

VOICES *of Mexico*

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Beyond the Gulf of Mexico Oil Disaster

Articles by *Rosío Vargas, Gian Carlo Delgado, Fabio Barbosa, Heberto Barrios, Zirahuén Villamar, and Alfonso Sánchez*

Security and the Criminal System Reform

Miguel Carbonell

The Left and Mexico's Elections

Pablo Cabañas

The Challenge to Mexico's Foreign Trade

Fausto Kubli-García

Daily Life and Food Distribution in Mexico

Felipe Torres

Mexico's Southern Border, Security, and Migration

Natalia Armijo

Ideological and Cultural Bases For Arizona's SB 1070

Javier Durán

Art in UNAM Museums



ISSUE 90 SPRING-SUMMER 2011 MEXICO \$50 USA \$12.00 CANADA \$15.00

Exhibirse hasta: 30 de septiembre de 2011. Display until September 30, 2011.



ISSN 0186 • 9418

Voices of Mexico is published by the
Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN (Center for Research on North America) of the
Coordinación de Humanidades (Office of the Coordinator of Humanities), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,
UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico).

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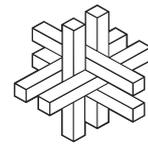
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VOICESTM of Mexico

Issue 90 Spring-Summer 2011



Patricia Pérez

An exhibit hall in the San Ildefonso Museum.

Cover

José Clemente Orozco
The Last Judgement, detail, 1923-1924 (fresco).
Mural at the Old College of San Ildefonso.
Photo by Elsie Montiel

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OUR VOICE

The challenges currently faced by Mexico seem to be not only multiplying but also rapidly intensifying. These challenges have emerged from structural problems characterized by the absence of sustained economic growth, together with random actions indicating the lack of comprehensive planning for prioritizing attention to the population's needs associated with well-being, specifically dignified employment, education, health, food and housing. And now the upcoming electoral process is already unfolding, scheduled to culminate in the summer of 2012.

With this panorama the current issue of *Voices of Mexico* begins with an analysis of various political and economic aspects that are critical to understanding the particularities that will define this electoral process and its results, specifically security, political forces and international trade. The first aspect—security—looms at the center of national debate, and this is not only because it is the principal demand made by the Mexican people—most of whom consider the strategy followed by the current government to be counterproductive, given the incessant rise in the numbers of victims and levels of cruelty, as exemplified by the repeated discoveries of “narcocemeteries.” In addition, corruption and impunity have left institutions fragile and discredited, and this is particularly the case for those responsible for imparting justice. And furthermore, the country's international image has also been damaged. The numbers tell us that the last four years have brought over 30,000 deaths and 230,000 persons displaced by the war against organized crime, indicating that the Mexican penal system has ceased to fulfill its function. It is for this reason that the excellent article by Miguel Carbonell is a necessary reading.

It is important to remember that Mexico's democracy is a model yet to be completed, since we are about to mark only twelve years since the end of the official party system, with a national president outside the ranks of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) elected on two subsequent occasions. If we take into account that citizens consider the actions and results of those in government in line with their expectations, it is concerning, in the context of the consequences of the global economic crisis and their repercussions in Mexico, together with, of course, the complex situation of insecurity, to see the data illustrated by Pablo Cabañas, indicating that two thirds of our population believe that government decision-making is aimed at protecting the interests of the country's elite.

We thus believe it will be interesting for our readers to recognize in this article the complexity of the country's partisan actors—beginning with those on the left—who have opted for more pragmatic tendencies that, while distancing themselves from orthodox practices, leave them navigating in an ocean of contradictions, with personal ambitions and group interests particularly apparent.

Moving on to economic matters, this issue includes reflections on the current status of Mexico's foreign trade. Despite the fact that our economy has become one of the most open in the world, the benefits are far from being perceived by most Mexicans. Fausto Kubli points to the risk inherent in our country's extreme dependence on foreign trade with the United States—beyond the 30 markets with which Mexico has established trade links—since our economy is far from being productive. As long as our domestic market is not strengthened, and actions are not taken to persistently move toward entering the knowledge economy, the inequalities within our country will intensify, as will those in relation to our regional partners, Canada and the United States.

In addition, it is still necessary to study the consequences of fast-track trade agreements for Mexico, by assessing the pros and cons of deepening regional cooperation vis-à-vis international cooperation.

In our Special Section—coordinated by Rosío Vargas, a CISAN researcher—we invite our readers to an extensive review of the effects from the Macondo well oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Six experts on this topic debate the direct impacts for Mexico, the environment and bilateral relations between Great Britain and the United States. In a world in which the combination of climatic change and environmental devastation resulting from human actions has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths attributed to natural disasters in 2010 alone, the disappearance—caused by the oil spill—of sources of traditional work such as fishing means that numerous victims are placed into a vulnerable situation.

It is during this type of event that major corporate interests are exposed to global public opinion, demonstrating the need for stricter multilateral security measures, as well as for the accelerated development of clean energy alternatives.

Lastly, among the individuals contributing to this issue of *Voices of Mexico*, it is important to acknowledge those who have offered a thoughtful perspective on the wealth of cultural heritage preserved by the UNAM. With their focus on the great museographic settings housed within architectural treasures from our colonial period and to the 20th century, and including today's avant-gardism, as represented by the University Museum of Contemporary Art (*Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo*—MUAC), we are able, as members of the university community, to communicate to the world that we are proud of our origins, our history, our identity.

In short, as long as the spirit continues to speak for our race, as our university motto states, the people of Mexico will continue to fight unceasingly until the universal values focused on peace, justice and living with dignity prevail over the violence currently casting shadows over our land.

Silvia Núñez García
CISAN Director

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Año LXI • Nueva Época • n.48 • enero - marzo 2011 • \$30.00

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Suscripciones: Circuito norponiente de Ciudad Universitaria, México, D.F., 04510

Tel: (55) 5622 0093 Fax: (55) 5616 2183 correo-e: magosbet@yahoo.com.mx página web: www.udual.org

Mexico. The Fight For Security and the Criminal System Reform

Miguel Carbonell*



Saul López/Cuartoscuro

New courtrooms for Mexico's recently approved oral trials.

HARD TIMES

Mexico is going through turbulent times. Extreme, savage, merciless violence unlike anything since the time of the revolution is plaguing several states in the northern part of the country. The federal government has deployed both civilian and military operations to recover territorial control and bring offenders to justice. The drug cartels, well armed with weapons that mainly come from the United States, are fighting for control over drug routes and charging a quota of blood and corruption in small, medium-sized, and large cities. In the midst of this, the citizenry is asking itself what the government's objec-

tives are and when the nightmare that has already cost more than 35 000 lives between 2007 and 2010 will end.

Solutions are not easy to envisage. Very probably public security will continue to be a central item on the public agenda in coming years. However, the steps toward building the rule of law and significantly diminishing the violence are already being taken, above all based on the coordinates sketched out by the important June 2008 constitutional reform in criminal matters.¹

For this reform to help decrease the violence, arms trafficking from the United States has to be stopped. Evidence points to an important percentage of assault rifles confiscated from drug traffickers having been purchased in U.S. border state gun shops. The armories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona do a thriving business selling guns that end up being

* Researcher and coordinator of the UNAM Institute for Legal Research area of constitutional law.

Arms trafficking from the United States has to be stopped.
The armories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona do a thriving business selling guns
that end up being used to kill Mexican police, soldiers, and citizens.

used to kill Mexican police, soldiers, and citizens. The lack of regulations on gun sales, the irrational ease with which they can be acquired with only minimal paperwork, considerably increases the risk of violence on the Mexican side of the border.

This does not mean that the U.S. government is guilty of the violence in Mexico, as is sometimes rather simplistically alleged, but we have the great responsibility of taking better care of our borders. Finally, the task of avoiding the entry of arms into our territory is ours, not theirs. Every country must assume its part of the responsibility, and our two nations must create shared channels to facilitate teamwork for information exchange, intelligence gathering, operations coordinated on both sides of the border, police training, etc. Therefore, ensuring control of the northern border and reducing arms trafficking from the United States must be the Mexican government's number one priority in its fight against insecurity and the big cartels.

SECOND-RATE POLICE FORCES

An additional step is linked to training and improving the thousands of existing police forces in Mexico. Every municipality—more than 2 500 nationwide—and every one of the 32 states and the Federal District, has its own police force, as does the federal government. The 2008 constitutional reform stipulates that all police officers be certified and their personal data be registered in a system that would ensure that they have no criminal records. The aim of this part of the reform is to substantially improve the quality of Mexico's police forces.

Besides training, certifying, and registering their personal data, it is also important to raise their wages so that a career as a police officer is attractive to more people. According to the federal government's Ministry of Public Security, 60 percent of municipal police officers earn a maximum of US\$333 a month.

This kind of wage makes them vulnerable not only for recruitment by organized criminal groups, but also creates a

big turnover in the police force since officers frequently explore other job alternatives and leave the force after only a short time. Paying them better is indispensable for moving ahead in the fight against crime in Mexico.

HOW DO YOU WIN?

Another public security issue that is beginning to be debated is linked to the goal pursued by the federal government's intervention in the fight against the big criminal groups. Many analysts ask themselves how we can know whether we are winning, are tied, or are losing. When and under what conditions will we know if the scales are tipping toward the side of law and order or the criminals' side?

To answer these questions, I think there are two objective parameters indicating possible government success in the fight against crime. One is linked to territorial control: a state is winning against criminal groups when the latter do not control parts of the territory or when they are constantly pursued by public forces wherever they are. The second parameter is linked to decreasing violence on our streets: fewer thefts, fewer kidnappings, and fewer homicides.

Territorial control has been ensured for quite a while now. The presence of federal forces, whether military or civilian, in places previously controlled by drug traffickers is evident. The broad deployment in Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, and Michoacán must be appreciated at its true worth. However, there is still much left to do since, even in those states, where operations are constant, people cannot go out onto the street and feel safe. Often, the situation looks like a game of cat and mouse.

The second parameter is much more complicated, and the data do not look very optimistic. In fact, if we take into account the figures for violence (homicides, kidnappings, etc.), it would seem that not only have we not advanced, but we are actually going backward. Homicides had been dropping since 1992, giving Mexico a much lower rate than other Latin American countries. For example, according to the Na-

tional Population Council (Conapo) and the federal Ministry of Public Security, by 1997, our homicide rate was 17 per every 100 000 inhabitants and dropped to 10 per 100 000 by 2007. However, the trend reversed itself in 2008, 2009, and above all 2010. In 2008 and 2009, the homicide rate increased 50 percent each year, revealing that Mexico had gone backward about 20 years in this area.² Fernando Escalante reports that in 2008 there were 5 500 more homicides than in 2007, and in 2009, 5 800 more than in 2008 and 3 000 more than in 1992, the year with the highest rate in the country's recent past. At that point, victory seems not only remote, but it looks like we are facing what could be called, as I already mentioned, a grave reversal.

THE PROBLEM OF THE JAILS

The previous sections have pointed out the low quality of our police forces and their miserable wages, the advance in territorial control by authorities and the huge spike in homicides. To complete this overview of the public security problems plaguing Mexico, we need to look more closely at the issue of jails. Frequently forgotten by our politicians, today this has become a Petri dish for new, more dangerous forms of crime, like telephone extortion, just to mention one example.

June 2010 figures indicate that we have more than 439 jails nationwide housing 227 882 inmates. Forty-two percent of the inmates are being held under preventive, pretrial detention, deprived of their freedom as a precautionary measure as long as their trial lasts; this is the same as saying that they have not yet been found guilty of committing any crime. If each of these inmates has at least four family members, the result is that more than 1 million people—or approximately one in every 100 Mexicans—have direct or indirect dealings with those jails. So, we can say that this is not something that involves a radical, subversive minority, but an important segment of the population, whose problems and privations are projected on many other Mexicans.

One hundred thirty-five of Mexico's jails have women inmates, sometimes separated from the male prisoners simply by some bars or a few steps from one dormitory to another. The laws are clear on this point, but they are not fully enforced. More than 150 detention facilities are overcrowded, from 230 percent overcrowding in Navolato, Sinaloa, or 224 percent in the Chalco Center for Social Readaptation (Cereso), in the State of Mexico, for example, to the reasonable rate of 1.14 percent overcrowding in the Nogales 1 Cereso in Sonora.

Almost one in four inmates is housed in six main penitentiaries: Mexico City's Federal District East, North, and South Ceresos—altogether, they hold 32 000 inmates—the Tijuana Cereso, the Guadalajara prison, and the Puente Grande, Jalisco Cereso.

In 23 of Mexico's states, prisoners are not appropriately classified, which in practice means that murderers are housed alongside pickpockets, rapists alongside those sentenced for drug trafficking, conmen alongside car thieves, and so on. This fosters violence inside the facilities and creates an atmosphere ripe for finding new recruits for organized crime. In 30 percent of our jails there are forms of self-government. This means that the inmates themselves, not the authorities, are the ones who organize activities, exercise control or violence against the others, are in charge of paid labor, employ other inmates for personal services, or carry out acts of sexual exploitation.

We cannot suppose that a diagnostic analysis of our penitentiary system's problems would be limited to the numbers explained above. To them, we must add the "collateral" problems "derived" from detention itself. Guillermo Zepeda Lecuona reminds us of the indicators of "incarceration genocide": in Mexico, the most vulnerable segment of the female population to contagion with the HIV/AIDS virus are women inmates, even more than sexual workers; the homicide rate in prisons is eight times that of the already very high rate in society at large, and the suicide rate is five times that of the general population.³

To these chilling data must be added the enormous problem of corruption in Mexican jails. Inmates state that the

In Mexico, prisoners are not appropriately classified;
this fosters violence inside the facilities and creates an atmosphere ripe
for finding new recruits for organized crime.

guards charge their family members to allow them to visit, to bring them food or other items, to be able to exercise their right to conjugal visits, or even to have the special benefits that are the right of prisoners about to be released, like day, weekend, school, or work leaves.⁴ According to a survey by the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) in Mexico City's Federal District and the State of Mexico, 30 percent of the inmates in the former and 19 percent in the latter said they did not have enough water to drink; 67 percent in the former and 58 percent in the latter thought they were not given enough to eat; and 35 percent in the former said they did not received medical attention when they needed it. In the Federal District, the authorities supplied less than 4 percent of inmates such basic items as sheets, blankets, clothing, or shoes; and 98 percent said the authorities did not given them toilet paper, toothpaste, or soap. Families are the big suppliers in the prison system.⁵

Weapons, drugs, and alcohol abound in our jails, and they can only be introduced into the prison with the acquiescence of authorities and guards. Some prisons have areas for the richest inmates, equipped with the most surprising array of luxuries: some even have a private garden, satellite TV, birthday parties, the right to many visitors at once, etc.

To supposedly combat the introduction of banned substances and weapons, the authorities practice ostentatious but ineffective methods of searching visitors, some of which violate these individuals' dignity, as CNDH General Recommendation 1 maintains. In this document, the CNDH states, "One of the human rights violations most frequently seen in most of the detention centers is linked to the searches that violate the dignity of relatives, friends, and lawyers visiting the inmates. This can range from a body search without the least respect, to extreme situations where people have been forced to take off their clothes, do squats, put themselves into demeaning positions, and even submit to cavity searches."⁶

If we do not solve the problem of our jails, it will be very difficult to bring together a successful public security policy. Today, the jails are part of Mexico's public insecurity problem, and they are not helping resolve it in any way.

WHAT NEXT?

Clearly, the panorama is by no means encouraging. The numbers show a northern border that is extremely "porous" to arms trafficking; badly paid and even worse trained police forces;

To supposedly combat the introduction of banned substances and weapons, the authorities practice ostentatious but ineffective methods of searching visitors, some of which violate these individuals' dignity.

and, in short, a jail system that is not getting the expected results. The painful consequence of all this is a desperate society that is watching, stupefied, as social intercourse in many cities of the country deteriorates and the criminal element implacably advances over and above different economic, and even political activities.

Given this huge problem, the way forward must be full enforcement of the 2008 reform of the criminal justice system, which covers all the links in the chain of Mexico's penal system. It deals with crime prevention, criminal investigation, the mechanisms for trying the accused, and implementing sentences involving incarceration.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the reform has been very slow and today is opposed by many actors who have an interest in the Mexican penal system remaining unchanged. The interests at play are very important ones, pressuring for immobility. Let us hope that the thousands of citizens' desires for change nationwide are stronger. The worst thing that could happen to us would be to remain as we are. ■■■

NOTES

¹ For an analysis of this reform, see Miguel Carbonell, *Los juicios orales en México*, 3rd Edition (Mexico City: Porrúa/RENACE/UNAM, 2011).

² Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo, "Homicidios 2008-2009. La muerte tiene permiso," *Nexos* 397 (Mexico City) (January 2011), p. 36.

³ See the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) document *Derechos humanos de los reclusos en México. Guía y diagnóstico de supervisión penitenciaria* (Mexico City: CNDH, 2007). This publication has an excellent introductory study by Sergio García Ramírez. Guillermo Zepeda's data can be found in his doctoral thesis, "La procuración de justicia en México" (The Administration of Justice in Mexico), presented in 2008 at the UNAM.

⁴ A detailed account of what each product or visit costs can be found at <http://www.oem.com.mx/elsoldemexico/notas/n487121.htm>.

⁵ Marcelo Bergman, comp., *Delincuencia, marginalidad y desempeño institucional. Resultados de la segunda encuesta a población en reclusión en el Distrito Federal y el Estado de México* (Mexico City: CIDE, 2006), pp. 41-47.

⁶ The document is dated June 19, 2001, and can be found at <http://www.cndh.org.mx/recomen/general/001.pdf>. [Editor's Note.]

The Different Left Forces And the 2011 and 2012 Elections

Pablo Cabañas Díaz*

The 2012 race for the presidency began in 2011. This took the form of a dispute in which clear national, long-term projects were nowhere in evidence. Quite to the contrary, what have come to the fore are personal ambitions and party interests. According to the *Latinobarómetro 2010 Report*, in Mexico, only 28 percent of citizens polled are very satisfied with democracy; 21 percent think the country is being governed for the good of the people; and 65 percent think government decisions are made to ensure privileges for the few.¹

Senator Gustavo Madero, president-elect of the National Action Party (PAN), represents a weak leadership. In the fight for the top spot in his party, Madero beat federal Deputy Roberto Gil, who presumably had President Felipe Calderón's total backing and support. That support was real, which is why last January 7, Gil once again came into the spotlight as Calderón's new political operative in the presidential race. Gil is currently his new private secretary, with functions that go way beyond the scope of his job description.

The election of former Coahuila Governor Humberto Moreira as president of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and Cristina Díaz as its new general secretary, reveals the nucleus of the forces preparing to launch the presidential candidacy of Enrique Peña Nieto, current governor of the State of Mexico. Moreira's close relationship with Elba Esther Gordillo, head of the powerful National Educational Workers Union (SNTE), is another expression of the coalition being forged on the road to 2012. In Coahuila, the new PRI leader's brother will be running for governor, while former Governor Enrique Martínez heads up the PRI in the State of Mexico.

* Professor of the UNAM School of Political and Social Sciences Center for Communications Studies.



The two frontrunners for a left coalition presidential candidacy, Marcelo Ebrard (left) and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (right).

The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) Political Commission has agreed to elect the new national leadership March 19, 2011, but the renovation of the party will last until September. Its changes in leadership will impose an extremely complex, wearing, internally confrontational dynamic, since the dispute inside the institutional left has centered on controlling the PRD. We should remember that on July 21, 2008, its National Guarantees Commission voided the March 16, 2008 internal elections when it discovered there had been irregularities in more than 20 percent of polling booths.

The recent election in Guerrero merely confirmed one thing: if other parties want to beat the PRI, they will only be able to do it by running a former PRI member. To be clear, “only the PRI can beat the PRI.”

Six states hold gubernatorial elections this year: Guerrero, Southern Baja California, Michoacán, Coahuila, the State of Mexico, and Nayarit. In the first three, the PRD is in office, and in the last three, the PRI. Guerrero, South Baja California, and Michoacán are of capital importance for the PRD since they are places where it has been in office for up to two consecutive terms. The first of these elections was in Guerrero, where the “Guerrero Unites Us” alliance candidate Ángel Aguirre won, supported by the PRD. This election merely confirmed one thing: if other parties want to beat the PRI, they will only be able to do it by running a former PRI member. To be clear, “only the PRI can beat the PRI.” The second round of elections was for governor, the state Congress, and mayors in South Baja California. Important changes came about: after 12 years of PRD administrations, the incumbent party dropped to third place in the voters’ preferences, and the PAN will now sit in the governor’s office.

The last strategic election for the PRD will be November 13 in Michoacán, where the results are up in the air; it is not clear whether the citizenry will attribute the grave problem of insecurity to the federal or the state government.

Today, the PRD is electorally weakened, representing only 12 percent of the national vote, while in the 2006 presidential elections, its candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador won 14 683 000 votes. In four years, this party lost 44 percent of the sympathizers who voted for it in 2006. Also, in the 2009 elections in Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz, the PRD came in third, and in Puebla and Tamaulipas, fourth.

In 2009, the PRD dropped to being the third largest caucus in the Chamber of Deputies, winning only 39 districts and 32 more seats by proportional representation. Historically, the PRD’s average vote for federal deputies by district, from 1991 to 2010, was 18 percent, but its average for midterm elections of deputies by district in 1991, 1997, and 2003 is 16.56 percent.

In 2009, the PRD lost important districts, mainly in Mexico City’s Federal District, the State of Mexico, Guerrero,

Oaxaca, Veracruz, Hidalgo, Tabasco, Morelos, and Tlaxcala. This meant that it stopped governing eight million Mexicans as the result of municipal elections, most notably in the State of Mexico municipalities of Ecatepec, Nezahualcóyotl, Chalco, Valle de Chalco, Ixtapaluca, Texcoco, and Los Reyes la Paz, among others.

The PRD, with its coalition with the Labor Party (PT) and Convergence called the Broad Progressive Front (FAP), has limited potential. This is because the votes predicted for the smaller organizations individually range from 2 to 2.5 percent. However, if this were not sufficient for gauging each party’s electoral strength, we can use another parameter: the 2003 midterm elections, in which each ran its own candidates and the results were that the PRD got 17.6 percent of the vote, the PT 2.4 percent, and convergence 2.2 percent.

On July 4, 2010, elections were held in 14 states. In 12, the governor’s office was up for election, and of these, nine were won by the PRI, with PAN-PRD coalitions winning three states: Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa. The PRI wrested Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala away from the PAN and Zacatecas away from the PRD, where it had governed since 1998. The PAN-PRD electoral alliance won in Puebla, Sinaloa and South Baja California, also capturing 167 city governments and 13 local districts from the PRI in these states, where it had been the majority. In 2010, the PRI won 49.5 percent of all the seats up for election. Although it kept its place as the country’s largest political force, the PRI was not able to repeat the victories it had achieved in almost all states in previous years.

Both the PAN and the PRD won positions where they had previously had no presence. In Oaxaca, for example, where the PAN had headed up only seven municipalities before, it won 56 as part of the coalition; and, after having no deputies at all by district vote, it now has nine. In Sinaloa and Durango, where the PRI had predominated, the PAN and the PRD will jointly govern 18 municipalities. The PAN lost the governorships in Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala, and the municipalities it had governed in Baja California.

While the PRI maintained its 19 governor’s seats, its distribution changed: it won three small states (Aguascalientes, Tlaxcala, and Zacatecas), with a total of 3.5 million inhabitants, with voters’ rolls of 2.6 million and an overall budget for 2010 of Mex\$150 million. In contrast, the states it lost (Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa) total 11.4 million inhabitants, voter rolls of 8.3 million, and a combined budget of Mex\$117.61 billion.²

Split voting —voting for one party in one race and a different one in another race in the same balloting— did not mean a transfer of PRD votes to the PRI. In fact, a phenomenon seen in the 2009 and 2010 elections was the migration of votes from the PAN to the PRI. The latter's vote count in the 2009 federal elections (15 518 000) was 3 870 303 more than its total in the 2006 race for federal deputies; this last number is approximately the number of votes lost by the PAN in 2009, whose count then came to 4 235 935.

For the elections for federal deputies, the following table illustrates this situation, comparing the number of votes for the PRD, PT, and Convergence in 2003 and 2009.

Party	Vote Count by Year	
	2003	2009
PRD	4 694 365	4 164 000
PT	640 724	1 216 237
Convergence	602 392	808 764

Source: Developed by the author.

If this tendency continues in Mexico City's Federal District, the consequences will be greater in 2012. While the majority of the vote continues to favor the PRD, there has been a change in the party's trajectory since 1997, the year when the capital's citizens were first allowed to elect a local government. This makes it possible to predict that 2012 will bring some changes.

On this note, before continuing, it is necessary to clarify something. The largest chunk of PRD votes nationwide comes from and depends on the Federal District and the metropolitan area, including part of the State of Mexico. Given this, for years the PAN has done everything within its power to snatch electoral space away from the PRD in the country's capital. But every attempt has failed. However, in 2009, some changes were visible. In the local Federal District elections, the PAN won three of the 16 borough races (Miguel Hidalgo, Benito Juárez, and Cuajimalpa), one more than in previous years, and nine local deputyships, when previously it had only had four.

For its part, the PRD won 12 boroughs, two less than three years before, with one going to the PT (Iztapalapa). In the Federal District's Legislative Assembly, Mexico's main left party kept 30 of the 66 seats, four fewer than it won in 2006.

For years the PAN has done everything in its power to snatch electoral space away from the PRD in the country's capital, but every attempt has failed. However, in the 2009 local elections, some changes were visible: the PAN won three of the 16 borough races.

An alliance between the PRD and the PT and convergence does not have an impact on the national electoral panorama, since, together, they display weakness. This can be seen in their performance since 1997 —when Convergence did not run, since it only got its official registration as a political party in 1999— when the PT got 756 436 votes, compared to the PRD's 7 519 914 (the PRI came out of the balloting with 11 445 852, and the PAN 7 792 290). In 2003, the vote count was PT, 642 290 (2.4 percent of the total); Convergence, 605 156 (2.2 percent); PRD, 4 707 009 (17.6 percent); PAN, 8 219 649 (30.7 percent); and PRI, 6 196 171 (23.1 percent).

In the 2000 and 2006 elections for federal deputies, the results were not published separately since the PRD, PT, and Convergence ran in an alliance. In 2000, it was called Alliance for Mexico, and included the participation of the now-defunct Social Alliance Party and the Party of the Nationalist Society; in 2006, it was called the "For the Good of All" coalition. Given those two initiatives, in 2000, the coalition obtained 6 984 126 votes compared to the PAN's 14 321 975 and the PRI's 13 800 145. In 2006, the coalition netted 12 013 364 votes nationwide, compared to the PAN's 13 845 121, and the 11 676 585 ballots in favor of the PRI in coalition with the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM).

In 2009, when Jesús Ortega was heading up the PRD, it dropped down to the third largest legislative caucus. With this drop, Manuel Camacho Solís, the coordinator of Dialogue for the Reconstruction of Mexico (DIA),³ proposed to Ortega that the only way out was an electoral alliance with the PAN, their ideological opponent, which the PRD had accused of stealing the 2006 presidential election. This alliance got strong media support from Televisa and Televisión Azteca, the companies that control the media in Mexico. However, in the July 2010 balloting, the real victory went to Elba Esther Gordillo, whose New Alliance Party (Panal) won nine of the 12 governorships up for election. Her strategy was to make state-level alliances with practically all the parties (PRI, PVEM, PAN, PRD, PT, and Convergence).

Gordillo won 38 percent of the mayor's seats and 48.7 percent of the deputy's seats in 11 states. The crisis of the PAN and the PRD strengthened the Panal, which is looking good as the third electoral force in Mexico in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

In contrast with the Panal, of the 12 governor's seats up for election, the entire left (PRD-PT-Convergence) only won three, allied with the PAN. The only state the left had governed alone was Zacatecas, but, as I mentioned, it lost it and also made a very bad showing in terms of number of votes. The broad alliance won 33.8 percent of the mayor's seats in 13 states, and only 23.3 percent of the deputy's seats in 14.

Manuel Camacho's contribution was that the PAN became a state-level governing party not through a defeat of the PRD, but with its support. This was obvious in the July 4, 2010 elections, in which 12 governors were elected. All the polls pointed to the PRI as the indisputable frontrunner; there was even talk of "the whole enchilada," the PRI making a clean sweep. The option was clear: if the PRD and the PAN had not allied with each other, the PRI would have defeated them.

In 2010, voter turnout increased and no-shows dropped. Manuel Camacho's hypothesis that none of the opposition parties could beat the PRI if they ran separately was proved true. The PAN and the PRD won in alliance running former PRI members as candidates and thanks to their operations. For the movement headed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the PRD-PAN-PT alliance is the PRD's "legimization" of Felipe Calderón as president of Mexico.⁴ **MM**

NOTES

¹ See <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>. [Editor's Note.]

² See the figures published by Mexico City daily *Reforma*, July 6, 2010.

³ On December 8, 2009, the Labor Party (PT), Convergence, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution formalized the Dialogue for the Reconstruction of Mexico (DIA), headed by Manuel Camacho Solís. Camacho Solís explained this alliance saying that the unity of the three parties had been lost in the 2009 federal elections, and that the DIA aimed to have the three parties run together in the 2011 governor's race in Oaxaca and the 2012 presidential race.

⁴ See Israel Covarrubias, "El PRI como orilla de la democracia. Después de las elecciones de 2010 en México," *Nueva sociedad* 230 (November-December 2010), pp. 4-13.

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Mexico's Foreign Trade Challenge: Diversification And Comprehensiveness

Fausto Kubli-García*

In 2014, the North American Free Trade Agreement will have been in effect for 20 years. As an international trade instrument, it has had a very important impact on Mexico, not only because of what Canada and the United States represent in terms of trade, but also because 80 percent of the country's trade is with the latter. On the other hand, Mexico's gross domestic product is the world's fourteenth largest due to its high production and export levels.¹ Despite the billions of dollars that enter and exit the strengthened Mexican economy, it cannot be considered completely successful until it diversifies and becomes comprehensive. This implies rethinking national strategy so that, on the one hand, we trade with more actors and, on the other hand, other items become more a part of foreign trade, above all items linked to intellectual property.

DIVERSIFICATION

Today's situation can be explained by the origin of Mexico's productive capacity in the 1980s, when the decision was made to put the country on the free market path, a time when today's productive conditions did not exist.² At that time it was necessary to take action quickly using whatever was closest at hand. In my estimation, this defined the situation as an emergency, to be able to create an environment acceptable for free market competitiveness, and public policies responded to that national situation: that is, taking advantage of the long border with the world's largest economy and the one-third of the world's market represented by the United States. On the other hand, it was necessary to take advantage of the closest thing at hand productively speaking: the manufacture of commod-

* Researcher at CISAN and professor of foreign trade at the UNAM School of Law.



José Candelario/Cuartoscuro

Mexico should depend less on U.S. markets.

ities. However, today we continue with the same tendency, although the scenario is completely different: Mexico has historically high levels of reserves; monetary parity has stabilized; there is much, much higher investor confidence; and there is relatively sustained growth.

It is important to point out that the Mexican market must diversify. This would imply have a stronger economy and decreasing dependence on a single market, making it possible to achieve greater productivity. This would also be reflected in increased trade with other countries. Mexico has signed a good number of trade agreements that could be more fully taken advantage of, such as those created in the framework of the WTO's multilateral agreements, the Latin American Inte-

Mexico has high reserve levels, stable monetary parity, greater investor confidence, and relatively sustained growth, but it must diversify its markets. It has the trade agreements in place to diversify, but it has not happened.

gration Association, and the free trade agreements with Japan, the European Union, and Israel, among others. This means the institutional framework to diversify our trade exists. Nevertheless, it has not happened. The legal instruments for expanding the market exist, but the conditions needed to do it have not been created.

The conditions I am referring to translate into public policies to create trade channels different from the more than 30 markets Mexico has access to through these instruments and as a function of a greater variety of products and obtaining new goods using technology and innovation. It is also necessary to encourage large-scale production, motivate de-regulation, and explore the possibility of reducing transportation costs. Of course, all this should be within a framework of respect for and protection of the environment.

COMPREHENSIVENESS

By “comprehensiveness” I am referring to adding other elements to the productive process. Traditionally, three kinds of goods are part of foreign trade: commodities (raw materials, manufactured goods, or capital goods), services (intangible and portable), and intellectual property in any of its forms (industrial property or copyright). For many countries, innovation represents high earnings for their gross domestic product; that is, for those countries, high investments in science and technology get high returns. Equally, other economies are fundamentally based on payment for the services they trade and royalties from intellectual property rights, like Switzerland.

Mexico shows a great preference for producing physical goods, and forgets the two other objects traded internationally. An example, just to illustrate this: our 2010 trade balance registered US\$217.25 billion in income from the export of physical goods;³ for services, the total was about US\$11.45 billion. Meanwhile, the Mexican Institute of Industrial Pro-

perty (IMPI) Patents Section registered 14 576 inventions, only 951 of which originated in Mexico.⁴

These numbers are indicative of an industrialized, manufacturing society, while Mexico’s goal is for our productive system to integrate trade in services and intellectual property more, in order to achieve status as a post-industrial country, and that the economy be based not only on manufacturing tangible goods, but one that bets on its human resources and generation of knowledge. It has often been pointed out that the difference between developed and developing countries is that the former have technology, while the latter merely consume that knowledge. This has also been long emphasized by different sectors of Mexican society, mainly those focused on scientific research and technological development. It is also important to underline that while the emerging economies are betting on capitalizing creativity and offering incentives for science and technology, in Mexico, Article 9b of the Law on Science and Technology, an article stating that at least one percent of GDP should be earmarked for this sector, has not even been enforced yet. Unfortunately, less than half of that amount is usually channeled into this area.

Along these same lines, the terms “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy” have been coined, and from the point of view of trade, this means that the other two kinds of goods traded internationally should also be integrated, and we should not just aim all our efforts at the manufacturing sector. Nevertheless, we should understand that integrating trade in services and intellectual property requires big investments in human resources and technology, in addition to which, results can only be expected in the medium and long terms. In the knowledge society, human capital is fundamental; this is why it grows and is enriched in accordance with a well-defined state policy articulating all kinds of education (basic, middle and high schools, and higher education), scientific research carried out in both public and private universities as well as special research centers, and technological development. This implies linking all these forms of activities to production, that is, companies. However, the challenge is even greater if we take into account the fact that the creation and development of technologies, despite there being a defined public policy to foster creativity and innovation, must go through several filters like economic feasibility, operational costs, and ethical considerations involving the relationship between society and technology, public policies and actions, and market forces that position better, competitive products with better quality and lower costs.⁵

Usually, the commonly recognized points of concentration of power were armies, through their weaponry; governments, because they have all the power of the state; and economic agents, since capital is an enormous source of influence. However, to these three power sources we can add a fourth: information. This is translated into the fact that both those who generate knowledge and those who distribute it concentrate increasing amounts of power. One example is what is happening in the area of modern biotechnology. Estimates say that by 2030, the biggest source of production in the advanced countries that invest in science and technology linked to the biosciences will be advances in the bio-economy. This includes sectors like medicine with an enormous array of possibilities like reproductive technologies, regenerative medicine, and the procurement of bio-pharmaceuticals. In the agricultural sector, for its part, this kind of knowledge will also have an impact on the generation of satisfiers through genetic recombination. In specific industrial sectors, those linked to bio-fuels, bio-refineries, and bio-processes (such as the manufacture of foodstuffs), this technological advantage will also show through. The same thing will happen with the environment, with bio-solutions, and even with matters of security and defense.⁶

This productive paradigm will produce new elements through big investments in research and development. But if measures to reorient production are not taken, we will fall into technological dependency again, and the gap between the knowledge-generating countries and those that depend on it but do not participate in building it will widen.

In the process of consolidating a knowledge-based economy, we must take advantage of what is already in the public domain; that is, we must use technologies that can be perfected and developed without infringing any intellectual property rights. Along these same lines is technology transfer: Mexico is fertile ground for its incorporation into the productive matrix proposed here. In principle, NAFTA and other international agreements include stricter protection of industrial property; on the other hand, conditions also exist for direct investment in this area. For that reason, the state needs to design an appropriate public policy for technology transfer with public, private, and social actors' participation.

It should be underlined that the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) formulated 45 recommendations for development. Among them are those under the heading of Technology Transfer, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and Access to Knowledge, which empha-

There is a direct link between stimulating science and technology, the knowledge society, and foreign trade. The now unjustified delay in this sector is bad for the economy for many reasons.

size the necessary cooperation and exchange among developed and developing countries to create an environment of inventive capability based on stimulating science and technological development.

There is also a direct link between stimulating science and technology, the knowledge society, and foreign trade. The now unjustified delay in this sector is bad for the economy for many reasons. First, neglecting it causes something called "technological rent," that is, capital used to purchase satisfiers from another country, thus contributing to the deficit side of the balance of payments, in addition to the fact that very often the technology acquired is obsolete or not appropriate for national needs. Secondly, setting a policy to promote science and technology to increase trade in services and intellectual property goods leads to large investments in education, from the creation of educational infrastructure to the professionalization of human resources. The latter is of great import, since the majority of Mexico's population is made up of young people who represent the fundamental input for creating cadre and human resources capable of generating knowledge and solving innumerable problems.

That is, if Mexico is thinking of investing in its youth and their education, now is the time. **MM**

NOTES

¹ World Bank, "World Development Indicators Database," December 15, 2010.

² Mainly in 1986 with the country's entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later, with NAFTA.

³ According to data from the Banco de México, www.banxico.org.mx.

⁴ According to data from the Instituto Mexicano de la Propiedad Industrial, www.impi.gob.mx.

⁵ Helen Kreuzer and Adrienne Massey, *Biology and Biotechnology: Science, Applications and Issues* (Herndon, Virginia: ASM Press, 2005), p. 5.

⁶ OECD, *The Bioeconomy to 2030: Designing a Policy Agenda* (Paris: OECD, 2009).

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Vol. 42, núm. 165, abril-junio 2011

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Transformations in Food Supply In Mexican Cities

Felipe Torres Torres*



Isaac Esquivel/Cuartoscuro

Big supermarkets are the main places for food shopping in Mexico today.

BACKGROUND

More than 70 percent of Mexico's population is urban, and approximately 56 percent lives in metropolitan areas. This demographic concentration affects the organization of consumption and the supply of foodstuffs, which can be observed in consumers' travel through cities themselves and in store location.

The transformation of the model of our cities and the activities that make them functional is associated with the dynamics the economy imposes on territorial organization. This means that the food supply pattern in Mexico is established in the metropolises and from there reproduced in smaller urban areas.

For example, shopping centers, located originally in traditional urban areas and then spreading outward toward peripheral population centers contribute to diversifying the food supply. The unlimited shopping hours typical of this kind of store make it possible for workers to do their daily purchases with greater freedom when returning home. At the same time, the new residential areas in the cities' peripheries force people to change their behavior to acquire what they need and make large food purchases on pre-established days.

In many cases, the population's mobility within the city and its new supply needs make building new malls that include large supermarket chains an attractive investment. So, downtown areas stop being the first option for doing the family shopping, and these establishments move to new

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Economic Studies (IIEC).

New food supply patterns are linked to Mexico's urbanization process. In 1950, 49.7 percent of the country's population lived in areas with more than 15 000 inhabitants; in 1990, this number had climbed to 60.6 percent.

locations where potential buyers meet. Distance and time factors make it necessary to change the volume of purchases: the previous behavior of making small purchases daily changes to doing a larger, weekly shopping expedition, although this is always subject to income possibilities. This creates greater fragmentation in the urban space, given that what is functional for this is the isolated hypermarket, which replaces small retail shops.

The city's supply networks, where different companies compete for consumers, seek points of convergence through diversified selection of products to attract buyers. This segregates traditional grocers but does not eliminate them: sometimes, they respond to the population's mobility and new purchasing habits by implementing mechanisms to keep up to date, like home delivery, among others.

The complexity of the population's consumption and concentration requires that cities increasingly specialize in the service economy. This means that in urban areas, businesses orient primarily to attending to these needs and prefer to locate around a regional or sub-regional market area, where large food stores are subject to zoning laws.

As I already mentioned, the advance of the service economy in cities and new food supply patterns are linked to Mexico's urbanization process. In 1950, 49.7 percent of the country's population lived in areas with more than 15 000 inhabitants; in 1990, this number had climbed to 60.6 percent. The number of cities with 15 000 inhabitants or more jumped from 82 in 1950 to 275 in 1990. Between 1950 and 1990, the population living in cities of more than 500 000 inhabitants went from 12.96 percent to 36.60 percent. This is the same as saying that 21 years ago, one out of every three Mexicans lived in cities of more than a half million inhabitants, and one out of every two Mexicans lived in cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants. International changes have led the country to change its style of development, to restructure its economy, and, as a result, to change patterns of organizing its

national territory. The essence of this change is the way of producing and distributing goods and services in the world; the globalization of the world economy implies a change in the way of conceiving of development and, therefore, of producing and relating to the rest of the territory.¹

Metropolitanization in Mexico dates from the 1940s, when Mexico City, Monterrey, Orizaba, Tampico, and Torreón surpassed their own political-administrative boundaries. In 1978, a first study stated that Mexico had 12 metropolitan areas; by 1986, there were 26; the National Urban Development Program 1995-2000 detected 33; but they increased to 38 in 2002. And by 2005, there were 56, home to 41.2 million people, or 42 percent of the entire country's population and 67.7 percent of its urban population. This process indicates the leading role that metropolitan areas have taken on in the national urban system.²

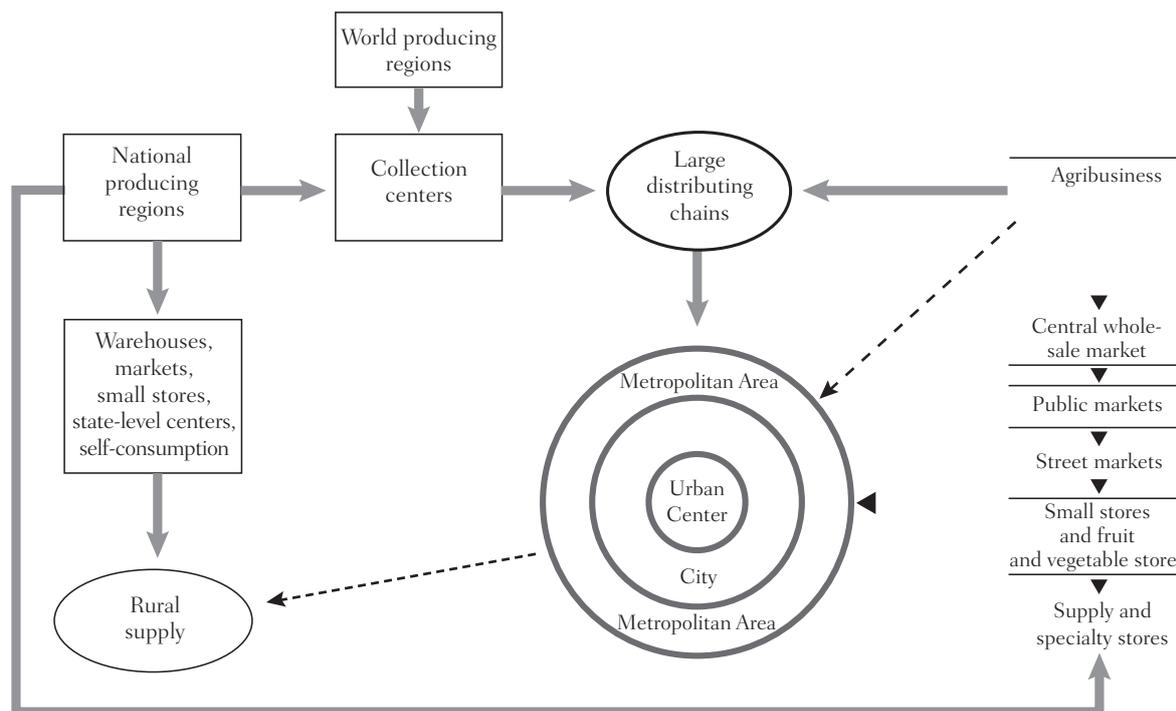
By 2010, the country continued with 56 metropolitan areas, which concentrated 56 percent of Mexico's total population, 79 percent of the urban population, and generated 79 percent of gross domestic product.³ This has meant that Mexico's demographic profile has become predominantly metropolitan. The country's main cities are metropolitan areas providing goods and services and are the driving force behind national and regional growth. Each region has one or more metropolises that play a central part in the economy and in the supply of social satisfiers.

FOOD SUPPLY AND ITS FUNCTIONALITY IN THE CITY'S CHANGES

Population movements demand a new territorial distribution of stores where they co-exist with the old, traditional systems. The modern entrepreneur transcends the regional and national supply spheres to incorporate the international level, given the competition from companies because of the demand for purchases concentrated in the cities. At the same time, he/she introduces new products and forges a consumption pattern that not only includes the cities, but the entire country.

In open economies, some characteristics of the old food-supply models are maintained, but the current model has presented some changes in the intermediation phase. Large, modern retail stores decrease their commercial relations with the old central wholesale markets and deal more directly with brokers (commercial intermediaries) and national and international producers.

HEGEMONIC PATTERN OF FOOD SUPPLY, OPEN ECONOMY PHASE IN MEXICO



Source: Designed by the author.

The main distributing companies exert pressure for developing innovative sales technologies and other strategies, like consumer credit systems, zero inventory control (that is, the control of merchandise stocks in the store's warehouse), marking prices using bar codes to increase the check-out speed, making cash available to the customer and accepting payments for municipal services at the check-out counter, etc. This attracts customers and consolidates the store's portfolio. However, it also displaces small establishments that cannot maintain the quality of service, supply, and competitive prices.

In Mexico, supermarkets were consolidated between 1970 and 1980. The new food distribution system implied changes in consumer habits, health, and eating, leading to a decline in traditional forms of retail sales.

It is possible to make this pattern flexible by integrating chains with a small-store format to satisfy needs the big supermarkets cannot cover. This system operates mainly at sales points on large, well-traveled streets for non-perishables like beverages and snacks for nighttime consumers, or also for what are called "forgotten items," that used to be purchased in small, neighborhood corner grocery stores.⁴

This explains the almost unlimited growth in the number of self-service stores in Mexico's main cities; there are more of them than really demanded locally, and so they saturate the commercial landscape. We can also observe the creation of new forms of markets, the dizzying development of new sales technologies, the design of organizational and internal security strategies, local firms being absorbed by international chains, and their proliferation in all the cities, breaking the barrier separating consumers by income level.

Self-service stores are the model of the new system of food distribution in cities, and this has been made possible thanks to their ability to adapt to the needs of the urban consumer, who requires flexibility in different aspects of his/her

The new patterns, with innovative supply systems and highly susceptible to international influences, do not completely destroy local traditions, but adapt them to the pragmatism of the new mass consumer markets.

demand. These establishments originated in the United States with trading posts that sold everything from rifles to wheat flour under a single roof with direct consumer access to the products. The spaces used were abandoned factory warehouses that allowed for the massive exhibition of simple, inexpensive installations, or venues located along big highways that guaranteed a greater flow of clientele and the reduction of transport in shipping merchandise. The automobile, for its part, made it possible to locate these establishments in the suburbs, while the appearance of the electric refrigerator guaranteed storage in optimal conditions for the foodstuffs acquired. From that moment on, diversification, flexibility, expansion, and the permanent adoption of new sales technologies were distinctive traits of the model.

THE TRANSITION TOWARD A NEW FOOD SUPPLY MODEL IN MEXICO

In Mexico, supermarkets were consolidated between 1970 and 1980 with emigration from the countryside to the cities, rapid urbanization, demographic growth, increased purchasing power, and demand for jobs. But it was also thanks to technological advances in domestic services and communications.

The new food distribution system in the city implied changes in consumer habits, health, and eating for the country's urban population, leading to a decline in traditional forms of retail sales. Supermarkets implemented new strategies by looking for different niches and creating stores that offered other kinds of items like organic, health, and imported foods.

Specialized stores offer personalized service, higher quality fresh foods, a wide selection of wines and cheeses, and gourmet take-out, among other items; they even encourage buyers to spend more time on their premises eating and enjoying themselves.

The aisles in a typical central store (the first store opened by a company) are replaced with a bakery, a cheese and cold-cuts section, fruits and vegetable section, and meat, chicken, fish, and seafood counters. Another strategy consists of increasing the amount of take-out food. These establishments start off from the idea that today's customers are smarter and have less time, and that they can be secured as clients based on competition. Therefore, the survivors are the ones capable of merging, setting the goal of capturing specific consumer segments, and increasing their technological base for improving customer service.

One important factor for success of the new model has been its ability to introduce quick changes in consumption patterns when changes in eating habits are by definition usually slow; for example, changing from one brand of instant coffee to another, from one kind of lettuce or fresh tomatoes. However, given the dizzying changes in open economies, the consumer needs to satisfy individualized kinds of demand.

The modification of Mexico's food supply pattern, in addition to being influenced by gradual changes in consumption patterns, consists of more diversified supply, a wider selection; the spread of stores located on thoroughfares in cities and metropolitan areas where several firms can coincide; shorter distances that make it possible to serve the customer in less time; the rapid acceptance of products with new characteristics, as long as they fulfill pragmatic demands; a facility for changing brands; only slightly regulated product contents; greater standardization of quality; and the differentiation in choice made by each individual.

The pattern of food consumption in Mexico is now diversified in product presentation and homogenous in terms of supply, with innovative supply systems and highly susceptible to international influences. It does not completely destroy local traditions, but adapts them to the pragmatism of the new mass consumer markets.

The new dominant model for food supply in Mexico has the following characteristics:

- a) It follows guidelines in which successful supply is that which satisfies the needs of pragmatic consumption; this is based on prepared, processed, ready-to-serve products requiring no additional work at home in preparation, consumption, and after consumption.
- b) In some cases, because of its pragmatic structure, it is relatively indifferent to the quality of content, to the extent that it combines substitutes with original prod-

ucts without subjecting them to strict regulations for consumption.

- c) There is a permanent or occasional presence of so-called junk foods that are part of what the middle and lower classes eat, particularly children and young people, though their consumption is sensitive to income variations.
- d) The food market is dominated by certain brands, whose image is well positioned among consumers, who prefer them over other brands. Among them are low-calorie products, but also natural or health foods, particularly those rich in fiber, which must jibe with an idea of well-being and health as a symbol of success for some social groups of today.
- e) Consumption outside the home is constantly on the upswing.
- f) It incorporates the international component in consumption habits, but does not eliminate local diets, given that the transition occurs in the framework of open economies, where all deep-rooted consumer preferences can be commercialized.
- g) It is by definition socially segmented, but these segments of consumers take advantage of the model as long as they are informed and maintain a constant income.
- h) It is characterized by the diversification in presentation and the combination of existing products more than by creating new ones. Even though new products are constantly made available, they generally have few possibilities of success in the market.
- i) It adjusts to the handling and norms of modern distribution apparatuses, publicity, and the new technological advances in the midst of which it is evolving.
- j) It influences the generation of new diseases linked to the product formula, usually oversaturated in fat, white or processed flour, and sugar.

CONCLUSION

The dominant pattern in food supply is essentially urban and metropolitan, made up mainly of self-service chain stores operated by different firms in networks. They have supranational dynamics that break down both regional borders and traditional models—although the latter have not been totally eliminated—by supplying urban spaces using more competitive sales technology, innovations in inventory control and

The dominant pattern is essentially urban and metropolitan: mainly self-service chain stores operated by different firms in networks with supranational dynamics that break down both regional borders and traditional models.

price marking, plus their capacity for modeling local consumption patterns in accordance with socially and territorially segmented demand. They optimize shopping time and diversify supply in a way traditional channels cannot, in accordance with the new needs of a more demanding urban society. ■■■

NOTES

¹ See María Eugenia Negrete, “Evolución de las zonas metropolitanas de México,” Carlos Garrocho and Jaime Sobrino, comps., *Sistemas metropolitanos* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México/Sedesol, 1995).

² Ibid.

³ Between 2000 and 2005, the population of the metropolitan areas increased from 53.3 to 57.9 million, making for a 1.5-percent average annual growth rate, half a point above the national average of 1.0 percent. These areas went from representing 54.7 percent to 56 percent of the national population and contributed 79.3 percent of its total growth; this led to an expansion of their basic needs and a more efficient way of supplying them.

⁴ A “forgotten item” is anything that a consumer forgot to buy in the supermarket and is forced to get in a small neighborhood store at a higher price.

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Year 5, number 2
July-December 2010



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Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte (Center for Research on North America) (CISAN),
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Mexico's Southern Border Security and Migratory Crisis¹

Natalia Armijo Canto*

Borders are dynamic, but sometimes change accelerates or elements come together to make them more visible. This is what has happened along Mexico's southern border since the 1980s, when different events both inside and outside the region resulted in the coincidence of security-related discourses and actions with migratory-related discourses. To a certain extent, it became "normal" to associate the terms. But neither "migration" nor "security" has a single meaning, and therefore, the links between migratory flows and security policies have to be analyzed in concrete geographic and historical contexts, in relation to specific movements of the population and taking into account the different dimensions of security.

Generally speaking, when talking about the southern border, we include the states of Quintana Roo, Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas. The border is 1 149 kilometers long; 956 of them with Guatemala and 193 with Belize.² The Mexico-Belize border is marked almost in its entirety by rivers, while between Guatemala and Mexico, part of the border is a river and the rest is mainly mountains and jungle.

The final establishment of Mexico's southern border was not without its conflicts. In the case of the Guatemala border, the groups settled on both sides shared the same colonial heritage, as well as similar social, ethnic, and cultural characteristics. In the case of Belize, the presence of rebel Mayas and their relationship with the British authorities was the determining factor; the population movements stemming from the conflict had a visible effect on both sides, and, while there is a greater degree of ethnic and organizational differentiation, they also favored the forging of historic and family ties.³



Enrique Ordóñez/Cuartoscuro

Central American migrants in southern Mexico use religious symbolism to protest their own calvary.

There are actually only ten formal border crossings: seven in Chiapas, one in Tabasco, and two in Quintana Roo. The entire 200 kilometers of border with Campeche does not have a single crossing. Ten crossing points are insufficient for the length of the border, but the porosity is also increased by a dearth of infrastructure and personnel.

CHANGES IN MIGRATORY DYNAMICS IN SOUTHERN MEXICO

In only two decades, the southern border went through rapid changes. Once the main internal conflicts in Central America ended with the signing of the peace accords in El Salvador

* Professor and researcher at the University of Quintana Roo. Member of the Collective for Analysis of Security with Democracy (Casede) and director of the research project "Migration and Security: A New Challenge in Mexico," nat_armijo@yahoo.com.mx.

and Guatemala in 1992 and 1996, respectively, paradoxically, migration increased. This was because economic problems spurred migration from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras to the United States, although in some cases, the final destination was Mexico.

The presence of Central Americans on Mexico's southern border did not create serious problems, nor were there visible signs that the local population rejected them. The undocumented status of many workers did, however, engender abuses and exploitation by some employers; and although in general local inhabitants along the border did not feel threatened by the foreigners, concern and hostility from certain sectors did become noticeable in the early twenty-first century when the number of undocumented migrants passing through increased at the same time that security conditions for living along the border deteriorated for multiple reasons.

The table shows two aspects of immigration along the southern border: on the one hand documented border workers, almost all Guatemalan, and on the other hand, people from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Belize who entered the country without documents and were detained and returned by the authorities.⁴

In 2005, a higher number of deportations was reported, 56.4 percent more than in 2001. In that same period, the number of documented workers grew only 12 percent. This shows the changes in migratory flows. Later, there was a decrease in both processes: by 2010 the number of border workers declined 37 percent *vis-à-vis* 2005, while deportations fell 66 percent. There are several possible explanations for this significant drop: anything from more effective border controls to the repercussions of the contraction of the economy and therefore the decline in job offers in both the United States and Mexico. Despite the fact that migratory flows have decreased, security conditions for migrants in border areas have not improved.

SECURITY PROBLEMS ALONG THE SOUTHERN BORDER. ABSENCES AND IMBALANCES OF THE MEXICAN STATE

To increase its control over migratory flows, in 2001, Mexico launched operations for the Southern Plan, involving strengthening actions to intercept undocumented migrants from the Tehuantepec Isthmus to the southern border. The figures in the table show that this plan did not achieve any significant results. In 2007, the then-commissioner of the National Mi-

The Mexican cartels took advantage of the situation in Guatemala, where a culture of violence prevailed, demobilized troops and weak institutions abounded, and the country was rife with poverty and corruption.

gration Institute (INM) described undocumented migrants in Mexico as “a huge membrane, an increasingly thick plug” along our northern border. When asked if the reasons for greater control were due to pressure from the United States, she said, “The social or political reason [for stopping them from going through Mexican territory] is not because the “gringos” tell me whether I can or I can't. Forget that. They just aren't going to let them through there...and at the same time they do affect Mexico's development, the social fabric of the border states, which turns into a very, very grave problem for us.”⁵

Another point that had a big impact on changing the migratory scenario on the southern border was the U.S. policy of deporting Central American prisoners from the United States without any warning. Some calculations put the number of inmates deported between 2000 and 2004 to El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala at 20,000.⁶ This strengthened the “Mara” gang members, favoring their transnationalization. The “Mara Salvatrucha” and the “Pandilla Barrio 18” (Neighborhood 18 Gang) lost no time in showing up in Chiapas border communities, the obligatory route for their return to the United States, as well as a land of opportunity for crime, taking advantage of migrants' vulnerability.

Emulating their Central American neighbors, Mexico mounted “anti-Mara” operations: in 2003, Steel I netted the arrest of 130 “Mareros”; in 2004, Steel II, 137; and from December 2005 to June 2006, Steel III, 600. Along these same lines, other operations were mounted: COSTA and Southern Border in 2004, and Community Shield, jointly with Guatemalan and Salvadoran authorities, in 2005.⁷ “Mara” presence diminished in Mexico starting in 2005 for several reasons: Hurricane Stan destroyed the train tracks and forced the close of the Tapachula station; migratory routes changed; and pressure was exerted by the authorities. However, starting in 2008, they once again began surfacing in National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) reports and information from

AGRICULTURAL VISITOR IMMIGRATION FORMS (FMVA)
AND BORDER WORKER IMMIGRATION FORMS (FMTF) ISSUED TO CENTRAL AMERICANS,
AND DEPORTATIONS BY MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES (2001 TO 2010)

Year	<i>FMVA and FMTF Issued *</i>	%	<i>Central Americans Deported by the INM**</i>	%	<i>Total</i>
2001	40 640	23.6	131 245	76.4	171 885
2002	38 693	26.7	106 247	73.3	144 940
2003	45 561	20.6	174 697	79.4	220 258
2004	42 895	17.3	204 434	82.7	247 329
2005	45 518	16.9	223 347	83.1	268 865
2006	40 244	18.3	179 345	81.7	219 569
2007	27 840	20.2	109 733	79.8	137 573
2008	23 322	21.8	83 616	78.2	106 938
2009	30 678	32.8	62 773	67.2	93 451
2010	28 544	31.0	63 342	69.0	91 886

* Until 2007, the figures include the FMVA that Guatemalan citizens residing in the Guatemala-Mexico border area had a right to and that were issued. Starting in 2008, the FMVA was replaced by the FMTF, and in 2010 the FMTF was widened to include workers from Belize and residents of municipalities located in the interior of Guatemala.

** These figures include the deportations of individuals from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Belize; starting in 2007, to make the data comparable with previous years, the figures include both the expulsion of Central Americans and those from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua who accepted the terms of the Agreements on Voluntary Repatriation.

Source: Developed by the author using data from the National Migration Institute, "Boletines estadísticos," Estadísticas migratorias, www.inm.gob.mx/index.php/page/Estadisticas_Migratorias.

migrant shelters. Also, the social exclusion of young people and their lack of opportunities in the region have favored the growth of local gangs.

Undoubtedly, the most serious security problem along Mexico's southern border stems from drug trafficking. In 1998, federal authorities implemented Operation Sealing to improve the interception of drugs in transit to the United States. In the region, the program was given another shot in the arm in 2000 with personnel training and modern technology for detecting drugs. It got some results, but after 2003, it stopped operating despite the fact that the general situation had not improved.

It is well known that Central America, and particularly Guatemala, became a bridge for drug producers and traffickers'

activities after the relative success of U.S. and Colombian operations to combat the air and sea routes through the Caribbean in the 1990s. The Mexican cartels took advantage of the situation in Guatemala, only recently recovering from civil war, where a culture of violence prevailed, demobilized troops and weak institutions abounded, and the country was rife with poverty, and corruption. According to the Stratfor agency, the Zetas dominate the departments of Huehuetenango, Petén, and Quiché, while the Sinaloa Cartel controls the department of San Marcos and Guatemala's Pacific Coast region.⁸ It should be emphasized that members of the elite Guatemalan special forces, known as the "Kaibiles," collaborated with the Zetas, particularly after military demobilization and cuts in the armed forces. Thus, the violence has

expanded since the incorporation of organizations with tough military training. In Belize, concern has increased about organized crime using the country as a platform for its operations. Recently, U.S. cooperation has stepped up through Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA), since, although previously a transit country, land and sea trafficking operations have been detected in its territory.⁹

REPERCUSSIONS OF BORDER INSECURITY ON MIGRATION

The abuses inflicted on migrants by municipal, state, and federal authorities mainly consist of theft and extortion. However, most ill-treatment comes from private parties, ranging from theft and cheating all the way to rape, kidnapping, or death. The presence of “Mareros” along the southern border has turned into a nightmare for migrants, particularly when some have decided to leave their countries precisely because they have been threatened by members of that very organization. Added to the “Maras” are now gangs made up of Mexicans, who take advantage of migrants’ defenselessness to rob and abuse them. Then there are also the “coyotes,” or human smugglers, unscrupulous individuals who, in addition to tricking them and not taking them to the agreed-upon destination, participate in thefts and rapes.

In 2010, kidnappings of migrants came under major public scrutiny nationally and internationally. In the first place, in February, the CNDH published an “Informe especial sobre secuestro a migrantes” (Special Report on Kidnapping of Migrants).¹⁰ The report states that from September 2008 to February 2009, 198 kidnapping operations affected 9 758 individuals: almost 95 percent were victims of organized crime; in the other cases, people had been victimized with the participation of public officials. In March, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHR) held a public hearing in

The presence of “Maras” along the southern border has turned into a nightmare for migrants. Added to them are now gangs made up of Mexicans, who take advantage of migrants’ defenselessness to rob and abuse them.

which civil society organizations presented the situation of migrants’ human rights based on the experience of Catholic-Church-run shelters. In April, Amnesty International published the report *Víctimas invisibles. Migrantes en movimiento en México* (Invisible Victims. Migrants on the Move in Mexico), an account of the dangers of the trip: kidnappings, threats, attacks, violence against women, disappearances, and death.¹¹ The document points to extortion and the excessive use of force as problems migrants face at Mexican border control points.

Between August and December of that same year, the situation did not improve. The kidnappings continued; in addition, the massacre of 72 migrants in Tamaulipas in August 2010 and the disappearance of between 40 and 50 migrants in Oaxaca in December clearly show the problem has worsened.¹² The Mexican government has taken important measures, but, as Amnesty International says, the abuses against undocumented migrants are just not a priority for many state and federal officials, particularly if there are no clear indications of direct participation by public officials. Although the main responsibility lies with criminal gangs, complicity or indifference by the authorities play transcendental roles. If it is not possible to guarantee the prevention, detection, investigation, sanction, and effective reparation in the cases of these abuses, a climate of impunity is created.

Human trafficking, the modern version of slavery, is perhaps the most serious crime associated with migration. The *Trafficking in Persons Report* the State Department must present to the U.S. Congress every year cites Belize and Guatemala on the next-to-the-last rung of a classification establishing four levels of agreement in the efforts to fight it.¹³ The presence of organized crime along the southern border increases migrant vulnerability. The groups considered most vulnerable are women, children, indigenous, and the undocumented.¹⁴ The sex trade predominates among the cases, but there have also been cases of children, particularly Guatemalan children, whose labor is being exploited in agricultural areas of Chiapas, in domestic servitude, forced begging, itinerant sales, and working in municipal garbage dumps.

INCONCLUSIVE EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH ORDER ALONG THE SOUTHERN BORDER

The emergence of actors operating outside the law who take advantage of both cross-border relations and the differences

In April 2009, Amnesty International published an account of the dangers of the trip: kidnappings, threats, attacks, violence against women, disappearances, and death.

between Mexico and its neighbors is a factor of the first water for understanding the deterioration in security conditions.¹⁵ The prolonged absence of the state along the southern border made living day to day outside the law something “normal.” The state has historically been weak in this area of the country, and the attempts to shore it up have merely been showy reactions to emerging problems or timid measures to get noticed because of the growing *de facto* powers made up of criminal networks, not really a political modernization strategy. Another option has been to “jump over the local,” to use William Zartmann’s expression, and adhere to the norms, symbols, or international treaties, in an attempt to recover authority. Mexico is a signatory of a significant number of international agreements about human rights, migration, and security, but its not being able to fulfill the commitments it has acquired has put it in a questionable position. The weakness of the Guatemalan state has contributed to making the situation worse. As a result, local groups become more important and begin specializing in providing services, products, and activities—inside or outside the law—even if they are displaced when bigger crime organizations take over.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Security on the southern border has not suffered a “sudden” deterioration. Its genesis and evolution can be traced historically: they are the product of complex interactions between internal and external factors, where the state’s actions and omissions have played a preponderant part. As the product of human agency, this deterioration is not a situation that will last forever, but the complexity it has taken on makes it necessary to rethink it from a comprehensive perspective including the economy, society, politics, and international relations. The challenge consists of seeking mechanisms to orient and redirect change in the border area toward forms of develop-

ment that counter the circumstances that have favored increased insecurity. The process will necessarily be long, and meanwhile, the state and Mexican society are obliged to recognize and guarantee the human rights and security of the migrants in transit in our country. Far from being the cause of insecurity, it is they who have become the preferred victims of organized crime, corruption, and impunity. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The original Spanish version of this article was published in Natalia Armijo Canto, ed., *Migración y seguridad: Nuevo desafío en México* (Mexico City: Colectivo de Análisis para la Seguridad con Democracia, 2011), pp. 35-51, <http://www.seguridadcondemocracia.org/mys/pda.pdf>.

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⁶ Ana Arana, “How Streets Gangs Took Central America,” *Foreign Affairs*, January-June 2005.

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¹⁰ CNDH, “Informe especial de secuestro a migrantes,” (Mexico City), February 2010, www.cndh.org.mx/INFORMES/Especiales/infEspSecMigra.pdf.

¹¹ See www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR41/014/2010/en/1345cec1-2d36-4da6-b9c0-e607e408b203/amr410142010es.pdf.

¹² In April 2011, when this article had already been turned in, the country was shaken by the discovery of clandestine graves in the states of Tamaulipas, Durango, and Sinaloa that held more than 200 bodies, presumably of migrants who had disappeared. [Editor’s Note.]

¹³ U.S. State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2009*, www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a4214a32d.html.

¹⁴ CIDH, “La trata de personas, un reto para México y Centroamérica,” Report presented by Mexican and Central American civil society organizations at the 123rd session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington, D.C., 2005, [www.oas.org/atip/Regional por ciento 20 Reports/ Report por ciento20TIP por ciento20CIDH.pdf](http://www.oas.org/atip/Regional%20Reports/Report%20por%20ciento20TIP%20por%20ciento20CIDH.pdf).

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Ideological and Cultural Bases For Arizona's SB 1070¹

Javier Durán*



The current Arizona government has become the most important symbol of the anti-immigrant movement in the United States. Recent legislation passed by its Congress is seen as the strictest of its type in the country, particularly the 2010 SB 1070.² The precedents for this Arizona legislature position date back several years and are due to various factors.

First, I will explain the notion of attrition through enforcement,³ which SB 1070 made public policy, as a strategy representative of a nationwide anti-immigrant, neo-nativist movement. Then, I will analyze how the concepts of deportability and illegality converge in a specific discourse to spearhead a

negative image of Mexican migrants in U.S. society.⁴ I will also mention some of the consequences the new legislation will have and some processes it will have an impact on.

I think this convergence has by no means come about by happenstance; it is part of a historic process and media coverage in which border security and undocumented immigrants have collapsed into a single issue in the U.S. imaginary, and are no longer merely local and regional concerns.

SB 1070 AND THE CHANGING POLITICAL SCENE ATTRITION THROUGH ENFORCEMENT

Let's begin by seeing what political place this law comes from. According to state Senator Russell Pearce, SB 1070 is a necessary piece of legislation in Arizona:

* Associate professor and director of border studies in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Arizona, duran@u.arizona.edu.

The construction of a de-humanized, uncivilized image of Mexicans on both sides of the border has been one of the most deeply rooted of the nativist imaginary for almost two centuries.

Why did I propose SB 1070? I saw the enormous fiscal and social costs that illegal immigration was imposing on my state. I saw Americans out of work, hospitals and schools overflowing, and budgets strained. Most disturbingly, I saw my fellow citizens victimized by illegal alien criminals. The murder of Robert Krentz—whose family had been ranching in Arizona since 1907—by illegal alien drug dealers was the final straw for many Arizonans.⁵

These arguments presented with absolutely no documentation to back them up have become part of a foundational discourse about undocumented immigration in the United States. Two images of the undocumented immigrant immediately come to mind in Pearce's account: that of an imprudent, irresponsible individual, costly to society, and that of a criminal, specifically connected to drug trafficking. The latter is seconded by the hyperbolic—and up until now unsubstantiated—affirmation that the rancher, Mr. Krentz, died at the hands of an undocumented drug trafficker.

The concept of attrition through enforcement has become the basis for a third road to deal with the “problem” of undocumented immigration. For the anti-immigrant right, that wearing down of undocumented immigrants is the best option to immigration reform or mass deportations. The underlying idea is that if the federal government strictly applies immigration laws, the undocumented will leave Arizona of their own volition for fear of being caught and deported.

But enforcement of the law is not the only part of this wearing down; added to this are strategies of expelling people from the state, like the adoption of a series of legislative measures aimed at making immigrants' social interaction more difficult, as recommended by Mark Krikorian, one of the anti-immigrant movement's intellectual leaders.⁶ These processes include economic sanctions, like making them ineligible for social and medical services, as well as legal measures criminalizing them beyond what federal immigration legislation stipulates, as can be seen in other anti-immigrant bills not only in Arizona, but also in other states. That is, long be-

fore SB 1070 was passed, wearing down the undocumented immigrants had been part of the anti-immigrant right's political agenda.

In the case of Arizona, it can be argued that laws like this one emerge presumably as a mandate from the citizenry and civic organizations that demand that the state defend its sovereignty and maintain strict controls over people perceived as peripheral in an essentialist model of citizenry prescribed from a status of privilege often emanated from the state itself. As I have already mentioned, the attrition-through-enforcement strategy is the result of a concerted effort by groups who consider undocumented immigration a threat to U.S. society.

For another sector of analysts, this forced wearing down lacks economic and social merit and is seen as a political strategy to control and stigmatize a certain segment of the population through “racialization,” as argued by anthropologist Gilberto Rosas when analyzing the concept of “policability.” He suggests that the concept incorporates the most widely disseminated and yet most powerful processes involved in population management, which are part of the experience of the undocumented, and sometimes other population groups that seem like them culturally or phenotypically. Policability explains in detail the epistemological, theoretical, and, in the last analysis, political queries about “illegality.” In other words, argues Rosas, the concept puts into practice a less clear distinction between documented and undocumented individuals in border areas, as a distinct kind of racialized management in a context in which immigrants are not only allowed to die, but are also subject to both official and unofficial monitoring and surveillance as well as forms of police control by the state.⁷

NATIVISM AND NEO-NATIVISM

Nativism has been intimately linked to the formation of the U.S. nation. In the nineteenth century a strong connection between this feeling and the problem of immigration—particularly European and Asian—was already evident. While a series of regional conflicts emerged mainly for religious and sometimes for linguistic reasons, nativism as an ideology is part of the process of forging the nation that gives a privileged place to an autochthonous vision and a historical-symbolic connection to a particular space or territory. In a certain sense, nativism comes into contradiction with some of Benedict Anderson's inclusionary postulates in his idea of the nation as

an imagined community. One of nativism's important relational strategies is exclusion and distance, with the space and symbolic values associated with them. The relationship between essentialist Americanism and anti-immigrant feelings has been a fundamental part of the nativist conception. A broadening of this feeling and its tension *vis-à-vis* the concepts of acculturation and assimilation have been historical characteristics of this ideology.⁸

Representations of Mexicans in the U.S. imaginary before and after the War with Mexico (1846-1848) were not exactly positive. Quite to the contrary, the figure of the Mexican, particularly male Mexicans, was developed as a discourse based on a series of negative stereotypes that part of academia attributes largely to the influence of the Spanish "black legend." In his comprehensive historical work, David J. Weber examined the perception a good number of Anglo-American travelers had of Mexicans in the nineteenth century. The construction of a de-humanized, uncivilized image of Mexicans on both sides of the border has been one of the most deeply rooted of the nativist imaginary for almost two centuries. As Weber states, the stereotype of the inferior Mexican is what is behind the arrogant feeling of cultural and political superiority, known in U.S. history as "Manifest Destiny," which led to the conquest of half of Mexico's territory.⁹

NATIVISM, ILLEGALITY, DEPORTABILITY, AND ALIENATION

Anthropologist Nicholas de Genova analyzes the generation and *legal* control of *illegality* in an ethno-historical study to explain the discursive naturalization of the label "illegal alien." He states that the process of construction of the notion of illegality emerges from the junctures and tensions among the concepts of nativism (whether right-wing or left-wing), Americanization, assimilation, and citizenship. While of course a legal dimension of the notion of "migratory illegality" does exist, it becomes a static category when not analyzed in its historic specificity or its legal nature in light of other processes of legal empowerment or of the practices known today as governance. Why is what used to be illegal no longer illegal, or *vice versa*? As De Genova argues, as a simultaneously spacialized and racialized condition, migratory *illegality* is also a central part of the ways in which "Mexican-ness" is reconfigured in a racialized relationship with the hegemonic national identity of "American-ness."¹⁰

"Attrition through enforcement"
means that if the federal government
strictly applies immigration laws, the undocumented
will leave Arizona by their own volition for
fear of being caught and deported.

As a social condition and a result of anti-citizen technology, the notion of "illegality" and the increasing trend of making it the equivalent of criminality lead to a semantic and real reduction of human, civil, and legal rights of the individual considered an "illegal alien." I agree with De Genova when he says that the most important element in the use value and exchange value of that individual is his/her degree of deportability, which, in addition, is the socio-political condition that transforms him/her into cheap, disposable labor. Illegality provides a space of discursive otherness to the concept of citizenship, seen here as a process of recognition of a particular individual by the state. However, this otherness is complex since it is used in the context of tensions produced by nationalism as a dominant ideology in the semantic production of the nation-state, and by the peripheral circumstance assumed by the migrant in his/her condition as foreigner. It is possible to visualize how the construction of the illegal alien as subject emerges from the meetings and clashes between simultaneous processes of xenophobia and xenophilia, that is, of tensions between extreme Americanism and fear of the other in the face of a condescending fetishization of the figure of the assimilated immigrant as someone who forges the nation. This is why the expression, "We are a nation of immigrants," is a recurring phrase in U.S. cultural and social discourse.

Within this ethical problematization of the immigrant, it is possible to discern three paradigmatic representations: his/her inherent criminal, antisocial nature; his/her condition as an eternal scab, that is, someone who steals jobs away from citizens of the host country; and his/her collective characterization as a burden to public coffers. Thus, the representation of immigrants as criminals, job stealers, and habitual free-loaders on the social security system and welfare state presents them as irresponsible, incapable of self-control or of handling themselves appropriately within the law, and, therefore, as a threat to the collective well-being and the safety of society. In the public eye, this image of carelessness turns them into a force that disrupts the economic and cultural fabric of the nation.

The semantic distance between the terms “illegal alien” and “terrorist” has reduced dramatically. The representation of migration has gone from a flow to a wave, to a tumult, to a stampede, and lately to an organized invasion of the U.S.

Please note the correlation with the idea of cultural and economic nativisms put forward before: the figure of the undocumented immigrant is compressed and reconstructed by entering into dialogue and into tension with the forces that lead the hegemonic discourse of national identity and of national (in)security. Some authors suggest that the immigrant’s illegality is constructed as a problem that is manageable by the state based on a numerology that can be adapted to the economic and political circumstances of its time. Using this numerology, the state also takes charge of making sure the immigrant is visible or invisible in the corresponding imaginary.

Other anti-citizen strategies also have an impact on the formation of this anti-immigrant discourse. One is the emergence of paramilitary groups that participate directly in border surveillance. As Roxanne Doty points out, their proliferation coincides with the organization of anti-immigrant campaigns and bills in several states; she highlights the case of California in the mid 1980s and the 1990s.¹¹ Along these same lines, the post-9/11 effect has sharpened the vision of the immigrant as a threat to national security, underscoring migrants’ diversity. The increase in the number of OTM, that is “other than Mexicans,” has sparked the rhetoric of national (in)security and shown up the porosity of the border. This has been amply capitalized on by various anti-immigrant groups and legislators like Pearce himself, who have incorporated into their discourse the threat and risk that undocumented immigration from the South constitutes. The semantic distance between the terms “illegal alien” and “terrorist” has reduced dramatically. The same has happened to other reference points, like the representation of the migratory flow itself, which has gone from a flow to a wave, to a tumult, to later be seen as a stampede and lately as an organized invasion of U.S. territory, as Leo Chavez has already pointed out.¹² The advance of anti-immigrant bills will greatly affect the political environment and the possibility of making an immigration reform, one of Barack Obama’s electoral promises to the community.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW: SB 1070 AS ANTI-MEXICAN STATE POLICY?

On July 6, 2010, the U.S. federal government brought suit in federal court against Arizona to strike down SB 1070. The suit was joined by a series of individuals and organizations who registered briefs questioning the law’s constitutionality. On July 29, federal Judge Susan Bolton handed down a decision suspending some sections of the law. The Arizona government immediately appealed and the court decided to hear the arguments and issue a second decision in November.

This case has merited close scrutiny by academia and the press. Legal experts have pointed out that SB 1070 brings up a certain number of legal issues about race, security, sovereignty, civil rights, state power, and foreign relations.¹³ Of all the law’s possible implications, I want to underline three: first, the relationship between racial profiling and the enforcement of federal law, that is, how far the law authorizes the reference to the appearance, physical traits, or an ethnic-racial profile as elements for suspicion for locating and arresting a person. What is the place of Mexican-ness or of discursive representation of Mexicans in this legal sphere? To what point is the degree of Mexican-ness, judging by the appearance of an alleged undocumented migrant, sufficient legal reason for his/her arrest and jailing? This is extremely important, because, as Chin himself has shown, the notion of Mexican ancestry has been a key factor for some decisions in federal courts.

The second aspect underlines the presumed unconstitutionality of the law given Arizona’s usurpation of certain functions by ignoring federal immigration laws. That is, to what point is it valid for Arizona to pass laws that seem to obstruct other jurisdictions and that increase the degree of “criminality” for undocumented persons beyond what federal law stipulates? We should also ask up to what point it is constitutional to have a policy of forced wearing down of the population in terms of interfering with and affecting specific population groups’ civil and human rights, in this case Mexicans and Latinos. In other words, how can the future of the Latino and Mexican-origin population be predicted in Arizona given its push for “exceptionalism”?

Lastly, the third point is that clearly, regardless of how the court rules on SB 1070, the aforementioned issues will continue to be part of the U.S. anti-immigrant debate. It is also clear that issues linked to the ideological and cultural framework of the anti-immigrant movement require greater scrutiny by academia.

CONCLUSIONS

I have established some preliminary points for interdisciplinary research that will make it possible to better understand the dynamics involved in the representation, construction, and later interaction with the figure of the Mexican immigrant in the United States. I hope these ideas and observations contribute to illustrating how the notion of the forced wearing down of the population has become a state policy

promoted by anti-immigrant sectors, whose aim is to wear down a certain segment of the population to the point that they will abandon specific spaces in U.S. society.

Another aim here has been to observe how historical processes of the nativist movements continue to contribute to the construction of concrete images of the Mexican immigrant in the U.S. imaginary. I hope the reflection about SB 1070 is taken into account in future research about immigration and the status of Mexicans in the U.S. and other latitudes. ■■■

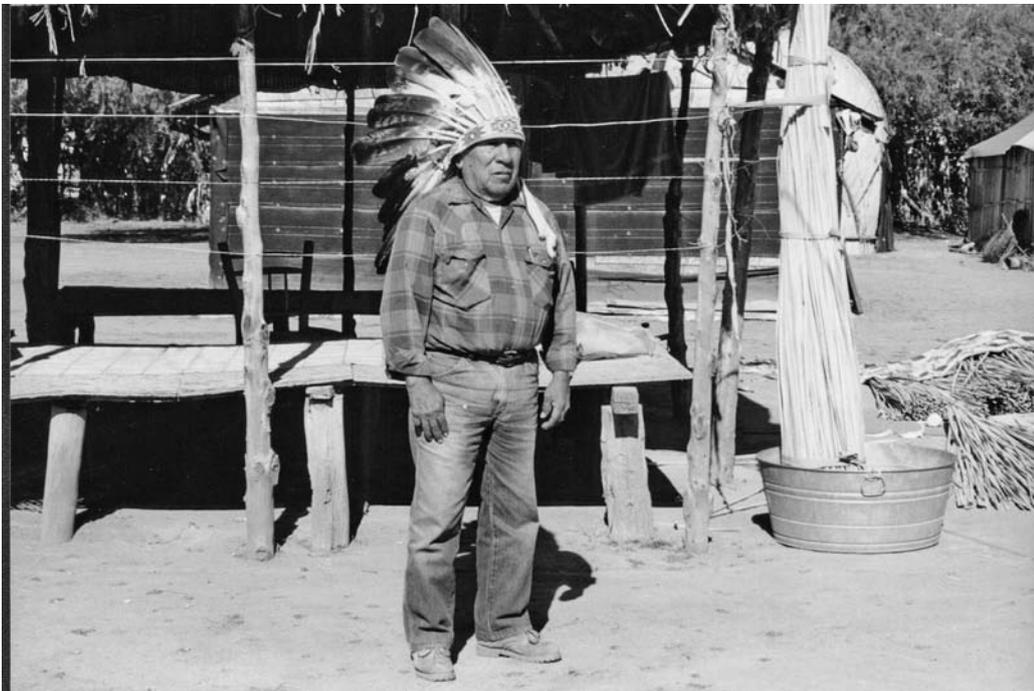
NOTES

- ¹ A longer version of this article can be found in Natalia Armijo, ed., *Migración y seguridad: nuevo desafío en México* (Mexico City: Colectivo de Análisis para la Seguridad con Democracia, 2011).
- ² See "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act," SB 1070, 2010, <http://senatebill1070.com/arizona-senate-bill-1070/full-text-of-arizona-senate-bill-1070/>.
- ³ That is, wearing down the undocumented population through strict enforcement of the law.
- ⁴ The term "deportability" has become popular for expressing what undocumented immigrants face: the vulnerability of being expelled, the authorities' "right" to deport them.
- ⁵ Russell Pearce, "SB 1070 Simply Says 'Illegal' is Illegal," *The Daily Courier*, May 11, 2010.
- ⁶ Mark Krikorian, "Downsizing Illegal Immigration: A Strategy of Attrition through Enforcement" (Washington D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 2005), www.cis.org/ReducingIllegalImmigration-Attrition-Enforcement.
- ⁷ Gilberto Rosas, "The Managed Violences of the Borderlands: Treacherous Geographies, Policeability, and the Politics of Race," *Latino Studies* 4, vol. 4, University of Illinois, December 2006, pp. 401-418.
- ⁸ Juan F. Perea, *Immigrants Out!: The New Nativism and the Anti-immigrant Impulse in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
- ⁹ David J. Weber, *Myth and the History of Hispanic Southwest: Essays* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).
- ¹⁰ Nicholas de Genova, *Working the Boundaries. Race, Space and "Illegality" in Mexican Chicago* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005).
- ¹¹ Roxanne Doty, *The Law into Their Own Hands: Immigration and the Politics of Exceptionalism* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007).
- ¹² Leo Chavez, *Covering Immigration: Popular Images and the Politics of the Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- ¹³ Gabriel Chin and Kevin Johnson, "Profiling's Enabler: High Court Ruling Underpins Arizona Immigration Law," *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2010, www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/07/12/AR2010071204049.html.

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The Kickapoo of Coahuila/Texas Cultural Implications Of Being a Cross-border Nation

Elisabeth A. Mager Hois*



Elisabeth Mager

George White Water, war chief, in front of his summer house in El Nacimiento, Coahuila.

Cross-border indigenous nations like the O’odham (Pápagos), Cucupá, and the Kickapoo of Coahuila/Texas, living on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border and continually crossing it, are subject to severe cultural influences by the U.S. Their economic future is north of the border, and, in power terms, the intercultural relationship between Mexico and the U.S. is asymmetrical, since the United States is a world power. In addition, certain privileges enjoyed by U.S.-origin tribes facilitate cross-border migration and their intercultural contact with the two nation-states.

Originally from the Great Lakes, the Kickapoo of Coahuila/Texas have settlements on both sides of the border.

* Professor and researcher at the UNAM School of Higher Learning (FES), Acatlán campus.

Nevertheless, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT) reservation is a more powerful magnet, because they set up a casino on that federal land and the U.S. federal government awards them certain benefits as an officially recognized tribe. Therefore, the cultural influence on them from the U.S. nation is determinant. In contrast, the Kickapoo community on the Mexican side serves mainly as a ceremonial center, although in recent years, the KTTT has invested a great deal in the countryside in this area with the profits from the Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino.

Thus, cross-border migration from Mexico to the United States can be explained by the attraction of the latter’s economy, which simultaneously benefits the community in Coahuila, particularly when the exchange rate for the U.S. dollar is high. Tito Alegría calls this kind of migration “transmigration,”

Cross-border peoples adopt the culture of the dominant country, where they work to ensure their economic and social future, even though it is derived from an asymmetrical relationship between two unequal groups.

characterized by “a relationship between two adjacent labor markets, each with different regimes of competition, productivity, relative prices, and legislation.”¹

This cross-border migration also has a cultural impact. Cecilia Ímaz Bayona refers to this as “de-territorialized cultures,” because of the resettling “of a considerable part of the community in another country, which remains linked to and interacts with the community of origin through relatively large, organized groups of migrants.”² In the case of the Kickapoo, people of working age are the ones who emigrate, together with their families; in contrast, the elderly prefer the sacred land of the Coahuila community.

In general, cross-border peoples experience intercultural contact with two nations at a time. “Facing interculturality processes through different kinds of migration and migrants who travel through the region, the Pápagos live with different groups from southern [U.S.] states, allowing them to make their cultural references and sources of identity plural,” writes Hernán Salas.³ For their part, the Kickapoo receive more of a cultural influence from the U.S., given that, since the casino’s opening in 1996, they spend more of their time on the KTTT reservation. This cultural impact cannot be denied in the Coahuila community’s day-to-day life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE KICKAPOO

In the Great Lakes region of what is now the United States, the Kickapoo, an Algonquin tribe of hunters and gatherers, were distinguished by their great mobility. This explains their original name, *kivikapawa* or *kivegapaw*, which means “he moves about, standing now here, now there.”⁴

Down through their history, moving to different places was not always voluntary. They were expelled from their native land between Lake Erie and Lake Michigan, first by the French (1688-1697), which resulted in their being divided into different bands, then by the English (1763-1771), and later by the Americans.⁵ The 1819 Treaties of Edwardsville

and Fort Harrison obligated them to migrate to the other side of the Mississippi, ending up on reservations in Missouri (1819) and Kansas (1832).⁶ In order for the government to reduce their territory and exercise greater cultural control over the tribe, they were forced to become farmers, which made for an ideological change and caused social tensions resulting in a high incidence of alcoholism.

When the railroad began crossing their territory (1854) and the Kansas reservation was divided up into individual lots (1863) in a fraud perpetrated against them by the railroad companies, the Kickapoo tribe members who resisted the most decided to move southward, first to Texas and later to Coahuila, to continue living according to their ancestral traditions. In 1859, Benito Juárez granted them 3 510 hectares of land in El Nacimiento, Coahuila, in exchange for defending Mexico’s northern border against the Mescalero Apaches, the Lipan Apaches, and the Comanches. In 1936, Lázaro Cárdenas gave the tribe another 3 512 hectares of *ejido* collective land to raise cattle.⁷ However, because there was a drought at the time, they had to work temporarily as agricultural workers in U.S. fields.

This was by no means an ideal solution because it made them the same as poor peasants, with all their workplace disadvantages. That was when they began taking drugs, particularly inhaling solvents.⁸

ACQUISITION OF THE KTTT AND SETTING UP THE CASINO

One solution for the economic problem was setting up a casino on U.S. federal land.⁹ To be able to do that, the Kickapoo had to take out U.S. citizenship and request federal recognition as a tribe. In 1983, after a long legal process in Congress, they obtained U.S. citizenship and were able to purchase a small, 125.43-acre piece of land in Maverick County, about 7.25 miles southeast of Eagle Pass, Texas.¹⁰ Initially, the land was used by Kickapoo day-laborers to rest on their way to U.S. fields, but, when in the mid-1990s they were largely replaced by machines, they had to seek another source of income. So, in August 1996, they set up the Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino on the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT) reservation.

In the early years, the casino was equipped with between 180 and 200 video machines; but in 2004, casino earnings provided the funds to build a new facility and in winter 2006,



Elisabeth Meager

The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas's Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino.

the number of machines increased to 1 325. The number of bingo rooms also doubled, according to Scott, the marketing director. They did have to do away with blackjack in November 2006 because the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) banned it as a level-III game, and the casino is only licensed for level-II games.¹¹ The tribe is now fighting to get the permit for level-III gaming.

Thanks to the casino's monopoly in Texas, large numbers of people go there from different parts of the state and Mexican border states.¹² This provides jobs in the gaming industry for most of the Kickapoo; but this economic progress has also had its cultural consequences.

THE CASINO'S CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ON A CROSS-BORDER TRIBE

For Chairman Juan Garza, the Kickapoo tribe is in the midst of a transition to modernity, in which ancient customs co-exist with new ones. Andreas Huyssen addresses this phenomenon by talking about a negotiation of the impact of modernization and globalization, characterized by media penetration and the spread of consumerism.¹³

This social phenomenon is understandable if we consider that cross-border peoples adopt the culture of the dominant country, where they work to ensure their economic and social future, even though it is derived from an asymmetrical relationship between two unequal groups. Therefore, the Kickapoo tribe changed its main residence to the KITT reservation in Maverick County, Texas, where they are assured of

Neither the Kickapoo language nor Spanish, but English predominates in young people's conversations. Because of this, many adults are concerned about the survival of their culture among the new generations and the preservation of their language.

a higher income from the casino, which also benefits the El Nacimiento Kickapoo community in Coahuila. This is why the tribal chairman recognizes the importance of the casino's economic success, and that it is necessary for the tribe's survival.

However, this progress is derived from a structural change in the tribe. In the middle of the last century, the gaming industry turned a tribe of agricultural day-laborers into a group of entrepreneurs. The cultural impact of this in a capitalist society predisposes tribe members to the "American way of life" in their daily activities, with its resulting addictions like alcoholism and drug abuse, particularly when young people experience the difficulty of combining two different worlds: the modern and the traditional.

In this matter, new generations' education in U.S. schools plays an important role, as does the massive influence of television, which has the ideological impact of imposing the values of an English-speaking consumer society. This is why Kickapoo children and young people prefer to speak to each other in English, leaving aside their native language, which they use only to communicate with their grandparents in El Nacimiento. Spanish is also losing ground, because it is the language of a country about which they have few expectations.

Therefore, culture cannot be understood as something static; rather, it is dynamic because it goes through significant changes over time. Nevertheless, the social process of identity takes on certain authenticity, which is possible only with ethnic consciousness that guarantees the group's survival.¹⁴ If this were not the case, the tribe would get lost in the macro-society of U.S. capitalism, even more so given its "cross-border" nature, oriented to dynamic processes of merger and cultural migration.¹⁵

IS TAKING REFUGE IN EL NACIMIENTO A CULTURAL SOLUTION?

Cross-border migration also exports cultural values from the dominant society to the subordinate country; this is why daily life in El Nacimiento, Coahuila is influenced by U.S. culture. It is not, however, a true modernization of daily life in Mexico, but what can be seen as a cultural assimilation fostered by the influx of the mass media, which often interferes in people's world view. Therefore, we can talk about cultural syncretism, in which modern life merges with traditional life.

The El Nacimiento community still represents a refuge for living life freely. This implies ritual and daily ceremonies and hunts, farming and cattle-raising, done mainly by Black Seminoles and Mexicans. So, traditional life still exists at certain times of the year. For example, some Kickapoo go every weekend from Eagle Pass to El Nacimiento; others only go in the ceremonial season, or when their children are on vacation. In addition, casino employees are given certain leeway for going to El Nacimiento. But, broadly speaking, that traditional life has been impacted by the American way of life, since the Kickapoo live most of the time in Texas.

Above all, the new generation, educated in the United States, adapts to new customs like forms of dress and eating and recreational habits; but the most noticeable thing is their way of communicating. As already mentioned, it is no longer either the Kickapoo language or Spanish, but English that predominates in these young people's conversations. Because of this, many adults are concerned about the survival of their culture among the new generations and the preservation of their language.

On the other hand, the land they have bought with the profits from the Lucky Eagle Casino mean a territorial and cultural expansion of the United States. In 2007, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas purchased 17 000 acres of land

The gaming industry turned a tribe of agricultural day-laborers into a group of entrepreneurs. The cultural impact of this in a capitalist society predisposes tribe members to the "American way of life."

for cattle and deer raising near El Nacimiento, Coahuila, in addition to approximately 12 000 acres they bought in Texas. Investment in Mexican territory, then, is derived from the tribe's economic progress, but at the same time it fosters a capitalist mentality that, in the last analysis, stems from the casino's success.

CONCLUSIONS

Cross-border tribes like the Kickapoo of Coahuila/Texas inhabit a space of a certain interculturality that emerges from their continual movement across the Mexico-U.S. international border. The ease of this cross-border migration comes from their dual-nationality status and being members of U.S. tribes, which brings with it a strong cultural influence of the dominant country. Expelled from their places of origin, the Kickapoo feel attracted by the U.S. nation, where they have found the economic key through the casinos set up on U.S. trust land. Thus, Mexico, as a dependent nation, comes in second for this people; it is only useful to them as a ceremonial center and a place for investment.

Territorial and cultural expansionism toward the country where they have fewer expectations continues. In this sense, Alicia Lindón talks of a "blurring" of the national borders and a "break-down" of boundaries that facilitate the merger of cultural values and create a space of interculturality, where the dominant country comes out the winner.¹⁶

In the case of the Kickapoo of Coahuila/Texas, employment in the casino is the key to these cultural influences, because it allows tribe members to rise on the social ladder, as opposed to the past when jobs as farm workers guaranteed certain social discrimination.

For this people to not end up a completely entrepreneurial tribe, it is extremely important that it become aware of this process and continue its cultural practices in El Nacimiento. Throughout its history, this has allowed the tribe to preserve greater ethnic specificities than many other tribes in the

United States who have lost that traditional character. This does not mean that the tribe should stagnate, but that it should transform itself over time. How? That will depend on the degree of consciousness that allows it to seek out its own path. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ Tito Alegría, "Modelo estructural del trabajo transfronterizo," Alejandro Mercado Celis and Elizabeth Gutiérrez Romero, eds., *Fronteras en América del Norte* (Mexico City: CISAN/UNAM, 2004), p. 417.
- ² Cecilia Ímaz Bayona, *La nación mexicana, transfronterzas: Impactos socio-políticos en México de la emigración a Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), p. 65.
- ³ Hernán Salas Quintanal, "Identidades y globalización en el espacio fronterizo del noroeste de Sonora," Cristina Oehmichen Bazán and Hernán Salas Quintanal, *Migración, diversidad y fronteras culturales* (Mexico City: IIA/UNAM, 2011), p. 134.
- ⁴ Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, "Kickapoo," Bureau of American Ethnology, *Handbook of American Indians*, Bulletin 30, 1910.
- ⁵ Elisabeth A. Mager Hois, *Casinos y poder* (Mexico City: CISAN/IIA/FES Acatlán/UNAM, 2010), p. 101.
- ⁶ In 1873, a new Kickapoo reservation was set up in the Oklahoma Indian Territory when Coronel Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry Regiment attacked the Coahuila Kickapoo community, kidnapping elders, women, and children and forcibly resettling them there.
- ⁷ Martha Rodríguez, *Historias de resistencia y exterminio: Los indios de Coahuila durante el siglo XIX* (Mexico City: INI/CIESAS, 1995), p. 119, and Elisabeth A. Mager Hois, *Lucha y resistencia de la tribu kikapú* (Mexico City: FES Acatlán/UNAM, 2008), p. 106.
- ⁸ Eric V. Fredlund, *Volatile Substance Abuse Among the Kickapoo People in the Eagle Pass, Texas Area 1993*, Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Briefs, November 1994.

- ⁹ In Texas, legislation only permits Indian tribes to set up casinos on federal trust land.
- ¹⁰ The Traditional Kickapoo of Texas, *Land Acquisition Committee Report, 1981-1984*, McLoud, Oklahoma, 1984, p. 2.
- ¹¹ Level-II games include electronic bingo and card games; level-III games include these and other, riskier games. High-risk level-II card games require authorization under state law.
- ¹² The casino's prosperity can be explained by the fact that, since the Tiguas' Speaking Rock Casino and the Alabama-Coushatta Casino closed in 2002, it is the only one left in Texas.
- ¹³ Andreas Huyssen, *Modernismo después de la posmodernidad* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2010), p. 33.
- ¹⁴ Allan Hanson, "When the Natives Talk Back: Thinking about Narrative in Anthropology," paper presented at the Hall Center Narrative Seminar, Lawrence, University of Kansas, 1991, p. 27.
- ¹⁵ Andreas Huyssen, op. cit., p. 41.
- ¹⁶ Alicia Lindón, "De espacialidades y transnacionalismo," Daniel Hiernaux and Margarita Zárate, eds., *Espacios y transnacionalismo* (Mexico City: UAM Iztapalapa/Casa Juan Pablos, 2008), p. 125.

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Antologías

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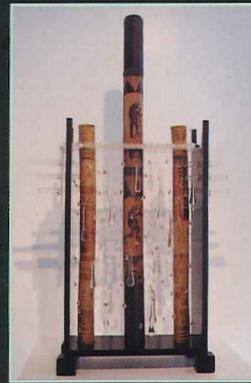
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UNAM ART MUSEUMS

The UNAM's cultural wealth and role in promoting every possible kind of art are undisputable. A brief overview of some of its museums and their exhibits is ample proof. Whether by supporting contemporary art by young people or hosting huge exhibits by great masters, or opening the door to collective projects, playful or dangerous creations, intervention of enormous structures, or even proposals that might not have found a place elsewhere, our university's museums demonstrate an irrefutable vocation for creativity and freedom of expression, and are permanently open to artists from all over the world.



The Old College of San Ildefonso



El Chopo University Museum



The University Contemporary Art Museum



The MUCA Roma



Tlatelolco University Cultural Center



Experimental Museum



The Nezahualcōyotl Hall



The Old College of San Ildefonso

Elsie Montiel*

THE VENUE

Associated with education and culture since its foundation, the history of this museum dates back to colonial times. Founded by the Jesuits in 1588, it was one of the most important educational institutions of New Spain's capital. As it is today, it dates from the eighteenth century and is one of the most outstanding examples of civic architecture of its time. After the Jesuits were expelled in 1767, the building fulfilled different functions, most related to education, although it was also used as a barracks in nineteenth-century Mexico after independence. In 1867, a Liberal educational reform created the National Preparatory School, and San Ildefonso was chosen as its site. In 1910, the National Preparatory School became part of the National University, founded that year. Until 1978, it was the spawning ground for several generations of intellectuals and outstanding public figures. Closed to the public until 1992, it was restored to hold the huge exhibition "Mexico: Splendors of 30 Centuries." Since then, the Old College of San Ildefonso has been a center for exhibiting art from all periods; its size makes it possible to use all the rooms and patios for all kinds of artistic creations, with exhibits whose dimensions and importance leave a lasting mark on the memory of those who have the privilege of viewing them.



Patricia Pérez



José Clemente Orozco "Painting and Truth"

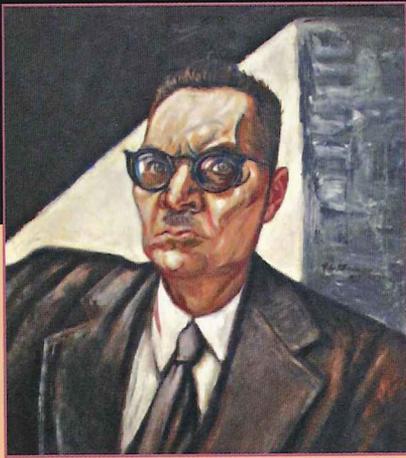


I feel that my heart has grown little by little, becoming larger than myself, larger than anything, more and more sensitive, more and more ardent.¹

They say every human being is unique and unrepeatable, making it impossible to know what is in the depths of each one. That is why we almost always judge the acts and motives of our fellow men and women—not to say our equals—on appearances. It is also known that there is a formula for going beyond appearances, for discovering the essential in every being, and that is that we must use our hearts instead of our eyes.

* Editor of *Voices of Mexico*.

In my opinion, that is the way we should approach José Clemente Orozco. Looking at his creations and then withdrawing to listen to what our heart tells us, how it fights its own opinions, how it reveals that other heart filled with commitment, personality, audacity, awareness of his time and of his own contradictions, shown in strokes of impeccable technique and a creativity so vast that it transcends mere individual achievement and becomes universal. San Ildefonso brought together the largest selection of Orozco ever accomplished: 14 rooms, 1 902 m², and 34 overall themes; this makes intensely scrutinizing his being and actions a titanic endeavor.²



Patricia Pérez

Self-portrait, 66 x 56 cm, 1946 (oil on canvas). Carrillo Gil Museum Collection.

Confronted with his self-portrait, we asked ourselves what the mirror he reflected himself in was like.

“Painting and Truth” began by confronting us with a self-portrait whose unspeakably grim countenance is a surprise. We ask ourselves what the mirror he was looking at himself in was like; and then we are immediately submerged in how he was reflected and how he reflected his world, through 358 works in all facets of his artistic oeuvre: painting, sketching, gouache, engraving, and studies for his murals, what he is best known for today. The result of this process is necessarily individual, as is the opinion of every art critic who delves into the motifs of the works of this Mexican painter who traveled the road of critical painting, committed to the society of his time, without losing what made him both unique and universal.

This sketch will only attempt to report on some of the topics, like caricature (1906-1925). His first caricatures were published in 1906; however, he became polemical in 1911, in the first months of Madero’s democracy, when he echoed

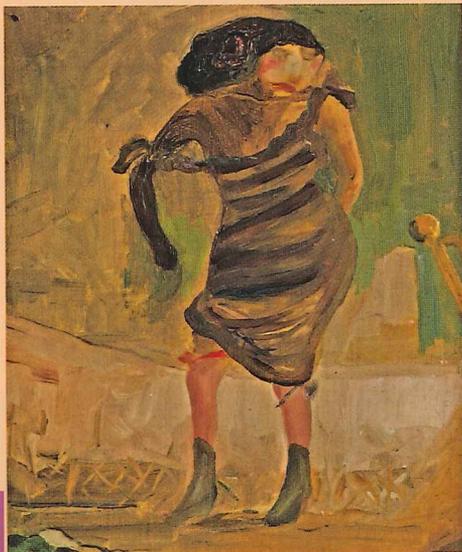
other illustrators and journalists in criticizing the Madero government and its cause. Parallel to this appeared his schoolgirls and prostitutes, his figures from the dregs of society and the world of entertainment, his figures of immodest sensuality and open anticlericalism. This genre would always be present in his painting, appearing in canvases and on walls, unself-consciously and gracefully, somehow easing his seemingly tragic view of life.

Women of easy virtue are depicted in his work to contradict the image of the grim, almost authoritarian Orozco. When he was about to turn 33 and was already recognized by his contemporaries, he produced a series of watercolors “The House of Weeping,” part of his first solo exhibition, “Studies of Women.” In them, he delicately and humorously recreates life in the brothels.



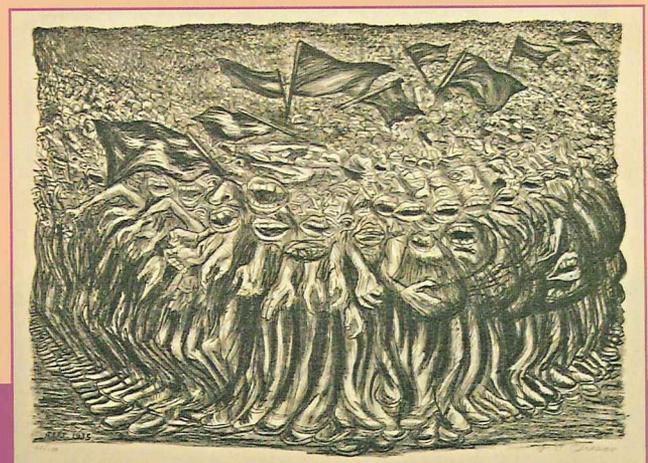
General with Long Nails, c. 1915 (ink on paper). Isaac Gutman Collection.

Elsie Montiel



Courtesy of the Old College of San Ildelfonso

The Seeker, 32 x 24 cm, 1912 (oil on canvas). Private collection.



Elsie Montiel

The Masses, 33.7 x 42.9 cm, 1935 (lithograph). Private collection.



The Last Judgement, 1923-1924 (fresco). Mural at the Old College of San Ildefonso.

San Ildefonso boasts some of the most satirical, ironic, and sublime murals Orozco ever painted.

Some of the museum's walls were part of that exhibition. San Ildefonso boasts some of the most satirical, ironic, and sublime murals Orozco ever painted (1923-1924) on the three stories of its central patio walls.

The exhibition of his paintings, spanning 1925 to 1927, is important because his art was compared to Goya's, alluding particularly to his graphic collection, "The Disasters of War." He never liked being called "the Mexican Goya," as he was dubbed in 1924: I would say only the insecure like being compared to the "greats." Poor people's wakes, rebels marching, desolate landscapes, or troops fighting; the mixture of clashing colors, grays and whites next to blues, yellows, and greens



The Trench, 1926 (fresco). Old College of San Ildefonso Collection.

Courtesy of the Old College of San Ildefonso



Stalking, 1923-1924 (fresco). Mural at the Old College of San Ildefonso.

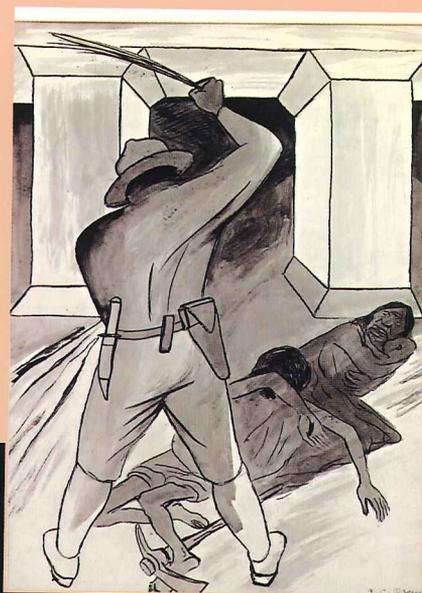
Elsie Montiel

Elsie Montiel

spark a particular unease, and, implacable, he gives no quarter either to "The Masses."

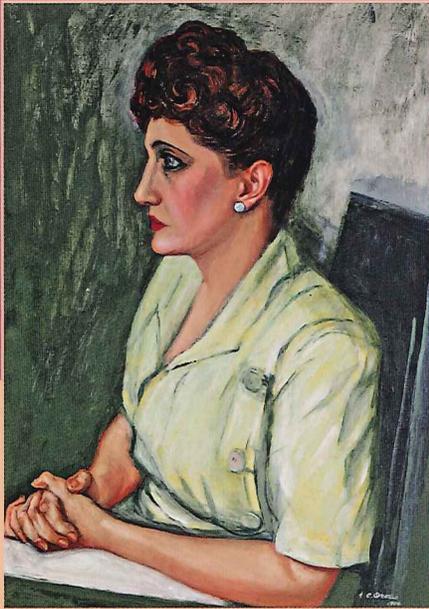
His works "Mexico in the Revolution" (1926-1928) are a summary of that anti-dramatic, but simultaneously profound and unswerving, way that he used to show the tribulations of the war and its devastation.

Orozco alternated between muralism and easel painting; he did engraving, traveled and lived abroad, familiarized himself with contemporary painting, stayed firm in his own. Thus, over the years, he sketched women soldiers, revolutionary strongmen, desolate houses, architectural landscapes, buildings, bridges, *teules* or gods (pieces that recreate scenes of the conquest of Mexico, the heat of the battle between Europeans and indigenous). He covered Guadalajara's Cabañas



Cruelty, 40.7 x 30.5 cm, 1926-1928 (water and ink on paper). Enrique Guerrero Gallery private collection.

Courtesy of the Old College of San Ildefonso



Carmen T. de Carrillo Gil, 85 x 60 cm, 1944 (oil on canvas). Private collection.

Courtesy of the Old College of San Ildefonso



Ballet of Masks, 43 x 38 cm, 1945 (oil on canvas). Private collection.

Courtesy of the Old College of San Ildefonso

Almshouse/Orphanage with frescoes that prompted someone to exclaim, “Kneel down, bastards!” —in reverence, naturally. Throughout the exhibition, it is clear that Orozco would never stop expressing himself, never stop creating. Scenes of the Gospel and compositions dealing with death, portraits, self-portraits, are followed by scenery and costume design for the Mexico City Ballet: his creative urge would die only with him.

At the end of our visit, we discover that Orozco loved life deeply, in all its manifestations, creations, and subtleties, and that’s why he charged, brush in hand, anyone who despised

it, wasted it, or dashed it to the ground; even in the deepest shadows, he placed a hint of light; he loved Man, which is why he praised everything perfect in his human activity, education, development, critical consciousness. He loved his craft, and that love was the source of the perfection in every sketch, stroke, drawing. But, above all, he loved himself; that is why he remained firm in his convictions and allowed them to transcend into his creations; at the end of the day, I believe his grim countenance was nothing more than too much ebullient energy. **MM**



Fabien Dany/www.fabiendany.com

Man of Fire, 1937-1939, Cabañas Orphanage vaulted dome (fresco).

NOTES

¹ Letter to Margarita, this future wife, quoted by Ricardo Castillo in “Un retrato, siete apuntes y un boceto para un estudio de ‘Pintura y verdad: La palabra enmascarada,’” from the catalogue *J.C. Orozco. Pintura y verdad* (Mexico City: Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 2010), p. 457.

² Part of the information about the topics in the exhibition is taken from the press bulletin for the inauguration of the exhibit “José Clemente Orozco. Painting and Truth,” September 29, 2010.



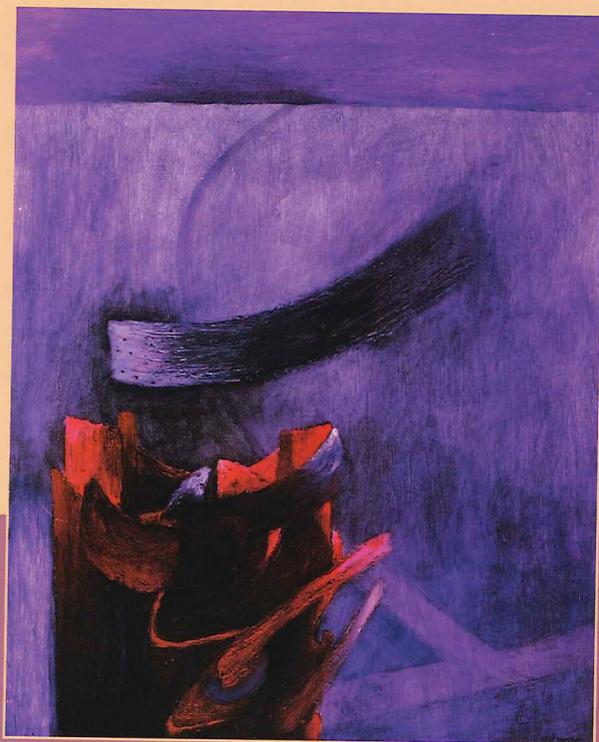
Fernando de Szyszlo

"In Praise of the Shadows"

The work of Peruvian painter Fernando de Szyszlo, considered one of the great living Latin American masters, was on display in San Ildefonso in the exhibition "In Praise of the Shadows" until May 8. The artist himself chose 27 paintings to try to sum up 40 years of his artistic production. Like the cherry on the cake, we are given a world premier: *Paracas: The Night*, an acrylic on canvas painted in 2011.

The introductory explanation at the start of the exhibit describes the work and the artist as follows:

These masterfully executed paintings reveal Szyszlo's poetic temperament... the passion and the rigor with which he transcribes the pictorial event. Before his canvases, each brushstroke reveals atmospheric densities that involve the solemnity of the ritual, of creation without anecdotes. They are sparkling paths,



Puriq Runa (VIII), 100.6 x 81.4 cm, 1976 (acrylic on canvas).
Pérez Simón Collection, Mexico.

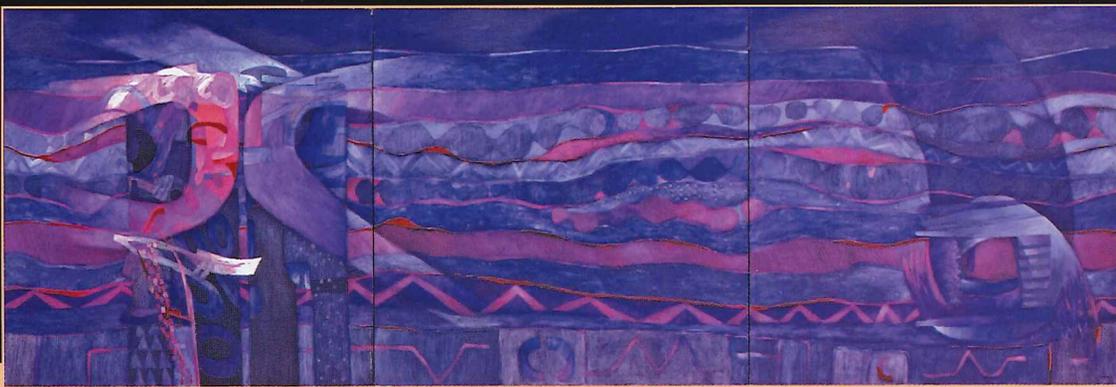


Paracas: The Night, 150 x 120 cm, 2011 (acrylic on canvas). Private collection, Lima.

places, flashes and whispers, mirages and evanescent presences betraying themselves through light and textures, the emotion sparked by the expressiveness of shadows. They sing melodies that blend with cosmic choirs....

His canvases are crossed by serpentine flows of puzzles, enigmatic waves ordered by lyricism and such an eloquent intelligence that it is difficult not to share the fluidity of that interior that animates, swells, and illuminates Fernando de Szyszlo's painting. In it are intertwined the un-graspable and the unheard of...blinks of the landscape...furtively magnetize the canvases, cross through doorways, go up stairways without destination, and come upon walls perforated with incisions predated the alphabet....

His voice is raised from the waterfalls of being to inhabit the shadows....His colors intone the victory of life over death and oblivion....

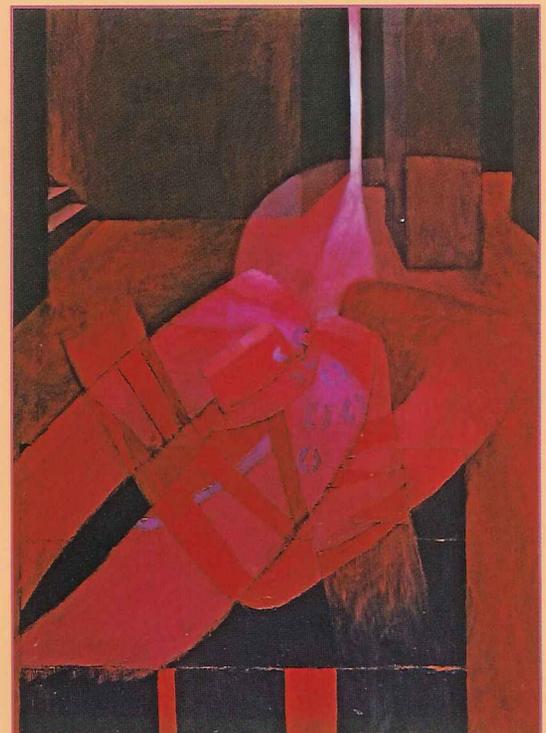


From the "Lurin Sea" series, triptych, 200 x 600 cm, 1989 (acrylic on canvas). Private Collection, Lima.

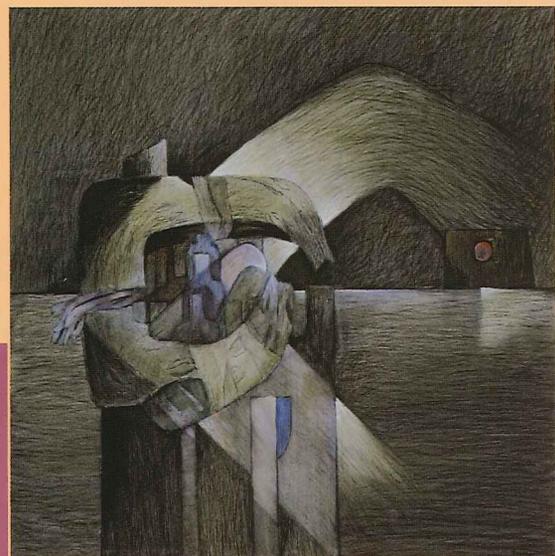
Once again, we have
an opinion about the other,
the quest for finding keys that reveal
the mystery of the motives
for human creation.

This is how we want to recognize the tremors of these canvases that reveal their creator to us. They are like life, a perpetual metamorphosis faithful to itself in the least change....The shadow that undoubtedly inhabits this voice, so subtle and complex that it emanates from Fernando de Szyszlo's canvases, is that stretch where the painter's authenticity always rules between equilibrium and harmony.

Once again, here we have the opinion about the other, the quest for finding keys that reveal the mystery of the motives for human creation. How can 40 years of painting be summed up in 27 paintings? That would be the first question. Once again, the voice of the critic and the viewer can be no more than individual; each person will make this experience something simple, transcendent, complicated, or obtuse, according to the mood and internal gaze with which he/she moves through the rooms. In the end, the painter always reserves for himself the ultimate key to his feelings. That, we should already know, is inscrutable. **MM**



Room for the Night, 190 x 140 cm, 1981 (acrylic on canvas). Private collection, Lima.



Road to Mendieta, 150 x 150 cm, 1977 (mixed technique on canvas). Private collection, Lima.

**ANTIGUO COLEGIO DE
SAN ILDEFONSO**

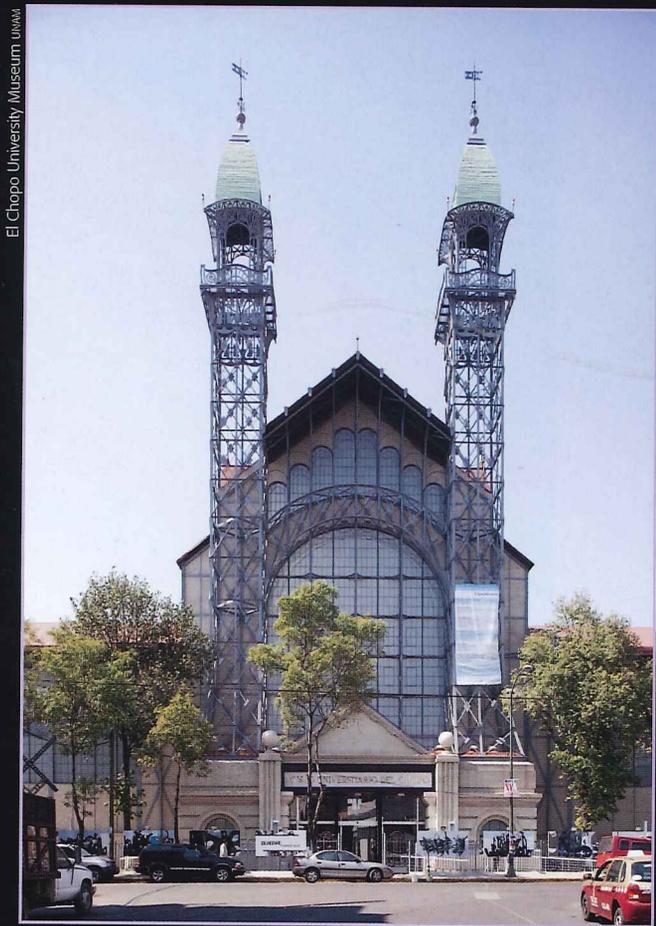
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El Chopo University Museum

Raquel del Castillo*



THE VENUE

A building made of assembled metal pieces, designed by Bruno Möhring for the Düsseldorf, Germany Exposition of Art and the Textile Industry, in the early twentieth century, and acquired in 1902 by the Mexican Company of Permanent Expositions. It was brought to Mexico in pieces and reassembled between 1903 and 1905 in the Santa María de la Ribera Neighborhood. It was named after the street where it was placed, El Chopo (or black poplar). These are only some of the specifics of a museum that, after 100 years, indisputably belongs to the inhabitants of this part of the city.

Its vocation for art has been constant. In 1909, the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts rented the building to use as the Museum of Natural History. Before that, it housed the exposition of Japanese industrial art, part of the fiestas for the Centennial of Independence. By 1922, it had become Mexico's most popular museum, receiving more than 1000 visitors a

day. Since then, it has been familiarly known as the El Chopo Museum.

In the 1960s it fell into disuse and its important collection was scattered among different museums. In 1975, after several years of salvage and restoration work, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) turned it into the El Chopo University Museum, a space for the dissemination of culture, particularly experimental work by young artists.

Characterized by its innovative, inclusive, pluralist vocation, from that time on it has been an obligatory reference point for avant-garde art.¹

* Staff writer.
Photos by Patricia Pérez.



KAMI-ROBO

Little Paper Giants

Part of the Japanese Pavilion celebrating 100 years of artistic exchange with Japan, Tomoshiro Yasui's work, more than 400 robot-fighters, reflects not only how significant, up-to-date, and popular this country is, but the globality of popular art.

Born in 1971, Yasui began his adventure 33 years ago. Inspired by 1970s television characters, he created the world of the Kami-Robo. According to Japanese puppet theater Bunraku tradition, puppets come alive and acquire a soul independent from the humans handling them. This is what the Kami-Robo are like: 15 to 20-centimeter-high little giants that feed their fans with passion and drama. Their physical genesis, based on folded paper like origami, gives them jointed shoulders, hips, elbows, knees, wrists, and ankles, allowing them to move freely and smoothly. This is important because

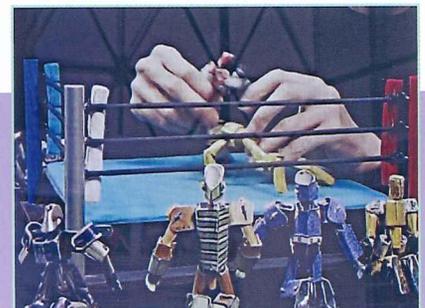
they are designed for fighting. In addition, they each have a definite personality: every design is unique and, when they're in the ring, we are told "who's who."

What had been a child's game became known thanks to Yasui's friends from the Kyoto University of Art and Design, who presented his fighters in a ring in front of an audience that rooted for them, got excited, and suffered in every bout. Today, they are arranged in a genealogical tree and each has an ID card to help us visualize the friendships and blood relations among them, their records, likes and dislikes, and whether they are still competing or have retired after hard battles and injuries.

The Kami-Robo are popular in their native country; it could be said they are cult objects, collectibles, and valuable among their fans, who also create their own robots. In Japan,



The Kami-Robo are popular in their native country; it could be said they are cult objects, collectibles, and valuable among their fans.





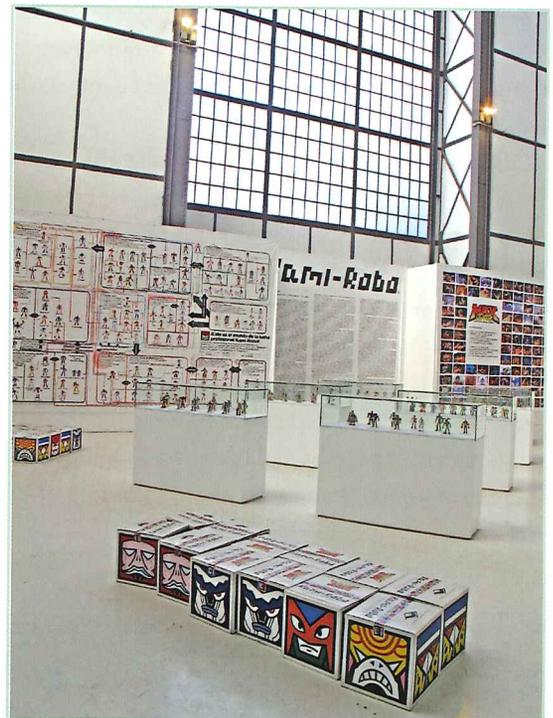
Pink Princess.

A fan of professional wrestling and pop art, Tomoshito Yasui shares his childhood companions with the world.

anyone who makes a toy is considered an artist deserving respect.

In Mexico, they are understood and empathized with by young people, who have grown up with the Japanese anime and manga (animated cartoons and comics, respectively) thanks to television series broadcast starting in the late 1970s, and later, in the 1990s, the Pokemon anime or the Evangelion manga series, that appeared to live in children and teenagers' imaginations. We should also not forget the Mexican cult of wrestling and enthusiasm for figures both as old and current as El Santo.

A fan of professional wrestling and pop art, artist Tomoshito Yasui shares with the world the companions of his childhood because they are something he likes and is important to him. In his comments for this exhibition, he said, "If the Kami-Robo make you happy and help you revive the dreams of your childhood, I'll be delighted."



Each Kami-Robo has a unique design and its own personality.



Xavier Esqueda's Musical Interpretations



Samrat Yantra, object art, 2004.

After a more than 40-year career as a visual artist, Xavier Esqueda presents 42 pieces in a visual symphony: “The Colors of Music,” with works created between 1983 and 2004, on the perfect stage for the young people who come to see them. Through paintings, box-objects, art objects, and ensembles, he pays his own homage to music. A declared melomaniac, he nevertheless admits, “I know nothing about music; I can’t read it; I can’t play anything; but I have loved it more than painting ever since I was a child.”

Life-sized or scale models of musical instruments collected on his many travels around the world are transformed into marvelous pieces and accompanied by an eclectic soundtrack: the visitor may identify Kansas and Creedence, but he also





Temperamental Lamellophone,
object art, 2005.



Darbuka Doumbek from Marrakesh,
object art, 2004.

His art is not limited to his affections;
it also reflects his aversions, like Paganini.
“He’s a virtuoso, but mediocre.”

includes compositions by Maurice Ravel and Georges Bizet, all seasoned with surprising Veracruz rhythms of equal weight. These are compositions Esqueda has grown with, that have given intensity to his life, and that remain stored in his melodic memory.

A particularity of his work is the box-object, an idea taken from the New Yorker Joseph Cornell. “My box-objects are a constant in my work,” he says. Each of them describes a melodic episode: a white T-shirt lettered with the name “Werther” in red, wounded in the heart and watched over by a line of bullets (*Homage to Jules Massenet*, 2000), a piano concerto for pears covered with musical notes (*Homage to Erik Satie*, 1983), or maracas and details of Huichol art (*The Colors of Music*, 2003).

“On my travels, I have bought ethnic instruments, since I was thinking of doing an exhibition of object art. As such, music is an object art,” reflects Esqueda, who tries to transport us simultaneously to sound worlds from different regions of the planet: to Africa with the xylophone, and at the same time to Veracruz, with its guajes (pods) that are resonating percussion instruments. He also reminds us of Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar, the Spanish pasodoble, and the soundings of Andean winds.

His art is not limited to his affections; it also reflects his aversions, like Paganini. “He’s a virtuoso, but mediocre,” he says, materializing his criticism with a violin leaning down toward a bleeding ear, while the chords break one after the other (*Paganini’s Caprichos*, 2005). The maestro protests against jazz by threading pieces of twine through a sheet of music so they move up and down the musical scales. “I detest jazz; it is the worst canvas I’ve ever done,” he says.

His pictorial work is emotional: a sad Ravel, a rainy Debussy, or a bloodied Stravinsky. Besides proposing aquatic and fiery sheets of music, he presents us with an *Adagio*, forming



Homage to Joni Mitchell, object art, 2004.



Paganini’s Caprichos, object art, 2005.

Many place him in neo-Mexicanism or post-modernism because he developed at times when the muralist school was giving way to the abstract discourse.

constellations, a sunny *Andante*, and melting treble clefs. This is how Esqueda creates a new discourse between music and painting.

Francisco Gabilondo Soler is one of this space's heroes. "Cri-Cri was a great connoisseur of music," explains Esqueda before a representation of the singer/songwriter just as children knew him: a cricket playing a violin over an old radio (*Homage to Cri-Cri*, 2004). He creates moods inspired in Debussy's opera, proposes scenery for *Pelléas et Mélisande* (2003). Meanwhile, elsewhere, he includes music business symbols (*Hypnosis of Sounds*, 2004), a dog in front of a phonograph as though it were listening, the RCA emblem, with a bass accompaniment.

Xavier Esqueda was born in 1943. He is self-taught. At 17 he was already selling his work in the Sullivan Street public art mart. With what he made, he took his first trips to the United States. In 1965, he had an exhibition in the Antonio Souza Gallery, one of the 1960s' most important. He lived in San Francisco for three years, which was a platform that allowed him to organize art shows in Houston, Miami, Flo-



Homage to Claude Achilles Debussy, "The Colors of Music" series, 2000 (oil on canvas).

rida, and Los Angeles. In Mexico, he has exhibited in almost all the existing museums, from the Anthropology and History Museum to the Modern Art Museum. "The only places I haven't exhibited are the Carrillo Gil and the UNAM Contemporary Art Museum; in all the other I have had shows," he says.

Many place him in neo-Mexicanism or post-modernism because he developed at times when the muralist school was fading to give way to the abstract discourse. What is certain is that Esqueda cannot be labeled, nor is he married to any particular current. Perhaps this is because he forged himself. Now, with this exhibition, he has erased the frontiers between the visible and the invisible, color and music, describing emotions that speak about loves, hatreds, and fascination. **MM**

NOTES

¹ See <http://www.chopo.unam.mx/historia.html>.



Homage to Cri-Cri, "The Colors of Music" series, 2004 (oil on canvas).

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The University Contemporary Art Museum



Pedro Hiriart, courtesy of the MUAC

The University Contemporary Art Museum (MUAC) is dedicated to art, those who make it, and those who appreciate it. From the outside, its glass wall seems to defy gravity; on the inside, an ample, light-filled space hosts exhibitions that challenge the senses. Since its opening in 2008, it boasts the premier public collection of Mexican art of our day and has sought to promote artistic creation, understanding of the audio-visual, performing, and performance arts with dynamic exhibitions by artists from Mexico and abroad.

Mexico: Sunshine and Solitude

Cai Guo-Qiang at the UNAM

Mariela Sánchez-Belmont*

*All processes have a beginning and an end;
all processes change themselves into their opposite.*

MAO ZEDONG¹

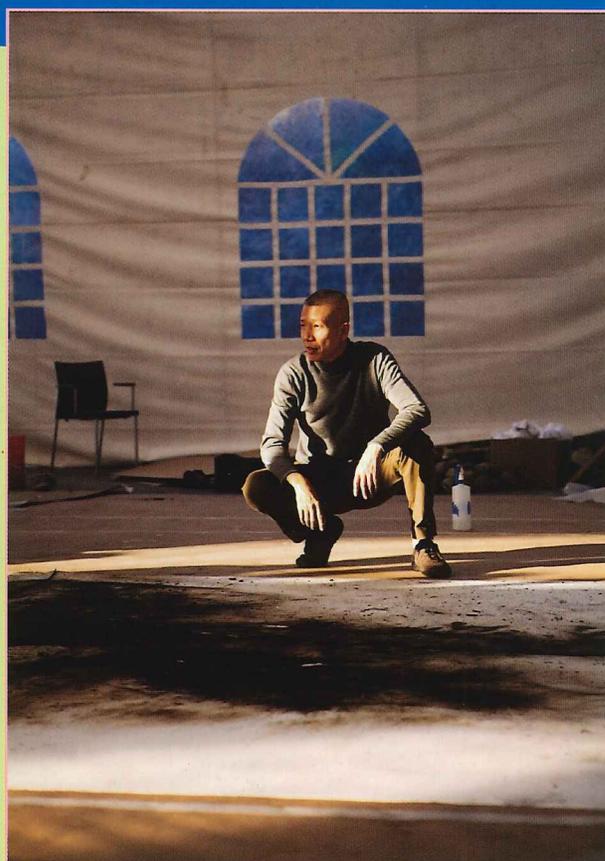
One of those artists from abroad is internationally known Cai Guo-Qiang, who demonstrated in this museum his mastery of the handling of gunpowder. The result was an impressive exhibition of 14 pieces all inspired by his visit to Mexico in September 2010. His show, “Sunshine and Solitude,” is part of the curatorial cycle “Events and Deliriums: Foundation, Material, and Work,” centered on Plato’s description of artists and poets as illusionists and demiurges,² to show the way that art liberates the life force and turns work and matter into pure illusion. The gunpowder explosions liberate that energy and leave us with art.

A single spark can start a prairie fire.

MAO ZEDONG

Gunpowder immediately makes us think of ancient China. But we are not all aware that its formula, dating from the ninth century, was originally developed for medicinal uses. Its name in Chinese, 火药 (*huo yao*), embraces this duality. It is composed of two Concepts: “huo,” or “fire,” and “yao,” meaning “medicine.” Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), it has been used for military purposes. Gunpowder represents the attempts to control life and death, creation and destruction.

Its use in the work of Cai Guo-Qiang is no mere happenstance. He was born in 1957 in the coastal city of Quanzhou in Fujian province, China. He grew used to being around gunpowder and became familiar with its various meanings. Fujian is famous for producing fireworks, used today in China to

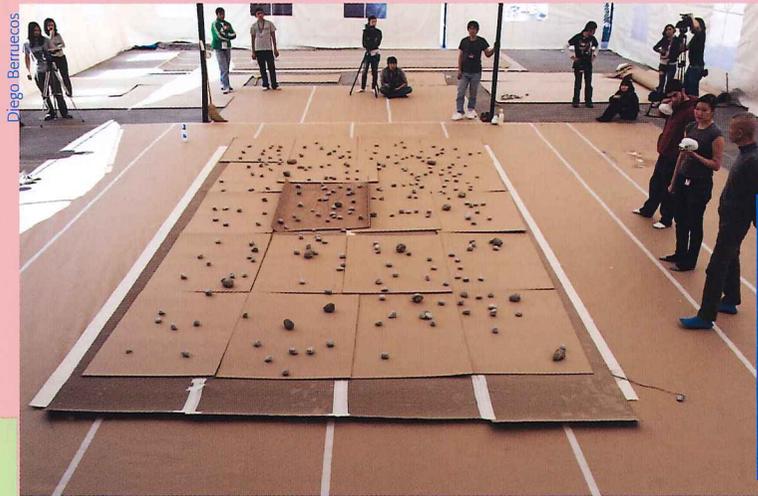


Diego Berrueros

celebrate important national moments: parades commemorating the Communist victory, for exhibitions before the eyes of the world to show its capability as the host of sporting events, and, of course, Chinese New Year. But Cai was also familiar with the other side of the coin. Gunpowder was used in the constant bombardments that crossed the Taiwan Strait. Yin and yang.

“I myself set out to choose a material that brought an element of danger with it, and that would create a certain disquiet within myself as the work was being prepared.”

* Staff writer.



Diego Bernuecos

Cai Guo-Qiang, his assistant, and volunteers, before lighting *Quetzalcóatl y Xipe Tótec*.



Elsie Montiel

He composes images by applying different kinds of gunpowder, fuses, and stencils to handmade sheets of paper.

Replacing oils and ink with gunpowder and fire was a calculated decision. In 1985, he graduated from the Shanghai Drama Institute's Department of Stage Design, and the following year, he moved to Japan to continue his studies. It was there that he left behind traditional techniques and opted for explosions. He was seeking a way to free himself. In his words, "I have a controlling personality; I'm obsessive; I like to have things in their place... I myself set out to choose a material that brought an element of danger with it, and that would create a certain disquiet within myself as the work was being prepared."³ Having grown up in a restrictive China

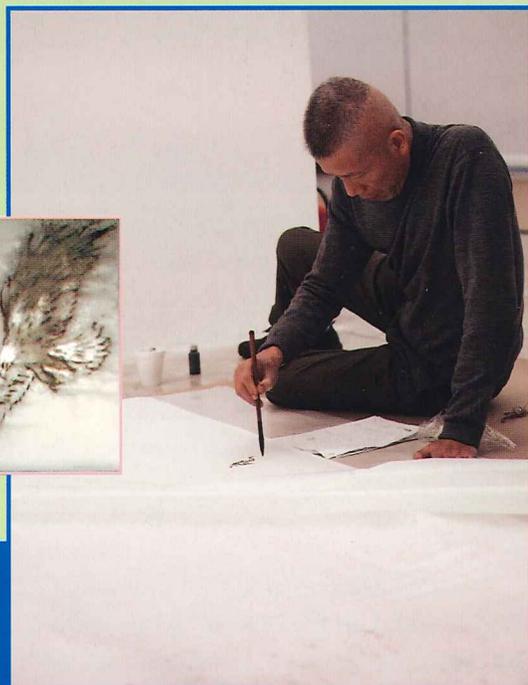
that influenced and controlled individuals' creativity to the nth degree to make it collective, gunpowder, with its uncontrollable explosiveness, presented Cai with an escape valve for contained energy. "I wanted to investigate both the destructive and constructive nature of gunpowder and observe how destruction could also create something."⁴

There is no creation without destruction.

MAO ZEDONG

Comrade Mao used to say that political power is born from the barrel of a gun. Cai Guo-Qiang uses gunpowder as a political weapon. His explosions carry messages and create metaphors. He destroys so people remember. His "Black Rainbow: Explosion Project for Valencia" launched a reminder of black smoke into the heavens so we would not forget the victims of the Madrid March 2004 attacks. The ephemeral spectacle cost almost US\$200 000, scattered in less than 15 seconds. "The pleasure comes precisely... from the destructiveness inherent in the act of consuming that enormous amount of money in just a few seconds... It is the victory of the spiritual reality over the material. Because money is a symbol of power, status, and privilege in our society. And causing explosions worth US\$200 000, lost in 15 seconds, is a declaration of intent."⁵

His work's great achievement is the perpetuity of the ephemeral. The memory sparked by the scattering smoke, by the powder that explodes to leave behind an empty vista but a full heart. Where is the art? Before, during, or after the explosion? His exhibitions spend energy, materials, time, and effort, not to mention money. It all evaporates in a few seconds. But it leaves us with something more, perhaps of greater value.



Diego Bernuecos



Elsie Montiel

Cai Guo-Qiang signing *Eagle*.

The fuses are lit to produce a series of controlled explosions on the surface of the paper, fixing the figures, completely comparable to fine lines drawn with ink.

Elsie Montiel



Diego Berruecos

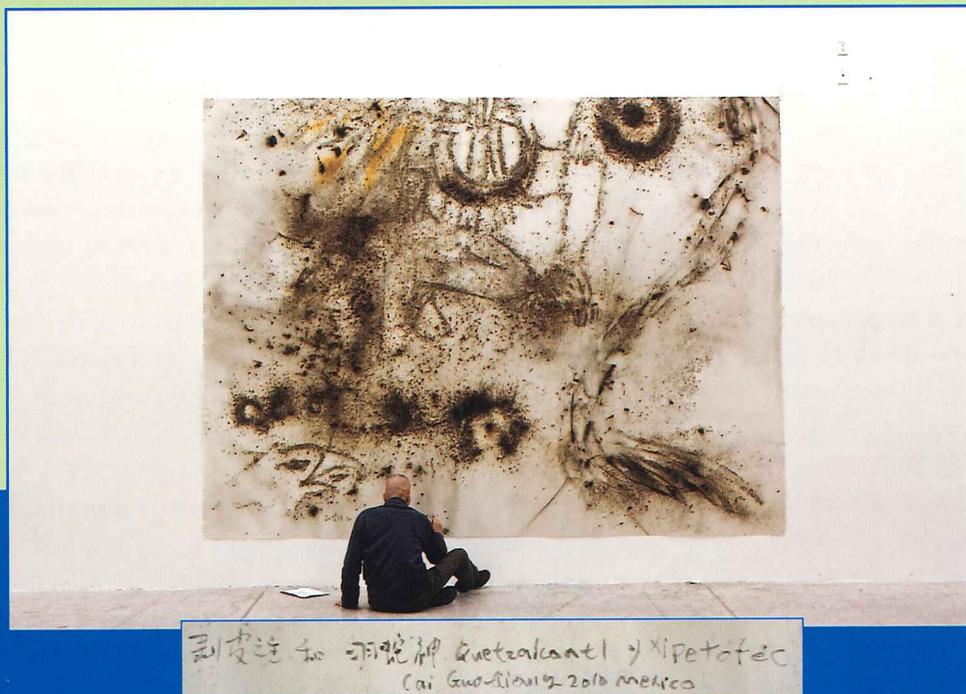
Cai Guo-Qiang as *Pine* ignites, one of the 14 sketches in "The Sunshine of Solitude."

THE SUNSHINE OF SOLITUDE

In September 2010, Cai Guo-Qiang visited Mexico during the Bicentennial celebrations, 200 years after the struggle began. In the ruins left by the War of Independence, we built the foundations of a country. One hundred years went by, and with the remains left by the revolutionary hurricane, we erected a homeland. Another centennial was celebrated and Cai came to Mexico. On his trip, he gathered images and smells that impregnated his work.

Weeks of preparation for the fatal moment when it explodes. In sessions open to the public, the artist traces lines

on his canvas. Together with several students from the UNAM National School of Visual Arts, he arranges the pieces for the exhibition designed specifically for the MUAC. He composes images by applying different kinds of gunpowder, fuses, and stencils to handmade sheets of paper. Finally, they explode: the fuses are lit to produce a series of controlled explosions on the surface of the paper, fixing the figures, completely comparable to fine lines drawn with ink. What Cai leaves us when he goes is a majestic exhibition of the impressions Mexico made on his gunpowder. Images of the Valley of Mexico, of scenes of the fight for independence and in the revolution, the pre-Hispanic origins that still color our present,



Diego Berruecos



Elsie Montiel

and, above, the sun that illuminates it all. Of course, Mexico's traditional ground firework "Castillo" (a tower of fireworks set on the ground) could not be left out, impossible without Chinese gunpowder, reminding us of the heroes of Independence.

When entering the room, the first thing that alerts the senses is a familiar smell. In the midst of the volcanic gravel covering the floor is a representation of Texcoco Lake, but instead of water, it is filled with mescal. This lake is nostalgic for Cai. "I have always been moved by the relationship that lake has with the city. It always seemed sad to know that it had disappeared so Mexico City could become the capital of an empire. If the city had been built around the lake, it would be the most beautiful in the world."⁶ The alcohol it contains is also symbolic; for the artist, it is simultaneously an agent for being together, community, and hospitality, and the bearer of solitude.⁷

The walls of the room are covered with Cai's works, and while the visitor explores, walking on the gravel, his or her figure is reflected in the mescal with the pieces in the background. The ambiance wraps the visitor in the (non-exclusionary) contradiction between the melancholy of the black, white, and brown colors—a brown that could well be the brown of dried blood—and the happiness of imagining (desired) explosions and the power of the resulting beauty. The pieces closest to us will be unrecognizable. You have to move away from them to be able to make out the image. A modern impressionism, à la China. But it is worth staying close a few moments. That way you can appreciate Cai's impeccable technique: the controlled burns on the paper, the white spaces done with stencils, the subtle colors achieved with the different kinds of gunpowder. When you back away, you are presented with Mexico, the product of several explosions the result of which can only be appreciated when the smoke clears

It is worth standing close a few moments.
That way you can appreciate Cai's impeccable
technique: the subtle colors achieved
with the different kinds of gunpowder.

and time or space distances you from the event. The eternal
destruction and construction of our history.

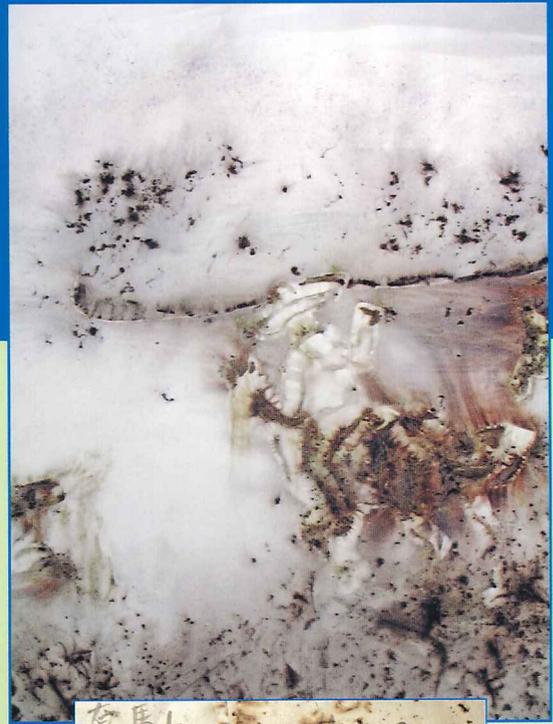
NOTES

- ¹ Mao Zedong, *On Contradiction*, 1937, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm.
- ² For the ancient Greeks, the demiurge was the spirit that gave rise to and ordered all things out of chaos. In Gnostic philosophy, it meant the universal soul, the active principle of the world.
- ³ "Cai Guo-Qiang llega a México para realizar sus exposiciones de arte," *El Universal*, November 26, 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/64296.html>, accessed February 20, 2011.
- ⁴ Interview with Octavio Zaya, "Interview: Octavio Zaya in Conversation with Cai Guo-Qiang," Dana Friis-Hansen, Octavio Zaya, Guoqiang Cai, and Takashi Serizawa, *Cai Guo-Qiang* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2002), p. 13, cited in Miwon Kwon, "El arte de gastar," Thomas Krens and Alexandra Munroe, *Cai Guo-Qiang: Quiero creer* (Bilbao: Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, 2009), p. 62.
- ⁵ Interview with David Rodríguez Caballero about the Valencia Project. David Rodríguez Caballero, "Oriente-Occidente-Oriente," *Cai Guo-Qiang:*

Fuegos artificiales negros (Valencia: Institut Valencia d'Art Moderne, 2005), p. 123, cited in Miwon Kwon, op cit., p. 65.

⁶ "Cai Guo-Qiang: arte que resplandece en soledad," *Milenio* (Mexico City), December 5, 2010, <http://www.milenio.com/node/593674>, accessed February 23, 2011.

⁷ Christian Gómez, "El fuego creador de Cai Guo-Qiang," *Cultura UNAM*, November 29, 2010, <http://www.cultura.unam.mx/?tp=articulo&id=2037&ac=mostrar&Itemid=207&ct=322>, accessed February 24, 2011.



Patricia Pérez



Elicé Montiel

Poppy Flowers.

(Hi)story in a Subway Car

Isabel Morales Quezada*

Conceiving of the future of a society as synonymous with progress/modernity, ignoring the past and its specters does not mean that they cannot live in it, as ghosts. In Mexico, the official celebrations of the bicentennial of independence and the centennial of the Revolution turned history into spectacle, betting on oblivion. In answer, the MUAC mounted “Spectographs: Memory and History,” another way of conceiving of the dialogue between the past and the present. We will look at one of its four sections, “Archaeologies in Modernity,” titled *“Yellow Capitalism”: (Hi)story of a Sale*.

Walls and windows were covered with objects and videos relating to itinerant sales, the sale of pirate merchandise and junky trinkets in Mexico City subway cars. That is, it deals with the “vestiges” of modernity, the remains of a capitalist upheaval that threw thousands into unemployment, thousands who “reinvented” the economy to try to survive.

The exhibition of objects and videos out of their habitual context leads to an analysis of the roots and structure of what is so commonplace that it has become invisible to city dwellers, particularly for a passengers on transportation like the subway.

Pirate copies of DVD documentaries, books by well-known writers, items that were “the latest thing” like the ones alluding to the commemoration of the bicentennial and centennial (bracelets, earrings in the colors of the Mexican flag, pins that light up) are some of the merchandise behind one display window, as though they were relics or very valuable objects, or stuck to the windows in the room. The disparity among the items is chaotic; but nevertheless, there is order behind the

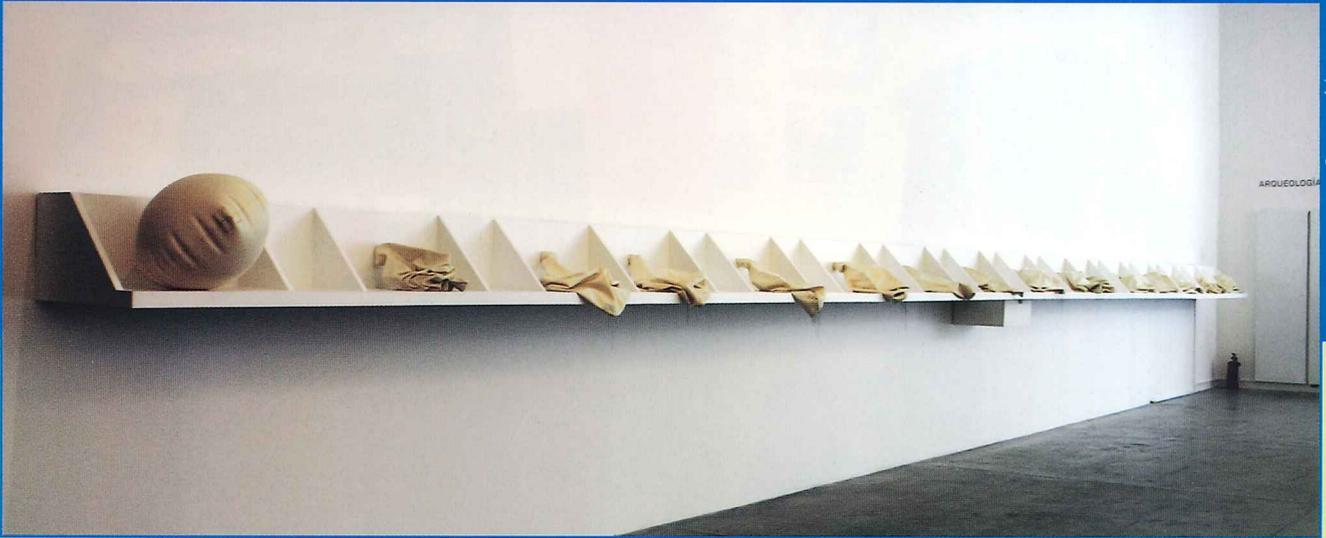
“Yellow capitalism” makes everything cheaper, and therefore disposable. Most things sold in the subway cost no more than Mex\$15 (a little over a dollar). The low price adds value to the product itself.

* Staff writer.



Jota Izquierdo, “Yellow Capitalism”: (Hi)story of a Sale,” 2010 (multimedia installation).

Courtesy of the MUAC



Tania Candiani, *Read Straight Through*, from the "Archaeologies of Modernity" nucleus.

Courtesy of the MUAC



Courtesy of the MUAC

directly into your hands the *National Geographic* documentary called *Olmecs, Mother Culture of Mesoamerica*...for young students, for children, or for your personal consumption." Documentaries of all kinds, surplus books by world-renowned authors, magazines that, although old, are still useful: in this case, what is being sold is the idea of "culture" and "knowledge" accessible to all.

This new form of capitalism makes everything cheaper, and therefore disposable. Most things sold in the subway do not cost more than Mex\$15 (a little over a dollar). The low price adds value to the product itself, paradoxical as it may seem, since in a country where the minimum wage is Mex\$60/day (US\$5), a trinket for half a dollar or a movie for under a

dollar seems within anybody's reach. The "car-men" and "car-women" also sell the fantasy of having buying power.

There are videotaped testimonies of very experienced itinerant salespeople showing what is sold there and why. "What is sold is whatever's new, what's in fashion or in season," and the basic thing is to stay up to date, says one of the interviewees who goes to Mexico City's Tepito neighborhood to buy his "Chinese trinkets," generally bought by parents for their children as toys. Another young woman explains that subway sales is a job she inherited from her mother, and expresses her criticisms of what she sells: "It's crud, and people like buying it." Another woman describes what people like to purchase: "brand name stuff,' chocolate candies, batteries, but it has to be 'brand name'."

"Yellow Capitalism': (Hi)story of a Sale" sheds light on a daily occurrence and is an invitation to the viewer, who also may have been tempted to acquire one of the products on offer, to stop and think about a topic generally only discussed in terms of "piracy," as a damaging, pernicious activity, without

This new form of capitalism emerges as a copy of an economic model that no longer functions and is expressed through a microcosm: the subway.



Carla Herrera-Prats, *Official Stories IV*, 2000, from the "Archaeologies of Modernity" nucleus.

going to the bottom of the problem or looking for the causes. "Yellow capitalism" emerges as a copy of an economic model that no longer functions and is expressed through the microcosm that is the subway.

The subway is the city....Almost to the letter. It is the life of everyone trapped in a single great perspective....And it is the horizon of the professions and the crafts, of the orientations and disorientations, of the employments, sub-employments and un-employments....The subway is not a trait of the city; it is, I insist, the megalopolis in all its splendor, housed in its ruins... it is the presentiment of the mall whose origin can be glimpsed in the itinerant salespeople.¹

And isn't "yellow capitalism," with its cheap goods, pirated copies, disposable items, the product of a model in decline in which the remains of a forgotten history are accumulated until today? The specters of "classical capitalism" are manifested through the "car-men" of each of Mexico City's subway lines, and not only through them, but also through the pas-

sengers, who most of the time live in harsh economic conditions, given the continuity of "capitalism in a failed state," while outside of that, from a present in ruins, others continue with their gaze fixed on progress and modernity. **MM**

Consult: www.capitalismoamarillo.net.

NOTES

¹ Carlos Monsiváis, *Apocalipstick* (Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2009), pp. 241-242.



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Vicente Razo, *General Interest Publications*, from the "Archaeologies of Modernity" nucleus.

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The MUCA Roma

Luis Orozco*



THE VENUE

The University Museum of Arts and Sciences in Mexico City's Roma Neighborhood, or MUCA Roma, opened its doors in April 1999 to disseminate and promote new forms of management and production of international contemporary art by young people. It is an experimental venue where contact with the work is more intimate because of the proximity inspired by the physical space; this means that visitors relate to each project by almost being a part of it. Also, all the work is recent. This is the case of the exhibits in the beginning of 2011 described below.

* Curator of the University Museum of Arts and Sciences in the Roma Neighborhood (MUCA Roma).



Photos this page by Patricia Pérez

“Not everyone who belongs is here...”

Urban elements in dialogue with objects and images of intimacy and displacement between cities occupy a common ground in most of the projects in this exhibition, the result of each artist’s interpretation of a specific context or city. The works use traditional printing and reproducing techniques (offset, linoleum prints, and xerography) applied to unusual supports and presented as part of diverse discourses. However, there are coincidences in the themes and concerns the artists develop in each proposal. The projects demonstrate three levels of approaching the urban: a profound level, that involves elements of intimacy; another that externally functions as the support (dwelling, building, etc.); and lastly, everything that makes up the scenery of the city, from sewers and flying buttresses to monuments.

Raúl Calderón, from Morelia, Michoacán, and Arturo Angulo, from Mexico City, appropriate elements from Buenos Aires and Munich, respectively, to make prints in which the viewer can identify both the original motif and the technique used to represent it, which plays a leading role in constructing these images. Transfers, lithography, and digital processes are the procedures these artists use to translate a fragment of urban



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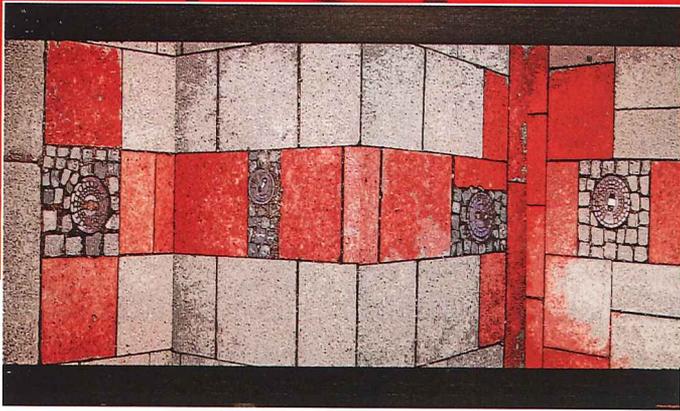
Osmeivy Ortega, from the “American Dream” series (linoleum prints on dishcloths).



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Raúl Calderón, from the “Urban... Buenos Aires” series (transfer and lithograph).

Urban elements dialogue with objects and images of intimacy and displacement between cities.



Patricia Pérez

Arturo Angulo, from the "Munich, Monaco of Baviera" series (digital print).

landscape into a graphic, which is simultaneously both a testimony of a journey and an experiment.

Osmeivy Ortega, from Havana, Cuba, and Iván Krassoievitch, from Mexico City, use items used in day-to-day life like dishcloth and LP record covers to build a nostalgic discourse expressed in the images printed on them. In his project *American Dream*, Ortega makes a critique from the standpoint of precariousness—therein lies the reason for the dishcloth as a support—of a culture in constant dialogue and controversy—Cuba's—which aspires and dreams through images alien to its own reality. In contrast, Krassoievitch's meticulously transforms LP record covers, representatives of an era and a reflection to a great extent of the lives of the people who used them: memory linked to technology, where the original images are barely recognizable because of the format, which is simultaneously both support and object.

Mr. Fly from Mexico City and Víctor Muñoz, from Medellín, Colombia, use popular printing presses to reproduce their ideas and develop their projects. Different in form, but at bottom similar, Mr. Fly portrays 10 icons of popular art and culture to make street stickers in a kind of collage and décollage that he mixes with ads for dances, concerts, and other kinds of publicity. Inside the gallery the phenomenon is re-

peated, using these images and playing with one of the show's premises: establishing a dialogue between intimacy and the exterior. For his part, Muñoz turned the space into a laboratory where the image of an element is used as a module, just like a real brick, to build fictitious spaces, projections, and artist's books. The play between representation and construction, two-dimensionality and volume, invites an immediate reflection about the object that sparks it: the brick as a unit that can be handled and used for building.



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Víctor Muñoz's fictitious spaces.



Iván Krassoievitch's intervention of LP record covers.



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

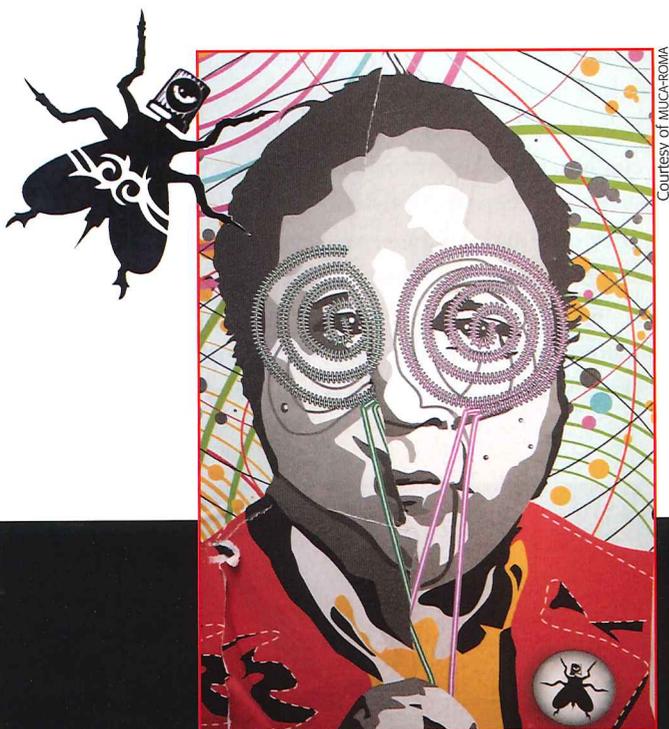
Memory linked to technology, where the original images are barely recognizable because of the format.

“...and not everyone here really belongs.”

The concepts of pop art and popular (or folk) art, that would seem to be based on the same premise, are actually used to refer to different forms of expression. The former is the name given to the twentieth-century artistic movement that was famous for using icons from the world of entertainment and publicity as models. The latter, popular (or folk) art is made by craftsmen and women, almost always anonymously, generally linked to traditions and with materials determined by its place of origin.

However, both pop art and folk art use resources based on repeating a technique or elements easily identifiable by the collective memory of their culture, whether disseminated through the media or rooted in their customs. Another way of approaching the difference that is presumed to exist between these manifestations of art is in the origin of each expression itself.

Pop art is presumed to be part of a system of “high culture,” even when it uses images recognizable by a large number



Mr. Fly (collage of street stickers).

Mr. Fly portrays 10 icons of popular art and culture to make street stickers in a kind of collage and décollage.

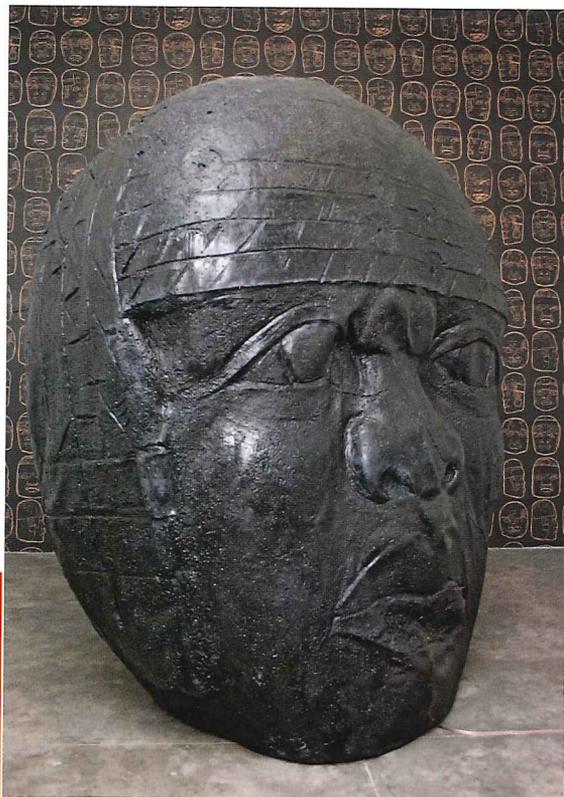
of its viewers who it shows utilitarian objects consumed daily turned into vibrant colored prints-cum-works of art. Meanwhile, folk art maintains a close relationship between the objects produced and their functionality. Pop art is constructed on the basis of recent history, and folk or popular art maintains strong links to the remote past. One ponders industry, and the other, the attitude.

“...and not everyone here really belongs” included three projects dealing with the differences and similarities between the pop world and the world of tradition. One point about what can be seen as “what is Mexican” is the constant that unifies these projects: in the three cases, the artists clearly have a legitimate concern about reflecting on this topic, more than coinciding in time with the historical moment that frames these reflections. Each artist deals with different periods of the country’s history with different aesthetics and supports.

Richard Moszka from Mexico City uses different media to reproduce an Olmec head in a realistic style and as caricature. Through the play of representation —of history and of the object— he invites us to think about the monolithic presence of *The Mother Culture*, represented in figures em-



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Richard Moszka's *Olmec Head*.

blematic of our past that can be found continually paraphrased in modern monuments. With the change in size, materials, and context, this installation alludes to things like the form and function of these heads, which, since their discovery have been moved around and exhibited as “museum pieces,” shown theatrically, just like animals in a zoo (including the reproduction of their habitat).

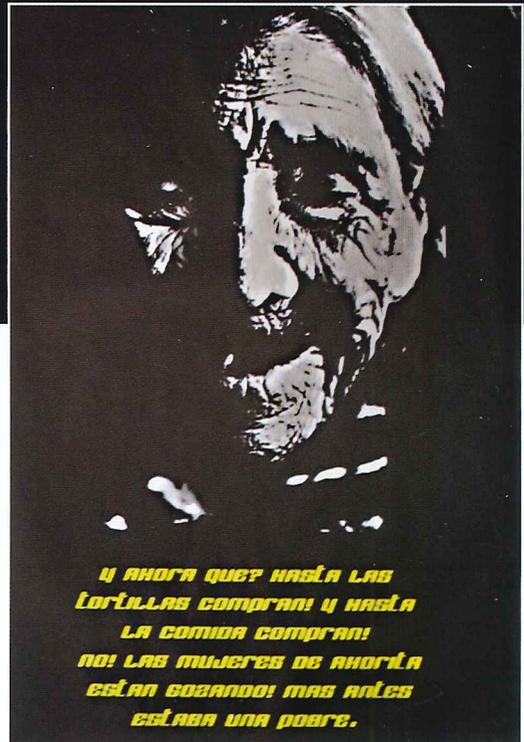
The Children of the Revolution is the work by Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, from Mexico City, photographer and action artist, respectively. Both become vehicles through which a series of Mexican rural characters relate historical and mythological events about what we know as the Mexican Revolution. In a kind of living archaeology, the artists transform testimonies into video and poster documents through which the project deals with various aspects of recent Mexican

The artists clearly have a legitimate concern about reflecting on “what is Mexican.”



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, images from the *The Children of the Revolution* project.



Patricia Pérez

Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, *The Children of the Revolution* project.

**¿ Y AHORA QUE? HABÍA LAS
LORTILLAS COMPRAN! Y HABÍA
LA COMIDA COMPRAN!
NO! LAS MUJERES DE AHORITA
ESTAN GOBIERNO! MAS ANTES
ESTABA UNA POBRE.**

history. The revolutionary past in the form of a short story and the arid present of the protagonists seem to construct a third truth: a balance between history and story.

Amateur is an experimental film project and sketch of cinematographer Ángela Reginato, from California. Films and film clips the artist found are projected, a trio of films made up of *Contemplating the City*, *To Live Dreaming*, and *Memory Maintained* are complemented with a series of sketches by

Huichol artists Esmeralda and Eliseo Carrillo, who reproduce frames of the films being shown. The projection is a collage of constructed and recovered images that all together propose a reading of Mexico in the 1970s. The sketches, done in yarn and beeswax, are simultaneously anecdote and commentary on an object of folk art turned into a sign representing an era.

This montage is part of a more complex project, *Memory Maintained*, in which Ángela constructs a visual essay using poems, films, and songs to tell the story of a Mexican middle-class family that draws a portrait of itself that is revealed in the film. **MM**



Patricia Pérez

Ángela Reginato, *Amateur* film project.



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Tonalá 51, esquina Colima
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Tlatelolco University Cultural Center

Isabel Morales Quezada*



THE VENUE

A huge tower, once the symbol of Mexico City's modernity, rises out of the area where history has been ossified: Tlatelolco. Built in the 1960s by architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, the Tlatelolco tower was home to the Foreign Relations Ministry for almost 40 years. In 2006, it passed over to the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which decided to use it to create the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center (ccut).

*Staff writer.



Photos this page by Patricia Pérez

Xipe Tótec by Thomas Glassford

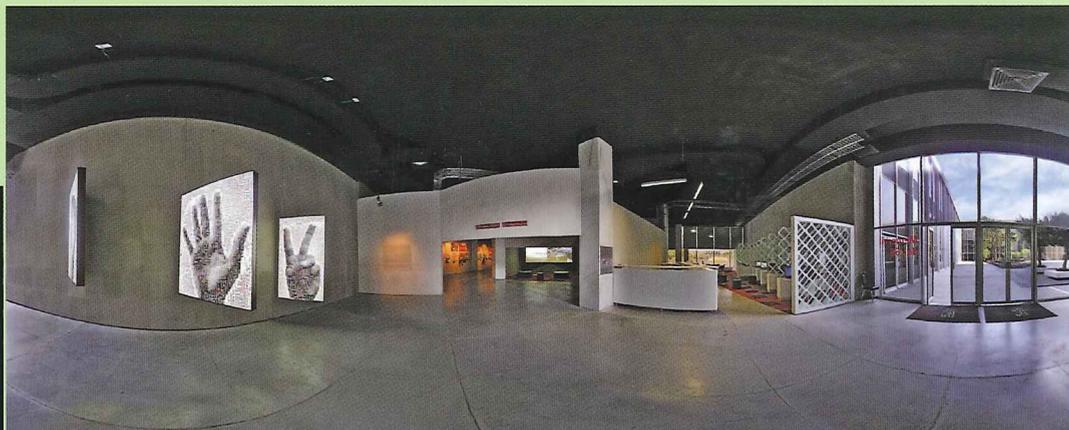
The Light of Tlatelolco

The building is still imposing, and some of the area's residents do not yet really see it as a cultural center because of its strong governmental image since its inauguration. However, that perception has been changing little by little since it was covered in November 2010 by a new shining skin of light that illuminates its dark surroundings. This is the "Xipe Tótec" installation by Thomas Glassford, a geometric structure placed over the building's façades that lights up at night. It owes its name to the Aztec deity who took off his own skin to feed human beings (Xipe Tótec, "Our Lord the Flayed"), who is at the same time symbol of the corn kernel that sheds its skin before germinating. The installation covers the building's four sides with a veil of red and blue diodes, and, like a reminder of the way the site has been profaned by the different civilizations that have gone by here, Glassford resorted to the scientific concept of quasi-crystals that uses a synthesis representing both contemporary scientific studies and old aesthetic models and that is, finally, a natural molecular network.¹ This infinitely changing atomic pattern marks the complex's historic continuity.

Thus, we could say that the CCUR's illuminated skin will nourish Tlatelolco's inhabitants with light for the next two years, and at the same time serves as a lighthouse to guide them to that other form of sustenance: culture.



Barry Domínguez/UNAM Cultural Outreach Communications Department



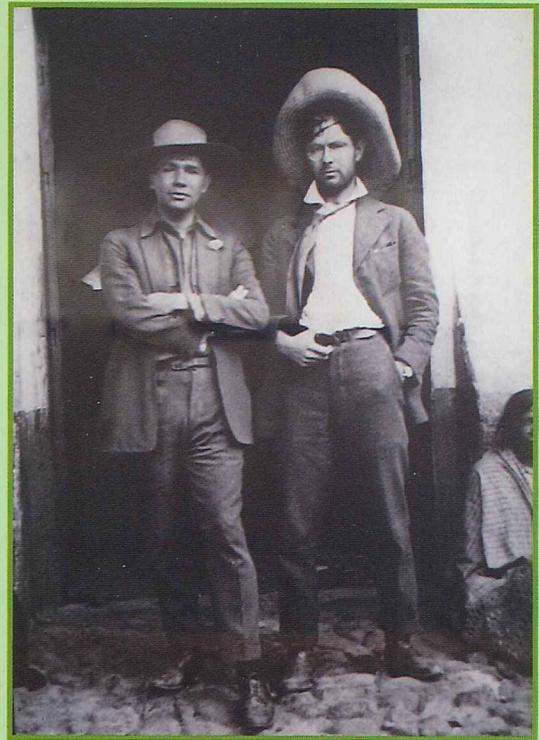
Courtesy of ccur

Francisco Díaz de León Between Reality and Fiction

*I bought myself a suit, gloves, spats, a cane, and
even a monocle. I used to stroll through
Plateros, wearing sandals and white britches,
and other times wearing tails, leading a small dog.
They used to say I was mad, but that amused me.*

FRANCISCO DÍAZ DE LEÓN

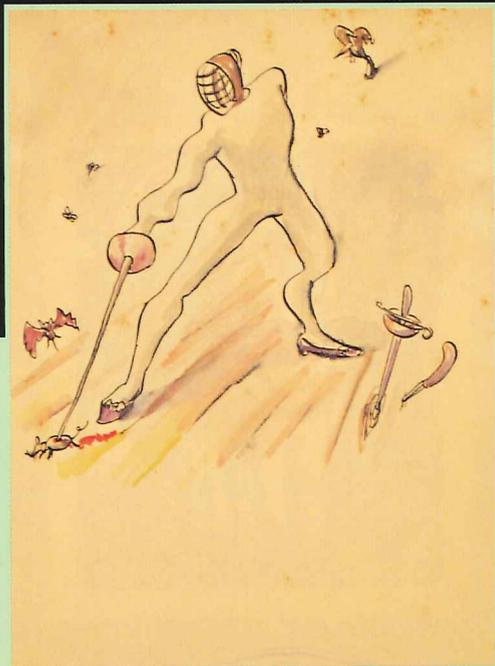
He was part actor, part eccentric. In his self-portraits, Francisco Díaz de León (1897-1973) dresses up, seems not to take himself seriously, and at the same time respects his own role in the images he has created. They are scenes and artifice, where the wardrobe and pose is theatrical, even mocking. The titles give us a clue: *Dressed like a Painter* and *Dressed in Rough Cotton, at San Carlos* depict two different characters interpreted by Díaz de León like a kind of unaffected representation of the stereotype. Nevertheless, the artist's image does not fade; the photographs portray him and his characters.



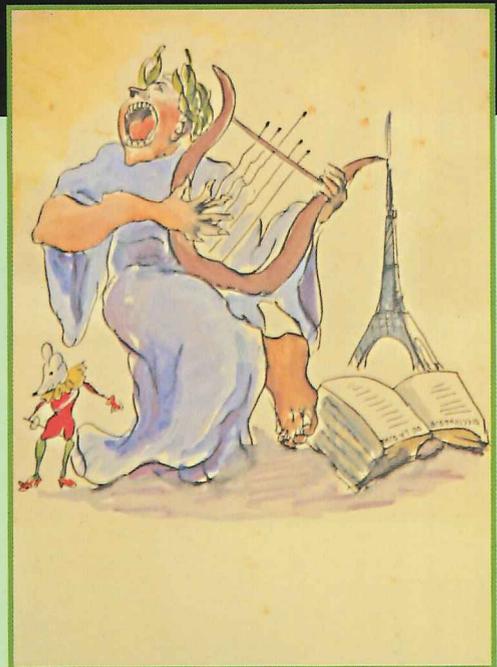
*Self-portrait, Bulmaro Guzmán and Francisco Díaz de León,
38 x 27 cm, 1922 (digital print from vintage silver).*



Photos by Patricia Pérez



Swordsman, 29.5 x 17.5 cm, 1937 (watercolor on paper).



French Minstrel, 29.5 x 17.5 cm, 1937 (watercolor on paper).

So, the CCUT Blaisten Collection temporary exhibition introducing us to the artistic and intellectual world of Francisco Díaz de León begins this way, with his self-portraits. Born in Aguascalientes in 1897, Díaz de León was brought up in close contact with craftsmanship, since his father had a bookbinding workshop. He studied sketching at the local art academy, and at 19, emigrated to Mexico City to study painting in the San Carlos Academy, where he later taught. He studied engraving, watercolors, and oil painting, but his restlessness led him to also work as an editor, designer, illustrator, typographer, and photographer. In 1938, he founded the School of Book Arts, later to become the National Graphic Arts School.



Worker, 21.1 x 14.5 cm, 1929 (stencil).

All the works in the show are linked; the interconnection among them can be divined in the topics Díaz de León used to cover using different techniques.

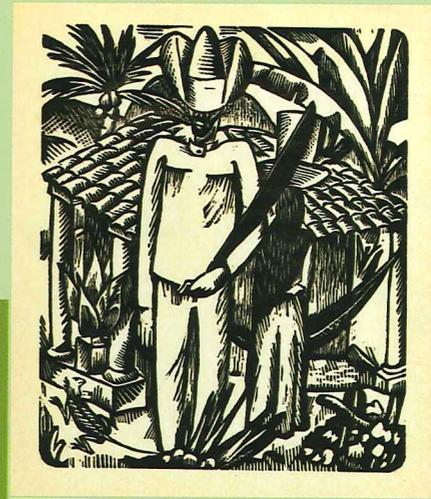


Indians on Market Day, 100 x 122 cm, 1922 (oil on canvas).

All the works in the show are linked; the interconnection among them can be divined in the topics Díaz de León used to cover using different techniques. The series of self-portraits contrasts with his engravings and photographs of the indigenous world, where what is shown is no longer the montage humorously presenting a stereotype (like *Self-portrait Disguised as the People*), but his interpretation of reality. The engravings function as small extracts of what Díaz de León perceived in the faces of the indigenous, particularly the women: their roots in the land and their traditions, hard work, and their eternal role as mothers.

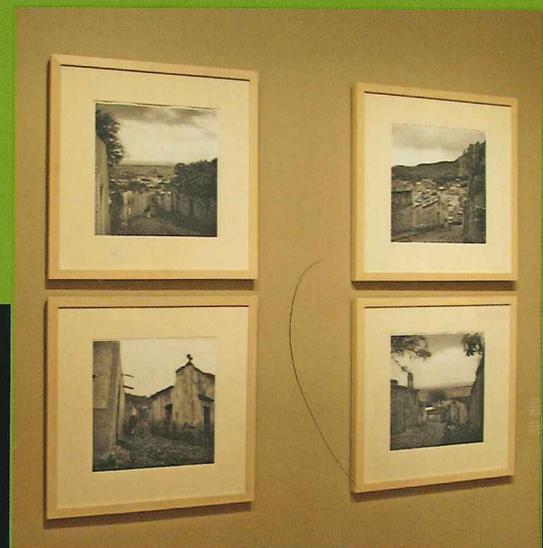
Whether staged or representing reality, Díaz de León's works are also an affront to society. In the show, the portraits and engravings of indigenous people are counterposed to the engravings depicting the concept of a liberal woman. Relaxed female nudes with their backs to the viewer and some of these together with the figure of the Devil are a symbol of rebellion.

The "Landscapes" section represents an aesthetic pleasure that also attracts the artist, the delight he found in something as simple as the shadow of trees in a forest or a town fountain.



Man from the Coast, 19.6 x 16.2 cm, 1929 (linoleum print).

This duality in the artist's work, composed scenes and images taken from real events, can also be seen in the section called "Military Matters," a series of photographs about war and violence that let the viewer clearly know that some of them are not spontaneous shots, but posed. This is the case of *Executed by Firing Squad*, an image of a young man at the center, surrounded by rifles aiming at him, which, despite being almost cinematographic, transmits the raw nature of a practice that does have a reference point in reality. *Mourning the Dead*, on the other hand, is a spontaneous shot made of lights and shadows and looks that show the tragedy of violence.





Lights and shadows are an essential part of Díaz de León's work. In the "Landscapes" section, they are the protagonists of the engravings and photographs, which at the same time complement each other, establishing a dialogue among them. This section represents the aesthetic pleasure that also attracts the artist, the delight he found in something as simple as the shadow of trees in a forest, a town fountain, the streets in Mexico City neighborhoods (Tlalpan, Coyoacán, Chimalistac), and the way that these scenarios are transformed when inhabited.

Finally, the show includes some stencils depicting workers and others with colorful figures that tend to be caricatures. Together with these are some examples of Díaz de León's editorial design work, like bookplates, vignettes, and ornamental initials that are examples of the versatility of his work.

As a whole, the exhibition brings us an artist who represented and interpreted the reality of Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century, a man who mastered the techniques he used to create his work, and who resuscitated and disseminated the technique of woodblock engraving, and the arts in general. His work is that curious mixture of reality and fiction, and in the end, the viewer discovers that most of the time one nourishes the other. Díaz de León stages and portrays, acts and represents, and even has fun, but always with a critical gaze that invites reflection. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Leticia Hernández, "CCU Tlatelolco, iluminado como un faro," November 23, 2010, <http://www.milenio.com/node/5684368>.



Vignettes and large ornamental initials.

CCU TLATELOLCO

Ricardo Flores Magón 1
 Colonia Nonoalco-Tlatelolco
 Del. Cuauhtémoc, Mexico City
 C.P. 06995
 Phone: (54 55) 5583-0960
 / 5583-4061

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Experimental Museum

Tobías Ostrander*



THE VENUE

El Eco is open to artists who experiment, play with emotions, and venture into interdisciplinary art. It is inspired in the matchless architecture and conceptual interests of Mathias Goeritz, Mexican sculptor of German ancestry who settled in Mexico after World War II. Goeritz left one of the most important artistic legacies in our country's cultural history.

The museum's construction has a singular history. At a painting and sculpture exhibition in 1952, Goeritz met Daniel Mont, a Mexican entrepreneur interested in art galleries, among other things. With the intention of discovering something different from the status quo, Mont commissioned him to design a museum that would meld his commercial interests and the avant-garde spirit of the times. The premise was, "Do whatever you feel like doing." So, on Mexico City's Sullivan Street was born El Eco, designed like a poetic structure based on what Goeritz called "the Manifesto of Emotional Architecture," in open defiance of the reigning functionalism. The idea was that the layout of corridors, roofs, walls, rooms, and doorways would lead its visitors to reflect on their experience emotionally.

It is specifically within this museum's spiritual theatricality that the Mexican-born, São Paulo-based artist Héctor Zamora positions his artistic intervention *Offered Paradises*. The artist has filled the central patio with a multitude of mini-architectures, the brightly colored inflatable castles, arches, mountains, and ramps that are normally rented to entertain children on their birthdays or at other family celebrations. He has closed the entrances to the patio, denying access; transforming the space into a gigantic box, open to the sky, but sealed on its sides and filled to the top with these gigantic toys. The viewer is only allowed visual access to this fantastical, inflatable world, to gaze at it through the large square window of the main gallery, evoking the experience of looking through a shop window at desirable items. The artist has placed a single element in the interior of the building: a framed photograph, hung on the surface of black tower. It portrays these plastic elements deflated in the patio, as flat, wrinkled shapes.

Inflatable sculptures have featured prominently in Zamora's recent work. The artist has described his interest in them as primarily formal. He is drawn to the transformative play they establish as they move from two dimensions into three, symbolically referencing a transition from painting to sculpture. These investigations are emphasized in *Offered Pa-*



Offered Paradises

A Project by Héctor Zamora

radises by the photograph the artist has included, whose two-dimensional format and subject both reference painting, while concurrently offering a comparison between the flat elements depicted and the three-dimensional, sculptural forms on view in the patio.

Most of Zamora's recent projects involving inflatable forms have been produced for art fairs or biennials, giving his use of these materials a site-specific character. Within a contemporary context, inflatable structures are often placed along highways to advertise car dealerships or other businesses; they have been used for entertainment or sightseeing in the form of hot-air balloons or blimps. Within the spectacle of art fairs and biennials, the inflatables Zamora shows become a critique of the commercial or high-end entertainment environments that these cultural contexts have come to represent.

Spectacle informs the cultural critiques that the current installation establishes. Perhaps the first spectacle *Offered Paradises* addresses is that of high modernism, its historical weight and spiritual aspirations, as exemplified by the building and manifesto produced by Goeritz. The structures Zamora chooses reference the architecture of El Eco and geometric

* Curator of the exhibitions and the museum's director.
Photos by Patricia Pérez.

abstraction in general, but challenge these cultural sites' seriousness through their status as temporary and silly constructions, offering themselves as primal, simplistic examples of emotive architecture.

The artist also sees these inflatable toys as particularly ubiquitous in Mexico, and his more acute reference to spectacle involves a critique of his native country. In the past, the Mexican government has invested heavily in dramatic public spectacles, ice-skating rinks and snow in the Zócalo central square, or parades and aquatic events on Reforma Avenue. These extravaganzas multiplied during the 2010 Bicentennial year, but have come to characterize the current presidential administration and its political strategies. These kinds of events offer a paradise of entertainment to a public increasingly burdened with unemployment, drug-war violence, and general insecurity. They evoke sites of wealth, travel, and leisure that are inaccessible to the majority of Mexico's population and, as such, represent "castles in the air," unreachable aspirations. The inflatable castles and temporary entertainment structures of the installation directly reference these political dynamics, most acutely through their inaccessibility, since Zamora denies access to the temporary pleasures that these forms offer by sealing them behind the museum's glass doors and windows.

The artist sees these inflatable toys as particularly ubiquitous in Mexico; his more acute reference to spectacle involves a critique of his native country.



Appropriation, Reproduction and Seriality In Erlea Maneros Zabala's Work

Originally trained as a painter, Erlea Maneros Zabala has developed a conceptual practice that analyzes and deconstructs how images are put together, while addressing the contemporary cultural implications of the diverse forms and mediums she engages. Her works address abstraction, but often through the use of figurative material. They involve appropriation, reproduction, and seriality. These production strategies challenge the traditional emphasis in painting placed on the creation of a unique, authored object. Imbedded in her investigations is a critique of conventional values placed on art, particularly romantic notions of beauty, the sublime, and art as a spiritual experience.

With her project for El Eco, the artist requested the opportunity to investigate the Mathias Goeritz archive, currently housed at the National Center for Research, Documentation, and Information on the Visual Arts (Cenidiap). In reviewing this material, which includes slides, photographs, and newspaper and magazine clippings, Maneros Zabala was particularly drawn to a set of images and related materials by Michel Zabé. This photographer documented Goeritz's work in the

1950s and 1960s, including several images produced during the opening days of El Eco. The archive includes contact sheets and notes by Zabé on these photographs. Through the croppings, edits, and other aesthetic negotiations these materials reveal, a particular voice is articulated in the archive, one deeply involved in the imaginary constructed around Goeritz. Maneros Zabala was interested in giving presence to the normally hidden role of the documentary photographer, as a way of de-mystifying the "master" Goeritz and destabilizing his centrality within both the archive and the museum, the commissioning site for her production.

A hand-written note from Zabé becomes central to her project: two index cards that address his envisioned user of the archive, the phantom viewer of his photographs. With underlined words and exclamation marks in various sections, this short text emphatically describes how any reflections of light one might see on the surface of the Goeritz mural recorded in the images, is indeed intentional and an integral part of the conception of the artwork. The text goes on to share anecdotes about the German artist's strong personality



The two copies of Zabé's images.

The works produced by Maneros Zabala became elements within a larger installation that engages the architectural character and history of the Mont Room.

and aesthetic convictions. For Maneros Zabala, in form and content, this note reveals several conditions. While its tone is condescending regarding his public's possible misreading of these slides, it displays extreme reverence of the creator of the source material, an importance demonstrated by Zabé through his emphasis on the truth conveyed in his photographic images, how they are able to convey the artist's genius; the elevated manner in which Zabé positions Goeritz, places himself in a secondary or subservient role, a structuring that Maneros Zabala seeks to invert through her appropriation and elevation of his comments within her new artwork. For this project, she transforms a digital image of these index cards, which she took while at the archive, into a photographic negative and prints them in a traditional photographic format. Through this analog process, she symbolically transports the text of the photographer back to the medium of its referent. Through this abstract analytical process, Maneros Zabala both layers and conflates form and conceptual content.

In a similar move, for another work, the artist reproduces two versions of a single image produced by Zabé. A black woman with a coat spread over her shoulders stands by the sculpture *Serpent*, produced by Goeritz for the El Eco courtyard. During the opening of the museum in 1953, the African-American Walter Hicks dance troupe performed a piece choreographed by film-maker Luis Buñuel, during which they moved around and through this large sculpture. This now mythical event was recorded and promoted photographically with images of the troupe in tropical costume, taken from

above and from ground level near *Serpent*. The Zabé image appropriated by Maneros Zabala most likely portrays one of the members of the Walter Hicks group. In this photograph however, the sculpture is secondary, with only the detail of its form recorded in the lower left of the frame. It is this woman who is central, with her back turned to the camera, gazing down at the sculpture. Maneros Zabala has reprinted two copies of the image, one displaying Zabé's cropping marks, editions not shown in the second, repeated image. As an "unofficial" photograph in which Goeritz's work is not central, this image depicts Zabé's own subjectivity and as such becomes another significant moment within the overall Goeritz archive when Zabé's supportive or peripheral role is altered and his vision becomes the protagonist.

These photographic works produced by Maneros Zabala have become elements within a larger installation that engages the architectural character and history of the Mont Room where they are exhibited. Through these displacements, reproductions, and formal recontextualizations, the project complicates the artist's chosen target, Goeritz's sacrosanct legacy. Her forms challenge this cultural construct, critiquing the works and spiritualist ideology of El Eco's founder through their materialist investigations of the institutions, substructures, and individuals that have helped sustain Goeritz's position in art history. Through such inquiry, Maneros Zabala seeks to establish an unromantic view of this artist's production and, in doing so, maintain its contemporary viability. Her works additionally seek to activate both the vision and analytical capabilities of the viewer. They demand that we move beyond the immediacy of the images given to us, to look behind, around, or through them, to acknowledge the cultural and political structures they perform. ■■■



MUSEO EL ECO

Sullivan 43, Colonia San Rafael,
Del. Cuauhtémoc
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The Nezahualcóyotl Hall



The Nezahualcóyotl Hall was the first building constructed in the University Cultural Center in 1976. Planned specifically for symphonic music, today it is home to the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra, Mexico's oldest symphonic ensemble, and is considered one of the world's most important concert halls. Recently renovated, it has dedicated its lobby to presenting temporary exhibitions of different genres of work in small and medium-sized formats. But never before had this space hosted an exhibit as fascinating in its visual scope and the unsuspected concatenations it unleashes as the one described below.



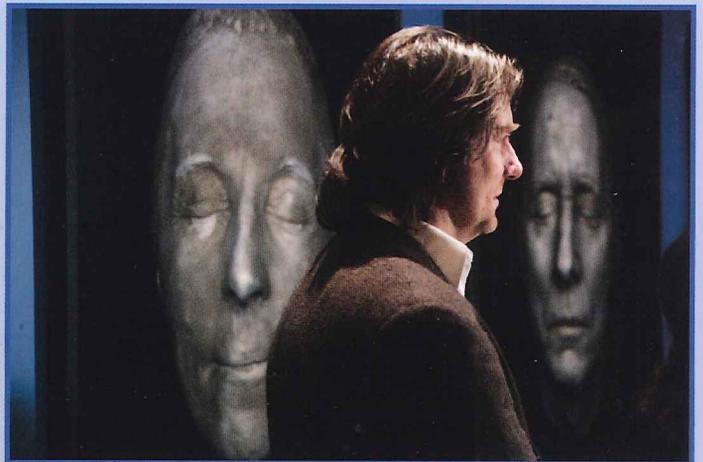
Juan Antonio López/García (UNAM)

“By thy mask I shall know thee” The Revelation of the True Face

Estela Alcántara*

For three months (January to March 2011), audience members at the Nezahualc6yotl Hall were surprised by a feeling of estrangement and wonder as they wandered through the lobby before the “curtain going up” announcement: assaulted by the arresting faces of Danish artist Torben Eskerod’s exhibition “By Thy Mask, I Shall Know Thee.”

Fifteen figures refuse to look back at the viewer determined to comprehend them. It seems like, dazzled or frightened by the flash of the camera, they have all decided to close their eyes to the light in different ways: the tensest stiffly and uncomfortably show the wrinkles around their eyes, the



*Head of the UNAM Press and Cultural Outreach Department.
Photos courtesy of UNAM’s Press and Cultural Outreach Department.



creases around their mouths and on their foreheads; others manage to negotiate with the moment to eek out a smile.

The viewer immediately decides to go beyond the petrified faces. Who are they? Are they alive or dead? Up to then, any deduction is just part of a phantasmagoria. The figures were never in front of the photographer’s camera; only their masks were. But the observer cannot get away from the optical illusion and continues to fantasize about the identity of the “people” in front of him/her: they are living, dead, phantasmagorical faces. They are like Maeterlinck’s *The Blind*, a hive of faces with closed eyes, suspended in a vacuum and

Eskerod’s photographs resist the traditional reading of a portrait because we cannot see the subjects’ eyes. Nevertheless, the faces of the people who are behind the masks seem extraordinarily present.



in silence, in the profound darkness of a landscape. We are comforted by the soft, silver light that makes their faces shine, but the absence of sight is what unleashes the conflict and triggers fragility and fear of them.

THE SPIRIT BEHIND THE HUMAN FACE

At one end of the gallery, lit in blue so we can ponder the faces bathed in silver emerging from a black background, the face of a woman with a warmer expression is the first friendly wink at the viewer. It is Danish writer Karen Blixen (*Out of Africa* [1937], *Babette's Feast* [1952]) immortalized by dentist and artist Holger Winther, who made the plaster mask while the writer was seated in his dentist's chair.

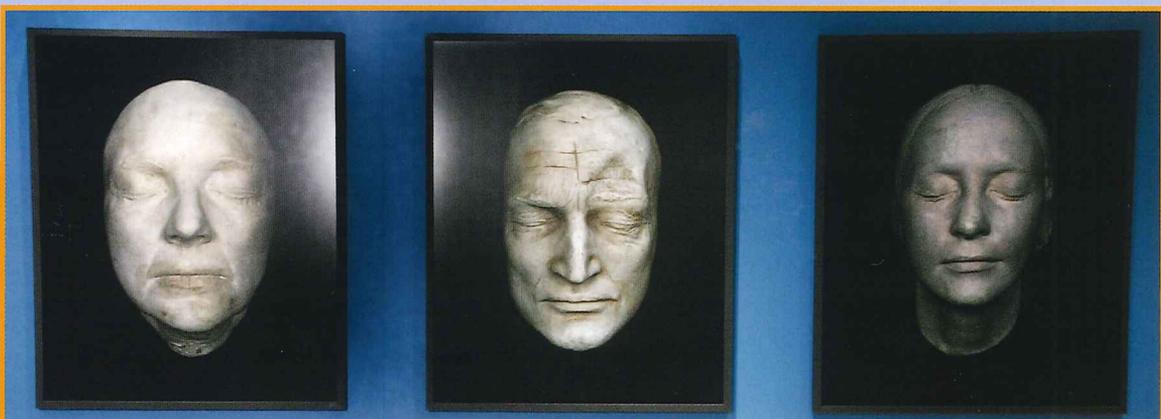
Blixen's mask, plus the faces of other celebrities of mid-twentieth-century Danish life like Niels Bohr, Nobel laureate for physics (1922), and Johannes V. Jensen, Nobel laureate for literature (1944), are part of Winther's collection, currently housed at the Frederiksborg Castle Museum, north of Copenhagen.

This is where Danish artist Torben Eskerod first saw the collection and decided to make 15 large-format, black and white photographs of the masks Winther made in the 1940s and 1950s in Copenhagen.

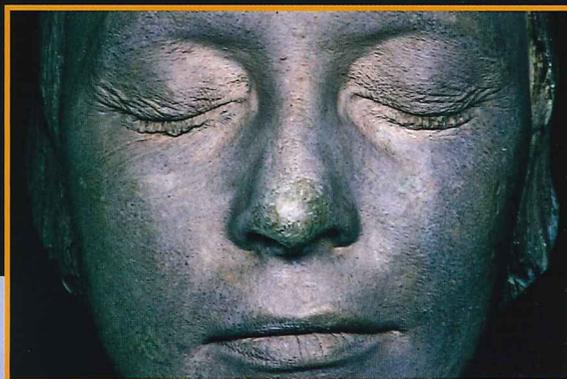
At that time, many celebrities let Holger Winther, known as the dentist of Copenhagen's high society, make masks of them. Once his patients were in the chair, he would ask them to stay a few minutes more to make a plaster mask that he would then add to his private collection.

Eskerod discovered the masks in the exhibition "100 Years of Lifeless Portraits" at the Natural History Museum in Copenhagen. As he walked through the exhibit, he was stupefied by them because they had a particular expression, something he was looking for in his portraits of living persons. He immediately asked the curator if there were more of these faces, and together, they discovered in the museum's attics a hidden collection of 67 life and death masks. Based on this find, Eskerod did a first series of works that were images of the masks, but inside their plastic bags, just as he had found them in the attic. When he saw the semi-transparent bags on the faces, they seem to contain each person's last breath.

He decided to take off the bags and photograph the second series. It seemed to him that the difference between a life mask and a death mask is that one theory says that at the very moment of death, a person's true face is revealed, perhaps that of his/her soul and spirit.

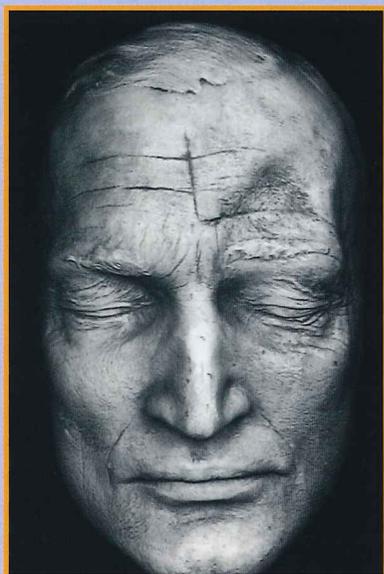
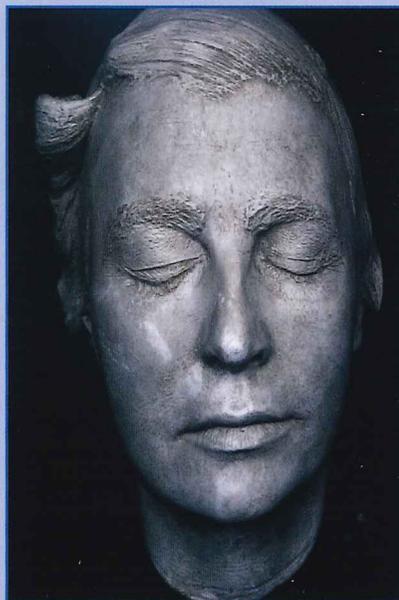


The fascination caused by these masks-cum-photographs stems from a certain proximity between the beautiful and the terrible. The death masks taken from persons "in life" lead you to that same indeterminate zone of the sinister where art appears.



According to Cecilie Mejer, Torben Eskerod's photographs of plaster life masks explore the expressive potential of the human face and open up questions about the degree to which the human mind can be portrayed on the features of the face. These images remind us of the point of view —commonly shared in the past— that photography was more objective than any other medium and that, therefore, it could show the true image of a human being.

Eskerod's photographs resist the type of traditional reading of a portrait because we cannot see the subjects' eyes. Nevertheless, the faces of the people who are behind the masks seem extraordinarily present.



THE PLACE OF BEAUTY AND THE SINISTER

In the gallery, attracted by the visual force of what is coming together before your eyes, you, the viewer, cannot avoid a certain sense of estrangement and wonder. You return to each face, linger over every fold and wrinkle, twice frozen: first by the plaster of the mask and then by the photograph.

You note that the fascination caused by these masks-cum-photographs stems from a certain proximity between the beautiful and the terrible. The death masks taken from persons "in life" lead you to that same indeterminate zone of the sinister where art appears. And, as Eugenio Trías says, aesthetic pleasure emerges before the imminence of a form that should remain hidden. In each photograph that has captured the perfection of the human face with all its geography and expressive plenitude, beauty covers something else: the presence of death. So, as Rilke wrote, "Beauty is the beginning of a terror that we are barely able to endure." **MM**

SALA NEZAHUALCÓYOTL

Centro Cultural Universitario
Insurgentes sur 3000
Ciudad Universitaria
Mexico City, C.P. 04510
Phone: (54 55) 5622-7125
(Ticket box office)

<http://www.musica.unam.mx>

Helen Escobedo's Transparency¹

Jorge Reynoso Pohlenz*



Courtesy of Patronato Ruta de la Amistad

Helen Escobedo, *Door to the Wind* (Station 18 of the "Route of Friendship").

In many ways, the Route of Friendship, the sequence of urban sculptures along the southern stretch of Mexico City's Beltway, were a series of standards proclaiming the fortunate growth of this part of the city. At least, that meaning of the project crossed through the minds of the government officials who supported Mathias Goeritz (1915-1990) in his endeavor to invite a group of outstanding internationally known sculptors in the context of the 1968 Olym-

pic Games. More than 40 years later, we can see that the city's growth was not all that fortunate; the feverish inertia of real estate speculation covered up the very sculptures that represented the enthusiasm about modernity.

The paradoxical tensions between authorities, artists, and the use of public space that come with projects of this scale were felt by Helen Escobedo from the moment her own sculpture for it began to be built. Goeritz had tenaciously insisted on her participation; several of Helen's models were rejected before the project committee approved the nth version, to be located in the —at that time— remote area of

* Technical secretary of the UNAM University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC).

Cuemanco.² While preparing the foundations for the work, Helen realized that the placement was not the best *vis-à-vis* the direction of traffic that the sculpture would be the aesthetic framework for. But not much could be done: the inertia of resources and infrastructure totally alien to this kind of consideration meant that the construction was already finished. According to the pre-established plan, that inertia would also cover the steel rod skeleton with concrete. But, before that happened, Helen could divine in that skeleton a work that she had not anticipated, one that in its transparent form enriched the sensation of volume and scale as well as its interaction with its surroundings. However, the piece Helen discovered inside the other seemed provisional, “unfinished” in the conventional view of how public sculpture was viewed at that time.

This episode was one of the many that guided Helen’s artistic criteria toward more flexible strategies for creative action. If permanence affected the work’s fluidity, impact, and flexibility, Helen tended to sacrifice it in favor of the ephemeral. If the resources invested compromised artistic criteria, she found another set of resources to work with, always favoring the intellectual over the material. If the context of the installation affected the piece’s consistency or look, she would consider and integrate it in the concept of the work from the beginning. This is not the first time I write about this anecdote, but I repeat it because of its significance: when asked about the graffiti on the Cuemanco sculpture, Helen responded that it would be best to offer the urban tribes scaffolding so they could tag the work evenly, as a whole.

* * *

Goeritz was not inviting a novice to contribute to the Route of Friendship. Before she was 20, Helen had already studied with Germán Cueto and at the London Royal College of Art; she had handled both traditional and new techniques, and she knew figures like Henry Moore personally. In a characteristic gesture, she said that in England she had learned more from watching her fellow students work than from her teachers. Before she was 27, she had already been invited to head up the UNAM Department of Visual Arts. From the platform of the University City’s University Museum of Arts and Sciences (MUCA), Helen developed a program of exhibitions that was an effective counterpoint to the orientation of the National Fine Arts Institute. As the intense, conflictive year 1968 approached, Helen organized national and international exhibitions facilitating the dissemination of new

trends in Mexico, turning the MUCA into a space for young artists to be known and recognized: informalism, opt art, or kinetic art combined with shows of Siqueiros’s work, the creative use of garbage, or folk art celebrating the Day of the Dead. At the same time that some of the new proposals hosted by the MUCA, Chapultepec Park’s House on the Lake, or the Aristos University Gallery were a far cry from traditional formats and strategies, favoring group and experimental ways of working, for Helen—as well as for museographer Alfonso Soto Soria—the MUCA itself became a laboratory for exploring new ways of presenting art and its relationship with the public. Helen would repeatedly recognize the importance of the MUCA’s museographical exercises and how enriching teamwork was for her own work.

* * *

Last May, while Helen was still with us—she passed away in September—I participated in the roundtable discussions organized by the La Esmeralda National School of Painting, Sculpture, and Engraving at the National Arts Center to honor her and reflect on the importance of her work. A few days before the roundtable, I thought I should talk about

**Her awareness of
the need to extend the social scope
of contemporary art may well have been one
of her main contributions.**



Helen Escobedo in her studio.

Photo by Barry Domínguez

Helen Escobedo: A Brief Biography (1934-2010)

*I have to put in three dimensions
what I feel in my gut.*

Born in Mexico City, July 28, 1934, of a Mexican father and an English mother, Helen Escobedo studied humanities at the Motilinia University. But, her artistic gifts, clear from the time she was a little girl and encouraged by her mother, led her to take her first sculpting classes with Germán Cueto in the Mexico City College in 1951. After receiving a scholarship to the Royal College of Art of London, she stayed in Europe from 1952 to 1956. The very year she returned to Mexico, she had her first solo exhibition at the Gallery of Mexican Art. In 1968, she met Mathias Goeritz, and from that moment on, her work aimed for integration with architecture. She produced a series of polychromatic two- and three-meter high panels called “dynamic walls,” which sparked Goeritz’s enthusiasm enough to invite her to participate in creating the “Route of Friendship” for the 1968 nineteenth Olympic Games in Mexico City.



White Corridor, 1969, The MUAC-UNAM Collection.

Courtesy of MUAC-UNAM

Established as an artist with special interest in urban work, she began a search for spaces related to her visual interventions. That research led her to integrate art and space to end up by creating “permanent” and “ephemeral” installations. Helen Escobedo made change her constant; she created an oeuvre that included jewelry (in silver), sketches, engravings, paintings, collages, architectural design, large sculptures, and works she called “installation art,” like those made out of organic waste (branches, trunks, and dry leaves, among other things), put outside in public recreational spaces, which meant they did not last long. About the relationship between her work and people, in her presentation for the itinerant exhibition “Exodus,” in November 2009, she said, “I’m a visual artist; everything I feel in my gut, I have to get out in three dimensions, and I almost always deal with human problems in life, ecology —water concerns me enormously. Migration has changed the country, something terrible we see among those who come from the south to cross over and among our own people, looking for a better life or more money to send to their relatives. It’s a terribly sad situation.”

In 1986, she was appointed a lifetime member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and the Arts of Belgium; in 1991, she received a Guggenheim fellowship; and, after an intense, innovative career, in 1999, the Mexican government gave her a National Fund for Culture and the Arts fellowship.

The creator of about 30 works of monumental sculpture, located in different spaces like Chapultepec Forest (Mexico), the Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Bethanien Art House) in Berlin, the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans, and the Helsinki City Art Museum (Finland), she died at age 76, on September 16, 2010, almost a year after receiving the 2009 National Prize for Science and the Arts.

María Cristina Hernández Escobar
Assistant Editor

her dual role as creator and cultural promoter, but I later became convinced that there was actually no duality to these two aspects of her character: both came from the same creative impulse that simultaneously stemmed from her commitment as a cultural official, a contributor and independent artist. It was the same Helen who, with contradictory feelings, participated in the Route of Friendship and was disturbed by the armored vehicles parked a few feet away from her MUCA office during the student conflict. Completely alien to the hypocrisy common in Mexico's cultural milieu, Helen knew how to maintain her integrity and independent criteria in a delicate balance between her personal work and her public image. She also maintained that balance between her life with her life partner and raising her two children.

**Polyglot, charismatic,
and cosmopolitan, Helen's personality
must have been uncomfortable
for many sensibilities.**

In the early 1960s, consolidating her career as an artist and a promoter in Mexico before the age of 30 must have been no easy task. Polyglot, charismatic, and cosmopolitan, Helen's personality must have been uncomfortable for many sensibilities. Some photographers in the late 1960s portray the energetic head of the UNAM Visual Arts Department (later to become the Department of Museums and Galleries, between 1974 and 1978) wearing daring miniskirts that contrasted in their svelte lightness with the heavy dark suits of university officials. Given the provocation of the artistic proposals and communities she defended, Helen resorted to arming herself with aristocratic grace, which she displayed equally when talking to a university president or, as she always did, giving an interview to a young, unknown university researcher, breaking protocol and eliminating distances by offering a glass of tequila at noontime.

This social grace, both rigorously correct and affectionate, was not divorced from her intense, professional work. Many people avoid public service fearing administrative work; but, Helen understood very well that, in the area of artistic production she promoted, one that in many senses she made it possible to formally inaugurate in Mexico, administration,



Sui Generis, 1970.

Courtesy of MUCA-UNAM



Courtesy of MUAC-UNAM

Graphic Environment, 1970.

For her, the artistic event was a place that made it possible to represent, make visible, and conscious what was in the public interest.

management, and programming were part of the creative process, not inconveniences, but parts of the substance that makes a work of art emerge as a public event. Her awareness of the need to extend the social scope of contemporary art may well have been one of her main contributions.

The political, social, economic, or ecological were not just pretexts for justifying artistic action in the projects she conceived and participated in. Rather, for her, the artistic event was a place that made it possible to represent, make visible, and conscious what was in the public interest; not an ornament for an institution or a city, or recreation or decoration for the world, but the space we share and that art makes possible. Completely divorced from any kind of pamphleteering, this place for what is public that Helen conceived of was not a place of slogans; and the depth of its meaning could be peppered with a huge sense of humor. Her raw materials became those of the day-to-day world, including what was marginalized and

discarded. By finding aesthetic stimulation in what were apparently the least favorable places and events, Helen gave us back an enriched reality. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The author wishes to thank Pilar García for giving him access to Cuauhtémoc Medina's 2005 videotaped interview with Helen Escobedo, part of the research material for the exhibition "The Era of Discrepancies. Visual Art and Culture in Mexico, 1968-1997," hosted by MUCA in 2007.

² An area located at the southern part of Mexico City, near another famous place, Xochimilco. [Editor's Note.]

FURTHER READING

Eder, Rita, *Tiempo de fractura. El arte contemporáneo en el Museo de Arte Moderno de México durante la gestión de Helen Escobedo 1982-1984* (Mexico City: UAM / UNAM, at press).

Schmilchuk, Graciela, *Helen Escobedo: pasos en la arena* (Mexico City: Editorial Turner, 2001).

The Making of Self as Bridge: Pilar Rodríguez Aranda, Poet and Videopoet

Claire Joysmith*



Courtesy of Pilar Rodríguez

Frame from the video *Return or the Inexactness of Centre*.

Coiffed with a striking mass of curly pepper-and-salt hair, Pilar Rodríguez Aranda's broad smile inaugurates her happy laughter. As she talks, her candid brown-eyed expression matches her openness in talking about her motivations and work. A versatile creative artist, she has for many years now set her heart mainly on her own brand of "videopoetry," bridging words and images, in many ways becoming herself a bridge.

What is videopoetry and what kind of scope does she perceive it to have?

Pilar: As I understand it, videopoetry would be a genre within experimental video, in which a video becomes a piece generating the same feeling a poem would: mystery, reflection, musicality, and awakening of the senses. Some people

read poems, adding images, and call this a videopoem. One could call that, at the most, an "adaptation." A true videopoem, as I see it, is "born" with and within the media: that is, it could very well have no words—or it could be just words. But it would be a poem that could exist only in video. Of course, it's difficult to define, to draw a line. An experimental video can be poetic and considered a poem; I guess it's the creator's intention that comes into play here. When I began working with the video medium, it was only later I found out I was doing "videoart," and now I refer to it as "videopoetry."

It's an ideal form for me because I started writing verses as a teenager, although I also wanted to be a filmmaker. I guess I could call myself a visual poet, since I also explore photography. I've also worked with radio and enjoy performing my poetry live. With video I can explore every facet of poetry, and then go beyond each of these as individual forms

* Researcher at CISAN-UNAM.



Pilar Rodríguez

Self-portrait.

“Videopoetry is an ideal form for me because I started writing verses as a teenager, although I also wanted to be a filmmaker. I guess I could call myself a visual poet, since I also explore photography.”

and create a larger piece, where more meanings are involved. Also, in video, time is a prime element, which makes it very different from, let’s say, the printed form. Therefore, I can collaborate with musicians or performers, or else do it all on my own, especially now that technology is readily available.

* * *

As we talk about the malleability of videopoetry as form, I ask her about how this medium is able to articulate a collage or medley of experiences, perspectives, perceptions, and feeling worlds, in addition to bridging the individual and the collective, the private and the public self/selves.

Pilar: In terms of creating a video, I blend words, sounds, images, patterns, repetitions, light, silence; really, the possibilities are endless, that’s how malleable it is. The other day I saw a brief piece consisting of two phrases and one image;

in my video *Return or the Inexactness of Centre*, I have various layers of images and sounds going on simultaneously, lasting close to 20 minutes.

What’s wonderful about photography and video (and audio recording) is that one captures (that is, take notes, document) events, colors, textures, things, the world outside. Writing requires a different process. Words surge from within, and then I have to find a pen and bring them out. However, all of these are private actions.

But artwork only truly becomes alive when it becomes public. Without an audience it continues to be a work in progress—that’s how I view it. When you share your work and generate a reaction, then as a creator, artist, communicator, whatever, you have finally completed the circle. My pieces are very personal and subjective, so having an audience gives me a sense of being part of a larger world, because the others “get it,” so the personal becomes collective.

One of my first really “mature” works (in contrast to prior student videos or films I produced) was *The Idea We Live In* (1991), a collage of texts, written by others and some of mine included, around a common theme. I put together all these phrases and excerpts of texts; I was saying we all think/ feel/ say similar things, in this case around the idea of how “we all carry our home with us.” In fact, the piece was inspired by a painting I saw of a man pulling a child’s wagon containing a miniature version of his home.

The other thing that made this piece so strong was collaborating with others. I have this anecdote: the man who did the lighting and camera work, George Dolis, told me after reading the script, “I didn’t understand it at all, but I came up with some images.” I think poetry is like that, the way dreams can be; we don’t need to understand the meaning, or the details, we only need to let it grow inside us, whether it’s the rhythm or a phrase, as long as something touches our unconscious as well as our conscience, our soul, and our mind, then it has accomplished its purpose in life.

* * *

Pilar Rodríguez Aranda asserts she “totally believes” that “the personal is political,” so I ask her how this finds expression in her creative work.

Pilar: Every choice/action I take in life has consequences: what I eat, where I buy, what I do with my trash, if I recycle or use a car, how I speak, the words I use, the way I deal with my feelings, whether I pay my taxes or pay someone under the table to get some bureaucratic procedure done. Every choice/

action others take affects me and others as well, so how could we say the personal is not political?

When I write about my having been molested or how I feel about women being murdered, I am opening myself up and, therefore, others might feel they can do the same. It's the first step toward healing. We are a sick society, or as writer Susan Griffin would say,¹ we are the result of the ideologies of madness, and until each of us is aware of this, we'll continue to reproduce these, generating more and more sickness, whether physical, mental, and/or spiritual.

* * *

Pilar Rodríguez Aranda's work has received wide recognition in the U.S., Mexico, and Europe and she has been the recipient of several awards. Personally, I find her videopoem *Ella es frontera/Border She Is* (1996) to be a small masterpiece of flowing visual and oral creativity that interweaves, bridges, connects and brings together—even as it clearly recognizes a wide range of fronteras/borders, of differences. I find it provocative in the ways it explores the soft hurt-places where the bridging touch happens, and the gashing within that replicates in outer heridas (wounds). I ask her to comment on this videopoem, its main roots, rivers, and clouds, as well as on the reasons she resorted to the poetry of several Chicana women writers.

Pilar: Araceli Zúñiga once called this video “a classic.” I'm honored by such comments. I guess I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so when I see my videos I mainly see all the things I wish I could change, ha! In any case, from its inception, *Border She Is* emerged from my experience living in Austin, Texas. It was not only that I actually met other women poets, learned about the Chicana/o experience of bilingualism and biculturalism, but I was also touched by their solidarity, their sense of community, and their committed political activism.

Originally I thought of doing four different small pieces, adapting the work of four poets: Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Lucha Corpi, and a fourth one I can't recall now. In the end, I did something similar to *The Idea We Live In*, a collage, where I interweave whole poems or fragments of poems written by Chicana poets. I wanted to pay homage to these women who had inspired me, who taught me I was not the only one who felt this need to define myself in a divided world. The “main character” in the story is a poet who is starting to write, and

through her imagination and words—really, the words of many others—she creates a poem, perhaps at the end of a sleepless night.

In fact, this video starts with, “I am alone now,” from one of Sandra Cisneros' poems. And that was the other aspect that interested me and continues to be one of my obsessions: why has it taken us so long, as women, to learn to live alone? Alone as in not married, or being a man's “other.” It has been as if we are nothing without a male, and even if we know this isn't true, we still struggle with this nowadays.

I think that *Border She Is* talks to other women, because it explores this very same struggle of becoming “free women,” as Doris Lessing would say. I “translated” this into the video by using the words and poetry of other women who happen to be Mexican-American, whose duality is so close to the surface that it's easy to identify and identify with. Before I left Mexico, I never felt divided by culture or language. But as a woman, in terms of what was “acceptable” or was expected from me, I was constantly being told to bury my instincts, my “wildness.” I realize now that such a duality exists for all. To quote Griffin again, even though science has proven that there's no separation between matter and energy, our civilization continues to insist on such a dualism in which our consciousness seems separate from our material existence.

When I write about my having been molested
or how I feel about women being murdered,
I am opening myself up and, therefore, others might
feel they can do the same. It's the first step
toward healing. We are a sick society.



Renata Luna

About Pilar Rodríguez Aranda



Francisco Quintana

In 1990, *America's Review* published Pilar Rodríguez's interview with Sandra Cisneros, "On the Solitary Fate of Being Mexican, Female, Wicked and Thirty-three,"¹ which has been widely quoted in writings about her work. She has published in the anthologies *Género y gestión cultural: un esbozo de México y América Latina* (Gender and Cultural Promotion: a Sketch of Mexico and Latin America) (PUEG-UNAM/Unifem), *Speaking desde las heridas. Cibertestimonios transfronterizos/Transborder. September 11, 2001-March 11, 2009* (CISAN-UNAM/ITESM/Whittier College), and *One Wound for Another/Una herida por otra. Testimonios de latin@s in the US through Cyberspace* (CISAN-UNAM/Colorado College/Whittier College), and also in various magazines in North America, among them, *Replicante*, *Voices of Mexico*, *Tierra Adentro*, *Norteamérica*, *Saguaro*, *The Bilingual Review*, *FEM*, *Confluencia*, *Sin Fronteras*, *Blanco Móvil*, and *Tinta Seca*.

Rodríguez has received grants from the Austin City Arts Commission (1990); Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts, Young Creators, 1995; the Mexican Film Institute (Imcine, 1998), and the Morelos Institute for Culture (1999). *The Idea We Live In* won first place in the Second Video Biennial of Mexico (1992) and the Athens International Film and Video Festival, Ohio (1991). In 1998, Chon Noriega included it as one of the Best 100 Chicano Films (UCLA). Rodríguez's *The Unexpected Turn of Jim Sagel*, a documentary on writer Sagel, who won the Casa de las Américas Prize (Cuba) in the 1980s, was declared Best New Mexican Film at the Roswell Film Festival (2004)

Return or The Inexactness of Centre was shown in Palestine as part of the Twenty-second POETRONIQUE Video Moments Festival, 2009, and was included in the 2008 VideoBardo Showcase of International Videopoetry, and screened at the Loop Videoart Barcelona 2009 Festival. Other videos include: *Border She Is*, *El guajolote* (The Turkey), and *El entierro del mal humor* (Burying Bad Moods).

Rodríguez has shown her videos in various festivals and museums, among them: the AFI National Video Festival (1993); the Museum of Image and Sound, São Paulo, Brazil (1993); San Francisco Cinemathèque (1994); Mexico's Center of the Image (1995), El Chopo University Museum (V Biennial of Visual Poetry, 1996), National Cinemathèque (1996), and Carrillo Gil Modern Art Museum (1996); the Bronx Museum of the Arts (1997); the Whitney Museum (2000); the CineFestival San Antonio, Texas (1987, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2002); the Santa Fe Film Festival, New Mexico (2002, 2003, 2004); and the Boston Latino Film Festival (2004).

Featured in Cynthia Pech's *Fantasma en tránsito. Prácticas discursivas de videastas mexicanas* (Phantoms in Transit. Discursive Practices of Mexican Videomakers),² she also collaborated with Guillermo Gómez Peña and Roberto Sifuentes in their 1998 performance *Museum of the Apocalypse: End-of-Century Specimens*, CUT-UNAM. For more details, please visit <http://www.anarcafilms.blogspot.com/>.

Claire Joysmith
Researcher at CISAN-UNAM

NOTES

¹ Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, núm. 69, 1992.

² Published by the UACM, in Mexico City in 2009.



Courtesy of Pilar Aranda

Frame from the video *Return or the Inexactness of Centre*.

I like to write down my dreams,
because they are coded messages and, sometimes,
when I'm just walking or swimming, something
about those very same images becomes clearer.
Words are limiting.

* * *

Pilar Rodríguez Aranda is familiar with crossing borders, quite literally, having lived at times in Mexico, and at others in the United States over a period of many years. So what kind of strategies did she resort to in seeking ways to deal with these experiences in her videopoem *Retorno or the Inexactness of Centre* (2008)?

Pilar: In 2003 I had finished my documentary on New Mexican writer Jim Sagel, a friend of mine who committed suicide in 1998. I did this wanting to understand why he'd killed himself, again coming across this tormenting duality (in his case, he had been diagnosed as bipolar, among other things). It took me almost five years to do this video because I did it on my own, without any funding, with support from the local community. And because he was a "public" figure, I felt a lot of pressure. So, after that experience, I was ready to embark on something totally personal.

I decided to keep notes using video and audio, something I always do in writing. I keep a journal, although I am not always disciplined about it. At that time I purposefully taped myself visually and aurally, about my reflections arising from my decision to go back to Mexico. What makes one decide a concept like "Mexico" is me? In *The Idea That We Live In*, I used the image of a house, one that encompasses memories and that we carry with us. In *Border She Is*, the images were

of a border as holder of self and the other. In *Retorno or the Inexactness of Centre*, I chose the structure of the labyrinth, the path of the pilgrim,² where one walks toward what one thinks is the center, only to realize that you have to walk back out again in order to talk about it.

* * *

At this point in her life and career, what is a central inspiration for her creative work?

Pilar: I'm inspired to write by things, events, news, or anything I read that causes an emotional reaction in me that, in turn, provokes me to think: why am I reacting to this? Sometimes I don't even ask myself this, I go straight to writing and pour out feelings and thoughts, try to explore what's going on if it's not clear. I like to write down my dreams, because they are coded messages and, sometimes, when I'm just walking or swimming, something about those very same images becomes clearer. Words are limiting and I very seldom feel I have successfully expressed it all. That's probably why I also resort to images, sounds, moods.

* * *

What kind of work has she been inspired to do recently?

Pilar: In my latest work I've entitled *Poemas de Isla* [Poems from Isla] I've tried to emulate one of my favorite poets, Mary Oliver, and just be in the natural world, and learn from it.

I never stop writing, really, but right now is a time to put my work out there more. I'm tired of having drawers full of words and keeping them closed. I would like to play with digital technology and create a web-book to include my writing, images and, hopefully, performances. Performing my poetry is something I'm planning to do more of as well, exploring the use of images, not as videopoems, but, rather, as a support/contrast to the spoken word. As I mentioned earlier, I also take a lot of photos, so I am finding ways to finally fuse these into my work, whether by incorporating them into my live presentations, or the videos. I'm also working with a visual artist on a book fusing my writing and his visuals into an *Imago Ignota*.

* * *

Pilar Rodríguez Aranda has been a professional translator for many years now. In what ways does this relate to her creative

career? And how does that relate to bridge-making, or perhaps to bridge-being?

Pilar: It has mainly been a way to make a living, but I also think one my roles in the world is to be a bridge. A translator or interpreter does that very clearly. When I started doing video, I was in a way translating the written word into another medium. I've also done other translations and published them, both poetry and essays, such as Chicano poetry in Mexican literary magazines, or John Beverley's prologue to *Speaking desde las heridas*.³ Lately, I've been translating some of my favorite Mary Oliver poems, as an exercise, but also as a way to learn from and share her wisdom. There are so many good poets that are not being translated into Spanish, let alone published, in Mexico.

* * *

Until 2010, Pilar Rodríguez Aranda was involved with Artists in a transborder project called "A Prayer for Juárez/Una oración por Juárez." The same collective continues working together today, redubbed *Contra la Violencia el Arte* (Against Violence, Art).

Pilar: What inspired me to get involved was a small event held by Self Help Graphics in Los Angeles, where perhaps 30 of us, mostly artists and activists, got together to do readings and performances in response to 16 years of feminicides.

She explains that what she had been looking for was "a ritualization of a deeply hurtful experience," adding that her hopes are that "this will contribute to end the cycle of violence, in which," she concludes, "the real enemy is, in fact, ourselves." ■■■

NOTES

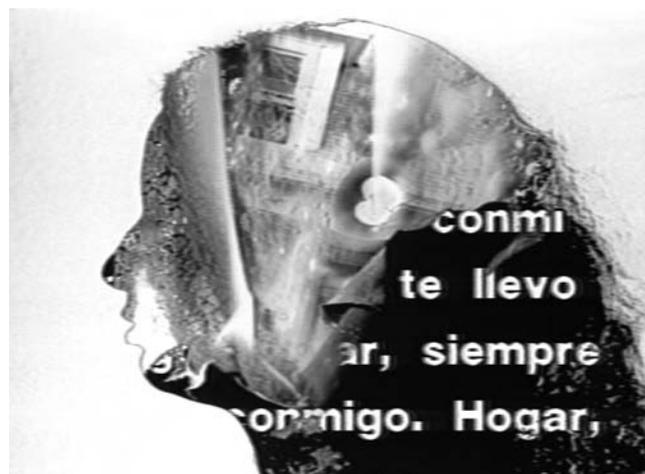
¹ Author of *The Eros of Everyday Life: Essays on Ecology, Gender and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

² See Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Crossing to Avalon: A Woman's Midlife Pilgrimage* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994).

³ Claire Joysmith, ed., *Speaking desde las heridas. Cibertestimonios transfronterizos/transborder*. Prologues by John Beverley, Cristina Rivera Garza, and María Antonia Oliver-Rotger (Mexico City: CISAN-UNAM/ITESM-Cátedra Humanidades, campus Toluca/ITESM-Cátedra Alfonso Reyes, campus Monterrey, and Whittier College, California, 2009).

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<http://poemasdella-anarca.blogspot.com/>
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<http://anarcafilms.blogspot.com/>



Courtesy of Pilar Rodríguez

Frame from the video *The Idea We Live In*.

BILINGÜE FOOL

by Pilar Rodríguez Aranda

*Words sometimes are
 puras chingaderas
 Repeticiones parangoneras
 Repetitions of falsas promesas
 Pochas calmas de monolingua espera
 Why, I have even switched codes
 as if in disguise
 Las words somehow have become
 my way to surmise
 Pages of dolor - rincón
 Looking for an imposible perdón
 Worst of all
 Looking for entendimiento
 Las palabras siempre engañan
 ¿Es love? Es lust?
 ¿cómo los separas?
 ¿Cuál es el que nos chitea?
 Do you know what you quieres?
 Do yo?*

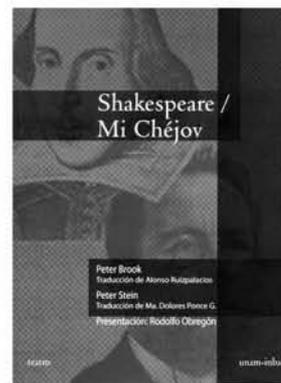
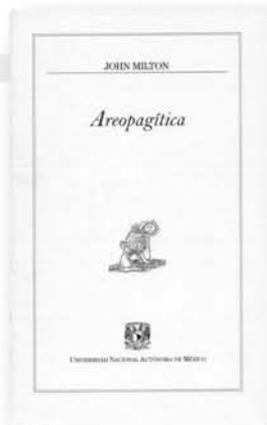


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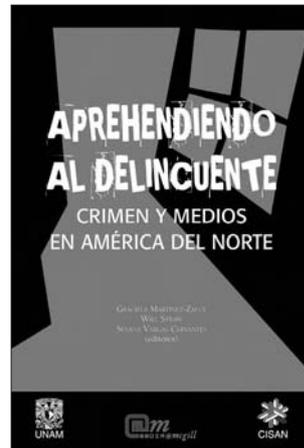
CISAN

p u b l i c a t i o n s

Cooperación en Ciencia y Tecnología en América del Norte y Europa

Edit Antal
Fidel Aroche Reyes
editors

Despite expectations about NAFTA, Mexico's deficit in science and technology puts both its competitiveness and environment at risk. The book identifies the cooperation models in these fields in North America, comparing them with the successful European Union case. This helps the reader understand the scope of integration policy for promoting a regional technological change through an effort capable of combining public and private policies that can close the gap.



Aprehendiendo al delincuente. Crimen y medios en América del Norte

Graciela Martínez
Will Straw
Susana Vargas Cervantes
editors

Crime is a central topic in the cultural discourse, and it is redefined using intertextual operations in which many representations of urban life are configured. Activities like drug use, transvestitism, or downloading music or movies have caused panic, rooted in moral and legal considerations; they have also sparked the appearance of new social or cultural communities with a renovating and questioning effect on culture and the media.

Fronteras de tinta: literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas. Una bibliografía comentada

Graciela Martínez-Zalce
Víctor Manuel Granados Garnica
Jorge Olvera Vázquez
editors

Literature's influence on the media has always been unimpeachable. This book's wealth is its thematic range and the variety of reviewers and texts reviewed. It offers a interdisciplinary snapshot of the literature-media-humanist-disciplines link. The reader will find in this volume how word and image influence each other, making it a great reference work for humanist studies of all kinds.



Los derechos humanos en las ciencias sociales: una perspectiva multidisciplinaria

Ariadna Estévez
Daniel Vázquez
compilators

The democratizing wave of the 1980s brought human rights to the center of the social and political spotlight. Exercising them poses certain fundamental questions that the law cannot answer, among them: Do they empower or disempower collective subjects? Do they transform national citizenship versus the challenges of migration? Does their universality constitute or oppose cultural diversity? What impact do the issues of gender and sexual diversity have on them? Can human rights help build a collective memory?

For further information contact

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre de Humanidades II, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510
México, D.F. Tels. 5623-0246 y 5623-0308; fax: 5336 3595; e-mail: voicesmx@servidor.unam.mx

Beyond the Macondo Oil Disaster



The significance and consequences of the Macondo well spill must be analyzed in light of the geological moment of conventional oil resources in non-OPEC countries, whose production has stopped growing. This is leading to the acceleration of non-conventional production, including deepwater oil development. Moving into waters over seven kilometers deep not only creates all the possibilities for causing spills, with their adverse environmental consequences, but also implies high production and other costs, derived from a series of non-quantifiable externalities that it will take decades for the environment to heal, if those habitats are recoverable at all.

The competition for the world's remaining oil reserves not only instigates military strategies to ensure future supply for the powerful nations. Diplomatic differences are daily occurrences, and the Macondo spill produced several in bilateral U.S.-Great Britain relations, which had to be overcome so the historic "special relationship" between these two powers could prevail. This difference revealed that the implications of an oil spill can touch, among others, the most important actors on the international stage, like nation-states. Oil corporations, with their characteristic productive de-territorialization, have economic power, since their financial circumstances can have an impact not only on the nation of origin, but also on the economy of the countries where they operate.

Finally, the possibility of oil spills touches Mexico because of its incursion into offshore areas and its expectations of developing Gulf of Mexico deepwater resources. Given a scenario of oil spills, this could leave the country up in the air because of the costs and legal suits it would have to face. This shows the need for preventive regulation using different approaches and measures by the bodies involved; but it also brings up central issues for the nation's future, like the country's continuing to force its productive capacity to maintain the rhythm of exports; the very strategy of moving into deep waters, given that there is no evidence of proven reserves; and the insistence on maintaining the fossil-fuel-based energy paradigm in order to guarantee capitalist accumulation.

Rosío Vargas
CISAN researcher

Hidden Costs for the Oil Industry

The Macondo Spill

Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos*



According to 2008 International Energy Agency (IEA) data, fossil fuels make up 81.3 percent of the world's total primary fuel.¹ Most of the oil is used in internal combustion engines for transport; the rest is used to generate electricity and for petrochemicals. Half the coal goes into generating electricity and the rest, to different industrial and domestic uses. Gas is increasingly utilized to generate electricity, rising from 12.1 percent of electricity generation in 1973 to 21.3 percent in 2008. Practically equal amounts are used in industry, commerce, and homes. This implies that, generally speaking, fossil fuels are used three major ways: to generate caloric energy, electrical energy, and in internal combustion engines.

* Researcher at the UNAM Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Science and the Humanities, www.giandelgado.net.

It is important to remember that the rate of extracting and burning oil has led us to what is called “peak oil,” the highest point of production. Marion King Hubbert estimated that the world peak would come between 1990 and 2000. However, much of the data about oil wells that he used in his analysis was not completely precise and, in addition, since that time, extraction technology has made it possible to slightly increase proven crude reserves.² Colin J. Cambell, another oil geologist, updated the estimates and fixed a world peak between 2008 and 2010.³ Kenneth Deffeyes also talks of a peak between 2003 and 2009, while L. F. Ivanhoe, the founder of the Hubbert Center for Petroleum Supply Studies, agrees that the peak was reached between 2000 and 2010.⁴ Others, like geologist Thomas Magoon of the US Geology Survey (USGS) and the *Oil & Gas Journal*, are relatively more optimistic and speak of a range from 2003 to 2020.⁵

To this must be added the IEA estimates predicting a 57-percent hike in energy consumption from 2004 to 2030. This will complicate the future even more by the fact that consumption is already unequal: calculations put per capita consumption in high-income countries at 21 times the levels of low-income countries. In addition, some world figures indicate that 2.4 billion people use traditional biomass, like, for example, wood, for cooking, while 1.6 billion have no access to electricity.⁶ That is, half the world's population is practically excluded from the supposed "benefits of modernity." Therefore, when we talk about intensive energy consumption patterns, to a great extent, we are referring to the practices of a fraction of the world's population: the middle and upper classes.

PREVAILING ENERGY PATTERNS AND THEIR SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS THE CASE OF OIL

One of the weightiest arguments in favor of the fossil fuel model versus the development of "sustainable" energy is that oil, coal, and gas continue to be the cheapest sources of energy.⁷ Nevertheless, this argument is rooted in a very peculiar system of accounting.

Regardless of the fact that we are talking about a limited form of energy—fossil fuel is presented as a stock, not a flow, in contrast to solar energy—the fact is that included in the cost not only of fossil energy, but of maintaining the fossil energy model *in toto*, is a broad spectrum of "hidden externalities" that are not taken into account and that, if they were, would make it expensive not only financially, but also socially and ecologically. To this, we must add the negative argument that the subsidies granted (about US\$200 billion a year)⁸ and the security costs involved in guaranteeing and maintaining the constant flow of fossil fuels to the biggest consumers come to an estimated cost of at least 25 percent of the world's total defense expenditures.⁹

These hidden costs can be identified throughout the production-circulation-consumption process (in the case of oil, from exploration, drilling, and extraction to transportation, refining, and burning). Just to show some important aspects, it should be pointed out that exploration does not take into account changes in the ecosystems immediately surrounding drilling sites due both to equipment and machinery movement and the explosions themselves. The impact is consid-

erable, given that once potential oil areas have been identified, their existence has to be proven by drilling test wells. Once the fuel is found, drilling increases from between 10 and 30 wells per platform, with a 40-percent chance of failure.¹⁰

Large amounts of explosives are used in drilling, plus the subsequent construction of oil platforms. The process pollutes, changes, and fragments ecosystems, which can be even worse because it is common to find underground deposits of radioactive materials in their natural state. The frequency with which these materials are brought to the surface and the scant monitoring of those operations have clearly shown that the risks can be very high, since even low levels of radiation can have mutagenic impacts on biodiversity.¹¹

Among other kinds of environmental impacts, the extraction of oil uses massive amounts of water and generates large amounts of waste with diverse ecological impacts because of the heavy metals and toxic compounds it includes,

Far from being occasional, oil spills are systematic. The Macondo well case is only one of the most recent large-scale socio-environmental disasters produced by the oil industry.

like mercury and volatile aromatic hydrocarbons, among others. On an average, estimates put the volume of mud waste for onshore oil production at from 270 000 to slightly under a million and a half liters a day. For maritime platforms, the volume of waste water is almost 2 million liters a day.¹² So, while the mud is usually poured back onto the land and the waste waters are partially treated, the maritime waste water is almost all dumped directly into the ocean. Thus, reserves of underground and surface water, as well as biodiversity, are affected by dumping on land, at the same time that waste water dumped into the ocean can be swept hundreds of kilometers away by marine currents, harming ecosystems in their path. To this must be added the risk of explosions, spills, and fires caused as part of day-to-day oil well operations, the transfer of crude from one facility to another, human error, etc.

Also, greenhouse gases and other atmospheric contaminants generated by extraction, transport, and refining crude

oil should be included in the calculation. It is estimated that the burning of natural gas associated with the extraction process alone, a cheap and very common practice, releases about 35 million tons of carbon dioxide and 12 million tons of methane into the atmosphere. In addition, extraction and transportation bring with them the permanent risk of spills of differing degrees of seriousness and socio-environmental impact; this risk is not just a possibility, but a constant occurrence in this industry.

Big-scale spills (more than 10 million gallons) have occurred almost every year since the 1960s; however, analysts think that although smaller spills get less public attention, when added up, they may represent a much higher amount of oil released into the environment than the big ones.¹³ As we will see further along, the impacts are enormous, and even greater in aquatic ecosystems given the lower density of oil to water, which means that a ton of crude spilled typically covers about 12 square kilometers of water.

One of the weightiest arguments in favor of the fossil fuel model versus the development of “sustainable” energy is that oil, coal, and gas continue to be the cheapest sources of energy.

Burning oil generates a series of contaminants that, as is well known, have been the main contributing factor for global warming. Six main elements contaminate the air: volatile organic compounds (generated by the combustion of fossil fuels); sulfur dioxide, produced by burning coal; carbon dioxide; 10-micron or smaller particles (smoke, dust, steam, etc., the product, above all, of burning diesel); 2.5 micron or smaller particles, or PM_{2.5}, similar to the 10-micron particles, but more damaging for human health, above all lung tissue; and tetraethyl lead additives usually used to improve gasoline efficiency.

The short- and medium-term impacts of these contaminants (or smog) include contamination of vegetation; filtration to water tables, and from there to the rest of the food chain; acid rain; and different diseases such as asthma, cardiovascular problems, cancer, irritation; allergies, etc. The long-term, or “indirect” impacts are essentially linked to the implications of global warming.¹⁴

THE MACONDO SPILL IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

As already mentioned, far from being occasional, oil spills are systematic. The Macondo well case is only one of the most recent large-scale socio-environmental disasters produced by the oil industry. The volume of oil spilled went from about 800 barrels a day at the time of the accident to 25,000 barrels daily in just a few days. The US Flow Rate Technical Group (FRTG) estimated that, from April 20 to August 5, 2010, the entire spill totaled about 4.9 million barrels, that is, one and a half times the amount spilled after the Mexican Ixtoc I well accident in 1979.¹⁵

Deepwater oil operations —of the kind the Mexican government is betting on today— were clearly high risk. This is due not only to the depth and the pressures they entail, but also because they were in an area with a high incidence of hurricanes and tropical meteorological phenomena and, once again, they were being carried out relatively near an important coastal area with biologically diverse marine life.

The location of the oil project *vis-à-vis* the U.S. Continental Shelf, about 66 kilometers from the coast of Louisiana, was a factor that increased the spill’s socio-environmental impact and visibility, given that it spread rapidly along the coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and part of Florida, at least to Panama City.¹⁶ It also expanded to inland waters.

To “handle” the spill, 17 percent was pumped, 8 percent was burned, and 8 percent was chemically dispersed. For the last procedure, clearly designed to partially hide the impact, BP used the dispersal agent Corexit 9500 and 9527.¹⁷ While there was no longer a discernable oil slick on the surface after August 2010, the oil is still there: it is estimated that it remains for a while suspended in small globules (a form that if ingested, can bio-accumulate in animal tissues, causing different kinds of damage). The substances would then be deposited on the ocean floor with largely still-unforeseen results derived not only from the presence of the crude oil itself, but also because the chemical used creates a toxic environment with deadly effects for sensitive species and possible carcinogenic damage in these and others.

Naturally, the impacts will depend on the degree of exposure the species have both to the oil and the dispersal agent, their relations of interdependence, and their capacity for movement. But the ecosystems as such will take decades to recover, if they are actually able to recover completely at all.

Along these same lines, it is noteworthy that the dispersal agents used were, strictly speaking, experimental. The man-



ufacturer itself, Nalco Holdings, related to BP through interlocking boards of directors, recognizes that it has not done toxicity studies, but, despite that, assures the public that the damage to human health is moderate or low.¹⁸ Even though it knew this, the compound was used in indiscriminate amounts despite its not being the best, but the cheapest option. Thus, between 7 and 8 million liters of Corexit were poured into the gulf, a little more than half on the water's surface and the rest injected underwater.

This action has effectively made it possible to keep the environmental impacts imperceptible to the naked eye, but that does not mean they do not exist. Particularly worrying are the effects that will be noticeable in the medium and longer terms and for that very reason, will be difficult to associate with the spill. So, it should also be taken into account that the "management" of the accident only covered one-third of the oil spilled. Estimates put the rest of it along the coasts in the form of balls of tar buried in the sand, in sediments, or floating on the surface of the ocean (26 percent); another 25 percent has already evaporated or dissolved; and 16 percent has dispersed naturally. Therefore, the real size of the damage has yet to be seen.

In any case, the immediately visible costs are diverse. One example is the negative effects on 445 species of fish, 134 species of birds, 45 species of mammals, and 32 species of reptiles and amphibians, many in danger of extinction, like the Atlantic Ridley sea turtle. That, plus the damage to more than 160 kilometers of coastline, including Louisiana wetlands and swamps and the Mississippi Delta, may be the most illustrative cases. This has also affected productive activities related to fishing and marine cultivation, which supply 40 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States. Other

damage can be added, like the aforementioned burning of oil and the consequent emission of toxic smoke.

All of this means the costs are high, although for now they are not all visible and measurable. In November the Norwegian publication *Upstream* put the cost at US\$32.2 billion.¹⁹ This includes containment operations, drilling the auxiliary well, sealing the well, reparations actually paid out, among other items. Neither the value of the loss of biodiversity nor the effects on entire ecosystems in the short, medium and long terms have been taken into account. In addition, that calculation process becomes complicated since the value of biodiversity is often incommensurable, exactly the reason why, from an ecological economics point of view, the measurement cannot always solely be made in economic terms.

It is at least a matter for controversy that, in the face of these kinds of hidden costs, the U.S. Department of the Interior Mineral Management Service adopted in 2005 a series of regulations based on the idea that it is the oil companies

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themselves that are best equipped to evaluate their environmental impact. It is a political measure that in concrete terms is weak since the oil industry and its lobby are so strong that their priority continues to be business above everything else, even sustaining life itself.

CLIMATE CHANGE, A REFLECTION OF THE LONG-TERM HIDDEN COSTS OF THE CURRENT ENERGY MODEL

Worldwide, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions is burning fossil fuels to generate electricity and heating (24.6 percent) and in transportation (13.5 percent). Changes in land use (18.2 percent), agriculture (13.5 percent), and industry (10.4 percent) are the next largest, although agriculture and some industrial processes are the ones that emit the most methane.²⁰

The effects of this dynamic are multiple and anthropogenic global warming is one of the most visible symptoms. A product above all of the indiscriminate burning of fossil fuels, the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, which had remained constant for the last 10 000 years at about 28 parts per million (ppm), rose to 360 ppm in 1998 and 391 ppm by early 2011. Climate change specialists consider the last figure to be the tipping point into dangerous territory in terms of the size and irreversibility of the impacts.

The polarization of responsibility percentage-wise in the destruction of the environment is clear: historically speaking, the 20 percent of the population who mostly live in the metropolitan (or rich) countries have generated 90 percent of all GHG.²¹

The long-term impacts of solely the accumulation of atmospheric contaminants are essentially linked to the increase in temperature and sea levels, the spike in extreme climatic events, the change in rainfall patterns, and the growing loss of biodiversity.

Thus, in the face of the expected impacts of climate change, it is widely accepted that the countries that will pay the highest costs will be those whose GHG emissions are small. To a great extent, those costs will be linked to current risks (floods, storms, water scarcity, etc.) that will become greater. To this must be added problems of food production and other atypical ones. This makes it imperative not only to take measures to improve or adapt infrastructure, for which energy is key, but also to design a broad agenda of mitigating actions including revising the entire energy-material cycle of production, distribution, consumption, and also waste.

Climate change makes it necessary, then, to seriously rethink how and with what goals in mind the territorial space is constructed and, therefore, how development is conceived.

FINAL THOUGHTS RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT AS THE BASIS FOR CHANGING THE PARADIGM

Typically, people believe that development is based on economic growth, or what is even worse, that development is synonymous with economic growth. This leads, sooner or later, to socio-environmental debacle given that economic growth necessarily requires the transformation of nature. For Georgescu-Roegen, the dilemma is clear: “We need no elaborated argument to see that the maximum of life quantity re-



We have to wager on a transition from the prevailing energy paradigm toward one that would be increasingly supported by flows and not stocks of energy. We must bet on alternative sources.

quires the minimum rate of natural resources depletion. . . . Any use of the natural resources for the satisfaction of nonvital needs means a smaller quantity of life in the future.”²²

In this sense, rethinking development is key for constructing alternatives for life. First off, de-linking it from economic growth is fundamental to be able to associate it to sustainable biophysical degrowth, understood as an equitable reduction of production and consumption that would increase human well-being and improve ecological conditions locally and globally in the short, medium, and long term. But sustainable degrowth and kinds of development can and should adopt different forms, with their common central purpose: to be constructed in harmony with nature and from the perspective of the lives of each and every one of the world’s individuals (this, from the standpoint of the unity of human beings and nature); that takes into account the complexity of the contexts of each space or region; and that takes advantage of and preserves diversity and the wealth of existing cultures and knowledge.

To a great extent, this implies not only avoiding profligate consumption, but also changing the entire process and forms of production, circulation, and consumption that externalize

environmental costs, mortgaging the future to serve the present. For the specific case of the peripheral countries, like those of Latin America, it will be essential to seek ways to deal with the urgent social needs that will initially require an increase in energy-matter flow, but generated on the basis of a different perspective and modality and for a different end, that is, other forms of development. This means that development be linked to a good way of life, a notion that will vary for each society, but that in any of its forms involves not only the material, but also the emotional, the intellectual, and the spiritual.

The design of different modalities of development must take as its starting point the recognition of the notion of socio-environmental justice; avoiding ecological debt and socio-ecologically unequal trade; decreasing ecological conflicts based on distribution and increasing the quality of life; as well as recognizing non-chrematistic values and reciprocal, non-mercantilist services.²³

Specifically in terms of energy, we have to wager on a transition from the prevailing energy paradigm toward one that would be increasingly supported by flows and not stocks of energy. Betting on alternative energies that would be less aggressive to the environment in its entire life cycle or *in toto* will not be viable if it is not accompanied by a decrease in energy consumption patterns and decentralized, fair access to energy. The transition process will require a great deal of energy, and most of that will initially be from fossil fuels. In that context, the current waste is at least doubly questionable. At this point, it should already be very clear for humankind that sustained economic growth cannot be maintained infinitely on a finite planet. The construction of a new social imaginary on issues like development and the meaning of life itself is, then, more and more an imperative. **NMM**

NOTES

¹ International Energy Agency, *Key World Energy Statistics 2010* (Paris: IEA, 2010).

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³ Colin Cambell, *The Coming Oil Crisis* (Brentwood, Essex, U. K.: Multi-Science and Petroconsultants, 1997), and Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos, *Sin energía. Retos y resistencias al cambio de paradigma* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2009), p. 13.

⁴ For more about these scientists' estimates, see Kenneth Deffeyes, *Hubbert's Peak: The Impending World Oil Shortage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and L. F. Ivanhoe, "Time Is No Longer on Our Side," *Oil & Gas Journal* 85, September 7, 1987, pp. 70-71 and "Future World Oil Supplies: There Is a Finite Limit," *World Oil* 216, October 1995, pp. 77-88.

⁵ Richard Heinberg, *The Party's Over. Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies* (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2003), p. 113.

⁶ Bank Information Center, /Bretton Woods Project/Campagna per la Riforma della Banca Mondiale/CEE Bankwatch Network/Friends of the Earth-International/Institute for Policy Studies/International Rivers Network/Oil Change International/Urgewald, "How the World Bank's Energy Framework Sells the Climate and Poor People Short," September 2006, p. 21.

⁷ Nuclear energy should not be considered "sustainable" as the nuclear-electric industry has advertised.

⁸ Dinyar Godrej, *No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change* (Oxford, U.K.: Verso, 2001), p.134.

⁹ Dale W. Steffes, "A Proposed World Oil Stability Policy," *The World Oil & Gas Industries in the 21st Century: Conference Proceedings of the 16th Annual North American Conference of the IAEE* (Dallas, Texas: IAEE, 1994), pp. 20-29.

¹⁰ Paul R. Epstein and Jesse Selber, eds., *Oil. A Life Cycle Analysis of Its Health and Environmental Impacts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Center for Health and the Global Environment-Harvard Medical School, 2002), p. 9.

¹¹ Mutagenic changes are those that cause genetic changes or mutations in living organisms. They are usually the product of exposure to radiation or toxic substances. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴ See the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): R.K. Pachauri and A. Reisinger, eds., *IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007* (Geneva), www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_and_data_reports.shtml.

¹⁵ See the report at www.doi.gov/deepwaterhorizon/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=33972.

¹⁶ For a modeling of the spill, see www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/05/01/us/20100501-oil-spill-tracker.html.

¹⁷ Corexit 9500 contains sorbitan, butanidioic acid, and oil distillates. Corexit 9527, for its part, is produced with 2-butoxyethanol and an organic compound with a low concentration of propylene glycol.

¹⁸ See www.lmrk.org/corexit_9500_uscueg.539287.pdf and www.doh.state.fl.us/chd/bay/Documents/Oilspill/Master_EC9527A_MSDS_539295.pdf.

¹⁹ See *Upstream*, <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article235210.ece?mobile=&lots=SITE>.

²⁰ Kevin Baumert, Timothy Herzog, and Jonathan Pershing, *Navigating the Numbers. Green Gas Data and International Climate Policy* (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 2005).

²¹ Dinyar Godrej, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

²² Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 21.

²³ Chrematistic values pertain to money or commerce; non-chrematistic values can be traditional, cultural, historical values, etc.

The Official U.S. Version Of the Environmental Damage

Zirahuén Villamar*

Almost a year has passed since the explosion on the British Petroleum (BP) Deepwater Horizon oil platform, in the Mississippi Canyon Block 252 well. Between the April 20 explosion in U.S. territorial waters 75 kilometers from the Louisiana shore, and August 5, when the well was finally sealed and the spill halted, 4.4 million barrels of crude were spewed into the waters of the gulf,¹ at a rate of 56 000 a day.² This article will examine U.S. government perceptions of the damage caused by the leak.

ELEMENTS FOR AN ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

The importance of the Gulf of Mexico lies in the amount and diversity of its natural resources, both because of their intrinsic maritime and coastal value (islands, wetlands, beaches, and coral reefs) and because they are areas that are the habitat and spawning grounds for many species; in its historic value; and in the productive activities it sustains and the economic, commercial, recreational, and other kinds of benefits it provides. To a great extent, this natural wealth is due to the action of three ocean currents: the Yucatán current, which enters the gulf from the Caribbean, flowing between the Yucatán Peninsula and Cuba; the Loop Current, fed by the first and turning clockwise to become the third, the Florida Current, which pushes out of the gulf into the Atlantic through the Florida Straits. To a lesser extent, the current that comes from the Caribbean moves north-northwest toward the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama; then, when it nears the coast, the weakened current splits toward the west and Texas, and toward the east-northeast and Florida.³

* Economist, specialist in global governance and European studies; professor at the UNAM School of Economics, zirahuenvn@gmail.com.

On the other hand, as far as experience with oil spills indicates, the general impacts depend on four variables: the spill's volume and rate or rhythm, the location of its source, and the type of crude involved. The way in which these variables articulate with each other makes the difference between a minor incident and a catastrophe. Regardless of the size, it is generally accepted that the effects on the environment can be classified into two categories: severe or short-term, and chronic or long-term. Severe spills can be lethal or not, but in any case they debilitate the environment because they reduce the reproduction of animal and plant species, change their daily development, decrease their feeding mechanisms, and hamper their ability to fight off disease. The chronic effects are much more polemical, since the evidence is often not conclusive and the results not straightforward. This controversy tends to be resolved, without much effort and simply using common sense, by assuming that exposure to low levels of crude significantly affects the survival and reproduction of the species.

The U.S. Department of Commerce Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration explains that maritime oil spills cause differentiated impacts depending on the place the oil is located: crude oil offshore, crude oil in coastal habitats, and crude oil and human activities.⁴ Based on this classification, evaluations of the effects of an oil spill vary in their methods depending on what they propose to analyze and the purpose of the exercise.

MACONDO'S DAMAGE

According to Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) officials, five states suffered the greatest environmental damage: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, all of which have threatened and endangered mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish.



The Gulf of Mexico is important due to the amount and diversity of its natural resources, both for their intrinsic maritime and coastal value and because they are the habitat and spawning grounds for many species.

In the first category, threatened animals are those that run the risk of becoming endangered, that is, that could become extinct, the second category.⁵ Alabama has 21 threatened animals, four of which may have suffered damage to their habitats from crude oil pollution. Of 58 endangered species, 10 or 11 may have been affected by oil pollution.

In Florida, 9 or 10 of the 19 threatened species and 23 or 24 of the 35 endangered species may be affected by the contamination, while in Louisiana, four or five of the eight threatened species, and eight of the ten endangered species are in the same situation. In Mississippi, the same is happening to 4 out of 11 of the threatened and 10 out of 20 of the endangered species. In Texas, 9 animal species are considered threatened, 3 of which may have their habitats affected by crude oil contamination; and 49 species are endangered, of

which 8 may have had their habitats contaminated with oil.⁶ Obviously the damage varies according to the kind of species, and U.S. officials emphasized these differences, an analysis of which follows.

ESTIMATES OF THE DAMAGE TO DIFFERENT SPECIES

For official agencies, quantifying the damage and trying to mitigate it were the priorities from the moment the news of the incident on the platform and its resulting oil spill came out. Regarding the diagnostic analysis of the damage to animal and plant species, the NOAA and the FWS explained that the figures they provided referred to the total of the reports of the ongoing procedures: once finished, after a first look, they qualified the specimens in three categories: “visibly oiled,” “no visible oil,” and “pending.” In the next stage, they would be subjected to long-term assessments to determine the causes of the injuries or death of the specimens collected, verifying if they had broken bones, oil on their skin, or other injuries. If necessary, another examination would be made to look for less obvious injuries, studying the mouth, throat, and eyes to see if they showed signs of crude oil. An additional step could include a partial or full necropsy to help determine

the exact cause of death and see whether it was related to the damage caused by the oil spill or not.⁷

BIRDS

If oil contamination in the birds' feathers is severe, they can lose their insulation properties and they die of hypothermia even if the temperature of the water seems mild or lukewarm. If their plumage is covered with oil, ocean birds can no longer float, so they sink and drown. This makes it very difficult to estimate the number of bird deaths since there are no bodies to count. A third case of contamination of birds with oil is when they ingest it as they try to clean their contaminated feathers or they eat prey that has also been contaminated.⁸ According to one FWS report published in November, 7 835 birds have been affected; 2 888 were found visibly covered with oil, 66 percent of which were dead. Another 4 014 were not covered with oil, but were internally contaminated; of these, 77 percent had died. Lastly, 933 birds, in whose cases contamination had not been confirmed, were found, but 931 of them had died.⁹

MAMMALS

Rodents, felines, bears, deer, manatees, dolphins, and sperm whales are some of the mammals whose habitats—and therefore their lives—may be directly or indirectly affected by the spill. While land animals are usually less affected than marine animals—and this was, indeed, the case—there was still clear concern about protecting their surroundings. For the mammals inhabiting Gulf of Mexico waters, the situation was worse: despite the fact that they do not have much fur to be covered with crude, they require the layer of fat under their skin to maintain their body temperature, and when their skin comes into contact with the oil, it becomes irritated and can become infected.

Even more dangerous is their inhaling oil fumes when they come to the surface to breathe, and their eating contaminated prey, poisoning them. According to the FWS, by November 2, nine live mammals had been found, two visibly covered in oil and seven without any visible outward signs; 100 specimens were found dead, four of which were covered in oil and another 92 not; conclusions about the other four were pending. In total, 109 mammals were collected, of which only three could be returned to the wild.¹⁰

The controversy about the chronic effects of spills tends to be resolved simply using common sense, by assuming that exposure to even low levels of crude significantly affects species' survival and reproduction.

REPTILES

Six species of tortoises and the American crocodile are the reptiles most affected. Five hundred thirty-five tortoises were collected alive both from the sea and on land; 85 percent were visibly affected by the oil, and the remaining 15 percent had no clear marks of oil on them. Another 609 carcasses were collected, 3 percent dead from the oil, 52 percent with visible signs of oil contamination, and 45 percent still pending conclusions. This makes a total of 1 144 samples collected, of which 397 were treated and released; 278 nests were relocated, and 14 676 tortoise young were freed.¹¹

CORALS

It is common knowledge that exposure to large amounts of oil kills corals; the same is true of prolonged exposure to small amounts of oil. In the first case, it weakens them; in the second case, it exterminates them. Additionally, there is evidence that in the medium and long term, the use of chemical dispersants to reduce the amount of oil after a spill is harmful. On an optimistic note, previous experience teaches us that corals recover more rapidly from the damage from oil contamination than from injuries caused by mechanical disasters like hurricanes or ships running aground on them.¹²

FISH AND FISHING ACTIVITIES

Two species of sturgeon were the most threatened by the Macondo spill.¹³ However, researchers consider that the greatest damage was done to commercial fishing activities. In U.S. waters in the gulf, fishing directly and indirectly generates 200 000 jobs with a value of US\$5.5 billion at 2008 prices. In 2010, the value of the catches in the area came to US\$659 million. By last July, the Oceanic and Atmospheric National Administration had closed about 217 000 square kilometers

For sea mammals,
the main dangers are inhaling oil fumes
when they come to the surface
to breathe, and being poisoned
by eating contaminated prey.



of ocean to fishing, something like 35 percent of the U.S. territorial economic waters in the gulf. The most important species and the ones most damaged by this ban are shrimp, menhaden, oysters, and blue crab.¹⁴

(UN)OFFICIAL CONCLUSION

By November 2010, 25 803 samples had been collected from water (10 236), sediment (3 060), tissue (3 286), and residue washed up on beaches (1 894). The Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) joint operation did 35 487 tests on them; 3 200 kilometers of coastline had been explored, and oil residue was found at 1 500 points, dispersed in marshes, salt-water marshes, beaches, and mangroves. Also, 1 507 tons of oil residue was removed from the coasts most susceptible to damage.¹⁵

By the end of 2010, the environmental damage from the Macondo oil spill, quantified as costs of cleanup and rehabilitation, were calculated at US\$40 billion, according to BP sources.¹⁶ To this must be added the US\$20 billion fund to pay claims by individuals and companies who can prove their economic activities have been affected.¹⁷ It should be expected that in the long term, the cost of the damage due to the spill will rise up to as much as US\$200 billion, as more negative effects begin to show up.¹⁸ This is not just possible, but very probable. **NMM**

NOTES

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- ⁹ FSW, "Bird Impact Data from DOI-ERDC Database Download 16 Nov. 2010," November 16, 2010, p. 1, <http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/pdfs/Bird%20Data%20Species%20Spreadsheet%2011162010.pdf>.
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- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 1.
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- ¹³ FSW, "Wildlife Threatened...", op. cit.
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- ¹⁵ NOAA, op. cit.
- ¹⁶ Paula Dittrick, "BP Oil Spill Costs Reach nearly \$40 Billion," November 2, 2010, http://www.pennenergy.com/index/petroleum/display/2212977131/articles/pennenergy/petroleum/finance/2010/11/bp-oil_spill_costs.html.
- ¹⁷ BP, "BP Establishes \$20 Billion Claims Fund for Deepwater Horizon Spill and Outlines Dividend Decisions," June 16, 2010, <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062966>.
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U.S.-U.K. Diplomatic Differences On the Oil Spill

Alfonso Sánchez Mugica*



The repercussions of the Macondo Well oil spill were felt in many different spheres, revealing the complexity of contemporary systems. The breach opened in diplomatic relations between the United States and Great Britain was noteworthy, as was the importance of confirming that diplomacy can be understood as a space in which conflicts are managed mainly symbolically. In this case, these conflicts involved the environment, pensions, companies, terrorism, war, alliances, and the economy, among other issues.

The United States and Great Britain share a unique diplomatic cooperation agenda that after World War II Winston Churchill dubbed the “special relationship.” Questions like

diplomacy, defense, nuclear cooperation, containing communism, and the United Kingdom’s mediation between Europe and the United States have filled out this simple, ambiguous term that nonetheless hides a more complex meaning.

This “special relationship” has been uneven and marked by disloyalty and imbalances. Great Britain profited from it to remain a world power even after losing its colonies and its economic power had shrunk. During the Cold War there were cracks in it: the Suez crisis; Korea and Vietnam; Granada and Libya. But at the end of these processes, the relationship was bolstered. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher asked President George Bush to act decisively during the Arabian Persian Gulf crisis, and Tony Blair got a reticent William Clinton to commit to intervene in the Kosovo conflict. September 11, 2001 brought them closer together; George W.

* Coordinator of foreign relations in the UNAM School of Political and Social Sciences Graduate Department.

Bush himself told the U.S. Congress that he did not have a truer friend than Great Britain. And, in effect, Prime Minister Tony Blair would completely back the “war against terrorism.”

Although there has been a good understanding between statesmen of conflicting positions (Conservative Harold Macmillan and Democrat John F. Kennedy; Republican Henry Kissinger and Labor Party member Jim Callaghan; Republican George W. Bush and Labor Prime Minister Tony Blair), today’s inverted political geometry brings Democrat Barack Obama and Conservative David Cameron’s differences face to face.

THE CONTEXT OF THE OIL DISASTER

Nevertheless, the context in which the oil disaster took place in mid-2010 was not the best: Obama was dealing with the biggest crisis of his first 18 months in the presidency. His popularity and the expectations about his administration began to blur in the face of profound economic, political crisis and the worsening of the war in Afghanistan. The three key reforms he had fostered were running into problems: the economic package had transferred big benefits to the banks; the health reform subsidized the private insurance industry; and the financial reform was not going well. In addition, the Republicans were accusing Obama of being a socialist and trying to change the U.S. political system.¹ Different polls showed a drop in both Obama’s and his party’s popularity in the face of the approaching November elections.

For his part, David Cameron had just taken office after a long crisis that had finally ejected the Labor Party from Number 10 Downing Street. According to some analysts, his most difficult task was to find the role Great Britain should play internationally after 50 years of a hazy profile. He was facing heavy public spending cutbacks because of the European crisis, and even so had to deal with a complex global agenda.

On May 14, during his first trip as head of the Foreign Office, William Hague met with Hillary Clinton, hoping to demonstrate the new Conservative government’s Atlanticism.² He expressed his confidence in the “special relationship” and his desire that it would be less dependent than under Tony Blair, saying that, while it was undoubtedly true that the two countries could not agree on everything, Great Britain continues to be the U.S.’s indispensable partner in matters of intelligence, nuclear issues, international diplomacy, and what the two countries are doing in Afghanistan.³

During the U.S.-British conflict around Macondo, there were three moments: the attack on British Petroleum, the jewel in the crown; the emphasis on its being British; and the terrorism factor.

One of the main effects of the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon platform was environmental damage, one of the most sensitive topics for President Obama’s policies, as well as the impact on the economic situation of both oil workers and the Gulf of Mexico. For this reason, the answer was immediate: two days after the explosion, Obama said that his “number one priority” was to deal with the disaster. His strategy focused directly on the company. During the conflict, there were three moments: the attack on British Petroleum, the jewel in the crown; the emphasis on its being British; and the terrorism factor.

Given the lack of a decisive response by the companies involved, Barack Obama insisted on the need to find alternative energy sources, reaffirming one of his campaign issues. In addition, the United States began a criminal investigation into the explosion. On June 8, Obama reproached BP, saying he talked to experts about the spill so he would know “whose ass to kick,” a typical American expression heard around the world. This attitude sharpened with the statement about keeping the boot on the neck of the oil corporation and that he would have fired Tony Hayward, the company’s CEO. This aggressive rhetoric can also be explained by the fact that Obama was facing the no less harsh criticisms about his administration’s handling of the oil spill crisis alleging that his response was slow in coming and halfhearted.

The next day, in the midst of the 16-percent plunge in BP stock prices on the New York Stock Exchange, Obama demanded that the corporation cap the well and clean up the disaster and the crude spilled into the Gulf, in addition to paying reparations and appropriate compensation to its workers and everyone affected, mainly fishermen and businesses in the tourism industry. At the height of the crisis, as Obama raised the tone of his criticism of the British corporation, Cameron was being pressured domestically. The media tension had forced both statesmen to show how good their relations were.⁴ But, in this context, Chevron Oil criticized its British rival saying that with “best practices” the sea of oil could have been avoided.⁵

Later on, the U.S. president compared the spill to 9/11, using the name “British Petroleum” in the same statement, although the company had changed its formal name to BP in 2001. This was interpreted as an attack on Great Britain, even though most of the consortium’s activities are concentrated in the United States. Chris Blackhurst pointed out that “BP has not called itself British Petroleum for more than 10 years. . . . It’s not the only one to not use its full name. Barack Hussein Obama is another.”⁶

Another factor that upset even the best intentions of repairing the “special relationship” was the 2009 release of Libyan agent Abdel Baset Al-Megrahi, sentenced to life in prison for the 1988 mid-air explosion of a Boeing 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland, with a 270 death toll. *The Times* had reported that two years before BP had led a campaign to obtain Al-Megrahi’s release to sew up a contract for developing Libyan oil. Hague stated that BP had had nothing to do with Al-Megrahi’s release, and the Scottish government said the oil giant had not contacted Edinburgh authorities, which are independent in judicial matters. BP admitted having spoken to the British government about an agreement to exchange prisoners between Great Britain and Libya, but denied any participation in the discussions that led to Al-Megrahi’s release.

The counterattack was not long in coming in this diplomatic crisis. The response came from three main kinds of actors: British diplomats, the information media, which were harsher in their reaction, and businessmen. Malcolm Rifkind, former foreign minister, wrote that President Obama’s aggressive rhetoric was exaggerated and ran the risk of dividing the two countries. Christopher Mayer, former ambassador to Washington, expressed concern about pension plans that had invested their funds in BP stock. For its part, the *Daily Mail* denounced Barack Obama as a hypocrite, saying he himself had fostered deepwater exploration, and, along with the *London Evening Standard*, underlined the environmental disasters caused by U.S. companies off British coasts. Philip Stephens of the *Financial Times* remembered that the United States, with one-twentieth of the world’s population, consumes one-fourth of the world’s oil. *The Daily Express* and the *Daily Telegraph* also counterattacked.⁷

Outstanding among the business community to respond were Richard Lambert, director of the Confederation of British Industry;⁸ Miles Templeman, director of the Institute of Directors; and John Napier, president of the RSE insurance company, who accused Obama of being anti-British, as did

If the United States and Great Britain have a “special relationship,” what is so special about it and what impact did Macondo have on it? Behind an idealist vision are big economic, military, and global security interests.

London’s Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson. All of this pressured David Cameron to try to get the U.S. president to tone down his discourse.

Amidst this crossfire of accusations, the French daily *Libération* talked about a human, ecological, and economic catastrophe that was beginning to turn into a diplomatic crisis. Cameron’s government decided to help BP resolve the situation, recognizing that the company should do everything possible to respond effectively. On June 11, Cameron, returning from Afghanistan, underlined the importance of BP continuing to be a strong, stable company, both for Great Britain and for the United States and other countries, and clearly stated his concern about the oil spill’s environmental damage. The next day, in a more conciliatory tone, Obama communicated to Cameron that BP was a global, multinational corporation, that the frustration about the oil slick had nothing to do with British national identity, and that there was no interest in pushing down the company’s share value.⁹

The first official meeting between Barack Obama and David Cameron, July 20 in the White House, was a chance to smooth rough edges. There were points of agreement (global security, Afghanistan, and Iran’s nuclear program) and others of difference (the solutions to the economic crisis and the oil spill). Cameron defended the interests of the British pension funds that owned the oil company; plus, he asked that the issue of the oil spill not be mixed with the case of the Libyan terrorist, recognizing that his release, which he dubbed “completely wrong,” was not due to BP.

Certainly, part of this diplomatic distancing has to do with the profiles of the two politicians. In contrast to his predecessors, Barack Obama, of Kenyan descent, does not have personal ties to Great Britain. He was raised in Hawaii and Indonesia, which is why he is considered the United States’ “first Pacific president.”¹⁰ Cameron, for his part, is the first prime minister elected since the war in Iraq began, and his priority is to contribute to European economic recovery. It is the case, then, that the two statesmen do not share either

a political agenda or an ideological perspective, so the Atlantic gap continues to widen.¹¹

If we look at this case as a whole, we see a U.S. politician concerned mainly about his national situation, who responds to domestic problems on an international sounding board. This may be due to a certain degree of diplomatic inexperience or to something that has characterized U.S. politicians: a certain amount of imperial arrogance. There was political uncertainty and the latent threat that what had been achieved during his first year could be lost; nevertheless, there was still a certain degree of diplomatic incapacity on the part of the United States. For his part, David Cameron displayed better management of the crisis and was able to deal with both internal and U.S. pressure, given that he was in a better position politically, but above all he understood that the risk of destroying the oil company could spread to the United States itself, where the attack would boomerang and blame him for not having averted the consortium's bankruptcy.

In this case, it was interesting to observe how different actors (diplomats, businessmen, and, increasingly, the media) intervened in this diplomatic crisis, and also how old issues, for example global corporate interests, superimposed themselves on emerging topics like the environment. In addition, it is interesting to note how the importance of local governments has grown, such as in the case of the Scottish court's decision about the Libyan terrorist.

The question that must be asked is, if the United States and Great Britain have a "special relationship," what is special about it and what impact did Macondo have on it? Behind an idealist vision are big interests, mainly economic, military, and global security interests, and this crisis affected economic agreements and changed the rules of the game. Both countries forgot that the companies are global and that the severing of national ties in production also brings the severing of national ties in risks, costs, and responsibilities. This crisis was the regulatory valve for the interests of big powers. Nevertheless, undoubtedly the United States has no better ally in its

global war than Great Britain, and cooperation in international political matters will continue in coming years.

One way or another, David Cameron assured this when he said the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom was simple, that it is strong because it benefits both countries, and that the alliance is not sustained by historical ties or blind loyalty, but that it is a voluntary partnership that serves both countries' national interests.¹² ■■■

NOTES

¹ Paul Harris and Anushka Asthana, "Barack Obama in Crisis as David Cameron Arrives for First Official Visit," *The Observer, The Guardian*, July 18, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/18/barack-obama-david-cameron>.

² Atlanticism is the philosophy of cooperation among Western European and North American nations—specifically the United States and Canada—on political, economic, and defense issues, with the purpose of safeguarding their security and protecting the values that unite them: "democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law." One who shares the idea of Atlanticism is known as an Atlantist or an Atlanticist; the name derives from the Atlantic Ocean that "connects the two continents," and ultimately from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). [Editor's Note.]

³ Walter Oppenheimer, "La nueva diplomacia británica se estrena en Washington," *El País*, May 14, 2010, http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/nueva/diplomacia/britanica/estrena/Washington/elpepiint/20100515elpepiint_6/Tes.

⁴ Yolanda Monge, "Obama exigirá a BP fondos para pagar los daños del vertido," *El País*, June 14, 2010, http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/Obama/exigira/BP/fondos/pagar/danos/vertido/elpepisoc/20100614elpepisoc_2/Tes.

⁵ Sonia Delesalle-Stolper, "Convoqué chez Obama, BP soigne son profil bas," *Libération*, June 15, 2010, <http://www.liberation.fr/economie/0101641437-convoque-chez-obama-bp-soigne-son-profil-bas>.

⁶ "UK Media Attack Obama for Comments about BP," CNN, June 11, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-11/world/uk.media.gulf.oil_1_bp-oil-rig-explosion-deepwater?s=PM:WORLD. [Editor's Note.]

⁷ Walter Oppenheimer, "Cameron pide garantías para la compañía," *El País*, June 17, 2010, http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Cameron/pide/garantias/compania/elpepiint/20100617elpepiint_1/Tes?print=1.

⁸ Sonia Delesalle-Stolper, "Quand Londres se lasse du ton de Washington," *Libération*, June 12, 2010, <http://www.liberation.fr/terre/0101640995-quand-londres-se-lasse-du-ton-de-washington>.

⁹ AFP, "Obama à Cameron: les critiques contre BP ne visent pas Londres," *Libération*, June 12, 2010, <http://www.liberation.fr/economie/0101641085-obama-a-cameron-les-critiques-contre-bp-ne-visent-pas-londres>.

¹⁰ Gideon Rachman, "Love and Loathing across the Ocean," *Financial Times*, June 14, 2010, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8974d0fe-77e8-11df-82c3-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1BJuv5dBZ>.

¹¹ Matt Browne, "¿Hacia dónde va la relación Obama-Cameron?" *El País*, July 21, 2010, http://www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/va/relacion/Obama-Cameron/elpepiopi/20100721elpepiopi_5/Tes.

¹² Antonio Caño, "Obama y Cameron certifican la solidez de sus relaciones bilaterales," *El País*, July 20, 2010, http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Obama/Cameron/certifican/solidez/relaciones/bilaterales/elpepuint/20100720elpepuint_21/Tes.

The U.S. president even compared the spill to 9/11, using the name "British Petroleum" in the same statement, although the company had changed its formal name to BP in 2001. This was interpreted as an attack on Great Britain.

After Macondo Considerations for Mexico

Rosío Vargas*

The goal of this essay is to underline the importance of analyzing the problems stemming from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill: its impact on Mexican oil policy, as well as some of the considerations Mexican policy design should include about the geopolitical context and the geological situation of its oil fields.

The Macondo oil rig spill is important for Mexico because it affects U.S. energy security. For this reason, the decisions made now to guarantee that security will depend on the level and rhythm of our neighbor's oil production and will affect other producers, members and non-members of the Organization of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC) alike. Since Mexico is one of the main suppliers to that market, U.S. policies and norms have an impact on the state-owned oil company Pemex and its production strategies. In general, our neighbor's actions will determine global supply, and that is leading many of the industry's important actors to propose effective solutions.

The context of the oil spill in which these actors design their proposals could be called a scenario plagued with regulatory and technical deficiencies, violations of federal security operating regulations, and the lack of appropriate focuses for managing the risks inherent to the oil industry's deepwater drilling.¹ The picture drawn by the numerous investigations into the spill's causes and the resulting penalizations has recently been completed by the December 15, 2010 Justice Department resolution against British Petroleum (BP) and eight other companies involved in operating the Macondo well. The fundamental argument is that BP and a group of contractors violated operational security regulations. The forceful, blunt verdict is that decisions were made to

save time and money when better alternatives could have been chosen. According to the Oil Pollution and Clean Water Acts, BP's fine promises to be large.²

For its part, the Obama administration and the U.S. Congress have planned legislative measures and regulatory safeguards, as well as performance safeguards to be complemented by institutional changes like the replacement of the Mineral Management Service, the body in charge of granting permits for oil drilling, by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement.

The U.S. oil industry, another important actor, is also implementing its own actions to ensure that oil production does not come to a halt. Among the mechanisms it is using is to exert pressure to raise the moratorium the Democratic administration has imposed. On a company level, they are discussing technological improvements to be used at the first sign of possible oil spills, reviewing their "best practices," guidelines, and protocols, as well as running simulations—up to and including "worst scenario" simulations—to come up with a gamut of alternatives that will make better response capability possible.

The industry is convinced there is no alternative to moving into deep waters, and therefore the only thing left to them is to reduce the risks. In the face of this, governments are readying themselves to back up oil exploration and drilling management in extreme environments, including dangerous operating conditions with important environmental and human risks.

Actually, their priorities are a reflection of international geopolitics, characterized by structural changes on the international oil scene that are unfavorable for the industrialized nations and private oil corporations. In this context, the latter have made clear their need to generate alternatives to counter

* Researcher at the CISAN-UNAM.



their disadvantages by speeding up their drilling and pumping to avoid a dip in profits where they still have resources.

To avoid another Macondo, governments and the international oil industry are analyzing how to regulate offshore production based on the Norwegian regulatory experience. Of particular interest is its advantage in the comparison of the U.S. Mineral Management Service to its counterpart, the Research Council of Norway.

However, this comparison must take into account the fact that the improvements the Norwegians have carried out have not been limited to regulatory requirements, but also include voluntary (risk-based) measures adopted by most of the companies in its oil industry.³ This means that regulation is not necessary when the political will to make improvements is a conviction that leads to effective action.

Another of the international experiences of note is Brazil's. While the international oil industry's tendency is to move into deep waters, the experience of countries like Brazil will have to be interpreted correctly. Its development does not depend on the tutelage of the transnational actors, and therefore, is independent, with the certainty that going into deep waters does not pose a risk *per se*, given the fact that its technological capacity allows it to guarantee success in its projects. Applying international experiences in their contexts and according to their particularities in order to not extrapolate

To avoid another Macondo, governments and the international oil industry are analyzing how to regulate offshore production based on the Norwegian experience.

situations alien to a national policy design is a conceptual priority and a necessary exercise in epistemological objectivity.

The sinking of the Deepwater Horizon platform and its fallout have made it clear that Mexico lacks the appropriate regulations to be able to deal with contingencies like oil spills; this is important given that the Mexican government intends to move into deepwater drilling. While the proposal actually responds to the interests of multinational corporations, undoubtedly Macondo will be the driving force behind the design of new regulations for upstream and offshore activities.

The spill has also been the opportunity to brush the cobwebs off issues debated at the time of the 2008 Energy Reform, such as the urgency of moving into deep water, looking at transborder issues in order to come to an agreement to share borders and develop resources (reserves), as well as a sup-



Issues like guaranteeing Mexico's future oil security must be taken into account in light of the official aim of maximizing today's oil production levels by developing all the existing productive options.

posed U.S. commitment to increase Mexican oil production.⁴ The neoliberal project now has a new opportunity given the need for greater regulation of the oil industry. Clearly, regulation is the operational part needed to constitute a market, and therefore, to privatize substantial activities.

The regulatory changes required to avoid environmental catastrophes of the magnitude of the BP spill will demand answers. For that reason, it will be necessary to connect oil production estimates to economic costs and the changes being made in the regulatory process in the Gulf of Mexico. Undoubtedly, this will involve higher costs.

According to some estimates, the costs of upstream activities (indices) will grow in the short run, given that deepwater production trends point to more offshore services, and exploration and development of new territories create the need for new infrastructure and an additional tension in supply chains.⁵ Indexed to year 2000 prices, the cost of US\$1 billion in capital in that year would come to US\$207 billion; and the operating costs for an oil deposit in that same year would rise from US\$100 billion to US\$173 billion in 2010.

Another impact to take into consideration in these estimates is the restrictions to offshore production both in the United States and in Mexico. In the case of the former, it would result from maintaining the ban on oil exploration and exploitation in the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic, in addition to developing stricter regulations in these same areas.⁶ In the case of Mexico, it would be due to Pemex's change in its deepwater production program. Due to the lack of a regulatory framework for deepwater and ultra-deepwater drilling, Mexico's state oil company postponed drilling in the Perdido area, near the U.S. border. Later, the National Hydrocarbons Commission (NHC) issued directives stating that Pemex should not drill in ultra-deep waters (with a sea bed deeper than 1 500 meters from the water's surface) as long as the NHC guidelines sent to the Federal Commission for Improved Regulations (Cofemer) were not fulfilled. These guidelines consist of industrial security technical procedures and requirements that must be observed when carrying out deepwater activities.⁷

Except for this, the Macondo spill has not changed the strategy Pemex is implementing in any major way. However, the energy policy decisions to be made should consider Mexico's role in our neighbor to the north's oil policy. Taking this into consideration implies designing a national policy using the room for action left to Mexico in light of the asymmetry in power *vis-à-vis* the United States. This asymmetry is evidenced in Mexico's subordinate integration with regard to energy, given that it is increasingly clear that it is following the U.S. energy priorities to design its own oil strategy.

Issues like guaranteeing Mexico's future oil security must be taken into account in light of the official aim of maximizing today's oil production levels by developing all the existing productive options. It should be pointed out that the aim of maximization does not necessarily correspond to domestic market requirements, since around 50 percent of national production is currently exported to the United States. Therefore, maximization is part of the neoliberal (non-proprietary) model that aims to extract the maximum economic value from developing resources,⁸ since in that model, resources have no value when they are in the ground, but only when they have been extracted, that is, if they are developed. The matter becomes controversial in a context of declining resources that would seem to demand moderating oil production rates to conserve them for future generations.

With regard to this, it would be important to establish development priorities so they can be implemented in a production cost curve that jibes with the range of productive alter-

natives corresponding to the national geological and technological situation. Clearly, productive decisions reflect not only a certain way of managing projects, but are also the result of the influence of interest groups covered by official policy to favor national and foreign private interests.

Undoubtedly the central question to consider is oil rent.⁹ The fact that it accrues to the government may be a necessary condition—though it is not sufficient—to ensure that those revenues benefit society. But this runs into difficulties if the aim is maintaining the welfare state and sharing oil revenues with the private sector, particularly foreign interests. Although oil rent is distributed in the private sector all along the chain of production, it is hoarded by private investors, and this explains their deliberate low profile and/or virtual absence in today's debates and Supreme Court decisions when it hears constitutional cases on these issues. Today, the oil rent is hid-

The dispute over oil rent continues to be the most important political issue related to oil. All these aspects must be incorporated into the design of the most appropriate national options together with any industrial security measure.

den, disguised in the form of risk and efficiency premiums to investors, and is transferred to private hands through new kinds of contracts (the “contracts with incentives”).

Under neoliberalism, the rent is disguised by the legal paraphernalia, economic theory, and corporate law that deny its importance; you also have to deal with the appropriation of oil reserves in a context of supposed sovereign management given the pretension that today these reserves constitute a “patrimony of humankind.”

Clearly, the new forms of appropriating producing countries' oil income do not even require foreign occupation by developed countries' armed forces, such as in the case of Iraq. Today, it is more effective to gain “access” to upstream sectors in oil producing countries through concessions, joint production agreements, or, as in Mexico's case, based on a regime of contracts through which oil rent is appropriated by covering up the *de facto* loss of a country's oil reserves to the benefit of multinational companies, exploration and drilling service providers, and other participants from the national private sector.

The dispute over oil rent continues to be the most important political issue related to oil. All these aspects must be incorporated into the design of the most appropriate national options together with any industrial security measure. The objective of regulating the market is to establish a legal regimen to ensure investments in the oil industry. The regulations that will come out of Macondo could lead us down a camouflaged road toward that same objective. So, what kind of regulations are we talking about? **NM**

NOTES

¹ The National Academies, “Interim Report on Causes of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Rig Blowout and Ways to Prevent Such Events” (Washington, D. C.: National Academy of Engineering and National Research Council of the National Academies, November 16, 2010), p. 5.

² Thomas Hart, “Justice Department Files Oil Spill Lawsuit against BP and Others,” <http://personalmoney.com/moneyblog/2010/12/15/oil-spill-lawsuit/>, accessed December 17, 2010. The amount that has been mentioned is US\$40 billion. The company did not use the best drilling technology nor the surveillance assets required to protect workers. Due to the prohibitions in the Clean Water Act, BP has tried to get the fine reduced by questioning government estimates of the spill's volume.

³ Jan Erik Vinnem, “Evaluation of Offshore Emergency Preparedness in View of Rare Accidents,” *Safety Science* no. 2, vol. 49 (2001-2002), pp. 178-191.

⁴ See Lourdes Melgar, “Impact of the Deep Horizon Oil Spill on Mexico's E&P,” Gulf Oil Spill Impacts Series (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, National Security Program, and the Institute of the Americas, August 5, 2010).

⁵ Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA), “Cost Building and Operating Upstream Oil and Gas Facilities Begin Measured Rise” (Cambridge, Massachusetts: CERA), http://press.ihc.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=4335, accessed December 17, 2010.

⁶ This is what Secretary Ken Salazar stated December 3, 2010.

⁷ Alma Hernández, “Ponen reglas para aguas profundas,” *Reforma* (Mexico City), December 9, 2010, http://www.cicm.org.mx/noticias.php?id_noticia=4857, accessed January 14, 2011.

⁸ The concept of the non-proprietary model is based on Bernard Mommer's work *Global Oil and the Nation State* (2002), where he alludes to the two existing forms of property in the oil industry today: 1) proprietary, in which the state maintains ownership of mineral resources (oil), issuing permits in exchange for royalties. This model is based on international land rent, on a state responsible for the intermediation of distributing that rent, the existence of which is the result of the state ownership of the territory; and 2) the other, non-proprietary form that emerged in the 1980s, based on the notion that mineral resources are a “free gift of nature,” spurs the industrialized countries through their companies to seek “access” to producing countries' oil resources through a change in the legal regimen to gradually decrease the state's store of oil rent to turn it into profits that end up in the pockets of investors, above all foreign investors and large transnational corporations.

⁹ This is the international price of crude multiplied by the total volume of production, less production costs. Its amount could be considered the equivalent of available income, although there can be certain variations in its quantification due to the concept of rent on which the estimation is based.

Pemex and the Macondo Well

Did the Accident Affect Its Agenda?

Fabio Barbosa Cano*

British Petroleum's accident did not trigger changes in the activities or plans of *Petróleos Mexicanos* (Pemex), Mexico's state-owned oil company, for the rest of the present administration. To demonstrate this, I will start by saying that land and shallow water exploration have both been difficult. In the decade from 2001 to 2010, Pemex doubled its investments and drilled the same number of wells as it had sunk in the 1970s, at its zenith. But it has only found small, disperse deposits of heavy crude, in some cases more than 7,000 meters deep. In this context, we can be sure that the possibility of discovering a new gigantic deposit inside Mexico or in shallow waters can be discarded. Deep waters are the last hope for slowing the decline in production and maintaining income from exports.

RESULTS IN THE DEEP GULF

Up until now, 18 wells have been drilled and two are underway. The success rate, an indicator measuring the ratio of successful wells to wells drilled, has been 38 percent. That is, 11 have been failures and seven have hit new deposits.

On the other hand, two new hydrocarbon basins have been discovered: one that produces natural gas off the coast of Catemaco in southern Veracruz, and another that produces super-heavy oils off the coast of Campeche. It is ironic that, given the hurry to raise exports and maintain fiscal revenues, geology provides us with gas, but enormous investments are required to process and transport it. Also, we have super-heavy crudes, but we face the challenge of creating new technologies for its extraction and industrialization. In addition, few reserves have been discovered, with the exception of Lakach, a gigantic field in the area of Catemaco, Veracruz. In short, until now, geology has not been the splendid

provider promised in the discourse that pointed to the existence of a "treasure" in the bowels of the Earth. However, the predictions that we would find no hydrocarbons at all also turned out to be false. See the table for a summary of the results.

We can disregard the Nab well because, according to a study published as a master's thesis by Mexican engineer Omar Romero Mata at Stavanger University in Norway, the technology does not currently exist to be able to extract its 8- to 10-degree API crudes. According to Romero, if it were programmed for development, "Nab' [would be] one of the most challenging fields in the world....No historical reference exists for a commercial development for this depth and fluid properties."¹

In the two remaining years of this administration, 2011 and 2012, Pemex's plan is to continue to simultaneously operate three deep-water platforms in the Gulf of Mexico, among them the Centenario, which, at the time of this writing, continued drilling the Pikkis Well, located in the Catemaco area and at a greater depth than Macondo. Work there will conclude in 2011, and work on Nen, Kunán, Kabilil, and Kajkunaj will follow. Pemex has more than 100 prospective sites in this area. The second team in Mexican waters will be Sea Dragon; its contract was confirmed by Pemex's director at the recent oil congress in October 2010. Its vast program will cover the entire Gulf coast, from Tamaulipas to the Campeche coast, drilling in virgin areas.

The third platform is called Bicentenario. It will move into Mexican territorial waters at some time in 2011, since it is already slightly behind schedule. It is the first team designed for wells 3 000 meters under water. In 2010, at the moment of greatest alarm about the Macondo accident, perhaps waiting for the new U.S. regulations that began to be designed at that time, Pemex announced a change in its programs: Bicentenario would not begin operations directly in border areas with the United States, but would operate across from the port of Tuxpan, Veracruz, "while the crew became familiarized with

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Economic Research, fabio-barbosacano@gmail.com.



the equipment.” The priority is now “the search for best practices in deep waters,” according to Dr. Juan Carlos Zepeda Molina, commissioner and president of the National Hydrocarbons Commission, the new regulatory body.²

Discoveries about the geology of the gulf have made it possible to pinpoint three areas to concentrate activity, two already mentioned here: Catemaco, a new wet gas basin in Mexico’s oil geography, and the super-heavy area off Campeche. Geologists who have studied this region for decades like Dr. Salvador Ortuño Arzate have dubbed it the Kayab Area.

Finally, the third zone, bordering on the United States, is called Perdido Fold Belt. Mexico has been studying it for more than 10 years and has held five diplomatic meetings seeking a new treaty to jointly explore the transborder deposits thought to exist there. The U.S. government response can be summed up in the position that the first requirement for initiating negotiations has to be the demonstration that there is at least one deposit spanning the border. Once that has been proven, the next step would be to determine which parts of it are on either side of the border and what percentage of the hydrocarbons there belong to each country. However, this can only be determined by drilling wells; it is not possible to negotiate blindly using hypotheses based on geophysical soundings. In the late 1990s, the National Autonomous University of Mexico’s Institute for Economic Research launched a seminar to examine these problems. Among its proposals is to begin drilling on the Mexican side near U.S.

At the moment of greatest alarm about the Macondo accident, Pemex announced a change in its programs: the priority is now “the search for best practices in deep waters.”

wells in this Gulf of Mexico border region. Our proposals were supported when Dr. Sergio Alcocer Martínez de Castro, then the director of the UNAM Engineering Institute, asked about why the move into deep waters, explained, “Because the United States is already there.”³

After years of waiting, the Bicentenario platform is now due to arrive, and is slated to drill the first well on the Mexican side of the border with privately-owned Mexican equipment. We estimate that drilling will begin in the Perdido Fold Belt in the second half of 2011 and will take five years, since it is earmarked exclusively for this promising region. There are very high probabilities for success in the area. In the United States, out of 19 exploratory wells, 12 hit hydrocarbons: that is, there was a 63 percent success rate.⁴ By analogy, we hope to get similar results: these are the same geological layers, the same structures. Why can’t we expect similar results?

It is also possible we could find giant fields like the Great White, but geology has the last word. Despite the advance of technology, no well can offer a 100-percent guarantee. In

RESULTS FOR 20 WELLS DRILLED BY PEMEX

Well	Year	Result	Volume of Crude and/or Gas
Chukta-201	2004	Dry hole	—
Nab-1	2004	Only possible reserves of extra-heavy crude reported	32 million barrels
Caxui	2004	Dry hole	—
Kastelán	2005	Only possible reserves of extra-heavy crude reported	43 million barrels
Noxal-1	2006	Only possible gas reserves reported	420 billion cubic feet
Lakach-1	2006	The only one with proven gas reserves	308 billion cubic feet
Lalail	2007	Only probable and possible gas reserves reported	709 billion cubic feet
Chelem-1	2008	Dry hole	—
Tamha-1	2008	Immature organic matter	—
Tamil-1	2008	Only traces found	n/d
Leek-1	2009	Only possible gas reserves reported	112 billion cubic feet
Catamat-1	2009	Only water	—
Etbakel	2009	Traces of crude. Non-productive	—
Cox	2009	Dry hole	—
Holok-1	2009	Only water	—
Kabilil	2009	Dry hole	—
Labay	2009	Possible reserves of natural gas	2.4 trillion cubic feet
Lakach delimitador	2010	Evaluation of its gas reserves pending	Production tests: 25 000 cubic feet/day
Piklis	2010	Drilling since August 2010	n/d
Bakale (tamil dl)	2010	Drilling since July 2010	n/d

Source: Pemex, *Las reservas de hidrocarburos de México (2005-2008)*, <http://www.pemex.com>.

this region, Chevron has drilled a dry well, the Toledo, only 9 kilometers from other successful wells.

THE TRIDENT CASE

The first Trident well on the U.S. side was announced as a supplier of light crude in 2001. The next year, two other Trident wells were drilled, one only four kilometers from the Mexican border. With this data, the press, research institutions, and oil companies considered Trident a transborder field. To prove whether this structure was productive on the Mexican

side, since the Ernesto Zedillo administration (1994-2000), Pemex has been studying a locale called Alaminos, five kilometers across from the Trident. A first successful Mexican-drilled well would be sufficient to sign new diplomatic agreements on “unified” pumping of the site. However, the whims of geology have changed some forms and rhythms of the Mexico-U.S. relationship.

What has happened? Information is incomplete, but we have some important pieces of the puzzle. The United States has given out information in small doses and only after a long delay: it has published the fact that the lease of the blocks where the Trident wells are located (that is, numbers 903,

904, and 947 in the Alaminos Canyon area in the U.S. sector of the Gulf of Mexico operated by Chevron) was “let go” and returned to the U.S. government in 2008. That is, after a decade, the report is that it is a “non-commercial” deposit with no reserves, where only “resources” have been recognized. The return occurred in 2008, at the end of the period U.S. legislation establishes for offshore leases in its waters.

Information now public in the United States also tells us that Blocks 903, 904, and 947 in the Alaminos Canyon area were included in Lease Sale 210 in August 2009.⁵ Today, we also know that the blocks were given in exchange for a few million dollars to a small Norwegian firm called Rocksource Gulf of Mexico. The company’s website reports that it not only acquired the Trident rights, but also a group of nine blocks; it also includes a short history of Trident, explaining the return of the leases, and repeating that the crude “discovered” in Trident can only be evaluated as a “resource,”⁶ that is, not as a reserve, and announcing that it will do its own estimate sometime in the future.⁷

As a result, the Mexican government reformulated its plan for partnering with large oil companies. It hoped to resolve the financing problems associated with the majors in a “unified” development of the transborder deposits. As became abundantly clear in the 2008 debate on the energy reform, without huge investments, Pemex’s entire deepwater program is unviable.

The search for new forms of partnership probably began in 2009, when the director of Pemex Exploración y Producción proposed at the Offshore Technology Conference that any Mexican crude discovered near the border be transported directly to Houston, using the transportation installations built only 14 kilometers away for Chevron, British Petroleum, and Shell’s Great White project.⁸ Probably that proposal will be combined with the so-called “contracts with incentives.”⁹

Positive Mexican results in the Perdido area will prompt an immediate change in Pemex’s entire program. Drilling would immediately concentrate in this area near the U.S. border. The relationship of forces among Pemex, the governors of the Gulf coast states involved, and, of course, national and foreign oil companies leading the debate about Pemex’s deepwater programs would be reconfigured.

In the remotely possible case that in 2011 and 2012, Pemex faces consecutive failures in the Perdido region, panic will set in. Just drilling a well in this region costs Pemex more than US\$150 million. If these debts mount up, sources of credit

will shut down, though the flow of dollars from imports could remain constant for this administration and part of the next. The majors will change their policy toward Mexico; the ongoing courting that we have witnessed will become disdain; and only small companies willing to run very high risks will continue to be interested in the country, as international experience has shown.

In short, although Mexico has now been added to the long list of countries that are post-peak-oil, it can continue to play some role in energy supply, and oil will continue to be a factor in Mexico-U.S. relations. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Omar Romero Mata, “Model for Economical Analysis of Oil and Gas Deepwater Production Concepts/Comparisons of Life Cycle Cost of Subsea Production Systems vs. Floating Structures with Dry Wellheads,” master’s thesis, University of Stavanger, spring semester, 2010, <http://ingenet.com.mx/aguasprofundas/2010/07/04/estrategia-para-el-desarrollo-de-campos-en-aguas-profundas-en-mexico/>.

² “Estamos preocupados por cuestiones de seguridad, dice funcionario. Postpone Pemex perforación de pozo ultraprofundo en el Golfo de México,” *La Jornada* (Mexico City), August 7, 2010, p. 23.

³ Sergio Alcocer Martínez de Castro, “Retos tecnológicos en aguas profundas. Fortalezas en institutos e instituciones de educación superior,” paper presented at the Encuentro Tecnológico Internacional sobre los Recursos Energéticos del Golfo de México, held in 2008 at the UNAM School of Engineering.

⁴ Don Lyle, “Operators Stretch the Limits,” *E&P*, <http://www.epmag.com/archives/print/364.htm>, accessed April 3, 2007.

⁵ See http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/lseale/210_active_lease.pdf, accessed May 23, 2010.

⁶ In oil industry jargon, the term “resource” means that only favorable indicators were found, but because of their high level of uncertainty, they require more investigation; that is, what has been found does not yet merit being elevated to the category of proven, probable, or possible reserves.

⁷ “Rocksource ASA announces that the company, through its subsidiary Rocksource Gulf of Mexico Corporation (RGOM), has been awarded nine leases in the Western Gulf of Mexico Lease Sale 210... Unocal merged with Chevron in 2005, and in 2008 the operator Chevron returned the leases at the expiry of the primary lease term... In addition, the awards include the Trident discovery, which the previous operator (Unocal/Chevron) estimated to contain in excess of 100 million barrels of discovered resources. Rocksource will release its own resource estimate upon further evaluation.” <http://www.rocksource.com/archive/rocksource-awarded-9-gulf-of-mexico-leases-article182-170.html>, accessed May 2, 2010.

⁸ He said, “Mexico also needs international help... A shortage of pipelines in deep Mexican waters could mean, for example, that the Mexican side of the U. S. Perdido prospect might flow to market through U.S. pipes if the two countries agree.” Bruce Nichols, “Mexico Hurries Deep Gulf Oil, Gas Search,” *Reuters*, Houston, May 6, 2009.

⁹ In the energy reform approved two years ago by Mexico’s Congress, a new legal term, “contracts with incentives,” was introduced. These contracts allow private companies to do work for Pemex in areas of exploration and production reserved by the Constitution to the government. The companies are paid for this work, with the incentive of increasing their pay if they surpass targets established in the contract.

Reflections on the Consequences Of the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

Heberto Barrios Castillo*



Undoubtedly, one of the most important recent negative events in the oil world was the Macondo well oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. It will bring many changes and have important consequences.

A maxim typical of industrial security says that “when it rains, it pours.” That is, an accident makes us realize everything that was being done wrong in an organization, and this is due above all to two circumstances known as “workplace blindness” or “systemic blindness.”

THE CONTEXT

Although recently, both internal and external pressure has been exerted on *Petróleos Mexicanos* (Pemex) to begin pro-

duction in so-called deep waters as soon as possible, this is not a real necessity, at least not for the country or the company. On the other hand, it may well be a necessity for agents abroad, as stated in a Pemex press release about an 8-percent increase in crude exports.¹ It further stated that Pemex’s crude production in the first 10 months of 2010 kept pace with the same period in 2009, and closed at an average of 2.58 million barrels a day. Based on preliminary figures for oil indicators, of total production, 1.43 million barrels were heavy crude (55 percent), 0.83 million barrels were light crude, and 0.32 million were super-light. In October 2010, production hit an average of 2.57 million barrels a day, a number similar to last September. This means that there is actually no urgency to starting to develop super-deep deposits (see table).

On the other hand, beginning this kind of production of crude at a breakneck speed could lead us to adversely affect Mexican ecosystems, even though the damage may not be perceived directly or may be not very visible in the short term.²

* Retiree, former Pemex employee and member of the National Committee for Energy Studies (CNEE).

To evaluate the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in April 2010 off the Louisiana coast, an interdisciplinary group of Mexican scientists, coordinated by Baja California's Ensenada Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education (CICESE), organized an oceanographic expedition. This launched a five-year monitoring project in the area, unprecedented in Mexican oceanography.

Meanwhile, a study recently published by "Democracy Now!" indicates that the BP oil spill rapidly disseminated toxic chemicals at dangerous enough levels to end marine life in the Gulf of Mexico.³ According to research findings published in *Geophysical Research Letters* magazine, these chemicals were found at a depth of more than 1 000 meters, 13 kilometers away from the well in May 2010, only weeks after the spill began.

Some U.S. specialists think that thousands of species are at risk because in high enough concentrations, these chemicals, called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), immediately cause death in animals and, in time, cause cancer.⁴ The governments of the states of Veracruz, Tamaulipas, and Quintana Roo, for their part, brought suit against BP in a Texas court for possible losses associated with the spill.⁵

On this issue, in his article "Advertencias del Macondo" (Forewarnings of Macondo), Mexican researcher John Saxe-Fernández states that the explosion, which caused the biggest

spill and ecological disaster in U.S. history, "is a sign of what the era of the exhaustion of non-renewable natural resources, in this case peak oil, means, its dangers and environmental, socioeconomic, and political-military consequences. In the best-case scenario, a partial recovery of the habitat will take decades."⁶

It should be pointed out that when he talks about peak oil, he is not referring to the end of oil in general, but to conventional, cheap, high quality, easy-access oil. In this first decade of the twenty-first century, other metal and mineral deposits also start to show signs of being exhausted.

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As shown, the statements and reports from different authors and media fit together perfectly, allowing us to arrive at a series of observations and conclusions. For example, one is that the almost surrealist handling of the news about the spill and how it was later dealt with undoubtedly honor the field's name, Macondo, which comes from Gabriel García Márquez's classic magical realist novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Another more important and less anecdotal issue is that two high risk circumstances came together here: the spill itself and the means used to control it. Plus, the impact can be

CRUDE RESERVES/PRODUCTION RATIO IN MEXICO
(JANUARY 2010)

Type of reserve	Volume (billions of barrels of equivalent crude oil)	Projected duration of deposit according to 2010 internal consumption levels (1.378 billion barrels of equivalent crude oil)*
1 P (proven)	14.0	10.2 years
2P (proven + probable)	14.0 + 14.2= 28.2	20.5 years
3P (proven + probable + possible)	14.0 + 14.2 + 14.8= 43.0	31.2 years
3P (total: proven + probable + possible)	43.0	31.2 years

* Round numbers.

Source: "Reservas de hidrocarburos Pemex a enero de 2010," <http://www.ri.pemex.com/index.cfm?action=content§ionID=134&catID=12201>.

It is clear that plans
for deepwater development
in the Gulf of Mexico must be reformulated
and redesigned, not just reviewed
as some authors suggest.

seen in two ways: on deepwater crude production and on the environmental preservation/destruction binomial. As already mentioned, Pemex's reserve/production ratio does not make it imperative to develop these kinds of deposits as soon as possible, above all if we disregard exports.⁷

All of this demonstrates that neither the appropriate technology nor procedures nor experience required for supervision exist. With the current amount and type of information available, specialized bodies and oil companies have been shown to be enormously inadequate. Accusations of indolence and corruption have been leveled at both BP and the Mineral Management Service (MMS), now the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), known as "Bummer," which replaced the MMS because of its damaged reputation and the conflicts of interest that came to light after the spill.

For all these reasons, it is clear that plans for deepwater development in the Gulf of Mexico must be reformulated and redesigned, not just reviewed as some authors suggest. Regarding the environmental destruction/preservation binomial underlined by the media, it is clear that new technology must be developed to prevent damage and, in the last analysis, regenerate anything that is impacted.

CONCLUSION: ACTION PROPOSALS ON DIFFERENT LEVELS

Internationally

Countries with mature deposits and declining reserves will undoubtedly develop all possible deposits, even the most difficult and costly (like those in deep waters) in the near future. For this reason, they must do everything possible to come to agreements with their neighbors about these issues in the framework of international cooperation. One example of this is Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation agreement signed

last September 15 by Norway and Russia about deposits in the Barents Sea.⁸

New technologies must be developed to increase environmental security in everything concerning developing deepwater deposits, whether from platforms or in pipelines, etc., as well as to fight possible spills, given that one of the lessons of the Macondo incident is that the technical and administrative systems used in this kind of development are not yet as trustworthy as needed.

In the Gulf of Mexico

As mentioned above, in this kind of work, international cooperation is needed, above all between neighboring countries. For this reason, undoubtedly some kind of an agreement must be sought among Mexico, the United States, and Cuba as the main countries affected. This could be done bilaterally, although ideally, there would be a multilateral framework to guarantee safe development of the Gulf of Mexico's deepwater deposits and to carry out joint actions in case of a spill.⁹

Nationally

Undoubtedly, one of the lessons learned is that nationalism is a factor that continues to dominate decisions about oil, whether by private or state companies. For that reason, Mexico must display a healthy dose of nationalism that until now the actions of recent federal administrations have not displayed.

On the other hand, it is necessary to continue to systematically follow in detail the effects that with time will undoubtedly be detected in Gulf of Mexico ecosystems, and, if merited, the appropriate legal proceedings stipulated by international law must be brought.

Inside Pemex

For Pemex to display a healthy nationalism, it would have to develop deepwater deposits, but only when necessary and based on internal decisions (production-demand-reserves) and not because of pressure from other countries or multinational corporations. This is all the more the case given the growing cost and complexity of working in deep waters and that some companies, like Devon, have announced their withdrawal from this market.

I think that what is needed is for this kind of exploration and development to be done directly, acquiring and assimilating the technologies needed and not inventing new kinds of contracts that endanger national integrity and oil earnings, among other things, and that have already shown themselves to be inoperative in the past, such as the so-called “multiple services contracts.”¹⁰

Without a doubt, the decline of the Cantarell deposit and others that will begin to wane in the future will make Pemex have to develop Gulf of Mexico deepwater deposits. However, the terms in which they are developed should be reformulated, as should, above all, the technical and ecological conditions that until now had been predicted for them. For example, it will be necessary to redesign the planning of deepwater development regarding the assimilation of technology; security, prevention, and ecological rescue procedures, with an eye to future development. This should be applied in the upcoming Lakach Project.¹¹

Also, Pemex’s Environmental Protection Strategy should be reformulated, particularly the “Strategic Projects” chapter. Although the current chapter mentions that one of Pemex’s new challenges is working in deep waters, it proposes no concrete measures and no project that could protect the environment when this kind of development is underway.

The production strategy should also be reviewed and changed. That is, some of the closed deposits and capped wells should be re-opened, and development should continue along the coasts, both onshore and offshore. It is easier and cheaper to work in shallow waters than to explore in deep waters, and it is estimated that we will have oil for 10 more years. Given that the South and Maritime Southeast regions are where 100 percent of the super-light crude and 90 percent of the light crude is produced, the two together have gone from making up 25 percent of national crude oil production in 2004 to 42 percent in the second quarter of 2010, and it continues to rise. Forty-two percent of natural gas production also came from there in the same quarter.¹²

If the decision were made to decrease, or even cancel, crude oil exports—the latest reserve/production ratio is a matter for great concern since if it continues this way, there would only be enough for 10.2 years—¹³ we would have enough oil to maintain our development for about 28 years.¹⁴

It is also very important to say that a great deal of effort must be put into regulation, since, as has already been shown—and this was recognized by the president of the United States himself—a regulatory body was corrupted.¹⁵ **NM**

NOTES

¹ Pemex, “Mantiene Pemex estable la producción de crudo en los primeros 10 meses del año,” Press Release 90, November 25, 2010, <http://www.pemex.com/index.cfm?action=news§ionID=8&catID=40&contentID=23473>. [Editor’s Note.]

² See “Sin precedente, monitoreo en el Golfo de México; llevará un lustro concluirlo,” *La Jornada*, November 17, 2010, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010/11/17/index.php?section=sociedad&article=048n1soc>. [Editor’s Note.]

³ “Estudio: Químicos letales se extendieron ampliamente tras derrame,” “Democracy Now!” November 3, 2010, <http://www.democracynow.org/es/2010/11/3/titulares#9>. [Editor’s Note.]

⁴ CNN, <http://mexico.cnn.com/mundo/2010/11/02/quimicos-toxicos-se-propagaron-en-un-area-del-derrame-en-el-golfo>, November 2, 2010. [Editor’s Note.]

⁵ Agencia EFE, “Tres estados mexicanos demandaron ante un tribunal de EE.UU. a BP por vertido,” Mexico City, September 30, 2010. [Editor’s Note.]

⁶ “Opinion Section,” *La Jornada* (Mexico City), September 9, 2010, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010/09/09/index.php?section=opinion&article=030a1eco>. [Editor’s Note.]

⁷ For the purposes of an analysis like this, when we talk about reserves, we are referring to three kinds: proven, probable, and possible. Proven reserves are the estimates of crude oil, natural gas, and natural gas liquids about which geological and engineering data point to the reasonable certainty that they can be extracted from known deposits under existing economic and operating conditions by a specific date. Probable reserves are those which analysis suggests are commercially feasible to recover. There must be at least a 50-percent probability that the amounts to be recovered will be equal or greater than those expected. Possible reserves are volumes of hydrocarbons whose commercial recovery is less feasible than that of probable reserves.

⁸ See http://www.noruega.org.mx/News_and_events/Noticias-principales/Acuordo-historico-entre-Noruega-y-Rusia/. [Editor’s Note.]

⁹ Ángel de la Vega Navarro, “Desastre en el golfo: implicaciones para la industria petrolera,” *Energía a debate* no. 39 (July-August 2010).

¹⁰ Antonio Gershenson, “Presupuesto petrolero...donde no hay petróleo,” *La Jornada*, September 30, 2010.

¹¹ In 2006, the Pemex Exploración y Producción company confirmed the potential of the area called Deep Coatzacoalcos, where Lakach lies under 988 meters of water. Today, project design is underway and an investment of about Mex\$21 billion (at 2011 value) is predicted from 2011 to 2023. See <http://www.pemex.com/index.cfm?action=content§ionID=145>. [Editor’s Note.]

¹² See www.pemex.com.

¹³ “Reporte de reservas de Pemex a enero de 2010,” http://www.ri.pemex.com/files/content/DCF_ccw_r09_e%20090319%20nota%20precautoria.pdf. [Editor’s Note.]

¹⁴ Rafael de Celis Contreras, “México no es un país petrolero,” lecture at Mexico’s Chamber of Deputies in September 2010.

¹⁵ Sergio Benito Osorio, “Después de Macondo,” *Energía a debate* no. 39 (July-August 2010).

Reviews

Casinos y poder

El caso del Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino

(Casinos and Power

The Case of the Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino)

Elisabeth A. Mager Hois

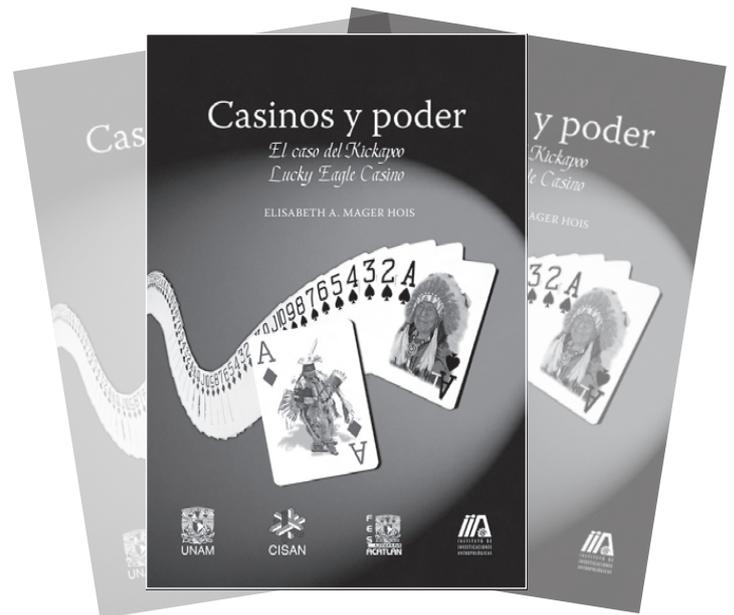
CISAN, IIA, FES Acatlán

Mexico City, 2010, 253 pp.

The study of the indigenous peoples of our hemisphere is a current issue because theirs are problems the national states have not been capable of resolving, and this remits us to a necessary starting point: history. Without a doubt, a temporal perspective is absolutely necessary for knowing the roots of a cultural identity. However, the problem becomes more complex when we look at contemporary groups, immersed in capitalist, globalized societies.

This is where the specificity of Elisabeth Mager's research about a very particular, little-studied tribe, the Kickapoo, lies. It is a group that comes from the Great Lakes region and which, from the nineteenth century on, has maintained a presence in Kansas and Oklahoma. It settled in Texas and, after the 1847 war, requested permission from the Mexican government to colonize part of Coahuila. It is a small tribe scattered over a large area that became bi-national. This made it possible for it to experience and cross the northern border constantly, participating in different kinds of labor markets, societies, and cultural references. These characteristics became more marked with globalization, when the tribe became more involved in relations of greater linkages, simultaneity, and consumption.

In this new book about the Kickapoo, Mager concentrates on the group located on the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT) reservation, in Maverick County, immersed in the fight for economic control over the Lucky Eagle Casino, established in 1996. This struggle has spawned political factions and rifts in the group.



Power disputes in native communities are more evident since the United States authorized the establishment of casinos on Indian reservations. Together with the aim of effectively implementing a cultural assimilation policy, this has strengthened the finances of tribes settled on their own land, in addition to giving them visibility and social and political power by positioning them in the public sphere. We should remember that Indian reservations are territories with limited sovereignty, and native tribes can, among other things, open casinos and gambling halls, prohibited elsewhere.

Using historical and ethnographic data and theoretical reflections, the research project clarifies the group's current situation, created by the tension between two different processes: assimilation and social integration into broader U.S. society. The former involves the acceptance and appropriation of a new culture, achieving social recognition by negating the original culture; the latter includes the incorporation of some cultural traits of mainstream society, but preserving the tribe's own identity.

Setting up casinos on U.S. tribal lands is seen as a way of giving them privileges. However, two things should be taken into account. The first is that the economic improvements experienced by reservation inhabitants do not nullify

the reservations, which the United States used to try to solve “the Indian problem” by confining these people to a specific reserved territory; in addition, the economic benefits are not distributed equitably. The second is that the profound social differentiation and economic asymmetries have created internal conflicts, favoring the emergence of different social classes.

Mager’s description of how Kickapoo tribal power has been constituted is so complete that it breaks with classical ethnographies that present indigenous people as static and homogeneous. Undoubtedly, these are groups with a common identity and past, a shared history, language, and cultural and natural heritages that are very important to document. However, inside these communities there are also rivalry, conflicts of interests, and competition. In this struggle, the dominant groups are constantly at risk of losing power to other factions that become empowered in accordance with economic, political, or ideological interests. These risks of division weaken

The situation is becoming more chaotic and hostile for the youth of the tribe, who receive an education according to mainstream U.S. culture, centered on consumerism and exacerbated individualism. Thus, they are losing their cultural heritage.

the tribe, its identity, consciousness, and ethnic resistance, and expose it to dangers from mainstream society. Political adversity is expressed in social disarticulation, exposing its members to individualism and consumerist selfishness typical of capitalist societies, which divides peoples and conglomerates.

This people has gone through worse moments. They had to face a policy of physical extermination and ideological persecution, and then a policy of cultural assimilation in the form of a government “civilizing” policy. This went on until they were able to find a way to forge a self-determination strategy that has not only kept the Kickapoo united as a nation and given them the strength to overcome internal divisions, but has also integrated them into the dominant society despite its defects. Down through its history, it is possible to see this dual character in the Kickapoo identity: atavism and the cultural heritage of U.S. society and resistance to alien

cultural schema. An obvious concern in Mager’s study is that the group’s socio-economic conditions weaken that ethnic resistance, that strong response to cultural influences that undermine the group, community fiber.

Other fundamental indicators exist for observing contemporary ethnic identities. At the end of the day, a tribal nation like this one has gone through certain changes: they lost their religious cohesion and traditional power structures; their current government and authorities manage both federal funds channeled into the reservation and casino earnings. In this sense, the book concludes, the casinos are more like corporations with directors who presumably have the mission of defending tribal interests, when their interests are actually business interests. For this reason, both ceremonies and expressions of religion and kinship become mere representations of culture. Therefore, what is suggested is that with this “win-win” policy, the state is the main beneficiary: U.S. first peoples become businesspeople of the system and have put to one side ethnic resistance; and at the same time, the self-determination policy frees up the government from its financial obligations to the tribes.

This situation is becoming more and more chaotic and hostile for the youth of the tribe, who must be educated in English-speaking schools to be able to work in the casinos. There, they receive an education according to mainstream U.S. culture, centered on consumerism and exacerbated individualism. Thus, these young people are losing their cultural heritage, moving into syncretic labyrinths where different and sometimes contradictory beliefs are reconciled, pushing them into the complicated world of drug addiction, alcoholism, and crime as a result of their cultural confusion and economic inequality.

According to Mager, power structures, the driving force behind the disarticulation of indigenous organizations, can be characterized not only as the use of economic mechanisms based on political and military power, but also as instruments of ideological orientation. This conclusion leads us to rethink the nature of the ethnic question, cultural resistance, and the self-determination of contemporary indigenous peoples, all questions influenced by the contexts in which they are immersed, that is the national states that, nevertheless, define themselves as multicultural. ■■■

Hernán Salas Quintanal
**Researcher at the UNAM Institute for
 Anthropological Research**



Fronteras de tinta: Literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas.

Una bibliografía comentada

(Borders of Ink: Literature and Communications Media in the Americas. An Annotated Bibliography)

Graciela Martínez-Zalce, Víctor Manuel Granados Garnica
And Jorge Olvera Vázquez, eds.

FES Acatlán/CISAN

Mexico City, 2010, 185 pp.

In 2008, the “Borders of Ink” research seminar began working as a project. Three years and two publications later, its annotated bibliography appeared, clear proof that time brings wisdom and, above all, a recognizable academic identity. None of its other products embody the seminar’s concerns like this one, offering a multi- and interdisciplinary vision of the intersections of the humanities and the communications media. Seminar participants have training in different academic disciplines (communications, history, literature) and work in different university areas and levels (teaching, research, and undergraduate and graduate studies). This achievement is due to the collaborative nature of the book, which brought together the pens and specific interests of all its members.

Fronteras de tinta: literatura y medios de comunicación en las Américas. Una bibliografía comentada (Borders of Ink: Literature and Communications Media in the Americas. An Annotated Bibliography) is a compendium of reviews of books important for cultural border studies. According to the ed-

itors, gathering them played a dual role: developing didactic support materials and constructing a common theoretical framework for the research project. With that in mind, they picked recent texts that showed a state of the topic in question, that contributed a multidisciplinary point of view about the relations between literature and communications media, that theorized about dissolving borders as a symptom of today, or that were, in and of themselves, examples of these mixes, contacts, overlaps, etc.

The reviews are organized into seven sections. The first two (“Fronteras intergenéricas” [Inter-generic Borders] and “Postmodernidad” [Postmodernity]) look at the dissolution of borders from a general perspective, whether as a phenomenon that brings literary, journalistic, audiovisual, and political discourses dangerously close together, or as an ideology whose goal is to dismantle the parceled-out forms of knowledge of modern rationalism. The five remaining sections deal with the problem of limits based on conceptual pairs. These may be two crafts centered in writing or two narrative languages (journalism and literature or cinema and literature, for example) with a longstanding love-hate relationship; hybrid expressions in which various disciplines converge (like scripts); or the ties that the media establish with human reality (cinema and culture or history and the media).

In accordance with this, the largest most varied section is the first, “Inter-generic Borders.” The other sections are presented as introductions to more specific books. One of these is *La incómoda frontera entre periodismo y literatura* (The Uncomfortable Border between Journalism and Literature), in which writer-journalists of the Latin American and English-language traditions review the specificity of their occupation. *Máscaras de la ficción* (Masks of Fiction), for its part, traces various narratives, both literary and audiovisual, seeking a typology of emblematic characters. The last example is *Literatura y política* (Literature and Politics), a paper presented by Mario Vargas Llosa in 2000. The text explains the Peruvian writer’s position regarding writing literature as a social activity with reverberations in all aspects of life.

The “Postmodernity” section includes reviews of texts that deal with this concept from a Latin American perspective. *Los vertederos de la postmodernidad. Literatura, cultura y sociedad en América Latina* (The Drains of Postmodernity. Literature, Culture, and Society in Latin America) states that certain geographical areas are spaces where the centers of political, economic, and cultural power throw away surplus materials. Therefore, regions like Latin America live in a state

of “garbage-ization,” and so cultural products that have a meaning in their culture of origin lose importance in receiving societies. In the same way, in *De Macondo a McOndo. Senderos de la postmodernidad latinoamericana* (From Macondo to McDeep. Paths of Latin American Postmodernity), the reader will find a confrontation between the most polemical topics of postmodernity and the way in which Latin American culture concretizes them. The author’s incisive analysis demonstrates, for example, that some recent writers’ post-colonial attitudes hide dangerous affinities to neoliberal, globalizing thinking.

The following three sections are noteworthy for their reviews of texts that mostly follow a single thematic axis, manifesting the academic interests of some of the members of the seminar. In “Cinema and Literature,” this is predominantly the theme of adaptation. Different kinds of books respond to key questions regarding this phenomenon: Is it correct to evaluate a film as a function of the book it is based on? How many kinds of adaptations exist? Is cinema

In addition to the 43 books reviewed, the final bibliography contains a list of more than 100 important sources for the study of the media, literature, and inter-generic borders.

more closely related to theater or to narrative? Are adaptations specific to the cinema-literature relationship? Can adaptations be made between other artistic languages or disciplines? Is accuracy a valid criteria for judging an adaptation? Lastly, the section includes a review of Lauro Zavala’s well-known text *Elementos del discurso cinematográfico* (Elements of the Cinematographic Discourse), a kind of map for analyzing the narrative dimension of films from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Scriptwriting as a discipline is explained from two different but complementary points of view. Some of the books reviewed were written by scriptwriters—this is the case of Doc Comparato’s and Madeline DiMaggio’s texts—and are presented as manuals for writing and promoting scripts. Others are more didactic and systematic (*El libro del guión. Fundamentos de la escritura de guiones* [The Script Book. Fundamentals of Scriptwriting]; *Arte y ciencia del guión. Una completa guía de iniciación y perfeccionamiento para el escri-*

tor [The Art and Science of the Script. A Complete Writer’s Guide to Starting Out and Perfecting Scripts]), which makes them extremely useful tools in the classroom. The section opens and closes with two texts that stray away from scripts to center on cinematographic plots. The first, *La semilla inmortal Los argumentos universales en el cine* (The Immortal Seed. Universal Plots in Cinema), follows the typological intention of *Masks of Fiction*, and listing a total of 121 basic plots in film fiction, each linked to a universal oral, mythical, or literary tradition. Finally, *El arte de la adaptación. Cómo convertir hechos y ficciones en películas* (The Art of Adaptation. How to Turn Facts and Fictions into Films) focuses on this phenomenon from the perspective of the scriptwriter.

“Cinema and Culture” ponders the field of horror films, and its three texts review the genre from different perspectives. Its relationship with literature is established in terms of its origins: the aesthetic conventions of horror literature were later adapted to cinema. This establishes parallel and at the same time independent roads for both forms of expression. Another point dealt with is using horror in world and Mexican film traditions, looking at emblematic filmmakers in this genre like John Carpenter, Carlos Enrique Taboada, Darío Argento, José Mojica Marins, and Alejandro Amenábar. Lastly, the articles analyze the figure of the monster through its most representative embodiments (Frankenstein’s monster, the vampire, the Werewolf, the double or *doppelgänger*). The section includes one more text, which touches on the representations of Mexico City down through several decades of Mexican cinema.

The next section, “History and the Media,” deals with three different thematic topics. One proposes the use of audiovisual means (image and cinema) as a valid source for doing historiography: this includes *Visto y no visto. El uso de la imagen como documento histórico* (Seen and Unseen, The Use of Image as Historical Document) and *Diez lecciones para la historia del siglo XX* (Ten Lessons for the History of the Twentieth Century). Another reflects on the role of the press in the digital era and what competencies this implies both for journalists and readers. This is dealt with in the texts by Concha Edo and Manuel López. Finally, two volumes coordinated by Celia Palacio Montiel deal with two concerns: the press as a historiographic document, focusing on journalism in Mexico’s interior and how this contributes to writing a non-centralized national history.

Borders of Ink closes with “Journalism and Literature.” The common denominator of the books reviewed is the fic-

tional configuration of journalistic genres. Some authors dismantle the idea of objectivity using theoretical tools taken from literature to analyze journalistic products. Others use hybrid models of expression like the “chronicle,”¹ to question the way in which we conceive of and interpret the autonomy of discourses. Another book centers on a novel, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, to unravel the ambiguity of the text in terms of its relationship to journalism or to literature. A work by Sergio Ramírez that ventures outside the main topic is also included: a guide for writers, plus an account of the author’s personal experience in the exercise of his craft.

In addition to the 43 books reviewed, the final bibliography contains a list of more than 100 important sources for the study of the media, literature, and inter-generic borders. For all the reasons mentioned above, this is a timely, necessary book. The careful selection of its texts, together with the effective work of each of the reviewers, make up a work useful for students, professors, and researchers. It is useful precisely because it saves the reader having to gather and evaluate impor-

tant references about the relations between literature and the communications media. Anyone interested in dissolving the borders between different points of view will find illumination for moving through a terrain whose topography can sometimes be rather hazy. In this sense, the publication establishes the conceptual bases for a Mexican tradition of cultural border studies. **MM**

César Othón Hernández
**Scholarship Student in the
 “Borders of Ink” Project at the UNAM
 School of Philosophy and Letters**

NOTES

1 In Spanish-language journalism, a “chronicle” is a detailed report of an event, as differentiated from a straight news story. It can include a chronological summary, but is more of a feature story. [Translator’s Note.]



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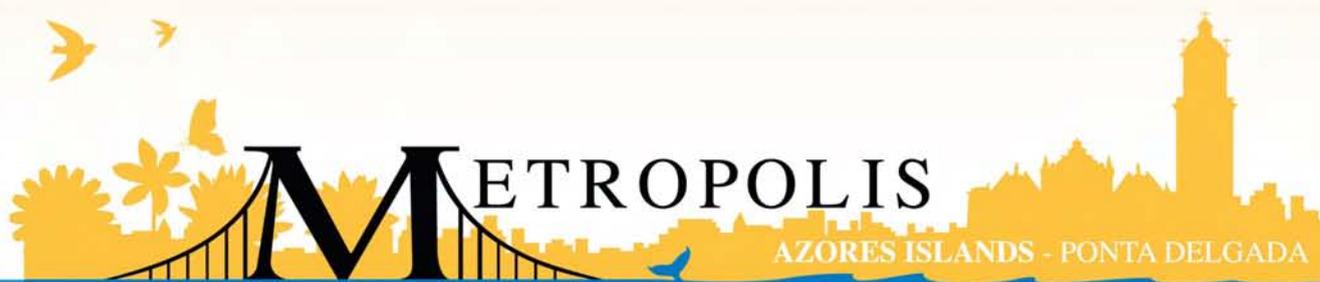
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