP library in Mexico City, August 2004.
16. Cervantes, 1.
17. Reyes, "Mexico en sus Cantares," 4.
18. This document had been reproduced and included as an appendix.
19. Aurora Reyes, "*Las Escuelas Particulares – su actuacion – situacion del personal especial docente gubernativo – unas cuantas sugerencias*," Unpublished document from the Aurora Reyes Archive in Coyoacan, Mexico.
20. Williams, 87
21. Shirlene Ann Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: her participation in revolution and struggle for equality, 1910-1940* (Denver: Arden Press, 1990), 100.
22. LEAR Executive Committee, "Notas y actividades de la LEAR," *Frente a Frente* (August 1936): 23, quoted in Alicia Azuela, "El Machete and Frente a Frente: Art Committed to Social Justice in Mexico," *Art Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Political Journals and Art, 1910-1940 (Spring, 1993), 86.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Roberto Lopez Moreno "Aclara Aurora Reyes: 'Silvia Pardo no es la Unica Muralista.'" *La Prensa*, (April 9, 1978), 40.
25. The Cristeros, or "fighters for Christ," emerged in response to the enforcement of the anti-clerical articles of the 1917 Constitution. Carried over from the Mexican Constitution of 1857, these articles were aimed at reducing the influence of the Catholic Church in daily Mexican life in an attempt to speed the nation's march toward modernity. Article three of the 1917 Constitution demanded secular education in the schools, which rural schoolteachers struggled to uphold in the face of popular resistance. The Cristeros' struggle against the anti-clerical policies of the Revolutionary government culminated in the Cristero Rebellion, which began on January 1, 1927. Violence raged across the countryside for several years before the struggle between Church and State was settled by diplomatic means in 1929. During these violent years the *Cristeros* murdered rural schoolteachers converting them into martyrs of the experiment in revolutionary education. For more information on the *Cristeros*, see the work of Jean Meyer.



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26. Margarita Aguilar, "Aurora Reyes, Primera Muralista Mexicana," 3. Almargin.com, <http://www.almargen.com.mx/archivo/ensayo/muralista.html> (accessed on July 7, 2004).

27. For more detailed information on the evolution of this space and its use, see Josefina Muriel, *Los Recogimientos de Mujeres* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), 1974.

28. North American Ione Robinson worked as an assistant to Rivera in his National Palace murals in 1929, in 1930 Isabel Villseñor assisted muralist Alfredo Zalce, and New Yorkers Marion and Grace Greenwood worked on murals in Taxco, Morelia and Mexico City between 1933 and 1936.

29. "Diez pintores opinan..." *Excelcio*, suplemento dominical, 19 de octubre, 1958. (AAR)

30. Of course, Reyes would only have had to re-examine the legacy left by her paternal grandfather, General Bernardo Reyes, to realize that she was directly descended from a patriarch who lived and worked by these precepts to ensure the survival of his family.

31. AAR, Reyes, Aurora, "*La Mujer y La Cultura*" (Woman and Culture) unpublished essay (Coyoacán, México. 1939). This document has been reproduced and is included as an appendix.

32. Franco, Jean. *Plotting Women: Gender & Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 131.

33. Franco, 131.

34. Paz, 35.

35. In 1977, Aurora Reyes contributed to the modern re-interpretation of Malinche's significance with her mural entitled *El Primer Encuentro* in the Salon de Cabildos, also known as the House of Cortés, in Coyoacán.

36. Franz Blom. "Various notes on the northern section of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec," MARI pamphlets, Middle America. Drawer: A-B Folder: Blom, F, manuscripts apparently published, 7.

37. Blom, 7.

38. Moreno and Ocharán, 7.

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39. The entire poem is provided as an appendix.

40. López Moreno and Ocharán, 69.

41. Bambi. *Excélsior*, febrero de 1953. (AAR)

42. López Moreno and Ocharán, 70.

43. The window of the projection booth is located in the center of the painted sun and framed by the points of a giant trompe l'oeil mathematical compass, whose opposite ends point to the recognizable face of Albert Einstein. Although Mexican scholar Margarita Aguilar Urbán refers to the swastika that marks the forehead of Reyes's Einstein in her article "*Los murales de Aurora Reyes: una revision general*" as representation of the scientist as "*un hombre atacado por la persecución fascista*," my personal experience in the auditorium compels me to argue that the swastika was not part of Reyes's initial design. It shows that the murals have been defaced through ongoing lack of care and maintenance evident throughout the building. The aforementioned swastika is not painted onto the scientist's forehead, but etched into the plaster and then filled in with ink. In an adjoining section of the mural, an anti-clerical condemnation that Reyes painted to call attention to the Mexican experiment in Socialist education has been crudely chipped away.

44. This text is part of a longer dedication from Atl to Aurora on the inside cover of example number 255 of his 1950 monograph *Cómo nace y crece un volcán, el Parícutín*. The work was inspired by the eruption of the volcano *Parícutín* in Michoacan state in 1943. This volcano, which grew over one thousand feet in its first year of existence (1943-44) is often recognized as one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

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**CONCLUSION: REVOLUTION= RE-EVOLUTION**

1. Francisco Arce Gurza. "En Busca de una Educación Revolucionaria: 1924-1934," in *Ensayos Sobre historia de la educación en México*, Second Edition. (México: El Colegio de México, 1985), 145.
2. Didier T. Jaen, "Introduction," *The Cosmic Race, La Raza Cosmica*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), xxiv.
3. Juan Garcia Jimenez, "Aurora en los Andamios." *La Prensa* (September 13, 1962), 28.
4. López Moreno and Ocharán, 8 (translation by Sarah Borealis).
5. Lopez Moreno, "Aclara Aurora Reyes," 40. (translation by Sarah Borealis).
6. Poniatowska, Elena, "México Necesita una Revolución?: Habla Aurora Reyes," *Novedades*, (August 24, 1954), 1. (translation by Sarah Borealis)
7. Maria Luisa Ocampo. "Mujer Mexicana," *La República*, No. 29, 1 mayo 1952. (AAR)
8. *Revista Unomásuno*, March 6, 1980.
9. This phrase, "ballinche," is composed of two mexican slang terms: "ballin" (something of poor quality, or of a lower grade) and "pinche" (something really miserable).
10. *Revista Impacto*, March 14, 1953. Cited in Abelleyra, 4-5.(AAR)
11. In an interview with Abelleyra in May of 2002, Palacios alluded to her marriage in this way: "...yo era una vagabunda por vocación, loca como una cabra y completamente libre a pesar de estar casada con el filósofo Samuel Ramos. Duramos cuatro años de matrimonio normal y 23 de puros cuates (drinking buddies), hasta que murió." (Angelica Abelleyra, "Ser pájaro o pez", 5. (AAR))
12. Abelleyra, 5. (AAR)
13. Juan Soriano to Angelica Abelleyra, August 7, 2002. Cited in Abelleyra, 6. (AAR)

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14. Samuel Schmidt, *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency: The Years of Luis Echeverría*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 5.

15. Ibid, 5-6.

16. A written account of this story was published by Manuel Gonzalez Calzada in the *Revista Hoy*, March 3, 1956.

17. A Catalogue of this 1992 exhibit is available in the Tulane University Library. *Del Istmo y Sus Mujeres: Tehuanas en el Arte Mexicano*, Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 1992.

18. Godoy, Hector. Interview by Sarah Borealis. Personal interview. Mexico City, Mexico, February 15, 2005.

19. According to Reyes, the Mexican Communist Party treated women worse than more Bourgeois sectors of the population. In an interview with Renato Leduc, Reyes said that after attending meetings daily for four years she left "vomiting blackness" because although the bourgeoisie objectified women as "private property," the comrades of the party objectified women as "group property" that could be passed from hand to hand for its collective use. (Oralba Castillo Nájera, *Renato Leduc y Sus Amigos*, México: Editorial Domés, S.A., 1987), 16. (translation by Sarah Borealis)

20. Abelleira, 4.

21. Godoy, Hector. Interview by Angélica Abelleira. Personal interview. Mexico City, Mexico, June 11, 2002.

22. Godoy, Hector. Interview by Sarah Borealis. Personal interview. Mexico City, Mexico, February 27, 2005.

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Presidencia de la República

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Propiedad Artística y Literaria

Archivo Historico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (AHSEP)

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Producción Artística

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<http://www.almargen.com.mx/archivo/ensayo/muralista.html>. (accessed July 7, 2004).

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Sarah is a visual historian who studies Mexico through the cultural expressions of its people. Her documentary photographs of urban political art are included in the visual anthology *Mexico: Stencil: Propa* (Mexico: Editorial RM, 2008). In 2010 she earned a certificate in film editing from New York University. As co-founder and co-director of Banda Ancha Productions, an artistic collective that utilizes High Definition video to produce innovative perspectives of the Latin American experience. She currently offers several courses on modern Mexico through Tulane's School of Continuing Studies.