

Transcending Borders: The Transnational Construction of Mexicanness, 1920-1935

by

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Date: April 6, 2010

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of
Romance Studies in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

My dissertation, “Transcending Borders: The Transnational Construction of Mexicanness, 1920-1935,” examines the conflicting attitudes towards “Mexicanness” or *mexicanidad* both in Mexico and the United States, an area that, José Limón, conceptualizes as “Greater Mexico.” Beginning with an analysis of the Mexican post-revolutionary state’s construction of nationalist culture, I argue that the transnational invention of Mexicanness through the circulation of the Aztec artifact reveals the possibilities for people of Mexican descent to reclaim public space and cultural citizenship on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I examine the construction of Mexicanness through an analysis of the limitations of Mexican post-revolutionary literary production in generating a clear vision of Mexican nationhood as well as the possibilities for nation building offered by public spaces such as the museum and the monument (an outdoor museum). Tracing the cultural manifestations of Mexican nationhood as expressed by the state and by people of Mexican descent is essential to understanding how the nation is practiced and thus intimately intertwined with the practice of citizenship. Through an interdisciplinary analysis of the Aztec artifact’s various incarnations as an archaeological artifact, created artifact, and spurious artifact, I contend that the artifact represents an alternative text for the study of nationalism in its ability to narrate a national identity ultimately shaped beyond Mexico’s geographical borders.

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Nearly every good idea in the following chapters can be traced in some way to one or more of the people mentioned above; any inaccuracies and ineloquent passages are mine alone.

Introduction

It wasn't until Lou Dobbs' sudden resignation announcement on November 11, 2009, that I realized that mainstream American views regarding Latinos were entering a state of transition. As a founding anchor of CNN and host of the show *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, Lou Dobbs filled the network's 7pm slot with inflammatory views on Latino immigration and frightening descriptions of border violence; a border which he often depicted as a long-tentacled parasite spreading terror and disease across the United States.¹ While Dobbs enjoyed rising ratings for many years, his increasing misrepresentation of the facts began to create tension with the network's commitment to "unbiased reporting" (*The Situation Room*). Though Dobbs often sought to connect illegal immigration to crime and other societal ills, a recent *NPR* article explains that, "In one instance, Dobbs and a CNN reporter seemed to attribute a startling rise in leprosy cases to illegal immigration from Latin America. There was no such startling rise — and what cases there were would have been more likely to have had Asian origins" (Folkenflik 1). It appeared that CNN's tolerance for Dobbs, one of the country's most visible critics of Latino immigration, was beginning to wane as the network sought

¹ I must admit that Dobbs' fiery descriptions of the menacing U.S.-Mexico border finally caught up with me in Phoenix, Arizona. I spent the summer of 2009 writing fragments of my dissertation in that city while rarely missing an episode of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*. During that time, the city of Phoenix made the show's headlines on nearly a weekly basis with discussions of either drug-related kidnappings or reports of Maricopa County's Sheriff Joe Arpaio and his controversial arrests of immigrants (illegal or not). These descriptions of Phoenix as the ground zero of the drug wars and the wild persecution of immigrants made me re-think the border in a way that my quaint, childhood experiences of the San Diego/Tijuana border had not. As a native of Los Angeles, it was in Phoenix where I finally understood what Gloria Anzaldúa means when she writes that, "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (25). I enacted that "unnatural boundary" every evening as I jogged through the neighborhoods of Phoenix, always looking over my shoulder for fear of being kidnapped by either a group of Mexican drug lords or Joe Arpaio's anti-immigrant squad.

to reposition itself as a credible source of world news. But why did the network suddenly find Dobbs' views so offensive? Had Dobbs' relationship with CNN really deteriorated overnight or was the network responding to a more complex set of national issues? Did Latinos, as the fastest growing minority in the United States, suddenly merit "unbiased reporting"? Was CNN finding it necessary to finally recognize Latinos as an influential social force within mainstream America?

The premiere of CNN's two part series "Latino in America" just one month before Dobbs' resignation appeared to hold some answers. Narrated by senior anchor Soledad O'Brien, the series was interested in featuring the stories of immigrants who were living the American dream. Most of the stories highlighted in the series were of people who had gained or were on their way to gaining legal immigration status and with it a solid middle class lifestyle. Though O'Brien travelled to the major Latino-populated cities in the country to film the documentary, surprisingly, the program's producers wove the city of Los Angeles into the series almost tangentially by featuring the little known suburb of Pico Rivera. The small city of only 66,000 people, of whom 92% are of Mexican descent, is located about five miles east of East Los Angeles and is neatly cradled between the Rio Hondo River and the San Gabriel River Basin. Though Pico Rivera is usually only remembered by history as the site of the ranch of Pío de Jesus Pico, California's last Mexican governor (1832; 1845-1846), O'Brien and her producers decided to take a closer look at this unpretentious city. O'Brien explains in her book *Latino in America*, a collection of essays which arose from the production of the television series, that "Pico [Rivera] residents think they've created a Latino Mayberry, a place so removed from immigration and the acrimonious debate that the

residents get insulted if you assume they speak Spanish. I like Pico [Rivera] for our documentary because it's a window into what the future might look like" (187). In this way, "Latino in America" dares to imagine not only the new demographics of the United States and its subsequent geopolitical shifts, but also the meaning of cultural citizenship for Latinos.

While citizenship is often conceived of as a legal category which is bestowed upon an individual by the state either by virtue of place of birth or through the swearing of a naturalization oath, cultural citizenship is a negotiated practice. In the case of U.S. citizenship, it is a status that an individual either has or does not have, and anything in between does not exist. However, cultural citizenship involves individuals negotiating their often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and the hegemonic forms that determine the dynamics of belonging within the nation. Though anthropologist Renato Rosaldo understands the concept of cultural citizenship as the demand made by disadvantaged individuals for full citizenship despite their cultural difference from mainstream society, I employ the term to signal the *bilateral* negotiations taking place between those same individuals and the state. In this sense, I build off of the definition of cultural citizenship used by social cultural anthropologist Aihwa Ong which she explains as "a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (264). Cultural citizenship, therefore, is not granted by the mystical powers of the state, but rather achieved through the efforts of individuals seeking to negotiate their place within the nation. Culture, and the right to its manifestation, becomes then the site through which individuals, including those not recognized by the U.S. Constitution, challenge the state and its exclusionary practices. In

the discussion that follows, I will discuss how a contemporary consideration of cultural citizenship can help us think about the problem of locating Mexicanness and Mexicans within the nationalist imaginaries of both the United States and Mexico.

But does a Latino Mayberry have the need to appeal to cultural citizenship? After all, the debate on immigration and the use of the Spanish language, according to O'Brien, appear to have no place in Pico Rivera. The predominant language spoken in Pico Rivera is English and many of the city's residents are of second and third generation Mexican descent with few ties to Mexico. It would seem then that the residents of Pico Rivera would have little trouble being recognized by corporate America as American citizens. However, I argue that this Angeleno suburb is precisely the product of cultural citizenship. However much this town prides itself on its large Fourth of July fireworks festival and little league baseball, historically, the city of Pico Rivera has struggled to retain big business within the community. In 2005, the city sought to develop the remains of a plot of land which was once the site of a Ford Motor Company assembly plant and later a Northrop Grumman plant. The city planned to attract "good all-American stores" such as Staples, Wal-Mart, and Borders (O'Brien 190). But city council members didn't expect to find that Pico Rivera would ultimately be overlooked by these national brands due to the city's 92% Mexican-descent demographic; Gracie Gallegos, the city mayor, explains that this statistic translated into the image of an undereducated, impoverished, and non-English speaking community. Ultimately, the city offered to subsidize these stores for a pre-determined length of time if they agreed to open locations within Pico Rivera's new shopping complex. Wal-Mart accepted and it is now estimated that about twenty-five thousand people walk through

the doors of this location on any Saturday, and Pico Rivera's Borders bookstore sells more Spanish books at this location than in any other of its chain stores in the United States (ibid). Of the food and store chains who have begun to look for location space in the city, Gallegos explains that "unfortunately it might be too late because there's not a lot of space in Pico Rivera" (191).

While some critics might be tempted to claim that the city of Pico Rivera succumbed to the racist practices of these "good all-American stores," it's difficult to deny that the increased revenue generated by these businesses and the 20% increase in median house prices turned the city into one of the most prosperous suburbs outside of East Los Angeles (*Pico Rivera at a Glance*). The people of Pico Rivera refused to remain economically invisible and re-negotiated the meaning of the city's 92% Mexican-descent population. The city's residents claimed their cultural citizenship by not only asserting their power as consumers, but most importantly by declaring themselves *American* consumers; for the residents of Pico Rivera, to be an American consumer meant actively participating in the American economy as cultural citizens. While consumerism² is not the only way to declare cultural citizenship, in the case of Pico Rivera, it represented the most assertive way to dismantle corporate America's ideas about Latinos and their consumption habits. Although the economic and political battle won by the city's residents produced quantifiable gains for both the city and the

² As I mention above, cultural citizenship does not necessarily have to be asserted or negotiated in terms of consumption. However, I propose approaching the question of capitalist markets not in terms of its socially oppressive dynamics, but rather in terms of its possibilities for cultural resistance. As I have attempted to show through the case of Pico Rivera and will further explore in chapter four, capital markets and culture are constantly intersecting in everyday life. Considering the influence that market forces exert over daily life, I find it important to ask what possibilities for cultural citizenship can be created through market participation.

corporations, the answer to the question of whether Pico Riverans were American enough for these businesses represented a priceless win. In the case of Pico Rivera and its store wars, the recognition of the city's residents as Americans equated to their assertion of their cultural citizenship.

Although media outlets such as CNN have only recently begun to take notice of pockets such as Pico Rivera where Latinos are actively asserting their place as Americans, Mexicans have a long history of seeking their place within the nation. The case of CNN and Pico Rivera is a contemporary microscopic look into the inner workings of cultural citizenship and the function of Mexicanness within a Latino community. I find it relevant to part from a discussion of how the notion of Mexicanness, and its association with Latinness, continues to shift even today. In the discussion that follows, I aim to identify how, historically, Mexicanness has escaped any concrete and unified definition; this elusive quality complicates the location of both Mexicanness and Mexicans. The question of where Mexicans are located within the imaginary landscape of the United States is best summarized by literary critic John-Michael Rivera as "a complicated inquiry into the relationship between America's geographic imagination as a (trans)continental empire and the political rights and racial status of Mexicans as an identifiable collective group who reside both within and outside the maps..." (11). The radical redrawing of the geographical and imaginary borders which resulted from the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo complicated the questions of who is represented as an American citizen and what is the status of collective minority groups.

However, the complex re-drawing of boundaries placed the people of Mexican descent at the crossroads of American nationhood and Mexicanness. Alonso S. Pereles, a founding member of an early civil rights group, the Order of the Sons of America, explains this phenomenon best in his essay “The Evolution of Mexican Americans,” which he first presented to a Mexican public in 1923:

We Mexicans should take more of an interest in our government. Ours is a republican government, and in the words of the great president Lincoln, “a government of the people, by the people and for the people.” ... No one person in whose veins flow blood from another race that makes up this nation has the right — even if he does have the audacity — to will us that we are not “one hundred percent Americans.” As I have already said, based on ethnicity, history and geography, nobody — except for the pure blooded Indian — has more right than we, the descendents of Hidalgo and Cuauhtémoc, to call themselves one hundred percent American (quoted in Kanellos 155).

Pereles emphatically concludes that since Mexicans in the United States are the descendents of the revolutionary Hidalgo and the Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc, then the United States should bestow on them the democratic privileges of citizenship, facilitating their evolution as one of the “people” to whom, Pereles argues, President Lincoln refers in his works. What is interesting about Pereles’ essay is that he recovers the historical, almost mythical, ancestors of the Mexican nation in order to meld them to the symbolically universal democratic language of Lincoln. Pereles readily assumes his position as a Mexican in order to demand his citizenship rights as an American. Through the peculiar invocation of Hidalgo, a Creole, and Cuauhtémoc, an Indian, Pereles is appealing to his mestizo ancestry in order to re-imagine the very idea of citizenship.

However, Pereles’ discursive appeal to his subject position not only as a Mexican, but also as the descendent of a long history of mestizaje, necessitates a questioning of Mexicanness. What are the features of Mexicanness that allow a Mexican-American such as Pereles, to link his ancestry to the citizenship of the United States? How is the apparent permeability of Mexicanness, which Pereles describes, constituted? And what

is the role of the Mexican state in shaping not only Mexicanness, but also in negotiating the meaning of Mexican cultural citizenship? It is important to note that Pereles delivers his essay shortly after the end of the Mexican Revolution (1910-20). Not so coincidentally, his claims for citizenship through the invocation of a genealogy of mestizaje coincide with the height of the post-revolutionary Mexican state's own project of forging nationhood and modern citizenship. Although the search to define the characteristics of Mexicanness can be traced to as early as the 18th century with the publication of *Prólogos a la Biblioteca Mexicana* (1755) and *La historia antigua de México* (1780) by the Creole Jesuits Juan José Eguiara y Egurén and Francisco Javier Clavijero Echegaray³, respectively, it was not until the first fifteen years after the Revolution that a fruitful endeavor to create a unifying nationalist discourse was accomplished. At the heart of this all racially encompassing nationalist discourse was the creation of a common cultural and historical heritage. José Vasconcelos, Mexico's first Secretary of Education (1921-24) and ardent promoter of post-revolutionary cultural production, captures best the language of this new nationalist discourse in his seminal essay *La raza cósmica* (1925):

La civilización no se improvisa ni se trunca... se deriva siempre de una larga, de una secular preparación y depuración de elementos que se transmiten y se combinan desde los comienzos de la historia. Por eso resulta tan torpe hacer comenzar nuestro patriotismo con el grito de independencia del Padre Hidalgo... pues si no lo arraigamos en Cuauhtémoc y en Atahualpa no tendrá sostén, y al mismo tiempo es necesario remontarlo a su fuente hispánica... (7). ... El indio, por medio del injerto en la raza afín, daría el salto de

³ Although Eguiara y Egurén and Clavijero were writing decades apart from one another, it is curious to note that they were primarily interested in recording the cultural history of Mexico. In his *Prólogos*, Eguiara y Egurén creates a descriptive list of all the literary works published by *mejicanos* (Creoles and mestizos) up to the time of the book's publication. He includes a fiery defense of the Mexican *ingenio* by praising the colony's literary production and even pre-conquest cultural production. Clavijero follows a similar path by recounting the history of Mexico (including the pre-Conquest period) through a reading of the Aztec codices and ideograms. For the two Jesuits, the book is not only a cultural object, but more specifically an artifact capable of revealing the secrets of the ancients while simultaneously attesting to the ingenuity of colonial Mexicans.

los millares de años que median de la Atlántida a nuestra época, y en unas cuantas décadas de eugenesia estética podría desaparecer el negro... (43).

Although like Pereles Vasconcelos invokes the racial and historical heritage represented by Hidalgo and Cuauhtémoc, he ultimately implies that “la civilización [mexicana]” should be defined by a set of characteristics that are “hispánicas” or non-Indian. Within Vasconcelos’ plan for the “cosmic race” and the modern Mexican nation, the Indian and other racialized others are to disappear to give way to the white citizen. Their racial and cultural disappearance of the Indian forms part of Vasconcelos’ plan to deal with the illiterate masses which the post-revolutionary state was struggling to integrate into the modern nation. In practice, this plan translated into the implementation of education and hygiene programs intent on replacing Indian cultural practices with a Western way of life. Far from genuinely appealing to Cuauhtémoc as a foundational figure, Vasconcelos looks to the Indian as merely an evolutionary bridge toward modern nationhood.

While Pereles and Vasconcelos both invoke Mexicanness, it is important to highlight that it represents a different configuration of citizenship for each writer. Pereles invokes Mexicanness as more than simply the national character of a people. For Pereles, Mexicanness serves as a discursive move linking the Mexican people to an Indian heritage in order to lay claim to what José Limón calls “Greater Mexico,” the unity of territories inhabited by people of Mexican descent on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border (3). However, for Vasconcelos, Mexicanness is a vehicle which facilitates the ultimate erasure of an Indian heritage and the return to a set of values that seek to racially and culturally “whiten” and modernize the nation. In this way, Pereles and Vasconcelos are ultimately pointing toward two very different conceptualizations of

Mexicanness whose implications are vastly distinct. As Pereles seeks to negotiate the meaning of cultural citizenship, more specifically a set of democratic rights, for the people of “Greater Mexico” through the deployment of Mexicanness, Vasconcelos, within the context of post-revolutionary nation building, attempts to rigidly define the parameters of modern citizenship in Mexico by appealing to Mexicanness. But how do both Pereles and Vasconcelos, writing during roughly the same time period, reach such different conclusions with respect to Mexicanness and its implications for citizenship and the nation? How is it that Mexicanness is approached and shaped by different groups? What are the broader implications of the construction of Mexicanness for the making of nationalism beyond the geographical confines of mapped borders?

It is precisely at the juncture of these inquiries that my study, “Transcending Borders: The Transnational Construction of Mexicanness, 1920-1935,” begins to question the construction of Mexicanness and its implications for Mexican nationhood. In the early stages of this project, I initially set out to answer the questions of why people pledge allegiance to the flag and why today nationalism continues to ignite such heated passions. Although nationalism is a subject that persistently makes headline news either in the form of international business or politics, I wanted to understand the inner workings of nationalism within the context of Mexico. I wanted to know why so many U.S.-based Mexicans, *los deseterrados*, can simultaneously cry at the sound of Mexico’s national anthem, but also cringe at the sight of the Mexican national colors when exhibited alongside the PRI’s (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) logo. In the early stages of this project, I believed that to be Mexican was as Los Angeles Times columnist writer Hector Tobar summarizes, “To say ‘I am *mexicano*’ implies an identifiable set of

beliefs and customs; love for the tricolor flag, reverence for early-twentieth-century revolutionary icons like Pancho Villa, and shared grievances with respect to the United States” (19). But as the juxtaposition of Pereles and Vasconcelos shows, locating Mexicanness is not as simple as generating a short list of identifiable Mexican icons. The search for Mexicanness must necessarily take into account the complex dynamics of race, the writing of history, and the construction of a national patrimony.

Although the question of nationhood and its implications for citizenship entail recovering the stories of “peoplehood” as John-Michael Rivera describes it, I focus my study on reconstructing the stories of nation-making touted by the presentation and circulation of so called “Aztec” artifacts. These cultural objects, whether archaeological or spurious, ultimately tell more about the people who have collectively created them as national icons than they do about the ancient Aztec Empire that they are intended to represent. I read the artifact as a gateway to understanding the writing of official history on the part of the state and the subsequent re-writing of that memory by the common people. More specifically, I read the artifact through an analysis of its production and exhibition and through the (un)official narratives it represents. I not only approach the artifact as a type of palimpsest where different interest groups write and re-write history, but as a privileged body which is able to freely circulate and cross borders without the hassle of visas or passports. And like Mexicanness, artifacts prove to be extremely malleable, taking on the characteristics desired by the artisan, writer, politician, or entrepreneur who happens to be working with them. I propose that the artifact be read as a text capable of revealing the vision of nationhood and citizenship supported not only by the state, but more importantly the one being shaped by people operating outside of

the dictates of the state. Unlike the literary text, the text supported by the artifact is one which intersects with the nation-making endeavors of Mexicans who did not necessarily possess the ability to read. The artifact itself can take the shape of nearly any tangible object while representing more than one set of cultural values. The artifact, as I define it within my study, begins as an object valued by an institution, such as the state or the museum, and has the ability to become a token for cultural negotiation between citizens and the state. While not all artifacts can be easily appropriated for the purpose of cultural negotiation, as I discuss in chapters one and two, I am particularly interested in those that can mediate the relationship between citizens and the state. A study of the Mexican nation must take into account forms of cultural production which were accessible to a heterogeneous audience, and not only to an elite sector of society. The artifact ultimately allows for a study of nation-making which recovers the participation of the common people, truncating the idea of the nation as a purely elitist project.

While other studies, such as Ricardo Pérez Montfort's *Estampas del nacionalismo popular mexicano* (2003), have been conducted on the construction of Mexicanness within post-revolutionary Mexico exclusively, my work strives to question the transnational manifestations of Mexicanness, a concept born in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, as it was shaped by the representation of Mexican cultural production in both Mexico and the United States. An analysis of this transnational Mexicanness leads to several questions concerning modern nationhood and citizenship: Whose interests are served through displays of Mexicanness? What social and political possibilities does Mexicanness offer through its multiple cultural locations? Finally: How do the circulation of Mexico and its significations within the U.S. imaginary

inform a broader idea of the meaning of Mexicanness? It is my goal to disentangle and answer these questions through an investigation of the ways in which the cultural and national representation of Mexico in museums, alongside the standing of the Mexican national, advance a certain idea of Mexicanness that shapes the place of Mexicans on both sides of the border. I examine the construction of Mexicanness through an analysis of the limitations of Mexican post-revolutionary literary production in generating a clear vision of Mexican nationhood as well as the possibilities for nation building offered by public spaces such as the museum and the monument (an outdoor museum). It is crucial to look to the museum not only for its production and display of state-sponsored history, but also for its status as a cosmopolitan institution looking to both promote the nation within the country's geographical borders and also among the international community of modern nations. The museum is an important space where the state's vision of a nation in the making can be read. Through an interdisciplinary analysis of the role that the Mexican National Museum and private museological endeavors have played in shaping Mexicanness, I contend that the "Mexican" museum artifact represents an alternative text to the novel and school textbook, which have formed the archive for past studies on Mexicanness, in its ability to narrate a national identity ultimately shaped beyond Mexico's geographical borders.

My study of transnational nationalism is organized around four different types of artifacts. Each chapter is dedicated to the exploration of the book (the literary artifact), the archaeological artifact, the monument (the created artifact), and the spurious artifact (an artifact of contemporary production which is intentionally presented as a genuine object of ancient provenance). I have organized the chapters that follow to reflect the

evolution of the relationship between the artifact and the nation in Mexico with the final chapter exploring the spurious Aztec artifact within the United States. In chapters two and three I draw significantly from Tony Bennett's notion of the exhibitionary complex, which he summarizes as:

The institutions comprising 'the exhibitionary complex,' ..., were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power ... throughout society (61).

Although Bennett develops this idea within the context of the British and French museums of the 19th century, I find that the spectacle of power to which he refers allows for a meaningful discussion of the Mexican state's strategies for the construction of political and cultural hegemony. Before exploring the function of the artifact within the museum, I begin with an analysis of the book whose access to the masses is limited by the country's elevated illiteracy rates. The novel's lack of vision for what the Mexican nation should be and what it should look like also limits the book's ability to inspire the creation of modern nationhood. Parting from this first chapter allows for a critical evaluation of historian Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of the nation:

it [the nation] is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (7).

An analysis of the Mexican state's national project in chapters one and two shows that the nation, according to the state, is far from "a deep, horizontal comradeship" for the common people. Those citizens not already conforming to the state's vision of modern citizenship are essentially written out of the national memory and denied representation within civil society. Mexico's rural, poor, and contemporary Indian populations are excluded from the state's writing of history as the case of the National

Museum shows. A careful analysis of the erasure of the *Coatlicue* monolith and the state's re-packaging of Cuauhtémoc reveal the cultural strategies by which the Mexican state denies national and civil representation to its Indian and mestizo populations. With the progression of each chapter and the analysis of a new type of artifact in each, I trace the development of nationhood among the disenfranchised people of Mexico through their re-invention and even creation of new representations of Mexico. I argue that it is ultimately through the creation of new Mexican icons, whose circulation closely parallels the flow of transnational capital markets, that Mexicanness is re-presented as the meaningful participation of the disenfranchised people of Mexico within a nation that spreads beyond geographical borders. As I show in chapter four, the Mexican nation is collectively invented far beyond the national borders of Mexico allowing for a conceptualization of cultural citizenship rooted within an ancestral memory and not a legislative categorization.

While this project is based on an analysis of the nationalist discourse circulating in Mexico from 1920-35, my final chapter ends with a study of the spurious artifact in the final years of the 19th century. This seemingly backward progression to a later period is necessary in order to uncover the origins of the transnational invention of Mexicanness, a process which begins in the decades prior to the Revolution. Although the spurious artifact certainly circulated during the post-revolutionary period, I am most interested in this project in uncovering the origins of this process rather than in tracing its development in later years. I find this reverse chronological progression necessary in order to juxtapose the transnational invention of Mexicanness with the unified nationalist discourse of the Mexican post-revolutionary state. While I begin my first two

chapters with discussions of the nation and how it is envisioned by the state through the novel and the museum, I shift the focus of my last two chapters on the practice of cultural citizenship. The nation cannot be fully explored without studying how the nation is practiced. It is through the practice of cultural citizenship that the nation is practiced in everyday life. Though I touch upon the notion of cultural citizenship in chapter three, I explore this concept more fully in my final chapter. The progression of each chapter leads to my analysis of this study's fullest articulation of cultural citizenship in my final chapter where I find the most meaningful representation of Mexicanness within the transnational circulation of the spurious artifact.

In my first chapter, "Narrating a New Nation: From the Peasant Revolution to the Intellectual Revolution," I study the vision of the Mexican nation offered by the country's two most canonical novels of the Mexican Revolution, *Los de abajo* (1915) and *El águila y la serpiente* (1928) as well as the first state-endorsed essay defining the essence of Mexicanness "La raza cósmica" (1924). An analysis of these works shows that the Mexican Revolution represents a different set of goals for the peasants fighting for the right to land ownership and the intellectuals searching for the establishment of progressive social mores. Though these authors seek to reconcile conflicting notions of Revolution, the three works ultimately succumb to an urban and bourgeois idea of the nation that excludes the same Indian and mestizo peasants who made the Mexican Revolution possible. For the post-revolutionary state, Mexicanness is rigidly associated with bourgeois subjectivity as well as mestizo culture; "La raza cósmica" strongly suggests the goal of erasing the Indian not only from the Mexican landscape, but also from the definition of Mexicanness. In evaluating these works, I find that it is quite

difficult to sustain the argument, in the case of Mexico, made by academics such as Benedict Anderson that print media birthed the nation. Quite the contrary, the literary revolution begun by the Mexican Revolution became not only inaccessible to the illiterate peasant, but also points to this large sector of the population as a problem for nationalism.

Contrary to the Mexican novel, Mexico's National Museum attempts to narrate a vision of the nation through the incorporation of a millenary Indian, and not the contemporary Indian, as the protagonist of that history. Through an analysis of the museum's rationale and selection of artifacts, I show in chapter two how the history of Mexico's ancient archaeological artifacts is "enhanced" to support the post-revolutionary state's version of national glory. This chapter titled "El Museo Nacional de México: Selecting and Exhibiting a Glorious Nation" focuses on how the museum attempts to narrate the proud vision of the Mexican nation that the literary works in chapter one are simply unable to accomplish. In this chapter I focus on a comparative case study that analyzes the rationale behind the museum's veneration of the Aztec calendar and its abhorrence for the monolith Coatlicue despite the two of them being initially interpreted by Creole Jesuits as bad omens. In the case of the National Museum, Mexicanness is presented through the careful selection of archaeological artifacts framed for the exaltation of a Creole nation, which in the post-revolutionary period is referred to as a mestizo nation. Although the archaeological artifacts of the National Museum are of indigenous production, these artifacts are deployed by the museum to exclude figure of the Indian from the production of Mexicanness. My analysis shows that despite the state's configuration of the museum as an institution for the production and diffusion of

knowledge, its ability to reach citizens of all social classes is limited by its function as a temple of elite culture.

The monument, which I treat as a kind of outdoor museum, overcomes barriers of illiteracy and bourgeois social code by standing in the middle of the city, accessible to all, as it depicts a story of the nation's history sculpted in bronze. In my third chapter, "Will the Real Cuauhtémoc Please Stand Up?: The Awakening of Many Cuauhtémocs," I argue that the monument functions similarly to an archaeological artifact in its ability to narrate the glories of the nation. But unlike an archaeological artifact, the monument is a created artifact that is sculpted to meet the dimensions of the official version of history. Through an analysis of the Cuauhtémoc Monument, an ode to the last Aztec Emperor, I show how Mexico's multiculturalism is actually written out of history even as racial mixture is affirmed through the state's discourse on *mestizaje*, the cultural and biological fusion between Indian and Spaniard. However, an analysis of the monument's potential for interaction with the masses sheds light on this artifact's role in helping people reclaim public space and history as their own.

As the state encouraged vigorous cultural production in its efforts to define the features of the Mexican nation in the years prior to the Revolution, notions of Mexicanness were simultaneously taking shape in the United States. The pioneering of archaeology in Mexico toward the end of the 19th century by French and American scientists spurred an interest in things Mexican among American collectors and museums. In my fourth and final chapter, "The Faking of History and the Making of Mexicanness" I explore how the overwhelming creation and circulation of false archaeological Mexican artifacts within the United States re-invented the Mexican

state's rigid notion of Mexicanness. I focus specifically on the organization and travels of the Aztec Fair (1886), a travelling show of Mexican antiquities and performers, alongside the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo. The advent of transnational capital markets within Mexico facilitated not only the participation of disenfranchised artisans within the creation of Mexico's representation abroad, but also their participation in the nation-making process. In this chapter, I look beyond a discussion of the nation as a geographically bound location to more fully explore the potential for Mexicanness as an articulation of cultural citizenship for people of Mexican descent on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many of the questions informing this project can be traced to the works of other scholars within the fields of Latin American Studies, Museum Studies, and Latino Studies. Nestor García Canclini in *Culturas híbridas* (1990) argues that cultures, practices, and artifacts are hybrids, resulting from the melding of different societies and experiences. This hybridization is nowhere more visible than in Mexico where the fusion of Indian cultures and Spanish colonization form the core of national history and culture. Highlighting that Mexico shares a highly contested border with the United States, García Canclini argues that Mexican American culture demonstrates hybrid forms too. Chicano lowrider cars, for example, subvert a classic symbol of U.S. culture. *Culturas híbridas* takes as its starting point the modernizing drive many Latin American leaders urged for their countries during the 1990s. This drive involved embracing new technologies as well as new economic and political models, such as globalization. García Canclini contends that this drive does not replace traditional cultural practices, but rather results in the creation of hybridized interactions. For instance, Latin American

governments, such as Argentina's or Mexico's, may adopt democratic and free market systems, but may still preserve aspects of their authoritarian past.

However, understanding how material culture or artifacts take form requires an analysis of the strategies and institutions that are directly involved in their creation. In *The Birth of the Museum* (1995), one of the foundational texts in Museum Studies, Tony Bennett explores the philosophical, social, and ethical beliefs influencing the evolution of 19th century European museums. His collection of essays documents how the public, specifically in England and France, were expected to use museums. Bennett argues that museums were credited with the ability to escort an unsophisticated public into a more elevated form of moral and civilized behavior. In tracing the 18th century curiosity cabinets to the rise of the modern museum, Bennett adopts a Foucaultian approach that leads to an analysis of the modern museum's role in controlling an emerging middle class. Bennett portrays the museum as an institution directly involved in the task of teaching civilizing values and rules of social decorum. Simultaneously, the museum, as the state's face to its citizens, is put into service as a locus from which to project national power and authority. The welfare of the individual is viewed as directly dependent on his domestic and national environment, including social and cultural institutions. Bennett goes on to investigate the museum not only in its manifestations as a public institution of science and art, but also in the broader context of public quasi-educational institutions and entertainments, such as fairs and amusement parks.

Though Bennett's work provides an important theoretical framework for approaching the museum within the constructs of national history, another set of tools are needed to understand the post-colonial museum. Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno, in

Orígenes de la museología mexicana (1994), traces some of the more relevant publications and case studies regarding the collection and exhibition of artifacts within the Mexican National Museum. Drawing heavily from Bennett's work, Morales Moreno highlights the importance of a national patrimony coupled with a slogan for progress within late 19th century Mexico. He provides an analysis of the historical specificities that must inform any study of the Mexican National Museum. Aside from outlining a theoretical framework for a scholarly approach of the Mexican National Museum, Morales Moreno also pays special attention to the monoliths *la piedra del sol* and *Coatlicue* as they have helped to shape the collection and exhibition practices of the museum in the 20th century.

While Morales Moreno highlights the nationalist underpinnings of the Mexican Museum, Benedict Anderson studies the role of culture within the construction of the nation. In *Imagined Communities* (1983), Anderson describes community and nation as an imagined space created from cultural constructions. He looks specifically to the rise of print culture during the Enlightenment to trace the origins of the modern nation or imagined community. Through the production of books and a literate public, the printing press began to sell national culture along with the novel. Anderson argues that nationalism is constructed and understood not through political systems of power, but through systems of cultural production. Essentially, culture creates the nation. Anderson shows that it was impossible for each citizen to know and identify himself with every citizen given the sheer size and diversity of national territory. Through the spread of print culture, the public collectively imagined their community creating a sense of nation.

Following Anderson's discussion of nationalism in terms of cultural production, John-Michael Rivera attempts to recover Mexican American cultural contributions to U.S. history and literature. In *The Emergence of Mexican America* (2006), a study covering the period in U.S. history from 1821-1939, Rivera argues that the association between democracy, race, and citizenship depends on cultural production and representation. Using the term "peoplehood," Rivera analyzes how collective consciousness coalesces around cultural production, which subsequently impacts political mobilization. In this revisionist view of Western American literary history, Rivera furthers contemporary projects that insert Mexican American contributions within U. S. literary studies. Rivera's book follows a model of Latino scholarship that engages in cultural critique under the rubric of cultural citizenship, a concept furthered by Renato Rosaldo and others. Rivera specifically investigates the ways in which Mexican Americans, such as Lorenzo de Zavala and Miguel Antonio Otero, maneuvered within the public sphere in efforts to achieve political enfranchisement. He contends that though frequently overlooked, Mexican American cultural workers employed literature for specific political purposes that narrate the Mexican American quest not only for political power, but recognition of citizenship as well.

While this project begins as an exploration of the nation-building endeavors of the post-revolutionary Mexican state, its trajectory makes critical interventions within the field of Museum Studies. Although much work has been conducted on the study of the European museum, the French and British especially, few studies have been conducted on the development of the museum in Latin America. Unlike the imperial legacy of the European museum, the Latin American museum must be evaluated within a post-

colonial context and the effects of a post-colonial legacy need to be considered when thinking about the museum as a vehicle for nation-building. My chapters on the Mexican National Museum and the monument contribute not only to the void of Museum Studies within a Latin American context, but also to a more nuanced understanding of the particular challenges of the Mexican museum, such as the national and historical imagining of the Indian. In this study, I not only consider the place of the National Museum within the broader formulation of Mexican nationalism, but with the aid of Museum Studies I also closely interrogate the artifact itself beyond the context of the space of the museum. Drawing from the conceptual tools of Museum Studies, allows for an intervention into nationalism that places the field in dialogue with other area studies disciplines.

My analysis of the cultural strategies used by the post-revolutionary state and the transnational circulation of Mexicanness also helps us rethink Mexican Studies as a field of study that needs to be conceptualized in conjunction with other fields of critical area studies. As I show in chapter four, Mexican Studies and American Studies need to be thought of in conjunction with one another and not simply as the reinforcement of the “nation within a nation” model of approaching the presence of people of Mexican descent within the United States. The fluidity of the transnational flow of cultural products, such as the spurious artifact, can help us think about the fluidity of not only geographical borders, but also conceptual borders. Not only does this project propose the conceptualization of a transnational Mexican Studies and transnational American Studies, but also a rethinking of how a close study of the artifact and other manifestations of material culture can enlighten our understanding of the intertwined

relationship between the nation and the practice of cultural citizenship beyond the confines of geographical borders.

As a study on the construction of the nation and the invention of Mexicanness, my dissertation is one more attempt to understand the nature of nationalism. While many studies on nationalism have been conducted within the broader disciplines of the Humanities and the Social Sciences, my study on Mexicanness and the artifact has implications far beyond Mexico and the United States. As I have suggested in my final chapter, the circulation of material culture can help us think about the survival or metamorphosis of nationalism within the context of globalization in the twenty-first century. While in recent years the process of nation-building has increasingly been conceptualized by governments in terms of war and destruction, I hope that the present study contributes to a re-thinking of nationalism that places culture and collaboration at the center of nation-making.

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I. Narrating a New Nation: From the Peasant Revolution to the Intellectual Revolution

Lo mítico es el arma con que se reprime la experiencia histórica, con que se entorpece la conciencia. –José Joaquín Blanco in La paja en el ojo

In 1976, writer and literary critic José Joaquín Blanco explained that few remnants of popular culture had managed to find their way into “la cultura libresca mexicana” or lettered Mexican culture. While popular culture is generated by the masses and characterized by the predominance of oral tradition, Blanco argues, “[la] cultura populista significa una interpretación que los de arriba hacen para a través de ella, entender y asimilar o manejar mejor a los de abajo” (*La paja* 183). In his article entitled “Fórmulas de la cultura populista”, Blanco points toward the production of a national Mexican literature as one of the fundamental mechanisms by which the ruling elite attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to grip the minds of the popular masses. From *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (1889) to *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), for Blanco, national literature is representative of a populist manipulation that strives to generate a fixed vision of the nation. But more precisely, this cohesive image of the nation is constructed through the mythic romance of provincial life, as in Manuel Payno’s novel, and the depiction of the epic rise and fall of larger than life *caudillos* such as Artemio Cruz. However, these literary images not only generate the idea of a mythical Mexican nation, but also a grandiose vision of the Mexican citizenry which has little to do with the everyday reality of the popular masses. In this way, the myths generated by populist literature overshadow the immediate social realities experienced by both the popular masses and the burgeoning bourgeoisie.

While Blanco equates the creation of a national literature with the wielding of a populist culture, scholars such as Doris Sommer place this literature, specifically the romance novel, within the context of elite nation building projects. In *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America*, a seminal study on the projection of a desire for nationhood within the nineteenth century Latin American romance novel, Sommer shows that the same writers who authored these novels were also the same statesmen who were engineering the post-independence Creole republics. Although her study centers on the nineteenth century search for nationhood, it is crucial to note that Sommer establishes a connection between the production of a national literature and the edification of a Creole nationalist project that Blanco rejects to some extent for the twentieth century Mexican case. This rejection comes in the form of his conceptualization of the early twentieth century Mexican nationalist project as one especially focused on incorporating the popular masses into the modern nation. Blanco understands national Mexican literature as a process of devious intent that clouds the historical consciousness of its readers while Sommer reads in Latin American nineteenth century romance novels a desire for the consolidation of nationhood, most particularly within lettered circles. For Blanco, that devious literature is exclusively at the service of a governing elite interested in manipulating the popular masses. Yet this conceptualization of national literature assumes at least two things: 1) that the popular masses have access to print media 2) that this audience is making a particular reading of national literature that furthers the interests of the ruling elite. However, these are assumptions that need to be assessed within the context of the birth of a Mexican national literature.

Literatura revolucionaria: Writing the Nation's Literary Revolution

The cultural nationalism encouraged during the early years of the post-revolutionary period accelerated the process of locating, identifying and exhibiting the soul of the nation. This state sponsored cultural nationalism focused on promoting the production of artistic and literary works that encouraged positive feelings of identity and pride among the citizenry. Although the production of a nationalistic discourse encountered a heavy mix of supporters and critics within the post-revolutionary regime, the cultural agenda played a decisive role in the development of a Mexican national literature. In 1925, the minister of culture, José Manuel Puig Casauranc, made a call for the creation of a national literature that highlighted the country's social reality and encouraged readers to meditate on the search for "real reforms" (O'Malley 98). Literature was essentially expected to become a vehicle for national integration.

This post-revolutionary literary agenda sent a ripple effect among critics and writers that eventually ignited a debate regarding the contemporary state of national literature. This polemic was triggered in 1925 among Mexico City's intellectuals whose discussions became especially intense over a debate concerning the literary merits of Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*. At stake was the renovation of a Mexican literature intended to correspond to the demands of the nationalist literary agenda. The debate confronted the old literary guard with a generation of younger writers who espoused ideas of revolutionary progress. However, this revolutionary progress quickly took on authoritarian and patriarchal tones when critic Francisco Monterde G.I. declared that, "ante el público de México y de la América de habla española que existe en la actualidad una literatura mexicana viril que sólo necesita, para ser conocida por todos, una difusión

efectiva” (qtd. in Engelkirk 57). The declared desirability for a “virile” national literature expressed the rise of *machismo* as an acceptable expression of state power. Although this aggressiveness was initially associated during the Mexican Revolution with popular resistance, it was an attribute readily promoted within the state’s elaboration of a national cultural identity.

But the literary polemic did not only pull a relatively obscure novel out of the shadows, it also triggered a critical discussion concerning literature’s potential to reach the popular masses. Critics and intellectuals were concerned with the virility factor expressed in the language and content of the nation’s literature partly because there was the question of delivering a “revolutionary” message that would convey a particular national cultural identity. It is important to note that terms such as “modern”, “urban”, “Mexico” and “social” came to define the particular brand of national culture endorsed by the state (Parra 16). Critic Carlos Gutiérrez Cruz expresses the connection between the need for a “renewed” language and the post-revolutionary social movement in explaining that, “Muchos de nuestros escritores afiliados al movimiento social, han creído que basta con adoptar formas extravagantes, con elaborar metáforas absurdas, para estar a la altura de las necesidades estéticas del presente; pero se equivocan de la manera más lamentable, puesto que toda obra ejecutada para un lector, debe llevar como condición absoluta ser comprensible para ese lector” (211). Gutiérrez Cruz essentially heeds Puig Casauranc’s call to generate a literature, and more specifically a *literatura revolucionaria*, capable not only of depicting the need to pursue the ideals established by the Mexican Revolution, but also one potent enough to captivate its readership.

However, there was also the issue of determining what was meant by the term *literatura revolucionaria*. In 1925, writer Guillermo de Luzuriaga defines the genre in declaring,

¡Desliteraticémonos! ¡Despojémonos de toda paja aunque sea dorada!... Bajemos de la torre de marfil en donde nuestra vanidad de artista nos haya vuelto herméticos y, dejando las sordinas, los refinamientos, las exquisiteces quintaesenciadas y las ‘discreciones’, vayamos a la ‘tierra baja’ en donde toda una legión de semejantes nuestros desfallecen hambrientos y se agitan y se arrastran, carentes del pan del espíritu, del pan de las ideas... Vayamos a ellos y orientemos su justa rebeldía... El mejoramiento social reclama nuestra cooperación (94).

For Luzuriaga, *literatura revolucionaria* represents not only a renewal of literary language, but more importantly the approximation between the lettered class and the *campesinos* who led the agrarian revolts that characterized the Mexican Revolution. He proposes the parallel development of *literatura revolucionaria* alongside the movement of the popular masses. It is important to remember that unrest was still rampant in the countryside, which later exploded most violently during the Guerra de los Cristeros (1927-29), making the revolutionary cause an end that was still to be achieved. The idea was essentially to synchronize literary production to echo the demands made by the proletariats and *campesinos* who constituted *el alma nacional*.

The development of a *literatura revolucionaria* was crystallized in part by the formation of the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (LEAR). The LEAR, formed in 1935, represented the consolidation of several intellectual and literary circles both within and outside of Mexico City; although the LEAR was established over a decade after the publication of the first revolutionary novel, the group represents the establishment of one of the first artistic groups associated with the Revolution. The group became especially influential from 1935 to 1938, through its organization of conferences and discussions focused on spreading revolutionary literature, art and ideology among the proletariats and *campesinos*. LEAR’s purpose is best described by poet José Mancisidor in an article entitled “La poesía revolucionaria en México”, who

writes that, “Es natural que ante la soberbia de la pequeña burguesía (usufructuaria en gran parte de la Revolución Mexicana), se vaya creando una nueva conciencia literaria de acuerdo y más en consonancia con la esperanza que palpita en los corazones proletarios” (6). The LEAR’s writers and artists attempted to foment among working class citizens a revolutionary consciousness that explicitly countered not only the expanding bourgeois social sector, but also the increasingly capitalist economic policies of the state. Although the state certainly promoted the development of revolutionary artistic production, it did so while simultaneously seeking to strengthen Mexico’s economic ties to England and the United States. The state was essentially fighting for the consolidation of the nation on both domestic and international fronts.

Yet despite the revolutionary efforts of groups such as LEAR, the canonical literary works, which were canonized by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), produced during the post-revolutionary period espoused the liberal ideals of the flourishing bourgeoisie. Adalbert Dessau, in his study of the revolutionary novel declares that, “La literatura revolucionaria... presenta esencialmente las ideas de la pequeña burguesía... [aunque] algunos grupos de escritores se aproximaron temporalmente a la clase obrera y a la ideología marxista” (110). More recent studies conducted on the revolutionary novel conclude that within some of the works produced during the period there can be read a dynamic of class violence against the popular masses. In his study of Francisco Villa within the literary imaginary of the Mexican Revolution, Max Parra suggests that, “Both Azuela and [Martín Luis] Guzmán,... wrote works that in the act of representing rebel subjectivity simultaneously tried to control and suppress it by employing a social philosophy anchored in notions of private

property, individuality, and bourgeois nationhood” (8). Rather than describing this simultaneous representation and suppression of the Mexican Revolution as a contradiction, Parra approaches this phenomenon as a point of tension representative of the post-revolutionary period’s conflicting political voices and goals. During this time, the state chanted socialist rhetoric when it came to social issues, especially education and civil duty, but promoted the formation of a strong capitalist economy. Though Azuela’s novel was written during the Mexican Revolution and Guzmán’s fictionalized memoir portrays his role during the height of the armed conflict, it is important to highlight that these works were canonized by the state during the post-revolutionary period and cannot therefore be separated from this particular context. While revolutionary ideals included the pursuit of equality and the right to private property, the state’s revolutionary discourse often marginalized its Indian and mestizo populations by limiting their access to civil rights. This is not to say that all literary works written during the reconstruction period or under the auspices of LEAR were ingenuine in their revolutionary efforts to bring about social equality. But rather, what is curious to note is that many of the novels and essays of the period espouse the same liberal ideals, such as modern citizenship and bourgeois subjectivity, which Parra identifies as the state sponsored social philosophy.

In order to understand the impact that the *literatura revolucionaria* had on its readers, it is first necessary to analyze the relationship sustained between the (bourgeois) intellectual and the popular masses during the reconstruction efforts. Intellectuals played a decisive role in forging the cultural nationalism the state desired in its search for hegemony. It was after all the intellectual and specifically the bourgeois intellectual who

represented the civilized world to which the popular masses were, according to the state, supposed to aspire. I use the term “intellectual” not in the Gramscian sense, but rather as an adjective used to describe those who dedicate themselves to the realm of ideas as opposed to organization, administration or government. However, with this clarification I do not mean to disregard the role played by other kinds of intellectuals within the development of the Mexican Revolution. As historian Alan Knight emphasizes, “También se puede dar el caso (y aquí sostengo que así fue en el México revolucionario) de que los intelectuales menos destacados o ‘típicos’ desempeñen un papel importante aunque poco reconocido en el proceso político” (“Los intelectuales” 29). The recognition these intellectuals sought was directly linked to the construction of state hegemony and not necessarily to the cultural citizenship sought by the revolutionary masses. Many of these intellectuals strove to find political participation within the new political order taking shape as early as the peak of the Revolution. It is precisely the political recognition of these intellectuals which needs to be assessed within the context of nation building and more specifically, the construction of state hegemony.

Delineating the difficult relationship shared between the intellectual and the popular masses requires asking how the idea of revolution adds a new dimension to their exchanges. The nation building project up until the Mexican Revolution had been an endeavor pursued by intellectuals far before the fight for independence (1810-21). But when the Díaz regime was finally defeated in 1910 and the Mexican Revolution’s rank and file *campesinos* were recognized as greatly responsible for the political and social instability that ensued in the aftermath, it was clear that the popular masses could no longer be omitted from the pursuit of nationhood. A process of incorporation was soon

started through the usage of revolutionary jargon and the search for new alliances between intellectuals and the popular masses. Though the recent Revolution was the bridge that would bring these groups face to face, as historian Franz Borkenau points out, “the central problem of the revolutionaries was from beginning to end... how can the revolutionaries, the ostensible champions of the people, get into contact with the people?” (30-1). Closing the social schism through the creation of a new communications infrastructure was the challenge that lay ahead for the burgeoning nation.

But establishing a communications network that connected the intellectual and the popular masses proved difficult in a country where literacy was an elusive commodity, especially in rural Mexico. At the end of the nineteenth century, less than a fifth of the population knew how to read and write, and by 1910 the illiteracy rate was at a staggering 75 percent (Bartra 304-5). And by the end of 1910, as Armando Bartra explains, “*El Imparcial* [newspaper]... achieved a surprising circulation.... . Yet by then end of the first decade of this century its circulation numbered only about one hundred thousand, and that in a country of fifteen million inhabitants” (305). This suggests that both the prevalence of illiteracy and the limited circulation of newspapers limited the effect that print media could exert with respect to the nation building project. It is absolutely crucial to ask who was reading and also who had access to the information espoused within the print media. It could be said that such information had the potential to circulate orally, but the limited publication of newspapers and magazines suggests that it cannot be assumed that printed information circulated thoroughly throughout all social sectors. In light of the challenges posed by print media in early twentieth century

Mexico, what possible influence could *literatura revolucionaria* have in constructing the fraternity and liberalism necessary to consolidate nationhood, particularly among the popular masses? How did novels such as *Los de abajo* and *El águila y la serpiente*, publications that first appeared in El Paso, Texas and Mexico City, respectively, reach the illiterate sectors in Mexico?

Assessing the merits of print media as a viable communications network among seemingly polarized social sectors, is a question that cannot be answered without taking a closer look at what literacy represented during the nineteenth century. Contrary to what Benedict Anderson suggests in *Imagined Communities*, it is difficult to prove that print media had a substantial role in having readers imagine themselves as part of a community sharing the particulars appearing in the paper. Anderson cites the case of nineteenth century Venezuela, noting that, “The newspaper of Caracas quite naturally, even apolitically, created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow readers to whom [the mentioned] ships, brides, bishops, and prices, belonged” (62). However, as Sara Castro-Klarén and John C. Chasteen point out, Anderson does not refer to any specific newspaper, and also only a few of these newspapers existed in Latin America before independence (xx). Although Anderson is dealing with the constitution of nationhood in nineteenth century Latin America, the insufficiency of the argument he proposes suggests that nineteenth century newspapers could not have played a major role in constructing the imagined community that represents the nation. This suggests that countries such as Mexico entered the twentieth century with the nation as more of an aspiration than a fact. Though Castro-Klarén and Chasteen suggest that newspapers became a beacon of nationhood later in the nineteenth century, I find

that a strong argument cannot be made for Mexico. With the staggering illiteracy rates and weak circulation of publications through the end of the Porfiriato, it is difficult to argue that print culture, newspapers and books, alone spread the seeds of nationhood across a heterogeneous citizenry.

By the time the reconstruction project began in 1920, illiteracy remained a social plague that the state arduously combated in its effort to construct modern nationhood. Though illiteracy had also been a concern for the Díaz regime, the fight against this social ill took on new dimensions in the post-revolutionary period. Jean Franco describes the terms for this fight in asserting that, “The Revolution had recast the traditional relationship between the advanced intellectual and the ‘backward’ people because initially it was the people who had overthrown Porfirio Díaz and Huerta by using new methods of combat” (450). In this way artistic movements such as muralism and the rise of a *literatura revolucionaria* emerged as responses to the problem of how to address the popular masses. These movements sought to remedy illiteracy through the use of both visual culture and literature, but in the process also established a novel relationship between the intellectual and the popular masses. The cultural revolution that erupted in the aftermath of the armed conflict was a phenomenon that linked these two social groups through a state sponsored economy of production and consumption. The Mexican murals, *literatura revolucionaria*, and nationalist iconography were all imagined by intellectuals as part of the state’s effort to transform the popular masses into modern citizens.

However, the cultural economy of production and consumption that characterized this period also brought into question the term “revolutionary intellectual.” Was the idea

of the revolutionary intellectual limited to semantics or was there indeed something truly revolutionary about the intellectuals who sought to modernize the popular masses? Gramsci frames the question best in asking, “Do they (the intellectuals) have a paternalistic position towards the workers [classi strumentali] or rather consider themselves to be their organic expression? Do they have a servile attitude towards the leading classes, or rather consider themselves to be leaders themselves, an integral part of these classes?” (qtd. in Buci-Glucksmann 32). These questions need to be assessed in light of the attitudes espoused by those intellectuals most closely aligned with and sponsored by the state. It was after all the work of these intellectuals which the state privileged in its efforts to build cultural nationalism. Intellectuals such as Mariano Azuela, Martín Luis Guzmán and José Vasconcelos explored within fiction, and the latter also through social reform, the limits of what this kind of leadership could communicate to the popular masses. Their writings are representative of middle class intellectuals who supported and even joined the Mexican Revolution but whose social mobility after the armed conflict became threatened by the increasing political pressure of the popular masses. The writings of Guzmán and Vasconcelos especially, convey this social anxiety in their assessments and disqualifications of the two major leaders of the armed conflict, Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa. In his autobiography *El desastre*, Vasconcelos writes, “After the death of Zapata, who was the disgrace of Zapatismo, there remained his best aides, the learned and the self-sacrificing; those who did not take land, or execute people with voluptuous pleasure, or participated in the excesses committed in the name of the revolution by so many” (20). Following a similar attitude, Guzmán ponders, “Porque tal era el dilema: o Villa no sigue sino instinto ciego, y

entonces él y la Revolución fracasan” (265). The issue to which both Vasconcelos and Guzmán allude is the perception that politics is a matter to be reserved for “civilized” men. Though the Mexican Revolution gave rise to a seemingly new kind of leadership, for these state sponsored middle class intellectuals that leadership was still the exclusive right of men of letters.

However, an understanding of the cultural and social leadership conferred upon these intellectuals alongside the assertiveness demonstrated by the popular masses in their overthrow of the Porfirian regime requires a careful analysis of key texts constituting part of the *literatura revolucionaria* where the popular masses first appeared not only as literary protagonists, but also as a powerful social force. Though the masses do not play the same role in *La raza cósmica*, the inclusion of Vasconcelos’ essay within this study is crucial in understanding the relationship between the intellectual and the popular masses within a post-revolutionary context. While most studies of *literatura revolucionaria* exclude *La raza cósmica* from the repertoire, I insist that an analysis of this text complements the study of the revolutionary novel.¹

Vasconcelos was after all the maximum embodiment of the state’s search for cultural nationalism. While *Los de abajo* and *El águila y la serpiente* provide a snapshot of the chaos unleashed by the participation of the popular masses within the revolutionary movement, *La raza cósmica* offers a response to the question of reinstituting order. The

¹ One of the more recent publications on the Mexican revolutionary novel is Max Parra’s *Writing Pancho Villas’s Revolution: Rebels in the Literary Imagination of Mexico* (2005). Parra mentions Vasconcelos only tangentially in his historical analysis of the Revolution and does not consider Vasconcelos’ participation within the production of *literatura revolucionaria*. Antonio Castro Leal in his two volume anthology *La novela de la revolución mexicana* (1967), includes Vasconcelos’ novel *Ulises criollo* (1935). However, this novel does not espouse the same clarity of vision for the modern Mexican nation that “La raza cósmica” expresses.

questions of determining the place the popular masses were supposed to occupy within the national project and the role which intellectuals and their writings were to play for its achievement can all be studied within each of the texts' social and narrative tensions.

I approach these literary narratives or books as artifacts where ideas about Mexican nationhood and its difficulties can be read. The master narratives of the *literatura revolucionaria*, if read within the context of post-revolutionary nation-building, reveal the social and political tensions which continued to divide the nation even as its achievement was desired by the state. Approaching the book as an artifact allows for an analysis that not only considers the context of its production, but also facilitates its evaluation as a nation-building tool. In assessing the book's value in the context of nation-building, it is crucial to compare its narrative achievements with those of other cultural products or artifacts. I argue that an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the text's narrative strategies is imperative to the study of how other types of artifacts circulate within the nationalist imaginary. The questions of production, narrative, circulation, and social ramifications for Mexico's popular masses are concerns which I will assess not only in my discussion of the text's narrative location within the post-revolutionary imaginary, but also in my analysis in later chapters of the archaeological artifact, the monument, and the spurious artifact.²

Although a plethora of novels were written about the Mexican Revolution during the years following the armed conflict, the questions raised by the creation of a

² While questions of production and circulation are of interest in my analysis of the text as artifact, I want to clarify that I am not treating the physical book as artifact, but more specifically its narratives as artifact. In this chapter, I am interested in studying the production, circulation, and location of these narratives within the search for Mexico's national identity. These narratives, under the rubric of artifact, serve as a starting point to my interrogation of the artifact as a cultural product of nation-making.

literatura revolucionaria must be studied in the context of key authors such as Mariano Azuela, Martín Luis Guzmán and José Vasconcelos. No study of *literatura revolucionaria* could be complete without the inclusion of Azuela's *Los de abajo*, recognized as the first novel of the Mexican Revolution. It was not only written during the height of the armed conflict between 1914 and 1915, but the novel also paints one of the most complex portraits of the relationship shared between middle class intellectuals and peasants. Drawing on this same relationship, Guzmán sketches a highly stylized image of the violence and excesses of the Revolution in *El águila y la serpiente*. Though Guzmán later wrote other successful novels such as *La sombra del caudillo* and *Las memorias de Pancho Villa*, his first novel is especially important to this study in its search for both the essence of Mexicanness and the place of the intellectual within the Revolution's new social order. Though Vasconcelos' essay *La raza cósmica* breaks away from the novel as a genre, it provides unique insight into the kind of social order the post-revolutionary state proposed as its vision of modern nationhood. As the intellectual closest to the *silla del águila* (or seat of power) from this triad, Vasconcelos' mestizophile response to the search for a new social order is indispensable in the study of cultural nationalism and nation-state formation.

Though it can be said that Azuela, Guzmán and Vasconcelos were all intellectuals of the state at some point during their careers, their works share even more specific commonalities that contributed to their eventual sponsorship by the post-revolutionary state as the nation's master narratives. While these works fall under the umbrella of *literatura revolucionaria*, a study of what this new kind of literature meant for the modernization of the popular masses and the overall nationhood project requires that we

ask questions that go beyond the literacy and circulation issues that I have taken up thus far. It is not so much a question of determining who was able to read at the time, but rather one of exploring the nature of the dialogue established between these narratives and their readers. It is crucial to analyze how and where these narratives locate their readers and non-readers within the Mexican modern nation. In asking these questions it is important to also consider: How do these narratives legitimate the post-revolutionary regime? What kind of citizenship is advocated in these narratives? What vision of modern nationhood does this citizenship support? In what follows, I propose to explore the ways in which these master narratives explore the place of the popular masses as they simultaneously fail to incorporate this sector into the debate concerning the national project. These examples of *literatura revolucionaria* essentially reproduce the same top-down dynamic that the post-revolutionary regime practiced through its socio-economic policies. As artifacts, these novels are unable to negotiate or mediate a place for the popular masses within the burgeoning nation. However, these revolutionary novels narrate the social values most closely aligned with those of the governing elite and for this reason are worth interrogating alongside the museological artifacts which follow in the next chapters. While these texts are ultimately unable to be appropriated by the masses, I find it useful to treat the revolutionary novel as an artifact as this facilitates its comparison with the narrative strategies of other kinds of artifacts. Although the text cannot generate the socially and nationally inclusive narratives that I will explore in later chapters, it is important to interrogate the text within the domain of the artifact to more precisely understand the possibilities for Mexicanness produced by other cultural objects.

Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*: The Degeneration of the Revolutionary Bourgeoisie

In October 1914, physician and novelist Mariano Azuela joined the Revolution with the rank of colonel alongside the troops of Villista general Julián Medina. Years later, he described the experience in writing, "I then satisfied one of my greatest longings, to live together with the genuine revolutionaries, the underdogs, since until then my observations had been limited to the tedious world of the petite bourgeoisie" (qtd. in Parra 23). The experience not only satisfied the novelist's desire to live among the underdogs, but it also revealed to him the atmosphere and human dimensions of the armed conflict that soon found their way into his writing. Only a year later, in October 1915, the Texas newspaper *El Paso del Norte* began publishing Azuela's novel in installments under the title *Los de abajo: Cuadros y escenas de la revolución actual*. It is interesting to note that Azuela wrote and published the novel in Texas and not in Mexico. He was thinking about the Mexican nation from the other side of the border, a fact that in chapter four will allow me to think about Mexicanness as it is invented outside of the geographical borders of Mexico.

Azuela's literary project was truly innovative in that it radically broke with the literary production that had characterized the Porfirian regime. His novel did away with the *literatura colonialista* that had centered on descriptions of colonial life and catered to the literary taste of the Porfirian bourgeoisie. Azuela focused on the popular masses at a time when their overwhelming presence could no longer be denied. Their participation in the Revolution and alliance with the Maderistas confirmed that they were a social presence that needed to be recognized and incorporated into the country's political life. For the first time in the history of the Mexican novel, the "bajo pueblo" was assigned the

role of protagonist within the pages of what would come to be known as the “novel of the masses.” The forms of popular speech and the social division between the guileless and spontaneous (of rural origin) and the opportunist and corrupt (of urban origin) were some of the novel’s elements of formal innovation. After the novel’s proclamation as “la gran sensación literaria del momento” the national newspaper *El Universal Ilustrado* published the first installment of the novel under the headline, “*Los de abajo*-Una Creación Palpitante de Nuestra Vida-*El Universal Ilustrado* ofrece la Única Novela de la Revolución” (Engelkirk 60). As the novel gained notoriety and its readership multiplied, it became clear to some literary critics that *Los de abajo*’s focus on popular rebellion was exemplary of the literary nationalism espoused by the post-revolutionary regime. The novel quickly came to be regarded as the text of the Revolution *par excellence*.

The novel begins in the last months of the Huertista presidency in 1913 in the Bajío region though probably more specifically in the state of Jalisco, as Stanley Robe has shown (71). We meet the protagonist, Demetrio Macías, in the midst of an assault perpetrated against his family and his home. A bar fight between him and the local cacique impels the action as the latter sends troops to pillage and burn Demetrio’s home. Demetrio quickly organizes a group of men to defend the Juchipila Canyon, their home, in an attempt to defeat the invading troops. Their involvement in an armed conflict begins as a heroic attempt to defend individual liberty and private property. But Demetrio and his men later incorporate themselves within Villa’s troops, the División del Norte, changing the direction of their efforts. Luis Cervantes, a middle class medical student, instills new meaning into their struggle by telling Demetrio:

Usted no comprende todavía su verdadera, alta y nobilísima misión. Usted, hombre modesto y sin ambiciones, no quiere ver el importantísimo papel que le toca en esta revolución. Mentira que usted ande por aquí por don Mónico, el cacique; usted se ha levantado contra el caciquismo que asola toda la nación.

Somos elementos de un gran movimiento social que tiene que concluir por el engrandecimiento de nuestra patria. Somos instrumentos del destino para la reivindicación de los sagrados derechos del pueblo. No peleamos por derrocar a un asesino miserable, sino contra la tiranía misma. Eso es lo que se llama luchar por principios, tener ideales. (44-45)

The appearance of Cervantes is essentially the catalyst that brings a nationalist meaning to an otherwise regional struggle. The struggle for land rights that launched Demetrio and his men into the armed conflict takes on national significance and moves beyond the site of regional conflict. In this way, not only does Demetrio's effort to protect his homeland become charged with a political significance unknown to him before, but it also becomes entangled in a revolutionary dynamic that Azuela explores in parts 2 and 3 of the novel.

It is precisely Demetrio Macías who comes to incarnate that revolutionary dynamic. The narrator describes him as a *serrano* and an "indigena de pura raza" who embodies the virtues and limitations of the Mexican peasant. He is not moved to action by political credos or ideologies, but rather, by the basic principles of human preservation and freedom. The spontaneity of his rebellion and his instinctive struggle make of Demetrio the embodiment of the "unconscious" revolutionary. The revolutionary instincts that do emerge in Demetrio and his men are rooted in a politics of space (Parra 45). The spatial displacements or movements of Demetrio's troops evoke a sense of freedom unknown during the reign of Porfirio Díaz. The unchecked growth of large estates during that period exacerbated the already existing agrarian problem by making land ownership impossible for the popular masses. The troops are moved to action by their desire to possess the valley and the freedom to roam; *los de abajo* essentially yearn to be the masters of the land. The narrator captures this collective consciousness in describing the causes of their move to action:

Y hacían galopar sus caballos, como si en aquel correr desenfrenado pretendieran posesionarse de toda la tierra. ¿Quién se acordaba ya del severo comandante de la policía, del gendarme gruñón y del cacique enfatuado? ¿Quién del mísero jacal, donde se vive como esclavo, siempre bajo la vigilancia del amo o del hosco y sañudo mayordomo, con la obligación imprescindible de estar en pie antes de salir el sol, con la pala y la canasta, o la mancera y el otate, para ganarse la olla de atole y el plato de frijoles del día? (50-1).

As they move into their nomadic existence, Demetrio and his men revel in their possession of the land. The mere possibility of being able to roam freely through the hills and canyons of Juchipila brings the men a sense of ownership they have never experienced. Though Parra argues that this sentiment has little if anything to do with Liberal political discourse, it is important to note that the overwhelming excitement the men experience at the mere thought of owning the land does correspond to modern liberal ideals. Demetrio is after all struggling to defend not only his individual honor, but also the right to his private property. As Blanco suggests, this makes of Demetrio “un héroe individual en defensa de los valores e instituciones de la sociedad burguesa” (206). Though Demetrio is a peasant and the novel focuses on the popular revolt, Azuela’s framing of his individual struggle brings the story back to a spirit of Republicanism that evokes the bourgeoisie ideals espoused by the post-revolutionary state. The promise of a mass redistribution of land was after all at the heart of the post-revolutionary state’s populist initiatives (Erfani 30). The Constitution of 1917 explicitly linked land ownership to modern Mexican citizenship, the embodiment of bourgeoisie ideals. Though Azuela was summoned during the reconstruction period as an involuntary spokesperson (through his novel) for the state, it is crucial to note the commentary he begins weaving from the very first page of the novel. Demetrio’s association with modern liberal ideals points toward Azuela’s own desire to merge the peasant world with that of the middle class intellectuals in an effort to close the social schism. Though Demetrio, as the protagonist, is most closely aligned with the ideals of

those disparate worlds, his ultimate demise expresses Azuela's own pessimism toward the Revolution and its shortcomings.

Although Demetrio is initially linked to a bourgeoisie set of values through the ownership and defense of his land, he and his troops later come in direct opposition to those values during a raid in Zacatecas. It is when Luis Cervantes encourages Demetrio and his men to join the Constitutionalist army that their struggle becomes politicized and also degenerates into banditry. In chapter 2 of part 2 of the novel, Azuela pairs his characters against bourgeoisie property and culture. While in Zacatecas, the troops or revolutionaries dedicate their efforts to the sacking and pillaging of the homes of the rich. But very quickly, banditry escalates into the profanation and destruction of objects that are representative of high culture. Books are used to fuel a fire for cooking corn and framed photographs are thrown aside with the tip of a *huarache*. The narrator describes the height of this barbarous scene through the encounter of some young girls with *The Divine Comedy*: “-¡Mira, tú...cuánta vieja encuerada!- clamó la chiquilla de La Codonriz, divertidísima con las laminas de un lujoso ejemplar de *La Divina Comedia*-. Esta me cuadra y me la llevo. Y comenzó a arrancar los grabados que más llamaban su atención...” (80-1). The meticulous detail with which this attack is described is meant to condemn these actions in the eyes of a bourgeois reader. It is no coincidence that Azuela chooses Dante's *opus magnum* as the victim of the cruel attack these girls launch against the book both through its physical and cultural profanation. The destruction of this particular work also seems to point toward the men's gradual descent into hell. As Jorge Ruffinelli observes, “No es la conducta de revolucionarios, sino de bandidos, de acuerdo con el código burgués” (80). The cultural objects that decorate the bourgeois homes are

carelessly destroyed by “los de abajo,” those who have always been marginalized by bourgeois society. But the violence committed against these objects is also an attack on the excesses of the bourgeoisie; by destroying these objects, the revolutionary peasants are symbolically attacking the same bourgeoisie landowners who have exploited them. It is important to remember that bourgeois property is the result of a social assault on the peasant class through the unequal distribution of wealth.

The only character who manages to escape Revolution’s destructive fate and reap the benefits of its degeneracy is Luis Cervantes. Though he manages to gain the acceptance of Demetrio and his men after falling captive to them, he does so through cultural intimidation. Not only does Cervantes initiate the troops into the ideology of the Revolution, but he also introduces them to the treacherous world of politics. He manages to pull them out of Juchipila to join forces with Villa, but in doing so he also sets the men on a destructive path of banditry and pillaging. Cervantes convinces them to join the Revolution by explaining as Blanco describes that, “ganara quien ganara, volvería a haber opresores y oprimidos, de modo que lo mejor era sacarle una buena tajada al presente y colarse entre los futuros opresores” (214). He coerces them to join through the power of his speech, which he spins around the men like a spider’s web. The men slowly fall victim to his trap as Demetrio explains, “Si vieras qué bien explica las cosas el curro, compadre Anastasio... parece a manera de mentira que este curro haya venido a enseñarnos la cartilla” (45). Cervantes’ fancy speech, a practice which is retrospectively reminiscent of the flowery speeches that would later characterize the Mexican politicians of the twentieth century, is read by the men as a manifestation of his formal education and high culture. However, this same education and culture serve as instruments to

subdue Demetrio and his men. They submit to Cervantes' coercion by assuming a strictly instrumental role that precludes revolutionary agency. For Cervantes, the Revolution and its men are only stepping stones toward securing his own financial gain. As he assures Demetrio, "Y así como ni Villa, ni Carranza, ni ningún otro han de venir a pedir nuestro consentimiento para pagarse los servicios que le están prestando a la patria, tampoco nosotros tenemos necesidad de pedirle licencia a nadie (...) Mire, mi general, si como parece esta bola va a seguir, si la Revolución no se acaba, nosotros tenemos ya lo suficiente para irnos a brillar una temporada fuera del país" (95). Even after the Revolution does end, prototypes such as Cervantes will not only have their futures financially secured, but they will also have their political careers set out for them. Though Cervantes is not representative of the revolutionary caudillo, he is reminiscent of the intellectual who will incorporate himself into the post-revolutionary state's governing apparatus. As Knight observes, "Otros conversos intelectuales a la rebelión popular, como Palafox y Vasconcelos, también tenían algunas de estas características del charlatanismo, el 'prototipo' del cual también se encuentra en la novela, en el Luis Cervantes de Azuela" ("Los intelectuales" 42). The same charlatanism that aided Cervantes in securing the trust of Demetrio and his men will certainly be an indispensable characteristic of the kind of politics that will define post-revolutionary Mexico. Through Cervantes' survival, Azuela alludes to the idea that he will return to govern with his "revolutionary" past as his best asset for the job; as Knight has already noted, it is certainly no coincidence that Cervantes shares uncanny characteristics with the architect of revolutionary culture, José Vasconcelos. The fact that Cervantes is the only survivor of the Revolution, and also the most conniving character in the novel,

suggests a grim outlook for the future. That Azuela essentially endows the nation's future in the hands of Cervantes indicates that the Revolution's dynamic of degeneracy will surely characterize the future of national politics.

This dynamic of degeneracy is not only announced through the actions of Cervantes, but it is also anticipated through the novel's other two intellectuals, Alberto Solís and Loco Valderrama. Though Azuela does not appear as a character within the novel, Solís is the mouthpiece who expresses the author's views. As a way of expressing these views, Azuela employs a literary technique characteristic of the nineteenth century realist novel where a passing figure espouses a prophetic message (Parra 30). In the first part of the novel, Solís plays this transitory figure. Shortly before falling victim to a stray bullet, Solís condemns the Revolution: "¡Qué hermosa es la Revolución, aun en su misma barbarie! (...) Hay que esperar un poco. A que no haya combatientes, a que no se oigan más disparos que los de las turbas entregadas a las delicias del saqueo; a que resplandezca diáfana, como una gota de agua, la psicología de nuestra raza, condensada en dos palabras: ¡robar, matar! (...) ¡Pueblo sin ideales, pueblo de tiranos! ... ¡Lástima de sangre!" (72-3). The "psicología de nuestra raza" refers to the perceived savagery of the Indian element within the Mexican racial and cultural heritage. The Revolution's unchecked violence is attributed to the underdogs' self-destructive instincts. Azuela considers the Mexican peasant to be flawed as a result of his indigenous racial heritage; the Indian element here is explicitly equated with savagery. The Mexican peasant is hopelessly condemned since he does not hold the ideals that might thwart his congenital defect. But if Solís is the disillusioned intellectual, Loco Valderrama is the intellectual forced to break with "la razón liberal" as Blanco describes it (221). Seeing that he

cannot live among the revolutionary masses, Valderrama breaks away from his reason and his sanity as a way of coping with the Revolution's spiral into degeneracy. He is aware of the Revolution's destructive force, but his loss of reason has also led to a loss of concern for what the armed conflict might represent for a nation still in the making. Valderrama expresses this idea best in a poetic image: "(...) Pero las piedras que quedan arriba o abajo, después del cataclismo, ¿qué me importan a mí?" (128). Though historically the Revolution would later come to be understood as the event that birthed the nation, for Valderrama, the Revolution has closed the possibility for a satisfactory ending to the peasant and intellectual struggles. According to Blanco, lunacy is Valderrama's contribution to the Revolution (221). Solís' disillusionment and Valderrama's nihilism are representative of the pessimistic view that members of the intellectual middle class, such as Azuela, held in regards to the Revolution. The war's cataclysmic dynamic leaves no possibility for real agency on behalf of the revolutionaries; the peasants essentially lose themselves within the Revolution's destructive dynamic while the intellectuals are paralyzed with either disillusionment or insanity.

Azuela further expresses his own discontent with the Revolution's dynamic by drawing parallels between his characters and naturalistic images of the Mexican countryside. One of the strongest images that *Los de abajo* offers of the Revolution is delivered by Solís: "La revolución es el huracán, y el hombre que se entrega a ella no es ya el hombre, es la miserable hoja seca arrebatada por el vendaval" (63). With this image of "la miserable hoja seca", the revolutionary is stripped of his will and consciousness; he is a character incapable of governing his own actions. In the same

way that Valderrama speaks of the stones shuffled by a cataclysm and Demetrio describes himself as a rolling stone that will ultimately crash at the bottom of a ravine, Solís' image of a dead leaf blown by the wind reduces the fighters to elements governed by nature, like the weather and the seasons. And in the same way that nature operates in cycles, the novel begins and ends in Juchipila Canyon. Though in the beginning the characters part from Juchipila Canyon to fight with Demetrio, by the end of the novel they return to the earth, as victims of the Revolution, to be reabsorbed by the soil. In this way, the naturalistic images affirm the Revolution's inability to bring about any transcendent human action.

Ultimately, Azuela paints an image of Mexico's Revolution as one where the country's social schism runs so deep that no real change can come from this event. Though Azuela is certainly looking down on the armed conflict from his position as a middle class intellectual, he views both peasants and intellectuals as ill equipped to make of the Mexican Revolution a true *Revolution*. For him, there is no character capable of combining the peasant world with the rational world of the intellectuals. As Blanco notes, "Azuela se atreve a mirar *como son* a las masas, pero no puede dejar de compararlas a cada momento con animales, metáfora a la que lo obligaba constantemente una cultura con tal abismo entre clases y razas" (233). The brutality and violence we see in the novel is committed at the hands of the masses, while the social violence committed by bourgeois characters such as Cervantes through thievery and conniving is implicit. It is after all only through a letter that we find out that Cervantes has enjoyed much better luck than the rest of the troops. In this sense, Azuela is especially severe in his treatment of the masses making the novel itself a reflection of

the social tension between the middle class and the peasants. The novel, as Franco concludes, essentially precludes the Gramscian notion of the peasant as the organic intellectual of the Revolution (“Trends and Priorities” 112-13). The revolution Azuela describes in his novel is not the same Revolution that could have closed the class and race schism to birth the modern Mexican nation. In this sense, the novel expresses a desire for nationhood precisely through its absence. Azuela is unable to describe what the modern Mexican nation might look like because the masses, according to his view, and their chaos deny the possibility for an orderly and progressive nation. The elements for modern nationhood are nowhere to be found within the novel.

Despite the novel’s scathing critique of the Mexican Revolution, *Los de abajo* was baptized as one of the master narratives during the early years of the post-revolutionary period. The void that remains through the end of the novel was interpreted as a calling for the paternalistic intervention of the state. Though it cannot be claimed that Azuela was writing as a spokesperson for the post-revolutionary state, in part because the novel was written during the war and the state’s position toward the Revolution would be defined *a posteriori*, his novel was nonetheless interpreted as expressing the need for the reinstatement of order and government. The social schism that divides the characters of *Los de abajo* was read as necessitating the intervention of the state’s liberal project of nationhood. Concepts such as the Constitution, democracy, private property and civilization are advocated in the novel as essential to the modern nation precisely through their absence. But these concepts are also paired against the figure of the peasant and the destructive naturalistic images of the Mexican countryside. Azuela’s interpretation of peasant Mexico was in line with the post-revolutionary state’s

own hostility toward the masses. Despite Azuela's skepticism toward his own class, the idea of the bourgeoisie prevails in the novel both through the survival of Cervantes and through the desire for modernity. Closing the novel's social schism implies endowing the peasants with bourgeois characteristics, but certainly not the absorption of the intellectual within the Mexican countryside.

Though the novel does express a desire for modern nationhood, it is difficult to find within its pages a clear articulation of what the Mexican nation should be. The novel appeals to a bourgeois readership in a way in which it cannot to peasant sensibility. The novel's condemnation of violence, barbarity and ignorance makes it inherently hostile toward the peasantry. This was after all the class the post-revolutionary state worked the hardest to incorporate into the nation through the project of cultural eugenics. Both within the novel and in the eyes of the post-revolutionary state, "la raza irredenta" is singled out as the nation's enemy; it is "la raza irredenta" which is explicitly associated with moral and social degeneracy within the modern nation. Though the bourgeoisie is the only class to prevail in the novel, Azuela's critique of this social class is conveniently "overlooked" within the post-revolutionary state's reading of *Los de abajo*. As Blanco so poignantly observes, "*Los de abajo* es lo que *no* dice y en ella se lee lo que el poder ha querido que se lea" (241).

El águila y la serpiente: Aestheticizing the Revolution

Martín Luis Guzmán's *Iconografía*, a book of photographs published in 1987, suggests a certain intimacy between the writer and Mexico's political elite. Though his literary prestige and long life explain the abundance of photographs in which Guzmán

appears with Mexico's presidents, it is difficult to ignore in these images the figure of a man drawn to the echelons of political power. Guzmán's presence in these photographs suggests an endorsement of the authoritarian regimes that characterized Mexico's twentieth century although a careful study of his biography tells otherwise. His questionable political loyalties forced him into exile in 1915 and then again in 1923 when Plutarco Elías Calles won the presidency. It was during these periods of exile that Guzmán wrote some of his most important works as if the power of the pen could in some way redeem his political and cultural exile. In this way *El águila y la serpiente* presents itself as a fictionalized testimony that chronicles the author's participation in the war from 1913-15 while simultaneously offering an aesthetic and moral portrait of the Revolution. This aesthetic portrait of the Revolution comes to life in the novel through Guzmán's use of highly descriptive, sensorial language and detailed portraits of the countryside and revolutionary characters.

Following his 1923 exile, Guzmán settled in Europe where he continued to develop his career as a journalist. At the time of his second exile, he was not only serving as personal secretary to Alberto J. Pani, minister of foreign affairs, but also as owner and director of the evening newspaper *El Herald de México*. Though his career seemed secure and his future appeared promising, Guzmán fell from grace overnight. After his newspaper's open support of the presidential candidacy of Adolfo de la Huerta in 1923, Guzmán was forced to flee the country when Alvaro Obregón chose Calles as his successor. He quickly established his journalistic career in Spain eventually acquiring Spanish citizenship. However, Juan Bruce-Novoa observes that *El águila y la serpiente* was written "for the most part in Paris between August 1926 and October

1927” (xx-xxi). Although the novel was first published in periodicals in the United States and Mexico, it appeared in book form in Madrid in 1928 where the first edition sold out in one month (ibid).

Guzmán had both economic and personal motivations for writing a fictionalized chronicle of the Revolution. Parra suggests that, “Readership in Spain, the United States, and Mexico could be guaranteed at the time by writing accounts of the Mexican Revolution based on the authority of the ‘I’ who sees, that is, on the belief in the narrator’s privileged access to facts as an eyewitness” (79). The novel’s incisive moral and physical portraits of key historical actors make of *El águila y la serpiente* one of the many “real life” war stories that sold so well. However, personal vindication was also a motivation for Guzmán. Soon after the electoral dispute of 1923, Calles declared that the Huerta revolt had separated “the false and the genuine revolutionaries” (ibid). In the novel, Guzmán challenges the charge of being a “false” revolutionary by chronicling his adventures as a young lawyer in the Constitutionalist and the Villista movements. By placing himself in the midst of the Revolution’s most significant events, Guzmán records, justifies and amplifies the role he played in the war.

While Azuela’s *Los de abajo* focuses on analyzing the political and historical forces that shaped the Revolution, Guzmán’s novel is interested in presenting the reader with a recreation of the sights, scents and sounds of the armed conflict; it is this sensorial recreation of the Revolution which constitutes the aesthetics of the novel. For Guzmán, the Revolution is a spectacle which he intends to reproduce within the pages of *El águila y la serpiente* in all of its aesthetic dimensions. Guzmán explains within the novel his approach to both the moral and physical space of the Revolution in writing,

A mí el aire sutil de mi gran ciudad [la ciudad de México]- transparencia donde reside la mitad de su hermosura: atmósfera que aclara, que purifica, que enjuta- me descubrió de nuevo (como si esta vez lo hiciera sólo para mis sentidos) todo un mundo de alegría serena cuyo valor esencial estaba en la realización perenne del equilibrio: equilibrio del trazo y del punto, de la línea y el color, de la superficie y la artista, del cuerpo y el contorno, de lo diáfano y lo opaco (273).

This sensorial description of his approach to the air and atmosphere of Mexico City serves as a window for what is to come in the rest of the novel. The artistic equilibrium he discovers in Mexico City is precisely the same kind of aesthetic harmony Guzmán will recreate in the novel through the use of suspense, striking juxtaposition, and symbolism. Although much of the novel takes place in the countryside, Mexico City is the location from which Guzmán will view the Revolution and its rural settings.

However, it is no surprise that Guzmán's visual description of Mexico City as "atmósfera que aclara" shares an uncanny resemblance to Alfonso Reyes' 1917 poem "Visiones de Anáhuac". As members of the Ateneo de la Juventud, both Reyes and Guzmán endorse Mexico City as the nation's bastion of civilization and progress. Established in 1908 in Mexico City, some of its more prominent members included not only Guzmán and Reyes, but also José Vasconcelos, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Antonio Caso. The *ateneístas* were known for their criticism of the Porfirian educational system, which was rooted in positivism and the scientific method. They espoused metaphysical speculation and called for a return to the study of the humanities and the classics. For their cognitive activity they coined the term "*atelesis*", a "spontaneous and spiritual energy" as Vasconcelos characterized it (84). Guzmán himself wrote extensively about practicing the "*vida atélica*", or the unencumbered life of intellectual curiosity, open to the pursuit of aesthetic contemplation. In this way Guzmán also follows the artistic sensibility of the *modernista* writers. Art and sensoriality take precedence for Guzmán over historical accuracy.

Although *ateles* was a concept sponsored by Mexico's *ateneístas*, it is at the core a Mexican version of Arielismo. Many of the ideas found in *El águila y la serpiente* are heavily influenced by the ideas of Uruguayan social philosopher José Enrique Rodó. In his essay *Ariel* (1900), Rodó explains that the highest state to which humankind can aspire is to be found in aesthetic³ harmony (49). His doctrine called for the practice of "selfless spiritual idealism- art, science, morality, religious sincerity, a politics of ideas" over the selfish interest of utilitarian Anglo-American culture (ibid). Arielismo most significantly found its way into the writing of *El águila y la serpiente* through two ideas: 1) the interdependence of aesthetics and morality 2) the idea that "spiritual selection" as a criterion for social discrimination produces a natural hierarchy of social divisions. Consequently, Guzmán's sponsorship of Arielismo shapes his own image of the revolutionary masses as well as his conception of modern citizenship.

These ideas heavily influence both the literary techniques Guzmán uses to depict his adventures as a revolutionary as well as the grim picture he paints of the Revolution. His use of light and shadow along with his constant exploration of national space (rural/urban divide) present the Revolution as a struggle between Arielismo and barbarity. Guzmán's self-insertion into the novel as narrator makes of his character not only a spokesperson for Arielismo, but also a vehicle for exploring the place of the intellectual within the Revolution. The novel is a study of how the immense upheaval of

³ While Rodó understands the term "aesthetic" as part of a philosophical movement interested in cultivating the spiritual dimension as the highest ideal of life, I employ the term differently throughout my discussion of Guzmán and *El águila y la serpiente*. For the purposes of my analysis, I use the term "aesthetic" to describe Guzmán's highly stylized portraits of the Revolution. His meticulous descriptions of the characters and the landscapes bring an aesthetic dimension to the memory of the Revolution which had not been explored to this extent in other revolutionary novels. However, Guzmán often judges the moral quality of his characters through his physical and stylized descriptions of them.

Mexican society becomes a violent process leading to the “predominio en unos y otros de las ambiciones inmediatas y egoístas sobre las grandes aspiraciones desinteresadas” (Shaw 3). Though the novel also explores the detective genre and develops eyewitness accounts reminiscent of *literatura de viajeros*, the following analysis will focus on studying a selection of vignettes that can be described as Guzmán’s own interpretation of the revolutionary novel as the foundation of a national literature. These vignettes not only explore Guzmán’s defense of Arielismo in the face of the Revolution’s unchecked violence, but also offer a dramatic view of the confrontation between the intellectual revolutionary and the guerrilla revolutionary.

One of the novel’s most compelling portraits of the Revolution’s merciless violence is found in “La fiesta de las balas” in Book VII of Part 1. Guzmán narrates this scene in response to his own questioning regarding the nature of Villa’s militia, the División del Norte. As a young revolutionary himself, Guzmán questions the moral dilemma that the Revolution presents through the character of one of Villa’s most ruthless generals, Rodolfo Fierro. It is important to note that this is a story that comes to the attention of Guzmán while in Ciudad Juárez during his first encounter with Villa himself. The story he narrates concerns an execution order of more than three hundred prisoners of war or *colorados*. Of the ruthless general, Guzmán writes that, “Fierro se sentía feliz: lo embargaba el placer de la victoria- en la cual nunca creía hasta consumarse la completa derrota del enemigo... . Su figura, grande y hermosa, irradiaba un aura extraña, algo superior, algo prestigioso y a la vez adecuado al triste abandono del corral” (258-9). Guzmán does not describe Fierro’s political views nor does he discuss the reasons why the general joined the Revolution. His portrait of the general is

rather a moral and physical composition. Before the reader knows the outcome of this vignette, Guzmán already anticipates the general's style of killing. The pleasure of victory is immediately associated with the final demise of the enemy. Though Guzmán admires the stature and physical imposition of Fierro, he simultaneously inserts the general within the rustic backdrop of the corral. The general's imposing figure or manliness is morally reduced by the corral's somber ambience.

However, Guzmán most strongly explores the moral dilemma presented by the Revolution through his own antithesis, the character of Pancho Villa. It is not only Villa himself who incarnates this dilemma; the landscape surrounding the *caudillo* also speaks of the kind of revolution taking place. In Book II of Part 1 in the chapter titled "Primer vislumbre de Pancho Villa", Guzmán and his friends Alberto J. Pani and Neftalí Amador, who would both later become leaders within the post-revolutionary regime, cross from El Paso, Texas into the border town of Ciudad Juárez to go in search of Villa. As they cross into the Mexican side of the border, Guzmán describes the experience in saying, "El espectáculo de Ciudad Juárez era triste: triste en sí, más triste aún si se le comparaba con el aliño luminoso de la otra orilla del río, extranjera e inmediata" (184). He makes clear that Ciudad Juárez is not even the shadow of the spectacular sights they found in El Paso. Although Ciudad Juárez marks the Mexican side of the Río Grande, it is the U.S. side of the river that Guzmán yearns for. The sad and dark state of the Mexican city serves as a preamble for the sight the *ateneístas* will encounter when they finally meet Villa. Guzmán describes the revolutionary *caudillo* as "en Pancho Villa, cuya alma, más que de hombre, era de jaguar, de jaguar en esos momentos domesticado para nuestra obra, o para lo que creíamos ser nuestra obra; jaguar a quien, acariciadores,

pasábamos la mano sobre el lomo, temblando de que no nos tirara un zarpazo” (188). Villa is instantly associated with a wild animal, a graceful cat, who can attack at any moment. Guzmán and the other intellectual revolutionaries are simply unnerved by Villa’s wild presence. They are aware of the fact that they are not before a man of letters like themselves, but rather a rustic man who will not think twice about eliminating an enemy. Guzmán goes on to describe this encounter as, “por más de media hora nos entregamos a una conversación extraña, a una conversación que puso en contacto dos órdenes de categorías mentales ajenas entre sí” (ibid). It becomes apparent here to Guzmán that they have now entered a primitive world. The uncomfortable and gradual disappearance of urban life as they cross into Ciudad Juárez culminates this spatial displacement with the clash between *ateneístas* and *caudillos*. For Parra, the parallel drawn between urban/country space and intellectual/guerilla revolutionary is, “Figuratively, the spatial displacement from north to south of the border is a journey to the world of the formless, of what has not yet been subjected, as on the American side, to the civilizing principles of geometry and order” (89). And it is precisely the absence of these civilizing principles that makes Guzmán nervous both in the poorly lit streets of Ciudad Juárez and in the presence of Villa. Again, the moral dilemma the Revolution represents for Guzmán resides in the inability to reconcile the goals and methods of the intellectual revolutionaries with those of the peasant revolutionaries. Though Guzmán can at times admire the physical form and fearlessness of the latter revolutionaries, he is ultimately unable to merge the world of the peasants, the *antiatelics*, with that of the intellectuals.

Though Guzmán realizes that he does not possess the physical prowess of revolutionaries such as Villa, he nonetheless capitalizes on his command of the rules of civil society. In “Pancho Villa en la cruz”, Guzmán manages to convince Villa to overturn an execution order. After the surrender of 166 turncoats, Villa orders the traitors to be executed. Upon hearing the order, Guzmán intervenes by explaining to Villa that, “El que se rinde, general, perdona por ese hecho la vida de otro, o de otros, puesto que renuncia a morir matando. Y siendo ello así, el que acepta la rendición queda obligado a no condenar a muerte” (333). After finally internalizing the moral code exposed by the young *ateneísta*, Villa quickly overturns his execution order and asks his telegrapher to send the new order. Seeing that the telegrapher is having trouble sending the new message, Villa’s angst begins to heighten with each passing minute. Guzmán describes Villa as, “Iban acentuándose por momentos en la voz de Villa vibraciones que hasta entonces nunca le había oído; armónicos, venidos por la emoción, más hondos cada vez que preguntaba si los tiqui-tiquis eran respuesta a la contraorden” (334). The message finally arrives in time to save the lives of 166 men. In this story, Villa’s anxiety rises only when Guzmán exposes him to the international rules for the treatment of prisoners of war who have surrendered.⁴ Villa essentially internalizes the civilizing code

⁴ In *Insurgent Mexico*, John Reed notes a different version of Villa’s reaction to Western rule’s of war. When in 1914 Villa received a copy of the *Rules of War* (adopted by the Hague Conference) from American general Hugh L. Scott, he questioned the legality of the pamphlet and found it to be incredibly hypocritical. Villa asks, “What is the Hague Conference? Was there a representative of Mexico there? Was there a representative of the Constitutionalists there? It seems to me a funny thing to make rules about war. It’s not a game. What is the difference between civilized war and any other kind of war? If you and I are having fight in a *cantina* we are not going to pull a little book out of our pockets and read over the rules. It says here that you must not use lead bullets; but I don’t see why not. They do the work” (142-3). Again, this anecdote confirms the idea that Guzmán conveniently fictionalized people and events to integrate them into his ideological agenda.

thereby revoking his execution order.⁵ But it is only through Guzmán's intervention, the intellectual revolutionary, that justice is ensured through the observance of the rule of law. Civilian Arielismo and military might come into an even more dramatic confrontation in "La pistola de Pancho Villa." On this occasion, Guzmán and Villa discuss who should be Mexico's next president. Disagreements arise and the situation is aggravated when Guzmán asks Villa for his pistol. Realizing that he is unarmed and vulnerable, Villa grabs an associate's pistol aiming it directly at Guzmán's head. In spite of his tremendous fear, Guzmán manages to weather the storm without losing control of his emotions. Villa finally replies, "Pues ¡qué se me hace... que es más valiente el civil que el militar!" (285). Guzmán's controlled demeanor figuratively castrates or disarms the revolutionary hero. Guzmán strategically places himself in a position of moral authority in his relationship to Villa, who though imposing, lacks the cultural and legal attributes of modern citizenship (self-control, urban manners, education, submission to the law). Though Guzmán manages to wield the direction of Villa's violent outbursts in both vignettes, he is nonetheless attempting to show that guerrilla revolutionaries of the likes of Villa are unfit to occupy the decision-making apparatus of the Revolution. Though these revolutionaries are an integral part of the Revolution, their efforts must be properly channeled in the same way that Guzmán manages to "disarm" Villa on both occasions through the exercise of modern citizenship.

⁵ Exposing the appropriate code of conduct in a society where the values of modern citizenship are upheld and infringements of the civil code are denounced is part of a long tradition in Mexican literature. Guzmán's didactic efforts are in line with José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento* (1816), Mexico's first novel. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano later adopted the same didactic style in *El Zarco* (1901).

But the ultimate clash between the guerrilla revolutionaries and the intellectual revolutionaries is perhaps best portrayed in “Los Zapatistas en Palacio.” In this vignette, Guzmán describes the way in which the Zapatistas, led by General Eufemio Zapata, take over the National Palace in Mexico City. As these rural men overtake the urban political space of the National Palace, Guzmán looks on with open sarcasm and contempt. When Zapata walks up the elegant staircase, Guzmán writes, “Eufemio subía como un caballerango que se cree de súbito presidente. ... Cada vez que movía el pie, el pie se sorprendía de no tropezar con las breñas; cada vez que alagaba la mano buscaba en balde la corteza del árbol o la arista de la piedra en bruto, Con sólo mirarlo a él, se comprendía que faltaba allí todo lo que merecía estar a su alrededor, y que, para él, sobraba cuanto ahora lo rodeaba” (350). His ironic description emphasizes the incompatibility of the rustic man in control of the National Palace, the political seat of government, and the urban forms of polity necessary for its occupation. As Christopher Domínguez shows, “En el centro ritual y real del poder, dos, tres mundos- los campesinos, sus generales, el intelectual- ocupan la misma estancia pero jamás el mismo espacio” (23). The Zapatistas have trespassed onto a space that does not belong to them in the same way that the leadership of the country could never be entrusted in their hands. The treatment of space within the National Palace reveals Guzmán’s violent rejection of the displacement of urban life by the perceived raw and primitive power of rural Mexico. The National Palace is representative of the national space which would later be contested by the masses through the reclaiming of national heroes such as Cuauhtémoc (chapter 3) and the production of spurious Aztec artifacts (chapter 4). In later chapters I will explore how common Mexicans challenge Guzmán’s vision of the displaced peasant in the

National Palace to eventually place themselves at the center of the production of Mexicanness.

Though *El águila y la serpiente* offers both a portrait of the Revolution and of the many Mexican landscapes Guzmán visits in his adventures, the novel ultimately argues for an *arielista* inspired mode of modern citizenship. The kind of Mexicanness he seeks is precisely the kind that manages to uphold the urban and middle class code of life as the proper form of citizenship. It is difficult to overlook Guzmán's fascination with El Paso, Texas and disappointment with the darkness and chaos of Ciudad Juárez. The vast schism between the urban and modern and the rural and rustic is one Guzmán ultimately cannot reconcile. David Foster describes this dilemma as, "Asimismo, no sorprendería saber que, para un intelectual y artista del calibre de Guzmán, el diario trajín de la Revolución constituía una larga pesadilla donde los ideales motores quedan aplazados por la arbitrariedad y las injusticias de hombres que no pueden trascender su propia condición sociocultural" (85). Though Guzmán is certainly searching for Mexicanness in his long revolutionary journey through the vastness of Mexico, he is continuously made uneasy by the primitiveness of rural Mexico. It is precisely this Mexico which the *arielista* seeks to escape, but continues to encounter through the poorly lit streets, the Revolution's rising death toll and uncontrollable *caudillos* such as Villa. But it is in Guzmán's sponsorship of an urban and middle class brand of modern citizenship that the post-revolutionary state finds a spokesperson for its own nation building project. Though the Revolution is certainly at the core of the state's interpretation of nationhood, *El águila y la serpiente* ultimately shows that this same Revolution must be properly directed and saved from the degeneracy of wild *caudillos*.

Revolutionary heroes of the caliber of Villa are served well by the presence of enlightened figures such as Guzmán. In this same way, the novel makes an open invitation for the paternalistic intervention of the post-revolutionary state. Although Guzmán points toward a particular kind of modern citizenship, the reader is never actually introduced to a clear and concrete portrait of what the corresponding modern nation should look like. Similar to Azuela, Guzmán never actually offers a picture or even a methodology for achieving that modern nation. Again, it is within the absence of a concrete image of modern nationhood that the post-revolutionary state finds support for its own projects. The absence of nationhood is not only constituted by Guzmán's inability to paint a vivid, sensorial image of its dimensions, but also by the political instability of the country. The continuous regional uprisings in the countryside and the internal bids for power within the post-revolutionary government, made it difficult to imagine what a unified nation might look like. Also, Guzmán's inability to reconcile the intellectual revolutionary with the goals and methods of the guerrilla revolutionary leaves an open invitation for the creation of paternalistic regimes such as the one later headed by his fellow *ateneistas*. Though *El águila y la serpiente* tells the cautionary tale of an intellectual revolutionary shunned from the enclaves of power, the novel nonetheless expresses the intent, similar to the one found in Guzmán's presidential photographs, to tacitly endorse the hegemony of the post-revolutionary regime.

***La raza cósmica* and the Birth of a Foundational Myth**

While Azuela and Guzmán both explore the schism that separates the peasant revolutionaries from the intellectual revolutionaries, they are ultimately unable to

provide a clear idea of how fraternity and nationhood are to be achieved. However, it is José Vasconcelos, the first minister of Secretaría de Educación Pública, who offers the post-revolutionary regime an ideological blueprint for the consolidation of the modern Mexican nation. Vasconcelos proposes the mestizo as both the building block for the nation and as the fabric for a post-revolutionary cultural nationalism.

Like Guzmán, Vasconcelos was heavily influenced by the *modernistas* and the Ateneo de la Juventud. His involvement with the Ateneo eventually led him to participate in the Revolution through his association with the *maderistas*. The importance of his ideological contribution to the movement is captured in several passages of *El águila y la serpiente* where the young Vasconcelos appears as one of the intellectual motors of the Revolution. With the election of Alvaro Obregón to the presidency in 1920, Vasconcelos was called to assume the ministry of education from 1921-24. Though a new post within the government of the post-revolutionary regime, it was nonetheless one of the most influential positions within the new administration. Under the leadership of Vasconcelos, Mexico experienced a revolution in cultural production through the development of Mexican muralism, the establishment of a national literature and the spread of education through the creation of an army of teachers. Culture and education, the principal tenets of the *ateneístas*, were undoubtedly the tools of choice for Vasconcelos in his effort to make of war torn Mexico a modern nation.

Though Vasconcelos was an important figure both within the Revolution and the subsequent political regime, rarely is his essay studied as part of the genre of *literatura revolucionaria*. Although *La raza cósmica* (1924) is not a novel and also does not take

up the Revolution as its explicit axis, it is fundamental in understanding the place of literature within Mexico's nation building project. From canonical studies such as Adalberto Dessau's *La novela de la Revolución Mexicana* (1973) to more recent studies such as Max Parra's *Writing Pancho Villa's Revolution* (2004), *La raza cósmica* is completely omitted from their discussions of the creation of a national literature. However, *La raza cósmica* must necessarily be included in any discussion of Mexican national literature or *literatura revolucionaria* for the vision it offers of a Mexican nation in the making. If writers such as Azuela and Guzmán analyze within their novels precisely the absence of nationhood, Vasconcelos steps into the discussion with *La raza cósmica* to offer an ideological structure for the achievement of a modern Mexican nation. Vasconcelos essentially offers a response to the questions and anxieties that novels such as *Los de abajo* and *El águila y la serpiente* express concerning the relationship between the Revolution and the nation. Again, though he does not write explicitly about the recent Revolution, the event is at the core of the creation of a new political subject, the mestizo citizen.

Vasconcelos' mestizophilia becomes manifest a few years earlier in his 1919 essay *Estudios Indostánicos*. Though not a full articulation of mestizaje as the future of modern citizenship as it is expressed in *La raza cósmica*, Vasconcelos sustains, with some trepidation, that only the mestizo races produce great civilizations. He goes on to claim that in the equatorial zone, specifically India and Brazil, great artistic creations will flourish to surpass contemporary European art: "Porque no es el frío, sino el calor, la condición del verdadero progreso homogéneo de todas las potencias humanas" (98-99). Already in *Estudios Indostánicos*, Vasconcelos is pointing toward a seeming

inversion of the Eurocentric thinking that condemns the intellectual production of the Americas.

However, it is not until *La raza cósmica* that the Vasconcelian thesis is presented in profound detail. Vasconcelos begins his prologue by declaring that in the present historical moment there is a movement to return to mestizaje. He explains that, “se da el caso de que aún darwinistas distinguidos, viejos sostenedores del espencerianismo, que desdeñaban a las razas de color y las mestizas, militan hoy en asociaciones internacionales, que como la Unesco, proclaman la necesidad de abolir toda discriminación racial y de educar a todos los hombres en la igualdad” (9). In this way the positivists of the past have recognized their mistakes, according to Vasconcelos, so as to embrace the “equality” mestizaje represents. From the first few lines of his prologue, Vasconcelos declares himself against positivist thinking, rooted in the authority of science, though curiously he himself appeals to the authority of geology and archaeology, disciplines born from the positivist wave, to establish the cradle of civilization in the Americas. This discursive movement is crucial considering that any modern nation needs to associate itself with a civilized origin. In this case, the myth of Atlantis establishes for Vasconcelos a legitimate origin through which he can redeem the Indian. For Vasconcelos, the Indian serves as a kind of bridge toward mestizaje because, “Después de un extraordinario florecimiento, tras de cumplir su ciclo, terminada su misión particular, entró en silencio y fue decayendo hasta quedar reducida a los menguados Imperios azteca e inca, indignos totalmente de la antigua y superior cultura” (15-16). This means that all that remains of that great Atlantic civilization is the contemporary Indian. Through mestizaje, the Indian will advance thousands of years to

redeem himself completely as he becomes integrated into *la gran raza de bronce*. In this way, the Indian will disappear completely as he is absorbed into the homogeneous race.

But if the survival of the fittest is the law that propels Darwinism, then the aesthetic law will be the criteria that will determine the racial and cultural profile of the mestizo. This aesthetic law, according to Vasconcelos, will bring the “tipos bajos de la especie” to disappear through their absorption into the mestizo race. He explains that, “De esta suerte podría redimirse, por ejemplo, el negro, y poco a poco, por extinción voluntaria, las estirpes más feas irán cediendo el paso a las más hermosas” (43). Not only will the black disappear, but he will do so voluntarily. It is clear that for Vasconcelos, the black, like the Indian, is constitutive of the lower and uglier races. But this law of aesthetics is actually a kind of eugenics that like geology and archaeology, the disciplines Vasconcelos appeals to in the beginning of the essay, has its origin in the same kind of positivist thinking he disdains so much. This becomes evident when

Vasconcelos says that,

en unas cuantas décadas de eugenesia estética podría desaparecer el negro junto con los tipos... fundamentalmente recesivos e indignos, por lo mismo, de perpetuación. Se operaría en esta forma una selección por el gusto, mucho más eficaz que la selección darwiniana, que sólo es válida, si acaso, para las especies inferiores, pero ya no para el hombre (ibid).

This means that the aesthetic eugenics that Vasconcelos imagines will be even more successful than the natural selection of Darwinism through its elimination of the inferior beings that form part of the human race. Although Vasconcelos criticizes the brutality of Darwinism, his aesthetic eugenics is a re-elaboration of the same racist thinking that during the latter half of the nineteenth century established the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons and European culture. As historian Agustín Basave Benítez so poignantly highlights, “Y su imagen del hombre cósmico huele a la bestia rubia de Nietzsche, por más que el mexicano aclare que el suyo será un ‘totinem’ distinto al superhombre

nietzscheano” (135). In this way, Vasconcelos reinscribes himself within the same racist positivist thinking that he despises so much precisely for its negation of mestizaje and Latin American cultures. Vasconcelos simply inverts the same thinking that negates the legitimacy of Latin America, as he establishes the insignificance of the contributions of the black and Indian elements, only to later annihilate them through their absorption within the dominant race. In this way, Vasconcelos ultimately validates the same nineteenth century colonial hierarchy in his construction of mestizo subjectivity.

However, Vasconcelos later inverts that nineteenth century hierarchy by establishing Spain as a superpower equal to Britain. Although during much of the nineteenth century Spain fell into political and economic decline while Britain expanded its colonial domains, Vasconcelos insists on viewing the two as equals. According to him, the British and the Spanish are “los dos tipos humanos más fuertes y más disímiles” (16). The mestizo race will spring from a combination of these two superpowers. But in the same way that the Spanish element has reached its splendor in Latin America, the British element has attained its potential in the United States. What results then is a rivalry between the United States and Latin America. But this rivalry will come to an end when, “Los mismos blancos, descontentos del materialismo y de la injusticia social en que ha caído su raza, la cuarta raza, vendrán a nosotros para ayudar en la conquista de la libertad” (35-36). The particular use of the term “blanco” in this sentence suggests a cultural connotation more than it does a racial one. This means that the North Americans will seek the Spanish roots so as to break the chains of their own materialism and in this way reach the utopia that Vasconcelos claims is linked to the consolidation of the cosmic race. When this race finally comes into fruition, there will no longer be any more

rivalry between the United States and Latin America; the schism created between the United States' utilitarianism and Latin America's spirit, a contrast described by Rodó as *arielismo*, is closed through the fusion of the cosmic race. On the contrary, the British and Spanish roots will join to form the strong base, the white base, of the cosmic race.

But what implications could the cosmic race have for the construction of the modern Mexican citizen and consequently the nation? The profile Vasconcelos constructs for his mestizo citizen can be read as an outline of what the Mexican state in the 1920s sought to motivate within its own citizens. With the end of the Revolution, the state sought to construct a hegemonic base so as to build a nation out of the divisions the war had provoked. Vasconcelos not only aimed to diffuse the country's political differences, but rather, he also sought to erase its racial differences. As Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas explains,

Vasconcelos' doctrine regarding a *mestizaje* creator of a cosmic man, in fact, masked Mexico's heterogeneity. This doctrine, while supposedly aimed at bringing everybody to an illusory mainstream, in truth was targeted at doing the opposite. His campaign blurred all Mexicans who were not white enough from the nation-state project particularly the *mezclas castas*... who nevertheless were the majority (18).

The education campaign that Vasconcelos led during his tenure as Secretary of Education was at its core a search for the "whitening" or Westernization of the nation. Perhaps the nation could not be so easily "whitened" in the racial sense, but Vasconcelos believed it could be done so on a cultural level. It was fundamental to educate the Indians in order to integrate them into the cosmopolitan and bourgeois society the post-revolutionary state so eagerly desired. It is important to remember that Vasconcelos' slogan was after all, "educación, pan y jabón". These were the three elements that Vasconcelos deemed fundamental in the construction of the mestizo citizen. The idea was to civilize the nation's racial others and in this way construct the modern nation that

the Revolution had promised. In practice, Vasconcelos was exercising a kind of cultural eugenics which according to *La raza cósmica* would also occur racially through the passing of many generations. With the education and art programs Vasconcelos designed, the post-revolutionary state sought to fabricate, like the machines of a mass production line, a mestizo citizen that would make of Mexico *the land of tomorrow*. But making of Mexico *the land of tomorrow*, implicated constructing for the mestizo citizen a neo-Creole interior with a bourgeois set of values. Here I am using the term “neo-Creole” to differentiate between this new political subject and the nineteenth century Creole. Unlike the Creole who defined himself vis-à-vis Spain, the neo-Creole defines himself with respect to the United States. The neo-Creole’s interior, or rather his values, continue to be in line with those of the nineteenth century Creole with the exception that now he integrates North American elements to constitute himself. Unlike the nineteenth century Creole, the twentieth century Mexican, or mestizo citizen to be more precise, was supposed to satiate his aspirations for modernity in seeing the North American silhouette reflected over his own Latin American face.

However, *La raza cósmica* cannot be understood in all of its complexity without placing close attention to the “Notas de viaje” that follow the essay. In 1920, when Vasconcelos became the Secretary of Education he launched a promotional tour throughout Latin America with the purpose of spreading his discourse on mestizaje. The “Notas de viaje”, or second part of *La raza cósmica*, document his visits throughout all of Brazil and Argentina. His description of this trip is a celebration of the technological and industrial advances he observes. But unlike New York, a city he describes as “una lacra del mundo” (62), the South American cities prove to be the perfect combination

between Hispanic culture and North American modernization. Juan Carlos Grijalva describes Vasconcelos' experience through South America as one where the *ateneísta*, “cuenta su experiencia por estos países como si transitara por una tierra edénica, pletórica de lugares naturales sorprendentes; mujeres hermosas y raras comidas y frutas desconocidas; gente buena y trabajadora; gran prosperidad industrial y urbana; pero ante todo, naciones donde la utopía americana está viva y en ascenso” (334).

The second part of the essay is essentially a reification of the ethnological argument presented in the first part. Vasconcelos assures that while Brazil will be the site of the cosmic race's new capital, Argentina, “hoy y quizá por mucho tiempo, será el faro en la noche hispanoamericana” (206). These two countries represent for Vasconcelos the incarnation of a cultural mestizaje. It is important to remember that racial mestizaje is supposed to take time in constructing the fifth race, but cultural mestizaje is a process already taking place, as is observed in the cultural nationalism he initiated. Although it is a mestizaje profoundly rooted in Hispanism, Vasconcelos' idea also has implications for the modernization of the city. Vasconcelos describes this modernization when he compares North American cities to Rio de Janeiro:

resplandor estridente de Nueva York, que ofusca un instante y enseguida desilusiona; resplandor gris de Chicago, envuelto en un manto de humo, que vicia la atmósfera diez leguas a la redonda. El resplandor de Río era un resplandor claro, se diría una gran ciudad en la que el tráfico, los servicios todos, dependieran de la electricidad y ya no del carbón; una urbe posterior a la etapa monstruosa del coke (66).

The city of Rio de Janeiro, as Vasconcelos perceives it, incorporates the best elements of the modernized North American cities while also managing to surpass them. The Brazilians are taking forms of energy developed in the United States, but are then making them more efficient at home. As a result, the luminosity of Rio de Janeiro is bright and clear and does not tarnish immediately like the lights of New York or

Chicago. The Brazilian city is managing to take the best elements of North American industrialization so as to make of Rio de Janeiro the Eden that the first part of the essay promises. The harmonious coexistence of elements derived from the United States with the picturesque landscape make of Brazil the model for the construction of modern nationhood that Vasconcelos envisions for Mexico as well as the rest of Latin America. Although the United States remains in the horizon for Vasconcelos as a constant point of reference, what operates at the core of his essay is a desire to recover Mexico's lost territory, and with it the nation. Already from an early age, Vasconcelos had encountered firsthand the threat that the United States posed for Latin America. Vasconcelos' childhood on the border between Piedras Negras, Sonora and Eagle Pass, Texas was marked by his impulse to, as José Joaquín Blanco explains, "defenderla [patria] a puñetazos contra los niños norteamericanos que sostenían su superioridad frente al semisalvaje mexicano" (*Se llamaba* 22). From the time he was a child, Vasconcelos was forced to face the United States' imperialistic attitude and was consequently obligated to defend his Mexicanness. This early racialization undoubtedly motivated Vasconcelos to counter the United States's brand of modernity. The young Vasconcelos, the son of bourgeois Creole parents, essentially personifies the underdeveloped nation as he is forced to counter the imperialistic impulses of the North American children. This early experience coupled with Mexico's massive territorial and moral loss at the hands of the United States drove Vasconcelos to seek the recovery of the nation. It is important to remember that Mexico had already experienced the United States' brand of modernity through the expansion of Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century. For Mexico, this translated into the loss of half of its territory. The 1848 Treaty

of Guadalupe Hidalgo turned what are today the states of Arizona, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico and California into U.S. territory overnight. Although the lost territory only constituted 1.5% of Mexico's total population, this significant loss of Mexican territory weakened the morale of certain sectors of Mexican society (Bazant 60). Historians such as Jan Bazant note that since very few natural resources were known in this part of the national territory, the loss did not prove to be a significant blow to the Mexican economy. However, it is important to emphasize that the loss of half of the Mexican territory became palpable proof of the United State's colonizing powers; Mexico's northern neighbor proved capable of devouring its surrounding territories in the name of modernity.

Undoubtedly, mestizaje was the discursive front on which Vasconcelos sought to counter the menacing powers from the north. It is no surprise then that his slogan was, "¡Mestizos de América, uníos!" Vasconcelos brings with him a discourse that is first envisioned for Mexico and then for the rest of Latin America. Considering that Vasconcelos was seen as a representative of Mexico in his visits through South America, his tour could be read as a kind of mexicanization of the south.⁶ The propagation of mestizaje as a discourse can be interpreted as the dispersion of precisely those ideas that in Mexico were helping to consolidate the modern nation. Although it cannot be argued that Mexico was attempting to colonize the rest of Latin America through the discourse

⁶ In the biographies and articles I have found on Vasconcelos, I have not encountered any significant details concerning the reception of his discourse on mestizaje in South America. The most I have found is that according to Basave Benítez, Vasconcelos was proclaimed "maestro de la juventud" in Central and South America (131). What is clear is that Vasconcelos had every intention of fomenting his discourse outside of Mexico. His Pan-Americanism which is so palpable in *La raza cósmica*, and his "evangelization" tour through South America suggest Vasconcelos' strong desire to cross Latin American borders armed with his discourse on mestizaje. But the question of how his discourse was in actuality accepted and interpreted outside of Mexico is one that has yet to be studied.

of mestizaje, what can be observed is that Mexico was attempting to discursively unite itself, through the Pan-American relationship prophesied by Vasconcelos, with the rest of Latin America. Symbolically, Mexico was uniting itself with other peoples and was in a sense compensating for the loss of half of its territory at the hands of the United States. This Pan-American union was conceived by Vasconcelos and the Mexican state as a way of strengthening the nation building project. Mexico's relationship with the rest of Latin America energized, at least morally, the Mexican state's struggle to modernize the country vis-à-vis the United States. If Mexico could not physically recover its lost territory, it could at least seek to create unity with the rest of Latin America through the propagation of mestizaje as the panacea for modern nationhood.

Although Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* is perhaps the most prescriptive work within the genre of *literatura revolucionaria* with regards to the nation building project, it nonetheless falls short of constituting the nation on its own. It is crucial to note that *La raza cósmica* was only one component of Vasconcelos' grand national project. Though his project is essentially summarized in the essay, it is important to look toward the Mexican state's cultural strategies, especially those informed by the ideas espoused in *La raza cósmica*, in the study of how the modern Mexican nation-state was consolidated. Access to *La raza cósmica* not only presumed an advanced level of literacy and familiarity with a positivist education, but also presumed a reader's ability to interpret the text's implications for Mexico as well as the rest of Latin America. Again, this is where the question of mass accessibility to the text suggests that *La raza cósmica's* plan for the consolidation of the nation enjoyed limited diffusion through the written word. This suggests that the population, the masses especially, were perhaps

looking to other “texts” and finding an articulation there of how Mexicanness and modern citizenship might be exercised.

Beyond the Book: “Writing” the Nation’s Visual Text

Literatura revolucionaria as a genre not only sought to create a national literature for Mexico, but also aimed to forge a national spirit by closing the schism between the intellectual middle class and the popular masses. Canonical works such as *Los de abajo*, *El águila y la serpiente* and *La raza cósmica* attempted to present a meditation on the problem of nationhood while simultaneously seeking to promote the fraternity necessary for its achievement. However, the social position and agenda of each of these authors surfaces within their respective text to reveal the difficulty of both forging nationhood across class lines as well as utilizing the written text as a cultural product or artifact for the promotion of the nation. The question of mass accessibility to the book as well as its advocacy for a bourgeois subjectivity that seeks to erase the degeneracy represented by the Indian peasant from the nation is one that cannot be ignored. These issues make of the written text an insufficient strategy for the consolidation of the nation.

If the written text is insufficient in achieving the Mexican state’s desire for nationhood, what other cultural strategies, then, contributed to the consolidation of the nation? It is important to remember that by 1934, when Lázaro Cárdenas assumed the presidency, there were already many programs, proclamations and rhetorical and visual devices of all sorts to carry the message of nationhood. This study aims to analyze precisely the implementation and rhetoric of those rhetorical and visual devices exercised as part of the nationhood project. It is in the 1920-35 period, the years leading

up to the height of Cárdenas' populist administration, that these cultural strategies can be identified and questioned regarding what they had to offer a nation in the making. As art historian Leonard Folgarait notes, "This was a society whose powerful members were busy creating a culture. Such a creation demanded a concern for the manufacture of meanings. A heady mix of activity and discursiveness, a need to be thinking, proposing, cajoling, propagandizing, but, mostly, by far, *doing*, affected all official behavior. ...the post-Revolution opened a space for a self-conscious and relatively peaceful culture to assert itself" (7). And it is this "relatively peaceful culture" that needs to be assessed within the context of nation building.

Where else was this cultural meaning to be found if it was not limited to the written text? In answering this question, it is necessary to interrogate other artifacts of Mexicanness and their contexts. To fully understand how the visual texts contained within other artifacts are read, it is crucial to move beyond the narratives produced by the text in order to anchor an analysis of the museum as an institution and as a temple for elite culture. It is imperative to look to the museum and the archaeological artifact to explore how the figure of the degenerate Indian is wrestled with by the state in its search to shape the modern Mexican nation. The same "raza irredenta" which troubles Azuela, Guzmán, and Vasconcelos is a point of tension which ultimately informs the state's difficult path toward shaping modern subjectivity among a peasant citizenry. In the following chapters I will be looking to different incarnations of the artifact as texts that not only shape the nation's capital, but also as narratives that aim at reaching into the minds and hearts of the population to make of them modern citizens of the nation.

II. El Museo Nacional de México: Selecting and Exhibiting a Glorious Nation

El pueblo mexicano levanta este monumento en honor de las admirables culturas que florecieron durante la era Precolombina en regiones que son, ahora, territorio de la República. Frente a los testimonios de aquellas culturas el México de hoy rinde homenaje al México indígena en cuyo ejemplo reconoce características de su originalidad nacional. – President Adolfo López Mateos at the inauguration of the Museo Nacional de Antropología

Walking up the steps of the entrance to the Museo Nacional de Antropología today, one senses that one is about to enter the nation's temple. The imposing monolith of Tlaloc sits outside of the museum on Paseo de la Reforma as representative of the national relics which are carefully guarded inside. While Tlaloc cannot lead the way to the museum because his eyes have faded from his stone visage, a colossal sized Mexican flag flies high enough to guide visitors to the museum's entrance. The "blind" Tlaloc signals the way, while the Mexican flag is the "x" that marks the spot. Together, these iconic figures keep visitors on the path to the museum. However, the ancient monolith and the Mexican flag stand as one not only to announce the museum's location, but also as a preamble to the nation's interpretation of its pre-Columbian past. Even before the visitor enters the museum, Mexico's pre-Columbian past is already re-presented as unmistakably patriotic.

The relationship between artifact and nationhood is made explicit through the museum's glorification of the national patrimony. Although today's entrance to the Museo Nacional de Antropología shares no resemblance to the entrance of the Mexican National Museum of the post-revolutionary period, I find it useful to part from the contemporary museum in thinking about the relationship between the artifact and the museum. Through the exhibition of a wide range of objects, from the miniature to the gigantic, the Museo Nacional de Antropología silently seduces its visitor (Canclini 170).

Rather than brutally imposing itself, the museum creates the illusion of an open space designed to house the ancient origins of the nation within a clearly architecturally modern building. In the museum's main garden, the partially roofed patio seems to be supported by a single column etched with pre-Columbian imagery sitting near the garden entrance. However, this sensation of openness is created by a system of cables that support this partial roof, but remain hidden from public view. Like the architectural illusions created in the museum's exterior, similar illusions are also mirrored inside through the presentation of the nation. Inside, though the museum's collections are contextualized through the use of explanation tags, maps and dioramas, below these visual aids the nation also lies hidden. While the museum presents itself as a tribute to the indigenous peoples of Mexico, the nation is always the frame through which these past and present cultures are re-presented. The museum offers the illusion that without these indigenous peoples Mexico would not exist, when in reality it is these indigenous peoples who are continuously circumscribed within a nationalist context.

Yet despite the museum's insistence on offering the pre-Columbian past as the true recipient of its homage, it also presents itself to the visitor as a kind of book ready to be read from beginning to end or one chapter at a time. It functions as a flexible text that is not necessarily premised on the ability to read. The fact that it has the potential to offer a patriotic message to anyone willing to step into this sacred repository of the nation, makes of the museum as institution a valuable cultural strategy in the construction of nationhood.

To understand the museum's role within the Mexican nation building project, it is crucial to conduct a study of the National Museum from 1920-35, precisely the period

when the state was so aggressively attempting to complete the construction of the nation. As the predecessor of today's Museo Nacional de Antropología, the National Museum was not only Mexico's first museum, but also one of the country's earliest and most important forums for the visual display of patriotism. Though established in 1790 under the name Museo de Historia Natural, the National Museum played a pivotal role during the post-revolutionary period in conceptualizing the transition from colonial subject to that of citizen of the state. Although Mexico had attained independence almost one hundred years prior to the Mexican Revolution, modern citizenship, a prerequisite for the kind of nation desired by the governing elite, was a goal yet to be attained. But unlike the European museum, the Mexican museum was directly responding to the question of exhibiting the glories and accomplishments of the post-colonial nation-state. The National Museum functioned as both the repository for the origins of the nation and as a kind of showcase for the scientific and cultural advances unique to Mexico. Though other cultural institutions such as the Mexican muralist movement and the creation of a *literatura revolucionaria* also attempted to articulate the nation through the exhibition of Mexicanness, it was within the walls of the National Museum that the cult to *la patria* was to be fomented and exercised. The National Museum as an institution for the production and exhibition of "knowledge" made museology a privileged cultural strategy in the effort to construct the nation. The museum's presentation of knowledge framed within the rhetoric of science made its legitimacy apparently irrefutable.

The Mexican National Museum: Homage to *la patria*

In the decades leading up to the establishment of Mexico's first museum, the idea of collecting and exhibiting the nation was being imagined by several Creole intellectuals. The attack on the value of the culture and intellectual production of the Americas led many Creoles to quickly respond with their own counter arguments. The Jesuit Manuel Eguirara y Egurén replied to the attacks of European scientists such as Corneille de Pauw and Buffon by publishing the *Prólogos a la Biblioteca Mexicana* (1755). The *Biblioteca* is a compilation and description of literary works produced in Mexico mostly by Creoles, but a few also by mestizos and Indians, which directly refuted the European Enlightenment's idea that the people of the Americas were incapable of innovative thinking. Eguirara y Egurén essentially "collected" by listing and describing all of the literary production generated in Mexico until then, including pre-Columbian codices written through the use of ancient glyphs, to show that Mexicans had the same abilities and cultural value that Europeans were so proud to possess.

But the most important intellectual in developing the notion of collecting and exhibiting was another Jesuit, Francisco Xavier Clavijero. In 1780 he published the *Historia Antigua de México* in Bologna, Italy. Though he heavily consulted the Aztec codices in writing his *Historia*, Clavijero completed and published his work abroad due to the Jesuit expulsion from the colonies ordered by King Charles III in 1767. Like the *Biblioteca*, the *Historia* proposes to refute the European notion of American inferiority. In his prologue, Clavijero proposes the creation of a "museo no menos útil que curioso" for the conservation of "los restos de las antigüedades de nuestra patria" (38). He goes on to argue for the symbolic re-appropriation of the pre-Columbian past along with the

desire to link it to Creole culture. As historian Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno argues, “Clavijero esboza en abstracto la función moderna del museo criollo ideal: recuperar y conservar restos materiales del ‘otro-diferente’ sobre el principio de reconstruir una posible identidad patriótica” (31). The project Clavijero proposes is not one of colonial collecting, but rather is intent on creating a common historical foundation capable of constructing a patriotic identity. For Clavijero, the Hispanic American museum should include:

Las estatuas antiguas que se conservan o que se vayan descubriendo en las excavaciones, las armas, las obras de mosaico y otros objetos semejantes; las pinturas mexicanas esparcidas por varias partes y, sobre todo, los manuscritos, así los de los misioneros y otros antiguos españoles, como los de los mismos indios, que se hallan en las librerías de algunos monasterios, de donde se podrán sacar copias antes de que los consuma la polilla o se pierdan por alguna otra desgracia (xviii).

Clavijero’s conceptualization of the museum was essentially an attempt to redefine the role of pre-Columbian civilizations within a European historical and philosophical framework. For the Jesuit, the remains of Mexico’s pre-Columbian past were particularly worthy of collection within the context of defining the common historical base that would erect the nation.

Only a decade after Clavijero’s publication of his *Historia*, King Charles III established Mexico’s first Natural History Museum. Opened in 1790, the museum was planned to coincide with the king’s ascension to the Spanish throne. However, the founding of the museum was also based in part on the Creoles’ interest in displaying the scientific knowledge of the day. The museum exhibited everything from elephant skeletons to microscopes and barometers (Morales-Moreno, “History and Patriotism” 174). The Novohispanic society embraced “with enthusiasm the existence of the first museum, and donations to enrich the collection began to come in by the dozen” (Lozoya 105).

Despite the excitement with which the new Natural History Museum was greeted, the museum of antiquities proposed by Clavijero was actually established by chance. King Charles III founded the museum with the intent of displaying the lush flora and fauna of Mexico along with the scientific production of the day, but not necessarily for the purpose of exhibiting *Mexican* antiquities. In 1790, the same year the museum was inaugurated, two very important monoliths were accidentally discovered during the repair of Mexico City's Zocalo (I will return to the case of the discovered monoliths later in this chapter). The archaeologist and anthropologist Ignacio Bernal described this event as one where:

si su hallazgo fue casual, no fue un accidente el cambio de actitud en el gobierno virreinal. El virrey conde de Revillagigedo ordenó que se conservaran en vez de ser destruidas, como hubiera ocurrido algunos años antes. El cambio traslucía la influencia de las ideas de Carlos III y de algunos de sus consejeros (75).

The idolatrous objects which only a few years before would have been destroyed for their pagan quality, were now being collected and exhibited as museum pieces. Though the idea was certainly to exhibit and gaze upon the defeated and barbarous "other," the de-contextualization and de-codification of these objects also facilitated their insertion into a new historical discourse.

The intention to write a new history for Mexico came into fruition in the years after independence. The first post-colonial museum or National Museum was established in 1825 by President Guadalupe Victoria. In a letter to the Minister of Internal and Foreign Affairs, Lucas Alamán, Victoria orders, "que con las antigüedades que se han extraído de la isla de Sacrificios y otras que existían en esta capital se forme un Museo Nacional y que a este fin se destine uno de los salones de la Universidad, erogándose por cuenta del Gobierno Supremo los gastos necesarios [...]" (qtd. in Castillo Ledón 11). This marked the beginning of the Mexican government's control

over cultural heritage as well as the legitimization of gathering all objects considered of “use and national glory” (“History and Patriotism,” Morales-Moreno 177).

Though the National Museum struggled greatly to keep afloat in the following years amidst political divisions and foreign invasions, it wasn't until the advent of the Porfirian regime that the museum would begin to blossom as the nation's museum. The museum essentially established a symbiotic relationship between archaeology and the state to form the myth of the Mexican origin. The National Museum paid homage not only to the mystified and fossilized native past, but also crystallized official versions of the War of Independence (1810-21) and the heroes of the wars of the American and French interventions (1846-48 and 1862-67 respectively). Porfirio Díaz became intimately involved with the museum by reorganizing its structure and renaming it the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnología, and more importantly by personally approving or disapproving of the content within the exhibition halls. This kind of control included the presentation of the Spanish Conquest, the heroes of the War of Independence, the Mexican American War, Benito Juárez, the 1857 Liberal Constitution and the struggle against the French (182). According to Morales-Moreno, these scenes were not only seen as representative of the new nation, but more precisely as the “incarnation of the state itself” (ibid). This made of the National Museum more than just the repository of the nation's origins; it made of the institution a *museopatria*, an institution for the monumentalization of the nation, as Morales-Moreno has described it (*Orígenes* 35).

However, the idea of the *museopatria* reached new heights when the National Museum was placed at the center of one of the many processions planned for the

celebration of the first independence centenary. Clavijero's idea of constructing a sacred repository (*museopatria*) for the antiquities representative of the *patria* came into full fruition in September of 1910. Genaro García writes in his chronicle of the festivities that the patriotic celebrations began with a solemn procession to the National Museum where "*the renowned instigator of Mexico's emancipation was christened*" (182). The pilgrimage to the National Museum was undertaken by school children, teachers and public employees. This religiously flavored civic homage truly placed the spotlight on the museum when, as García describes, "the first schools filed through Constitution Square forming a military parade from the entrance of the museum to the grand entrance of the Archaeological Hall" (186). The strategic starting and ending points of this parade showed that the National Museum was actively playing a key role in forging a unifying Mexican identity composed of an archaeological past and a mestizo present. The veneration of the *patria's* mystical past and its saintly heroes promoted a renewed acceptance of a common national identity.

Though Porfirio Díaz had planned the National Museum as the center of the first centenary festivities, in reality all of Mexico City became a stage for the celebrations. As a living patriotic museum, the city itself also shined as a representation of modernity. Not only did Díaz work on reorganizing the National Museum in time for the first centenary, but he also imagined the creation of a modern city that would reflect the country's scientific and cultural advances. From parks to monuments, the Díaz regime represented one of the country's first efforts since the colonial period to actively sculpt the city into an incarnation of order and progress (I will discuss Díaz's efforts to shape the city in greater detail in chapter three).

Although Díaz significantly altered the historical nuances displayed in the exhibitions of the National Museum, the museum's relationship with its visitors was preserved. The museum remained an elite cultural institution whose walls housed the country's most prized historical artifacts. The National Museum's institutional configuration kept the popular masses far from its entrance. The behavioral codes and entrance fee were only a few of the obstacles that kept the country's non-bourgeois population away from the museum. Although the museum had a very distinctive educational purpose, its reach was limited to those able to read as well as those commanding the formal education necessary to de-code its patriotic message. While the museum's exhibitions offered condensed history lessons, a formal education was still essential to the interpretation of the stories touted by the archaeological artifact. The rigid cultural space of the museum, as I will show through an analysis of *Coatlicue* and the *piedra del sol*, made it difficult to integrate the country's Indian and uneducated populations into the national family.

But shortly after the first centenary celebrations, the Mexican Revolution broke the Porfirian image of modernity into shards of chaos and backwardness. The fall of the Díaz administration made evident that patriotic history could be contained within the museum, though not history itself. It was after all the civic unrest that had been fermenting for decades that finally overthrew Díaz. While the Porfirian museum had managed to freeze the remains of Mexico's heroic origins, the National Museum did not cease its collection efforts during the war. Though the museum went through ten different directors from 1911-16, the collection of the Revolution quickly became one of

its primary goals. As the armed conflict raged throughout the country, the National Museum never ceased to construct its next great exhibit: the Mexican Revolution.

The Post-Revolutionary State: Collecting the New Nation

In the aftermath of the war, not only was the reconstruction of the country a prime concern for the post-revolutionary state, but also the representation of the Mexican Revolution. The Revolution was quickly imagined as the origin of a new nation. Even before the armed conflict came to an end, writers such as Mariano Azuela were already imagining and interpreting the ramifications of the Revolution. But while writers and artists were weaving their own interpretations of the war, the post-revolutionary state was writing a new history text to retell its own version of recent events.

However, writing that text proved difficult at a time when the country was more torn and divided than it had been before the war began. Regional conflicts continued to rage while the revolutionary caudillos disputed power within the halls of the National Palace. Alvaro Obregón's presidency, the first administration after the war, would last four years (1920-24) but would end with his assassination. Soon after, Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-28) would arrive on the political scene to ascend to the presidency and later control the following three presidencies. He essentially elected puppet presidents in order to make the executive decisions from behind the scenes.

Though the recent Revolution had destroyed much of the countryside by disrupting agriculture and the development of new construction projects, the post-revolutionary state inaugurated the advent of a new Revolution that would come to change the face of public spaces, beginning with those in the capital city. While

reconstruction efforts were relatively slow in rebuilding the rural regions by making the individual states responsible for these efforts, Mexico City was quickly re-imagined as the example of modernity that the rest of the country should follow. As art historian

Eloy Méndez Sáinz describes:

Es arquitectura con significados más o menos coherentes y referidos a la misma matriz ideológica reivindicativa plasmada con intenciones retóricas, no sólo manifiestos en el uso de los espacios, sino también, y sobre todo, en formas dirigidas a comunicar mensajes, a reiterar con aire renovado la ‘toma’ de cada lugar, la conquista explícita del entorno, cuya transformación legítima, tramo a tramo, era la expansión interminable del poder materializado de un Estado voraz (15).

In this way the Revolution was not only quickly translated into a type of architecture, but it also became the muse that would inspire how the city’s public spaces would be conceptualized. Though most of the monuments dotting El Paseo de Reforma and the parks and neighborhoods structuring the downtown area were actually the product of the Porfirian project to modernize the city, it was now the post-revolutionary state’s responsibility to solidify a discourse that would make of these public spaces themselves the visual text that would tout the glories of the *modern* Mexican nation.

However, reifying those public spaces with revolutionary meaning meant revisiting many of the social issues the Porfirian regime had refused to address. Díaz carved new neighborhoods and social gathering spaces meant to showcase the burgeoning bourgeoisie while simultaneously pushing the peasant and working classes further into the periphery of the city. Historian Pablo Piccato shows that, “the constant arrival of migrants and the development of new means of transportation... weakened social divisions and undermined the authorities’ control over public spaces” (21). Given the resistance presented by these classes and also the mass participation of peasants in the recent war, their presence could no longer go unrecognized by the state. But addressing the illiterate classes through the representation of already existing public

spaces was a challenge necessarily related to the question of educating this sector of the population. The idea was essentially to cultivate civic pride within every citizen as well as an appreciation for the bourgeois values that defined the state's conceptualization of modern citizenship through the transformation of Mexico City into *the* modern city.

Though efforts to modernize the city and its residents were a priority for the post-revolutionary state in its attempt to implement an example of order for the rest of the country to follow, this was not the first project of its kind in Mexico. The post-revolutionary state's project can be described as an attempt to bring into fruition *la ciudad letrada*. Angel Rama theorizes *la ciudad letrada* as a place which confers official recognition and prestige on cultural production. Rama points to the early colonial period (*la ciudad barroca*) as the precursor to *la ciudad letrada* by showing that this latter city is constructed on the pillars of a vast bureaucratic, professional and intellectual network. This same network though shares an intimate relationship with writing and *la ciudad letrada*. Rama explains that,

La escritura construyó las raíces, diseñó la identificación nacional, enmarcó a la sociedad en un proyecto, pero si por un momento los hombres concernidos por esos designios se hubieran puesto a reflexionar, habrían convenido en que todo eso que resultaba tan importante era tan simplemente planos dibujados sobre papel, imágenes grabadas en acero, discursos de palabras enlazadas, y aún menos y más que eso lo que las conciencias alcanzan a soñar a partir de los materiales escritos, atravesándolos con la mirada hasta perderlos de vista para sólo disfrutar del sueño que ellos excitan en el imaginario, desencadenando y encauzando la fuerza deseante (77-8).

As Rama admits, although writing was fundamental in laying the foundation for a national identity (I have dedicated Chapter 1 to this idea), it was part of a project that was essentially limited to the imagination. Seeing that project into fruition necessitated another kind of writing: re-shaping the city itself. It is the re-conceptualization of the city as an all inclusive *national* space that would mobilize the power of a national literature and the post-revolutionary state's discourse on Mexicanness. Rama alludes to

this when explaining, “Y en ambos casos cumple una suntuosa tarea idealizadora que infundirá orgullo y altivez a los auténticos descendientes de aquellos hombres de los campos, de aquellos hombres de las grandes aldeas, forzando a los advenedizos pobretones llegados del exterior a que asuman tales admirables progenitores” (77). It was within the select ordered spaces of Mexico City, the aspiring *ciudad letrada*, that the nation’s foundational myths would take on a life of their own. As I will show in the length of this chapter, *la ciudad letrada* would remain more of an aspirational project than a real city since in practice it would come to exclude the “auténticos descendientes” who inhabited the fringes of Mexican society.

La ciudad letrada’s modern grid during the post-revolutionary period was shaped by the construction of new governmental buildings as well as by shifting attention to already existing monuments, such as the National Museum. Though the institution blossomed significantly under the Porfiriato, the nationalist ideology that can be read in its displays became fully articulated after the Revolution. The museum’s role as an educational institution expanded during this period in an attempt to inculcate the civic lessons that would motivate modern citizenship. Morales Moreno describes the National Museum during this period as an institution whose “mayor vocación consistiría en contribuir al proyecto de educación pública, según los parámetros establecidos desde 1867 y reimpulsados por el vasconcelismo” (48). In this way the *modern* National Museum was re-conceptualized as an instrument for the diffusion of the post-revolutionary state’s patriotic brand of education.

By 1925 the National Museum was not a mere abstract cultural symbol, but rather it was representing through its collections exhibitions of history in motion; the

arrangements of artifacts were meant to recreate historical events within the halls of the museum. Wars, insurrections, revolts and military invasions were all transformed into symbols. The exhibition galleries functioned as historiographic canvases or fictitious social stages of the political imaginary. The objects representing these events, “—los escapularios, los monolitos, las armas— permanecían intemporalmente, mientras que las miradas sociales sufrían modificaciones fijando y codificando sus valores (sus propios criterios de verdad) en las colecciones admiradas” (Morales Moreno 50). While the objects and collections remained the same, the lens through which they were filtered and interpreted was in constant flux. Though the objects were themselves inanimate and immobile, it was their arrangement and interpretation which endowed them with the mobility to breathe life into the nation’s foundational myths.

The diffusion of these interpretations, though, necessarily implicated the mobilization of the museum as an educational institution. The major ideological shifts that took place within the museum with respect to education were already being expressed by researchers during the Revolution. Though the museum was conceptualized during the Porfiriato as a major stepping stone for the advancement of an elite positivist education, the revolutionary years came to significantly widen the scope of the museum’s role in the diffusion of a different kind of education, a social and patriotic education. Researcher Alfonso Pruneda argues for the social importance of the museum in his article “Algunas consideraciones acerca de los museos” (1913) by quoting Franz Boas:

No hay que despreciar el valor de un museo como medio de distracción popular, particularmente en una ciudad populosa, en donde debe aprovecharse toda oportunidad para dar empleo a los ratos de ocio del pueblo en un ambiente sano y estimulante; en donde cualquier atractivo que se le presente pueda contrarrestar la influencia de la taberna y del atavismo, lo cual es de gran importancia social (85).

The museum was conceptualized as a vehicle for the reformation of vices and as an example of accepted social mores. The museum was not only meant to be a provider of healthy entertainment, but also a stage where proper conduct was to be performed for visitors to emulate. And it is this social behavior which is equivalent to the kind of modern citizenship that would later be at the center of the post-revolutionary state's discourse on modern nationhood. Jesús Galindo y Villa, one of the National Museum's most distinguished researchers and director of the museum's Department of Archaeology, writes in his article "Museología: los museos y su doble función educativa e instructiva" (1921):

templaremos las cuerdas del civismo, y si multiplicamos los objetos y el ejemplo y nos ejercitamos frecuentemente en su contemplación y en su análisis, iremos educando, sin darnos casi cuenta, la voluntad y el carácter, con lo cual llegaremos a ser buenos ciudadanos y poseer la noción de Patria, que es tan vaga en ciertos espíritus, pero que en ellos está latente y puede exteriorizarse en cualquier momento (426).

In this way the museum is further imagined as an institution capable of directing social behavior in the direction of patriotic veneration. The museum's objects, especially those artifacts pertaining to the ancient Aztecs (the origin of *la patria*), are deemed touching enough to inspire patriotism and loyalty to the nation. The museum experience is therefore directly linked to the exercise of modern citizenship.

Although the National Museum developed a strong commitment to education in the years after the Revolution, it is also crucial to recognize that its role in the construction of nationhood was complicit with the post-revolutionary regime's development of cultural strategies. I choose the term "strategy" to describe the creation of tools placed at the service of a state project of nation building which needed to be completed swiftly and rapidly. While Foucault uses the term "technologies of power" to describe the state's management of individuals as a group, the term cultural strategies

offers a more nuanced interpretation of the post-revolutionary cultural production which drew from the production of past decades. As I will show in later chapters, the cultural production of Mexicanness would eventually escape the exclusive domain of the state. The idea that cultural production can be summarized as a “technology of power” is to ignore the contributions that common Mexicans both within and outside of Mexico were making to the production of Mexicanness. The term cultural strategy allows for the conceptualization of Mexicanness as a cultural product collectively invented by players outside of the state, an idea that I will explore more fully in chapter 4. But within the efforts for nationhood made by the post-revolutionary state, activities such as attending school, listening to the state sponsored program “Domingos culturales”¹, and visiting the museum were all examples of the state promoted cultural strategies used to make modern citizens out of individuals. The idea was not to intimidate people into submission to the nation-state, but rather to have them willingly embrace the *patria* as an entity, as a community, that has always existed and has always belonged to *los mexicanos*. As Tony Bennett explains, “Rather than embodying an alien and coercive principle of power which aimed to cow the people into submission, the museum-addressing the people as a public, as citizens- aimed to inveigle the general populace into complicity with power by placing them on this side of power which it represented to it as its own” (95). The museum, then, presents to the visitor a version of history that he can claim as his own. The aim is to have the visitor effortlessly and seamlessly embrace

¹ The radio broadcast “Domingos culturales” was aired Sunday afternoons during the 1930s as a means of promoting proper social and political conduct. The program was broadcast mainly in Mexico City with the sponsorship of the PNR. The program’s openly socialist content, highlighted with the program’s ending every broadcast with the socialist anthem, was softened by the inclusion of folkloric Mexican songs.

the mythic nation that the several museum halls weave together like the pages of a storybook.

In order to understand how the mythic nation is constructed within the museum and the ways in which the *museopatria* appeals to the formation of modern citizenship, it is necessary to carefully analyze the construction of some of the museum's more controversial archeological artifacts. I believe that it is through a study of these artifacts that the place of the National Museum within the nationalist project can be traced in order to understand its function within the post-revolutionary Mexican state. A comparative study of the *piedra del sol* and *Coatlicue* can begin to answer the question of why some archeological pieces are forgotten for decades while others become iconic images of the *patria*. This case study also questions how the history of such iconic pieces is carefully edited to reflect a clean and linear image of their connection to the nation. It is also crucial to study how certain artifacts were analyzed and catalogued specifically during the post-revolutionary period. A study of the National Museum curator Ramón Mena and his writing of the *Catálogo del Salón Secreto* (1926) is telling of the ways in which the museum's curators rationalized the existence of artifacts representative of the degenerate Indian and deemed offensive to bourgeois sensibilities. Mena's cataloguing and analysis of phallic pre-Columbian artifacts shows that certain artifacts were difficult to reconcile with the nationalist narrative the state was interested in promoting. Both case studies also highlight the complicity of archaeology during this time as a "science" within the construction of the nation.

Disinterring the Nation: The Rise of the *Piedra del sol* and the Fall of *Coatlicue*

Histories discussing the *pedra del sol* and *Coatlicue* record their date of discovery as the year 1790. During some major repairs of the Plaza Mayor that year, *Coatlicue* was disinterred and a few months later, in December, the *pedra del sol* was also found. Alexander von Humboldt in his *Sitios de las cordilleras y monumentos de los pueblos indígenas de América* (1878) and archaeologist Ignacio Bernal in his *Historia de la arqueología en México* (1979) discuss the discovery and circumstances of these monoliths. More recent studies, such as Eduardo Matos Moctezumas' *Las piedras negadas: De la Coatlicue al Templo Mayor* (1998), discuss the reasons for the fall of *Coatlicue* and the ascension of the *pedra del sol* (35-44). However, neither von Humboldt nor Bernal make any mention of the fact that the *pedra del sol* and *Coatlicue* shared a similar early history. Both had been exhibited and re-buried, though not simultaneously, by colonial authorities for their “negative” influence on the local Indian population. The *pedra del sol* was reburied sometime between 1551 and 1572 while *Coatlicue* disappeared from sight soon after her disinterment in 1790. The reasons for the omission of the *pedra del sol's* early history are linked to its quick ascension as an iconic image of the nation.

Soon after the fall of Tenochtitlán in 1521, the *pedra del sol* was moved by the conquistadors from the south of the Cuenca de Mexico to the Plaza Mayor. It is unknown why the 24.5 ton monolith was dragged and abandoned there for decades (López Luján 80). It was left in public view just west of the vice royal palace with the relief side facing up. Fray Diego Durán, circa 1581, describes the *pedra del sol's* effects on the viewing public:

La una [piedra] de las cuales vimos mucho tiempo en la Plaza Grande, junto a la acequia, donde cotidianamente se hace un mercado, frontero de las casas reales; donde perpetuamente se recogían cantidad de negros a jugar y a cometer otros atroces delitos, matándose unos a otros. De donde, el ilustrísimo y reverendísimo señor don fray Alonso de Montúfar...la mandó enterrar, viendo lo que allí pasaba de males y homicidios, y también a lo que sospecho, fue persuadido la mandase quitar de allí, a causa de que se perdiese la memoria del antiguo sacrificio que allí se hacía (vol. 1 100).

Fray Durán's chronicle makes clear that the *pedra del sol* was reburied for its pernicious influence on the city's inhabitants. Like a bad omen, the monolith was removed from view as to erase any memory of the Plaza Mayor's sanguinary past as well as deter undesirable behavior among the locals.

When the *pedra del sol* was disinterred in 1790, there was little memory of the existence of this monolith. The astronomer and antiquary Antonio León y Gama was called in to help discern the identity of this "new" monolith. In a letter sent to the exiled Jesuit historian Andrés Cavo in 1795, León y Gama complains about how a place came to be selected for the monolith:

se pusiese de piso delante de las gradas de la puerta principal de la Iglesia Cathedral; ya se dexa concocer, que el animo era, sepultar otra vez lo labrado, dexando arriba la superficie plana. Quando lo supe, pasé á vér al S.^{or} D.^o Joseph Uribe, uno de los comisionados de la fabrica de la Iglesia, y le hice presente lo mucho q.^e se estaba gastando en la Italia, y en otros Países cultos de la Europa para descubrir monumentos de la Antigüedad gentilica; y que aquí se habían de abandonar los que la contingencia nos ofrecia, unicos en su especie para ilustrar la Historia mexicana, que estaba en obscura (qtd. in López Luján 81).

León y Gama's efforts to secure a place for the *pedra del sol* take on a patriotic tone as he calls for the writing of a Mexican history that will place Mexico among the "Países cultos." He successfully convinces Viceroy Count of Revillagigedo to authorize the exhibition of the monolith in an effort to show that New Spain, like Europe, also possessed ancient culture. However, Bernal notes that it was the cultural initiatives of King Charles III which prompted Revillagigedo to preserve the monoliths of 1790 (75).

Although the *pedra del sol* suffered a number of aggressions during its time located outside of the Cathedral, its move to the National Museum in 1885 was received

with mixed feelings. A number of researchers associated with the museum had clamored for the relocation of the monolith. During its time outside of the Cathedral, the *pedra del sol* had trash thrown at it by the masses, became target practice for the U.S. troops during the 1847 occupation and suffered the deterioration caused by time. Despite these setbacks, the *pedra del sol's* location during many decades made of the monolith a fundamental urban referent. It's move to the National Museum represented not only the loss of a spatial locator, but also the disappearance from public view of an icon "que al transitar frente a la Catedral les evocaba un pasado glorioso y que sintetizaba en su materialidad una identidad compartida" (López Luján 82). The *pedra del sol's* transformation from witness of an agitated street life to museum artifact, is mourned by an anonymous poem titled "El adiós y triste queja del gran Calendario Azteca," circulated in pamphlet form in Mexico City in August of 1885:

¡Cuántos lustros yo pasé
Al pié de ésta hermosa torre,
Qué inexorable es el tiempo!
¡Válgame Dios, como corre!
No hay cosa que no se borre
Y se pierda en la memoria,
Ejemplo vivo en mi historia
Que acertar nadie ha podido;
¡Ay triste de mí, me voy!
Adiós, Montepío querido!

Como el caballo de Troya
Ya me llevan estirando
Y los soldados me jalan
Entre gimiendo y llorando.
Mucho sudor voy costando
Porque algo pesado soy,
Para el Museo yó me voy
Donde me van á cerrar,
Por eso digo llorando:
¡Adiós, bella Catedral!

[...]

Adiós, mexicanos todos,
Si verme, tienen deseo,

Dentro de muy poco parado
Me verán en el Museo (qtd. in Luján 80).

Lamenting the “incarceration” of the *pedra del sol* within the walls of the National Museum, these verses mourn the loss of a monument that had become a permanent part of the Zócalo’s landscape. The verses in the first stanza reminisce about the time that has passed since the *pedra del sol*’s placement as part of the Cathedral’s façade. With the passage of time, the *pedra del sol* has not only become part of the Cathedral’s architecture, but also part of the city’s memory. In the second stanza, the soldiers are not only hauling the several thousand pounds of stone forming the *pedra del sol*, but also the figurative weight of the monolith’s presence in the regional and national memory. But as the first stanza declares, the movement of the *pedra del sol* will not erase its presence from history or the city’s memory. Though the poem represents the monolith’s departure from the location that had been its home for nearly a century, it ends with an invitation to the museum for all the citizens who may desire to see it again. The urban referent now takes on new meaning as it transforms into an open invitation to visit the National Museum.

The *pedra del sol* was soon regarded as the National Museum’s most valued artifact. Not only did it become a main attraction for the city’s residents, but also for foreigners. The British archaeologist William Bullock writes that when he saw the monolith, “Desde el primer momento en que la contemplé me determiné, si ello era posible traer a Europa un facsímile de este bello ejemplar de la habilidad azteca” (183). In the eyes of observers such as Bullock, the *pedra del sol* attested to a cultural legacy that even Europe did not possess. The monolith had already become an object of veneration in its previous phase as it sat on the side of the Metropolitan Cathedral,

Mexico's first temple to Christianity. Its new location as the *obra magna* of the museum's Monolith Gallery made of the *pedra del sol* not only a national relic, but also itself the location of a grand nation. As López Luján shows, "De manera inmediata, la piedra se convirtió en icono del museo, imagen típica de tarjetas postales y fondo obligado para las fotografías de funcionarios y visitantes distinguidos" (83). But as the face of the museum, the *pedra del sol* also became representative of the national spirit, the Mexicanness the post-revolutionary state sought so desperately to infuse across the regionally fractured country. In the same way that the towering Metropolitan Cathedral had long before become the first representation of Mexico's Christian faith, the *pedra del sol* had now broken away from the Cathedral to become a representative in its own right of the country's and even the world's veneration of the cult to Mexicanness.

As perhaps the most important archaeological artifact in the National Museum's pantheon of objects, the *pedra del sol* becomes a sacred asset within the nation's heritage industry. This industry can be described not only as a sanctuary of tourism, but also and most importantly as the process of raising indigenous culture to the level of high culture (Carr 344-45). Sacred assets circulate through education and instruction as they attempt to become a common denominator among an otherwise heterogeneous citizenry. The archaeological artifact or asset acquires a sacred² character as it loses its archaeological particularity. The *pedra del sol* is no longer an ancient instrument used to track the movements of the sun, but rather a signifier whose referent changes throughout the centuries. The sacred asset is imbued with a transcendental logic which culminates in the materialization of the nation within universal history. The curators,

² The sacred asset is not, however, a relic, an object which deals directly with the issue of memory. My discussion of the Cuauhtémoc Monument in chapter three will discuss the relic in greater length.

researchers and archeologists of the museum become the guardians of the sacred asset as they attempt to dictate its significations. In this sense, it is the institution of the museum that decides the means through which citizens will interact with the artifact. But more precisely, it is the state³ that controls this interaction as it manifests itself through the chosen conduct and self-identification of museum visitors and more broadly, citizens. As Tony Bennett argues, the museum is not a democratic space of egalitarian public access, but rather a contentious space for the modeling of refined behavior, and the acquiescence to proper modes of political and social participation (99-102).

As the new temple housing the *pedra del sol*, the National Museum became a mirror for the nation the post-revolutionary state desired to forge. The idea was to have every citizen see himself reflected in the museum's galleries. Museum curator Alfonso Teja Zabre captures this notion best in his 1925 speech to the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria: "Aprendamos a ver las cosas con ojos nuevos, como nos enseña a ver nuestro Museo los peregrinos que llegan de todas partes del país, y dejan su hatillo en la puerta para desfilarse por las galerías, para deslumbrarse y soñar frente a la Piedra del Calendario, como si adivinaran el movimiento de los soles, los diluvios, los éxodos y los terremotos" ("Discurso" 116). As Teja Zabre suggests, regardless from what part of the country visitors may be arriving, their pilgrimage to the National Museum, the nation's temple to *la patria*, is in itself already representative of an homage to the nation. He depicts museum visitors as enjoying an imagined access to the knowledge locked within the carved glyphs of the *pedra del sol*. Visitors not only daydream about the Aztec ingenuity that must have produced such an artistic feat, but they also partake

³ I theorize my conceptualization of the state more fully in chapter three.

of that greatness as they imagine themselves unlocking the monolith's secrets in order to predict the earth's movements as the ancients once did. The fantastic contemplation of the *piedra del sol* creates another imagined continuity between the visitor and the ancient Aztecs. Not only does the *piedra del sol* attest to the nation's origins within the Aztec civilization, but it also compels the visitor to actively envision himself as a direct descendant of that civilization. The rationale of the museum with respect to its husbandry over the country's cultural heritage was that to truly feel the Aztec legacy as one's own was to actively embrace the Mexican nation as *la patria*.

While museum visitors partook of the nation's glory as they strolled through its galleries, few observers could suspect that artifacts such as the *piedra del sol* (fig. 1) had been selected and historically "enhanced" to represent the desired image of the nation. By the time the post-revolutionary state was sponsoring the National Museum's role in promoting nationhood, almost all memory of the *piedra del sol's* ominous beginnings had been erased. The direct lineage the museum drew between the ancient past and the modern present made no mention of the fear that the *piedra del sol* had once aroused among early Creoles and Spaniards. There was no need to disrupt the quiet contemplation of visitors by mentioning that the monolith was once removed from public sight as a result of its believed negative influence. The National Museum's presentation of the artifact as the crown jewel of its Monolith Gallery had successfully erased the *piedra del sol's* early history. The monolith's veneration as the epitome of Aztec civilization successfully replaced earlier artifacts that had not been as effective in communicating national glory. Rosa Isidica, a visitor of the early National Museum in 1827, laments, "Tales son los muñecos de trapo, las minas y los pajaritos de cera, cuyas

obras estarían mejor en una mesa del portal de Mercaderes o en un nacimiento de nochebuena, que no en Gabinete de Historia o Museo” (193). Archaeological artifacts such as the *pedra del sol* replaced mundane objects exhibited in the museum that according to bourgeois visitors such as Isidica, presented a disgraceful image of the nation. However, archaeological artifacts also became of prime importance in projecting an image of the nation in that they represented tangible or material evidence for claiming precisely that image. The artifact represents irrefutable testimony to the claims of national glory that not only the museum makes, but that the state also encourages in its efforts to construct hegemony. As the National Museum made every effort to glorify the nation’s past, it also carefully selected the elements that would weave the nation’s claims of a modern present.

Selecting those elements also meant excluding certain artifacts from the construction of the national patrimony. Although *Coatlicue* was disinterred the same year as the *pedra del sol*, the discomfort provoked by her discovery only increased in the following decades. With a height of 2.52 meters, the Aztec earth goddess of life and death bears two contiguous serpent heads with protruding tongues. Her name, meaning “she of the skirt of serpents” in Nahuatl, describes the skirt she wears made from the bodies of serpents interlaced with tiger claws. She bears a severed and bleeding torso and has eagle claws for feet on which there are eyes. Her belt is made of serpent skin with a human head as a pendant while over her chest she wears a necklace laced together with severed human hands and hearts. At the base is a god squatting which can be interpreted either as Mictlantecutli, the god of death, or as Tlaloc, the god of rain.

Although her discovery proved offensive to the sensibilities of Spaniards and Creoles, she was taken to the patio of the Real y Pontificia Universidad where she was discretely placed out of sight in a dark corner. Despite having brought *Coatlicue* to the University as an ancient artifact to be examined, professors and clerics quickly disqualified her as the shameful product of a barbarous civilization. But *Coatlicue's* monstrous appearance (fig. 2) was not the only trouble the monolith brought upon the University. In a letter written in 1805 Bishop Benito María Moxó y Francoly describes the complications caused by *Coatlicue's* presence:

La estatua se colocó [...] en uno de los ángulos del espacioso patio de la Universidad en donde permaneció en pié por algún tiempo, pero al fin fue preciso sepultarla otra vez [...], por un motivo que nadie había previsto. Los indios, que miran con tan estúpida indiferencia todos los monumentos de las artes europeas, acudían con inquieta curiosidad a contemplar su famosa estatua. Se pensó al principio que no se movían en esto por otro incentivo que por el amor nacional, propio no menos de los pueblos salvajes que de los civilizados, y por la complacencia de contemplar una de las obras más insignes de sus ascendientes, que veían apreciada hasta por los cultos españoles. Sin embargo, se sospechó luego, que en sus frecuentes visitas había algún secreto motivo religioso. Fué pues indispensable prohibirles absolutamente la entrada; pero su fanático entusiasmo y su increíble astucia burlaron del todo ésta providencia. Espiaban los momentos en que el patio estaba sin gente, en particular por la tarde, cuando al concluirse las lecciones académicas se cierran a una todas las aulas. Entonces, aprovechándose del silencio que reina en la morada de las Musas, salían de sus atalayas é iban apresuradamente a adorar a su diosa Teoyaomiqui. Mil veces, volviendo los vedeles de fuera de casa y atravesando el patio para ir á sus viviendas, sorprendieron a los indios, unos puestos de rodillas, otros postrados [...] delante de aquella estatua, y teniendo en las manos velas encendidas o alguna de las varias ofrendas que sus mayores acostumbraban presentar á los ídolos. Y esto hecho, observado después con mucho cuidado por personas graves y doctas [...], obligó á tomar, como hemos dicho, la resolución de meter nuevamente dentro del suelo la expresada estatua” (qtd. in Matos Moctezuma 39).

As Moxó y Francoly describes, *Coatlicue's* presence in the University attracted the attention of the local Indian population who viewed her as an object of adoration. The Indians' veneration of this Aztec deity was worrisome for a number of reasons. First, with the Spanish Inquisition still raging in Mexico, *Coatlicue* represented an affront to the Church. After almost three hundred years of Inquisition in Mexico and a campaign for the extirpation of idolatry during that period, the persistence of Indian religion was viewed as a problem that needed to be handled at the source. Though only a few decades later that would have translated into the destruction of objects deemed idolatrous, the

liberal currents of the 19th century dictated another solution: the monolith was reburied to put an end to the resurgence of idolatry. A second reason for the problem with *Coatlicue* was also the increasing dissatisfaction with Spain that would erupt in the independence movement only a few years later. The Indians' encounter with their pre-Conquest past, only contributed to the political instability that was already brewing in the years after *Coatlicue's* discovery; the act of venerating *Coatlicue* was representative of the Indians' practice of cultural citizenship. The adoration of *Coatlicue* was subversive and undermined the Creole nation which was already in the making. Though the local Indians attempted to assert their cultural citizenship through their re-appropriation of *Coatlicue*, this endeavor was quickly truncated. This made of *Coatlicue* and the archaeological artifact more generally, a limited cultural strategy for the negotiation of cultural citizenship. In the case of these Indians, there was no cultural citizenship to negotiate once *Coatlicue* was pulled from public view. These Indians would need to look to another set of artifacts or cultural strategies for their assertion of cultural citizenship. And lastly, the Indians were viewed as venerating the wrong artifact or sacred asset. Rather than losing themselves in the silent contemplation of European sculptures or even the *pedra del sol*, the Indians were adoring a monstrous symbol of Indian savagery. The problem was not that they were admiring an Indian artifact *per se*. Spaniards and Creoles were after all venerating their own deity in the *pedra del sol's* location on the wall of the Metropolitan Cathedral. The issue with *Coatlicue* was that in the same way that the *pedra del sol* had come to symbolize the grand civilization of the ancient "Mexicans," *Coatlicue* became a shameful reminder of the darker side of that grand civilization.

The monolith was briefly pulled from the shadows a few years later at the request of Alexander von Humboldt. Surprised that such a well preserved artifact had been reburied, von Humboldt asked why this had been done. According to Moctezuma Matos, the university professors replied to him that as to not, “oponer el ídolo a la juventud mejicana” (41). As soon as the baron finished his studies and sketches of the monolith, *Coatlicue* was quickly returned to the site where she had been buried. The monolith’s disturbing features and status as a pagan idol were considered inappropriate to publicly exhibit, but these same features made *Coatlicue* an object of scientific curiosity for von Humboldt. With the triumph of the Mexican independence movement in 1821, the National Museum was soon established. The archaeologist Ignacio Bernal narrates the next phase of *Coatlicue*’s fate: “Así permanece hasta 1824, cuando Bullock la ve después de su tercera y última exhumación, aunque Mayer afirma que esto ocurrió en 1821. Sin embargo, no por eso quedó a la vista del público, sino que, en consideración más bien de motivos nacionalistas, fue colocada en la esquina de un corredor, pero rodeada de tablas y muebles viejos, donde prácticamente quedó sepultada” (78). Although she was housed within the museum soon after its creation, *Coatlicue* remained out of sight and was symbolically reburied once again. The abrupt change in her location around 1890 to the patio of the University which initially housed the National Museum, continued to reflect the problem of what to do with *Coatlicue*. Though she was ultimately placed in full view, she was far from representative of the nation’s glorious past.

While *Coatlicue*’s merits continued to be debated through the end of the 19th century, it was not until after the end of the Mexican Revolution that a thorough re-

evaluation of the pre-Columbian past brought about another view of the controversial monolith. As scholars began to re-write Mexican history, *Coatlicue* took on new significance in relation to both the ideology of mestizaje and in art history. The publication of Manuel Gamio's *Forjando Patria* (1916) differed from earlier theories on mestizaje in its celebration of indigenous cultural contributions. Gamio concluded that, "To incorporate the Indian let us not try to 'Europeanize' him all at once: to the contrary, let us 'Indianize' him a bit, to present to him our civilization already diluted with his own, so that he will not find [it] exotic, cruel, bitter, and incomprehensible. Naturally, we should not exaggerate to a ridiculous degree our closeness with the Indian" (qtd. in Saldaña-Portillo, "Revolutionary Imagination" 206). However, *Coatlicue* initially proved difficult to reconcile even within Gamio's indianized version of mestizaje. In an attempt to reappraise Indian culture, Gamio devised an experiment to illustrate the relativity of artistic taste. He showed various photographs of a set of pre-Columbian sculptures and artifacts to art lovers who appreciated those pieces closest to the European ideal, "but amongst those to which they were indifferent or repulsed was the Goddess of Death, Mictlantecutli, and the Goddess with the skirt of snakes, Coatlicue" (Toscano 5). However, the repulsion toward certain Aztec artifacts began to change as interest in Mexico's pre-Columbian past began to grow in the following decades. Jean Franco describes this interest as one growing "not only among the muralists but also thanks to the arrival of Europeans searching for alternatives to what they saw as the deceptive rationalism inherited from the Enlightenment" ("Return of Coatlicue" 211). But despite the revisionism of the pre-Columbian past, *Coatlicue* was interpreted as either a horrific manifestation of ancient Aztec domination or as a

magnificent antithesis of Western cultural production. In both instances, *Coatlicue* was nonetheless conceptualized as a figure that shattered the ideal of Greek perfection and the rational order of Western civilization. *Coatlicue* was imagined as either occupying a place below or beyond Western civilization, but could not be reconciled within the boundaries of those cultural parameters in the same way that *la piedra del sol* had eventually been negotiated.

Despite the artistic and philosophical currents that attempted to re-conceptualize controversial figures such as *Coatlicue*, the National Museum's treatment of the Aztec deity did little to reflect those changes. In a late 19th century photograph by Abel Briquet of the museum's Monolith Gallery, *Coatlicue* can be observed in the far left wall of the gallery (fig. 3). Although her positioning is an improvement from the dark corner in which she was hidden soon after her discovery, she is by no means the star of this gallery. She appears in the middle of this photograph more by Briquet's intent to capture as much of the gallery in a single frame than by an attempt to photograph a national icon. The main attraction is still the *piedra del sol* as it occupies the center wall and becomes the first object that comes into view as visitors enter the gallery. All of the other smaller stone artifacts are arranged around the *piedra del sol* as afterthoughts. Although *Coatlicue's* sheer size makes it difficult to view her in this photograph as an afterthought, she is by no means this exhibition's attraction. She occupies a separate wall from the *piedra del sol* as she is clearly hidden from main entrance view. Once again, *Coatlicue* is overshadowed by the *piedra del sol's* presence as evidence of a glorious national identity. She is certainly no longer forgotten considering the inscription concerning her discovery at the base of her pedestal. However, the National Museum

does not re-baptize her as a symbol of national identity. She is simply viewed as a representation of the mystical and enigmatic facet of Aztec civilization, while the *pedra del sol* continues to be revered as the face of Mexico's national identity.

A more thorough re-conceptualization of *Coatlicue* would come in the decades after the post-revolutionary period. She gained new political significance in 1968 when the killing of demonstrating students at Tlatelolco was associated with the horror that *Coatlicue* represented. In the 1980s, she would become an icon for feminist Chicana subjectivity and as Gloria Anzaldúa has described her, "the consuming internal whirlwind, the symbol of the underground aspects of the psyche" (27). Although *Coatlicue*, "the most hallucinating sculpture conceived by the Indian mind" as Salvador Toscano (277) has described her, would later represent in her repetitive themes of death and sacrifice a series of disparate causes, it was perhaps as a result of that same impenetrability that centuries before had perturbed colonial sensibilities and that later failed to find a place within the post-revolutionary state's nationalist discourse.

Though *Coatlicue* and the *pedra del sol* are illustrative of the role archaeological artifacts play in constructing national identity, they also show that a number of narratives were able to find a place within the chiseled ridges of these monoliths. More than just the earth goddess of life and death and beyond a stone representing Mexica cosmogony, the popular representations of *Coatlicue* and the *pedra del sol* are products of the various discourses that attempted to make sense of the pre-Columbian past. But in trying to unlock the secrets of the ancients, the political and scientific discourses that formed around these artifacts were far more telling of their time. The mindset with which these artifacts were approached actively shaped both their interpretation and their

place within the nationalist imaginary. It was essentially the researchers, scientists and curators who finished weaving a story, whose beginning they could only imagine, around these artifacts.

Catálogo del Salón Secreto: A Curator's Fixation

Although artifacts such as the *pedra del sol* were better at singing national glory than others, some artifacts posed a serious challenge to the National Museum. This is the case that Ramon Mena documents in his 1926 publication of *Catálogo del Salón Secreto (culto al falo)*⁴. He was head of the National Museum's Department of Archaeology when he decided to catalog those objects in the museum's collection that he believed to constitute phallic artifacts. Mena's analysis is a documentation of over one hundred objects belonging to different Mexican indigenous groups, but especially Nahua or Aztec⁵. These objects range from stone and clay figures of phalluses to Nahua deities Mena believed to be representative of the phallic. His study of the phallic cult shows how the National Museum conceptualized and explained the existence of these figures within the ancient origins of the nation. An analysis of Mena's catalog reveals the tension these objects create within the museum's nationalist narrative as well as the fascination they stir in researchers such as Mena (fig. 4).

⁴ The 1926 publication was the second edition of the *Catálogo*, which included additional notes and corrections by the author. The first edition was published in 1923 and was of limited circulation.

⁵ Although I have been using the term "Aztec" throughout the chapter, in this subsection I will use the term "Nahua" to refer to the civilizations of central Mexico. Mena employs the term "Nahua" in his book to refer to the larger ethnic group of which the Aztecs formed part. However, his preoccupation with justifying the idea that the phallic cult originated from a source external to the Nahuas, suggests that he is actually concerned about presenting an image of the Aztecs, the dominant Nahua group.

The catalog begins with a justification for the documentation of such a peculiar collection of artifacts. In the first set of lines to the opening paragraph, Mena immediately offers an explanation for the need to embark on this project:

De las ricas y variadas colecciones del Departamento de Arqueología del Museo Nacional, he venido retirando aquellos ejemplares absolutamente fálicos, y encontrándome a la fecha con buen número de objetos de casi todos los grupos raciales del país, consulté al C. Director, Don Luis Castillo Ledón, qué destino habría de darse a las piezas que, ya por sus caracteres, ya por su número, integraban Colección interesante a los estudiosos (3).

He explains that not only has he removed these phallic artifacts from the museum's main collections, but he has also found the need to study them given their number and representation of indigenous groups. He admits that despite their absolutely phallic character, these artifacts represent nonetheless an attractive study. But why meticulously catalog artifacts that offered an uncomfortable image of Nahua cosmogony? Why not simply hide them in a dark corner of the museum in the same way that the National Museum had dealt with *Coatlicue* just a few decades earlier?

In order to more fully understand Mena's conceptualization of phallic artifacts, I find it useful to briefly turn to Foucault's notion of a "technology of sex."⁶ In *The History of Sexuality vol. 1*, Foucault defines a "technology of sex" as "a set of techniques for maximizing life" that have been developed and implemented by the bourgeoisie since the end of the eighteenth century to perpetuate its class survival and continued hegemony (116). Those techniques involved the construction of cultural discourses about privileged objects of knowledge. While the child and female bodies are often sexualized in the practice of these techniques, I argue that the artifact is another

⁶ My intention here is not to engage in a detailed discussion of Foucault's "technology of sex," but rather to build off of this idea to further my analysis of Mena's construction of the degenerate Indian. While I have discussed the degenerate Indian in chapter 1, in this section I aim to show how the processes of the "technology of sex" can help us frame the phallic artifacts of the *Catálogo del Salón Secreto* within Mexico's post-revolutionary discourse on nationhood.

body that can be sexualized within the bounds of bourgeois sensibility. In the case of the phallic artifacts located within the National Museum, Mena's collection and privatization of access to the artifacts constitutes their sexualization. His perception that the phallic sculptures are offensive to the bourgeois gaze in itself sexualizes the figure of the Indian. It is important to note that Mena not only sexualizes the cold phallic stones, but also the Indian body through its association with the production of these artifacts; the glorious ancient Indian is sexualized into the same degenerate Indian which the post-revolutionary nationalist discourse cannot reconcile with the practice of modern citizenship. Whether that degenerate Indian is the artist producing the phallic artifact or the inspiration for its production, his body does not correspond to the mythic Indian represented within the National Museum. The perceived sexual behavior and practice which Mena reads within the hidden stone phalluses of the *Salón Secreto* also constitutes the production of the curator's own sexuality. Teresa de Lauretis summarizes Foucault's analysis of this bourgeois paradox in explaining that, "the prohibitions and regulations pertaining to sexual behaviors, whether spoken by religious, legal, or scientific authorities, far from constraining or repressing sexuality, have on the contrary produced it..." (12). The act of hiding these phallic artifacts in a secret chamber, suppressing these figures from public view, heightens the simultaneous sexualization of the select bourgeois men allowed to access these collections. As I will show later in this section, the *Salón Secreto* engaged the viewer in the production of sexual knowledge about the self as well as the archaeological objects themselves. In the length of this section I will engage in a detailed analysis of the *Catálogo del Salón Secreto* and its

place within the National Museum to explore the sexualized Indian as another dimension of the degenerate Indian.

Although Mena does not offer many answers regarding his interest in these phallic artifacts, he provides some peculiar observations regarding their origin. With respect to the Nahuas, Mena explains:

Los nahuas, en su peregrinación, al contacto con aquéllos, y luego por convivencia, en sus fronteras, adoptaron deidades fálicas introduciéndolas en su panteón; pero con mentalidad más alta que sus vecinos, fundieron en el culto sus ideas cosmogónicas, anticipadas siglos a la genial teoría de Laplace. Castos eran los nahuas, y testimonio dan sus antiguas esculturas, sus libros y sus mapas; no fue sino el contacto con tarascos, totonacos y huastecos, lo que pudo arrojarlos al desenfreno y a la misma sodomía. ¿No dice de los segundos Bernal Díaz que eran ‘grandes putos’? Deificaron los más lascivos animales, el mono y el coyote (*Iyeiscus latrans*) entre otros... (4).

In discussing how the Nahuas developed a phallic cult, Mena is quick to point to external sources as the origin. Although they adopted the cult from their contact with other peoples, he explains that the Nahuas were much better than their neighbors at integrating deities, although phallic, within their cosmogony. They essentially improved on these ideas despite the Nahuas being an inherently chaste people, as he explains. Mena attempts to prove this by pointing to Nahua cultural production as evidence although he fails to provide any concrete citations to strengthen his argument. He claims that it was their contact with other groups which launched the Nahuas into sexual degeneracy. Although Mena attempts to authorize his argument by citing Díaz del Castillo, it becomes clear that the Nahuas, the origin of the Mexican nation, are not responsible for creating this phallic cult. According to Mena, they are simply responsible for improving upon the ideas of other indigenous peoples using the same advanced minds that produced the most spectacular cosmogony within pre-Columbian Mexico. It is interesting to note Mena's insistence on presenting the Nahuas as a great people while shifting blame for the existence of these phallic artifacts on other indigenous groups.

Within this catalog, Mena creates an opportunity to redeem the Nahuas of any sin his readers and museum visitors may read in these artifacts. He essentially attempts to extract “knowledge” supporting the nation’s grand past from these phallic figures.

Mena continues his introductory essay to the catalog by describing all of the phallic figures and symbols he has observed in the museum’s collections. But aside from attempting to turn what he calls the “phallic cult” into an apology for its existence within Nahua culture, he also tries to resolve an old debate. Of the existence of venereal diseases in the Americas, Mena argues that: “El rito MOTEPULISO *parece resuelve* la existencia de la sífilis precolombina en América, por lo menos en México; pues a los dioses de la veintena de la fiesta pedían los devotos alivio de las *bubas*, la *sarna* y la *podredumbre* del miembro, haciendo sacrificios sajándose el pene, por virtud o por reducirse la impotencia” (4). In this way Mena “resolves” the debate regarding the American origin of venereal diseases claiming that he has found evidence for its existence in the phallic artifacts forming part of the Salón Secreto. Despite his attempt at the beginning of the essay to preserve the grand image of Nahua culture that the National Museum has tried to construct since its founding, Mena reads in these artifacts evidence of disease. Although he does not distinguish between indigenous groups when making this assessment, this turns out to be a problematic reading for the museum’s nationalist narrative. Rather than offering a pristine image of the nation’s forefathers, Mena disrupts this picture by conjuring visions of festering lesions and uncontrollable fever. This image reveals the tension caused by the representation of the sexualized Indian within the museum. In the same way that *Coatlicue* proved disturbing because she was a vivid reminder of human sacrifice within Aztec culture, these phallic artifacts

inevitably produce discomfort in their representation of sex and sensuality in ancient Mexico.

Mena's catalog reveals the difficulty of making the representation of sexual practice among Mexico's ancient Indians permissible within post-revolutionary Mexico. The National Museum's responsibility of presenting a grand image of the nation's origins involved smoothing the rough edges produced by the ghosts of human sacrifice and sodomy. It was the museum's duty to help the visitor overcome the notion of Indian savagery. Though Mena argues that the Nahuas had no part in these practices, he eventually condemns Mexico's ancient Indians through his "evidence" for venereal diseases. Mena himself is unable to overcome the image of the degenerate Indian that his museum is supposed to deconstruct within the parameters of a nationalist discourse. José Vasconcelos reflects in *Estética* on the Indian problem to which Mena is alluding:

Huerfanía de vates y de reformadores espirituales, se deja llevar de la sensualidad sin fuerza y rápidamente se desintegra sin honra y sin historia, levantando por mausoleo la calzada de los falos gigantescos. Allí donde el egipcio ponía la valla de las esfinges misteriosas a la entrada de los grandes templos, el maya levantó el símbolo de la generación simplemente humana y no como sostén de un futuro, sino como emblema del estéril placer vicioso (38).

Similarly to the way in which Vasconcelos reads these artifacts, specifically the giant phalluses as evidence of an immoral degeneracy, Mena is at times unable to apologize for their existence. As much as Mena attempts to generate a more favorable reading, at least for the Nahuas, of these artifacts within the nationalist narrative, he is often unable to see in these objects anything other than "el estéril placer vicioso." The artifacts' exhibition of sexual practice and worship among ancient Indians represents for Mena nothing more than the degenerate pleasure of sex. For the curator, sexual practice in the ancient world for any purpose other than reproduction is quickly equated with savagery and degeneracy.

In this way the existence of a *Salón Secreto* is more telling of Mena's own ideas regarding pre-Columbian Mexico and sexuality than it is about ancient Indians. Felipe Solís Olguín, the director of Mexico's Museum of Anthropology until 2009, suggests that an actual salon exhibiting these phallic artifacts did exist in the National Museum (fig. 5). Instead of hiding these phallic artifacts in a dark corner of the museum and away from all public view, he adds that the *Salón Secreto* was probably, if it existed, limited to the gaze of male bourgeois visitors. Of Mena's methodology, Solís observes:

Sin embargo, Mena incluyó más de una docena de imágenes de Xochipilli y otras múltiples figuras con el pene y los testículos a la vista, de las cuales no hemos detectado en la colección actual, lo cual nos hace sospechar una obsesiva fijación del licenciado Mena: a las conocidas esculturas de los ancianos sembradores de la cultura huasteca, de plano los identifica como 'masturbadores'; los relieves de serpientes, de manera fácil y directa, los considera 'elementos fálicos'; la urna que define como un 'hermafrodita' es indudablemente una figura apócrifa" (63).

These observations suggest that Mena was ascribing his own preconceptions to the collection of the *Salón Secreto* and that the collection itself tells us more about Mena than it does about the people who produced those artifacts. Rather than generating "scientific" knowledge, these artifacts appear to have fed the voyeuristic, sexual hunger of bourgeois male visitors seeking a different kind of knowledge. While some ancient artifacts were used as the writing blocks for a national identity, other artifacts were placed at the service of more unwholesome projects. This is not to say that the post-revolutionary state's national identity project was particularly wholesome, but Mena and his *Salón Secreto* debased the figure of the Indian in a way that had not been documented in the history of the Museo Nacional. Mena and his male bourgeois visitors eroticized pre-Columbian Indians as they sought to write their own voyeuristic pleasure on the surfaces of these ancient artifacts. The museum as an institution of pleasure had already existed in the Naples Museum in Italy where a similar salon had been exhibited. The salon, whose entrance was strictly prohibited to women and children, featured

Pompeian mural fragments picturing erotic scenes and clay pots and figures exalting masculine vigor (ibid). It is possible that Mena could have had knowledge of this exhibition and may have wanted to offer a “Mexican” version of the same.⁷

The case of the Salón Secreto shows how ancient artifacts served as a canvas for the narration of an occult version of the nation’s past. These particular artifacts appear to narrate a national history that reifies the judgments made by early Spanish chroniclers regarding the cultural practices of Indians. Solís argues that, “Sin ningún juicio crítico, el licenciado Mena acepta de manera literal las patrañas que los conquistadores españoles escribieron acerca de las costumbres sexuales de los nativos, particularmente los actos contra natura, infamias que justificaron las atrocidades cometidas contra los nativos del Nuevo Mundo” (62). Mena’s alternate narration of the nation’s past does little to further the image of the nation that the *piedra del sol* evokes. These conflicting versions of the nation’s origins reflect the National Museum’s, as well as the state’s, inability to reconcile the image of the degenerate Indian with that of the brave Aztec warrior-king. These discourses regarding the place of the Indian within the national narrative are disputed not only by the post-revolutionary state’s policies toward them, but also within the museum’s interpretation of pre-Columbian cultural production.

⁷ Solís surmises that this Salón Secreto was probably shut down soon after opening its doors due to the scandal it must have provoked among conservative high society. He makes this conjecture based more by inference than concrete documentation. Very little primary documentation exists on the Salón Secreto and even less has been written about it by scholars. Solís confirms its existence by a set of blueprints of the room that are archived at the Museum of Anthropology and as well as a document describing one of the artifacts exhibited in the collection. It is also interesting to note that in the only study of the collection that I have found, Solís’ brief four page article published in a recent edition of *Arqueología Mexicana*, the author provides no bibliographical information regarding the few primary documents pertaining to the Salón Secreto. I suspect that this reluctance to provide details could be a way of discouraging scholarly production regarding this embarrassing episode of both museum and national history; I find it difficult to separate Solís and *AM* from their nationalist agenda.

Although Mena's collection does little to further the grand national narrative that the *pedra del sol* helps narrate, it nonetheless sheds light on the process of writing the stories that have shaped the national patrimony. While the spokesmen of the post-revolutionary state called for the revitalization of a virile Mexican cultural production, this call must not be conflated with the sudden appearance of the *Catálogo del Salón Secreto*. Francisco Monterde's call for a virile Mexican literature and with it a virile Mexicanness, does not translate into the glorification of ancient phallic sculpture. Monterde's call for virility is a petition for the creation of a Mexican cultural production effective enough to evoke the spirit of Mexicanness among the country's heterogeneous citizenry. For Monterde and the post-revolutionary state, virility is equated with the achievement of a strong Mexican nation-state where order and progress are at the core of its foundation. The phallic, particularly in the context of ancient Mexico, is interpreted as not only a vulgar display of sexual practice, but also as a symbol of the degenerate Indian. The peculiar case of the stone phalluses also shows that in the same way that *Coatlicue* proved difficult to integrate into the grand national narrative, these phallic objects also failed to attain a dignified position within Mena's museum. Artifacts such as *Coatlicue* and the phallic objects were carefully guarded not because of their status as sacred assets, but rather due to the need to restrict their circulation. The pre-Columbian human body and sexuality were topics that appeared to compromise the National Museum's vision of the glorified pre-Columbian Indian. Given the danger these artifacts posed to the production of an official version of history, these objects were ultimately kept out of public reach so as to not deflate the fantastic vision of the nation that was so skillfully being woven in the other galleries of the National Museum.

Rethinking the Museum and its Narratives

Through the use of pre-Columbian artifacts and the archaeological narratives that the National Museum helped promote, the post-revolutionary state found precisely the image of national identity it sought to "mexicanize" the nation. However, the terms on which that national identity would be adopted can be observed within the narratives written around major artifacts such as the *pedra del sol*, *Coatlicue* and the *Salón Secreto*. These artifacts show that Mexicanness as a national identity, although premised on the existence of a great Aztec Empire, faced the challenge of overcoming notions of savagery and degeneracy associated with the Indian. The conflicting ideas that had been generated for centuries regarding the Indian battled their tensions on the stone and clay surfaces of these artifacts. While the *pedra del sol* was quickly embraced as the face of Mexicanness, *Coatlicue* and the "phallic" artifacts found in the *Salón Secreto* were read as representatives of the darker, irreconcilable side of the Aztec Empire. Those objects intended to serve as irrefutable evidence for the existence of a great ancient Mexican nation, were the same objects that attested to the difficulties of integrating the Indian into the modern Mexican nation.

As a cultural strategy utilized by the state for the construction of modern nationhood, the National Museum was configured as an elite cultural institution. While the museum was greatly responsible for generating an integrating image of Mexicanness, it did little to reach beyond class and race lines. Though the National Museum continuously envisioned the origins of Mexicanness, it curiously enough left out of that vision those citizens who did not already conform to the image of modern nationhood. As an institution born from the fervor of Creole nationalism, the museum

was not equipped with the resources to “nation” the masses. The museum limited any possible negotiation between official meaning and oppositional politics to the terms set by governmental projects, as the case of *Coatlicue* shows. The constant condemnation of the contemporary Indian, whether through the pages of *Los de abajo* or *La raza cósmica*, was a point of tension that needed to be re-negotiated in post-revolutionary Mexico. It would take another cultural strategy, one premised on a more accessible method of visual narration, to bring about an Indian figure and with it a Mexican nation that could be accessed by the people of Mexico.

III. Will the Real Cuauhtémoc Please Stand Up?: The Awakening of Many Cuauhtémocs

El sentido de toda escultura no radica en su cualidad mimética, o en su capacidad para imitar la carne viva, sino en su poder para encarnar ideas y actitudes. - Sergei Eisenstein cited in "La historia en bronce" (81)

The experience of walking down the vast lawn of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. is a vivid reminder of the monument's discrete ability to tout the values of Washingtonian conservatism. *Rendition* (2007), a film exploring the controversial exercise of rendition in the post-9/11 era, narrates the impenetrability of political power through the cold and stoic marble of Washington's most iconic monuments. The Lincoln Memorial appears in the near horizon as Corrine Whitman, the Central Intelligence Agency director played by Meryl Streep, orders her agents to kidnap and torture an Egyptian-born U.S. resident on his flight back from a chemical engineering conference. In the following scenes we see an airplane "disappear" as it flies past the Washington Monument and is seemingly absorbed by the tall obelisk, never to emerge again. In a later scene his devastated American wife, a pregnant Reese Witherspoon, falls to her knees in tears before the imposing dome of the Capitol building as it appears through the wall-sized windowpane of the House minority building. Her devastation is the result of a series of unabated pleas she makes to the Central Intelligence Agency director herself, who denies any knowledge of the case, and to the deaf Congressmen she seeks for help in returning her innocent husband. Though uneasily silent, in each of these scenes the iconic monuments of Washington emerge in the background as oppressive figures representative of unfulfilled Constitutional guarantees. The triangle of power constructed by these three iconic monuments (Lincoln

Memorial, Washington Monument and Capitol Building) simultaneously incarnates the excesses of a conservative government while representing the incorruptibility of the promises made by the Constitution. The stoic monuments are then both tools of the indiscriminant abuse of governmental power as well as careful listeners and witnesses to the wishes and prayers of all passersby.

Though seemingly inanimate bodies gracing the most emblematic niches of the city, monuments and the relationship established between them is often a reflection of the urban setting imagined by the architects of power. As *Rendition* so skillfully portrays, Washington, D.C.'s Haussmann-inspired downtown can be experienced through its monuments as both a rational city of open spaces and wide boulevards as well as an asphyxiating reflection of the power structures that often limit the exercise of citizenship. Monuments are the pages of the storybook of the city and are as essential to the constitution of urban space as the complex arteries of freeways and the labyrinth of sewage pipes. These colossal sculptures narrate multilayered stories which are read and enacted before the gaze of all passersby willing to listen. Their imposing size is meant to maintain alive the official memory of a specific historical event or character from the pages of the city's history.

Similar to the archaeological artifacts exhibited within the National Museum, the monuments of the city depict history in motion. The marble and bronze of these figures constitute the historical infrastructure which supports the state's own interpretation of national history. Mexico City's El Paseo de la Reforma represents one of the best examples of how the monument is called upon to perform the state's official history. The long spinal column of the city was developed by Porfirio Díaz during his second

administration (1887) through the erection of a number of monuments. The state's ideological invention of history was depicted through the Paseo de la Reforma's progressive chain of events beginning with the glorious indigenous past, the "discovery" of the Americas, the War of Independence, and culminating with the Reform Movement. The permanent monumentalization of the nation's most prominent historical actors was intended to emblazon the citizenry's consciousness with a heroic and progressive image of the nation. From the serene statue of Christopher Columbus to the pious figure of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, each monument was endowed with the task of enacting the glories of the nation. The historical narrative constructed by the chain of public sculptures gave way to the nation's most important period: the contemporary *pax mexicana*, facilitated by Díaz himself.

Although the seemingly infinite chain of statues culminates with the Independence Monument, most commonly referred to as "El Angel," the nation's *pax mexicana* is most contradictorily represented within the bellicose figure of Cuauhtémoc. The last Aztec emperor's cold bronze embodies both the nation's appropriation of a grand pre-Hispanic past exhibited through the prestige of an archaeological baggage as well as the state's indigenismo, a kind of bandage for the open wounds of the national body. The Cuauhtémoc Monument was intended to not only represent the heroism of one of the nation's founding fathers, but also to publicly tout the supposed end of the racism and injustices suffered by the country's large, present-day Indian population. However, the Porfirian state appeared to enter a deep contradiction as it attempted to rid the capital city free of any flesh and blood Indian presence. How could the Porfirian state champion the triumph of *pax mexicana* while actually continuing to wage war

against the figure of the degenerate Indian and with it its own Indian population? Why then would a monument to an Indian be erected in a city modeled in intent and aesthetics after the modern cities of Europe?

Despite the many questions raised by the strange erection of an Indian hero among a long series of European and mestizo figures, the Cuauhtémoc Monument takes on new significance during the post-revolutionary period. It is essential to begin a discussion of Cuauhtémoc with the construction of the ideal city as well as the erection of his monument in 1887 since it is during this time period that the last Aztec emperor is for the first time brought to life through a clear set of aesthetic and moral characterizations. The post-revolutionary government draws from the 1887 monument's romantic representation of the Indian to inform the nationalist discourse on race. The new post-revolutionary era brings with it not only a new Constitution, but also a new ideology regarding the embodiment and exercise of citizenship. The new state's discourse on mestizaje as the panacea for the fractured national family once again brings into question where the Indian is to be located within that family. How can Cuauhtémoc be venerated as a "benemérito de la nación" if the foundation of the nation is the mestizo, the whole rather than its fragments? What does the continued presence of the Indian within both the material and imaginary pantheon of the nation suggest about his role within the nation-building project? Would Mexico's Indian population ultimately embrace the state-endorsed version of Cuauhtémoc, presumably their ancient ancestor?

The role of Cuauhtémoc and his status as national hero take on new dimensions when the remains of the last Aztec emperor are "found" by a rural farmer in Ixcateopan, Guerrero. The sudden "embodiment" of Cuauhtémoc is telling of the monument's ability

to encourage the performance of nationhood even beyond the confines of Mexico City. While the full consequences of this supposed discovery do not take effect until the 1940s, it is crucial to also ground this case within the discourse of the post-revolutionary period whose grip continued to manifest in later decades. The possibilities for grassroots nationhood represented by the new found Cuauhtémoc highlights the sharp break from the post-revolutionary government's romantic image of Cuauhtémoc as the predecessor of a paternalistic and oppressive state. Although the remains of other colonial actors have been claimed as found throughout the 20th century, the peculiar disinterment of the Aztec hero represents the monument's unique ability to be appropriated and re-written at a grassroots level; in this case, the monument's presence within the nationalist imaginary ultimately evolves into the materialization of a body taking the place of the first. Though the monument is erected by the state, it is often reified with intimate meaning by those citizens engaging with either the physical statue or its icon. In this sense, the figure of Cuauhtémoc becomes a relic which is first summoned as a monument by the Porfirian government to incarnate national heroism and decades later by rural *campesinos* in the shape of a fake tomb to embody their own conceptualization of imagined community. The case of Cuauhtémoc illustrates the process by which common citizens internalize nationalism on their own terms and beyond the dictates of the state. The Cuauhtémoc artifact, specifically his fake tomb, functions as a token for the mediation cultural citizenship between common citizens and the Mexican state. Cuauhtémoc's evolutionary embodiments ultimately show how notions of state and nationhood fluctuated both during the post-revolutionary period as well as in the populist period of the 1940s. But more than showing how these created artifacts change

in meaning as they are appropriated by different groups, a study of the Cuauhtémoc relics reveals the possibilities for political negotiation or cultural citizenship both within and beyond the terms set by the post-revolutionary government.

Pax Mexicana: Writing the Ideal City's Cartography

The purpose of national monuments is intimately intertwined with the design and expansion of the modern city. This is a concept that Díaz understood quite well as he attempted to write the ideal modern city within the confines of Mexico City's historical downtown. The monu-*mania* that flourished alongside the construction of public parks and wealthy *colonias* was far from coincidental. The monuments that quickly sprouted around the ordered rose gardens of the Alameda Park as well as those that narrated the country's most memorable historical events along the cement-paved blocks of the Paseo de la Reforma are themselves a testament of the relationship shared between the statues and the development of the city. Like flag pins on a map, monuments mark the locations where the pedestrian gaze should stop and take in the view.

Understanding why a monument such as the Cuauhtémoc Monument acquired a privileged place within the nationalist imaginary requires a critical look at the development of the ideal modern city during the early years of the 20th century. Though many monuments, including Cuauhtémoc, and various other public spaces had been constructed during the close of the 19th century, the years leading up to the independence centenary (1910) marked the furious and heightened continuation of the expansion of modern urbanization within a city hundreds of years old. The landmarks of yesterday along with the architectural constructions of the day acquired new meaning as they

became part of not only the official historical narrative, but also part of the textbook of a civic religion.

But for that civic religion to thrive, a worthy urban landscape needed to come to life as the binding holding together the pages of a textbook. During the 1880s, the urban transformation of the city was inspired by developments made in Paris by Georges-Eugène Haussmann as well as the rise of garden cities. The new avenues of the city were modeled after the Champs Elysées, while the budding suburbs fused urban comfort with the health and beauty of gardens. Gardens were so essential to the stylization of the city that homes along Reforma were required to keep eight meters of garden around the front façade (“1910 Mexico City,” Tenorio-Trillo 83). Of the elegant western part of Mexico City during this period, it can be said that “la ciudad multiplica prodigiosamente el número de sus barrios modernos... las clases acomodadas han construido una verdadera ciudad de atractivos chalets y residencias suntuosas al poniente de la población” (Espino Barros 11). Mexico City, the western sector at least, was on its way to becoming a Mexican Paris.

However, the Parisian-aspiring city was quickly undergoing urban partition as the city expanded from every cardinal point. During the 1900s, *barrios* to the north east such as Santa María and Guerrero were home to middle-class workers while the newly developed *colonias* Morelos, Díaz de León and Valle Gómez were inhabited by proletariats. The west was imagined for the sprawling urban middle class through the construction of *colonias* such as San Rafael and Limantour. Finally, the south-west exploded as the city of wealth, style and power through the expansion of *colonias* Juárez, Cuauhtémoc, Roma and Condesa; the namesake appropriation of Indian heroes

became fashion-forward although not the presence of their contemporary kin. These were the *colonias* of the chic and modern where it was fashionable to be seen by the urban elite. It is no surprise that the spinal column of the ideal city, the Paseo de la Reforma, ran between these *colonias*. As its name suggests, the Paseo was named after the Reform Movement of 1855-67 which generated a new Constitution; drawing on its name, the new *colonias* of the Paseo were intended to reform the old city into a cosmopolitan urban space. The Paseo, surrounded by major landmarks such as the Zócalo, the Alameda and Chapultepec Park, was the pathway to follow through the Porfirian elite's ideal city. On the south side of Reforma, the ideal city ended at the Río de la Piedad and twisted back into the downtown area. On the north side, the city limits became blurred by wealthy haciendas and the countryside.

While the ideal city exploded just beyond the city limits, a less desirable city continued to sink through the cracks of destitution. The renovation of Mexico City led to the displacement of the city's large Indian and *campesino* populations. These communities were pushed into the more neglected and impoverished parts of the city. It quickly became clear, as John Lear has argued, that the design of the ideal city implied "ridding the centre of the poor [...] the Government wished to eliminate the presence of the poor so close to the corridors of power and wealth and feared the problems of health and morality" (130). In reality, two cities were contesting urban space within the city limits of Mexico City. Rather than deal directly with the city's chronic poverty, the state chose to "clean" the streets by pushing out the unsightly presence of the poor and indigent. By 1906 architect Manuel Torres Torrija keenly observed the rise of two contesting cities:

Entre el México oriental y occidental hay una diferencia marcadísima; aquel vetusto, triste, angosto, a menudo tortuoso y siempre sucio, con callejas insignificantes, plazuelas desiertas y anticuadas, puentes ruinosos, depósitos de agua pantosa y casas insignificantes de adobe, donde se albergan gentes miserables; éste por su parte, moderno, alegre, amplio, trazado a cordel, limpio, con calles cuidadosamente pavimentadas, parques frondosos, jardines y alamedas, pasajes en condiciones satisfactorias, y residencias confortables, elegantes, algunas del peor gusto pero ciertamente costosas, aseadas, importantes, y que llevan el sello indiscutible de influencia moderna (qtd. in Trentini 64).

While in Europe urban reform was considered an issue of social reform and internal security, in Mexico it was a matter of frontier expansion (Tenorio Trillo 86).

Urbanization was not only a local concern, but rather a project intended to take effect throughout the country. In this sense, urbanization was intended to spread far beyond the confines of the ideal city. The construction of the ideal city was not only conceived as a conquest over urban space, but also over chaos and backwardness.

The unchecked expansion of this civilizing panacea overflowed into the surrounding countryside as well. A slow physical blurring of the distinction between city and countryside was one of the effects of the Porfirian urban project as it aimed to expand the city limits. Mauricio Tenorio Trillo describes this process by showing that, “In an 1870s José María Velasco landscape canvas of the Valley of Mexico, we can clearly point out where the city ended and where the countryside began. By the 1910s, the Porfirian ideal city had reshaped the old city, but had colonized (through *colonias*) what was believed the uncivilised ‘emptiness’ of the countryside” (88). However, Alan Knight observes that it was really the Mexican Revolution which had initiated the merging of city and countryside by bringing Indians and provincial elites into Mexico City (“Revolutionary Project, Recalcitrant People” 233-5).

However, the unchecked expansion of the ideal city was challenged by the presence of the city’s large Indian population. As much as the Porfirian elite desired to present Mexico City as a modern, hygienic and cosmopolitan city, the Indian and

campesino populations incarnated precisely the backwardness and chaos which needed, according to that same discourse, to be eradicated from the city's façade. Although the urbanization project led to the class-based division of the city, local authorities failed to successfully isolate the city's Indian populations within the fringes of the city. They found their way back to the city center, especially around the vicinity of the ideal city, because this is where many were able to find work and conduct business. Indians were often times identifiable by their attire consisting of *calzón de manta* and *guaraches*. Influential Mexican diplomats proposed either prohibiting Indians from circulating within the city center or dressing them properly. The problem was not only that they were easily identifiable by their dress, but also that, "se conforman con una camisa y un calzón de manta para cubrir sus carnes, con unos guaraches para calzar sus pies... con una cazuela de chile, frijoles y tortillas y una medida de pulque" (qtd. in Tenorio Trillo 80). The issue of modernizing the city's Indian population was a problem that city officials were intent on addressing first as an aesthetic problem. The image of *campesino*-attired Indians transiting within the wide boulevards and ordered gardens of the ideal city created a visual displacement which delegitimized the efforts to modernize the city. Indians were supposed to belong to another time and another place, but not to the landscape of the ideal city.

As much as Mexico City attempted to join the wave of cosmopolitanism by etching order and progress within the art-nouveau marble of the new Mexican Opera House and the crisp green lawns of the Alameda Park, the Indian populations remained as a living testament of the movement's shortcomings. Expelling these Indians from the neat confines of the ideal city was not feasible since the functional needs of the city

required the service of servants and peons. To solve the dilemma, it was proposed that they be camouflaged through the use of “modern” clothing. A number of Mexican functionaries proposed, “Vistámosla [a la población indígena] y obligémosla a que use pantalones y blusa y calzado” so that “para vivir tenga que trabajar” (qtd. in Tenorio Trillo 92). In this way, the Indian problem was intended to be resolved by changing their dress and further submitting this population to the urban modes of production. Most, if not all, aesthetic remnants of the countryside and Indian culture were supposed to disappear through the adoption of Western attire. This move, coupled with the spread of hygiene programs, was intended to be the final touch to the urbanization project which had chiseled a modern and ideal city out of a crumbling colonial city.

Despite the shiny marble of the new state-sponsored buildings and the gilded splendor of the national monuments, these structures constituted an urban mirage. The architects of the ideal city were desperately chasing an image that seemed to vanish whenever an Indian face unexpectedly appeared. These architects were in reality seeking to construct a Porfirian version of *la ciudad letrada* which quickly proved impossible. Rather than looking to directly confront the social challenges posed by the Indian population, the Porfirian state spent the first decade of the 20th century playing a tug of war with them over full control of the ideal city’s contested space. While the space of the ideal city represented an opportune stage for the state’s display of modernity and cosmopolitanism, it also remained impregnated with the sights and smells of the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. While the state remained intent on preparing the ideal city for the celebrations of the centenary which would be closely observed by the international community of modern nations, the city’s Indian population continued to invade the back

streets of the historical center with their *tianguis* (markets) and with a multitude of *sombrero*- clad figures stretching in every direction of the ideal city.

From *Indigenismo* to *Mestizaje*: Redeeming the *pelado*

As the Porfirian state recognized and commemorated the country's Indian past through the restructuring of the National Museum and the erection of monuments dedicated to Indian figures such as Cuauhtémoc, it made every effort to ignore the presence of contemporary Indians. While the Indians of yesteryear were recognized as the forefathers of the Mexican nation, contemporary Indians were considered to be at most a weak shadow of their ancestors. The Porfirian elite venerated Mexico's Aztec civilization as their Greco-Roman equivalent of civilized culture. The great pyramids of Teotihuacan and the divine-inspired codices made of Aztec civilization a proud origin to claim in the cultural war for nationhood. As Octavio Paz has so shrewdly observed about the national appropriation of Aztec culture, "la relación entre aztecas y españoles no es únicamente una relación de oposición: el poder español sustituye al poder azteca y así lo continúa... hay un puente que va del tlatoani al virrey y del virrey al presidente" (414). It was not only Aztec civilization which the Porfirian state inherited, but also a mode of government which concentrated absolute power in the hands of a few.

It was Díaz and his circle of positivist intellectuals who practiced a brand of *indigenismo* which had little if anything to do with the contemporary Indian. To *look* Indian at a time when the state was reinventing the nation using the mechanics and infrastructure of modernity was to *be* backward and ignorant. Alan Knight describes this phenomenon best in showing that, "the dictator Díaz ('an almost pure Mixtec' Indian,

according to one Mexican historian) was, to a contemporary, ‘of supposed [*sic*] only one-eighth Indian blood’ and, in fact, ‘probably all white’ (“Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo* 73). In this way, race became an optical illusion deployed for the achievement of upward mobility. Before the Díaz administration, national heroes such as President Benito Juárez and President Vicente Guerrero had undergone a process of symbolic whitening. Juárez, a Zapotec Indian, is not remembered by history as Mexico’s first full-blooded Amerindian president, but rather as the hero who helped overthrow the French occupation and consequently restored the Republic. For post-revolutionary Mexico, Juárez is not representative of the problematic degenerate Indian, but is instead a founding father of the mestizo nation.¹ The Afro-Mexican revolutionary hero Vicente Guerrero is rarely ever described in history books as anything other than a mestizo. In the last few decades, however, historians have begun to highlight Guerrero’s Afro-ancestry and the contributions of other Afro-Mexicans to the fight for independence.² In the case of Díaz, his perceived whiteness was an accurate reflection of the illusory cosmopolitanism taking place in Mexico. Race became a relative category that could be adjusted and manipulated, especially with regard to class. It was an illusion that even

¹ Art historian Stacie G. Widdifield conducts a close study of the figure of Benito Juárez in her book, *The Embodiment of the National in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexican Painting* (1996). She closely analyzes the changing figure of Juárez in late nineteenth-century painting within the framework of Mexico’s search for national identity. Widdifield studies the process of cultural mestizaje that can be read in the paintings of Juárez, especially those where he is featured with his Creole wife Margarita Maza. She argues that the union of Juárez and Maza, an Indian and a Creole, symbolizes the mestizo nation that late nineteenth-century intellectuals and politicians sought to construct.

² In his seminal work on the philosophical genealogy of mestizaje in Mexico, *México mestizo: Análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez* (1992), Agustín Basave Benítez highlights the contributions of Afro-Mexicans to mestizofile thinking in nineteenth-century Mexico. In *La población negra de México* (1972), Mexican anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán compiles the serious first study of Afro-Mexicans and their history. Building from the work of Aguirre Beltrán, Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas closely studies the contributions of Afro-Mexicans to and their ultimate erasure from the Mexican nation in *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation* (2004).

found its way into policymaking. Porfirian elite, convinced of the superiority of the white European, fervently sought to attract European immigrants to Mexico. Justo Sierra explained that they were needed “so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race, for only European blood can keep the level of civilization... from sinking, which would mean regression, not evolution” (368). The “whitening” of the nation was an essential part of the neo-liberal goal of bringing about “order and progress.”

The contemporary Indian figured as an anti-national element requiring forcible assimilation. More specifically, the *pelado*, the urban *campesino* or Indian, was the figure that most threatened the stability of the ideal city, a model of modernity for the rest of the nation to emulate. Roger Bartra describes this figure best:

...es el *pelado*, que es una especie de campesino urbano- valga la paradoja- semi-asfixiado por la ciudad, que ha perdido el edén rural y no ha encontrado la tierra prometida. En el *pelado* es recuperada la horrenda imagen porfirista y novohispana del *lépero*; esa plebe, el leperaje, que era vista por los científicos del siglo XIX como un pozo sin fondo de vicios, de animalidad y atavismos sanguinarios, resurge a los ojos de la intelectualidad posrevolucionaria como el *pelado* (46-7).

All of the chaos and backwardness the state was so desperately trying to shake from the national image of the Mexican, appeared exacerbated within the *pelado*, a displaced urban and degenerate Indian. Foreshadowing post-revolutionary mestizaje, Porfirian intellectuals proposed education as one way of transforming this toxic figure. In practice, however, Porfirian indigenismo was more rhetorical than practiced: its material manifestation was a statue of Cuauhtémoc in Mexico City rather than schools for the disadvantaged. This type of indigenismo followed a long genealogy of elite discourses on indigenismo/mestizaje which appealed to Creole nationalism, but had little to do with genuine social reform.

The state that arose from the ashes of the Mexican Revolution proposed not only a sharp break from the authoritarian government of Porfirio Díaz, but also a cohesive

discourse on the nation's racial identity. While many of the indigenistas of the Porfirian regime proposed a gradual whitening of the population through the adoption of European culture and immigration, the post-revolutionary state offered mestizaje as a unifying nationalist discourse. Although indigenismo survived the revolution and continued to present itself as a racial discourse during the 1920s and 30s, it becomes difficult to distinguish this discourse from the mestizo thinking of the same period. In both discourses, the Indian element is proposed as one that is to be absorbed and digested within Western culture; both schools of thought aim to culturally and biologically de-Indianize the nation. However, the post-revolutionary state describes the modern nation as one constituted by mestizo citizens whose cultural origins can be traced back to the Aztec Empire. For this reason, I find it useful and accurate to use the term mestizaje rather than indigenismo to describe the dominant racial and nationalist discourse of the post-revolutionary state.

Although the prominent thinker Vicente Riva Palacio had already made an explicit connection between mestizaje and Mexicanness in 1884, it was not until the 1920s that the Mexican state would also move to exalt mestizaje as the embodiment of the national. However, the post-revolutionary state strictly defined the mestizo as the fusion between Indian and Spaniard. This definition of the mestizo omitted Mexico's large Indian population, both urban and rural. The state offered Indians the possibility to become mestizo through the adoption of Western clothes, Spanish as their only language and participation in social and hygiene programs. The invitation the state extended to Indians was offered under conditions that made rejection difficult. For rural Indians, their de-Indianization was a prerequisite for their eligibility to keep their ancestral lands.

In the case of urban Indians or *pelados*, full recognition by the state required their adoption of Western social mores and culture.

The long term effects of mestizaje's de-Indianization efforts are most extensively theorized in Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* (1925). Although he later turned against the post-revolutionary state, specifically President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-28), his seminal essay on mestizaje offers the most complete description of how this racial/cultural term was conceptualized during this time. The only detail that redeems the Indian in Vasconcelos' view is that he is the remnant of an ancient Atlantic civilization that flourished in the Americas. Again, it is the Indian's *past* which makes him crucial for the creation of the cosmic race. Vasconcelos clearly describes the future of the Indian by insisting that, "El indio no tiene otra puerta hacia el porvenir que la puerta de la cultura moderna, ni otro camino que el camino ya desbrozado de la civilización latina" (25). However, the door to modernity is ultimately a neat disguise for the demise of the Indian. Although it would not be inaccurate to read Vasconcelos' writings as the will of the state, they are useful in tracing the theoretical trajectory of the Indian within the national mestizo imaginary.³

While this new Mexicanness, defined in terms of mestizaje, paid homage to the nation's pre-conquest origins, it looked toward a culturally Creole future. Though this certainly had severe implications for rural Indians, I am most concerned here with the

³ Vasconcelos proposed mestizaje not only as a nationalist project, but also as a Pan-American vision for the progress and modernization of Latin America. As a guest speaker at the 1922 Centennial exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, Vasconcelos presided over Mexico's presentation of a four meter high replica of Cuauhtémoc. Before Brazil's President Pessoa, Vasconcelos claimed: "el bronce del indio mexicano se apoya en el granito bruñido del pedestal brasileiro: dimos bronce y nos aprestáis roca para asentarlo... El conjunto creador de una raza nueva, fuerte y gloriosa." (qtd. in Jiménez Rueda 112-121). In this instance the Mexican Cuauhtémoc is transformed into a tropical Cuauhtémoc capable of appealing to a broad Latin American citizenry (Tenorio Trillo "A Tropical Cuauhtémoc," 119).

effects it had on the *pelado*. He was after all the nuisance which Díaz attempted to push out of his ideal city with very little success. The new post-revolutionary regime, however, targeted this figure specifically in its war to conquer the nation through the undisputed control of Mexico City. Though the rural Indian also had to be de-Indianized, it was the urban Indian who was closest to the seat of power and who transited the Haussmann-inspired boulevards without any regard for the state's efforts to modernize the nation. The conquest of the *pelado* was particularly conceptualized in terms of planting in him a desire to belong to the national family. These efforts took the form of Mexican muralism, an artistic movement encouraged by Vasconcelos, and the civic evangelization taught in schools. Through a comprehensive army of teachers and artists, the city's Indians and children were encouraged to participate in civic communion with the state and the new national family.

As the figure of the Indian was glorified within school textbooks and even worshipped in his proletariat form in the murals of Diego Rivera, he continued to appear as an abstraction within the nationalist imaginary. While thinkers such as Vasconcelos proposed the ultimate demise of the Indian both through cultural de-Indianization and biological dilution, paradoxically, the figure of the Indian was celebrated as the autochthonous origin of the Mexican nation. A direct line was after all drawn between the Indian past and contemporary national culture. The Indian element was praised as the defining element which set Mexico apart from other nations, but it was also the stain in the nation's genealogy which had to be eradicated in an effort to make of Mexico a comfortable nest for modernity to settle and propagate. It was a deep contradiction that

would unfold both in the battle for urban space as well as the war over the writing of national history.

The abstract Indian had already been drawn a face during the Porfiriato through the plumed Indian marketed by the *Cervecería Cuauhtémoc* (fig. 6) as well as the monument to the last Aztec emperor himself. While indigenistas such as Manuel Gamio proposed to “forge...an Indian soul,” this ethereal element was succinctly captured in the bravery and gentleness of the most heroic Indian in national history, Cuauhtémoc (qtd. in Knight 77). He was not only an Indian, but more importantly the benevolent founding father of the nation. While Cortés fathered the mestizo nation, it was Cuauhtémoc who incarnated the patriotic heroism that modern citizens should emulate when called to duty. But the monument’s representation of Indianess had little if anything to do with the vilified Indian that Díaz and later the post-revolutionary state would try to eradicate.

Within the figure of Cuauhtémoc, two images of the Indian would ultimately come into opposition. The idealized or abstract Indian that the bronzed statue of Cuauhtémoc incarnated had very little to do with the contemporary Indian or *pelado* who threatened the stability of the modern nation. Although the statue of Cuauhtémoc had virtually no resemblance to the contemporary Indian, the latter necessarily figured in both the urban and nationalist imaginaries which desired the first as a founding father. Reading between the contours of the Cuauhtémoc statue reveals not only the inconsistencies between these two representations of Indianess, but also the way in which these two opposing images are crucial in narrating the Indian as the foundation of the nation.

Inventing a Founding Father: Cuauhtémoc and the Writing of History

According to Bernardino de Sahagún, the 16th century friar who launched the writing of the encyclopedic *Florentine Codex*, it was ritually demanded of a *tlatoani* as he took the throne, “What will you do if in your time your kingdom is destroyed and your splendor becomes darkness?” (338). Countless school textbooks and general histories record Cuauhtémoc’s answer as one of stoic resistance and unmatched bravery. Francisco López de Gómara’s version of the events that figuratively canonized Cuauhtémoc as the Zeus of the pantheon of national figures was sanctified by repetition in generations of pictures and public speeches. It describes how Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec Emperor, and his cousin Tetlepanquetzal were captured and tied by Cortés and his men. As their hands and feet were burned with oil, Tetlepanquetzal looked pleadingly to Cuauhtémoc for the relief of confession regarding the whereabouts of the empire’s gold treasure. The brave emperor is best remembered for uttering back the now classic line, “Am I perchance enjoying a bed of roses?” (Gómara 275).

But Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who had the incomparable advantage of being present during these events, recalls none of the grandeur associated with the great emperor’s ultimate demise. According to the soldier’s account, there is nothing redemptive or heroic about the scene: the men were tortured and eventually confessed (410). From the viceregal perspective, both the heroic and pathetic accounts of events were equally subversive, and representations of Cuauhtémoc were strictly controlled during the colonial period. In 1577 Philip II prohibited “... that on any account, any person should write things which deal with the superstitions and ways of life which these Indians had” (qtd. in Gillingham 562). As late as 1790, a play about the torture of

Cuauhtémoc smuggled past the censors to a stage in Mexico City, provoked political unrest and was quickly banned (Pilcher 14).

With Independence, Cuauhtémoc's latent symbolic potential as a national origin figure slowly began to unfold. The Independence hero José María Morelos invoked him as the father of the independent nation in opening the Congress of Chilpancingo while Fray Servando Teresa de Mier claimed direct biological descent from Cuauhtémoc. Benito Juárez himself spoke of his "progenitor, Cuatimoczin" (qtd. in Florescano 436). Even within post-Independence Mexico, Moctezuma remained in the imaginary of some writers as the only indigenous hero of the Aztec Empire. Writing in 1841, Fanny Calderón de la Barca appeared to ignore Cuauhtémoc in believing Moctezuma to have been the last emperor (416). In his 1852 *Diccionario Universal de Historia y Geografía*, José Fernández Ramírez referred to Cuauhtémoc as "forgotten" (Keen 414). A few decades later in Rivera Cambas' popular history *Los gobernantes de México*, Cuauhtémoc receives five mentions compared to Moctezuma's twenty four. (3-29). These fleeting and superficial references to Cuauhtémoc make of the emperor a minor actor whose martyrdom has little to contribute to national history. But the adamantly unheroic raw material of Moctezuma's life held little possibility for being re-shaped into a clear and awe-inspiring indigenous origin figure. Not only was national history left as the sum of a series of fragmentary scenes, it also presented the idea of "national heroism" in a kind of vacuum. National history suffered the absence of a larger than life hero or figure representing duty and courage in action. Also, the recent Mexican American War (1846-48) and its devastating effects both on the national territory and national morale made the need for a national origin hero even more pressing. As

historian Paul Gillingham so succinctly describes, “Had Cuauhtémoc not existed, it would have been eminently necessary to invent him” (563). And that’s precisely what the Porfiriato and later the post-revolutionary nation did.

Although Cuauhtémoc was first invented as a novelistic literary hero during the 19th century, the best incarnation of the national hero can be found in his statue located on Reforma. Although the first memorial to Cuauhtémoc was actually unveiled in 1869 on the Paseo de la Viga, I am here interested in analyzing the monument which was inaugurated by Díaz on August 21, 1887, the anniversary of the likely date of Cuauhtémoc’s torture (fig. 7). While the first memorial of the last Aztec emperor consisted of only a bust which was later destroyed, it is the 1887 bronze statue of Cuauhtémoc which rose from an attempt to unify the nation, and also remains today as the best aesthetic representation of how history remembers him.

After the expulsion of the French in 1867, the liberal intelligentsia believed Mexico to have acquired true freedom. During his first year in office (1877), Díaz decreed that a large statue of Cuauhtémoc should be raised in Mexico City’s Paseo de la Reforma.⁴ Upon assuming office, the new president took up residence in Chapultepec Castle at the western end of Reforma, and as he made his way to the city center everyday he would encounter a large monument to Columbus. It had been recently

⁴ The decree of August 1877 actually called for a series of four different monuments to national heroes: to Cuauhtémoc and the warriors who fought in the Conquest, to Hidalgo and the *caudillos* of Independence, to Juárez and the authors of the Reform, and to Zaragoza and the soldiers of the War of Intervention or “the second Independence.” In compliance with the decree, the Cuauhtémoc Monument was erected with a bronze statue of the Aztec king and a base with the names of four chieftains who died alongside him: Cuitláhuac, brother of Moctezuma and penultimate emperor who died of disease; Cacama, next in line to Moctezuma, garroted by the orders of Cortés; Coanácoch, brother of Cacama and king of Acolhuacán, hanged by Cortés; and Telepanquétzal, lord of Tlacopan, hanged with Cuauhtémoc. The front panel of the base summarizes the inclusion of the others with the inscription, “A la memoria de Quauhtémoc y de los guerreros que combatieron heroicamente en defensa de su patria, MDXXI.”

erected in May 1877 by a private citizen, then residing in Madrid, who had commissioned the project to the French sculptor Charles Cordier. It would be easy to imagine that the Mixtec blood of Díaz, a staunch liberal and a hero of the war of Intervention against the French, must have boiled at the sight of such a grand public homage to the first European intruder. Perhaps a wish to rectify this misplaced honor could have been a prompt motivation to erect a life-sized Cuauhtémoc just a few feet down from the Columbus Monument. But regardless of Díaz's primary motivation, Cuauhtémoc was imagined as a symbol of Mexico's triumph over foreign intervention and of the national unity achieved by the liberal regime of the new head of state.

The base of the monument was designed by Francisco María Jiménez and Ramón Agea, who aimed to incorporate motifs from several pre-Hispanic sites producing an early example of neo-Aztec design on a large scale. The lower socle takes the form of a sloped Aztec pyramid or *teocalli* with Mitla-inspired fretwork. The base's mid-section is decorated with pre-Columbian motifs, composed of a frieze with bronze appliqués of Aztec shields, weapons, costumed figures, and a cornice of bundled laurel leaves in European style. Inscribed on the sloped faces of the mid-section are the names of Cuauhtémoc's fellow warriors and its niches hold bronze trophies of Aztec weapons, costumes, headdresses, musical instruments, and other decorations. The trophy on the front of the structure includes a round shield with the national emblem, derived from an image in the *Codex Mendoza*. The upper section includes the bronze statue of Cuauhtémoc on a short pedestal ornamented with intertwined snakes, an attribute of *Coatlicue* to whom Cuauhtémoc was devoted. The pre-Hispanic shapes and motifs which characterize the monument contrast sharply with the neo-classical form of the

Columbus Monument, and constitute a Mexican architectural style rooted in the ancient past.

Two dramatic narrative reliefs designed by Manuel Noreña, professor at the National School of Fine Arts, and his student Gabriel Guerra adorn the sides of the monument's base. The compositions contain meticulous details of period costumes and armor as well as vivid characterizations of historical figures based on illustrations in the *Codex Durán* (Reyes 199-214). The first plaque shows Cuauhtémoc brought to Cortés soon after his capture and shows the moment when the emperor asks to be killed since he is no longer able to protect his kingdom. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl describes a moving version of the event in Cuauhtémoc's words:

García de Holguín lo llevó a Cortés, el cual lo recibió con mucha cortesía, al fin como á rey, y él echó mano al puñal de Cortés, y le dijo: ‘¡Ah, capitán! Ya yo he dicho todo mi poder para defender mi reino, y librarlo de vuestras manos; y pues no ha sido mi fortuna favorable, quitadme la vida, que será muy justo, y con esto acabaréis el reino mexicano, pues á mi ciudad y vasallos tenéis destruídos y muertos’ (378).

Although this citation is not inscribed on the monument, it is performed in a solemn manner recalling ancient Roman reliefs. It is clear that the central narrative of this plaque is bravery while sacrifice is the theme of the second plaque. These are precisely the characteristics that both the Díaz regime and the post-revolutionary state wished to foster among their citizens; when called to duty, citizens were to perform the bravery and sacrifices demonstrated by Cuauhtémoc⁵. The second relief is more dynamic in conception as it depicts the torture of Cuauhtémoc and his fellow prisoner (fig. 8). The two prisoners are stretched over stone blocks as their feet are roasted over open flames.

⁵ However, these sacrifices during the post-revolutionary period would take the form of blind submission to a paternalistic state and the abandonment of Indian culture. It is no surprise then that citizens in the late 1940s would contest the post-revolutionary government's excesses by redefining the significance of Cuauhtémoc and his sacrifice.

Crouching over Cuauhtémoc is the treasurer Julián de Alderete, with a lust for gold sparkling in his eyes. The moment when the king turns to the faltering prisoner to say reproachfully, “Do you believe that I am on a bed of roses?” is carefully captured. In addition to the accurately portrayed costumes and armaments, the relief conveys the psychological tension in the exchange of glances among the characters. Both reliefs have parallels in the literary and historical depictions of Cuauhtémoc that immortalized the young king within the national imaginary.

Cuauhtémoc’s body is further idealized as he stands tall with a straight muscular frame. Such physical characteristics appear to imitate Greco-Roman models and scarcely reflect the typical form of an indigenous person.⁶ Cuauhtémoc is Indian in spirit, but he is a flesh and blood mestizo. This incarnation of the last Aztec Emperor was precisely in line with the indigenismo of Díaz as well as the post-revolutionary regime’s vision of modern nationhood. Many 19th century critics praised the sculpture for its appealing blend of classicism and realism. Art historian Christopher Fulton shows that these attributes, “were constantly quoted by nineteenth-century writers in their eagerness to commend the emperor’s physical qualities along with his moral attributes, and elevate him above the ordinary Indian, who in their view had fallen into a degraded condition” (26-7). The statue’s feathered helmet and spear are the few objects which remain to represent the Indianess touted by the monument’s architecture; it appears that only Cuauhtémoc’s Aztec dress is all that is left of his Indianess. Although his features can

⁶ The stylization of Cuauhtémoc’s body also appears to be anachronistically consistent with the testimony of Bernal Díaz del Castillo: “Guatemuz era de muy gentil disposición, así de cuerpo como de faiciones, y la cara algo larga y alegre, y los ojos más parecían que cuando miraba que era con gravedad que halagüeños, y no había falta en ellos, y era de edad de veinte y un años, y la color tiraba su matiz algo más blanco que a la color de indios morenos” (389).

best be described as mestizo, Cuauhtémoc stands as a Greco-Roman model dressed in Aztec costume. Cuauhtémoc represented the mestizo subjectivity the citizenry should incarnate along with the Indian courage they should emulate. The Indian element is called upon to represent the ultimate sacrifice or martyrdom for the nation while the mestizo element comes to life as the country's cultural present. The Cuauhtémoc monument essentially reduces the idea of Indianess to a set of romanticized moral values, which have little relation to the contemporary Indian.

However, the beautiful and graceful statue of Cuauhtémoc was part of a broader program of developing civic cults intended to legitimize the new government. The idea was to have statues such as that of the young warrior king move citizens to pledge civic allegiance to the nation-state. In his formal address at the monument's August 21, 1887 inauguration ceremony, Francisco del Paso y Troncoso best captured the power of the Cuauhtémoc myth:

Los buenos mexicanos que aquí están levantaron esta estatua para ser un recuerdo de sus acciones del gran señor Cuauhtémoc no perdiera su patria si los otros ciudadanos no se dividieran; esto una enseñanza encierra, que nos unamos, y que olvidemos nuestras antiguas malquerencias: en presencia de este gran caballero (el presidente) que nos está oyendo, declaremos: 'Defenderemos la patria que nos dejó Cuauhtémoc, como él nos enseñó, con todo nuestro corazón conservaremos la unión, la independencia (qtd. in *Historia*, Teja Zabre 85-7).

This appeal had special resonance with the public in light of the foreign invasions suffered during the last half of the 19th century. By asking for disengagement from "ancient disputes," Paso y Troncoso also had in mind the mollification of divisions within the Mexican polity, specifically between liberals and conservatives. He is also careful in alluding to steps taken by the Díaz administration to pave over these differences as national integration and progress was achieved.

Though Díaz certainly aimed to communicate national unity through the construction of a benevolent father for the nation, he also claimed a direct connection to the last Aztec emperor. His move to dot his ideal city with monuments of the nation's heroes intended to narrate the story of Díaz's own moral predecessors. From Juárez to Hidalgo, Díaz traced his own ascent to power as the next chapter in the nation's history. It is no surprise then that the grand Independence Monument was built within precise view of the balconies of Chapultepec Castle which overlook the ideal city's spinal column, El Paseo de la Reforma. The Paseo's long train of monuments culminate with a clear skyline view (albeit the smog doesn't fog the landscape) of Chapultepec Castle, the presidential powerhouse.

But not only does Díaz claim a direct lineage to the pre-Columbian past, he also claims to inherit the grace and courage of Cuauhtémoc through the erection of his monument. The monument itself links the mythical figure of Cuauhtémoc to Díaz and his efforts for national unification. However, Díaz's link to Cuauhtémoc does not function in the same way that the post-revolutionary regime's deployment of the Indian contributes to national unification. Díaz appeals to Cuauhtémoc not as an Indian, but as the warrior-king of a great empire. Díaz views himself as the inheritor of both the moral attributes of Cuauhtémoc and the kingdom of the ancient Mexican nation. Unlike Díaz, the post-revolutionary state appeals to the Indian to strip him of his cultural practices and convert him into the citizen of a modern nation. In the late nineteenth-century, the Cuauhtémoc Monument functions as an artifact that attests to the relationship between Díaz and the warrior king. Similar to the *pedra del sol* in the National Museum, the monument offers a moving narration of a chapter of the nation's official history. In the

absence of a disinterred artifact, the monument operates as a created artifact summoned to narrate a story that is not to be forgotten. More than a *lieux de memoire*, a site created for the preservation of memory as Pierre Nora has defined it, the monument narrates a story that is meant to be internalized making it a powerful cultural strategy of the state. At its essence, the state-endorsed monument is to be felt and believed, and not simply remembered at its sight/site. The Cuauhtémoc Monument is the missing link that connects Díaz to the heroism of the last emperor. While the disinterred artifacts of the National Museum link the modern Mexican nation to the grandeur of the Aztec empire, the created artifact associates the mythical feats of the historical Cuauhtémoc to the nationalist agenda of Díaz. The monument incarnates a set of desired traits that a disinterred artifact cannot entirely be manipulated to communicate. Díaz remembered this well as he overlooked the design of Cuauhtémoc and his incomparable heroism sculpted in bronze.

As Díaz's sculptors attempted to bring Cuauhtémoc to life, the state was simultaneously deploying such created artifacts as cultural agents of social transformation. Education historian Mary K. Vaughan draws from the Gramscian notion of hegemonic process in arguing that the state does not dominate its subjects through the establishment of false consciousness, but rather utilizes official culture to create a consensus of values and goals within a society (16). In this sense, the Cuauhtémoc Monument is erected by Díaz in an attempt to tout not only heroism and courage as values that all citizens should possess, but also to espouse the Indian as a foundational element within the nationalist imaginary. The figure of Cuauhtémoc is conjured during this time as one of the major seams shaping the nation's cultural fabric. But the

interiorization of those national values would not be truly achieved until the advent of the post-revolutionary state's totalizing discourse on mestizaje. As the new "one size fits all" discourse of national identity, mestizaje aimed to generate a consensus of national values among a heterogeneous populace. The created artifact version of Cuauhtémoc was intended to serve as an irrefutable point of national and cultural commonality.

However, the figure of Cuauhtémoc was treated more as a religious figure than an inanimate sculpture during the 1910 centenary independence celebrations and within the national textbooks published in the 1930s. In this case, the created artifact supersedes its monumentality as it begins to function much like a relic. Annabel Wharton defines the relic as a "sign of previous power, real or imagined" (9). However, it is also a fragment that stands in place of a lost fullness and consequently allows for the embrace of an absent whole. I contend that the Cuauhtémoc Monument both in 1910 and in the years immediately following the Revolution evoked not the loss of the original Mexicans⁷ who perished with the demise of the Aztec Empire, but rather the loss of power, autochthonous civilization, and prestige associated with its disappearance. Unlike the *pedra del sol*, the Cuauhtémoc Monument was summoned by the state to represent the *loss* of the first Aztec or Mexican Empire. Cuauhtémoc even performs this loss as he holds in his lowered left hand a parchment spelling the peace offer from Cortés that he will ultimately reject. It is understood from the sculptured plaques decorating the base of the pedestal that this rejection will lead to both Cuauhtémoc's and the empire's demise. While the disinterred artifact is deployed by the museum to narrate a grand national past,

⁷ I use the term "original Mexicans" here to refer to the ancient Aztecs. During the late 19th century and even early 20th century, writers often referred to the ancient Aztecs as "Mexicans" in order to draw a linguistic connection between the Aztecs and the contemporary Mexican citizenry.

the relic commemorates a loss while simultaneously gripping the imaginations of its followers in very real ways. Unlike the Cuauhtémoc Monument, none of the disinterred artifacts of the National Museum were the object of so many parades, festivities and publications during the first third of the 20th century. The Cuauhtémoc Monument's spiritual grip of the nation suggests that more than just another urban sculpture, the last Aztec emperor was quickly becoming a popular cultural icon.

While not all citizens had access to the literary texts that narrated the event that turned Cuauhtémoc into the most heroic of all the Aztec kings, the Cuauhtémoc monument overcame that problem through the performance of that event; Cuauhtémoc's statue was sculpted to represent his courageous semblance just before his capture. His place on the high pedestal overlooking Reforma, made of Cuauhtémoc a larger than life figure. The tall tale of his unmatched bravery made of Cuauhtémoc a figure as inaccessible as Paul Bunyan or Johnny Appleseed. As the father of the post-revolutionary nation, there was a need to physically locate the great hero. Cuauhtémoc outgrew his monument and it soon became necessary to access his remains beyond the boundaries of the ideal city. The promises made by the Revolution were blown away by the turbulent winds of the 1920s and the country's Indian population was once again faced with the paradox of exchanging its Indian culture for full citizenship. The post-revolutionary state, far from showing benevolent paternalism, looked toward the country's Indian population to sacrifice their culture and way of life in the name of the mestizo nation it equated with cultural modernity. Though the state neglected to keep its promises, Cuauhtémoc continued to thrive within the nationalist imaginary becoming a representation of the post-revolutionary government's unfulfilled promises. In the final

years of the post-revolutionary period, Indians and mestizos alike were determined to quite literally resurrect their own Cuauhtémoc in an effort to culturally assert their set of oppositional politics.

Finding the “Flesh” and Bone Cuauhtémoc: The Creation of a Fraudulent Memory

The problem of finding Cuauhtémoc is one that precedes the advent of the post-revolutionary state. The near-polymath, Vicente Riva Palacio, variously incarnated Cuauhtémoc in a novel (*Martín Garatuza*), a history (*México a través de los siglos*) and a monument. His initiative to find Cuauhtémoc within the country’s national culture led to an explosion of odes, plays, histories and speeches centering on the last Aztec emperor. A brief list of the more notable authors who wrote about Cuauhtémoc between 1880 and 1910 includes Ignacio Altamirano, Alfredo Chavero, Rubén Darío, Manuel Orozco y Berra, Francisco Pi y Margall, Manuel G. Prieto, Justo Sierra, Francisco Sosa and Eduardo del Valle. It was rare to find a Mexican writer during this time that did not have at least one work about Cuauhtémoc attributable to his name.

Although Mexico City’s Cuauhtémoc Monument proved to be the most effective cultural machine in his canonization as the patriarchal origin figure of choice, the only thing lacking was a body.⁸ Gillingham describes this need as one where “Politically significant corpses constitute, as anthropologists have noted, ‘a kind of charismatic stockpile’” (565). They were of increasing significance in late 19th century Mexico

⁸ The fetishisation of dead leaders’ bodies is an almost universal phenomenon that predates the age of nationalism. Herodotus, for example, describes the quest of the Spartiates to recuperate the bones of Orestes as he was convinced by the oracle that this was necessary to ensure victory over the Tegeans (29-30). In the same manner, the body of Theseus was located, exhumed and returned in pomp to Athens about four centuries after his death (Plutarch 24-5).

where the language of Catholicism was appropriated to depict nationalist cults as parallels (and hoped for displacements) of the cults of saints. The bones of the Independence heroes were ‘sacred relics;’ when they were moved to Mexico City it was understood that they were travelling to ‘the altar of *la patria*’ (ibid). In such an atmosphere it was perhaps unsurprising that an entrepreneurial man should attempt to remedy the critical absence of the last emperor’s bones. But what was perhaps more surprising was the identity of the entrepreneur in question. The tomb of Cuauhtémoc was not the creation of that amorphous abstraction the state, or more precisely Vicente Riva Palacio. Rather, it was the work of a rancher from an isolated country village who made the obvious move to provide the missing link in the nationalist narrative.

Florentino Juárez was in many ways typical of the socially mobile *ranchero* class that dominated rural Mexico during the Porfiriato. He began as a rural laborer in the isolated and impoverished village of Ixcateopan in the mountains of northern Guerrero. At some point between August 1891 and the end of 1893, Juárez inserted a body beneath his parish church. With Cuauhtémoc’s bones placed in their tomb, Juárez concentrated on fabricating the other pieces of the story. As a central piece of evidence was a first person account of Cuauhtémoc’s burial. Among the dark ink arabesques and erratic spellings, the author claimed to have buried Cuauhtémoc beneath the Ixcateopan church and proceeded to identify himself as Motolinía, the well-known 16th century Franciscan. The challenge of producing plausible early colonial papers was swiftly resolved by an authentic letter from the Archbishop of Mexico, which contained the all-pardoning line: ‘This date I copied the ancient [illegible] as they were [illegible] dust’ (Gillingham 567).

By the early 20th century, the story was accepted in the area as something more than just a local myth.⁹

Though Juárez gained very little from his fraudulent grave, he did manage however to help locate a body for Cuauhtémoc, one far more malleable than his sculpted embodiment, within the nationalist imaginary in the years after the post-revolutionary period. Juárez was never able to convince the local authorities or the state of unearthing his Cuauhtémoc, but he left behind a story which would be “unearthed” in the 1940s. Although the post-revolutionary state had by the late 1930s been replaced by a populist state, I find it crucial to step out of the confines of the 1920-35 time period to analyze how Cuauhtémoc is ultimately appropriated and re-defined by both the citizens of rural Mexico and Mexico City, by this time a distant shadow of Díaz’s ideal city. In an effort to understand the Cuauhtémoc Monument’s possible role in mediating the cultural citizenship of the people of Mexico City, it is important to look at the years following the post-revolutionary period. It was in the late 1940s that people aggressively clamored for the materialization of Cuauhtémoc’s body and with it their own representation of the national hero. While the post-revolutionary period would see the rise of a citizenry clamoring for the resurrection of their Christ-like hero, it would not be until 1949 that he would be bulldozed out of Ixcateopan’s soil. But the Cuauhtémoc that would rise from that tomb would come to dispute the beautiful mestizo Cuauhtémoc that graced the modern streets of Mexico City’s Reforma.

⁹ Paul Gillingham provides a detailed study of the Ixcateopan Cuauhtémoc in his article, “The Emperor of Ixcateopan: Fraud, Nationalism and Memory in Modern Mexico.”

In 1949, Juárez's grandson brought the forged documents to the attention of the Ixateopan parish priest, and within days news reached the President and the front pages of the Mexico City press. The timing was quite auspicious considering that the late 1940s was a period of intense nationalist promotion by the governing elites.¹⁰ It was also the peak of the so called "milagro mexicano," which led to the country's rapid economic expansion. The nationalization of Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex) in 1938 by the populist administration of Lázaro Cárdenas placed Mexico on a rapid course toward international capitalist expansion. The terms of national assertiveness were no longer premised on a crowded pantheon of national heroes, but rather on the careful monitoring of quarterly GDP. News of the discovery of Cuauhtémoc's supposed remains now had the potential to lead to international embarrassment, rather than pride. As a newcomer to the international arena, the world's eyes were carefully watching Mexico's political and economic development. The state sought to live up to the name "milagro mexicano" by catching up to the club of industrialized nations and not through the resurrection of a five hundred year old national hero.

While the news of such a grand discovery quickly spread across the country, President Miguel Alemán remained uneasily silent about the matter. Strategic federal agencies such as the Education Ministry, the Departamento del Distrito Federal, unions, and the army coordinated a wave of public ritual. Their success led to the declaration of 1950 as the "The Year of Cuauhtémoc." When the official INAH report was released on

¹⁰ Between 1947 and 1949 the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) published nearly a million free biographies of the nation's heroes. Contemporary cultural nationalism even verged on the necrophiliac: a few years prior to the re-emergence of the Ixateopan documents, archaeologists had sedulously recovered the supposed remains of Cortés and the *Niños Héroes*, the six cadets who died defending Chapultepec Castle in the face of the invading U.S. troops in 1847.

October 19th it damned the find by dating both the artifacts and documents to the 19th century, and by disaggregating Cuauhtémoc's bones into the fragmentary remains of an adolescent, a young man, a young woman and two small children. As President Alemán continued to look upon the scandal in silence, the fragmentation of the last emperor's remains certainly brought new meaning to the term "body politic."

It was at this point, that the image of Cuauhtémoc swelled beyond the neat and predictable confines of the state. While the government did little in the way of recognizing Cuauhtémoc's fraudulent remains, what could not be denied was that the Ixcateopan tomb was a new relic representing the values of a number of grassroots groups. While the "official" Cuauhtémoc was wrapped in a blanket of abstract proclamations, Western aesthetics and Mexicanness, a much more compelling Aztec leader arose from the rhetoric of the Mexican Left. A left-wing coalition which included muralists and pro-authenticity academics used the public ceremonies to construct an alternative, "dissident" Cuauhtémoc whose primary characteristics were incorruptibility and anti-imperialism (Camp 125).¹¹ As the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) fought back through the publication of images of a Catholic and hierarchically disciplined Cuauhtémoc, rural Mexicans continued their pilgrimages to the tomb in Ixcateopan.

The many Cuauhtémocs that arose from the fraudulent tomb suggest that a cultural negotiation began to take place between the official representation of the Aztec hero and the oppositional politics of those redefining his place, and in turn their own, within the nation. For the left wing coalitions, the "dissident" Cuauhtémoc was a

¹¹ In February 1950 an unscheduled speaker violently seized the microphone at one of the few state-sponsored commemorations of Cuauhtémoc's sacrifice to deliver an anti-Spanish, anarchic and extreme left message. The explosion of this dissident Cuauhtémoc even led Siqueiros to compare the last emperor to Arab nationalists, the Viet Minh and Mao Tse-Tung (Carr 347).

manifestation of their desire for a socialist state wary of the dangers of industrialization. In the case of the PAN, they launched a conservative Cuauhtémoc espousing free market values. These oppositional visions of Cuauhtémoc not only diverged from the state's official representation of the last Aztec emperor, but also allowed for alternative interpretations of the term "imagined community." As Mary K. Coffey shows, "The state then lives in and through its subjects, through their performances... and possible means of identification..." (21). While the terms and conditions of that identification varied from group to group, what remained constant was their association with the foundational hero. The left wing and right wing groups pledged allegiance to the nation through the figure of Cuauhtémoc, but they did so by negotiating the values that he and the nation represented to each.

While it can be argued that the people of Ixcateopan also communed with the nation through the fraudulent Cuauhtémoc, the "ancient" remains ultimately defined their regional identity; Ixcateopan came to be known nationally as the site where Cuauhtémoc's remains were found and the town's residents also identified themselves as the descendents of Cuauhtémoc. The fraudulent tomb was immediately turned into a relic upon the disinterment of "Cuauhtémoc's" bones placing the small town of Ixcateopan on the cultural heritage map. During the years after the finding, Ixcateopan found itself on the forefront of the country's heritage industry; the residents of Ixcateopan essentially gained a national and regional legitimacy they had not experienced before. Not only did this change in status bring Ixcateopan to the attention of the federal government, but it also brought in a significant influx of economic growth through tourism and increased federal aid. However, the fraudulent tomb belonged first

and foremost to Ixcateopan. Not only did the Juárez papers allege that Ixcateopan was the ancestral land of Cuauhtémoc, but they also pointed to the small town as a sacred place within the region. In this way, the Cuauhtémoc tomb was a relic that belonged to Ixcateopan and allowed its people to negotiate their regional political influence. The advent of a new Cuauhtémoc relic, however fraudulent, led to a renaissance within the political and cultural life of Ixcateopan.

Though public and political interest in the cult of Cuauhtémoc eventually waned in the subsequent decades, what is perhaps most interesting about the search for the last emperor is the role of groups other than governing elites in the construction of Mexican nationalism. As playwright Rodolfo Usigli has called Mexico, it is “a country in which tradition seems a daily intervention” (11). The re-engineering of Cuauhtémoc’s image throughout the early 20th century provided the necessary skeletons on which the flesh of a national identity could hang (fig. 9). But as one villager observed, “Everybody... tried to get something out of [Cuauhtémoc]” (qtd. in Gillingam 582). Although Cuauhtémoc was quarried by elites, he was ultimately reshaped by peasants and bureaucrats. If any of the many participants in the search for Cuauhtémoc’s body can be judged successful, it is not the elites, but rather those at the grassroots level. The Juárez family did quite well as a result of Cuauhtémoc, and Ixcateopan received development funding and enjoyed a newfound political prominence. No commission report can change that, and irrespective of what one villager of Guerrero remarked as “the quantity of foreign idiots who have written that [the tomb] is a fake,” Cuauhtémoc will always be buried in Ixcateopan (584).

A Cuauhtémoc for all Citizens

Although the Cuauhtémoc Monument at the turn of 19th century stood as a mute and stoic representative of the bourgeois ideals framing the ideal or modern city, the emperor's wide appeal led to the search for a body. Just as 19th century liberal thinkers found it necessary to invent an Aztec father, so did common citizens find it crucial to locate Cuauhtémoc both within the geography of the national territory as well as the vastness of the nationalist imaginary. Whether as an instrument for political control or as another member of the pantheon of saints and heroes, every incarnation of Cuauhtémoc appears to have had something to offer almost everyone. Fulton describes the evolution of Cuauhtémoc as one where, "[his] imagery stressed national integration at the expense of community and shared benefits...and while it [Cuauhtémoc imagery] promulgated republican ideals, it also commended a style of leadership which validated the autocratic power of Mexico's presidents, and appealed to a bankrupt nationalism..." (46). However, amidst the regional and national drama generated by Cuauhtémoc's numerous resurrections, it is easy to overlook the *campesinos*, *pelados* and even bourgeois citizens who participated in making possible each of Cuauhtémoc's re-awakenings. The common citizens' insistent attachment to the image of Cuauhtémoc can hardly be described as the product of a "bankrupt nationalism." With every subsequent incarnation of Cuauhtémoc, the invitation list to form part of the national family became longer and more diverse. Every search for Cuauhtémoc broadened the reach of Mexican nationalism, allowing citizens to imagine and commune with the nation on their own terms through the figure of the last Aztec emperor.

While the scope and grip of the image of Cuauhtémoc is exceptional among the pantheon of statues lining Reforma and the long list of historical actors gracing the pages of national history books, it is crucial to understand Cuauhtémoc's many transformations as part of the on-going search for modern nationhood. Similar to the way in which common citizens began to control and transform images such as Cuauhtémoc's, so did nationalism become internalized beyond the parameters of the state's dictates. Through the created figure of Cuauhtémoc, the *people* of Mexico City looked toward a rural village not to subjugate it under an exoticizing eye, but rather, to venerate it as the location of a national patrimony. However, just like the *pelados* who refused to submit to the protocols and rigid confines of the ideal city, mestizo and Indian citizens alike insisted on venerating their own Cuauhtémoc and on communing with their own conception of Mexican nationhood. With the rise of every Cuauhtémoc, the state's oppressive and totalizing vision of the Mexican nation was replaced with a far more tailored conceptualization of the nation, one meeting the needs of heterogeneous communities.

As fraudulent as the Cuauhtémoc tomb and the subsequent affect between Mexico City and the far away village of Ixcateopan may appear, it is no more an invention than the narratives recited by the artifacts within the National Museum or the urban and progressive nationalism endorsed by the state. Beyond the smoke and mirrors of the state's production of cultural nationalism, what remains are images which can be shaped, re-shaped and reified with new meaning with every view. And it is perhaps here where the real power of the monument or relic resides as it is appropriated by varied audiences to fill different sites of absence. Although the monument, in the case of

Cuauhtémoc, brings about the national community desired by the residents of Mexico City, it is necessary to look to another incarnation of the invented artifact for an understanding of Mexicanness that transcends both the geographical borders of Mexico City and the Mexican Republic. The case of Cuauhtémoc illustrates how the residents of Mexico City and Ixcateopan internalize their own version of nationalism, but in order to answer the question of how other people of Mexican descent commune with the nation we must look to artifacts that circulate alongside the transnational trajectory of people of Mexican descent.

IV. The Faking of History and the Making Mexicanness

Suspensión del ánimo: la masa de piedra enigma labrado, paraliza nuestra mirada. No importa cuál sea la sensación que sucede a ese instante de inmoralidad: admiración, horror, entusiasmo, curiosidad— la realidad, una vez más, sin cesar de ser lo que vemos, se muestra como aquello que está más allá de lo que vemos. Lo que llamamos ‘obra de arte’— designación equívoca, sobre todo aplicada a las obras de civilizaciones antiguas— no es tal vez sino una configuración de signos. Cada espectador combina esos signos de una manera distinta y cada combinación emite un significado diferente. Sin embargo, la pluralidad de significados se resuelve en un sentido único, siempre el mismo. Un sentido que es inseparable de lo sentido. — Octavio Paz, Los privilegios de la vista

A walk through the interior of the towering Aztec pyramid reveals a colonial plaza filled with folkloric music and a gallery showcasing artifacts from different periods of Mexican history. Modeled after the actual Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan, the inner walls of the pyramid depict quaint murals of a lush and tropical Mexican landscape under the perpetual twilight of a dark blue ceiling dotted with the sparkle of protruding recessed lights. Even before the illusion is broken by the unnaturally blinding light of the “twilight,” the waves of small heads bearing felt Mickey ears quickly remind the visitor that this is indeed Epcot Center, Orlando, Florida and not the rustic cobblestone streets of San Angel, Mexico City.

However staged, the illusion of this charming vision of Mexico insists on embedding itself in the memory of the visitor as alluring depictions of Mexican women parade the screens of the Gran Fiesta Tour boat ride. As the only ride inside the pyramid or Mexican Pavilion, the Gran Fiesta Tour features Donald Duck, Panchito (a Mexican rooster), and Joe Carioca (a Brazilian parrot). The gentle boat ride across the pyramid’s mysterious lagoon corners around a giant Olmec head and a holographic mural of an exploding Popocatepetl volcano before entering the *gran fiesta* adventure. The ride is based on the Walt Disney 1944 animated film “The Three Caballeros” which centers on

Donald Duck's adventures across Latin America. Donald's good friends, Panchito and Joe Carioca, serve as both his tour guides and saviors as he strays into the arms of seductive Latin American women. Clips from the film serve as the narrative for the Gran Fiesta Tour boat ride while mechanical figures of mariachis simulate playing traditional Mexican music. The ride takes the visitor to Mexico City, Acapulco, Manzanillo, Chichén Itzá, and Isla Mujeres; the grand tour of Mexico is accomplished in just under eight minutes through a showcasing of scenic landscapes and women. The final moments of the boat ride linger before the scene of a *gran fiesta* packed with more mechanical mariachis than one can count as well as mechanical figures dressed in traditional attire representing Mexico's various cultures. As the final fireworks explode somewhere in the staged distance, the mechanical peoples of Mexico suddenly go out in inebriated chaos as they chase each other in circles around their fixed rails while Donald and his feathered friends sing, "¡Adios amigos! Come again!"

The *gran fiesta* fun continues as the visitor exits the ride to enter the pyramid's Mexican marketplace. A number of carts attended by Mexican women cover the plaza. Dressed in airy, romantic off-the-shoulder blouses paired with long flowing skirts, the attendants help visitors try on *sombreros* while answering questions about Mexico. The young attendants work selling Mexican trinkets and souvenirs for the Disney Corporation, while they themselves stand in for the living, breathing Mexican souvenir. Following the Disney Corporation's strict policy of "importing" authentic nationals for Epcot Center's World Showcase Pavilions, it is no surprise then that children and adults line up to take pictures with the lovely *señoritas*. Disney's Mexican Pavilion is not only an American representation of how Mexico is viewed north of the border (or perhaps

more specifically Walt Disney's own vision of Mexico), but also a simulation of a "safe" encounter between Americans and Mexico. The Mexican Pavilion is after all a showcase of charming, English-speaking Mexicans selling maracas and serving tequila — a distant image from those paraded in the American media of beheadings in Ciudad Juárez and petty muggings on the filthy streets of Mexico City. This vision of Mexico is one sanitized and presented for the delight of American consumers.

But this caricaturization of Mexico is not an invention of the Disney Corporation since its origins can be traced to mid-19th century American and European media and travel literature depictions. During the last third of the 19th century especially, as Porfirio Díaz marketed the country abroad, Mexico became a popular haven for rogue explorers and amateur archaeologists. Following in the steps of the early Alexander von Humboldt, many foreigners invaded Mexico with dreams of digging up Aztec and Mayan treasures that would presumably turn them into very wealthy men. These Indiana Joneses pioneered a frantic race to uncover the stone idols and gold treasures of ancient Mexicans. Amateur archaeologists such as the French Désiré Charnay, Auguste Genin¹, and the American William Henry Holmes, extracted knowledge of Mexico not from its people, but rather from the cold and shiny stones extracted from the ground. With every ancient and contemporary artifact retrieved and collected, an idyllic and dreamy image of Mexico became reinforced abroad. These artifacts quickly circled the world and even

¹ Though he was born Mexico, Auguste Genin was raised and educated in France. As an adult, Genin arrived in Mexico to manage his family's explosives company. While there, he spent much of his spare time unearthing and collecting Aztec and other indigenous artifacts. In 1922, Genin donated a photo album showcasing his collections to the U.S. National Museum. The album contains 37 photographs and several descriptive narratives taken and written by Genin which boast his vast collection of native artifacts. The album even includes a photograph of his China room which showcases vases, robes, and fine porcelain from the Far East. Photo albums such as this one clearly reveal the artifact fascination which motivated the crude archaeological endeavors of the time.

found places within major world museums as authentic representations of Mexico. Although it would seem that only authentic artifacts could produce authentic representations of Mexico, many amateur archaeologists came across spurious artifacts that also generated authentic representations of the country and its people. In this chapter, I argue that spurious artifacts can produce a representation of Mexico that sustains the construction of Mexicanness both domestically and abroad. It is through the creation of the spurious artifact, that collectors, amateur archaeologists, and artisans create an authentic representation of Mexico which escapes the control of the state.

Considering the influence of foreigners, particularly archaeologists and explorers, a comprehensive study of Mexican nationalism must include a discussion of how Mexico circulated abroad during the final years of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. Although my study so far has centered on the deployment of Mexican nationalism by the state during the 1920-1935 period, I find it necessary to anchor my discussion of Mexico's representation abroad on the decades prior to the eruption of the Mexican Revolution. In many ways the Revolution interrupted a process of representation which began long before the armed forces exploded. Archaeology would not be resumed in Mexico until the 1930s and it is for this reason that I find it indispensable to step out of the chronological bounds of prior chapters in order to trace a phenomenon that began to take shape at the turn of the 20th century.² It was during this time that a lasting representation of Mexico began to take form, particularly in the

² In *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (1992), Helen Delpar studies the role of Mexican artwork in mediating the cultural and political relationship between Mexico and the United States. Like this dissertation, her work also focuses on the Mexican post-revolutionary period. Parting from Delpar's work, I step out of the chronological bounds of the post-revolutionary period to trace the origins of the cultural phenomenon which she analyzes in its full articulation in her book.

United States. A film such as “The Three Caballeros” is a clear reflection of the United State’s view of Mexico as a land of banana plantations and dancing Carmen Mirandas. However, this chapter aims to study the images of Mexico that circulated prior to the explosion of American tourism in that country which slowly altered the way in which Mexicans viewed themselves.

In this chapter, I study how Aztec artifacts, specifically spurious Aztec artifacts, during the 1885-1901 period served as a means of knowing Mexico and its people. The spurious, or fake, artifact, which eventually circled the world, was collectively invented by archaeologists, entrepreneurs, investors, and Mexican artisans. An analysis of the fake artifact within the Mexican context reveals a complex web of players all contributing in some way to the image of Mexico within the American imaginary. By tracing the circulation of the fake artifact alongside the transnational flows of capital, I will show how a study of transnational Mexicanness can help us re-think questions of nationhood and cultural citizenship not only within Mexico, but also within a U.S.-context. I contend that the expansion of transnational capital markets during this historical period fused the U.S. and Mexican economies, creating a mutual dependence on the supply and demand generated in each country, to the point of blurring the geographical borders separating “Greater Mexico.” An exploration of this geographical blurring necessitates asking: how does this transnationally produced image of Mexico differ from the one promoted by the Mexican state during this time? What does the fake Aztec artifact accomplish that the genuine Aztec artifact cannot? How do transnational capitalist processes produce Mexicanness? How does this particular artifact contribute to an image of Mexico that can be owned and claimed by people of Mexican descent on

both sides of the border? I will trace these questions through a comparative analysis of the Mexican state's deployment of genuine as well as dubious Aztec artifacts at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo and the presentation of similar artifacts by the Orrin Brothers at the 1885 Aztec Fair, a travelling show of Mexican performers and antiquities that circulated through the American Midwest and New England area.

History in the Faking

However, before discussing the influence of the spurious Aztec artifact at these World's Fair-inspired expositions, it is first necessary to bear the question, why is the fake artifact problematic? Pre-Columbian Art History specialist Esther Pasztory captures the problem of the false artifact best in summarizing, "To discover that a famous piece is fake is to stumble upon an obscenity— like a famous person playing with feces or interested in necromancy. The transgressive object falls immediately into the one zone that Kant felt could never be aesthetic— the disgusting" (159). But before such forgeries fall from grace, they are intensely loved by collectors and museum curators. While it is true that Aztec sculptures were the best known ancient Mexican artifacts during the final years of the 19th century, it is also known that there was an ever growing market for such antiquities that actively catered to the tastes and fancies of wealthy collectors. In fact, it is now understood that many of the Aztec masks held at the British Museum and the Aztec crystal skull of the Smithsonian Institution are embodiments of Western taste at a particular time. Though these artifacts tell us little about the people they are intended to represent, they do serve as texts where we can read the fantasies and interests of those who created and collected these objects.

Although spurious artifacts are now appreciated for their documentation of the trafficking of cultural objects, this appreciation was not always expressed by early critics of this trade. William Henry Holmes, honorary curator of the U.S. National Museum (today known as the Smithsonian Institution), expresses grave concern regarding the proliferation of fake artifacts within the collections of major world museums. In the 1889 *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, Holmes denounces the problem in an article titled, “On Some Spurious Mexican Antiquities and Their Relation to Ancient Art.” He claims that three-fourths of the copper objects and one-third of the stone artifacts in American collections, including those of the U.S. National Museum, are fraudulent. He goes on to highlight the fact that the Mexican artisans producing these frauds not only produce copies of original artifacts, but also invent and produce their own designs. Holmes goes on to complain that these original designs pay little attention to the style and motifs of authentic Aztec artifacts.

Holmes’ indignation about what he calls “bastard art” appears to focus on a frustration geared not so much toward collectors, but more aggressively toward the Mexican artisans producing these objects (331). He not only complains about having been swindled out of five dollars at San Juan Teotihuacan for an object that turned out to be fraudulent, but also tells that, “The dealers do not hesitate to assign definite localities to the ‘relics’ and to give circumstantial accounts of their discovery, notwithstanding the fact that no such ware is ever found in the locality” (323). Not only are these objects not dug out of the ground, but their sale is accompanied by elaborate narratives about how and where they were found. Holmes cites the French traveler and archaeologist Désiré Charnay in his work *Les Anciennes Villes du nouveau monde* where he also complains

that, “The fabrication of these pieces goes back as far as 1820 or 1826. This grand hoax was conceived in Tlatelolco street, and the fortunate inventor must have made his fortune thereby, to judge from the immense number of vases dispersed by him” (36). In this way both Holmes and Charnay point toward the dubious Mexican artisans from the slums of Mexico City as the culprits responsible for spreading the pandemic that has resulted in the infestation of fakes within the important cultural collections of the world.

While these Mexican artisans are indeed partly responsible for the rapid spread of fake Mexican artifacts around the world, Holmes and Charnay are short sighted in their analysis of the role of these artisans. In his lengthy article, Holmes overlooks emphasizing that the reason that entire schools of artisans exist for the production of spurious objects is because of the exigent and widespread demand for such artifacts. Anthropologist Jane MacLaren Walsh of the National Museum of Natural History explains that there were actually few authentic artifacts found in the ground in Mexico during this time and that artisans began supplying “artifacts” to meet the overwhelming demand for things Aztec (interview). European and American explorers flocked to Mexico during this time with the aim of amassing their own pre-Columbian treasures. These demanding travelers often overlooked stone sculptures in favor of crystal and jade carvings which adhered to their own ideas of beauty and value. Walsh explains that artisans often imported jade, a material non-native to Mexico, from China for the purpose of carving these stones into Aztec artifacts. Collectors and dealers simply had to ask for the kind of Aztec artifact they wanted, and it was quickly produced on the streets of Tlatelolco for wealthy customers. In this way, the production of fake artifacts was not

only the product of creative and complying artisans, but also the work of fanciful collectors.

Mexico for Sale: The Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo

As demand for things Aztec grew abroad, the demand also exploded domestically. Not only did foreigners living in Mexico feed the insatiable demand for Aztec artifacts, but the Mexican state also became increasingly interested in collecting such objects for its own museums and World's Fair Pavilions. As the World's Fairs gained popularity at the end of the 19th century, the Mexican state sought these platforms as one way to enter the international scene of modern nations. While Mexican President Porfirio Díaz had already successfully deployed the Aztec artifact within the galleries of the Mexican National Museum for the purpose of singing national glory in a country whose cultural identity was still unclear, he now intended to use the same artifact to market the country abroad as a place of exoticism and natural wonder.

Though Mexico participated in many World's Fairs, one of its most successful international appearances took place at the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo 1901. This particular exposition is a useful point of departure that will help better to understand the innovation and accomplishments of the 1886 Aztec Fair which toured exclusively in the United States. The exposition's emphasis on Pan-American collaboration reveals not only the already tenuous relationship between Mexico and the United States, but also Mexico's struggle to shake itself of the image of backwardness and underdevelopment that Díaz was so anxious to replace. The Pan-American Exposition was Mexico's most accomplished and thorough attempt to perform

modernity and to stage its “self discovery” in the interest of promoting a cosmopolitan image.

True to its origins within a tradition of World’s Fairs, the Buffalo Exposition emphasized access to resources and new markets in Latin America. The exposition directors were sure to announce the promise that the 20th century would be “an age of American dominance in international affairs” (Rydell 128). While pavilions from almost every region of Latin America paraded the Buffalo Exposition, Mexico’s participation was one of the strongest Latin American presences that year. In terms of the individual Mexican exhibitors who won awards, Buffalo was Mexico’s most successful presence (*Mexico at World’s Fairs*, Tenorio-Trillo 315). The Mexico Pavilion, though carefully designed in Aztec architectural style, dedicated most of its displays to the promotion of Mexico’s cultural and technological advances. Díaz’s collaborators made sure to present Mexico as an up and coming member of the club of modernized nations. The Buffalo press captures best the image of itself that the Mexican state strove to depict. One Buffalo newspaper offers accolades by describing Mexico’s exhibition as one endowed with “the dignity that is a heritage with the people of Spanish blood and training, and with a pride born of the consciousness of a part well-played and enthusiastically applauded” (*A Few Facts about Mexico* 117) (fig. 10). Another newspaper congratulates Mexico’s presence at the Fair by expressing that, “These commissioners are all gentlemen, who in their own country hold high positions and rank and, with what today has come to be known as ‘the true Mexican spirit,’ have left no stone unturned to make their display one of the finest and as up-to-date as is everything in modern Mexico” (126). Though modern Mexico was certainly represented through the agricultural and

manufacturing advances of production, the “true Mexican spirit” was most strongly depicted through the use of the Aztec artifact (fig. 11). While these artifacts included collections of clay pots and stone idols, others included Aztec pictures in water colors and even Aztec seats. Similar to what was already occurring with the proliferation of spurious Aztec artifacts in the slums of Mexico City, objects of modern production were christened as “Aztec” for the purpose of authenticating a particular vision of Mexico. Though the object here was not necessarily to sell dubious artifacts to wealthy collectors, the aim was certainly to attract investment and trade to a country just recently opening itself to global capital markets after the political chaos of the Revolution.

While the Mexican Pavilion’s collection of things Aztec entertained the curious gaze of investors and other thrill seekers, the Mexican Village concession was responsible for reeling in the passersby. Advertised as “The Streets of Mexico,” the display featured “Aztec” people performing the “racial customs” and pastimes common to daily Mexican life (Rydell 148). Unlike the Mexican Pavilion, the Mexican Village was sponsored by local Buffalo businessmen looking to promote their financial interests in Mexico. They sought Díaz’s consent to present the show in conjunction with the Mexican Pavilion. The Mexican president approved on two conditions: “first— that the concession should not in any way bring ridicule upon Mexico, her inhabitants or buildings; and, secondly, that the concessionaire should guarantee to return to Mexico all Mexicans employed in the concession” (qtd. in Rydell 148). Though Díaz eventually granted his consent for the show, the simulations of bullfights and performance of Aztec dancers emphasized the potential for American investment in Mexico and stressed the inferiority of the Mexican people. Díaz supplied the show with a troop of Mexican

rurales who satiated the ethnological curiosity of visitors. Not only did performers themselves represent Mexican souvenirs in their status as authentic nationals, but they also re-enacted a kind of modern discovery of Mexico. This was after all the first time that most American fairgoers had any contact with anything Mexican. Visitors reacted to the show in noting that, “The laziness of the place is pleasing, and its rosiness attractive” and “The life of Mexico is shown [complete with] the diminutive burros... and the girls who dance with the abandon of Midway and languor of Old Spain” (ibid).

As much as Díaz and his cronies attempted to tightly control the image of Mexico displayed at the Pan-American Exposition, the Aztec element on which Mexican cultural identity was proudly premised at home quickly floated out of the state’s domain. The sponsors and producers of “The Mexican Village” equated “Aztec” and “Mexican” as synonymous adjectives while qualifying the two as undeniably inferior to American customs. The Aztec element, through a collection of artifacts of probable contemporary production and a troop of rural Mexicans, was deployed at the Exposition as a brand of inferiority as it was intimately associated with the Indian element, a figure with a long tradition of conjuring images of barbarity and backwardness. However, the Exposition’s maneuvering of the Aztec element was quite in line with the ideological contours of the Fair. The Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo was after all committed to the goal of conquering international financial markets and of overcoming the mistrust generated by the recent Spanish-American War (1898). The stage offered through this Exposition was intended to serve as a gesture to Latin America of the United State’s intentions of courting burgeoning markets in those countries.

As evidence of the United States' "friendly" intentions, one of the advertisements designed for the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo depicts North America lending a helping hand to its southern neighbor (fig. 12). A blonde woman draped in a robe which extends out to take the form of North America (although here meant to signify solely the United States) looks down while stretching out her arm to help pull up a brunette woman whose figure takes the shape of South America. Miss South America looks up with pleading eyes as her body extends into an airy figure which appears as if it would float away if it weren't for the benevolent help of Miss North America. The light blue circle seems to be representing the globe. Curiously, the only two continents present on this globe are North America and South America, suggesting a relationship of exclusivity between the two women. This particular image of the Pan-American Exposition is one of the few illustrations depicting the United States as a feminized figure. Most other cartoons and advertisements of the Fair represent the United States through the figure of Uncle Sam courting a South American *señorita*. The poster's feminized illustration attempts to communicate the illusion of equality between the two continents, if only in gender.

Although the attempt made by U.S. politicians to court Mexico appeared to feed on pre-conceived notions of Latin American inferiority, it managed to generate an American demand for Mexican curiosities. Although the Aztec or Mexican people were viewed as clearly inferior to Americans, Mexican artifacts became highly prized in the United States. Fairs such as the Pan-American Exposition generated a desire among American fair visitors to possess reproductions of the quaint Aztec artifacts placed on display. Illustrated mail-order catalogues such as the *Mexican Art and Curiosity Store*

Catalogue (1888) began to gain popularity at about the same time that the World's Fairs were beginning to reach their peak. Based in El Paso, Texas, the Mexican Art and Curiosity Store sold everything from silver filigreed jewelry to Guadalajara pottery "made by the Aztec Indians" (23) (fig. 13). Curio shops such as this one, sold not only Mexican trinkets manufactured by mestizo artisans, but also accompanied their products with exciting narratives about exotic, faraway places. W.G. Walz, the founder of the Mexican Art and Curiosity Store, accompanies the image of every product with an enticing story which includes a description of Aztecs laboring away to produce a silver hairpin or Mexican chocolate stick. Although some critics may argue that the use of the term "Aztec" versus the use of the term "Mexican" is simply a difference in semantics, I contend that the use of the first term conjures a series of images which are intended to build on the curiosities of paying fairgoers and mail-ordering consumers. The usage of the adjective "Aztec" conjures images of brown-faced, feathered Indians carving stone idols and sculpting ritual masks. Not only are shops such as Walz's selling Mexican trinkets, but they are also selling the thrill of owning an "authentic" remnant of Aztec culture. Although it is unclear where exactly Walz was supplying his shop with Mexican curios, it is certain that his catalogue is filled with meticulously written stories about the supposedly traditional production of his items. Walz and shops of his kind were only a few of the players promoting a millenary image of Mexico abroad.

Packaged for the U.S.A.: The Orrin Brothers and the Aztec Fair

While shops such as the Mexican Art and Curiosity Store were appearing throughout the Southwest, other entrepreneurs preferred to market their lucrative image

of Mexico on the stage. Such was the case of the showmen George, Charles, and Edward Orrin. Born in England but naturalized citizens of the United States, the Orrin Brothers made their fortunes on the stage of the *Circo Teatro Orrin* in the Plaza de Santo Domingo and later the Plazuela Villamil in Mexico City. The circus was a combination of Wild West show and vaudeville with a sprinkle of ring show. They regularly recruited high-class acts, including many of those featured by the Ringling Brothers (Schell 39). The American traveler Reau Campbell describes the show as “wonderfully fascinating to the tourist in the brilliantly lighted ‘Circo’ to listen, perhaps, to an operatic selection by Parisian singers, to see a whirling vision of Viennese dancers, and then suddenly to be spattered with sawdust from the hoofs of the bare-backed horse of a dashing American girl rider” (73). The circus catered to the tastes of not only tourists and wealthy Mexicans, but most particularly to the American colonists.

The American Colony was established in Mexico City in the 1870s. While little is known about the American Colony, historian William Schell shows that many of the expatriates who established the group were southerners looking to escape the period of emancipation and reconstruction which dominated the post-Civil War years in the United States. These expats also belonged to wealthy American families, many of them managing to establish intimate ties with Díaz and his associates. Schell describes the American Colony as a “contact zone” where “forms of power are multiple and complex; simultaneously arranged through nation-states and more informal relationships; via business and communications networks and culture industries... and through constructions of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality” (ix-x). This burgeoning contact zone not only widened Díaz’s circle of friends, but also brought a

multitude of investment opportunities to Mexico. While Mexican entrepreneurs had exhibited an enormous fear of investing their fortunes in innovative projects, favoring instead low-risk low-gain endeavors, the opportunity to pool capital with these daring *yanquis* marked a new period in Mexican investment. Railroads and industrial infrastructure began to appear almost overnight, breathing fresh air into Díaz's failed schemes to bring into fruition a Mexican industrial revolution.

While the contact zone facilitated the construction of infrastructure and financial tools, it also created the opportunity for cultural negotiation between Mexico and the United States. The financial capital flowing from the United States to Mexico and back also encouraged the transnational flow of people and cultural products. With every financial and cultural transaction that took place between Mexican and American entrepreneurs, a contact zone was negotiated. Though the American Colony was located in Mexico City, the contact zone Schell describes was not limited to the capital city and its elite residents. As I will show later in this chapter, the Mexican artisans creating the spurious artifacts that sustained endeavors such as the Aztec Fair, were also participating in the contact zone as they negotiated their participation in the process of nationhood. The contact zone is not a place, but rather a relationship between two parties where the terms and conditions of that contact are constantly being created and negotiated. As the case of the Aztec Fair shows, the complex financial and cultural transactions taking place during this time were the tools by which difficult relationships or contact zones, such as the one between the United States and Mexico and also the one between disenfranchised artisans and the Mexican state, were being mediated.

Although the Orrin Brothers didn't exactly invest their fortunes in industrial infrastructure and trains, they did contribute to Mexico's financial machine in a different, but important way. As showmen, the Orrin Brothers were expert marketers. For decades, they managed to appeal to a mass audience while catering to the taste and sensibility of the bourgeoisie. In fact, *The Massey Gilbert Blue Book of Mexico* (1901) describes the show's versatility and appeal: "The ring may be transformed into a miniature lake, deep enough to float canoes, small sail and steamboats, or it may be made into a palace while you wait, and from the region beyond the curtain may come in a tiny coach of state the Prince and Cinderella, a pretty transformation, in full view of the audience, one of novelties for which the management is known" (62-3). The Orrin Brothers' stage could quickly transform from a lake to a corral for the Annie Oakley show. This swiftness extended beyond the ring itself to the investment aspect of matters. The fantastic shows produced under the Orrin Brothers brand were often supported by the investment of other American colonists in exchange for advertisement spots. These spots often took the form of print, particularly in the catalogues, pamphlets and general advertisements for the show. The performances themselves also managed to tie into the show's theme the particular product being advertised that week.

As advertisement spots grew to represent a significant portion of circus revenues, the Orrin Brothers soon became able to branch into antiquities dealing. They began acquiring "Aztec artifacts" from artisans in Mexico City and amateur archaeologists. Not only did they stumble into the business of purchasing a wide selection of artifacts and antiques, but they also became infamous for selling many of these acquisitions. In 1887 they even sold an Aztec "Calendar Stone" to Professor O.C. Marsh of Yale

University (MacCurdy 481). They collected everything from Aztec idols and clay pipes to the purported shawl worn by Malinche, Cortes' Indian mistress. While it is unclear whether the Orrin Brothers actually believed in the authenticity of their artifacts and antiquities, it would be reasonable to speculate that they were aware of the dubious origins of these objects. What mattered wasn't the origin or authenticity of an object, but rather the marketing savvy with which such an object was maneuvered. As expert showmen and entrepreneurs, the Orrin Brothers were keen to market their Mexican treasures as authentic remnants of an ancient people to unsuspecting collectors and museums. The alluring objects ranged from the mundane and ordinary, to the bizarre and spectacular.

However, being the innovative showmen that they were, the Orrin Brothers created a new venture on the shoulders of the antiquities-dealing business. They collected their "Aztec artifacts" to mount the Aztec Fair, a travelling show of Aztec curiosities and live specimens. Though it is unclear exactly when the Aztec Fair began to tour, it is sure that by at least the fall of 1886 the show was already appearing throughout the American Midwest. The show was constructed with the American public in mind and built off of the style and popularity of the World's Fairs. While few photographs of the Aztec Fair survive, the *Orrin Bro's & Nichols' Guide to the Aztec Fair: Mexico Past and Present* is a telling remnant of the impact this type of show impressed on the American imaginary. The guide is a working catalogue of all of the objects and performances visitors could encounter at the show. According to the guide, the Aztec Fair was not only comprised of live performances by living Mexican specimens performing basket-weaving to cooking, but also of a wide collection of

objects belonging to virtually every period of Mexican history up until then. But even more spectacular are the narratives that accompany the artifact descriptions included in the *Guide to the Aztec Fair*. Rather than presenting a chocolate stick as a mundane and probably contemporary object, the guide presents it as, “The chocolate stick with which the last cup of chocolate was made for Maximilian [Mexico’s Austrian Emperor executed in 1867] before his execution” (16). An ordinary piece of pottery turns into an ancient artifact presented as, “Clay pitcher in which pulque (a kind of drink) was served at the table of Montezuma” (7), while a necklace of uncertain provenance turns into, “[A] necklace unearthed on the banks of Lake Texcoco. This evidently belonged to an Aztec princess of the Montezuma family, being composed of rock-crystal beads and other stones of great value among the Aztecs” (8). In this way the Aztec Fair magically transforms seemingly ordinary objects into authentic representations of Mexico’s past. The Orrin Brothers essentially write their own interpretation of Mexican history and invent artifacts on the surface of objects of probable contemporary production.

The Discovery of Mexico: The Spectacle of the Find

But the magic of the Aztec Fair resided not only in the fantastic stories which accompanied the “Aztec artifacts,” but also in the visual performance of these pieces. One of the few surviving photographs of the Fair illustrates precisely how these objects were arranged to perform the spectacle of the discovery (fig. 14). Given that this is was the first time that most Fair visitors were coming into contact with things Mexican, the

Orrin Brothers were sure to capitalize on the novelty of this initial encounter.³ The clay and stone figures pictured in the photograph are carefully arranged inside a glass domed curio case. Within the case, sit several shallow boxes containing small figures. While the exact details of the contained figures are difficult to identify, the boxes probably categorize the figures into some kind of organizational theme, giving the fair the feel of a scientific endeavor. Adding to the scientific authenticity of the presentation are the larger, randomly arranged clay figures which sit above the glass case. The contrast of the thematically arranged figures within the case and the haphazard arrangement of the larger figures lend these an air of having recently been “unearthed.” The figures sit above the case as if waiting for the visitor’s gaze to arrange them somewhere among the multitude of smaller, encased figures. In this sense, the visitor is put in the position of the curious scientist looking to arrange or categorize his newly found knowledge. In the hazy background, a sign reads “historical mummies” perhaps indicating the way toward the mummies on display. But these aren’t just any mummies; they are, according to the *Guide*, the famous “historical” mummies of Guanajuato. The addition of this adjective attempts to contribute to the aura of discovery and science which the Fair tries to stage. The popularity of the discovery of Egyptian mummies by American and European explorers is definitely the referent behind the presentation of such “historical” mummies. The Orrin Brothers are in many ways simply taking popular referents and images

³ Though no history of the Aztec Fair has been written, it can be surmised that most fair visitors were probably coming into contact with Mexico for the first time. In *Opinions of the Press* (1886), Samuel Green, the mayor of Boston, explains that, “The Fair... gives a better idea of the customs and manners of a neighboring people with whom we ought to be acquainted... .” Mayor Green’s comments suggest that the average fair visitor knew little if anything about the people of Mexico and was probably coming into substantial contact with things Mexican for the first time. The Aztec Fair was viewed by visitors such as Mayor Green as a way of knowing Mexico and its people.

already circulating within the American imaginary and using these as the mounting on which to present the “discovery” of Mexico. Finally, what appears to be an imperial chair with necklaces hanging from the backrest sits near the far right, behind the glass case. While it is difficult to identify the details of the chair, it appears to hold an uncanny resemblance to the “Silla de Agustín de Iturbide” which today sits in Chapultepec Castle. The imperial chair in the photograph is crowned with what appears to be some kind of regal molding which decorates the upper portion of the backrest. While it is unclear which of the many descriptions of chairs in the *Guide* correspond to this particular imperial chair, it appears that the photograph attempts to capture a survey of the many historical eras represented at the Fair.

The visitor’s Fair experience or discovery of Mexico is completed by the performance of live “Aztecs.” The *Guide* interchanges the terms “Mexican” and “Aztec” as synonyms suggesting little difference between the two adjectives. The Mexicans of today are presented as the millenary ancestors of the ancient Aztecs through the performance of “cultural” activities, which according to the *Guide*, have remained unchanged since the days of the Emperor Moctezuma. Under the subtitle “Native Mexicans at the Aztec Fair”, the *Guide* reads:

The object of the management is to give the American people a correct idea of Mexico and the Mexican. It has secured, at great expense, representations of most of the arts and industries peculiar to its people, many of which have no name outside their language. ...In engaging these artisans, it has been necessary to separate husbands and fathers from their wives and children, and sons and daughters from their aged parents, thus bringing sadness to many homes in far-off Mexico (4).

Even before the visitor enters the Fair, the *Guide* already conjures within the visitor’s imaginary images of native Mexicans, untouched by the advances of Western civilization, performing tasks in the same way as they have been practiced for centuries.

The image of the painful family separation supposedly endured by some of the performers adds to the illusion of the “management’s great lengths” to bring this instructive show to the American public.

While there are no surviving photographs of the Fair’s performers, a pamphlet describing the show’s live performances depicts a sketch of Mexican types in action (fig. 15). The sketch pictures a *campesino* hauling clay pots on his back, while the shadow of a smoking volcano appears in the faint horizon. Across from the *campesino*, stands a woman who appears to be a cross between a *campesina* and Carmen Miranda as she balances a bowl of fruit atop her head. Different varieties of cacti surround the two figures as the text below them reads “Something about the People in the Mexican Village.” This sketch decorates the cover of a pamphlet which was probably distributed as a show guide to visitors at the Fair. The “Maids of the kitchen” performance is described in the pamphlet as “The two Mexican girls who grind the maize on the stone tables, make the cakes and cook them over the charcoal fire, are called ‘Tortilleras.’ The Tortillo is the national bread of the middle and poorer classes.” The “Mexican babies” show is described as “The two cute little natives can be found with their father and mother at one of the rag figure booths. The young father, aged nineteen, is a clever workman, while the mother, aged sixteen, helps him dress the figures.” This telling description is followed by a summary of the “Rag figure” show: “This clever artisan moulds the wax into, and down to, the minutest details; makes representations of all the types of people, animals, fruits, &c., found in Mexico.” These descriptions reveal that the performances were staged as moments of ethnological discovery for the visitor. The “tortilleras” grind and cook the tortillas as if unaware of the peering eyes of visitors. The

show appears to be staged as if to make the visitor feel like the rogue explorer stumbling upon the discovery of an ethnic tribe who is not aware that it is being watched. The voyeuristic visitor can then watch Mexican parents dressing their “figures” or children in the same way that dolls are quickly slipped into new outfits. It is rather curious that the description of the “Rag figure” show follows the “Mexican babies” performance, suggesting that these babies are viewed, at least by the management, as toy figures that can be collected and showcased. Similar to the Mexican babies, the “clever artisan” is also collected like the mechanical toy whose turnkey is twisted to see it march down with synchronous precision. The wax-sculpting artisan is valued by the show’s visitors in the same way that a chimp is applauded for its ability to use language. The artisan’s wax sculptures are not the focus of the show, but rather his ability to produce an object of beauty and skill.

The artifacts and the shows of the Aztec Fair are staged as spectacles of knowledge set to be discovered by the American public. Unlike the later Mexican Pavilions at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition and other World’s Fairs, the Aztec Fair’s exhibitions are meant to be “discovered” and not simply displayed. While the Mexican state attempted to display the nation as an up and coming modern country through exhibitions of industry and manufacturing, the Aztec Fair capitalizes on the thrill of discovering a millenary people. The allure of the Aztec Fair resides precisely in its ability to create the illusion of the discovery of a knowledge set previously unknown to the general American public. While the principle of the spectacle as Foucault summarizes it, the rendering of a small number of objects accessible to a multitude of people, applies to the Aztec Fair, the staging of knowledge is the missing piece which

accompanies this particular spectacle (*Discipline and Punish*, Foucault 216-7). The Orrin Brothers' unique ability to quickly transform an ordinary clay pot into Moctezuma's water jug and a pair of tired boots into Maximilian's favorite riding boots *is* the spectacle of knowledge which the Aztec Fair invents. It is through the spurious artifact and the imported Mexican performers that Mexico is likely for the first time rendered knowable to the American visitors paying to see the Aztec Fair. While the Mexican-American War of 1847 had already placed Mexico under the U.S.'s political radar, very little was actually known about the Mexican people. Shrouded in a fog of mystery, the Mexican people were the U.S.'s unknown neighbors. Although the 1920s would mark the beginning of a huge wave of Mexican immigration to the United States as well as the start of a spiked interest in Mexican art on the part of American intellectuals and collectors, the Aztec Fair was one of the first opportunities the American public had to come face to face with their Mexican neighbors. As museums such as the U.S. National Museum (today known as the Smithsonian) struggled to build their collections of authentic ethnic artifacts, the Orrin Brothers were building an entrepreneurial empire through the exhibition of knowledge as genuine as their Aztec artifacts.

The notes and comments published during the years the Aztec Fair toured the American Midwest reveal that a desire or market for this type of show was already stirring interest among certain circles. Though World's Fairs and museums were already exhibiting things Mexican, the spectacle of the discovery was missing from these displays. An anonymous writer, in the weekly magazine *The Critic* in August of 1886 further elaborates in writing,

A Spanish friend informs me that the well-known Orrin Brothers, managers, are about to bring the Aztec village, similar to the Japanese village, to New York. As we have a very vague idea of the Aztecs, it is just as well that we should learn what they are. Dime museums usually label what-is-its and dwarfs Aztecs, because the name has a mysterious sound. They are indeed nothing more nor less than descendants of the original inhabitants of Mexico, and they have remained a distinct race through all these years (91).

The writer's note reveals a strong interest in ethnic shows for their pedagogical value while noting that shows of this kind were already touring certain American cities. While the working class dime museums are noted here more for their entertainment value rather than their ability to display accurate knowledge, the writer hopes the Aztec Fair enters the American imaginary to remedy the knowledge gaps regarding the Aztecs or Mexican people. But in practice, the Orrin Brothers' emphasis on the spectacle made of the Aztec Fair an endeavor more akin to the dime museum than to the educational endeavors of the U.S. National Museum.

Comments made by Fair critics show that the knowledge gaps regarding Mexico are filled either with images of a backward people or with visions of a lush, romantic landscape. In September of 1886, Boston Mayor Samuel Green comments,

The exhibition is a good example of object-teaching, a lesson adapted to persons of all ages, from child to the adult. It shows well the contrast between the primitive ways of the Mexican and the more advanced methods of the New Englanders, which is very marked, and starts a suggestive train of reflection. The Fair is both interesting and instructive, and gives a better idea of the customs and manners of a neighboring people with whom we ought to be acquainted than could be obtained possibly in any other way than by a personal visit to that country (*Opinions of the Press and the Public* 1).

While the Fair reinforces for some visitors notions of underdevelopment, other visitors find in its shows an unspoiled landscape ready to be gazed upon by American visitors.

One visitor notes in the *Boston Herald*,

For us powerless Mahomets who cannot go to the Mexican mountains for lack of time or money, or both, the Mexican mountains are brought into our midst by the "Aztec Fair" or, at any rate, very much of the life that fills the valleys and the tablelands over which tower the noble Sierras of romantic New Spain. And it is all genuinely Mexican, as the writer can testify. There is nothing "made up," noting exaggerated. It is all just as one sees it on the spot, the actual daily life of the 12,000,000 of people south of the Rio Grande (*Opinions of the Press and the Public* 1).

Though the mayor and the anonymous visitor express different opinions about the visions of Mexico they have encountered at the Aztec Fair, they both agree in the genuineness of the knowledge they have extracted from the experience. The Fair appears to have made a lasting impression on these visitors as they each express particular ideas of Mexicanness in relation to the United States. The mayor finds the ways of the New England people to be far more civilized than those of the millenary-performing Mexicans at the Fair. The second critic finds the vision of a pristine landscape, perhaps the second frontier of Manifest Destiny, in the majestic mountains of Mexico. Whether seeking a potential civilizing project or a new tourist market, both visitors express a perception of Mexicanness stemming from their position as an exoticism-seeking public. In this way, American visitors of the Aztec Fair actively participate in weaving an idea of Mexicanness north of the border. The intersection of the spurious artifact, entrepreneurs such as the Orrin Brothers, and the American public begins to give way to a transnational construction of Mexicanness.

As the Orrin Brothers sought new ways to keep visitors coming back to the Fair, other entrepreneurs also looked to capitalize on the paradoxical allure of Mexicanness. The Mexican Central Railway sponsored a large portion of the touring Aztec Fair in exchange for advertisement spots. The *Guide* dedicates the last five pages to promoting American tourism to Mexico via the trains of the Mexican Central Railway. The advertisement is a long narrative promoting the beauty and allure of Mexico. The narrative is cleverly integrated into the text of the *Guide*, allowing the advertisement to flow seamlessly from the previous descriptions of the Aztec Fair. The advertisement,

under the heading “Mexican Central Railway: The Key to the Republic of Mexico” reads,

That wonderful land so little known and so mysterious, whose civilization and culture date centuries back of our human history; whose volcanoes and mountain peaks tower up from perennial summer into the realms of eternal snow, with a majesty and beauty beyond the power of language to express... . Yet, as a people, we know not Mexico—neither her past history nor her present struggles. [...] The Mexican Central has unlocked this treasure-house of nature and the past, and thrown wide its portals to our curious gaze. From the Rio Grande, on our border, its steel rails stretch 1,224 miles through its richest scenery and over the elevated tablelands, in whose wonderful climate disease is almost unknown... and now the traveler from New England may, in a few days’ luxurious and comparatively inexpensive travel by palace car, and without toil, hardship, or the danger of ocean, “See Egypt and Palestine and old Spain illustrated on our own continent,” revel in the exuberant vegetation of the tropics, breathe the pure, health giving air of elevated plateaus, and gaze upon the most majestic scenery that earth possesses (30-1).

The advertisement ends with a schedule of all the cities with departing Mexican Central Railway trains to Mexico and with sketches of Mexican life scenes. The advertisement’s narrative extends the Fair’s theme of acquiring knowledge of the Mexican people by visiting the country; in this case, the visit involves a trip by train rather than a walk through the Aztec Fair. The narrative sharply highlights a comparison of Mexico’s landscape and culture to those of Palestine and Spain. While the basis on which these strange comparisons should be made is unclear, it is certain that Mexico’s geographical proximity to the United States is cited as a convenient option for those seeking to dive into a tropical landscape. The advertisement appeals to adventure-seeking Fair visitors who might be curious enough to visit Mexico after their Fair experience. However, the advertisement’s descriptions of a “perennial summer” and “picturesqueness” contrast sharply with the New England landscape inhabited by potential Mexican Central Railway travelers. Like the shows of the Aztec Fair, the advertisement conjures images of a warm, lazy landscape and people ready to welcome American tourists. Mexico is essentially depicted as everything the United States is not. Mexicanness is represented here as both inviting and repulsive in its majestic landscapes and lugubrious sunshine.

The Aztec Fair and the Mexican Central Railway market Mexico as the antithesis of the United States, provoking either romantic desires for Mexicanness or deep disapproval of its cultural manifestations. Regardless of which extreme end of Mexicanness a Fair visitor may imagine, it is certain that the enticing images the advertisement stirs in readers further reinforces the ideas of Mexicanness touted by the Aztec Fair.

Transnational Mexicanness: A New Kind of Nationalism

While the Mexican Central Railway attempted to entice potential travelers with sexy images of the tropics, vigorous construction was already taking place to expand the railroad tracks connecting multiple Mexican cities with those of the United States. As the Orrin Brothers were reaching their attendance peak in the fall of 1886, investors in Boston became majority stockholders of the Mexican Central Railway. By the end of the 19th century, segments of the Mexican Central Railway would come to be chartered by the state of Massachusetts (Morales and Schmal 4). While profit-making was certainly one of the goals Orrin Brothers had in mounting the Aztec Fair for an American audience, the establishment of easy access to Mexican markets was one of the long-term objectives of the project. The Orrin Brothers were after all elite members of the American colony in Mexico City and they were looking to promote the financial interests of its members. The collaboration of the Aztec Fair and the Mexican Central Railway was one of the first historical instances where a serious, non-state effort to promote Mexico as a viable capital market exerted a major impact of its image abroad. The efforts of American colony members and subsequent American financiers marked the beginning of a transnational Mexicanness.

Though past efforts to exhibit Mexicanness as the cultural manifestation of Mexico's mestizo stock had already taken root within the country, transnational Mexicanness operated to promote the interests of a complex web of players. During the last third of the 19th century alone, Díaz oversaw the costly reorganization of the National Museum, erected more patriotic monuments than any other president before him, and led the country's financial and industrial revolutions. These projects were developed under the broader agenda of strengthening nationalism among a heterogeneous citizenry and building a modern image of Mexico abroad. Díaz's efforts to wield Mexicanness and its cultural manifestations as a tool for fulfilling his developmental agenda resulted in several side effects. The first of these was the strengthening of his grip on the country as a territory recently downsized by the devastating Mexican-American War. It was in the president's interest to send the message to the Mexican citizenry and to imperialistic nations that Mexico was now under the iron grip of an unyielding state. The spread of Mexicanness as the state-endorsed brand of nationalism was intended to strengthen the state's control of what was left of the Mexican territory. But as Díaz attempted to control the features of Mexicanness, the cultural manifestations of the nation quickly permeated the border between Mexico and the United States. While the 1823 Monroe Doctrine limited the intervention countries such as the United States could make within Mexico, though the Mexican-American War appears to have been the exception to the doctrine, it made no mention of the cultural and economic invasions Latin American countries could experience at the hand of imperialistic powers. In this way, showmen such as the Orrin Brothers and American financiers fuel the production of Mexicanness, turning it into a

means of securing markets rather than territories. Rather than seeking to create citizens through the production of Mexicanness, American investors sought to create new consumers of Mexicanness through the circulation of its representation.

However, the consumption of Mexicanness alongside its very production was a process that had been taking place in the years prior to Mexico's participation in international capital markets. The construction of the Mexican National Museum and with it the narrative of national glory framing its most iconic artifacts was the state's attempt to generate its own brand of nationalism. Though Díaz significantly improved upon the quality and quantity of the artifacts constituting the national patrimony, it is important to note that many national icons, such as the *piedra del sol* and the Cuauhtémoc Monument, survived the tumultuous political successions that defined Mexico's 19th century political history. Despite the national icons' resilience in the face of changing political and historical fads⁴, the very citizens who would later make the Revolution possible would be left out of the national memory erected by these same icons. As I show in chapter 1, even the most canonical Revolutionary novels eventually express extreme ambivalence regarding the ability for the country's peasant majority to assimilate modern citizenship. While the collection of Aztec archaeological artifacts at the Mexican National Museum appears to point toward the writing of an all inclusive ancestral memory, my analysis in chapter two of the most iconic of these artifacts reveals the production of a nationalist discourse which manages to exclude the country's

⁴ Historian Josefina Zoraida Vázquez traces the constant flux of historical trends and re-writings of history from 1821-1960 in her comprehensive study of historical textbooks in *Nacionalismo y educación en México* (1970). She analyzes the shifting historical framings of iconic figures such as Cuauhtémoc, Hidalgo, and Cortés while paying close attention to the permanence of these figure within the Mexican imaginary.

contemporary Indian population. And although the search for the mortal remains of Cuauhtémoc, as I analyze in chapter 3, allows for the appropriation of public space by common citizens, the monument doesn't allow for the production of an ancestral memory that unifies the people of "Greater Mexico." I argue that it is the transnational nature of the spurious artifact which allows for the production of a nation rooted in an ancestral memory that transcends borders. It is through this process of transcending borders that the Mexican nation, as imagined by the people of Mexican descent engaged in its representation, is produced. The historical, economic, and political ramifications of this transnational Mexicanness allow for the negotiation of cultural citizenship and inclusion within the nation-state for people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border.

The flows of capital contributing to the construction of transnational Mexicanness fueled the demand for businesses such as the Mexican Central Railway. The expansion of the railroad in Mexico as a significant mode of transportation was spurred by the transnational consumption of Mexicanness. The American public's increased fascination with things Mexican increased demand and need for the expansion of increased railway lines connecting Mexico and the United States. Though the idea was to reduce transportation costs between the two countries through the increased availability of railway lines, the expansion had a very unexpected outcome. The new rail networks made it easier for poor Mexicans to travel long distances in search of work. Inadvertently, the railways began to steadily draw thousands of Mexican workers toward the border (Parlee 20). By the 1920s, the number of Mexicans travelling northbound by train multiplied as the Revolution forced many to flee the country. The immigration

exodus the Mexican railways facilitated during the last years of the 19th century certainly reinforced the idea of a transnational Mexicanness. While the re-invention of Mexicanness for an American public opened Mexican markets, it also facilitated the unexpected arrival of transnational Mexicans.

In this way, Mexicanness as it is generated through the transnational flow of capital, whether through the market for spurious artifacts or through the railway networks, becomes a contact zone where the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States is negotiated. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had already radically re-mapped the political and geographical parameters of the contact zone unfolding along the U.S.-Mexico border. As José Limón explains, “The forcible partition of the Mexican territory left thousands of Mexicans as nominal citizens of the United States, “citizens” whose full rights in civil society would be a long time coming” (8). However, the increasing economic interdependence between the United States and Mexico gave way to the creation of Mexicanness as a contact zone where people of Mexican descent could lay claim to their cultural citizenship, whether in Mexico or the United States. The trains operated by the Mexican Central Railway not only carried Mexicans north-bound, but also served as a visual and geographic bridge seamlessly transiting through the territories of “Greater Mexico” as a unified land. As the different port cities visited by the trains of the Mexican Central Railway appeared on the map as dots connecting the people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border, the artisans of Mexico City were actively shaping their cultural citizenship by daring to imagine their ancestral past through the creation of the spurious artifact. It is through the possibilities created by the transnational flow of capital, a process begun by the

American colony described by William Schell, that a *true contact zone* between the United States and Mexico is created for the contestation of cultural citizenship and nationhood.

While the circulation of Mexicanness within the United States encouraged the permeability of both markets and borders, it is necessary to emphasize the role of the Mexican artisans who created the objects exhibited at the Aztec Fair. As Smithsonian curator Jane MacLaren Walsh has pointed out, there simply weren't enough genuine archaeological artifacts being excavated in Mexico to support the idea that the objects of the Aztec Fair were all authentic (interview). In her article, "What is Real?", Walsh shows that "[William Henry] Holmes spent some of his spare time collecting potsherds he found nearly everywhere he looked. These collections eventually convinced him that most of what was being sold to tourists and foreign collectors as ancient Aztec pottery was fake, bearing no resemblance to what he had been picking up in the railroad yard" (4). The many trips Holmes made to Mexico during the 1880s convinced him that the fake artifact industry had taken hold of the antiquities trade. He was able to readily compare the objects sold as Aztec artifacts with pieces of stone and clay he found lying on the ground in the newly constructed yards of the Mexican Central Railway. Holmes found that even those artifacts which were actually legitimately disinterred were often "enhanced" by adding carvings or appendages to make them more attractive to buyers. Whether the artifacts were genuine or created, Mexican artisans often had a hand in representing their own idea of Aztec art. More recent scholars have tried to summarize the trends in faking which have been observed in the Mesoamerican collections of several museums. Gordon Ekholm, curator of Mexican archaeology at the American

Museum of Natural History, discusses the objects created by the Mexican artisans participating in the industry by explaining that, “A more egregious kind of error that sometimes appears is where the maker grossly confused his materials and produces, for example, a stone sculpture that has all the characteristics of modeled clay. We must presume that the ancient artist could not possibly confuse the basically different techniques that are applicable to the two materials” (29). In this way both Holmes and Ekholm heavy-handedly condemn the work of Mexican artisans.

Though I have tried to emphasize the significance of the work that Mexican artisans were producing in the context of both the Aztec Fair and transnational Mexicanness, writing them into history presents a set of methodological difficulties. While Charnay sarcastically refers to the artisans of spurious artifacts as “fortunate inventor” (36), Holmes angrily refers to them as “modern Aztec” and “dealer” (321-323). Both Charnay and Holmes refuse to attribute an identity to these artisans or any artistic value to their work. Not only do these archaeologists refuse to write these artisans into their essays and chronicles in a meaningful way, but they also reproduce within their writings the same dynamic of oppression and disenfranchisement which had these artisans living on the fringes of Mexican society. Although artisans made up only about 30% of the labor force in Mexico City during the latter part of the 19th century (Pérez Toledo 135), historian Pablo Piccato explains that “artisans... many of whom peddled their services in the streets, supplied a higher percentage of rateros relative to suspects in judicial records” (172). Artisans, many of them using public space to market their goods, were equated with vagrancy and delinquency. Not only were artisans pushed to the fringes of society because of their use of public space, but also because of

the significance of their line of work. Sonia Pérez Toledo stresses that, “el elevado porcentaje de artesanos que fueron acusados de vagancia constituye un indicador del desempleo en la ciudad, pero también muestra cómo la pronunciada estratificación social y la división entre la población ‘decente’ y ‘la gente baja’ contribuía a que los artesanos constituyeran el mayor número de personas al que se acusó de vagancia” (250). Essentially, to be an artisan was to be poor. This became a vicious cycle of discrimination and criminality where artisans were increasingly targeted by policemen due to their physical and social (in)visibility. While this same dynamic of (in)visibility is reproduced in the writings of those archaeologists and curators denouncing the spread of the spurious artifact, it is important to recognize this phenomenon in attempting to rescue the significance of the work produced by these artisans. These artisans were individuals who usually came from backgrounds where their trade was passed down from previous generations of artisans. The work of these artisans wasn’t usually characterized by the reproduction of original artifacts, but instead represented the original invention of these objects. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the individual identities of these artisans, it is crucial to write these artisans back into the history of nation building by placing the significance of their art at the center of discussions of the production of Mexicanness.

Although the “egregious kind of error” represented by the spurious artifact is offensive to museum curators, they fail to recognize the project in which these artisans have inadvertently become engaged. These artisans are inventing and not imitating an idea of ancient Mexican art and culture. While the artisans’ participation in the industry is financially motivated, their productions became an expression of how they imagined

their ancient ancestors. In some ways this is no different from what Díaz had been doing with the Aztec artifacts of the National Museum. These objects were selected and exhibited to present an image of ancient Mexico which supported the president's plan to modernize the country. Díaz, following the trend of earlier presidents and curators, openly rejected uncomfortable objects such as the *Coatlicue* monolith in favor of supporting a "cleaner", more orderly image of Aztec Mexico. In a similar fashion, the disenfranchised artisans of the slums of Mexico City find a space, where they can express their own image of the nation, within the intersection of their sculpting material and the nascent antiquities industry. It is here where the artisan, or common citizen, finds an opportunity to participate in shaping a lasting image of the nation. In this way Mexicanness is no longer the exclusive domain of a few Mexican elite and a handful of greedy investors, but rather the muse of the many schools of artisans dotting the slums of the Mexican capital.

Despite the fact that the spurious artifacts created by these artisans represented for some curators "blackware excrescences" and "monsters", the artifacts of the Aztec Fair do not cease to represent the early participation of Mexican people within the nation-building process (Walsh 18). The artifacts they created ultimately traveled the world to find a place within the most important collections and world museums. While the Díaz regime during this time held a tight grip on the image of Mexico he wanted to promote at home and abroad, these artisans found a way to circumvent the president's autocratic grip on the production of Mexican culture and nationalism. Though later exhibitions of Mexico such, as the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, would minimize the work of

these artisans, these citizens would continue to maintain their lucrative practice of exporting Mexicanness for transnational consumption.

The Artifact and the Mexican: Rethinking Mexicanness

As the Mexican Revolution came and went, a process of nationalizing the citizenry was quickly developed by the post-revolutionary state. While this process was already brewing during the years prior to the Revolution, Mexicanness would certainly come into its fullest expression during the post-revolutionary period. However, it is important to closely examine the nationalizing processes which were already taking place in the years leading up to the Revolution. Whether nationalizing at home for the purpose of shaping the citizenry or Mexicanizing abroad with the aim of creating new capital markets, the circulation of objects and bodies is at the heart of the creation of Mexicanness. Differing representations of Mexico arose not necessarily to compete with one another, but rather to coalesce into a collective idea capable of being viewed from different vantage points. Mexicanness was not the elite project of the Mexican state, but rather the collective construction of intersecting interests and players.

This study has attempted to trace the material expressions of Mexicanness through the various nationalist projects of the Mexican state during the first third of the 20th century. While Mexicanness took many shapes during this period, its expression as artifact is especially compelling. The various aesthetic forms of the artifact, from literary to falsified, tell a story of how Mexicanness is wielded by different interest groups to communicate a particular representation of Mexico. But more than just a vision of Mexico, Mexicanness is deployed as a means to an end. The present study has aimed to

show how the use of the Revolutionary novel, the archaeological artifact, the monument, and the spurious artifact all tell a story of how Mexicanness was conceived during the years in which a lasting vision of its cultural expression was constructed.

Though Mexicanness began as a state project to modernize the citizenry, the representation of Mexico ultimately escapes the control of the state. It is here where the study of Mexican nationalism becomes intertwined with the production of culture in the United States. With the complexities of the Aztec Fair, many questions arise regarding the reception and exhibition of Mexicanness in the United States. It is imperative to ask how Mexican immigrants during the early 20th century altered representations of Mexicanness exhibited at World's Fairs and museums. Does Mexicanness become an emancipatory expression of cultural identity as it transcends borders, or does it remain, as James Oles describes, as "Mexican objects serv[ing] as elements useful mainly for American interior decorators or housewives looking for an inexpensive way to revitalize drab domestic landscapes" (113)? How does the invention of Mexicanness inform the circulation of *Latinidad* within the American imaginary?

In answering these questions, it is imperative to re-think Mexicanness far beyond both the confines of Mexican Studies and the geographical U.S.-Mexico border. Although the search for Mexicanness began as a state-endorsed project for nation-building, as I have traced in the first three chapters, once crossing geographical and cultural borders, it turns into the means for the creation of a nation rooted in an ancestral memory. As much as the Mexican state attempted to replace ancestral memory with the writing of national history, Mexicanness is appropriated by the people of "Greater Mexico" as part of a move to assert their cultural citizenship. But tracing the democratic

possibilities created by the trajectory of Mexicanness requires us to re-map Mexican Studies and American Studies as extensions of one another. The cultural and economic interdependence of the two countries, which I have traced in this study through an analysis of the Aztec Fair, shows that the transnational flow of capital, people, and objects eventually blurs the cultural borders between Mexico and the United States. María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo makes a call for scholarship that takes into account these transnational flows by explaining the insufficiency of current models: “border theory, and scholarship, precisely because of the binomial focus of their central trope, too often serve to reinforce a ‘nation within a nation’ model... the focus of such scholarship is almost exclusively on the historical and cultural ‘contact zones’ which occur along a border where two national cultures meet” (“From the Borderlands” 505). As the case of the Aztec Fair shows, the “contact zones” between the United States and Mexico reside far beyond the geographical border, and many points of economic, political, and cultural contact bind the histories of the two countries. And in the case of Mexicanness, it would be erroneous to characterize the nation it represents as simply another nation residing within the cultural fabric of the United States. The Mexican nation, as it is conceived by people of Mexican descent, is rooted in the ancestral memory of a territory divided by the U.S.-Mexico border, but is not wholly contained on either side of that division. This is an important distinction to make due to the implications that the construction of Mexicanness holds for asserting cultural citizenship on either side of the border. The claim that people of Mexican descent make to the territories of “Greater Mexico” is accomplished through their appropriation of Mexicanness. They appeal to Mexicanness as the descendents of the Indian nations that inhabited the territories that were conquered

by the Mexican state and later the United States. It is their ancestral ties to the land which informs the subject-position from which people such as Alonso S. Pereles, the citizens seeking the mortal remains of Cuauhtémoc, and the artisans of spurious artifacts all negotiate their democratic rights.

A study of the history of how the people of Mexican descent have negotiated their cultural citizenship must necessarily be a “topospatial” cultural history of the emergence of Mexicans on both sides of the border. I borrow the term “topospatial” from José David Saldívar who uses it to describe the profound interaction between space, history, geography, psychology, politics, nationhood, and imperialism; space is defined as not simply a “setting” but as a formative presence within culture (79). In this sense, a “topospatial” recounting of cultural citizenship must analyze how the nation’s territories are constituted. For the people of Mexico, whether followers of Cuauhtémoc or artisans, it is their ancestral memory of the lands governed by the Mexican state which informs their subject-position as citizens; whether that ancestral memory is lived or inherited, it nonetheless shapes the manner in which people negotiate the state’s often hostile initiatives. In the case of post-revolutionary Mexico, as much as the state attempted to produce a nationalist discourse that rigidly defined the meaning of Mexicanness and its relationship to modern citizenship, people contested that discourse through the production of their own narratives of “peoplehood.” For the people of Mexican descent in the United States, John Michael Rivera summarizes best how their political subjectivity is often constituted by their association to the land: “the United States also argued that Mexicans’ inability to work the land into a viable capitalist resource fueled the rhetoric of filibusters and was used to argue that Mexicans were unfit for democracy.

Hence, Mexicans relationship to the land become central to how they should be viewed as political subjects” (179). However, Mexicans such as Pereles, invert this paradigm to draw upon their ancestral ties to the land to challenge the very idea that they are “unfit for democracy.” As much as the United States and the Mexican state point to the interaction between the people of Mexican descent and the national territory as an obstacle for the practice of modern citizenship, these same Mexicans appeal to their experience with the land or national territory to re-define the meaning of citizenship.

The question of how the nation-building projects on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border inform the political subjectivity of people of Mexican descent has broader implications for the political and economic ascent of Latinos in the United States. If the development of the nationhood project in the United States is to be understood as an expansionist project of neocolonial interventions in the Americas, then the waves of Latino immigrants must be viewed as a consequence of that project. The U.S. economy’s continued dependence on Latin American markets and resources makes of Latino immigrants vital cultural citizens of the United States. Although critics such as Samuel Huntington argue that, “The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages...” (30), as the transnational construction of Mexicanness shows the U.S. nation cannot be properly conceived of in isolation from Latin America. The continuous transnational flow of ideas, capital, and people in the Americas has woven a complex cultural web between the United States and Latin America. As Alexander Aleinikoff points “Citizenship is both more than a commonly held set of rights and less than a common culture. It is an important joint venture, on a defined piece of territory, to which people contribute from

their particular circumstances (of faith, gender, occupation, race, region, and ethnicity)” (21). Citizenship and nationhood in the United States cannot be conceptualized as processes taking place strictly among citizens legally recognized by the U.S. Constitution. Rather, the process of nation-making is one where all the inhabitants of a territory are actively negotiating their cultural citizenship.

As questions of *Latinidad* continue to gain momentum within the United States, a history of Mexicanness will continue to be re-constructed through studies of the transnational circulation of Mexican culture and people. As long as media outlets such as CNN continue to show interest in the Latino community through reports such as *Latino in America* (2009) and the Latino vote continues to be the talk of political races, attempts to deconstruct the cultural underpinnings of *Latinidad* will be made on the part of journalists, politicians, and academics alike. Perhaps the crucial question at stake in this study as well as future ones is one that Holly Barnet-Sánchez presents as a statement in her study of pre-Columbian art: “It also became very clear that pre-Columbian art in general, and that from Mexico in particular, could never become part of a specifically U.S. patrimony” (258). The question of whether Mexicanness and other forms of *Latinidad* will ever become part of a U.S. patrimony is probably better gauged as a question of “when” and “how” rather than “if.”

Although states and capital markets may attempt to wield and control the deployment of Mexicanness, as the case of the Aztec Fair shows, it is a mode of subjectivity that is ultimately negotiated by those who are invested in the recovery of the cultural citizenship conferred to them by their ancestral memory of the national territory. While Mexicanness continues to be “served and bought” through the marketing of a

multitude of things Mexican, as the popularity of Disney's Mexican Pavilion suggests, its possibilities for citizenship increase on both sides of the border through its circulation. The residents of Pico Rivera understood this when they re-defined the meaning of their Mexicanness to assert their place as Americans. For the people of Mexico, it has been through the creation of pockets of cultural resistance that disenfranchised citizens have sought to assert the civil rights guaranteed by the Mexican Constitution of 1917. In relation to the making of the Mexican nation, Agustín Basave Benítez explains that, "Y si en el país de las desigualdades hemos llegado a imaginarnos herederos de muertos extraños y precursores de nonatos ajenos y a ver a millones de desconocidos como compatriotas es, a no dudarlo, por obra y gracia del mestizaje" (152). But as the stories of resistance uncovered through the artifact suggest, it is through "obra y gracia" of the making of Mexicanness that the people of Mexico have become citizens of the nation.



Figure 1: Piedra del sol, Museo Nacional de Antropología, 2006. Photograph by Laura Cobian.



Figure 2: The Goddess Coatlicue, Museo Nacional de Antropología, 2006. Photograph by Laura Cobian.



Figure 3: Coatlicue and the piedra del sol in the Monolith Gallery at the Museo Nacional. Photograph courtesy of the A.D. White Architectural Photographs Collection, Cornell University Library.



Figure 4: Fragments of circumcised phalluses at Uxmal. Photograph from the *Catálogo del Salón Secreto* (1926) held at the Biblioteca Nacional de México.

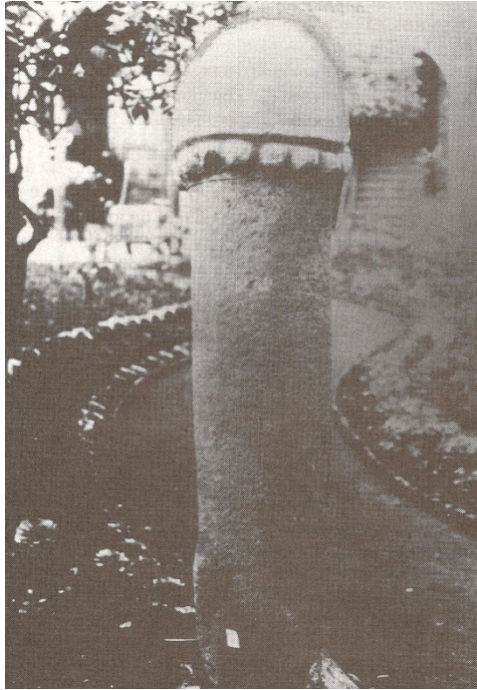


Figure 5: Prehispanic phallus. Photograph by C.B. Waite. Photograph from Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno's *Orígenes de la museología mexicana*.



Figure 6: Early 20th century lithograph advertisement for the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc depicting a romanticized vision of the last Aztec emperor. Image courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación and its collection “El coleccionista. Felipe Teixidor.”



Figure 7: Photograph by Abel Briquet circa 1887 of the newly inaugurated Cuauhtémoc Monument on the open streets of El Paseo de la Reforma. Photograph courtesy of Cornell University Library, Rare & Manuscript Collections, A.D. White Photographs, Schuchardt Collection.



Figure 8: A postcard photograph of the relief sculpture of Cuauhtémoc's torture locate on the left side of the base of Cuauhtémoc's Monument. Photograph courtesy of <http://www.historiaperuana.blogspot.com>.



Figure 9: Photograph by Nacho López circa 1962 of a man dressed in Indian costume posing next to the “torture” relief sculpture of the Cuauhtémoc Monument and what appears to be the fringe of a Mexican flag. Pilgrimages to the Cuauhtémoc Monument became infrequent during the latter part of the 20th century though the occasional visit by local protestors was not terribly rare. Photograph courtesy of University of California, San Diego, Image Gallery.

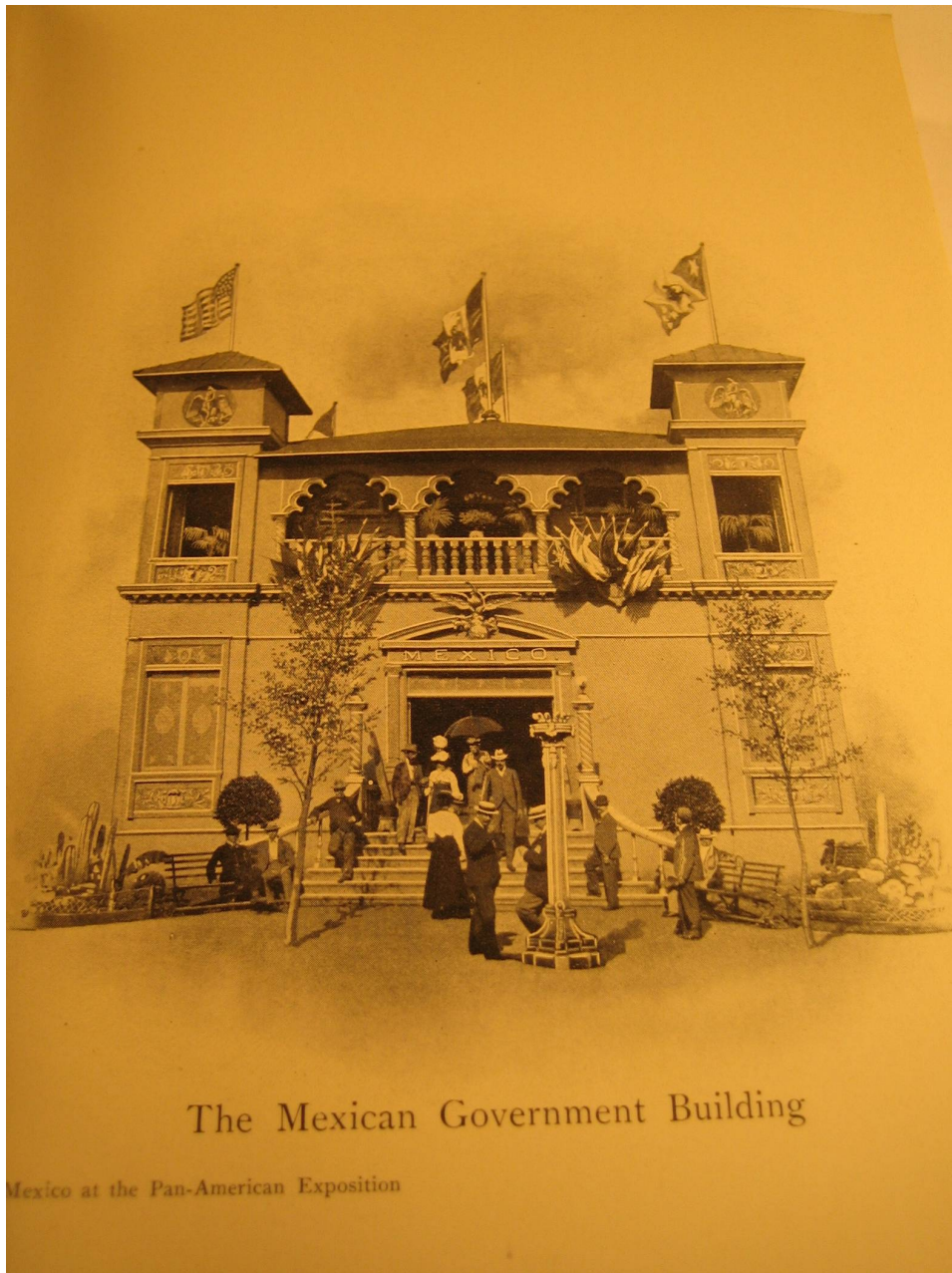


Figure 10: The Mexican Pavilion at the 1901 Buffalo World's Fair. Image from *A Few Facts About Mexico* (Mexico City, 1901).



Figure 11: A view of the carefully crafted ethnology exhibit at the Pan-American Exposition. Image from *A Few Facts About Mexico* (Mexico City, 1901).



Figure 12: An image of the Pan-American Fair's Official Seal picturing Latin America gently floating up to touch North America's helping hand. Courtesy of the Warshaw Collection, NMAH Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Guadalajara Pottery.

MADE BY THE AZTEC INDIANS. ANCIENT AND MODERN STYLES.

The pottery made at Guadalajara is more widely known than any other of Mexican manufacture. It is very light and porous, being made of a peculiar kind of clay not found in any other part of the country, and water kept in it cools by the evaporation from the surface of that which passes through the sides of the vessel—an item of great importance in a country where ice cannot be had. From this circumstance the natives refer to it as *la loza fria de Guadalajara*—“the cold pottery of Guadalajara”—and the larger pieces are known as *enfriaderas*, or refrigerators. The people who make it are true descendants of the Aztecs, and may really be called a race of potters, as the custom of the country for hundreds of years has been for the son to follow the calling of the father, and they have therefore naturally acquired considerable skill in its manufacture. This pottery is all soft



No. 1. Set of bottle, cup and plate.

baked, without glaze, but highly polished with a brush or cloth, after which a peculiar varnish, made of silver-bearing clay, is applied. The colors are gray, or ashes of roses, the natural color of the clay when baked; a rich, dark red, said not to be produced elsewhere, and an intense black. The better pieces are very elaborately decorated in silver, gold and bright colors, and the quaint designs which appear on them are very striking.

Figure 13: A page from the *Mexican Art and Curiosity Store Catalogue* (1888) describing the Guadalajara pottery made by “Aztec Indians.” Courtesy of the NMAH Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



Figure 14: A photograph of the Aztec Fair picturing some of the Mesoamerican artifacts placed on exhibition as well as a sign reading “historical mummies,” perhaps pointing to the several Mexican mummies on display. Photograph courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



Figure 15: The cover of an 1886 pamphlet describing the exhibits to be found in the Aztec Fair. Courtesy of the Warshaw Collection, NMAH Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

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