

NÚMERO 56

MAURICIO TENORIO

Around 1919 and in Mexico City

ABRIL 2009



www.cide.edu

• Las colecciones de **Documentos de Trabajo** del CIDE representan un medio para difundir los avances de la labor de investigación, y para permitir que los autores reciban comentarios antes de su publicación definitiva. Se agradecerá que los comentarios se hagan llegar directamente al (los) autor(es).

• D.R. © 2009. Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, carretera México-Toluca 3655 (km. 16.5), Lomas de Santa Fe, 01210, México, D.F.
Fax: 5727•9800 ext. 6314
Correo electrónico: publicaciones@cide.edu
www.cide.edu

• Producción a cargo del (los) autor(es), por lo que tanto el contenido así como el estilo y la redacción son su responsabilidad.

Abstract

Around 1919, the First World War, the Russian Revolution and starvation in Europe were facts that undermined European cities productivity in many ways. But Mexico City was far away from that context. This city was a refuge for foreigners, fact that made it a cultural seedbed. However, it must be remember that in 1919 the whole country was in a crucial politic and social moment: the Post-Revolutionary Era. The present work tells how in 1919, Mexico City became a cultural city. It was the moment where Mexico City started an economic, politic, social and cultural development; it was the start of a Modern City. Throughout the writers, the poets and the musicians of that moment, the author tried to construct a nostalgic tale about the past and about the social and cultural transformation suffered by Mexico City.

Resumen

Alrededor de 1919, la primera guerra mundial, la revolución rusa, las hambrunas en Europa y la epidemia de la influenza fueron acontecimientos que socavaron la productividad de las ciudades europeas en muchas formas. La ciudad de México logró salir avante de aquellas convulsiones mundiales debido a su lejanía geográfica, lo que le permitiría servir de refugio a los extranjeros y funcionar como un semillero cultural. Pero no se debe olvidar que en ese entonces el país pasaba por un momento político y social de suma importancia: la época posrevolucionaria. El presente trabajo da cuenta de cómo 1919 fue el año en que la Ciudad de México llegó a convertirse en una ciudad cultural, el momento posrevolucionario imprimió un sello distintivo en el desarrollo económico, político, social y cultural, proporcionando herramientas para el logro de grandes transformaciones en los mismos ámbitos; comenzaba a prepararse también el camino para consolidarse como una ciudad moderna. Es a través de los escritores y poetas, así como de los músicos de aquella época que se puede dar cuenta de la nostalgia por el pasado y de la transformación social y cultural de la Ciudad.

Introduction

There is a 1920s *Telegu* poem that talks about how the poet digs deep down, in order to find *the* poem, which of course is buried deep underground, beyond the personal limits of the poet —‘The buried poem’ (1928) by Ismael. The dilemma lies, so the poem concludes, in the fact that every time the poet reaches the bedrock, he finds a coffin: to open it is to discover himself, the poet, in the act of digging... but alive.

I never met Professor Allan Martin, and in a way it could seem like a mistake that I, a Mexican historian educated in the early 1990s, have been asked to deliver the 2008 Allan Martin Lecture. And yet, the more I learn about Professor Martin, from his work and from my colleagues and friends Barry Carr, Sandra Lauderdale-Graham and Desley Deacon, the more I am convinced that my presence here, in Canberra, is but one more indication of Professor Martin’s clairvoyance. Indeed, the poet, like the great historian, digs deep in unfamiliar terrain, beyond himself —the poet, beyond his own narrow national history— the historian, searching beyond the personal and the national, seeking knowledge and clues to truly understand the familiar. Neither the poet nor the historian escapes the confines of either the personal or the national, and yet, as in the case of the poet, the clairvoyant historian, by digging beyond the national, re-encounters in the most local history the unavoidable global resonance, the real significance of the local.

Professor Martin’s dedication to Australian political history would not have been the same without his hard-to-understand passion for Mexican history. His courses on Mexican history did not offer the narrow perspective of a historian of Mexico unacquainted with the history of British imperialism, and with Australian and larger Latin American histories. I wonder whether there is any parallel spirit in the United States or Mexican historiography to do what Professor Martin did in 1969: attend one of Mexico’s most prestigious meetings on Mexican History in Oaxtepec, Mexico, in order to learn what the debates were in Mexican history. I do not see a Mexican historian doing the same for any other history than Mexican. This is the fact: I am here today, in Canberra, because of the clairvoyance of a historian who was truly inhabited by the simultaneity of history. I may disappoint you with my talk, but the very attempt of talking about Mexican history here, at the Australian National University, constitutes the continuance of Professor Martin’s intellectual and institutional labors. And for being instrumental in this continuum, for modestly enacting the image of Professor Martin at work in his exploration of other countries’ histories —for that, I feel deeply honoured.

But why Mexico and Professor Martin? I have explored the question with colleagues in Australia and the United States, but I have no definitive answer. What I know is that he was influential in developing the research group that

ended up becoming what I was taught to refer as the Australian ethno-history approach (meaning the great work on Maya-Spanish encounters by Inga Clendinnen). I do not really know why Mexico, but I know he was ahead of his time. Today transnational approaches have become a commonplace. In fact, it is time to conclude that from Fernand Braudel, who lived in Brazil and worked for the institutionalisation of Latin American history in France, to Daniel Cosío Villegas, the great Mexican historian who tried to establish the study of African, Asian and US histories at El Colegio de México, it is time to conclude, I repeat, that clairvoyance in history is always a call for *re-discovering* the nation through the discovery of beyond-the-national.

Fashions will come and go in academia, what was called 'the proletariat' is today called 'the subaltern' and tomorrow will have another name; what yesterday was called 'dialectic link' is now referred to as 'interstices' and tomorrow, hopefully, will gain a better name. Allan Martin's lesson of gaining distance from our familiar histories by looking at other histories, however, will never disappear. But we cannot leave this to the serendipity of the appearance of another outstanding scholar and institution builder. I hope fervently that Mexican and Latin American histories remain a strong commitment in Australia.

Having said so, I can only honour Professor Martin's legacy with a view of a very local scenario, Mexico City, but read as something more.

Around 1919 and in Mexico City

*What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but
what I shall now write down will be
successive.*

Jorge Luis Borges, *Aleph*
(1945)

1919 saw the world adrift. It seemed that never before had the world known the clash of mighty historical forces: nationalisms, imperial interests and *the* Revolution. Then, Revolution meant something more than an intellectual lucubration—it was the all too tangible inevitability of radical social change; a fate that gained both a founding moment, in the Russian Revolution, and a driving force: the workers' struggle throughout the world. Yet 1919 was the year of peace after World War I, but also the year when world peace meant starvation in Germany, Russia, Hungary and Poland; when Wilsonian dreams of global stability contrasted with US and allied forces' hesitations and interventions in the bloody Russian civil war, fearing the expansion of Bolshevism. This was the year when, while soldiers returned home from the war front, unions everywhere revolted, cities were paralysed by strikes and by anarchist and socialist terrorist acts; it was the same in Philadelphia as in Buenos Aires, in Mexico City as in Barcelona, in Berlin as in Delhi. Nationalisms prevailed, whether through an intransigent George Clemenceau, eager to humiliate Germany, or in all sorts of regionalisms blended with revolutionary impulses—in Bavaria, Catalonia, Ireland, Egypt or Bengal. Thus, this was one of those years when either revolutionary or reactionary factions profited politically from xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism. Democracy hindered neither the persecution of pacifists and radicals in European and US cities nor the gradual closing of the US to 'undesirable' immigrants; the year when race riots in Chicago echoed pogroms in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, 1919 was a terrible year for the demographic balance of the world: countrysides were abandoned, infrastructure in Europe was destroyed, and the frightful consequences of the Spanish influenza were felt all over the world. It was a cold, very cold winter, and an unusually warm summer. It was nightmarish, or so it seemed then.

The concentric waves of this world in disarray reached Mexico City, which, however, was both too far away and too close to what 1919 meant in the world. After all, Mexico had been an integral part of the social and cultural change that had started 'right around 1910'—it had furnished the era of modern revolutions with the first massive popular revolution. But the city was far from either the famine in Europe or the red scare *à la américaine*. That is why Mexico City became both a refuge for the world's radicals and a

battlefield for world radicalism. *La ciudad* was not Moscow or Paris and yet it was full of interests, agents and intellectuals from all over the world. It was not peaceful, as it had just come out of a bloody and messy Revolution, and yet it surely knew less violence in 1919 than Berlin, Barcelona, Philadelphia or Chicago. It was not a decadent European city whose cultural life would have gone, as it were, from Spencerean or Nietzschean *surmenages*, to German-like impressionism and disenchanted radical vanguardism. It was, however, the laboratory where, in 1919, such notions as 'the nation', 'the people', 'the Revolution', as well as 'authenticity', 'race' and 'avant-garde' were being experimented with in a Mexican and in a more than Mexican fashion.¹

That is why the city became so important around 1919. To a world in despair, whose *leitmotifs* were Revolution, vanguardism, disenchantment and the collapse of the west, Mexico City offered a unique site in which to *safely* try out all sorts of enchantments and disenchantments. The multifarious evidence left by contemporaries is clear —Mexico City was great, it was a modern and relatively secure city, close to the US, never too cold, never too warm. It was comfortable, yet had the advantage of the exotic and authentic without the 1900s disgrace of the West, though ironically it was what the West was exactly about in 1919: revolution, experimentation, poverty, aesthetic and social innovation, and search for lost innocence. Thus in 1919 Charles Phillips, one of the many US radicals who were enchanted by the city, disappointingly found there the Singer Sewing Machine, the Oliver Typewriter and Libby's Potted Beef: 'Mexican cities mean nothing without/ Oliver, Singer and Libby/Lift up your voices, O Comrades and shout/Oliver, Singer and Libby!' Realizing this, he, like many others, wondered about the utopia of revolution and untouched genuine cultures that had brought him and many others to Mexico City in the first place: 'Where are the soldiers of the Revolution?' In the urban masses? In the bureaucrats? Mexico City was a very familiar milieu for 1919 world urbanites. Where was the 'brown Atlantis'?

*Is it true, as they say,
That you and that hideous, abject thing,
Crumpled up on the curbstone,—
A bundle of filth and rags,
One syphilitic hand stretched out
To point to where the other was shot away,
While he whines monotonously
'Una caridad, por el amor de Dios...!'
Which one of these is you?*

¹ William K Klingaman, *1919: The Year our World Began*, New York, Harper and Row, 1987; Anthony Read, *The World on Fire. 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism*, New York, WW Northon and Company, 2008; Ulrich Kluge, *Staat, Politik und Gesellschaft zwischen Weltkrieg und Kapp-Putsch*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1985; for Mexico, there is an excellent summary of cultural events around 1919 in Fausto Ramírez, *Crónica de la artes plásticas en los años de López Velarde*, Mexico City, UNAM, 1990. In this long narrative my sources are too many. In order not to saturate the text with footnotes I reduce footnotes to the minimum by consolidating many references in each footnote.

Despite the poverty —or perhaps because of it— the city must have been, for all the intellectuals and activists who discovered it, a sensual, exotic delight, filled with those revolutionary moments and the desire for strange bodies. The world started to become fascinated with Mexico and the city transformed that fascination into its own might as a modernist world capital.

For their part, in 1919 the city's inhabitants felt part of a changing world, as frightened about the future and as happy about the end of massacres as the inhabitants of European cities were. The future of the country and of the Revolution was still uncertain, but so was the future of the world. The benign world fascination with violence, Revolution and race that Mexico City represented, however, had a different meaning for the city's own intelligentsia. It was as if the city was lost in its own chaotic essaying. The world search for fixed racial and cultural hopes in a tropical land was just another sound lost in the midst of varied urban noises. As Mexico City's young poet Julio Torri wrote around 1919, evoking the Goddess Circe, 'since I was set on losing myself, the sirens didn't sing for me.' In 1919 the city's cultural possibilities called for '*perdición*' (getting lost) and also for perspective: experimentation joined by the realisation that, in view of what the world was going through, Mexico City was a paradise for that —namely, trial and error. It comes as no surprise then, that in 1919 the most powerful and prominent Mexican financier of Porfirian times, José Y Limantour, wrote to a friend and partner from his exile in depressed Paris: 'our Bolsheviks have not been shown to be as bad as their successors in other countries... we should attempt to put innovation back on track and on the path toward evolution, the only means to prevent revolution. With the wish I have always upheld alive and well, of bettering the condition of the working class and poverty-stricken, I did not consider many of the ideas that Socialists entertain to be contentious... Would this be possible without causing a commotion?'²

The life of a city, any city, is simultaneity *par excellence*; historical narratives are successive by necessity. It would be impossible to recover the simultaneity of ideas and events of Mexico City as a center of global cultural encounters. How, then, does one tell of the chaotic cultural possibilities of Mexico City around 1919? A string of consecutive interconnected stories is a way to compensate for the fleeting concurrence of urban life.³ I want to

² In what follows I provide translations of all quotations, except for those that cannot be translated. When the connotations and poetics of the original text cannot be fully translated, the original is also included. Frank Seaman [Charles Phillips], 'How to travel on a Slim Pocketbook. Seeing Mexico through your Parlor Window', *El Heraldo*, September 22, 1919; Seaman's poem, 'In the Backwash', *El Heraldo*, October 27, 1919. Limantour's letter to E Creel is in F Katz, 'Los científicos y la revolución mexicana', unpublished paper.

³ Elsewhere I have detailed the story of 'the brown Atlantis': the history of the global idea of 'Mexico' as an intellectual longing, as a search for a pristine *Gemeinschaft*, and the history of Mexico City as the un-mentioned centre of this craving of a morally and spatially fixed race and culture. Here I do not reiterate this fixation, though the 'brown Atlantis' is the invariable impulse that propels either the many characters here reconstructed or, ironically, any twenty-first-century reader facing the very idea of 'Mexico'. See M. Tenorio Trillo, *The Brown and Atlantis*.

furnish conflicted vistas of a past modernist urban center where many and weighty modern features were invented or reinvented in ways significant not only for Mexico but for the rest of the world. I seek merely to immerse the reader in one of the poorly known capitals of the modernist world around 1919.

The following stories show what was at stake in terms of intellectual experimentations and political trial-and-error. That is, in a culturally promiscuous revolutionary capital, a city of bizarre discoveries and inventions, of love and betrayal, not only the meaning of Mexico was at stake, but also the new connotations of paramount modernist concepts —revolution, the popular, avant-garde, authenticity, race and desire. Mexico City did not fail in producing a lasting new cosmopolitanism and therefore new forms of domesticity as the city reinforced its reign. But the city did, in the end, fail because the global and local trends that came together in the city around 1919 resulted in the silencing of the very city itself. Until the 1950s, and even often today, the phrase is conventional wisdom: Mexico City is not really Mexico.

These simultaneous stories go from days of death and revival of words and colors (then and there an array of cultural options seemed possible; some became lost futures, some others became cultural canons by the 1930s) to moments of performances and plottings in which the city itself was the most meaningful. For countless artists and intellectuals reached the city to partake in the devising of modernist enchantment and disenchantment, revolutionary optimism, cultural vanguardism, and modern love and betrayal. These stories also succinctly sample the thick yet mysterious, the creative yet depressing, urban *perdición*: the real bohemia, that which is not mere fashion but vice and poverty converted into cultural and moral mutiny.

1.

On the night of December 31st, 1919, an earthquake shook Mexico City: a goodbye to a shaky decade, for in 1919 it was clear: Mexico City had not only survived the Revolution but it was also taming the strong anti-urban spirit of most revolutionary factions. A popular novel, *La ciudad de los palacios* by Spanish writer and long-time Mexico City resident, Julio Sesto, then fictionalised the horrors suffered by the city in 1914 and 1915, when the city was invaded by various revolutionary troops. In the story the heroine returns to the city to look at and hear 'colonial moles that flaunted their secular potency... songs of metropolitan life, jovial, crazed, overwhelming and rhythmic; fumes of the hot pavement... scrubbed marble; resigned caryatids; diffuse colors; the panting breath of struggle; smiles of hopefulness; glances

of longing; rumors of life and living... Oh! The city of palaces.’⁴ The city indeed had returned to its natural and creative chaos, its streets and corners produced what they were: ‘songs of metropolitan life.’

That year, 1919, Emiliano Zapata, the ‘Attila of the south’ who once terrorised the city, was assassinated in Chinameca, not very far from the city. The news was received in a relatively peaceful Mexico City with a blend of indifference and relief. When alive, Zapata was seen as a potential threat to the city –unlike Francisco Villa’s troops, the social base of Zapata’s movement was just too close to the city. Once dead, the ‘Attila’ could easily be made into the hero of progressive urbanites. No open combat had occurred in the city since 1914; and the city will not be a major battlefield for the rest of the twentieth century.

The city then had around 600 000 inhabitants. That year about 14 000 died –the lowest death rate (22 per 1000 inhabitants) in the city’s history. Nevertheless, scientists debated the official figures and the effects of altitude, weather, and race on the still-too-high mortality rate. But in 1919 about 27 persons committed suicide, not much to match post-WWI Berlin, but enough to keep the romantic epic alive of late nineteenth century suicidal poets such as Manuel Acuña. This was also enough to show that the supposed Mexican *Gemeinschaft* was indeed a complex *Gesellschaft*. The Spanish influenza that affected the city very likely came from the US, though the city’s most prestigious environmentalist Miguel Ángel de Quevedo believed it came from Barcelona. Don Miguel Angel lost his wife to the influenza epidemic. Like Guillaume Apollinaire, who died in 1918 during the epidemic in Paris, his brother residing in Mexico City, the financier Albert Kostrowitzky, died a year later either from influenza or the city’s periodic typhus outbreaks. Young US writer Katherine Anne Porter survived the influenza and moved to Mexico City, rather than to Paris, to craft her modernist profile as a writer.

1919 Mexico City was still living out of its former Porfirian *belle-époque* grandeur, alas with close memories of the worst revolutionary years; a new era seemed to be starting, but the city lived with nostalgia of what was known. Architects and poets lamented the destruction of the colonial past that had started in the Porfirian time; but in 1919, as engineer Domingo Díez stated in a meeting at the prestigious Sociedad Científica Antonio Alzate, the new architecture was producing the end of ‘the references of infancy’. The city in 1919, recalled long-time Catalan resident, Felipe Teixidor, was extremely dark at night, and the shadow of Don Porfirio could still be felt. The Revolution in 1919 was ‘re-codifying’ the city and itself, losing what Teixidor recalled in the 1970s the appeal of both the Revolution and the city: ‘Napoleon codified the French Revolution. Well, here the revolution is

⁴ “Moles coloniales que ostentaban su poderío secular... cantos de vida metropolitana, risueña, loca, desbordante y rítmica; vapores del asfalto caldado... mármoles tallados; caryatids resignadas; colores difusos; jadeos de lucha; sonrisas de esperanza; miradas de anhelo; rumores de vida... ¡Oh! La ciudad de los palacios.”

codified and thus what was lost was not only the picturesque, which is something important, but also the flame.'

Walking in the city meant seeing new automobiles and buses, and lots of horses and mules, open sewer system and dust storms. By 1919 the city must have lost the stink of blood and violence and returned to its natural aromas—horse manure, cilantro, onion, gasoline, flowers and human excrement. In 1923 Miguel Ángel de Quevedo explained that the city would be buried neither by the Revolution nor by lava from the nearby Popocatepetl volcano (known as *El Popo*), but would instead be buried in excrement (*popó* in prudish Mexican Spanish). All in all the new post-revolutionary buildings and street plans started to emerge. Indeed, in 1919 the city was like a stylish and wicked *femme fatale* just awakening from a long spree of revolutions and abuses, gazing at her dishevelled and hungover self: everything to be redone. The city of nineteenth century-like ennui coexisted with the city of twentieth century avant-garde bohemia; old cosmopolitan forms of agrarianism and radicalism coexisted with the new radical cosmopolitanism marked by the 1917 Soviet revolution.⁵

While in 1910 the city's German, American, Spanish and French colonies were formed by longtime residents dedicated to commerce and finance, in 1919 many new foreigners started to arrive in the city, escaping persecution in Europe and the US or in search of the revolutionary appeal. Whereas in 1914 Apollinaire, informed by his brother's letters, announced in *La vie anecdotique* that French, German and British citizens were preparing in Mexico City their armed defense from the Revolutionary chaos, in 1919 US 'slackers'⁶ had taken over the Genova Hotel in downtown Mexico City, organising from there the escape of many other US socialists and pacifists.

One of the dead of 1919 was the most distinguished poet in Mexican letters for three decades, Amado Nervo. His death in Montevideo, Uruguay, produced a plethora of reactions in the entire Spanish-speaking world. Nervo had been the greatest expression of Mexican *modernismo*—understood within

⁵ The night of the earthquake is described by Juan Bustillo Oro, *Vientos de los veintes: crónica testimonial*, México City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1973; Julio Sesto, *La ciudad de los palacios*, Mexico City, El libro español, 1919, p. 217; Alberto J Pani, *La higiene en México*, Mexico City, Imprenta de J. Balleca, 1916; Ellsworth Huntington, 'The Relation of Health to Racial Capacity: The Example of Mexico', *Geographical Review*, 11, 2 (April 1921), 243-264. *La mendicidad en México*, Mexico City, Beneficencia Pública de México, 1931; Ricardo Granillo, 'La mortalidad en la ciudad de México', *Boletín del Departamento de Salubridad Pública*, no 1 (1925), p. 11; Miguel Ángel de Quevedo, *Relato de mi vida*, Mexico City, s.n., 1943; Quevedo's comments in *México Forestal, órgano oficial de la sociedad forestal mexicana*, 1, 2 (February, 1923), 20. Felipe Teixidor, PHO 4-104; J. González de Mendoza, 'G Apollinaire' and 'Apollinaire en México', both in *Ensayos Selectos*, Mexico City, FCE, 1970; Octavio Paz, 'Ramón López Velarde, el desconocido de sí mismo', in *Cuadrivio*, Mexico City, Joaquín Mortiz, 1965; Guillaume Apollinaire, *Correspondance avec son Frère et sa mere, présentée par Gilbert Boudar, et Michel Décaudin*, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1987; and 'Français à Mexico' (1914), in Apollinaire, *Oeuvres en prose complètes*, vol. III, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, p. 184; Domingo Díez, 'Nuestra cultura y el respeto a los monumentos colonias', *Memorias de la Sociedad Científica Antonio Alzate*, vol. 37, 1919, pp. 381-395.

⁶ Hereafter, 'slacker' is used to describe the young US radical—pacifists, socialist, and communists—who in the context of WWI escaped the draft and persecution in Mexico City.

the literary history of the Spanish language, that is, as a peculiar blend of decadentism, spiritualism, symbolism and rhetorical innovation. But by 1919 Nervo's style, even if still praised, was considered the target, the *passé* style that the city's avant-garde writers were trying to surpass. In 1919, with Nervo, an entire era came to an end.

Another important death around 1919 was that of the city's poet who had done most to innovate locally, namely Ramón López Velarde. 'Had I never left my little town', López Velarde wrote in Mexico City around 1919, 'a saintly wife would have been my sole comfort/ from only having known the world from a single hemisphere.' (*Si yo jamás hubiera salido de mi villa/ con una santa esposa tendría el refrigerio/ de conocer el mundo por un solo hemisferio*). The provincial poet from Jerez, Zacatecas, had reached Mexico City in the early twentieth century, blending his melancholy for a lost provincial world with the urban bohemia and cosmopolitanism that he both loved and despised. By 1919 he had distanced himself from Catholic political circles, experimenting with political and aesthetic ideas. He and the poet laureate of Mexico City, Enrique González Martínez —the great guru of immediate post-Porfirian letters and part of the intellectual group known as the second 'Ateneo de la Juventud' (a prominent youth literary organisation)—were the most prominent inhabitants of the lettered republic that Mexico City was around 1919. In 1918 and 1919 some of the well-established intellectuals disapproved of López Velarde's bizarre metaphors as well as his Catholic provincialism. But he was sought eagerly by young vanguard poets such as Xavier Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo —dandies who soon formed a prominent intellectual cohort, a sort of Mexico City Bloomsbury, around the literary periodical *Contemporáneos*.

By 1919 López Velarde was a conspicuous presence in the city's periodicals and literary gatherings, displaying his unusual metaphors, full of provincial as well as technical references and an uncanny melancholy. The city's cultural life revealed nostalgia for the social structure and order of the Porfirian city, but its intellectuals were engaged in vivid debates, deciding the educational, artistic, and political course of post-revolutionary Mexico: debates that blended scientific, political, social and aesthetic rhetorical devices. 'The city has become a carnival, with prostitutes everywhere', read a 1916 article in the prestigious literary journal *Vida Moderna*, 'in which it would be difficult to tell wheat from darnel' (*en el que difícilmente podría distinguirse el trigo de la cizaña*). And the author, full of nostalgia, recalled: 'remember the shining San Francisco Avenue [Madero street by 1919], that our modest boulevard, that our humble Puerta del Sol, where all of our elegances paraded on those glorious afternoons and voluptuous dusks... with such a satisfaction and safety could you take your wife, sister or daughter to revel in the

innocence of such honest amusement!’⁷ Now, the author concluded, the Revolution had made the city a place of sin. In the same issue of *Vida Moderna*, however, López Velarde—a Catholic poet who both feared and loved urban sensuality—published a story that would have been unacceptable in the language of the Porfirian city: the story of three worms that in very graphic terms eat a woman’s corpse as a symbolic means of devouring women’s ‘natural’ fear, indifference, and hate. In effect, as critic José Emilio Pacheco writes, López Velarde had made from trendy late nineteenth century Mexican literary modernism simple modernity: ‘he is no longer a victim of *Weltschmerz*, the illness of the century: he is his own tyrant so overwhelmed by himself that he distances from his own self and ironically contemplates himself from the outside.’

Also around 1919 Manuel Gamio, a future father of Mexican revolutionary archeology and anthropology and a great ideologue of post-revolutionary *mestizo* ideology, was finishing his Columbia PhD under Franz Boas’ supervision, seeking political positions and writing stories full of both nostalgia about the old Mexico and fear and excitement about the emerging one. In one of those stories, *La zahurda*, written around 1919, he collapsed all his concerns: the destruction of provincial communities, the city’s appeal and its immorality, the massive migration of Mexicans to the US during the Mexican Revolution, and the emergence of a common nationality based on the survival skills derived from misery. The tale told the story of a pauperised woman who migrated from the provinces to Mexico City, where she married an urban proletarian who left her and their two children in order to follow the revolutionary troops north. Alone, the woman faced the city with despair, experiencing hunger, prostitution, and abandonment in one of the many rooms of the city’s poor tenant houses (*la zahurda*). But she found help in one of the city’s most marginal dwellers: a crippled *mandadero* (errand-man) who helped her and fathered another baby, only to die from malnutrition and the city’s mistreatment. Her first husband returns from the US, where he had sought work following the dismantling of Villa’s army and disillusion with the Revolution—‘*¿Qué ideales ni que ojo de hacha!*’ (who cares about ideals!) he is told by a former revolutionary officer in the US. On his return he finds his wife burying her new man, with a new baby in arms. He tries to hit her, only to succumb to those arms, for ‘She, like he, was a victim of life; crushed to a pulp by the cruel machinations of misery.’ The city was the center of these contradictions and new syntheses that frightened and fascinated both López Velarde and Gamio.⁸

⁷ ‘Os acordáis de la brillante avenida de San Francisco [Madero by 1919], ese nuestro modesto boulevard, esa nuestra humilde Puerta del Sol, por donde desfilaban en los gloriosos mediodías y en los voluptuosos atardeceres todas nuestras elegancias... ¡con que satisfacción y seguridad podáis llevar a vuestra esposa, a vuestra hermana, a vuestra hija a gozar de la inocencia de un honesto esparcimiento!’

⁸ *Vida Moderna*, November 9, 1916. Lopez Velarde’s story: ‘Caro data vermibus’; José Emilio Pacheco, Ramón López Velarde (1970), in López Velarde, *Obra poética*, edited by José Luis Martínez, Mexico City, Barcelona, Buenos Aires,

Julio Sesto's popular novels —not only *La ciudad de los palacios* but also *La tortola del Ajusto*— had previously shown a revolutionary city where, for instance, bread was scarce but there was plenty of Bergson and Nietzsche. The symbolist illustrations of Sesto's novel (by Carlos Neve, Duhart, Gutiérrez and Zaldivar⁹ depicted the omnipresence of the city and the vanguard impulses of its artists. One image showed the entire symbolist city quietly sleeping through its sins and dangers, while a wizard surrounded by naked women, representing the temptation of the city, guards the sleep of the city's humble inhabitants.

The few novels with the city as *leitmotiv* since the 1880s had presented, like Gamio or Sesto, this ambivalence about the dangers of the city and nostalgia for a lost past. 'How does one not feel nostalgic about the countryside?' wrote in the 1880s lawyer and novelist Emilio Rabasa about one of his urban characters who is forced by an urban thunderstorm to recall his '*querencia*' (longing) for the bucolic past. The same was argued by such Mexican artists as Roberto Montenegro and Francisco Goitia, who were in the 1910s in Europe painting sad urban landscapes, devoid of people and full of melancholy, like the good symbolists they had become. The city was thus turned into a well-demarcated subject involved in the intellectual, spiritual, and moral life of its inhabitants.

ALLCA XX, UNESCO, 1998, quoted p. 588; Manuel Gamio, 'La Zahurda', in Gamio, *Vidas dolientes*, Mexico City, Botas, 1937.

⁹ No first names available.

FIGURE 1



Illustration, Julio Sesto's *La ciudad de los palacios* (1919).

But the city's poetic and plastic landscapes were composed by struggles against the old, finding solace in both by rhetorical innovation and by the nostalgia intrinsic to any modern city. There was the excitement of urban sin, the possibility of anonymity, and the inevitable gatherings and intrigues. For in those years, writes poet and critic Gabriel Zaid, there was 'a certain complacency in one's own sadness.' The city was thrilling, as López Velarde wrote before his premature death in 1921:

*Sobre tu Capital, cada hora vuela
ojerosa y pintada, en carretela;
y en tu provincia, del reloj en vela
que rondan los palomos colipavos,
las campanadas caen como centavos*

Above your Capital the hours soar,
hollow-eyed and rouged, in a coach-and-four,
while in your provinces the hours
roll like *centavos* from insomniac
clocks with fan-tail dove patrols.

Urban hours passed away rapidly, as women passed by in the night, covered with makeup, with dark circles under their eyes. The provinces, by contrast,

meant the calm sound of temple's bells. The *Patria's* secret of happiness, López Velarde wrote, was this: '*Patria*, I give you the key to your good fortune: always be the same, true to your daily mirror.' (*Patria, te doy de tu dicha la clave: sé siempre igual, fiel a tu espejo diario.*) The clue was for the nation not to be like its capital city. But the city was neither always the same, nor a mirror that could reflect any national essence. However it made possible the intellectual conception of the nation; its intellectual promiscuity and dynamism both produced and made necessary the idea of being always truthful to the nation's 'daily mirror'.

For López Velarde, as for the many inhabitants of the 'brown Atlantis'—the mythical capital of radical, exoticist, racial and primitivist dreams of a generation of world's activists and intellectuals—the real and eternal nation was in the small town. But unlike, say, Diego Rivera's nationalism or Stuart Chase's Mexican *Gemeinschaft* (*Mexico, a Study of Two Americas*, 1930, illustrated by Rivera), López Velarde's provincialism did not dream of atavist racial or cultural mandates. His urbane melancholy constituted a longing for a lost innocence: a frequent feeling resulting from cities. For López Velarde, wariness was indispensable in order to build the new *patria* and to face the city. He was, he wrote around 1919, 'then a seminarian', without urban taste, 'without Baudelaire, without rhyme or instinct', who faced urban temptations but wanted above all the return to innocence, for him, for the nation, for the city:

*Yo quisiera acogerme a la medida,
a la estricta conciencia y al recato
de aquellas cosas que me hicieron bien...*

I'd wish to welcome restraint
to welcome the strict conscience and the prudence
of those things that did me good...

For after all, lost innocence is what the world's radicals and writers sought in 1920s Mexico City, albeit Mexican innocence had, for them, to be somehow racial. The mythical provinces granted a modernist *illo tempore*, a golden age of peace and harmony: the *Gemeinschaft* that Mexico City (*Gesselfat*) at once disallowed and made more vivid and alluring in the consciousness of poets and observers. Even the most urban of the city's poets around 1919, Manuel Maple Arce—a sort of Mexican futurist poet—seemed caught by the city's nostalgia in the midst of reference to electric cables, cars, and airplanes: '*Suadade/ Estoy solo en el último tramo de la ausencia/ y el dolor, hace horizonte en mi demencia*' (Nostalgia/ I'm lonely in desertion's last stride/ and pain bends a horizon in my madness).

Soon, very soon, in 1921, López Velarde died: a disappearance that can serve to mark the potential futures that the city's cultural encounters were

pointing to. López Velarde's poetic blend of newness and traditionalism became an emblem. The city woke up, wrote Honduran poet, longtime resident in Mexico City, Rafael Heliodoro Valle, and its poet was dead; thus, he wrote, even Góngora —the great Golden Age Spanish poet— 'brought carnations/ for Ramón López Velarde.' And another Mexico City poet —this one from Colombia— then Rafael Arenas, soon to become Porfirio Barba Jacob, and the friend who pious López Velarde used to visit with terror in Arenas' urban and sinful hiding places —mourned the disappearance of the poet, of a way of seeing things, with López Velarde-like bizarre images (*Canción de la noche diamantina*):

*Musa solar con nardos irreales
El cielo niño del abril decora
Y éste era el huerto de una Reina mora
Y un lirio que la aurora aljofaró
Pero mi corazón balbucea ante la aurora:
--¡No! ¡No! ¡No! ¡No!*

Muse of the sun with dreamlike spikes
Adorn the infant sky of April
This, once the orchard of a Moorish queen
With an iris, set ablaze by glorious light
My heart stammers before the lights:
No! No! No! No!

Nervo's apparently solid Mexico was gone; gone also was López Velarde's experimentalism. The struggle continued. At the beginning of the 1920s, the city was the site of a struggle between a militant nationalism (*indigenista*, nativist and revolutionary) and an even more activist cosmopolitanism —both trends urban, both melancholic about the loss of mythic and innocent origins. It seemed adamant: the national was local, unsophisticated, real, popular, non-Western; cosmopolitanism was foreign, fancy, sissy, elitist, un-Mexican, and simply an impersonation of the West. 'We are neither Spanish nor aboriginals', López Velarde had written in 1917, 'aside from those considered traditionalists or progressives... Consequently, the nationalist cries should embrace neither the bronzed nor the blonde, rather this shade of coffee with milk that tinges us.' Of course the city showed at every moment and everywhere that such antagonism was a mirage created by different ideological interests (all cosmopolitan, all national). Members of both trends were admirers of French, German, English and Spanish literatures. All were fascinated by science and history and by the city's life; and both factions, in one way or another, were tempted by the allure of romantic ecstasies —in the form of Oriental or Aztec motifs. The literary periodicals that circulated in 1919 included translations of prose and poetry by Valery, Tagore, Gide and

Wilde, and of Japanese, Chinese, Aztec and Mixteco poetry, as well as news about archaeological discoveries, the Russian revolution, scientific advances. Mexican *haikus* coincided with translations from Nahuatl and Mixteco poetry; the intellectuals' fascination with Sara Bernhardt coincided with that for Rabindranath Tagore. If Yeats had found refuge in spiritualism and Celtic mythology, some Mexican poets found renewal in their invention of a local poetic tradition and in many forms of oriental ecstasies. López Velarde's legacy was an affirmation of how to live, intellectually, in the in-betweens of nineteenth century rhetorical devices, science, urban bohemia, revolutionary nationalism, Catholic values, the weight of history and changing cosmopolitan canons. He can be read as a lost direction in the history of the city's culture, one that ended with his death. Or he can also be read as a condensation of the possibilities that the city offered to all those who dared to see it and leave it around 1919.¹⁰

For there was another significant loss in 1918, again a provincial immigrant (from Aguascalientes) to the city—the painter Saturnino Herrán. He lived, like González Martínez and novelist Mariano Azuela, in the former well-to-do *barrio* of Santa María la Ribera, where Porfirio Díaz once owned his only house. Herrán, like López Velarde, never left the city. Unlike the new American and European visitors in the city, Herrán never attempted to escape the city. He was an innovator, a student of Mexican and Spanish professors in the city's art school, a painter who, like many others—such as Diego Rivera—had the opportunity to go to Europe on a Porfirian government scholarship. But like López Velarde, Herrán stayed—having something to do with his mother and his weak health. He became the master of domesticity and in such a way reached a cultural blend that was very Mexican and thus more than local. That localness turned out to be inevitably *citadino* (belonging to the city): a locally brewed form of universalism that the intellectuals and artists who eventually reached the city only footnoted, if not unconsciously then out of necessity. Because the city ruled, it made innovation and mixture possible, and purity and essences even less feasible. And Herrán was what the city had produced visually. While the young José Clemente Orozco, as he recalled, began to depict the worst *barrios* of the city, Herrán started to paint '*criollas que él conocía, en lugar de manolas a la Zuloaga.*' (*Criollas* he had met, instead of Zuloaga-like *manolas*-Andalusia looking women). He painted scenes of Mexican history out of real, if stylised, Mexican urban characters. He was

¹⁰ Emilio Rabasa, *El cuarto poder* (1888), Mexico City, Porrúa, 1970, pp. 9-10; Julio Sesto, *La tortola del Ajusco*, Mexico City, Maucci hermanos y cia, 1915; and *La ciudad de los Palacios*; on symbolism between Mexico and Europe see Fausto Ramírez, 'El simbolismo en México', *El espejo simbolista, Europa México, 1870-1920*, Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Arte, 2005, pp. 29-59. See Guillermo Sheridan, *Los Contemporáneos ayer*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985, p. 83; Gabriel Zaid, *Leer poesía*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987, p. 76; López Velarde, *Poesías*; Porfirio Barba Jacob, *Poesía completa*, edited and annotated by Fernando Vallejo, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008; López Velarde, 'Melodía criolla', *Armas y Letras* (1917), in López Velarde, *Obra poética*, quote p. 351; I develop Mexican orientalism in *Mexico, DeMexicanized*.

respected by the city's intelligentsia, but he seemed to be ahead of his time, or so his friend Julio Sesto thought when he imagined Herrán departing with the phrase: 'you do not deserve to have painters or artists of any kind: you are all brutal: I am leaving' (*ustedes no merecen tener pintores ni artistas de ninguna especie: Ustedes son unos bellacos: yo me voy.*) And depart he did.¹¹

Whereas López Velarde innovated with metaphors of the discovery of the local in the midst of cosmopolitan urban bohemia and melancholy, Herrán depicted local colors and characters in insightful renditions of urban people in stylised yet sensual and trendy fashions. Art historian Fausto Ramírez considers Herrán the first and more accomplished depicter of the *mestizo* as the national character. But Herrán's *mestizos* were not that because they were the right genetic blend but because they were urban. Herrán, together with illustrator and painter Julio Ruelas, became the painters of the city *par excellence*. Herrán was this not only because of his masterful urban characters—beggars, children—but above all because he was the illustrator of many of the city's literary publications. As López Velarde said in his eulogy to Herrán in 1919:

If only passion is fruitful, then it is appropriate to proclaim the name of Herran's lover. He loved his country but using a most sincere allegory, I can attest that Herran's lover was the city of Mexico, rich in pain and pleasure; he caressed her stone by stone, resident by resident, cloud by cloud.¹²

Herrán: the lover of *la ciudad*—a female name and reality in Spanish--, the artist who was never in Montparnasse and yet had to find a way to depict his lover in universal terms. These two extremes, López Velarde and Herrán, one in poetry, the other in painting, encompassed the huge local transformation toward a cosmopolitan, conflicted, urban discovery of the local, that is, the city: very local and yet never solely native. Before Diego Rivera, before the international discovery of the brown Atlantis, these extremes demarcated what was happening intellectually in the city.

Locally, artists and intellectuals started to create the porous borders of the brown Atlantis that extended the city's reach to Paris, Barcelona, New York. Hence the years from 1919 to 1921 were of returns—of Mexicans in Europe and the US to the city, of Mexicans in the city back to New York, the new

¹¹ José Clemente Orozco, *Autobiografía*, Mexico City, Ediciones Occidente, 1945; Julio Sesto, *La bohemia de la muerte; biografías y anecdotario pintoresco de cien mexicanos celebres en el arte, muertos en la pobreza y el abandono, y estudio crítico de sus obras*, Mexico City, Editorial Tricolor, 1929, p. 71.

¹² Fausto Ramírez, *Saturnino Herrán*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1976; 'Oracion funebre. Porununciada en el 1er aniversario de la muerte de Saturnino Herrán en el Anfiteatro de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, por Ramón López Velarde', *El Universal Ilustrado*, October 16, 1919, reproduced in Ramírez, *Crónica de la artes plásticas en los años de López Velarde*, Mexico City, UNAM, 1990, pp. 93-94.

international Mecca of arts, in order to display the new discoveries of a brown Atlantis in Mexico City.

FIGURE 2



Painting by Saturnino Herrán.

Herrán was at the centre of the milieu that Rivera's Mexico later overwhelmed. In 1918 painter Luis G. Serrano exhibited his rendition of *barrios* and landscapes around the city. During the same years two important Mexican artists returned, one from New York, the other from Barcelona: cartoonist Ernesto García Cabral and painter Francisco Goitia. The former became a success in Mexico City's growing magazine industry, creating a Mexico City style of cartoons that was influential for many decades to come. Goitia started to exhibit in the city in 1918 and worked with Manuel Gamio—the anthropologist who pioneered Mexican culturalism and was the main intermediary between the Mexican and US intelligentsias—, illustrating archeological discoveries. But Goitia soon left the city to live as an anchorite

in Xochimilco, starting the myth of abandoning the city that many others soon followed—for instance B. Traven, Antonin Artaud and Hart Crane on countless occasions. He painted landscape and events of the Revolution, and captured popular scenes in a Goya-like expression of faces.¹³ Goitia brought back the lessons of post-impressionist nationalist primitivism from Catalonia and inderted those trends into the thick flow of experimental possibilities in Mexico City.

Many others followed this double return to Mexico and to Mexican topics: Roberto Montenegro, Carlos Mérida, Adolfo Best Mougard, and finally, in July 1921, Diego Rivera. He left Paris and all its experiments except one: he opted to go native and revolutionary; he decided to become *the* Mexican painter. Some left Mexico City to promote their findings (like Best Maugard and Julio Oliguebel, who went to New York). All of them experimented with European vanguards and debated the return to authenticity and primitivism. Carlos Mérida, a Guatemalan, is an emblematic case: he was in Europe up to 1914, then in Guatemala and then in Mexico in 1918. He became, together with Gamio, a leading advocate of one kind of Indigenism, a militantly cosmopolitan and urban depiction that did not support a brown Atlantis kind of destiny for Mexico, but simply a sophisticated study of the Indigenous past and arts in order to transform them into modern and innovative cultural forms. This is what Manuel Gamio advocated in his 1916 nationalist manifesto (*Forjando Patria*), which rejected the same orientalist trend of such important 'nation builders' as José Vasconcelos—who was then fascinated with Hindu thought—rather than the new 'exotic' radicalism of US socialists and communists living in Mexico City.

All in all, the literary circles in the streets and cafes of Mexico City were, as a contemporary critic Castro Leal put it, about the 'vogue of the primitive', and that is why Carlos Mérida 'enters the picture through the well-known path of the primitive'. Indeed they were all orientalist in more than one sense. By 1922 many of these artists were involved in the most ironic of gestures: painting stylish art nouveau or social realist or Italian fresco-like images of Indians, countrysides, bucolic motifs, and idealised harmonious views of the pre-Hispanic past on the very urban walls of the official buildings (and *pulquerías*) of a massive city that hosted them, fostered them, taught them . . . made them.¹⁴

¹³ Alfonso Toro, 'El pintor de raza', *Revista de Revistas*, Nov. 17, 1918, p. 14, reproduced in Ramírez, *Saturnino Herrán*, p. 83. See Montserrat Gali i Boadella, *Artistes catalans a Mexic: segles XIX i XX*, Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, Comissió America i Catalunya 1992, 1993.

¹⁴ Castro Leal as quoted in Fausto Ramírez, *Crónicas de las artes plásticas*, p. 120; Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria (pronacionalismo)*, Mexico City, Porrúa Hermanos, 1916. Carlos Mérida illustrated Anita Brenner's book, *Your Mexican Holiday, a Modern Guide*, maps and illustrations by Mérida, New York, Putnam, 1932.

2.

In September 1919, Mexican musician Manuel M. Ponce —another exile from Zacatecas and Aguascalientes to Mexico City— wrote that Mexico was in need of its own Grieg. And to do so, musicians and folklorists needed to collect more popular tunes and lyrics (a task that Porfirian folklorists had already started). He sought the synthesis that López Velarde and Herrán were already doing. But what Ponce, Gamio and Mérida overlooked is that cultural syntheses are unstable; they never really end.

Ponce had also returned to Mexico City from Europe in 1909, and thereafter dedicated himself to the teaching and incorporation of traditional tunes into a form of Mexican classical music. In 1919 he headed the *Revista Musical de México*, in which he advocated the return to popular tunes at the same time that he welcomed Arthur Rubenstein, for instance, to the city. In the same journal Mexico's leading folklorist Rubén M. Campos reviewed Anna Pavlova's performance in Mexico City, in a highbrow rhetorical style that only he, one of the few intellectuals who could truly speak the city's slang, could feel free to exaggerate —impossible to translate:

*Semejante a Siringa, la cefirosa ninfa de los pies ligeros, rondadora del rondo de la alegría. Anna Pavlova ha tenido al tiempo maravilloso ante la gracia ebúrnea de su fragilidad tanagrina. Kronos la puso sobre la palma de su ancha mano, y sonrió al ver el pequeño Bibelot de biscuit voltear como una perinola en una de sus piernas fusiformes, la espalda florecida de alas de libélula, presta a desprenderse en vuelo voluble para errar como una hora o una musa de pubis de Chavannes de flor en flor, sobre las mieles doradas y las aguas pluviales.*¹⁵

Ponce lamented, in turn, that not many people saw Pavlova or heard Rubenstein because the city was hosting a unique guest: Enrico Caruso, who sang, among other things, *El Elixir del Amor* and *Carmen*, in addition to a giving public popular concert at El Toreo, where US boxer Jack Johnson also fought the same year. Europe's chaos had made it possible for opera premieres to be performed in America, not only in Buenos Aires and New York —consecrated Meccas of the *belle canto*— but also in Mexico City. 'As Sappho said about Aphrodite' wrote Ponce, commenting on Caruso's visit, 'I would not have wanted to die before hearing that singing.'¹⁶

In this way the capital city meant the eternal return to innocence and native authenticity but was nevertheless at the peak of its cosmopolitanism.

¹⁵ *Revista Musical de México*, no. 1, May 15, 1919, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Revista Musical de México*, no. 3, July 15, 1919. MM Ponce, 'Folk-lore musical mexicano', *Revista Musical de México*, no. 5, September 15, 1919; and 'Caruso en México, el arte exquisito de Caruso', *Revista Musical de México*, no. 7, November 15, 1919, p. 6.

Caruso was in Mexico City, where he and García Cabral echoed the encounters of the world with the city, of the city with the world, in mutual cartoons of each other. This was the humor of no civilisational barriers. Caruso was, in turn, photographed in Xochimilco, where Goitia escaped to—and where Edward Weston would soon arrive to photograph poor patios—drinking *Pulque* with an Italian soprano dressed in a *Charro* outfit. Soon Mexican musicians would start the same antagonism between those in favor of a militant Indigenism (Carlos Chávez) and those in favor of a more cosmopolitan music (Julián Carrillo). Ponce, like López Velarde, Herrán and Goitia, seemed caught in inhabiting the options that the city then offered.

FIGURE 3



Caruso, García Cabral (1919).

FIGURE 4



Caruso in Xochimilco (1919).

But while the city's intelligentsia was still digesting the departure of López Velarde and Herrán, and while the newspapers still commented on Caruso's and Johnson's visits, a new dancing hall was inaugurated in April 1920 on the old site of the *panadería Los Gallos* in Pensador Mexicano street. This was the *Salón México*, where for more than a decade the urban proletariat would dance *danzones* —a mixture of Cuban tunes, Spanish counter-dance and Veracruz musical traditions. This was the place where great Mexican *orqustras* (for instance, *Dimas*) played, and where eventually Aaron Copland would hear the tunes of the Nereidas *danzón* that inspired him to create 'Salón México' (1936).

It comes as no wonder then that in 1920 the Mexican artistic copyright agency registered a bizarre blend of creative products: the foxtrot, 'Blues oh

Helen' and 'I Wonder if the Same Moon Shines'; a '*Sanduga Oaxaqueña*' by the famous María Conesa; and a manuscript '*El triunfo de la raza*'. And in 1918 Mexico City saw a Porfirian novel –*Santa* (1903) by Federico Gamboa– made into a modern public display of technology and sentimentality, a successful silent film about a young girl from the nearby town of Chimalistac who was seduced by a military man and then corrupted by the city, becoming a prostitute. The plot would have many cinematic renditions, among them one that would eventually have a soundtrack and lyrics by Agustín Lara (1931). The rural girl converted into an urban prostitute, became, in Lara's lyric, the city's form of redemption: 'In the eternal night/of my sorrow/you [Santa] have been the star that lit up my sky' (*En la eterna noche/ de mi desconsuelo/ tú [Santa] has sido la estrella que alumbró mi cielo*).

Sometime in the early 1920s, Lara, a very young son of a pauperised Porfirian bourgeois family, having been expelled from home by his father due to his vices (drugs, alcohol, women), started to work as the pianist in the *Salambó* cabaret (and brothel) in Mexico City. There he had various affairs, and even had his face permanently scratched by one of the Salambo's ladies. He composed many songs dedicated to women, prostitutes and love betrayals, which would eventually become part of Mexican urban popular culture. A writer who shared the same *barrio* with Lara recalled: 'since those days [circa 1920], since those nights, he made up what we could call the inverse of our sentimental tradition...' (*desde esos días [circa 1920], desde esas noches, él atisbaba lo que podríamos llamar el sentido inverso de nuestra tradición sentimental...*). By 1929 Lara had become a radio star. In the sinful life of early 1920s Mexico City a legend of Mexican culture, Agustín Lara, was in the making.¹⁷

By 1919 popular tunes were experiencing an incredible distribution and consumption in the city, though most recordings were made in the US. Never had the city danced, as it did then, to the same tunes. In 1920 *El Teatro Lírico* had great success with '*Mi querido capitán*', a late nineteenth century style musical. But soon recordings of such famous revolutionary tunes as '*Adelita*', and others songs like '*A la orilla de un palmar*' arrived from the US. Now the popular rural lyrics were urban commonsense. By 1919 '*Perjura*' –a piece composed in 1901 by musician Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and poet Fernando de Luna y Drusina– had been sung by so many popular singers that its original 'sinful' nature seemed to be forgotten: 'When my lips, on your fair neck/with mad fever my being is possessed' (*Cuando mis labios en tu albo cuello/ con fiebre loca mi bien posee*). In the city, Lerdo de Tejada recalled in the 1930s, people received the song 'without reservation, it spoke to them in the language of things that had already been said in La Traviata' (*sin*

¹⁷ Propiedad artística literaria, 1920; Julia Tuñón, 'La Santa de 1918, primera versión fílmica de una obsesión', *Historias*, 51 (2002), pp. 81-89. Baltasar Dromundo, *Mi barrio de San Miguel*, Mexico City, Antigua Librería Robledo, 1951, p. 98; Paco Ignacio Taibo I, *Agustín Lara*, Mexico City, Jucar, 1985.

tapujos, le hablaba en su idioma de cosas que ya había dicho La Traviata). In 1919 popular composer Armando Villarreal Lozano wrote '*Morenita mía*', and by 1921 it was, and remained for decades, a sort of Mexico City everyday knowledge. In 1922, in addition, Mexican popular composer Alfonso Esparza Oteo released his '*Mi viejo amor*' (lyrics by poet Adolfo Fernández Bustamante), a romantic take on the nostalgia of old love, which contrasted that year with the popularity in the city of a Cuban tune by Manuel Corona, '*Falsaria*': an ode to urban love and to what economists would call rational choice:

*Cuan falso fue tu amor, me has engañado
el juramento aquél era fingido.
Sólo siento, mujer, haber creído
Que eras el ángel que yo había soñado.
Con que te vendes, ¡eh!, noticia grata,
no por eso te odio y te desprecio;
aunque tengo poco oro y poca plata
y en materia de compras soy un necio.
Espero a que te pongas más barata
Sé que algún día bajarás de precio.*

Your love was so fake, you betrayed me,
that commitment, the one I got from you, was mere pretending.
I only regret, woman, to have believed
you were the angel I had dreamt.
So, you're for sale, ah!, good news,
that makes me neither love nor hate you,
though I have neither gold nor silver,
I'm stubborn business wise.
I wait for you to get cheaper
I'm sure sooner or later your price'll go down.

Poems and lyrics from all over the Spanish-speaking world were made into the everyday understanding of the urba masses. The poem '*Flor de Mayo*', by the most prominent Porfirian poet, Amado Nervo, was set to music by Mario Talavera. Popular singers and composers from Veracruz, Mérida and Monterrey arrived in the city, and it became a musical capital. By 1925 even American journalist Alma Reed would be the *leitmotif* of one of the famous tunes, composed by Yucatán composer Ricardo Palmerín, that made him and Guty Cárdenas, among others, heroes of the city's cultural life. In 1925 one of the most popular tunes was '*Ella*', an edited version of the poem '*Pequeño nocturno*' by Osvaldo Bazil, a modernist and bohemian poet from the Dominican Republic. The poem was set to music by Domingo Casanova Heredia and made popular by Guty Cárdenas' voice and guitar playing in a Yucatán

rhythm known as '*bambuco*'. Its popular appropriation involved, curiously, editing the gaudy decadentism of the original piece in order to emphasise the everyday beauty of the images. For instance, the original included such lines as '*[Ella] la que el más blando susurrar de égloga/ derramó en el azul de mis mañanas*' (She, the one a soft whisper of eclogue/ spilled over as the blue of my mornings), but the musical version eliminated such dated language and left the lyrics to fly in a sonorous blend of feelings and metaphors:

*Ella, la que hubiera amado tanto,
la que echizó de música mi alma,
me pide, con ternura, que la olvide,
que la olvide sin odio y sin llanto*

*Yo que llevo enterrados tantos sueños,
yo que guardo tantas tumbas en el alma,
no sé por qué sollozo y tiemblo
al cavar, al cavar, una más en mis entrañas.*

She, the one I would have loved so much,
the one who enchanted with music my soul,
tenderly asks me to forget her,
to forget her with no hate and no tears

I, who go by with so many buried dreams,
I, who guard so many graves in my soul,
I don't know why I cry and tremble
digging just one more grave in my heart.

In 1923 two new radio stations started to broadcast music and by 1929 there were 25 stations in the city. By 1930 station XEW —'The voice of Latin American from Mexico'— opened, marking the start of the globalisation of the city's music in the Spanish-speaking world.¹⁸ In this way, Mexico City was at the center of the closest thing to twentieth century Mexican cultural imperialism in the Spanish-speaking world.

When foreign intellectuals and activists began to arrive in the city, they could not resist being enchanted by its music. In 1914 for instance Guillaume Apollinaire's brother, Albert, responded to Guillaume request for folk music from Mexico with: 'there is no popular literature or song belonging to the streets of Mexico. The Indians cannot read and they sleep in slums on the

¹⁸ Juan S. Garrido, *Historia de la música popular en México*, Mexico City, Extemporáneos, 1974; Jorge Mejía Prieto, *Historia de la radio y la televisión en México*, Mexico City, Octavio Colmenares Editor, 1972; Mario Talavera, *Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, su vida pintoresca y anecdótica*, Mexico City, Editorial Compás, n.d., pp. 64-65; *Atlas general del Distrito Federal. Geográfico, histórico, comercial, estadístico, agrario. Su descripción más completa, profusamente ilustrada con mapas, fotografías y gráficos. Se forma esta por orden del Sr. Dr. Jose M. Puig Casauranc, jefe del Departamento del Distrito Federal*, Mexico City, Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1930.

ground, on dirt very often... The entertainment for the people does not exist, other than military music and films, being predominantly French and Italian films.¹⁹ Nothing exotic. But many new radical visitors to the city were fascinated by its musical landscape. Journalist Timothy G Turner, who had covered the Revolution, annotated the tunes he encountered. In 1925 Anita Brenner copied the first lines of the popular Mexican tune *Morenita Mía* (*My Little Brown Girl*) in her diary: 'I knew a lovely little brown girl, and I loved her so much' (*Conocí una linda morenita, y la quise mucho*) –considered the first Mexican *bolero*. Most visitors compared their own stories of love and betrayal with the ballads they heard in the city's bars and from street singers. Bertram Wolfe collected songs, poet Witter Bynner translated them, editors Francis Toor and Idella Purnell published them in *Mexican Folkways* and *The Palm*. Bertram Wolfe took courses at the School for Foreigners at the National University, where he studied with the great philologist Pedro Henriquez Ureña and wrote a paper on Mexican romances; Bynner translated the old Mexican tune '*Un Viejo Amor*' :

My older love
 Though the world has come between us,
 We can never say good-bye
 My older love.

And of course two great moments in the city's musical enchantment were the popularity of the Yucateco tune '*Peregrina*' by poet Luis Rosado Vega and popular composer Ricardo Palmerín, requested by the radical governor of Yucatán Felipe Carrillo Puerto for his lover Alma Reed (1922). 'I could easily have wept', wrote Reed, recalling the first time she heard the song, 'when I grasped the resignation in the words of unfulfillment, stressed in the closing lines with Felipe's reiterated appeal: "do not forget do not forget my land, do not forget, do not forget, my love."' The song became part of the voices of the city, though the love affair between a young US journalist and a socialist governor (soon to be assassinated) was somehow lost. Aaron Copland, in turn, internationalised the tunes that were already, in 1919 Mexico City, the closest thing to the first citywide collective sentimentality.²⁰ To be sure not

¹⁹Il n'y a pas de littérature populaire ni de chansons des rues au Mexique. Les Indiens ne savent pas lire et ils couchent dans des taudis sur le sol, en terre battue très souvent... Le divertissements du peuple n'existent pas, en dehors de la musique militaire et du ciné, où prédominant les films français et italiens.'

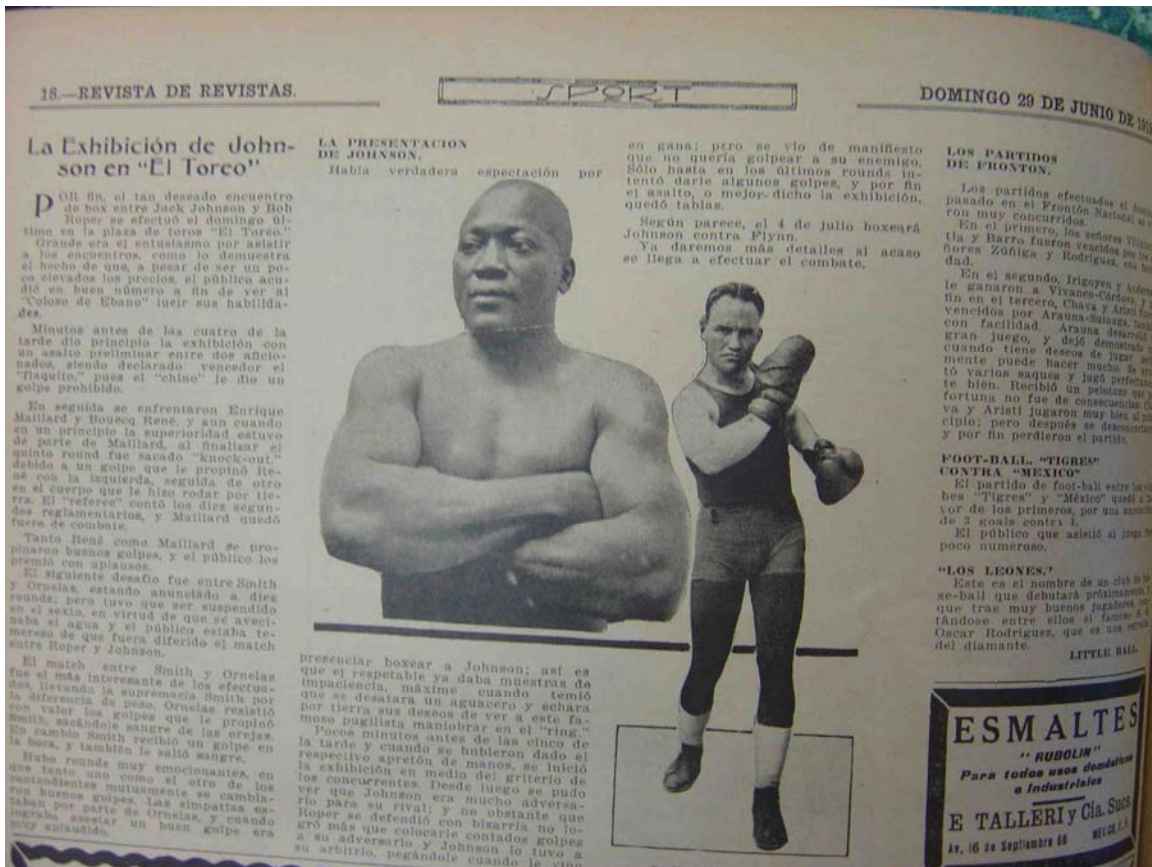
²⁰ Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Bertram Wolfe, 'Romances tradicionales en Méjico', in *Homenaje ofrecido a Menéndez Pidal*, vol. 2, Madrid, Librería y Casa Editorial Hernando, 1925, pp. 375-390. In 1932 Wolfe finished the MA essay 'The Mexican Corrido', for the Romance Language Department, Columbia University. His literary excursions were helped by his friendship not only with Henriquez Ureña, but also with León Felipe and F. de Onís, professor at Columbia; Bynner letter to Idella Purnell, March 12, 1924, Idella Purnell Papers. See Timothy G. Turner, *Bullets, Bottles and Gardenias*, Dallas, South West Press, 1935. Anita Brenner Papers, diary entry 1926; Albert's letter to Apollinaire, July 12, 1914, in *Correspondance avec son Frère et sa mere, présentée par Gilbert Boudar, et Michel Décaudin*, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1987. Alma R Reed, *Peregrina* (Reed's lost memoirs published by The University of Texas Press, 2007), p. 213.

everybody in the city felt the same: different classes, different people, felt every song in varied and indescribable ways. But by 1930, the reader can be sure, almost any inhabitant of the city could sing the next stanza of Lara's first *bolero* (1920) that began: 'I know it's impossible for you to love me, I know that my love for you was transient, and that you trade your kisses for money, thus poisoning my heart...' (*Yo sé que es imposible que me quieras/ que mi amor para ti fue pasajero/ y que cambias tus besos por dinero/ envenenando así mi corazón...*)

3.

In 1919, the Mexico City of Aaron Copland or Agustín Lara was yet to come. But, as if it were being visited and seen for the very first time, 1919 Mexico City became a capital for runaways of all sorts. Jack Johnson, the heavyweight black boxer, arrived from Spain with his white wife Lillian. In Barcelona he had defeated Arthur Cravan —nephew of Oscar Wilde, poet, boxer and photographer—, and during 1918 had been in touch with Cravan in order to re-enact the fight in El Toreo on the outskirts of Mexico City. Johnson had been on the run for a while, escaping ostracism and racism due to his flamboyant lifestyle and his breaking of the race code. He stayed on Donceles Street in downtown Mexico City for some months, travelling to different parts of the country, performing staged exhibitions. Two US socialists and 'slackers', Charles Phillips and Mike Gold, sought out Johnson in his Mexico City flat, requesting money to publish Bolshevik propaganda. Johnson gave them ten dollars, as he could not remember having anything against Bolsheviks. His most impressive performance in the capital took place in September in El Toreo, where he fought not Cravan but another white US boxer, Keith Cutler. Mexico City's newspapers were full of reports about the flashy black giant. He was like no one else in the city. But people wanted blood: the newspapers reported the popular discontent because the huge black boxer did not fully destroy his white opponent.

FIGURE 5



Johnson in Mexico.

Unknowingly, the fighter continued the break up of the city's social map that had started in 1914: a black man in a fancy apartment in the old Porfirian Ideal City. In 1919 Johnson visited Sanborns in downtown Mexico, the same stylish restaurant that was taken over by Zapatista and Villista troops five years earlier, and the same restaurant that in 1926 would be considered by John Dos Passos the center of Mexico City's *Yanquilandia*. He took a table there with his wife and asked to be served. Unknown to him, M. N. Roy was also present —the handsome Indian Braham who had arrived from California, also with his US wife Evelyn Trent, a radical Stanford student. Roy's memoirs describe how Johnson was denied service (Roy also described his first ever encounter with the *belle canto*: Caruso's performance in El Toreo.) Roy and Trent had also used the city to break rules: he was a Bengali nationalist, married to a socialist US woman whose father had accused Roy of abducting her daughter when she followed him from San Francisco to New York. But at Sanborns the American owner of the restaurant apparently reasserted the social map of the city. Johnson, Roy tells us, left Sanborns, only to come back

later with Mexican police authorities who forced Sanborns' owner to serve the boxer and his wife himself.

Yes —Mexico City was the revolutionary capital that would not allow such racial discrimination. Later that same year, 1919, young Langston Hughes came to Mexico City believing that there was no race problem in the city —his father was a lawyer in Mexico City and Toluca. Unfortunately facing the race line was not part of the agenda of the utopian city of socialists or 'slackers'. In 1919 the police probably helped Johnson more out of anti-American feelings —against the owner of Sanborns— than from notions of racial equality. The city was fascinated with the size and power of the boxer, and with Caruso's voice, but it totally ignored the young Hughes. Nonetheless, in the early 1930s Hughes, like in a good novel, came back to conquer and be conquered by the city.²¹

Manabendra Nath Roy was tall and dark. When not at Sanborns he could be found in a Chinese restaurant in Dolores Street —the city's small Chinatown— where he met many US radicals, people who had been introduced by Evelyn. The Roys arrived during the summer of 1918 at the Genova Hotel, where young US Americans avoided the draft, and pacifists or socialists fled from the witch-hunts in New York or Chicago following the Sedition Act. There were also several German guests, who sat apart from the cadre of *gringos*. The hotel was situated in the heart of the city, a few steps from the immense central square or *Zócalo*, just around the corner from the Alameda Park, a favorite rendezvous for all foreigners. The same streets and parks were patronised, in 1919, by such young Mexican dandies as Xavier Villaurrutia and Salvador Novo or the bohemian Barba Jacob, and soon after by three Spaniards who would become friends of the radical circles Roy left in Mexico after his departure to Berlin and Moscow in 1922 —Monna and Felipe Teixidor and León Felipe. Charles Phillips was there too, planning the revolution with Mike Gold and Eleonora Parker, whom Phillips had married (but who was then having an affair with the radical US cartoonist Henry Glintenkamp). Carleton Beals was part of the circle in the restaurant and in the Genova Hotel, where all the US 'slackers' first touched base in the city. Alameda Park, Donceles, Dolores, Madero, Cinco de Mayo and Colonia Roma were the typical settings of their discussions and encounters.

For all these characters the city had specific geographical contours. Their city did not include the entire city: it encompassed the two main historico-

²¹ M. N. Roy, *Memoirs*, New Delhi, London, Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1964; Sibnarayan Ray, *In Freedom's Quest. Life of M. N. Roy*, vol. I, Calcutta, Minerva Associates, 1998; Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1979; Jack Johnson, *Jack Johnson is a Dandy; An Autobiography*, introductory essays by Dick Schaap and the Lampman, New York, Chelsea House, 1969; Charles Phillips, *It had to be Revolution*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993 (Phillips says that Johnson's opponent in Mexico City was an Argentine); Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern, the Life of Mina Loy*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, The University of California Press, 1996; Maria Lluisa Borràs, *Arthur Cravan: Una biografia*, Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1993. I have dealt, in very different styles, with Roy and his times in Mexico City and Berlin in: *El urbanista*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004; and in *Mexico, DeMexicanized*.

geographical interpretations of the city and its centers of power; that is, the colonial center as reinterpreted and beautified by Porfirian architects and planners, and the new city constructed by Porfirians, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century. So in the narrow streets of colonial greed, from Zocalo to Alameda, and in the extensions around El Paseo de la Reforma, the confines of the Porfirian Ideal City, lived those who dreamt of a brown Atlantis and a socialist revolution.

FIGURE 6



Map of Mexico City, *circa* 1919.

In 1919, Mexico City had not yet been totally reconstructed after the events of 1914 and 1915. But the streets of the old colonial city and the Porfirian Ideal City had returned to a vivid urban life. Rampant crime had declined, and political violence had become selective. By 1926 a US military attaché in Mexico informed authorities in the US that city security had improved greatly, that criminals were apprehended and killed, and that General Roberto Cruz,

chief of police, was truly cleaning up the city. Joseph Retinger, a powerful Polish adviser to Mexican union leader Luis N. Morones, recalled however that in the early 1920s political violence was still part of daily life. But the streets were relatively safe, at least for men; women were expected not to be in the streets. Arthur Cravan's wife, Mina Loy, was free to circulate with her tall strong man, but Evelyn Trent and, after 1921, Ella Wolfe, were breaking the city's code when they rambled alone in La Alameda or in la Colonia Roma. But the Roys and their many visitors never had a problem; however they had money.²²

As with Alameda Park, Jack Johnson's fight and Caruso's performance linked different groups of people, often unknown to each other. M. N. Roy's circle was formed by radicals, always conflicted and crossed by ideological and personal passions. From 1918 to 1925 this group included such people as Charles Phillips, Linn Gale, Bertram Wolfe, Ella Wolfe, Maurice Baker, Mike Gold, Henry Glintenkamp, Joseph Retinger, Roberto Haberman, Tina Modotti, Juan Antonio Mella, and the Soviet envoys Michael Borodin, Sen Katayana and Louis Fraina. Almost all of them meant to be elsewhere, but ended up in Mexico City, living near each other. Mexican radicals joined them: Dr. Atl, Diego Rivera (after 1921), Xavier Guerrero, José Valadés, Elena Torres, José Allen and Santibañez. Before Rivera, the center of interactions was José Vasconcelos, a bilingual intellectual who knew the US very well, who gave them jobs and talked to them about books and ideas.

The outcome of these interactions could have been easily predicted: in 1919 Mexican and foreign communists founded the Mexican Communist Party, and appointed M. N. Roy, along with Evelyn Trent and Charles Phillips, to be Mexican envoys at the 1921 meeting of the Comintern. Once in Moscow, however, Roy became the representative of anti-Imperialist India, supported by Moscow, thus creating a conflict within both Mexican and the Indian Communists. José Allen, the secretary-general of the Mexican Communist Party, provided Roy and Evelyn Trent with Mexican passports. Roy became Roberto Allen y Villagarcía, a rather aristocratic English and Mexican name for an Indian revolutionary who could justify his poor Spanish on the basis of his affluent upbringing. Another US 'slacker', Linn A Gale, had introduced a mixture of socialism and New Thought into Mexico, and had struggled with Roy for the leadership of the new party and for the availability of international communist funds. Gale allied himself with union leader Morones, whose party line was closer to that of US labor leader Samuel Gompers and the American Labor Federation (a more evolutionary than revolutionary organisation). Also close to Morones were two inhabitants of the city who exemplified its status as a revolutionary capital: Roberto Haberman and

²² Military Attache, report, April 2, 1926, Edgard David, ACT 83 905 31 inv. 1543; Hoover Institute's Oral History Tapes, Ella Wolfe Interview, Burke, *Becoming Modern*; Joseph Retinger, *Memoirs of an Eminence Grise*, edited by John Pomian, Sussex, Sussex at the University Press. 1973.

Joseph Retinger. Thus by 1920 the Mexican Communist Party was already divided. In turn, the Indian radicals divided too and in Berlin and Moscow Virendranath Chatopadhyaya (Chatto) and his US lover Agnes Smedley were defeated by the intrigues of the Roys. M. N. Roy and Smedley had developed a mutual dislike, born of Roy's sexual advances and of Smedley's protagonism in Indian affairs and her sense of lack of class—she came from working class origins— *vis-à-vis* the bourgeois origins of Evelyn Trent, Roy's US wife. By the end of the 1920s, Roy had lost the support of Moscow; Evelyn had been accused of being a British spy, had been abandoned by Roy; Smedley had left Chatto, and had gone to China—as Roy did—and both enemies, Chatto and Roy, had exchanged their US partners for German radical lovers—Louise Geissler and Lucie Hecht respectively. In turn, Moscow sent Japanese communist Sen Katayama and US activist Louis Fraina to Mexico in order to resolve the disputes within the party.²³ International communism was an erotic mess whose scenarios were Berlin, Moscow and, of course, Mexico City.

Because of the language barriers and the cult of secrecy, the urban lives of all these radicals appear in the historical record as totally apart from the rest of urban bohemia and cultural life. But in fact these visitors were known not only by the Mexican and US secret services but also by José Vasconcelos (who helped many of them) and by Spanish expatriates who were often intermediaries between Mexicans and other foreigners (for instance, Felipe Camino—aka León Felipe—and Felipe Teixidor). By the late 1920s Diego Rivera became the center of all cultural and political actions and thus various cities that seemed disconnected became a single city.

²³ US military intelligence knew of all Roy's movements; apparently this was due to Allen's reports, as he seems to have been a US informant. In his memoirs Roy claims that Gale asked him for financial support for *Gale's Magazine*, a bizarre 'personal' magazine Gale started in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1917; Roy declined. Roy recalls his given Mexican name as Roberto Allen y Villa Garcia (sic) and says that it was Carranza himself who furnished him with the passport. In fact it was Allen who provided the passports to both Roy and Evelyn. Roy admits: 'I personified [sic] a brother of the Comrade who succeeded me as the General Secretary of the Communist Party' (ie, José Allen). See Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 223. For Allen see Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1992. For this complicated period in the history of the international left in Mexico see Carlton Beals, *Glass Houses, Ten Years of Free-Lancing*, Philadelphia, New York, JB Lippincott Company, 1938; Héctor Cárdenas and Evgeni Dik, *Historia de las relaciones entre México y Rusia*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993; Arnoldo Martínez Verdugo (ed), *Historia del comunismo en México*, Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1985; Ricardo Melgar Bao, 'Redes y representaciones COMINTERMistas: El Buró Latinoamericano (1919-1921)', *Revista Universum*, vol. 16 (2001), pp. 375-405; and Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Bolsheviks, Historia Narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México (1919-1925)*, Mexico City, Joaquín Mortiz, 1986. For Roy and Smedley see Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905-1921)*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1979; Ruth Price, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005; and Smedley's fictional autobiography, in which Roy becomes Juan Díaz—a blend of M. N. Roy and H. Gupta, A. Smedley, *Daughter of Earth*, New York, Coward-McCann, 1929.

4.

Long before the 1939 exile, Spaniards in Mexico City formed in 1919 one city cluster close to other foreigners and Mexican radicals. By 1920 poet León Felipe and painter Rafael Sala and his wife Monna were in Mexico, interacting with Americans and Mexicans. León Felipe had arrived sometime in 1919 or 1920, escaping prosecution for an incident in a bar in Spain. He had met young Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes in Madrid, and with this introduction he decided to migrate to Mexico. In 1921 two US radicals, Ella and Bertram Wolfe, shared the same patio with León Felipe and his sister and hereafter he interacted until the 1950s with many of the US intellectuals and radicals who came to Mexico City. For three decades León Felipe was a common reference for Mexicans and Americans alike. In 1939 he recalled:

I am not a refugee that today calls upon the doors of Mexico asking for hospice. Mexico gave me its hospitality sixteen years ago when I came here for the first time, alone and poor with nothing more than a letter of introduction that Alfonso Reyes gave me in Madrid, which opened all the doors in this town as well as the hearts of the best men who lived in the city then. With that 'open Sesame', I won the friendships of Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Vasconcelos, don Antonio Caso, Eduardo Villaseñor, Daniel Cosío Villegas, and Manuel Rodríguez Lozano.

León Felipe eventually became a popular poet; but in 1920s Mexico City he found, in the many personalities attracted by the city, not only friends but also intellectual and social crusades. He befriended the Wolfes, and as Ella Wolfe recalled, became particularly interested in the worldwide Jewish question. After 1945 he dedicated many poems to Jewish suffering and later to the state of Israel. But before that, perhaps as a result of his interaction with various US Jewish radicals, he wrote in Mexico City the 'First epistle to the Jews', (*Primera epístola a los judíos*) as a way to tame his friends' radicalism with their own Jewishness:

The [Jewish] prophets had no wisdom,
they barely knew how to read,
but about the 'socialist communism,'
about that fraternal socialism,
that you search for so heroically,
they knew much...maybe more than Marx.

*Los profetas [Judíos] no tenían sabiduría,
apenas sabían leer,
pero del "comunismo socialista",*

*de ese fraternal socialismo
que estáis buscando tan heroicamente vosotros...
Sabían mucho... tal vez más que Marx.*

Rafael Sala, in turn, was a Catalan painter close to the Italian Futurists in Florence just before the start of World War I and later close to Joan Miró's circle. Like Felipe Teixidor, Sala was from Vilanova i la Geltrú, near Barcelona. He left Catalonia for New York together with Teixidor. In Mexico City he became one with the adherents of the idea of the brown Atlantis, searching for official favors from the revolutionary government, and open to exotic ideas about Mexico. 'If not for the nine million of Indians in Mexico', he wrote in Catalan to a friend, 'I would have never had come; if Mexico is interesting it is due to these nine million of Indians and not due to all these Spanish merchants, these *indianos* who you know very well as they are an abundant race along the entire Catalan coast.'²⁴ How was Sala able to see so many millions of Indians in Mexico City? This was the mystery of exoticism the city offered to all its visitors. Nevertheless, he and his friend Teixidor found jobs writing texts sponsored by the revolutionary government. Sala circulated freely among US expatriates in Mexico —Edward Weston, Tina Moddotti, Ella and Bertram Wolfe, Anita Brenner— and Mexican intellectuals and officials, as well as his fellow Catalan Teixidor, who married Monna Sala in 1927 after Sala's death.

Felipe Teixidor also arrived in Mexico in 1919 and also became an acquaintance of Weston and other US radicals. He became editor of literary journals such as *Contemporáneos*, collector of Mexican urban motifs, and publicist. He lived for a while in Coahuila Street. He and Monna became English teachers for various Mexicans, among them prominent Mexican economist Jesús Silva Herzog. Monna was an important link between Spain, Mexico City and New York, as she had, as she put it, no fatherland. Her family had migrated to the US, and thus she was perfectly bilingual —her brother Felipe Alfau managed to write a novel in English in the 1930s, which was resurrected in the 1990s and greatly admired. In New York she was close to the Spanish Hispanicist and Columbia University professor Federico de Onís and to the Nicaraguan intellectual and later resident of Mexico City, Salomón de la Selva. De Onís' knowledge of Spanish and Spanish-American literature, as well as his concern with popular literature in Spanish, influenced not only Monna, but also Ella and Bertram Wolfe and many others.

Soon after Monna met Rafael Sala in the US they moved to Veracruz and arrived in Mexico City in 1923.²⁵ Monna was an intriguing female resident of

²⁴ 'no hi hauria vingut mai; i si Mèxic és interessant és per aquests nou milions d'indígenes i no per tots els botiguers espanyols, els 'indianos' que tu ha conoixes per ser una raça abundant en tota la costa catalana.' Wealthy Catalans who made their fortunes in the Americas were often called *Indianos* in Catalonia.

²⁵ See Felipe Alfau, *Locos: a Comedy of Gestures*, afterword by Mary McCarthy, Elmwood Park, IL, Dalkey Archive Press, 1988. PHO 4-104 (Felipe) PHO 4-114 (Monna).

1920s Mexico City. When Sala developed a fatal illness, the couple left Mexico City with Edward Weston's assistance to find professional help in the US. He died in Los Angeles. Monna returned to Mexico City, where she became Monna Teixidor, friend of José Vasconcelos, Anita Brenner, the Wolfes, Rivera... For Monna the city was a cosmopolitan site, an extraordinary Mexico—as she recalled in the 1970s—with no inhibitions and no inferiority complex.²⁶

Also around 1919 a famous Spanish writer, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, visited Mexico and wrote what seemed to be mandatory in those days: an opinion on the Mexican Revolution, *El militarismo mejicano*, published in 1921. In 1919, he claimed, US journalists, especially women (so he explicitly claimed), demanded his opinion about Mexico, since he had been in Mexico City. He therefore wrote several articles for US newspapers that later became *El militarismo: a view of Mexico as a land of savages* written by an incredibly self-aggrandizing *gachupín*.

In 1921 an old Spanish friend of the city, Ramón del Valle Inclán, returned as a celebrity. He had been a bohemian in Porfirian Mexico City; but when invited and subsidised by the Mexican revolutionary government—in view of his desperate economic situation in Spain—he returned and published *Tirano Banderas* (1927). The product of Valle Inclán's life in Mexico City in the 1890s and in 1921 and 1922, the book is icon in the Spanish-speaking world of the sort of conventional racial and cultural aspects assigned to such tropical places as Mexico.²⁷ This was the first in the saga of world-acclaimed Mexico-centered novels—but not one with Mexico City as the centre of action. This Spanish novel was soon followed by B Traven's *Der Schatz der Sierra Madre* (1927) and in 1947 by Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*—very different novels and yet with a similar fixation on racial atavism and similar indifference to the city.

Valle Inclán went to Mexico in 1921 as a special guest at the centennial of the final achievement of Mexico's independence in 1821. By 1920 many of the city's 'bohemian' intellectuals had entered the new cultural bureaucracy of a revolutionary government that needed their services as educators, publicists and cultural producers. Some of these intellectuals had been concerned about Valle Inclán's economic difficulties, and bringing him to Mexico was a way to help him. Valle Inclán was, in addition, an outspoken critic of the Spanish monarchy, which had in turn expressed reserves about the Jacobin and anti-Spanish rhetoric of the Mexican revolutionary government. Thus Valle Inclán's

²⁶ Enric Critòfol Ricart, *Memories*, Barcelona, Parsifal Edicions, 1975; Frances Xavier Puig Rovira, *El pintor vilanovi Rafael Sala, Vilanova i la Geltrú*, 1975, quote p. 46. See the book Sala produced sponsored by the Mexican government: *Marcas de fuego de las antiguas bibliotecas mexicanas*, Mexico City, Impr. de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1925.

²⁷ Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *El militarismo mejicano: estudios publicados en los principales diarios de los Estados Unidos*, Valencia, Spain, Prometeo, 1920. Ramón del Valle-Inclán, *Tirano Banderas: novela de tierra caliente*, Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1994; for Mexican subsidies and help to Valle Inclán, see his letters to Alfonso Reyes and Genaro Estrada, in Juan Antonio Hormigón, *Valle-Inclán. Biografía, cronología y epistolario. Volumen III. Epistolario*, Madrid, Publicaciones de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 2006.

anti-Spanish statements in many magazines and periodicals were widely celebrated by various Mexican intellectuals and officials. But for Valle Inclán, the return to Mexico City was a return to a lost innocence: to his own youth of excess in Mexico. 1921 Mexico City offered more of the same, all contained in the exotic valley of Anahuac. His wizard-like figure was captured by the caricaturist García Cabral: a Spanish Wiseman, the emblem of wit, blasphemy and love for Mexico. Valle Inclán's romantic encounters with Lupe Marín—later wife of both Diego Rivera and writer Jorge Cuesta—and his enchantment with the city's language became matters of legend. In 1922, in a stereotypical fashion, he said goodbye to the city with the poem:

With your wan sad gesture, I say goodbye to you, Mexican Indian,
I say farewell, hand in hand!

...

Mexican Indian
hand in hand
I tell you my faith.
The first thing
is hang the *encomendero*
And then reap the wheat.

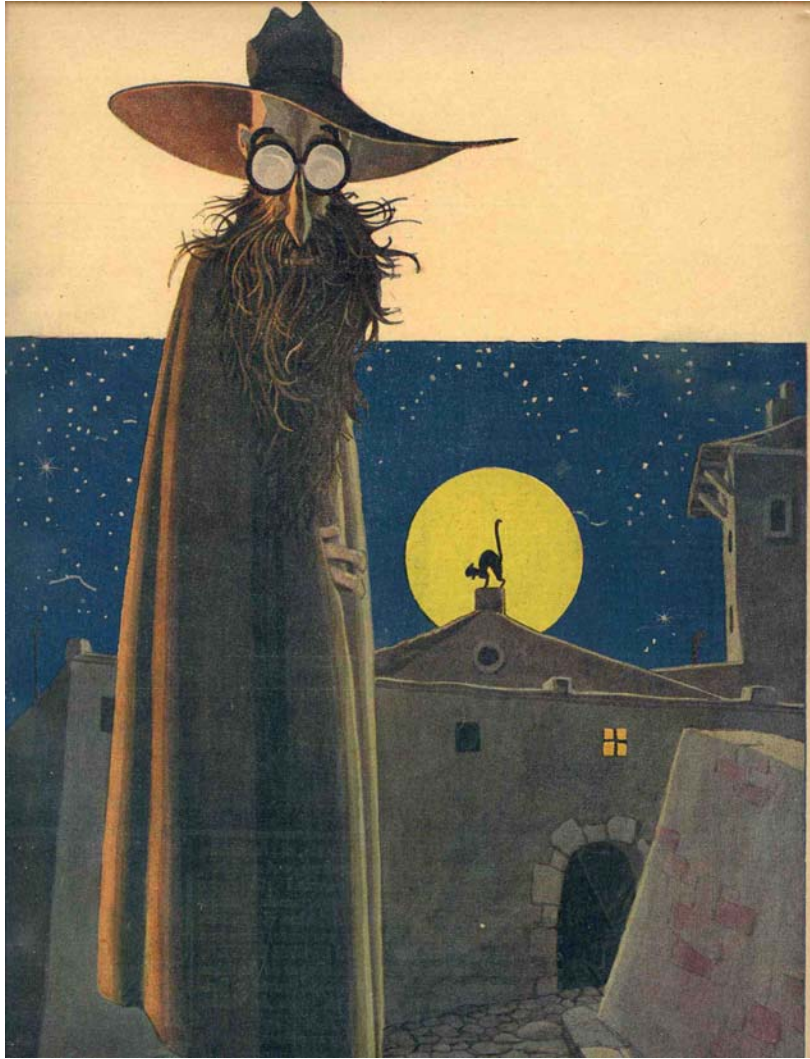
*¡Adiós te digo con tu gesto triste, indio mexicano,
adiós te digo, mano en la mano;*

...

*Indio mexicano
mano en mano
mi fe te digo.
lo primero
es colgar el encomendero
y después, segar el trigo.*²⁸

²⁸ Valle Inclán not only lived in the city in the 1890s but became part of the urban bohemia; the same in 1921, though as a guest of the Mexican government. Traven went to live near Acapulco. Lowy lived in Cuernavaca and Oaxaca as he hated Mexico City. León Felipe, *Español del éxodo y del llanto: doctrina, elegías y canciones*, Mexico City, La Casa de España en México, 1939, p. 14; *Presente amistoso a Felipe Teixidor*, Mexico City, 1969, especially Jose Carner's essay on Teixidor's house; Archivo de la Palabra, Felipe y Monna Teixidor, INAH; interview with Ella Wolfe, Hoover Institute; for Sala in Florence see the memoirs of his friend and fellow traveler Enric Cristòfol Ricart, *Memòries*, edited by Ricard Mas Peinado, Barcelona, Parsifal Edicions, 1995; and Françesc Xavier Puig Rovira, *El pintor vilanovi Rafael Sala*, Vilanova, Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis, 2nd edition, 1975; *Todo Valle-Inclán en México*, edited by Luis Mario Schneider, Mexico City, Coordinación de Difusión Cultural, Dirección de Literatura, UNAM, 1992. Valle Inclán's poem in *Mexico Moderno*, Spetember 2, 1922.

FIGURE 7



Valle Inclán by Cabral.

The streets of the city also knew an influential group of people from Central and South America: Carlos Mérida (Guatemala), Salomón de la Selva (Nicaragua), Porfirio Barba Jacob (Colombia and Guatemala), Rafael Heliodoro Valle (Honduras) and Aquiles Vela (Guatemala) —and a unique intellectual from the Dominican Republic, Pedro Henriquez Ureña, the only truly universal of all the inhabitants of or visitors to the capital city of the brown Atlantis, including Henry Adams (either a very American European or vice versa), Blasco Ibáñez (too much of a '*gachupín*' in Mexico), André Breton (an extremely French poet) or Stuart Chase (a parochial exoticist). Don Pedro deserves an entire book and not a simple stamp in this collection of stories.

5.

There was still space on the streets for another unconnected group of less radical foreigners —Bob Brown, Mina Loy and Arthur Cravan. In 1916 modernist poet Mina Loy met Arthur Cravan in New York. In December 1917 he escaped the draft by going to Mexico City. Mina followed him, leaving New York bohemian life and her children in Europe to live with Cravan in Mexico City, where they later married. No traces are left of their life there, other than Mina's departure, pregnant, to Buenos Aires in late 1918. Cravan was supposed to meet her but suddenly disappeared, becoming a legend. Cravan might have drowned trying to escape Mexico, though some argued The Colossus, as Loy called him, survived for many decades with a new identity. Mexico City in those days offered the possibility of escape and reinvention. That was what the city was about for their foreign conquerors, though not for Mexicans who were expected by foreigners to maintain their racial composition and remain eternally the same.

Arthur Cravan might have died, but B. Traven, who arrived in the early 1920s, died in 1969 without really revealing who he was. Traven hated the city, and went to live near Acapulco; but by the 1930s he had succumbed to the attraction of the city, where he lived until his death. M. N. Roy reinvented himself as a communist in Mexico City; Linn Gale went through several metamorphoses —socialist, communist, New Age spiritualist—; Charles Phillips was in Mexico City first as Frank Seaman then as Manuel Gómez; and Diego Rivera reinvented himself as the real Mexican.²⁹

Bob Brown, a journalist and novelist, also joined this group of vanguard women and men. 'Where was Buttery J during the Great War', Brown's autobiographical novel of those years in Mexico City began. Buttery J. was the *alter ego* of Brown. [He was] 'in romantic old Mexico whose sun-cured, fly-blown corpses, desecrated human herrings, hung by their gills cured still out from straight, tamed, gaunt-armed telegraph crosses' was the answer. Brown counted sixty 'slackers' in his group in Mexico City. Rex (Cravan) and Rita

²⁹ Burke, *Becoming Modern*; Maria Lluisa Borràs, *Arthur Cravan*. In addition to those mentioned above and below other members of this moment up to 1930 were Everett Gee Jackson, artist George Biddle, artist and writer Prescott Chaplin (see his *Mexicans; twelve woodcuts*, with a foreword by Rupert Hughes, Seattle, University of Washington Book Store, 1930), artist Alson Skinner Clark, George Overbury "Pop" Hart, muralist Pablo O'Higgins, and Canadian painter Henrietta Shore. There were also academics and intellectuals invited by the Mexican government, especially to the Support of the National University Summer School that became the university of the brown Atlantis. Frances Toor originally came as a student of the Summer School in 1922 and stayed. Thus came Harvard professor Clarence Henry Haring, Russian poet Mayackovsky, Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, and the great philologist from the Dominican Republic Pedro Henriquez Ureña, and even John Dewey, who visited Mexico for the first time in 1927 to advise on educational policy, realising that his pedagogical ideas were at work in rural school in Mexico; he never mentioned Mexico City. Economist Alfonso Goldschmith was brought by the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America. See *Seminar in Mexico*, reports, Mexico City, 1926-1937; *What Mr. John Dewey thinks of the educational policies of Mexico*, Mexico City, Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1926 (small pamphlet); John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary world, Mexico-China-Turkey*, New York, New Republic, inc., 1929.

(Mina Loy) were part of the novel, as well as Henry Glintenkamp—who seems to be a character who seduced many Mexican maids and servants. ‘Here she comes [Rita]’, he wrote remembering the interactions of these ‘slackers’ in Mexico City, ‘Lady Godiva! Galloping after me with her icicle dagger. *Generalissimissus* Joan D’Arc of the Queen’s own slakers, riding at the head of her hussars with her blood-red icicle dagger drawn. The succubus come with her deadly might shard kiss.’³⁰

Mina Loy left Mexico City and Fabienne (Mina and Cravan’s daughter) was born in England in 1919. She tried to find Cravan for many years, and her poem *Mexican Desert* (1921) became a modernist emblem of loss and endless mourning: A female locomotive entering into Mexico’s landscape, total isolation and constant re-starting of pain:

The mountains in a row
set pinnacles of ferocious isolation
under the alien hot heaven.

Her metaphors were no less odd or modernist than those of López Velarde (‘belching ghost-wail of the locomotive’ ‘into the jazz-band sunset’).

So much bohemian life, and yet up until the late 1930s, almost none of these characters lived outside the comfortable confines of the city, except, and for a brief period of time, Langston Hughes, who shared a place with Henri Cartier-Bresson and Andrés Henestrosa in the 1930s—a place in La Merced—a poor commercial part of the city. Artoni Artaud and Porifirio Barba Jacob were two other exceptions in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Langston Hughes, López Velarde and—say—M. N. Roy never met, yet the intellectual village they had constructed within Mexico City was the same—each one belonged to their own private Mexico City, offering all of them the same possibilities. I am sure López Velarde or Salvador Novo were aware of the existence in the city of, for instance, Roy and his Hindi friend H. Gupta, who translated Hindi literature into Spanish, but the opposite path was possible only by living wholly the cultural life of the city—not just the city as temporary site for international radical networking. Foreigners often hated the city’s intellectuals, except for José Vasconcelos, who they befriended as a politician. Mexican intellectuals were too urban, too westernised and too frivolous for the many visitors of Mexico City.

³⁰ Bob Brown, *You Gotta Live*, London, D Harmsworth, 1932, p. 247.

6.

Let us return to the intriguing M. N. Roy. He filled the radical circles of the city with money and inspiration. His first ardent engagement was for Indian independence (and the superiority of Indian spirituality over Western materialism and British imperialism). Then came socialism and communism, and the glamour of the clandestine and the intrigue of those days of spies, plots and secrets. Herrán's beautiful native bodies were paralleled by Roy's figure as an emblem of ethnic beauty and wisdom —characteristics that helped him to quickly become the center of communist intrigues, though even he could not recognise the degree to which this might have been true, perhaps because he was a man.

M. N. Roy was being followed by the English and American secret service because of his association with German spies and arms traders. He had initially arrived in the United States in search of German arms shipments to send over the Pacific back to India. The Germans proved amenable to the illusions of the young Indian. He soon left New York for Stanford, California, where he met Evelyn Trent. His charm convinced David Jordan Starr, then president of the university, that it was necessary to help the young and attractive pacifist couple —a radical Stanford girl and the Bengali Quixote, dapper and determined. Starr offered a letter of introduction to General Salvador Alvarado, a friend and 'the father of Mayan socialism in the Yucatán'. They left for Mexico soon after, but never arrived in Yucatán; instead they remained in Mexico City, then less dangerous and a more appealing city of hope.³¹

As he recalled in his memoirs, Roy fell in love with the city's nearby volcanoes, especially that of the Sleeping Lady. He and Evelyn lived in a comfortable abode on the outskirts of Colonia Roma, at 33 Córdoba Street. From the window, looking out over the maize seedlings, the city seemed to end just beyond the house. On one side lay the countryside and the Sleeping Lady; on the other were the streets and nooks of the urban revolutionary paradise. They lived austere as good socialists or even as Hindi ascetics, despite their wealth, but they boasted Louis XIV furniture, a Mexican servant named María, and a '*muchacho*' (boy) who performed odd jobs around the house. The city's inequality had conquered them. Many would follow the same route of employing a Mexican *criada* or male servant, who was an intrinsic part of the sensual, exotic and comfortable experience of the city. What could a vegetarian, nationalist, poorly read, unworldly Brahman do in the cosmopolitan Mexico of those years? The city stole his exotic virginity early on

³¹ See US War Department Files 10640-690 M.I.5 report on Roy's activities in Mexico by US military attaché in Mexico in 1918. Roy had been linked to a Hindi-German plot to buy arms in the US for Bengal nationalists; they were to be shipped from California but the shipment was intercepted and various people were prosecuted, including Roy, who then escaped to Mexico.

by exposing him to the modern life of commodities and socialist lectures at the same time as he entered the radical circles of US exiles.³²

International characters visited Roy: Louis Fraina, Charles Phillips, Bertram Wolfe and Sen Katayama. Louis Fraina was eventually accused of spying and, disillusioned with Leninism, he escaped to the US —apparently with Comintern money— in search of his Russian wife and a new beginning, becoming Lewis Corey in 1926. Fraina's perspective on the Revolution, like Roy's, came into conflict with his views on human loneliness and love —which were un-revolutionary, and even reactionary, issues: 'a man is', Fraina wrote, 'and then thinks; he feels, and therefore acts. Man has tried to make intellect the ruler, but it has been a marionette ruler with instinct and feeling pulling the strings.'

Indeed there was a high price to pay in the personal lives of all these radicals for fully embracing the universal hopes and the exotic allure of the city, where political and personal betrayals were common. That is why, in 1958, Joseph Freeman, one of the radicals living in Mexico in the early 1930s, wrote to Bertram Wolfe, in the way he had learned in the city, in a *corrido* (popular story-telling lyric): 'was it all a dream?' he wrote. 'Did we really want:

An end to murder, theft and cant
Hunger and war? Did we really hope...
To make men freer wherever they are?
When we two parted in polemics and jeers,
Completely unheated to argue for years,
Pale was your hate and cold, colder your hiss.³³

Inescapable destiny: José Vasconcelos, in his later years, ended up asking the same question and becoming a retrograde Catholic, resentful of his own patronage of all those radicals and 'slackers'; and M. N. Roy became a disillusioned nationalist trying to invent the new conservative universalism of Radical Humanism.

³² About the persecution of US pacifists in the context of World War I and the German connection in Mexico see F. Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1983; Gregory Andrews, *Shoulder to Shoulder: the American Federation of Labor and US Response to the Mexican Revolution*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1991; Diana K. Cristopolus, 'American Radicals and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1924', PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, Binghamton, 1980; WD Ratt, 'US Intelligence Operations and Covert Action in Mexico, 1900-1947', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1987), pp. 615-638; Daniel La Botz, 'Slackers: American War Resisters and Communism in Mexico, 1917-1927', PhD Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1998; Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918*, Seattle, The University of Washington Press, 1957; Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941*, Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1971; and Daniela Spenser, *The Impossible Triangle: Mexico, Soviet Russia, and the United States in the 1920s*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1999.

³³ Fraina quoted in David Madden (ed.), *Proletarian Writers of the Thirties*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1968; Freeman's letter to Bertram and Ella Wolfe, 1958, Joseph and Ella Wolfe Papers, Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University.

In 1925 Roy left Evelyn Trent and left with a German radical —Louise Geissler— who had enchanted many radicals in Berlin and Moscow. The Indian and German comrades accused Evelyn of being an English spy, or at least, an enemy of Lenin. Roy died without giving his version of the intrigues that ended, not only their relationship, but also his role as a protagonist on the stage of world communism. Towards the end of his life he turned to Radical Humanism, a desperate call for access to the central role already played by figures like Nehru or Gandhi. Ironically, he then suffered, as Evelyn once had, from rumors that he was a spy: there was a story that the CIA had lent its support to the Radical Humanists. He abandoned his Hindi spiritualism, becoming pro-Western in the process. Evelyn must have read the publications of Roy's group, hoping to see her name in Roy's pages, but she probably lost track of them eventually.³⁴ Roy had become a true subject of Her British Majesty, lambasting and admonishing his former allies, saying it was useless 'to sling mud at the moon for its blemishes when you are angry for it'. He ended up as a caricature of himself.

In 1919, of course, it was not easy for Evelyn —a young, well-educated and refined American woman— to leave everything to be with a foreigner —and a 'colored' one at that. But she shared Roy's anti-materialism and his passion for the one 'true' cause —the nationalism of Bengali independence and opposition to colonialism. Imagine, in the 1910s, the allure of this man in a Western suit —a black Quixote preaching about the evils of British and Yankee imperialism. Those were years in which, physically, intellectually and politically, love and surrender were one and the same. They lived for their love, and their love was a social cause, which was a political but also an aesthetic hope, one that rejected bourgeois taste for the exotic, and yet reproduced it in the form of messianic revolutions in India or Mexico, represented by the odalisque of a Bengali Quixote.³⁵

This was a kind of love that was demanded by revolutionary Mexico City. Urban domestic life occurred as business as usual in the Roy house. Every day a new radical would visit from the corners of the globe, looking for wisdom, contacts, plans, money... Everyone ate and drank for free. María cooked. The men would lock themselves up with the black Quixote to discuss matters not suitable for women's ears. Evelyn served tea over the latest news from Moscow or the newest Marxist analysis of the troubles of colonialism. Once the guest was a Russian aristocrat with English like any *gringo* and features so

³⁴ Both S. Ray and Samaren Roy refer to Trent's 1950s and 1970s "friendly" but cold encounter and communications with Ellen Roy —Ellen Gottschalk, M. N. Roy's last wife, who was assassinated in New Delhi in 1961 (apparently by a common city thief, but there were rumors of Chinese communists intrigues). Roy had died in 1958. See Sibnarayan Ray, *In Freedom's Quest*; and Samaren Roy, *The Twice-Born Heretic*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Limited, 1986, 191-204.

³⁵ See US War Department Files 10640-690 M.I.5 report on Roy's activities in Mexico by US military attaché in Mexico in 1918. Roy had been linked to a Hindi-German plot to buy arms in the US for Bengal nationalists; those arms were to be shipped from California, but the shipment was intercepted and various people were persecuted, including Roy, who then escaped to Mexico.

delicate they were almost effeminate. It turned out to be Michael Borodin, the Russian revolution's envoy to the Latin American republics. He stayed with the Roys for months, searching for some jewels of the Czar that he had misplaced at some point during a lark. He had left his wife and son in Chicago, which gave him license to flirt with both María and Roy, who viewed this physical and intellectual proximity as a simple revolutionary necessity. Borodin would eventually take them —Roy, Evelyn and Charles Phillips— to Berlin and Moscow for the 1921 Comintern Congress.

But Roy loved Mexico City. He later wrote that he would like to return to live there when he was old. He spent hours in correspondence and working on documents, forever gazing out the window to the transparent city, contained in its valley, yet far away from the Sleeping Lady. For Evelyn Trent and Ella Wolfe things should have been different. Evelyn, as the *gringa*, as Roy's wife and as a communist, had a sort of diplomatic passport and immunity in the city. She, like Ella Wolfe, strolled through the city at night —a time no decent woman would show her face. Roy bought an enormous dog to protect the house —a beast that soon captivated him. The city, on the other hand, was secure —at least for those with President Carranza's friendship. Nothing ever happened to them, while the dog died of a rare disease. Later, the animal, not Evelyn, would be the one with a special place in Roy's memoirs.³⁶

In effect, love and betrayal were everywhere in the capital of the world's utopias. Charles Phillips would spend hours walking on the Paseo de la Reforma and Dolores Street speaking of his wife, Eleanora Parker, who had left him for Henry Glintenkamp. Mina Loy left the city pregnant and without having befriended the bizarre circles of M. N. Roy and Linn Gale; and Arthur Cravan had disappeared. Another important couple would arrive by the early 1920s and also bring their revolt against the city's morals: Edward Weston (and his young son) and Tina Modotti —a couple who have been written about many times, but were only one of many similar cases.

³⁶ See the papers of H. Sneevliet, the Dutch Communist organizer who was killed during the German occupation (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam); a small amount of Evelyn Trent's papers (a single folder) (Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford); and the following sources: M. N. Roy, *Selections from the Marxian Way and the Humanist Way*, New Delhi, Ajanta Publishers, 1999; *Political and Social Views*, edited by R. M. Pal, with an introduction by Sibnarayan Ray, Calcutta, India, Minerva Associates (Publications), 1998; Sibnarayan Ray, *In Freedom's Quest: a Study of the Life and Works of M Roy, 1887-1954*, Calcutta, India, Minerva Associates (Publications), 1998; Roy, *Our Differences*, Calcutta, Saraswati Library, 1938; Samaren Roy, *M. N. Roy*, London, Sangam, 1997; N. Innaiah, *M. N. Roy, Evelyn, Ellen Bibliography*, Hyderabad, India, V. Komala, Sole distributor, 1996; Roy, Sibnarayam Ray, *M. N. Roy, Philosopher-Revolutionary*, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1995; Roy, *Fragments of a prisoner's diary*, Calcutta, Renaissance Publishers, 1957; ASK Hindi, *M. N. Roy, the Man who Looked Ahead*, Ahmedabad, Modern Publishing House, 1938; Clyde Rathburn Brown, 'M. N. Roy and the Communist International, 1920-28,' MA, International Relations Program, Stanford University, 2001; Samaren Roy, *India's First Communist*, Calcutta, India, Minerva, 1988; *The Twice-Born Heretic, M. N. Roy and Comintern*, Calcutta, Firma KLM, 1986; *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1964; Robert Carver North, Xenia J. Eudin, *M. N. Roy's Mission to China: the Communist-Kuomintang split of 1927*, New York, Octagon Books, 1977; N. Innaiah, *Evelyn Trent alias Shanthi Devi, Founder Member of the Exile Indian Communist Party*, Hyderabad, India, V. Komala, 1995; and John P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971.

7.

The lyrics of a song around 1919 Mexico City said it: 'An old love is neither forgotten nor left behind, and old love from our souls may depart, but never says goodbye.' (*Que un viejo amor ni se olvida ni se deja, que un viejo amor de nuestra alma sí se aleja, pero nunca dice adiós*). The intellectuals and activists enchanted with Mexico heard its songs but never thought they would enact them. Ella Wolfe recalled how she was visited and sought after when Bertram was not around, and Ella herself invited her 'friend' Joseph Lovestone to come to Mexico. Lovestone, in turn, became involved in Moscow with Louise Geissler, the same woman for whom M. N. Roy left Evelyn Trent. Katherine Anne Porter also reached Mexico around 1920 and soon had an affair, followed by disillusion and an abortion, with the Nicaraguan poet and *bon-vivant* Salomón de la Selva. By 1923 Anita Brenner was in Mexico, not only writing and researching for Ernest Gruening's project, *Mexico and its Heritage* (1928) and for her own *Idols behind Altars*, but also madly in love with a young French painter, Jean Charlot, who was in Mexico City with his mother.

Anita Brenner was a Jew and Jean Charlot and his mother were very Catholic. Love and attraction were intense, as Brenner's diary shows, but they were also torture. Charlot was not a Jew but was an acute observer of the city and an illustrator of some of the first poetry by Mexicans that took the city as its *leitmotiv*—such as Germán List Arzubide's *Esquina: Poemas* (1923) and Manuel Maples Arce's *Urbe: Super-poema bolchevique en 5 cantos* (1924). 'At six o'clock in the morning', wrote Charlot in 1922, commenting on the city, 'I was in the streets. Automobiles and ladies were still asleep, and the true features of the town emerged. Beautiful beings people the street like Ladies of Guadalupe innumerable. They move noiselessly, feet flat to the ground, antique beauty come to life. The wealthier quarters are as empty and soiled as a music hall at noon, but everywhere else, among those low-lying houses, cubic and freshly daubed, processions are staged. At first glance the crowd is the color of dust. Flesh and cloth, both worn out with use, melt into this grey that is the very livery of humbleness. Eye and mind soon learn to focus, and this race, its confidence won, attests to its beauty through fabrics, its straw, its flesh'. The city enchanted them while they enchanted each other thanks to their youth and the city.

Anita Brenner did not marry Charlot. He later married Dorothy Zohmah Day, who was visiting the young US painter, Rivera's student Lone Robinson in Mexico City in 1931. Anita, however, had affairs with Mexican officials and intellectuals and later went on to marry a Jewish physician from New York. Leaving the city of love and betrayal, she reported in her diary on January 12, 1926, in the language of the city as only she, more than any foreigner in the city, could do, 'I swallow it. Young little man that I thought to be mine, apparently did not result so. So what dam else is new... Life of a *pendeja* (fool

woman)... looking for statistics [for Gruenning] discussing art... what the hell do I care! Nothing comes to me and when it does it's not worth it.'³⁷ And in the city of betrayals and seduction she wrote the poem (diary June 9, 1926):

I am a lover of love
not knowing
what love to love.
I am a maker of tales
not knowing
what tale to make.

Mexico City, like any city, was a sensual temptation, but the 'revolutionary' situation made desire difficult to distinguish from intellectual deduction. 'What makes revolutionists', Brenner wrote after a conversation with Peter Panter in Mexico City, 'is either self-pity, or indignation for the sake of others (*vidas*) or a sympathetic perception of the dominant undercurrent of progress in things (Siqueiros)... That truthfulness of temper, that receptivity, which professors often strive in vain to form, is engendered here less by wisdom than by innocence...'³⁸ The spectre of López Velarde seemed to return.

There were those who did manage to love and marry in the city. Jean Charlot was one. Ione Robinson saved herself from Diego Rivera's large hands and belly, but was enchanted by the US socialist Rodolfo Valentino: Joseph Freeman, whom she married in 1929. He would not allow her to paint *bodegones* (bourgeois art). The marriage was a disaster when they returned to New York, as they could not reproduce there the bohemia and innocence they believed to be real in Mexico City. Ione had to attend long meetings in the houses of the comrades in Mexico City. And in New York, she had to face the rejection of Freeman's family —a wealthy New York Jewish family who could not weather the depression or abide a non-Jewish twenty-year-old girl who asked for butter on the Sabbath table.³⁹

Romanian and US radical Roberto Haberman also managed to find love in the city. According to FBI files, he had married in 1914 a Sweden, Thorberg Brundin, a radical woman who fought for women rights and lived a vanguard bohemian life. After working for the Governor of Yucatán Carrillo Puerto, and labor leader Luis N. Morones, Haberman offered his services as a propagandist and spy to Plutarco Elías Calles when he supported Álvaro Obregón against President Carranza in 1920 and fought for Obregón with other US radicals in Mexico City (Gale, for instance). In August 1921, for instance, he contacted

³⁷ 'Me la trago. Jovencito que yo creía logrado aparentemente no resultó... soy una desgraciada. Que fregado de Nuevo... vida de pendeja... buscando estadísticas, discutiendo arte.... ¡qué diablos me importa! Nada me sale y cuando me sale no vale la pena.'

³⁸ Anita Brenner Papers, diaries, March-April 1928.

³⁹ Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford University. Ione Robinson, *A Wall to Paint on*, New York, EP Dutton and Co., 1946.

the FBI, and informed them on Mexican radical affairs, denouncing his fellow radicals, L. Gale and Charles Phillips as communists. In those days, as the Mexican saying goes, '*nadie sabe para quién trabaja*' (nobody knows who they really work for). Many US radicals worked for José Vasconcelos; Mexican communist José Allen was a spy for US military intelligence, and Haberman, it seems, worked for both the Mexican and US intelligence services.

In the early 1920s Haberman left Thorberg and married Esperanza Domínguez, moving to New York in order to work for Calles (now the strong man of the Revolution) in radical union circles. In June 1926 Esperanza began to write to Calles' secretary, Soledad González (Cholita), revealing not the New York of free and communitarian men and women, but a city in which, it seems, she was only there to do the laundry and ironing. She asked Cholita for a job so she could return to Mexico, and by September 1927 she wrote in pure Mexico City ironic language: Haberman had two intentions, revolution and to 'do with my poor bones to the grave from so much affection' (*dar con mi pobre esqueleto en el joyo (sic) de tanto cariño*). Her husband was having an affair, she wrote, with a wealthy, intelligent and beautiful woman, and 'naturally I'm terrible, I've seen all the devils with their respective tails' (*naturalmente estoy viendo a todititos los diablos con sus respectivas colas*). Domínguez was, by then, not revolutionary enough for Haberman and they divorced, though, according to FBI informants, he was particularly concerned with the women status in Mexico—lessons very likely learned from Thorberg—, and without a hint of irony in view of his own personal life, he stated in 1924: "I am convinced that the salvation of Mexico rests entirely with women... The Mexican home is reactionary par excellence." He married a wealthy New Yorker, and by 1933 was a 'Counselor at Mexican Law' with an office in New York.⁴⁰

In those days, *circa* 1919, not a soul among the radicals believed that a lovers' quarrel was even thinkable, much less important, while the international revolution continued to march forward. So if the city meant so much love, why was it so invisible? This silence would be equivalent to García Lorca going to New York and writing about Granada.

⁴⁰ Archivo Calles Torreblanca, Archivo de Cholita, Esperanza Domínguez' letters June 3, August 8 1926; Sep. 6, Oct. 19, Nov. 4 1927, Roberto Haberman Ex 542, Cholita. See also M. H. Mohoney, *Espionage in Mexico: the 20th Century*, San Francisco, Austin & Winfield, 1997; La Botz, 'Slackers'; 'Roberto Haberman and the Origins of Modern Mexico's Jewish Community', *American Jewish Archives*, 63 (Spring/Summer 1991), pp. 7-21; Gregory A. Andrews, 'Robert Haberman, Socialist Ideology, and the Politics of National Reconstruction in Mexico', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 6 (Summer 1990), pp. 189-211; Andrews, *Shoulder to Shoulder?* See FBI records, R665, headquarters case files, call numbers 23, 25-218 through 25-230, box 19; especially report by agent Manuel Sorola, San Antonio, Texas, Sep. 25 1924; 25-230 letter to FBI director William J. Burns, confidential reports Oct. 21 1922, March 1924, August 1921, and May 1926 regarding Esperanza Domínguez entering the US (Laredo), 25-230. For Haberman, M. N. Roy and Thorberg, see Ruth Price, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

8.

Ella and Bertram Wolfe can serve to tell the story of the kind of domestic life that was being explored in the 1919 revolutionary city. Bertram Wolfe was a first generation Jewish immigrant from New York City, leader of the faction of the US Communist party led by Jay Lovestone and one of founders of the New York Workers School. In Mexico he became a member of the M. N. Roy faction of the Mexican Communist Party. Through Roberto Haberman he was on good terms with Plutarco Elías Calles, but he soon broke with the official labor movement and was expelled from Mexico accused of sedition. Thanks to his connections with Pedro Henríquez Ureña and León Felipe, he became a scholar of Mexican literature and a writer, especially of biographies —of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin (*Three Who Made a Revolution*, 1948). He was friend and twice biographer of Diego Rivera. In his reincarnation as a disenchanted Stalinist, he became an adviser on Russian and Latin American issues to the US State Department, as well as a recalcitrant anti-communist and senior fellow at the Hoover Institute.

In Mexico and for his entire life Bertram Wolfe was joined by his wife Ella, a unique personality who paralleled so many other women of that cosmopolitan Mexico City —Evelyn Trent, Tina Modotti, Anita Brenner, Frances Toor, Katherine Anne Porter, among many others. Bertram had a long life, but not as long as Ella, who died in 2000 at the age of 103. Throughout his life Bertram reinvented himself, while Ella kept many secrets and was in charge of preserving Bertram's memory according to how he wanted it remembered. The records of their lives, as kept by Ella, who was in charge of their archive at the Stanford Hoover Institute for more than two decades, talk of an invisible aspect of Mexico City as a radical capital city.

For Ella and Bertram Wolfe life in early 1920s Mexico City was an uncertain thing, full of economic depression and social unrest. But those were also days of colossal hopes and doctrinaire certainties and, above all, total engagement. In the city they became inhabitants of the beginning and the end of what they believed to be history, and when destiny caught up with them, guilt emerged in the form of militant oblivion. They made the city out of the ruins of their memories, and over the ruins of the world Mexico City represented, they had to reconstruct new lives.

In their memories and in the historical records, however, the city that made their hopes possible appears as a passive actor, unaware of its own enchantment, as if its *barrios*, coffeehouses, sins, and cultural life were only there for the mere possibility of becoming the personal experience of all those men and women who dreamt of a brown Atlantis and revolutions. But passive actors cities are not, especially that Mexico City around 1919 —a global cultural capital.

It is hard to find evidence in the city about the life of Ella Wolfe —or for that matter Evelyn Trent or Esperanza Domínguez. Even such prolific writers as Katherine Anne Porter, Anita Brenner and Frances Toor left little written record of their lives and feelings during their years in Mexico City. The ‘old *gringas*’ of that Mexico City reveal a very different city from that of the ‘old *gringos*’. No man left a record of urban hostility, only of the ambivalent —and passive— appeal of the beauty of servants, the stink of people, women’s gazes and disconcerting beggars.⁴¹ It was different for women. Katherine Anne Porter, like Ella Wolfe, grew tired of the harassment by Mexicans and foreigners, socialist or not, straight or homosexual; for behind the revolutionary facades, the dwellers of the capital of the brown Atlantis seemed to have been incontinent Don Juanes or homosexuals who found liberation in a city whose bodies, apparently, were there just for them in a way that bodies in New York were not. Bohemian writer Carmen Mondragón, affirmed, according to Edward Weston, that ‘every other man in Mexico is a homosexual’, an exaggeration no doubt, made out of revenge. The same city becomes a different one depending on the angle of passions through which one looks.⁴²

In 1919, the city was not yet that of Diego Rivera’s virile and revolutionary character. Eventually the city would welcome the passions of someone like Hart Crane, but also that model of asceticism, John Dewey. Crane’s adventures in Mexico City, Tepoztlán and other places in the early 1930s could fill an entire book. His passion for Mexican male bodies and alcohol led him to problems with the police, with his own US friends, and finally to his death while returning to the US in 1932. Dewey, in turn, came back to Mexico in 1937. He had been there in the mid-1920s, witnessing the application of his pedagogical theories in the schools that his follower Moisés Sáenz had started. In 1937 he was invited to Mexico City by the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, which included, among others, Franz Boas, Anita Brenner, John Dos Passos, Meyer Shapiro and Lionel Trilling. There his presence was charged with moral authority based not only on the fame of an honest intellectual, but also on a subtle conclusion in that dynamic city: at 78, Dewey was not a man, but an elder; he could ‘*juzgar*’ (judge) passions because he could not ‘*jugar*’ (play) them. In thanking Dewey for his presence in the city, Trotsky at 60 expressed the opinion that in Mexico City —the refuge of an era— an indisputable moral authority did not belong to men of action, but to those of idealism (Dewey, ‘the

⁴¹ See Mauricio Tenorio, ‘Gringos Viejos: Radicales norteamericanos en los años treinta y su visión de México (una interpretación)’, *Secuencia*, 21 (September-December, 1991), 95-116; ‘De adentro y afueras: intelectuales estadounidenses en México, Ella Wolfe’, in Luis Jáuregui, ed., *Historia y nación: actas del Congreso en homenaje a Josefina Zoraida Vázquez*, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1998.

⁴² ‘The list of illustrations...’ found in Bertram Wolfe papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, letter by D. Rivera, March 19, 1939; Letter to Frida, March 9, 1939; Freeman poem in Box 6, file 42; Bertram Wolfe, *A life in Two Centuries: an Autobiography*, New York, Stein and Day, 1981; *Diego Rivera, his Life and Times*, New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1939; *Three Who Made a Revolution: a Biographical History*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1948; Joseph Freeman, *An American Testament; a Narrative of Rebels and Romantics*, New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1936.

personification of great American idealism') and of old age: '...in the fact that at its head [of the Commission], is a man of unshakeable moral authority, a man who by virtue of his age should have the right to remain outside the skirmishes in the political arena... I see a new and truly magnificent reinforcement of the revolutionary optimism which constitutes the fundamental element of my life.'⁴³

Of course Trotsky's house in Coyoacán was itself a zoo of political and human intrigues. Trotsky's secretary, Jean Van Heijenoort, told the story of a house of betrayals: Trotsky's escapes to the woman in the neighboring house, Trotsky's abuse of his wife, Trotsky's affair with Frida [Kahlo], Frida's affair with himself, Heijenoort... The end of the story is well known: Trotsky was killed by the Catalan boyfriend of his female assistant, and later Heijenoort was killed in Mexico City in 1986 by his fourth wife, a wealthy Mexican he met there. In the early 1930s Heijenoort noted that Mexico for him was 'what Abisinia was for Rimbaud, a country that was outside the civilized, industrialized, western world.' It was not, however; it was very much part of the violent, *traidor* (traitor) and bloody twentieth century western world.⁴⁴

But before that, Bertram Wolfe's city was, like that of M. N. Roy, a city of action. Wolfe would eventually count on the complicity of the great revolutionary and artistic god of the city, Diego Rivera. In 1929 Wolfe published a biography of Rivera: what he considered to be the first biography of revolutionary art that he nevertheless wanted to be a bestseller published by Knopf in New York; and later he sought support from the Guggenheim Foundation. Diego disliked the book, and accused Wolfe not only of anti-revolutionary tendencies, but worse, of female influence: 'the list of illustrations shows that you were more influenced by Frida than by Marx, or that you have tried to help the sales of your book among members of the women's clubs of the States by showing more of my sex life.'

In 1963 Bertram Wolfe decided to edit and republish his Rivera biography, this time with a more aesthetic emphasis, and highlighting the contrast between Rivera's artistic genius and his lies. Rivera was, indeed, a Pantagruelian liar. The new version erased the memories of the Mexico City where Rivera and Wolfe had lived at the same time, leaving no trace of the causes and beliefs they shared. This new version reestablished the brown Atlantis with its civilisational differences: the US observer looking aloofly at the brown Atlantis. 'The life of the Mexican folk', wrote Wolfe in his revised biography, 'is a civilization more

⁴³ Edward Weston, *The Daybooks of Edward Weston. I. Mexico, II. California*, edited by Nancy Newhall, New York, Aperture, 1975, p. 52; *The Letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932*, edited by B. Weber, Berkeley, Los Angeles, The University of California Press, 1965; Paul Mariani, *The Broken Tower. The Life of Hart Crane*, New York, Norton, 1999; *Not guilty: report of the Commission of inquiry into the charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow trials*, Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials, New York, 1937, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1938.

⁴⁴ Anita Burdam Feferman, *Politics, Logic, and Love, the Life of Jean Van Heijenoort*, London, Boston, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1993; Jean van Heijenoort, *With Trotsky in Exile: from Prinkipo to Coyoacán*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1978.

passionate and aesthetic than rational in its quality'. Wolfe was reason; Mexico was passion: what is new? That in 1963 the real Mexico was not Rivera's Mexico City, but this was less transcendental than the fact that Mexico became lastingly what it was for Wolfe, a succession of Riveras.

When I corresponded with Ella Wolfe about the Mexico City of and around 1919, she wrote, in perfect Spanish, referring to many mythmakers (Rivera, Freeman, Gale), and to an exciting city. Whereas around 1919 they believed themselves to be engaged in an escape from the draft, capitalism and oppression, by the early 1930s, say, Freeman and Wolfe and Waldo Frank believed themselves truly to be in the revolutionary vanguard, far from modernist disenchantment, experts on Mexico —and all of them endlessly repeated that the real Mexico was of course not Mexico City. They did not know that the city had already left its mark on them. If US socialist and populist trends influenced US views of the Mexican Revolution and Mexico as a whole, the cultural life of 1920s and 1930s Mexico City left a mark on US radicalism. US and Mexican ideas travelled back and forth from Mexico City to New York, from Tepoztlán to Middletown, from Coyoacán to Los Angeles.

In 1919 a national labor strike was declared in the US steel industry. Mexicans who had migrated to Texas and Arizona were brought to Chicago to serve as strike breakers. By 1930 there were nearly 20 000 Mexicans in Chicago. US sociologists and anthropologists quickly started to study these Mexican immigrants, and thus, secretly, the Mexico City of the early 1920s started to mark the views of Mexico and Mexicans in the US and the world. For the cohort of bohemians, radicals and intellectuals of 1920s Mexico City soon produced books and studies that turned into scientific 'knowledge' the idea of Mexicans and their environment as the expression *par excellence* of either pristine *Gemeinschaft* or, when degenerated by modernity, ugly and hybrid *Gesselfat*. Carton Beals produced a series of books setting out a primitivist and revolutionary view of a nation of rifles and Indians. Manuel Gamio, trained in Porfirian Mexico City and Columbia University, advised his friend Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield —who studied Mexican immigrants in Chicago in 1925— to study Tepoztlán. The town was the perfect compromise for anti-urban anthropologists and travellers: it was close to the comfort and security of the city, yet Nahuatl-speaking people inhabited it. By the 1930s Tepoztlán had become the archetype of real Mexico, which was of course everything Mexico City, Chicago, and New York were not. Thus Stuart Chase published *Mexico, a Study of two Americas* (1931) —a contrast between Tepoztlán and Middletown, Indiana: genuine pristine community vs. fake industrial society. In this way the intellectual milieu of Mexico City in the early 1920s formed the basis of all these interconnected stories.

But before long the Mexico City they all lived, both Mexicans and foreigners, seemed like a bad dream. By the 1950s, all of them had, in effect, killed the Mexico City they created together. They abandoned the common cause —either

social revolution, social engineering, or aesthetic innovation— and saved the essence, what was there before, namely, the belief in race and civilisational differences. Thus, with the arguments of disenchanted revolutionaries, they reinforced the belief in the brown Atlantis.

One need only think of the futures of Ella Wolfe and her friends: Ella safe and comfortable in Palo Alto, Evelyn Trent back in the US remarried in a 'normal' American life, or Katherine Anne Porter living in New York always feeling unappreciated. The world they invented together in 1920s and 1930s Mexico City was like a messy shocking film turned into a fixed and clean portrait, frozen by intentional oblivion and exoticisation. Ella Wolfe would not talk about struggles and betrayals, nor of the memory of passion and betrayal with Lovestone. Evelyn Trent died without telling her story and her papers that reached the Hoover Institute offered very little information about her. By the 1950s Katherine Anne Porter was not only happy with a picturesque memory of her Mexico City but was also willing to betray the past: she became an informant for the Anti-American Activities Committee, accusing her old friend in New York and Mexico City, Josephine Herbst.

Of the foreign women who participated in the Mexico City of the 1920s, Katherine Anne Porter is, without doubt, one of the best known. As her biographer Thomas F. Walsh tells us, Porter did not share the origins, social status, or education of the New York intellectuals. But like Ella Wolfe, Thorberg Haberman, Alma Reed and Anita Brenner, she fluctuated from the left to the right. The old city and its hope died in them. Mexico, says Walsh, was for Porter: 'like a lover who always betrayed her trust, but on some unconscious level she welcomed the betrayal because it always revealed tragic truths that became the subject of her art'. Truly, Mexico City was a painful, indispensable, return to creativity.

Anita Brenner, in her turn, was not from New York but from Aguascalientes, though she moved to San Antonio, Texas as a teenager. Together with Salomón de la Selva, Monna Teixidor and perhaps José Vasconcelos, Brenner was one of the few who were able to circulate easily from the language, habits and styles of Mexico City to those of New York or San Antonio. Thus she became a true cultural broker between Mexico and the US. She was, like Ella Wolfe, a Jewish woman who fought to establish her own voice, but also one who helped various men speak in English (she translated many of the writings of Manuel Gamio, Carlos Mérida and Jean Charlot). Brenner knew how to present and sell Mexico; she taught Mexican intellectuals and scholars to understand their own marketing possibilities in the arts, academia and intellectual life of the US. Her polymorphism was only made possible by Mexico City around 1919, the capital of an intellectual and revolutionary pact in which differences and distance were impossible. She pretended, at least briefly, to be in agreement with other foreigners and Mexicans in creating a brown Atlantis —indeed not speaking much

of the city, but enjoying the common terrain of activism, bohemia and creativity.

Ella Wolfe, like Edward Weston and Brenner, remembered in their diaries the early 1920s city of parties, always with very little female presence. Ella worked at the TASS agency in the Russian embassy together with Carleton Beals. She translated and handled daily life in the city, as Trostky's wife or Anita Brenner did—going to markets, hiring servants, cooking, etc. We will never know what Ella was actually doing at the Russian embassy, or what Evelyn Trent was doing in Moscow or Berlin; but that they controlled domesticity in the city is a fact. Ella recommended servants to Tina Modotti, Evelyn cooked for Roy's guests...

'I have great feelings of affection for Mexican roofs', wrote Spanish exile Juan Rejano in 1945, 'and I constantly go up to them in order to dive into that original and incessant spectacle. From their invisible battlements I feel closer to my city, and I trust that some of its shyest and impenetrable angles lay bare before me.'⁴⁵ On the flat roofs—the *azoteas*— is, in effect, where one consciously becomes the city. It was on one of those flat roofs in La Condesa that Tina Modotti and Edward Weston fell under the spell of a *menage à toi* (Tina, Edward and Mexico City). It was on a 1920s *azotea* in Colonia Cuauhtémoc that Frances (Paca) Toor edited her magazine *Mexican Folkways*, devoted precisely to the non-city. There she could, as it were, direct the city, but in fact the flat roof was where the city dictated the lessons of revolution, *volk* and idealised countryside. Indeed, for a city that knows neither entry nor exit, the real salutation is on the *azoteas*. Thus the picture of Ella, Bertram and others at the roof of the Russian embassy is emblematic: a collection of revolutionaries, spies and families, in a Porfirian house in Colonia Condesa, the urban trees visible in the backdrop. They could see and feel the city of their work and hope surrounding them.

⁴⁵ 'Yo les tengo un gran cariño a las azoteas mexicanas, y constantemente subo a ellas para zambullirme en ese espectáculo incesante y original. Desde sus invisibles almenas siento más cerca de mi la ciudad, y advierto que algunos de sus ángulos más huidizos y herméticos se me desnudan.' Juan Rejano, *La esfinge mestiza*, Madrid, Cupsa, 1978.

FIGURE 8



Bertram and Ella Wolfe, Russian Embassy, early 1920s.

In order to reach that Mexico City, women like Ella Wolfe or Anita Brenner had to overcome many obstacles. And, as for Evelyn Trent or Thorberg Haberman, we will never know the entire story. Many were left quietly in the back of the synagogue, or silenced by the revolutionary self-censorship that established that everything feminine was *petit bourgeois* and as a result anti-revolutionary. Everything had to be neutral, that is, virile. As was the case with López Velarde, for all these radicals *la ciudad* was a corrupted and corrupting woman. From their position of disadvantage some women came out even wiser, only to face the 1950s American dream in the era of the 'largest Cadillac'. By the time of the emergence of the New Left and feminism, many of those old *gringas* and *gringos* were emerging from their self-exploration and from McCarthyism, simply trying to survive.

9.

The story of these commitments and disappointments can be finally explored through the relationship of Ella Wolfe and Frida Kahlo. In 1944 Frida Kahlo wrote to Ella Wolfe recalling the 'Nueva Yores y los Coyoacanes', of their old friendship in Mexico City. In the 'Coyoacanes' exists, said Frida, 'a well born lady, loved by all that hasn't been totally fuck up... please write soon... [*una dama bien nacida y de todos apreciada que no se la ha llevado la chin... please escriban aprisa diciendo all your pormenores (sic)*]. Indeed, for two decades Ella was linked to Frida Kahlo, her Coyoacán and its different lefts. Mexico City and its surroundings formed the capital of a generation that grew in fear, as Diana Trilling has argued, seeing solid certitudes collapse. Mexico City provided antidotes to those times: a social revolution, authenticity, innocence, brotherhood, pure race... and a safe and cosmopolitan refuge in which to hide

from persecution and from bourgeois morality. That is why Ella or Evelyn or Katherine Anne were there... and that is why this was also the city where new forms of Mexican womanhood —Carmen Mondragón, Lupe Marín, Frida Kahlo, Elena Torres and many unknown others— flourished.

After they left Mexico City in 1921, and over many years, Ella and Bertram Wolfe were constantly worried by the political and personal problems of the Riveras. Especially worrisome was Frida's fondness for alcohol. They asked her to exchange cognac for milk ('life is just one bottle after another in any case', Bertram wrote her). Frida answered that she had reduced alcohol consumption to '*dos copiosas lágrimas by day*'(sic) (two glasses a day). On every visit by Bertam to Mexico Frida asked him to bring with him 'that girl that both you and I love exhaustively named Ella' (*esa muchachita que tú y yo queremos y harto y se llama Ella*). To Ella herself she wrote, 'please don't *te rajes* don't *te cuartees*' (sic) ('please don't give up, don't crash). Ella Wolfe wrote to me in the 1980s in a discussion of the affection Frida had for Diego, that 'the only thing that interested him, really, was his art, and due to his remarkable imagination, he could create fantasies, that is how his politics —full of fantasy— were of no significance. One could not accept the crazy things he explained.' He was a quasi-animal, Ella told me, who made love like anyone else urinates. Though Ella came from a family of socialist convictions —she was the one who introduced Bertram to socialism— she had very little patience for a man like Diego, for whom, as Frida wrote to her in 1934, 'faithfulness was a bourgeois virtue...that only exists to exploit and to procure economic gain' (*fidelidad [era] una virtud burguesa... que no existe más que para explotar y sacar ventaja económica*). Ella offered all of her solidarity as an activist and as a woman to Frida, who heartbreakingly wrote her 'with my bourgeois prejudices of faithfulness I shall take my music elsewhere' (*con mis prejuicios burgueses de fidelidad me iré con mi música a otra parte*). Of course, as we have seen, the city they lived in was helping them to reinvent themselves and their sexualities, but to ask then and there for faithfulness was something Frida could do but not deliver.

Ella Wolfe knew a lot more about the Mexico City of the *Nuevayores* and *Coyoacanes* but she never talked about it. Her silence is for the historian as eloquent as her stories. In early twentieth century New York, she was a Jew who was seen, as she recalled, as a 'dirty foreigner'. She wanted to be *American*, and just as she was starting to be, the US entered into a period of social instability. She freely talked to me about Mexican *machismo*, but was not as ready to talk about the US version, though she mentioned it anyway when referring to Edmund Wilson and many of the New York intellectuals. In the late 1980s she did not want to be mouth her new refuge, America, and that old Mexico City of the *Coyoacanes* was left truly unconfessed, and despite the many years she never reached total imprudence in memory. Thus Mexico City as

experienced by the women of the radical milieu died with their memories. What survived was the refuge in the brown Atlantis.⁴⁶

10.

Around 1919, Mexico City furnished all its radical visitors with the surrender to ideological and personal doubts, as if one could have doubts about authenticity and rightness when surrounded by vivid authenticity and pureness. The city, however, was full of contradictions that they saw but did not want to see. The only collective record the US radicals left about 1919 and 1920 Mexico City was the English section of *El Herald*. There, for instance, an editorial proudly reproduced the words of William R. Sheperd, history professor at Columbia: 'The racial composition and character of the Mexican people are not predisposed to stability. In common with Latin American people, the Mexican have certain psychological traits that are different from ours.'⁴⁷ These were common ideas at the time, yet how could radicals who were reinventing world revolution not see the irony of living in a revolutionary city and thinking this about its inhabitants?

Apart from the section run by the US radicals, *El Herald* was very much a part of the city's life. It printed a poem by López Velarde that was no less escapist, yet more innovative, than the poems by Michael Gold or Henry Glintenkamp published in its English pages. López Velarde saw the beggars who disturbed M. N. Roy or Charles Phillips; and in this poem he *is* the city, and he uses the image not to create an atavistic '*tipo popular*' à la Glintenkamp or to search for a lost mythic Zapatista à la Phillips, but to merge two images: that of the street beggar and that of the urban poet:

I am a cosmic vagabond and my poverty is the sum
Of all the voracious fasting of beggars;
My soul and quivering flesh implore
To the sea foam and the blue pretence of the brilliant stars

*Soy el mendigo cósmico y mi inopia es la suma
De todos los voraces ayunos pordioseros;
Mi alma y mi carne trémula imploran a la espuma
Del mar y al simulacro azul de los luceros.*

In the same way that people from different groups walked the same streets unknown to each other, López Velarde's poem existed in the same pages where US radicals in Mexico used to think aloud about their ideas and dreams. But around 1919 US radicals thought very little about the city they lived in

⁴⁶ This section is based on Kalho's correspondance with Ella and Bertram Wolfe, in B. Wolfe Papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, box 12; and my correspondance with Ella Wolfe in 1998.

⁴⁷ He is identified as a member of the Mexican Committee of the Council of Foreign Relations.

and they soon called those years the golden era of the city. Those were the golden years of their youth and hopes. Phillips' poem said this —though actually attaching memories to something other than Mexico City— in a poem written as a result of a trip to the mountains around Guadalajara:

Guadalajara, memories of my love!
Of gold and his golden Mexican days
The golden Mexican days have been mine
..
Mexican days my treasure sure and strong
That in the death-like north when all is old
And dutiful and grim, shall be my gold
To give me hope that life is brave hand fine
Mexican days warming my veins like wine.⁴⁸

But in the pages of *El Heraldo*, probably unknown to the US editors of the English section, another golden age was in the making, namely urban bohemia, both as a desired modern non-identity for many and as self-destructive destiny for some. In the summer of 1919, *El Heraldo* published a series of articles by 'Califas'. 'The Lady with the Burning Hair drains the life out of her lovers' (*La Dama de los Cabellos Ardientes se bebe la vida de sus amantes*) was the title of the first installment on July 26, 1919. It dealt with marijuana, its consumption by street people, even by conductors of trams and buses. A drawing illustrated the article: a man consumed by the fumes of the drug represented by a snake, while in the background the fumes form a ghost that destroys the towers of a Catholic temple. The article gave a doctor's opinion on the effects of marijuana consumption. It described the lives of the '*grifos*' (addicts). The poetic phrasing of the effects of drugs warned people of the dangers: 'the initiated in the cult of the Green Goddess perishes with the three classic puffs of the reeking smoke' (*el iniciado en el culto de Diosa Verde se perece por las tres clásicas bocanadas del humo hediendo*). Califas was indeed Ricardo Arenales, who soon became Porfirio Barba Jacob and was a great devotee of the 'Diosa Verde' (Green Goddess). He was a poet, a journalist and a writer who, from the 1900s to the early 1940s, lived in and embodied Mexico City's dark bohemia —a bohemia composed of hunger, misery, drugs, alcohol, sex, but also of intellectual creativity.

⁴⁸ López Velarde's poem in *El Heraldo*, February 6, 1920, from *Zozobras* (1919). Phillips' poem in *El Heraldo*, August 4, 1919.

FIGURE 9



La Dama de los Cabellos Ardientes se bebe la vida de sus amantes, El Herald, July, 26, 1919.

Of course, poor Jews —other than the US radicals—, not in English, not in Spanish, but in Yiddish saw the Mexico City Barba Jacob inhabited and thus produced what cities often produce, revealing poems (Isaac Berliner):

The road is so muddy—
There is a man shuffling along
His lazy steps tread on the damp earth
As though his feet were heavy weights—
And eyes, that gleam like candles,
Spreading the flames that fall
On female bodies and hips
On the tender faces of girls

The man in the poem smokes marijuana and feels no hunger. As I have explained elsewhere, the poetry by such Yiddish-Mexican poets as Isaac Berliner, Jacobo Glantz and Moises Gotkobsky provide a unique window onto an urban world never fully captured by the many foreign intellectuals and activists of Mexico City around 1919. The foreigners who reached the city around 1919 saw what Berliner described, and by the late 1930s bohemian life of the ugly city had become fashionable. It had become a rite of passage to

visit *pulquerías* and even to paint their walls. But bohemia is a difficult area for the historian to approach, that is, as more than an urban lifestyle impersonated by many, lived by few. Many claimed to be bohemians, from Diego Rivera to José Clemente Orozco, from Anita Brenner to Frances Toor, from Dr. Atl to Joseph Freeman... Rivera told Bertram Wolfe great stories about experiments with drugs and bohemian life, but who could believe Rivera? In fact, Mexico City, like any city, offered a vivid bohemian life. But real bohemia is the creative and destructive might of a city unbounded, in which one cannot easily dwell: it walks all over you. For the many that claimed to live the great bohemia of the city starting in 1920, very few really knew it. Some were anonymous, such as Leonardo R. Pardo, whose life is told in a collection about bohemians by Julio Sesto. Pardo was a journalist and poet, an inhabitant of the city, a friend of beggars, and a great chatterer in coffeeshops and bars. He was 'quintessential socialism' (*el socialismo quintaesencia*) for his great generosity with the inhabitants of the streets. He died in 1914. But there were very few bohemians whose name we know, and they were not the Riveras, the Kahlos, the Glintenkamps and, of course, not López Velarde. I can mention very few: perhaps Dr. Atl and Antonieta Rivas Mercado —a patron of bohemians—, surely Antonin Artaud, Silvestre Revueltas, Nahui Ollin (Carmen Mondragón), and of course, Porfirio Barba Jacob and Hart Crane. Let us focus on Barba Jacob.⁴⁹

Ricardo Arenales, originally from Colombia, reinvented himself —like many others— several times, in Mexico City, in Monterrey, in Guatemala, in Bogotá, in Barranquilla. He had been a journalist on Porfirian newspapers (*El Imparcial*), supporter of Porfirio Díaz, and a well-known bohemian in the city. In 1918 he edited the satiric publication *Fierabrás*. His articles, his poems and his anecdotes were repeated by different sectors of Mexico's intelligentsia; his homosexual orgies became urban legends.

While US radical men and women were betraying each other erotically and politically while living comfortably in Colonia Roma or in downtown Mexico City, Barba Jacob was renting cheap hotel rooms, seducing —like Mexican dandy Salvador Novo did— bus conductors, soldiers and street children, as well as consuming marijuana in the various secret places patronised by intellectuals, homeless people and lost children of the city's middle classes. He knew that behind the National Palace, or in houses and pharmacies in Colonia Juárez or Roma, opium, marijuana and heroin could be found. Barba Jacob took a photographer from *El Heraldo* to capture one of the very few images we have of this face of the city in 1919. Thus there is the picture of Juan 'El Moto' (a popular name for a marijuana addict), smoking marijuana in front of the camera in August 3, 1919. Jacobo Dalevuelta, one of the first Mexican investigative reporters who truly became a window into dark Mexico

⁴⁹ I have dealt with the Yiddish poets in Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico DeMexicanized*; Sesto, *La Bohemia de la muerte*, p. 221-225.

City, was probably the journalist from *El Herald* who followed Barba Jacob around. During the 1920s he reported on the consumption of marijuana in the 'Callejón de San Camilito', La Colonia de la Bolsa, Tepito, Balvuenas and Santa Julia, all dark spots on the city's map, but also in Bolívar and in downtown cabarets. And in Barba Jacob-like language he described that Juanita (marijuana), 'great lady with the demeanor of a queen, yells her favors to all, as much to the poor than to the wealthy; to the sad than to the happy; to the courageous than to the coward. A great deal of the youth promotes in Mexico relationships with the great lady of white plume and caudal and of multi-color dreams'.⁵⁰ He reported that clandestine theaters performed shows with marijuana as *leitmotiv*, and he joined one of the proletarian sessions of *mariguanos* in which an old woman, Doña Tachita, rolled huge marijuana cigars, and eighteen people paid a fee to share them, combining the inhalation with bites of brown sugar (*piloncillo*). All were in a room 'dirty with no paved or wooden floors; lighted with a small oil lamp with the bulb stained by smoke. With great effort, I saw an old and bony woman sitting in the floor, near a soup box holding a timber where they rolled their thick cigars'.⁵¹ By the late 1920s he also reported the existence of a high-class marijuana club attended by wealthy young addicts who called 'Juanita' 'Cannabis'.

Barba Jacob described that city, blending the fascination of the bohemian for his vice with the moral lessons required by any major newspaper around 1919: 'Here, vagrant and starved households with the luxury of misery and raggedness; there, brothels among drunken women losing their heads, who mistook their destiny of motherhood becoming flowers in the mud; and everywhere sterility and absence of strength'.⁵² Making use of the words of Porfirian novelist and doctor Fortunato Hernández, who talked about urban degeneration and vice, Barba Jacob described his own life as that of one of Hernández' characters: 'There are moments in which the atavists degenerate so much that I think at one point we must have been like pigs in the Animal Kingdom' (*Hay momentos en que los atávicos nos degeneramos tanto que creo que alguna vez hemos de haber sido cerdos en la escala zoológica*).

⁵⁰ 'gran señora y con porte de Reina, concede sus favores a todos por igual, al pobre que al rico; al triste que al alegre; al valiente que al cobarde. Buena parte de la juventud cultiva en México relaciones con la gran señora de penacho y caudal blancos y de sueños multicolores.'

⁵¹ 'sucio sin ladrillos ni madera en los pisos; alumbrado con una lamparilla de petróleo con la bombilla llena de humo. Vi, merced a esfuerzos, sentada en el suelo a una vieja astrosa y frente a un cajón de los que usan como envase para jabones, una pequeña tabla atrevesada sobre la que echaban lo gruesos cigarros.'

⁵² 'Aquí, hogares mendigos y hambrientos con el lujo de la miseria y del harapo; allá, lumbaneres entre desmelenamiento de cabelleras de mujeres ebrias, que equivocaron su destino de ser madres para ser FLOR DE FANGO; y por todas partes esterilidad y ausencia de fuerza...' *El Herald*, May 8, 1919. Before, 1909, *El Imparcial*, June 8, 1909; and *México Nuevo*, no. 231, 1909, had engaged in a short debate about drugs in the city. An anonymous author in *México Nuevo* talked about experimentations with drugs (maybe it was written by Barba Jacob), and José Juan Tablada responded in *El Imparcial*, opposing the promotion of the bohemian life of drugs (*El imparcial*, August 24, 1909). Tablada mixed his criticism to the drug with his criticism to *México Nuevo*, a periodical close to Bernardo Reyes' political faction. Jacobo Dalevuelta was indeed Fernando Ramírez de Aguilar (he used the same pseudonym —Jacob— as Barba-Jacob. See his *Estampas de México*, Mexico City, NP, 1930, pp. 153-157.

But underneath the mandatory moral lesson was Barba Jacob's fascination with the bohemian life that granted him the possibility to re-invent both his art (poetry) and his persona. As he had written in 1911: 'My pain made up for my madness/ and no one has been happier than I!' (!*Compensé mi dolor con mi locura/ y nadie ha sido más feliz que yo*). Bohemia was his art, his own self. His poetry was innovative thanks to a musicality based on free associations such as drug deliriums or listening to the city's streets. Thus sometime in 1918 or 1919 he wrote what was nothing but an ode to marijuana:

The lady with burning hair
The lady with fiery hair
Changed everything for me,
And I loved the solitude, the forbidden
Gardens and the shameful deeds.

*La dama de cabellos ardientes
La dama de cabellos encendidos
Trasmutó para mí todas las cosas,
Y amé la soledad, los prohibidos
Huertos y las azañas vergonzosas.*⁵³

⁵³ Ibidem. Barba Jacob's refers to F. Hernández 'La degeneración', but very likely he was referring to F. Hernández, *Desequilibrio*, Mexico City, Talleres Tipográficos de Pablo Rodríguez, 2nd ed., 1907.

FIGURE 10



Juan el Moto, *El Heraldo*, August 3, 1919.

As irony would have it, in the same year of 1919 a Mexican writer in exile in Washington DC, Querido Moheno, had declared marijuana a plebeian Mexican drug that had neither a Baudelaire nor a Verlaine to sing it. He advised US authorities, who were concerned with the arrival of the Mexican illness (marijuana), that young US bohemians ought to be told that marijuana was not an addiction to be acquired in fancy salons of red silk and beautiful women: 'its favorite ambiance is jail's galleries: its language that argot of thieves and murderers' (*su ambiente favorito es la galera de la cárcel: su*

léxico es el argot de los ladrones y los asesinos); it was an addiction born in 'el petate' (Indigenous sleeping mat) in the midst of the lice and dirt of Mexican soldiers and proletarians. Little did Moheno know that as he was speaking marijuana was acquiring its Verlaine in Mexico City's underworld.

Barba Jacob used to visit poet González Martínez' house in Santa María la Ribera, and there he befriended López Velarde, his anathema. What López Velarde feared, and was fascinated by, was what Barba Jacob embodied: the city adrift. Barba Jacob claimed that he had initiated Spanish writer Ramón del Valle Inclán into the vice of marijuana in Mexico City. In 1919 José Vasconcelos helped Barba Jacob, as he did Bertram and Ella Wolfe or Pedro Henriquez Ureña, or Novo and Villarruitia. Sometime in the early 1920s, however, Barba Jacob attacked Vasconcelos in newspaper articles and, according to Barba Jacob's biographer, Fernando Vallejo, Vasconcelos sought out Barba Jacob in his hotel room, where he found him naked in bed with Toño Salazar; and it was there that Vasconcelos, the center of all intellectual groups before Diego Rivera reigned, was called by Barba Jacob 'the dictator of Mexico's culture'. Thus Barba Jacob became an outlaw within the Mexican intelligentsia.

A young man passing by in the streets of 1911 Mexico City inspired poems by Barba Jacob in which the main line read 'Who makes flesh tremble with a restrained yearning...' (*Que haga temblar las carnes una ansía contenida...*). In the same way, Novo, in 1919 a young and precocious teenager, observed the gazes of doormen, street boys and bus drivers: urban sin *in potentia*. Around 1919 on a flat roof in Pino Street, Santa María la Ribera, he had his first sexual experience with the family chauffeur, a man with an odor of 'proletarian gasoline' —an odor, he argued, that would mark his life-long taste for proletarian men. In the early 1920s, together with a group of his peers, he rented a room on Donceles Street, the same street where Jack Johnson lived in 1919. There all sorts of members of the city's underworld joined Novo and his friends. Following what he then saw as a chic fashion for all things Mexican, Novo decorated the room with Mexican motifs, to the extreme that '...an exhaustive nationalism pressed me to use a *jícara* (traditional small cup) as a deposit more in tune with the Vaseline necessary for the rituals...' (*...un nacionalismo extenuado me indujo a emplear una jícara pequeña como deposito más a tono de la vaselina necesaria para los ritos...*). There, in that room, Novo met Barba Jacob, with his 'repulsive ugliness' (*fealdad repulsiva*), who invited him and his friends to smoke marijuana. Novo collapsed. Of course, as a dandy and a homosexual, Novo knew of that other city inhabited by Barba Jacob, but Novo's aristocratic lifestyle always saved him, as he recalled; Novo and Elías Nandino, another poet and doctor, circulated safely in and out of the bohemia of the city. In 1974 Novo had a comfortable bourgeois death, crowned as the embodiment of the city itself (he was its official chronicler). His memoirs and narratives of the bohemian city remained

unpublished until very recently. Barba Jacob died in 1941, sick and poor in a miserable hotel room (Sevilla, on Ayutamiento street). Novo was, said Barba Jacob, a 'cheeky faggot with a lowered flag, I am a faggot with a wideopen flag' (*nalgasobo puto con bandera arriada, yo soy puto con bandera desplegada*). In Mexico City Barba Jacob and Hart Crane were to Novo or Nandino what in Paris Mallarmé and Baudelaire were to Zola or Victor Hugo.

In that other life of the city, bohemia, poetry, spiritism, orientalism, aesthetic ideas, politics, drugs and sex blended. One large room on the third patio of an abandoned colonial convent became the emblem of that life. In 1931 Barba Jacob wrote Rafael Helidoro Valle and nostalgically referred to the 'Nights of the Palacio de la Nunciatura'. The reference inferred that these scenes that could not be easily spelled out. In fact, however, as he had done in 1919 with his urban articles, Barba Jacob published allegorical references to those nights in March 1922 in *El Demócrata*, where he told stories of Hindu wizards, fakirs, young men seduced by drugs and sensual pleasures. Two Guatemalan writers, Aqueles Vela and Rafael Arévalo Martínez, wrote stories that made into an urban epic that black hole of bohemia, that room in an old convent in the historical center of the city. Ironically the convent was both the victim of post-revolutionary urban planning and until the late 1920s the architectural paradigm to follow —the neocolonial style being massively produced at the same time as old convents were abandoned and destroyed.

Some of the attendees of those nights later wrote about them and told the story of a spirit that materialised and was named by Barba Jacob 'Nalgalopio', then renamed Buda and later Timoteo. Arévalo Martínez recalled the 'Man who looked like a Horse', as he described Barba Jacob, his incredible rhetorical explosions, his vice, his wisdom and his total attachment to the city's pavement. In 1927 Arévalo wrote a text, half fiction, half journalism, mentioning names of attendees of those nights, such as Colombian poet Leoldo de la Rosa (though it is never clear whether he was there personally or only through poetry), Salvadorean cartoonist Antonio Salazar (named as Toño Morazán), and the Honduran poet José Cotto (named José Meruenda). In the narrative Arévalo Martínez entered into a fictional dialogue with Aretal (Barba Jacob), marking the great creativity and the terrible desolation that was the bohemian city: 'But Aretal did the curse of the God you believed in overcome you? Your marijuana, your alcohol, your lust brainwashed you in such a way that you are already imprisoned in an asylum and you have not realised it.'⁵⁴

Barba Jacob embodied the bohemia of the city but he also sought community and innocence —as did López Velarde and many of the US radicals who doggedly sought for lost innocence and origins in the city. 'In sum', wrote Arévalo Martínez, 'said Mr. Aretal: we know nothing yet feel something; this, what is felt can be called this: innocence, equality, unity.' Indeed, Barba

⁵⁴ "Pero Aretal, ¿se pronunció al fin sobre ti el anatema del Dios en quien creíste? Tu marihuana y tu alcohol y tu lujuria te sorbieron la médula de tal modo, que ya estas recluso en un manicomio y no te has dado cuenta".

Jacob had lived Porfirian, Revolutionary, and post-Revolutionary Mexico City. On many occasions he left the city, for Guatemala, for Monterrey, for Colombia, but he always came back. His was the city of sin and bohemia that so many claimed to live in, but hardly knew. Small wonder his 'Balada de la Loca Alegría' started with the wine of Anáhuac (Mexico City):

*My cup full —wine of Anáhuac—
My vain attempt —my passion, sterile—
I am a stray —I am a mariguano—
Let me drink —let me dance to the sound of my song...
The fragrant wreath fits, the satisfying cymbal tolls
A mad bacchanal and an insulting satyr
In my blood their loving frenzies fuse
Athens shines, thinks and sculpts Praxiteles.*

Mi vaso lleno —el vino del Anáhuac—
mi esfuerzo vano —estéril mi pasión—
soy un perdido —soy un mariguano—
a beber —a danzar al son de mi canción...
Ciñe el tirso oloroso, tañe el jocundo címbalo.
Una bacante loca y un sátiro afrentoso
conjuntan en mi sangre su frenesí amoroso.
Atenas brilla, piensa y esculpe Praxiteles.

Barba Jacob was, as Arévalo Martínez characterized him, a '*poète maudit*' [a cursed poet], a cynic like Voltaire and yet a positivist like Kant, homosexual like Plato, and 'like Teresa of Ávila, ascetic like two drops of water from the same ocean' (*como Teresa de Jesús, ascético como dos gotas de agua del mismo océano*). He found in the city the possibility of being and not being, the freedom of no identity, the fear and joy of experiencing the worst possibilities of human nature that the city's stones allowed —'and there are days that we are so squalid, so very squalid,/ like the dark entrails of a dark flint' (*Y hay días en que somos tan sórdidos, tan sórdidos,/ como la entraña oscura de oscuro pedernal*). But he also found the possibility of reborn innocence —'and there are days when we are so placid, so very placid.../decadence of childhood! Sapphire lagoons!' (*Y hay días en que somos tan plácidos, tan plácidos.../ -jññez en el crepúsculo! ¡lagunas de zafir!*). For it was said that Barba Jacob claimed that, in order to reach human superiority, one has to reach total orphanhood: 'to hate the fatherland and to abhor the mother' (*odiar a la patria y aborrecer la madre*). He found such orphanhood, and thus he became the city, the city that tempted so many, the city that became a fashion, but which very few fully surrendered to.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Querido Moheno, 'Arte y mariguana', included in *Cartas y crónicas*, Mexico City, A. Botas e hijo 192? Fernando Vallejo, *Barba Jacob, el mensajero*, Bogota, Planeta, 1997, first edition 1984 (Mexico City); Juan Bautista Jaramillo

Unknown to radicals and 'slackers' in the city, even to the visitors to the Palacio de la Nunciatura, in 1920 a young professional folklorist explored the city that Barba Jacob lived, and thus provided an inside/outside picture of those spaces (from the perspective of the ethnographer, the non-drug-addict and bohemian). A Viennese amateur botanist V. G. Reko, who had moved to Mexico City in 1921, also described the uses of marijuana in the city, and his description is that of Barba Jacob's physical and poetic impulse: 'then he [a marijuana addict] returns to his usual work, to his daily occupations, until his devil assaults him again sooner or later, once again his addiction to the pleasure drives him to repeat the dangerous experiment.'⁵⁶ But the description by the young folklorist constitutes the clearest record of the dark room that embodied an urban bohemia: a room in a patio of an old convent rented by 'A group of elegant youth':

To get to the room where they go only by night, you must cross some very long and somber corridors, that were at one time the cloisters of the convent. They have the room covered in black and adorned with skulls and bones and when they bring a neophyte to it, they use as lamps some pans where they light alcohol with salts to produce a greenish light perfect for producing macabre wanderings in their future smokers. In these meetings they regularly dedicate themselves to reading selected poems, recited with excessive religiosity and they all claim to never take more joy in their favorite literature than when they are high (*mariguanos*).⁵⁷

Meza, *Vida de Porfirio Barba Jacob: anecdotario-cartas-poemas*, Bogotá, Editorial Kelly, 1956; *Cartas de Barba Jacob*, selections and notes by Fernando Vallejo, Bogotá, Revista Litteraria Gradita, 1992; see articles in *El Demócrata*, March, 17, 22, and 26, 1922; Rafael Arévalo Martínez, *El hombre que parecía un caballo*, y *Las rosas de Engaddi*, Guatemala, Tipográfica Sánchez y de Guise, 1927; Rafael Arévalo Martínez, *Las noches en el Palacio de la Nunciatura*, Guatemala, Tipográfica Sánchez y de Guise, 1927; Porfirio Barba Jacob, *Antorchas contra el viento: poesía completa y prosa selecta*, edited by Eduardo Santa, Medellín, Gobernación de Antioquia, Secretaría de Educación y Cultura, 1983; Arqueles Vela, *El café de nadie; Un crimen provisional; La señorita etc.*, Mexico City, Lecturas Mexicanas, Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 1990; Fabienne Bradu, *Antonieta, 1900-1931*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991; José Vasconcelos, *Ulises criollo, la vida del autor escrita por él mismo*, Mexico City, Ediciones Botas, 1935; Salvador Novo, *La estatua de sal*, prologue by Carlos Monsiváis, Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1998, p. 84, 105-6; Elías Nandino, *Juntando mis pasos*, Mexico City, Editorial Aldus, 2000; Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán*, 2nd ed., Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, 1948; *Todo Valle-Inclán en México*, edited by Luis Mario Schneider, Mexico City, Coordinación de Difusión Cultural, Dirección de Literatura, UNAM, 1992.

⁵⁶ 'So kehrt er zur gewohnten Arbeit, zur alltäglichen Beschäftigung zurück, bis ihn nach kurzer oder längerer Zeit wieder sein Dämon überfällt, wieder die Sucht nach dem Genusse ihn treibt, das gefährliche Experiment zu wiederholen. VA Reko, 'marijuana', included in *Magische Gifte: rausch- und betäubungsmittel der neuen Welt*, Stuttgart, Enke, 1935; Eugenio Gómez Maillefert, 'La mariguana en México', *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. 33, no. 127 (1920), pp. 28-33, quote p. 29.

⁵⁷ 'Para llegar a la habitación, a la que solamente concurren de noche, hay que atrevesar unos larguísimos y sombríos corredores que fueron en un tiempo los claustros del convento. El cuarto lo tenían tapiado de negro y adornado con Calaveras y canillas, y —cuando llevan a él a algún neófito, usan, a guisa de lampadarios, unas cazuelas en donde encienden alcohol con sal para producir una luz verdosa muy propicia para hacer que tenga divagaciones macabras de futuro fumador. En estas reuniones por lo regular se dedican a la lectura de poesías escogidas que recitan con religiosidad exagerada, y todos protestan que nunca gozan más de su literatura favorita, que cuando están 'grifos' (mariguanos).' Gómez Maillefert, 'La mariguana en México', p. 29.

This was the city, and this is why López Velarde wanted to take refuge in parsimony, in 'restraint', in escaping to 'those things that did good to me'. This is why it was better to escape to the confines of either the brown Atlantis or the hope of the international revolution. Better than succumbing to the city's sin was to read in 1920 in Manuel Gamio's ethnographic journal, *Etnos*, a tune collected in the Colonia Guerrero, 'Tepito' as it is popularly known —and 'Is there someone who will ask these quiet people', went Isaac Berliner's Yiddish 'Ode to Tepito, 'Why such joy amid such bitter poverty?' The tune collected in *Etnos* went:

Suni, suni sang the frog,
There goes the dust of marijuana.
I am so high that I cannot
Even lift my head,
With my eyes bloodshot
And my mouth very dry, very dry.

*Suni, suni, cantaba la rana
ahí te van los polvos de la mariguana.
Mariguana estoy que no puedo
ni levantar la cabeza,
con los ojos reticolorados
y la boca reseca, reseca.*⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Version published in *Etnos* (1920), reproduced in Vicente T. Mendoza, *La canción mexicana. Ensayo de clasificación y antología, estudios de folklore*, Mexico City, UNAM, 1961. A very different version of the song was found and published by Gómez Maillepert ('La mariguana en México').

End

Modernist Mexico City, in all its peripheral modesty, achieved at once a lasting victory and a great defeat. On the one hand, by the 1920s the meaning of Mexico had more global connotations than ever before: a hitherto unknown and powerful notion of the 'native', of the authentic, an indisputable version of what such anthropologists as Edward Shils called in 1919 'genuine culture', or what countless world commentators identified as the lost community that fascinated such avant-garde personalities as Diego Rivera, Edward Weston, Aaron Copland, Fujita, or Hart Crane. On the other hand, such meanings discredited the laboratory (the city) where such meanings were made possible. The city became invisible, lost in the midst of its romantic third worldism. The city, of course, lost nothing with the silencing; it kept growing in size as well as in cultural, economic and political significance. For experimentation, however, the silencing was a loss; it weakened the experimentalism that originated important political solutions and new and lasting cultural trends that marked the first three decades of the twentieth century. The city was not, as the old Mexican saying goes, "*monedita di'oro pa' caerle bien a todos*" ("a little gold coin to be liked by all").

Novedades

DIVISIÓN DE ADMINISTRACIÓN PÚBLICA

- Laura Sour y Jorge Ortega, *Marco institucional formal del FAIS y del FAFM en México*, DTAP-210
- Luis F. Luna y José Ramón Gil, *Resultados de la "Encuesta sobre gobierno electrónico y colaboración interorganizacional"...*, DTAP-211
- José Ramón Gil, *Pensamiento sistémico y dinámica de sistemas para el análisis de políticas públicas...*, DTAP-212
- Laura Sour, *Correspondencia entre las políticas públicas del PND y el gasto ejercido de la CHPF en México*, DTAP-213
- José Ramón Gil, Judith Mariscal y Fernando Ramírez, *Gobierno electrónico en México*, DTAP-214
- Judith Mariscal, José Ramón Gil y Armando Aldama, *Políticas de acceso a tecnologías de la información: El caso de e-México*, DTAP-215
- Laura Sour y Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez, *Extrinsic Incentives and Tax Compliance*, DTAP-216
- Laura Sour y Fredy Girón, *The Flypaper Effect in Mexican Local Governments, 1990-2006*, DTAP-217
- Judith Mariscal y Fernando Ramírez, *Retos para el desarrollo del sector de las telecomunicaciones en México*, DTAP-218
- Alejandra Ríos y Juan E. Pardinás, *Hacia la reforma constitucional: Las entidades de fiscalización superior en México*, DTAP-219
- Laura Sour, *Regional Differences in Infrastructure Investment at the State Level in Mexico, 1998-2005*, DTAP-220

DIVISIÓN DE ECONOMÍA

- John Scott, *Incidencia de las transferencias públicas en el ingreso de los trabajadores de salario mínimo en México...*, DTE-443
- John Scott, *Evaluación de políticas y programas públicos...*, DTE-444
- Sonia Di Giannatale, Gian Luca Clementi y Thomas Cooley, *A Theory of Firm Decline*, DTE-445
- Víctor Carreón y Alfonso Zerón, *Innovación de procesos en el costo de generación de electricidad*, DTE-446
- Víctor Carreón y Evangelina Dardati, *La tarifa de generación en México estimada con el mecanismo de orden de mérito*, DTE-447
- Rodolfo Cermeño y Daniel Garrido, *Convergencia de las entidades federativas de México, 1940-2004: un enfoque de series de tiempo*, DTE-448
- Rodolfo Cermeño y Huver Rivera, *La demanda por importaciones y exportaciones: evidencia de cointegración para México, 1991-2005*, DTE-449
- Juan Manuel Torres, Octavio S. Magaña y Francisco Moreno, *Determinantes del cambio de uso/cobertura arbolada en México*, DTE-450
- Juan M. Torres, David B. Bray y Octavio S. Magaña, *The Role of Scale in Mexican Community Forest Management*, DTE-451
- Richard H. Adams, Jr. and Alfredo Cuecuecha, *Remittances, Consumption and Investment in Ghana*, DTE-452

DIVISIÓN DE ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES

- Jesús Velasco , *Lou Dobbs and the Rise of Modern Nativism*, DTEI-171
Jorge Schiavon, *La diplomacia local del Distrito Federal (2000-2007)*, DTEI-172
Rafael Velázquez, *La proyección internacional de Baja California*, DTEI-173
Consuelo Dávila, Jorge Schiavon y Rafael Velázquez, *La paradiplomacia de las entidades federativas en México*, DTEI-174
Francisco Javier Aparicio y Covadonga Meseguer, *Collective Remittances and the State: The 3x1 Program in Mexican Municipalities*, DTEI-175
Alejandro Anaya, *Free Trade, "Spillover" and Human Rights Foreign Policies in North America*, DTEI-176
Alejandro Anaya, *Security and Human Rights in Mexico: Do Pressure from Above and Argumentation Have Anything to Do With It?*, DTEI-177
Jorge Chabat, *The International Role of Latin America After September 11: Tying the Giant*, DTEI-178
Jorge Chabat, *The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy and Mexico: The Limits to Unilateralism*, DTEI-179
Jorge Chabat, *Franchises for Crime: "Maras" and North American Security*, DTEI-180

DIVISIÓN DE ESTUDIOS JURÍDICOS

- Gustavo Fondevila e Ingram Matthew, *Detención y uso de la fuerza*, DTEJ-23
Ana Laura Magaloni y Ana María Ibarra Olguín, *La configuración jurisprudencial de los derechos fundamentales...*, DTEJ-24
Ana Laura Magaloni, *¿Por qué la Suprema Corte no ha sido un instrumento para la defensa de derechos fundamentales?*, DTEJ-25
Ana Laura Magaloni, *Arbitrariedad e ineficiencia de la procuración de justicia: dos caras de la misma moneda*, DTEJ-26
Ana María Ibarra, *Los artificios de la Dogmática Jurídica*, DTEJ-27
Ana Elena Fierro y Adriana García, *Responsabilidad patrimonial del Estado. Interpretación de la SCJN del artículo 113 constitucional*, DTEJ-28
Adriana García y Dirk Zavala, *El análisis económico del derecho como herramienta para el diseño normativo...*, DTEJ-29
Carlos Elizondo y Luis Manuel Pérez de Acha, *¿Un nuevo derecho o el debilitamiento del Estado? Garantía de audiencia previa en la expropiación*, DTEJ-30
Ana Elena Fierro y Adriana García, *Guía de las decisiones del PJF en materia de competencia económica: Cómo generar una cultura de la competencia*, DTEJ-31
Carlos Elizondo y Ana Laura Magaloni, *La depuración de las corporaciones policiacas y el juicio de amparo*, DTEJ-32
Marcelo Bergman y Hernán Flom, *Policía y comunidad: una comparación...*, DTEJ-33

DIVISIÓN DE ESTUDIOS POLÍTICOS

- Joy Langston y Allyson Benton, *"A ras de suelo": Candidate Appearances and Events in Mexico's Presidential Campaign*, DTEP-199
- Gabriel Negretto, *The Durability of Constitutions in Changing Environments...*, DTEP-200
- Joy Langston, *Hasta en las mejores familias: Madrazo and the PRI in the 2006 Presidential Elections*, DTEP-201
- Andreas Schedler, *Protest Beats Manipulation. Exploring Sources of Interparty Competition under Competitive and Hegemonic Authoritarianism*, DTEP-202
- Alejandro Villagómez y Jennifer Farias, *Análisis de la evolución de la matrícula de las licenciaturas en CP, AP y RI en México, 1974-2004*, DTEP-203
- Julio Ríos Figueroa, *Judicial Institutions and Corruption Control*, DTEP-204
- Allyson Benton, *The Effect of Electoral Rules on Indigenous Voting Behavior in Mexico's State of Oaxaca*, DTEP-205
- Andreas Schedler y Cas Mudde, *The Quantitative Skeleton of Comparative Politics*, DTEP-206
- Joy Langston y Francisco Javier Aparicio, *The Past as Future: Prior Political Experience and Career Choices in Mexico, 1997-2006*, DTEP-207
- Francisco Javier Aparicio y Sandra Jessica Ley, *Electoral Institutions and Democratic Consolidation in the Mexican States, 1990-2004*, DTEP-208

DIVISIÓN DE HISTORIA

- Luis Barrón, *Revolucionarios sí, pero Revolución no*, DTH-44
- Ugo Pipitone, *Oaxaca: comunidad, instituciones, vanguardias*, DTH-45
- Luis Barrón, *Venustiano Carranza: un político porfiriano en la Revolución*, DTH-46
- Mauricio Tenorio y Laurencio Sanguino, *Orígenes de una ciudad mexicana: Chicago y la ciencia del Mexican Problem (1900-1930)*, DTH-47
- Rafael Rojas, *José María Heredia y la tradición republicana*, DTH-48
- Rafael Rojas, *Traductores de la libertad: el americanismo de los primeros republicanos*, DTH-49
- Mónica Judith Sánchez, *History vs. the Eternal Present or Liberal Individualism and the Morality of Compassion and Trust*, DTH-50
- Luis Medina, *Salida: los años de Zedillo*, DTH-51
- Michael Sauter, *The Edict on Religion of 1788 and the Statistics of Public Discussion in Prussia*, DTH-52
- Michael Sauter, *Conscience and the Rhetoric of Freedom: Fichte's Reaction to the Edict on Religion*, DTH-53

Ventas

El CIDE es una institución de educación superior especializada particularmente en las disciplinas de Economía, Administración Pública, Estudios Internacionales, Estudios Políticos, Historia y Estudios Jurídicos. El Centro publica, como producto del ejercicio intelectual de sus investigadores, libros, documentos de trabajo, y cuatro revistas especializadas: *Gestión y Política Pública*, *Política y Gobierno*, *Economía Mexicana Nueva Época* e *Istor*.

Para adquirir cualquiera de estas publicaciones, le ofrecemos las siguientes opciones:

VENTAS DIRECTAS:	VENTAS EN LÍNEA:
Tel. Directo: 5081-4003 Tel: 5727-9800 Ext. 6094 y 6091 Fax: 5727 9800 Ext. 6314 Av. Constituyentes 1046, 1er piso, Col. Lomas Altas, Del. Álvaro Obregón, 11950, México, D.F.	Librería virtual: www.e-cide.com Dudas y comentarios: publicaciones@cide.edu

¡¡Colecciones completas!!

Adquiere los CDs de las colecciones completas de los documentos de trabajo de todas las divisiones académicas del CIDE: Economía, Administración Pública, Estudios Internacionales, Estudios Políticos, Historia y Estudios Jurídicos.



¡Nuevo! ¡¡Arma tu CD!!



Visita nuestra Librería Virtual www.e-cide.com y selecciona entre 10 y 20 documentos de trabajo. A partir de tu lista te enviaremos un CD con los documentos que elegiste.