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Politics and the Media A Difficult Relationship

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Jacqueline Peschard and Tanius Karam

Human Rights in Mexico

Victor Manuel Acuña
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The International System after 9/11

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Querétaro's Baroque Architecture

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In Memoriam



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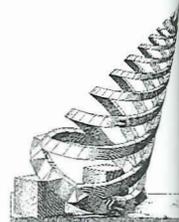
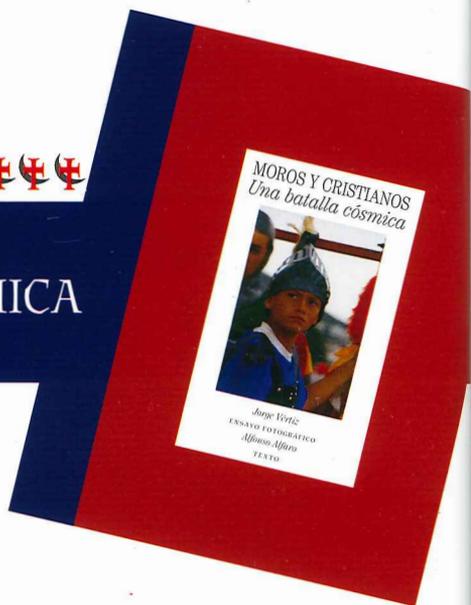
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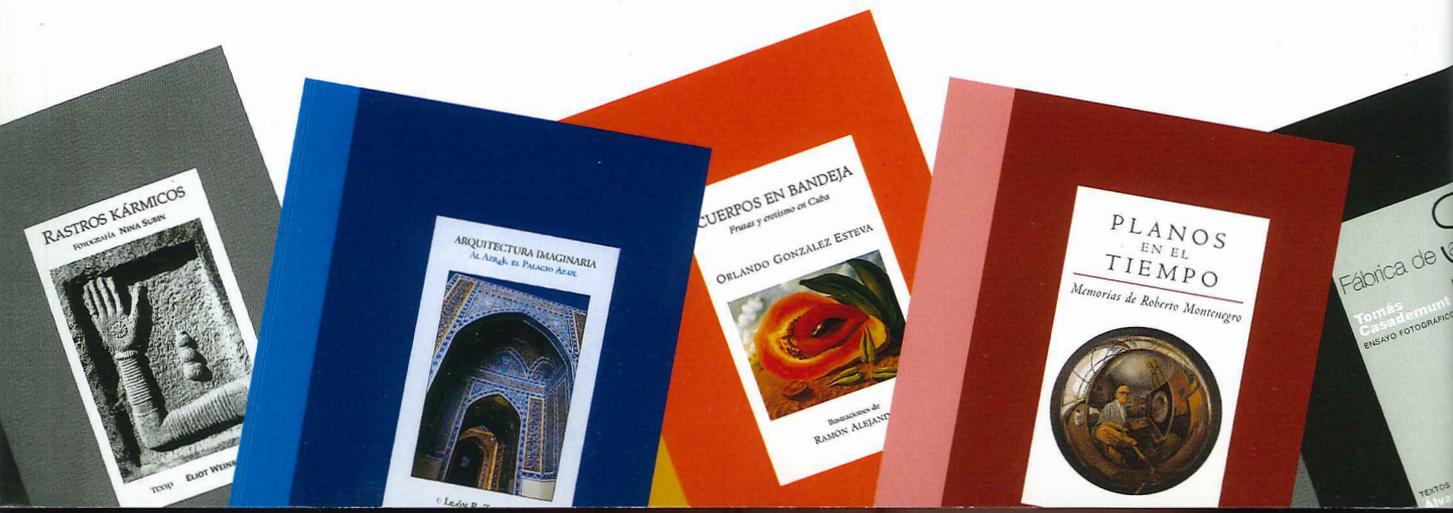
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VOICESTM of Mexico

ISSN 0186 • 9418

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

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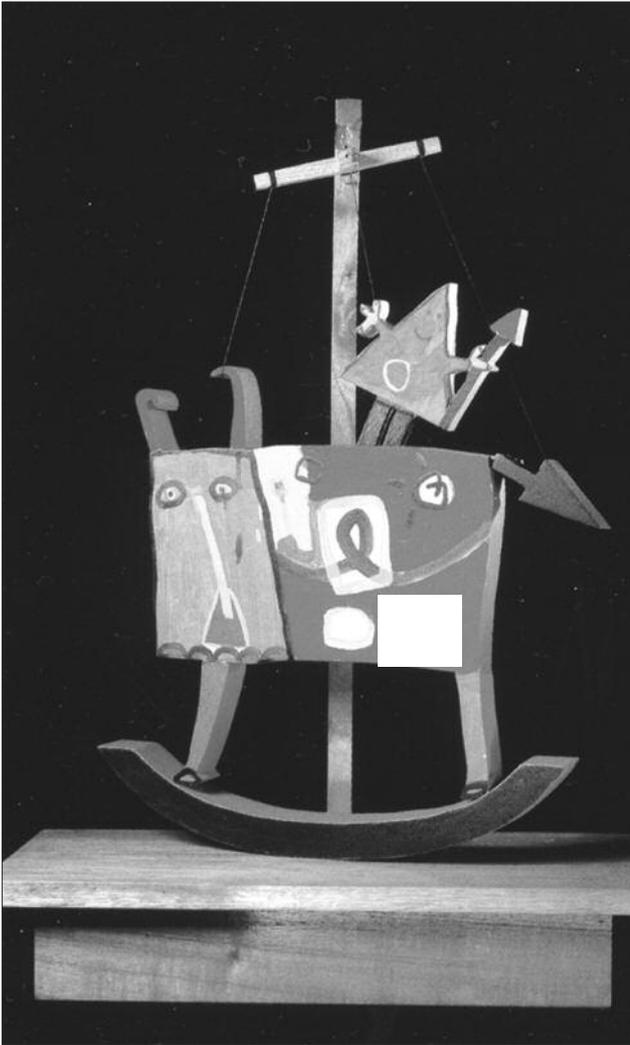
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Address letters, advertising and subscription correspondence to: **Voices of Mexico**, Miguel Ángel de Quevedo 610, Col. Coyocacán, 04000 México, D.F. Tel: 5659-23-49 and 5659-38-21. Fax: 5554-65-73. Electronic mail: voicesmx@servidor.unam.mx. Web site: <http://www.unam.mx/voices>. Annual subscription rates: Mexico Mex\$150; USA U.S.\$34; Canadá CAN\$44.80; other countries U.S.\$68.50, prepaid in U.S. currency to **UNAM**. **Opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent the views of Voices of Mexico.** All contents are fully protected by © copyright and may not be reproduced without the written consent of **Voices of Mexico**. The magazine is not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. Publicación trimestral, año catorce, número 59, abril-junio de 2002. ISSN 0186-9418. Certificado de Contenido No. 2930 y Certificado de Título No. 3340, expedidos por la Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas. Reserva al uso exclusivo del título No. 569-88, expedida por la Dirección General del Derecho de Autor. Correspondencia nacional de segunda clase. Registro 0851292. Características 220261212. Correspondencia internacional de segunda clase. Registro Cri D F 002-92. Revista trimestral producida por Ediciones de Buena Tinta, S.A. de C.V., Insurgentes Sur 1700, 6o. piso, Col. Florida, Álvaro Obregón, 01030 México, D.F. Tels. 5661-66-07, 5662-28-31. Impresa por Editorial Offset, S.A. de C.V., Durazno No. 1, Col. Las Peritas, Tepepan, Xochimilco, México, D.F.

VOICES *of Mexico*

TM

Number 59 April • June 2002



Carlos Alázar

Cover

Rubén Leyva, *Sun Child*, 41 x 41 x 47 cm, 2000 (mixed media/wood [puppet]).

Back Cover

Rubén Leyva, *Untitled*, 55 x 75 cm, 1996 (pastels on paper).

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Daniél Munguía

Statue from the Querétaro Regional Museum.

OUR VOICE

In today's world, borders are entities in which time and space coexist with an intense simultaneity of flows. As a cultural category and as a political and social reality, they are entities that in and of themselves transcend national sovereignties, ethnic groups, macroeconomic variables, political traditions, etc. Their complex and at the same time fascinating cosmogony make them confront day by day an endless movement whose temporality does not accept a mathematics of their traditional timing. Additionally, they are spaces that change rapidly due to the fact that social, political and economic circulation is both vertical and horizontal; that is to say, they trace an elastic and dynamic regional geometry and produce local phenomena which are unique, to a great extent because they are a-national, a-binational or a-trinational, and even if this becomes cultural "foreignness" in which the universal and the particular dialogue but also confront each other, naturally it also means events that have diverse similarities with the sociopolitical and economic realities that are close to them. Thus, borders dialogue but also confine themselves to themselves and make use of a language that is unique to them and that they inevitably extend to their closest synods, even more when emergencies demand it of them. This is even more common in a transnationalized world like ours in which the construction of bridges toward development and survival are both rational and emotional needs. It is here where the "symbolic reality" of borders paves the way to the "real" and coldly objective reality of nations.

With globalization, the boundaries between the global and the regional blur. The national becomes part of the international; the particular is somehow incorporated into the universal; homogeneity threatens to substitute itself for—and sometimes annihilate—the universal; and sovereignties reoccupy a different conceptual space. This is how borders are submerged in times marked by national discourses and needs and become the integrating—and often disruptive—space for the inevitable interaction between two or more societies and states that design their own strategies and define their own discourses.

In the context of the period after the Cold War and 9/11, border dialogue and relations have acquired a new tone and the CISAN as an academic institution is obliged to study this new dimension. The community of borders of North America and its increasing move toward a community of North America faces the challenge of achieving optimum management of our border relationship, which, because of the crisis of the attacks in the United States, has demanded new emergency measures that we did not expect to have to implement and which Canada, for example, has already begun. While it is true that in the emergency that began then, the issues of security have subsumed our countries' permanent priorities, it is nevertheless necessary to recognize the urgent need to institutionalize arrangements in the border relationship, give it an institutionality that it does not have today (including both trade and cultural exchange as well as migration and the circulation of commodities and goods, among many other factors) with the aim of creating both a climate of prevention and of sustainability of the variables of exchange, without this meaning—though this would be impossible in any case—the elimination of the borders as spaces rich in diversity and lines of communication for the essential contents of life and human and material wealth of our three nations.

In the relationship with Canada and the United States, Mexico today has the greatest challenge. It must seek roads forward as original as they are effective for dealing with an extraordinary situation. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the forms of exchange within the environment of alternative normality and in which multi-lateralism is the guideline for establishing the priorities in bilateral relations. None of the member countries of this North American community will be able to stay on the sidelines of this situation or on the margins of the needs that demand answers and arise very swiftly. Face to face with a world that is opening more and more—although the 9/11 attacks have provoked the most aberrant and simplistic temptations of the most diverse forms of fundamentalism—the need to broaden out the options in the relationship and the negotiation is a natural result, as well as a vehicle toward a more plural and inclusive understanding among our countries. If integration is a fact, it is also a fact that it has changed significantly since both 1986 and 1994. For that reason, we consider it of great importance that foreign policies begin to be a coherent reflection both of the socio-political and economic realities of the three countries and of the objectives that we share. Since July 2, 2000, Canada and the United States witnessed the opening up of Mexican political life, which not only created new opportunities for development for Mexico but also made it possible to envision new opportunities in relations with Canada and the United States. To mention only some of the steps forward in this regard, Mexico has been the winner with the exchange of agricultural workers that we have with Canada, a program which is becoming increasingly dynamic.

This is how things are and we see that Canada increasingly understands it in the same way; multilateralism will have to be the driving force that gives institutional form to our exchange with the world and particularly with our two partners to the north. For that, it is also necessary to strengthen our commitment as a nation to offer ourselves the endogenous conditions to be able to respond to this great challenge, which implies the healing of our own judicial, political and economic institutions. We think that through valuing the as disparate as common interests and through a both consistent and responsible policy to answer to these interests, the increasing signs of opening and growing plurality will be clearly reflected. This is the only way integration among partners can be understood. And this is the only way our borders will be bridges for fertile exchange and common spaces from diversity where secure areas will be created to guarantee a reciprocity that, while it cannot be symmetrical, can go beyond geopolitical determinism and messianic voluntarism, both of which are spaces of intolerance —whether state or terrorist— that have no place in the new international and regional order that we want to build with Canada and the United States.

* * *

The July 2000 change in Mexico's administration that brought alternating in office undoubtedly inaugurated a new way of conceiving of and acting in politics. In this context, *Voices of Mexico* dedicates its "Politics" and "Society" sections to two important topics: the relationship between political actors and the media, and human rights. Roberto Gutiérrez describes what is undoubtedly a conflictive relationship between Fox and the media during the first year of his administration; Jacqueline Peschard goes into the profound transformations caused by the transition to democracy in Mexico's main communications consortia; and Tanius Karam brings us a panorama of the conflictive relationship that existed during the 71 years of Institutional Revolutionary Party hegemony.

Two prestigious jurists and fighters for human rights have contributed to this issue: Francisco Javier Acuña presents an overview of what has happened in recent years, when there have been both advances and still-unclarified violations. Former Mexico City ombudsman Luis de la Barreda emphasizes the importance of consolidating the human rights commissions and ensuring their absolute autonomy.

Our "Economy" section consists of an article by Berenice Ramírez about the parallels between Argentina's troubled economy and Mexico's apparently solid one. Are we safe from a similar catastrophe?

"Science, Art and Culture" presents the work of Oaxaca-born painter and artisan Rubén Leyva, another example of the surprising fecundity of that state for producing extraordinary visual artists. Leonardo García Tsao has written about the most outstanding movies of the last five years, a body of work whose quality may well announce a resurgence of the industry in Mexico. Lastly, we include an article about The Lighthouse Factory of Arts and Trades in Iztapalapa, a center that shows how art is also a tool for improving the quality of life.

September 11's consequences will produce a large part of the literature and thinking in international relations in the next few years. In this issue, we have included two articles about the adjustments in the international system. In an article by myself, I look at some of the paradigms of global relations theory in light of recent phenomena like "post-bipolarity," United States' unilateralism and, of course, September 11. María Eugenia Mesta and Simone Lucatello reflect about the course of European Union and United States foreign policies since the attacks, and look at the fact that only six months later differences are beginning to emerge.

In "Canadian Issues", Mayra Eleonora Inzunza Sánchez examines the extremely varied body of work among writers of visible minorities in Canada, impossible to classify as a homogeneous whole.

"The Splendor of Mexico," dedicated once again to Querétaro, includes a contribution from Jaime Ortiz Lajous about baroque colonial architecture in its capital city. Jaime Abundis reveals the dreams and passions of Scotsman Edward James that led to the construction of a surrealist space amidst the exuberant mountain vegetation of Las Pozas, Xilitla. The Sierra Gorda Ecological Group tells us about its different productive and eco-tourism projects. Lastly, we present the Querétaro Regional Museum, of interest both for its Franciscan architecture and its collections.

We have dedicated the "In Memoriam" and "Literature" sections to joining the national and international homages to one of the greatest men of letters not only of Mexico but of the Spanish language in the last century. A lucid and generous man, master of the short story, erudite cultural promoter and versatile conversationalist, Juan José Arreola died at the end of last year. Christopher Domínguez and Homero Aridjis write about the loss that this has meant for Hispanic-American letters.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde
Director of CISAN

Vicente Fox and the Media

A Difficult Relationship

Roberto Gutiérrez López*



Antonio Nava / A6 Photo

In a country like Mexico —for decades without plural, independent communications media— the transition to democracy that culminated emblematically with Vicente Fox's July 2000 electoral victory also meant the emergence of public opinion formed through the activity of print and electronic media that progressively became free, critical political actors. What is more, the political change the country has gone through in recent years would be incomprehensible without the media's decisive influence on the public's perception of the limits of government power, that is, the depth of its vices and deficiencies, as well as the possibilities of overcoming them.

The media's contribution to this transformation has been uneven and contradictory: at the same time that they

are effective in their criticism, they also lean toward scandal, a lack of objectivity in handling information and often simplistic judgments. Increasing competition among the different media outlets has generated a dizzying spiral in which the fight to be first or sport the most attractive headlines has led to the construction of a political reality that is not very precise and in which balanced analysis has lost ground to sensationalism. This is why it is no surprise that the traditional political actors, the elite that operates within the political parties, the legislature or the government, have an uncomfortable relationship with the media: depending on the political moment, they can either greatly benefit or suffer enormous damage from the media's evaluation of their performance.

This has been particularly clear in the case of the president, still key to the Mexican political system. In fact, the declarations and discussions about the function and impor-

* Professor and researcher in the Sociology Department, Autonomous Metropolitan University, Azcapotzalco campus.

tance of the communications media during the first stage of the Fox administration have constantly referred to the president's relationship with them, an ambivalent one since, at the same time that the president is certain of their political importance and therefore of the need to use them as a basic tool in his work, he has also shown his irritation at the evaluation they have made of both the form and content of his performance.

For a political actor who based his electoral victory on very effective use of the media, the widening gap between the media's presentation of the image of the state of the nation and the president's perception of the real results of his work cannot be overlooked. Unfortunately, the growing distance between the president and the media has not been accompanied by a self-critical evaluation or a more serious—and urgent—debate about communicators' social responsibilities.¹ Far from it, the president has simply opted, first, to say that he would not be "hounded out of office by headlines" and, second, to publicly state that the media were far from reflecting what was really happening in the country.

Naturally, a position like this led to a spiral of mutual accusations that became an additional obstacle to creating a favorable climate for an overall discussion of the system of social communications, taking up the issues of freedom of expression, the right to information and the media's public accountability.

Obviously, if we want to better understand the magnitude of the president's irritation about communicators' work, perhaps we should not concentrate too much on the content of the media's critical observations or analy-

ses of the deficiencies of Fox's public policies, his cabinet's lack of solidity or his unorthodox personal style of government. Rather, we should look at the enormous effect that all of this has had on society's perception of the new administration's performance and particularly that of the president.

The public's certainty that the effects of alternating in office had no relationship to campaign promises grew, and this caused a drastic drop in the president's popularity, showing the increasing gap that actual governing had caused between government and society. This was so large that by January 2002, public approval of presidential performance plummeted below the

The president has simply
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headlines".

critical 50-percent point to 48 percent, something that had not happened since his taking office in December 2000.² The significance of this plunge can be better appreciated if we consider that during his first month in office, President Fox enjoyed a 79-percent approval rating. On the other hand, it is not surprising that together with his drop in approval, the number of Mexicans who think the country "is on a bad course" increased to 52 percent in January 2002.

Regardless of our opinion of how fair this public evaluation of the president's performance is, in the dispute with the first executive, the media has

once again shown its importance as a political actor of the first water. This is true first of all because of their defense of what they considered their right to exercise unrestricted freedom of expression, above all in the context of a new government associated with the slogan of change and a critique of authoritarianism.

Evidently, for a politician who became president on the basis of a strident, radical discourse, who made no concessions to the mistakes and deficiencies of previous governments, it was no easy matter to present himself as the victim of a campaign by precisely those who had contributed decisively to giving his project resonance and making it effective. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the president's protests were met with everything from surprise to indignation that gradually became harsher given what the media considered a terrible lack of political maturity on his part because it contradicted his own democratic discourse.

It is in this context that we must situate statements like that of Robert Cox, president of the Interamerican Press Society who said, "Vicente Fox has used language typical of *caudillos*....He has to accept that bad news is not the fault of the press and that criticism is important for governments."³ However, as if it were merely a matter of hypercritical media, the presidential view does not seem to have room for a deeper reflection about the causes of the media's dynamic, and much less for a serious proposal about the issue of their public responsibility.

In that sense, it is a matter for concern—and also regrettable—that the president's displeasure has not been followed up by rigorous thinking that

could at least open the possibility to understanding the media attacks and their effects on public opinion in the considerable gap between what were the “super-promises” of his electoral campaign and the meager results of the first stage of his administration. It does not seem exaggerated to say that the citizenry’s discouragement and disappointment in the government it initially perceived as an alternative for rapid, profound change in practically every sphere of the country’s life began to turn into social dissension that has been the ideal framework for the media’s sharp criticism (even if it is often frivolous and irresponsible).

In a continual, reciprocal process that fed on itself, the media’s constant focus on the president’s actions, both in form and content, fit in perfectly with the public’s direct perception of the lack of significant results in the most important aspects of people’s daily lives. A quick balance sheet of Fox’s campaign promises and the main initiatives of the first year of his “government of change” makes it possible to understand that the public’s frustration and the growing critique of the president cannot be attributable entirely to the media. What is more, if we examine the media’s behavior at times like the discussion about the indigent law, we can see that they actually functioned as a great sounding board for presidential aims which were, however, very far from jibing with the view of other actors, among them the legislature, which would, in the last analysis, be the one to decide the matter.

For that reason, on that occasion the president would once again be trapped between the very high expectations generated by the use and abuse of the media and a political reality that

he could not shape to his liking and that would be very costly and seen as a failure and a very bad investment of his political capital. As if that were not enough, this episode also demonstrated the lack of agreement between the political line fostered from Los Pinos [the presidential mansion] and the vision of his own political party, both with regard to content of some of the nation’s main political problems and in terms of the way to deal with them.

To this initial slip-up—which once again postponed the definitive solution to the Chiapas conflict—others would be added, such as the inability to effectively and credibly get bills as important as the fiscal, electrical and political

The debate on the role of the media in the overall functioning of Mexico’s young democracy is at a real crossroads.

reforms passed, as well as the failure of the attempts to solve the problem of public safety or clearly fight both past and present corruption and impunity. Unlike in the past, it can be said that the media made news out of the administration’s mistakes, even if sometimes they did it in a scandal-mongering, irresponsible way.

What is clear is the very lack of clarity about the president’s need to take a different attitude toward the media during a campaign and when in office. At this point in his term, it should be obvious that you cannot play the same role when in office as when in the opposition, and that being in office de-

mands more prudence than effect-seeking, more responsibility than a quest for popularity with everyone and at all costs, an aim which, besides being impossible, is in the end, as has been seen, counterproductive.

Until now, the difficulties in moving forward a balanced, realistic administration, capable of generating trust in a difficult national and international economic context, do not seem to have prompted a serious exercise in evaluation in which mistakes made are admitted and new styles of political leadership are put forward. Thus, the successive changes in the president’s press office have been presented more as changes in individuals than in strategies. If we add to this that the new government does not seem willing to forego such traditional and discredited methods as spectacular news leaks to the media—which completely distort the interaction among political actors, muddy judicial proceedings and contribute to sensationalism in the news spin—we find a rather disheartening panorama for the relationship between the media and the presidency.

In summary, today no one doubts the leading role played by the communications media in the country’s political life, and this means that social and political actors—starting with the president himself—will have to decide very clearly the way they are going to interact with them in order to stimulate their contribution to the democratic consolidation of the political system. Democratic life is inconceivable without the active, critical participation of the media, which must be neither hampered nor overvalued in terms of their limits and intentions. In a society like ours, the media do not bring down governments, but they are an undeniable factor of

power and social influence, and instead of furiously reproaching them for the real or supposed aggressiveness of their criticisms, we should demand of them true public accountability.

The basic problem is not, of course, the drop in the president's popularity rating, but how public opinion is formed, a public opinion that needs objective information presented in context as well as plural analyses and evaluations that allow it to base itself more on reason than on emotions, always fickle and subject to manipulation.

The debate on the role of the media in the overall functioning of Mexico's young democracy is at a real crossroads.

More than a year after effecting alternation in the presidency, it is clear that both a citizens' culture rooted in the principles and values of democracy and civilized, rational dealings among the political actors cannot be built on marketing strategies, all-out competition for ratings or short term popularity based on the exploitation of misunderstood criticisms. Politicians and the mass media alike are facing a job both complex and necessary: giving democratic life the ethical and cognitive content that will consolidate forms of social and political relations based on civic conscience and a sense of belonging to a common order. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The distancing has been clearer with the printed press which, for historic reasons, has had a greater vocation to and more opportunities for being critical. But there is distance vis-à-vis the electronic media as well; regardless of the substantive nature of their criticisms, they have been decisive in the wide dissemination of presidential gaffs (like the use of patent leather boots at a black tie affair, his kissing his wife in front of the Vatican, his mistake in pronouncing the name of writer Jorge Luis Borges in his speech to Spain's Royal Academy of Letters and his ignorance of protocol for presidential trips, among some of the best known cases).

² These figures and others mentioned further on in the article come from the January 2002 national survey carried out by the *Reforma* newspaper, published January 23.

³ *Reforma* (Mexico City), 6 November 2001.

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ESCUELA Y MULTIMEDIA

JEAN-PIERRE
CARRIER

La era de los multimedia apenas empieza. Del CD-ROM al Internet lo digital invade todos los dominios de las actividades y el campo educativo no podía escapar. Escépticos y entusiastas se plantean por lo tanto las mismas preguntas: ¿en qué pueden estas nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación renovar el aprendizaje y las prácticas del salón de clase? ¿Qué se puede esperar de manera razonable? Jean-Pierre Carrier intenta aquí responder a estos interrogantes. Después de un indispensable recuento terminológico señala con agudeza los desafíos de los multimedia para la escuela y analiza minuciosamente con su mirada de pedagogo los recursos bibliográficos disponibles. En fin, muestra cómo la información y la investigación documental no podrían pasar por alto los valiosos motores de investigación accesibles por internet.

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The News Media And Political Competition

Jacqueline Peschard*

It is almost self-evident to say that there can be no politics today without the communications media. The enormous reach and broad penetration of radio and television throughout our country leave them no competitors in the dissemination of information.

According to 2000 figures, Mexico has 1,332 radio stations and 595 television channels; 95 percent of the country receives television broadcasts, making it the means of distribution of information to the public par excellence.¹

The media are not only transmitters of news and events, but have also become true molders of people's interpretations of reality, shaping aspirations, perceptions, collective reference points and even behavior patterns in a particularly effective way precisely because of their ubiquitousness.

In a system that claims to be democratic like our own, politics and political actors require the recognition and legitimation of the citizenry; from this stems the fact that the way in which public matters are posed and discussed—from speeches to decisions and policy, where the communications media come into play—is key to achieving that social backing.

The media have specific characteristics that determine their social impact:

1) *The media are never neutral.* As conduits for the transmission of news, the facts that behind them are commercial interests that they must push and that they have broad coverage have turned them into authentic social and political actors capable of carrying out tasks traditionally shouldered by governments and politicians. Thus, the media have gone so far as to: a) fix the public agenda, selecting and ordering the issues according to their own criteria and even the way in which they disseminate them; b) determine the content, timing and emphasis in public debate. In fact, what

does not appear in the media is virtually non-existent, since they are the ones who breathe life into different issues; c) define the priorities of public attention since they emphasize certain issues while obscuring others; and d) condition the relationship between government and society insofar as the media are almost omnipresent, forcing those in government and political leaders to accept their protagonism, if not conform to their logic and demands. In this way, the predominance of image over content, or sound bytes over complex ideas, is imperative in the electronic media that has been imposing its dynamic on the deliberation of matters of public interest, among which are precisely those issues related to political competition.

2) *The communications media have a social role to fulfill.* Because of their broad coverage and the fact that they use the airwaves, property of the nation whose use must be licensed by the state, the media are entrusted with the task of fostering and defending certain fundamental principles of peaceful and democratic concert, such as freedom of expression, the right to truthful, timely information and, more recently, equality in political struggles.

During the long period of hegemony of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the communications media were unconditional allies of those in power because their interests coincided: the media openly backed up those in power and those in power renewed their licenses, and therefore, their ability to stay in business. This power relationship was demonstrated during the 1968 student movement and during the severely contested elections of 1988 in which the main television news programs dedicated 83 percent of their air time to cover the PRI candidate's campaign.²

Throughout the 1990s, political competition grew, to a great extent because electoral norms gradually created a clean, transparent and level playing field and because the main political parties became more deeply rooted in society. With

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this, the political electoral panorama broadened out to a plurality of contenders with the effective ability to attract voters and dispute the positions up for election.

The plurality of the political actors and the increasing competition among them has also demanded the opening of the media to reflect the diversity of offerings, but also stepped-up competition among the media themselves to win different audiences. In other words, changes in political life had an impact not only on the relationship of the media to a less and less concentrated and monopolized power structure, but also on their relationship to the public itself which, given its increasing ability to have an impact on political decisions, particularly the election of public officials, would demand better and more diverse sources of information. The steps forward in political-electoral competition were having clear effects on the mass media's behavior.

Since 1973, the importance of the media for political competition led to the pertinent legislation to include access for all political parties to air time during electoral campaigns using government time slots.³ However, it was not until the 1996 electoral reform that the principle of equality in electoral campaigns was put at the top of the agenda as a democratic demand, leading to its being incorporated into the Constitution (Article 41), guaranteeing in the legislation permanently balanced spaces in the media for all political parties given that they were considered entities in the public interest.

This guarantee of plural and balanced access to the media was made in two basic ways:

1) Political parties were given per-

manent, equal access to official time slots (15 minutes a month each on radio and television); they have access to additional time during political campaigns (200 hours on television and 250 on radio during presidential elections and half that at half-term elections), distributed according to a formula (70 percent proportional to their vote count and 30 percent equally); they have the right to participate in the distribution of commercial spots purchased directly from television and radio owners by the electoral authorities (10,000 radio spots and 400 television spots, whose costs must not exceed 20 percent of public financing for the presidential election and 12 percent for a mid-term election), which are then parceled out according to the aforementioned formula.

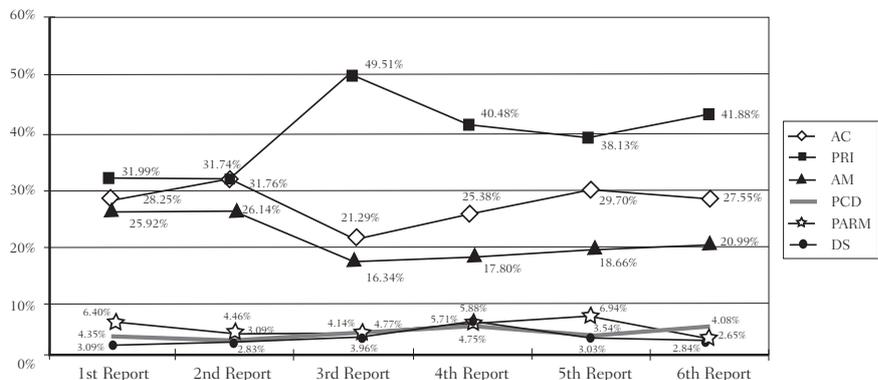
2) The electoral authorities monitor the main radio and television news broadcasts during political campaigns by taking a sample selected by the political parties themselves that allows them to determine the exact air time given to the different candidates and parties. The electoral authorities have only dissuasive measures at their command to make sure the news broadcasts cover the campaigns equitably. More moral

than legal in nature, this leverage consists of broadly disseminating the results of their monitoring. However, this has been effective because it has sensitized the TV channels and radio stations about the benefits of equality in campaign coverage; in addition, the public is now more demanding and requires this kind of coverage.

According to monitoring data for the 2000 federal elections —considered undoubtedly the most competitive of modern history— the distribution of news time among the main political parties was balanced during the first two months of the campaign, but in the third month the preponderance of the PRI shot up noticeably, taking up practically 50 percent of the broadcasts. Despite the fact that this disparity decreased in the last months of the campaign, the PRI still maintained an important advantage nationwide of 12 percent more air time than its closest competitor (see graph 1).

It is worth noting that the average results include all the stations and channels in the study, regardless of their audience penetration. Taking into account only the news programs broadcast from Mexico City —and they are the ones with the greatest audience

GRAPH 1. RADIO AND TV AIRTIME (2000 REPORT)



Source: Results of IFE Monitoring, 2000.

(AC) Alliance for Change • (PRI) Institutional Revolutionary Party • (AM) Alliance for Mexico • (PCD) Party of the Democratic Center (PARM) Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution • (DS) Social Democracy Party.

penetration because many of them are re-broadcast in different states—the PRI's advantage is reduced to two percentage points; that is to say, this shows a greater inclination of the media in favor of political competition. This is because the news programs broadcast from Mexico City are not only the best known in the country, but also the most dependent on public acceptance, or their ratings, because they are the ones that compete the most among themselves.

The explanation of why some media comply better with contributing to equality in political contests than others lies in the tension between freedom of expression and equality in campaign coverage since both principles are upheld in the Constitution. But in the case of equality, the norm is imperfect because there is no way that the electoral authorities can force the media to comply. This means that the media exercise quite a degree of discretion with regard to this principle and can use freedom of expression as a pretext to better serve their own interests. For example, during the 2000 campaign, Televisa, the country's most important network, openly came out in favor of equal coverage of the campaigns, perhaps to erase its image as a

traditional ally of the PRI. Channel 40, on the other hand, adopted a policy of only covering what it considered news during the electoral campaign, regardless of whether it left some of the political actors out of its coverage.

Another dimension of the communications media and political competition is the ability of the parties to purchase air time with their own resources, limited only by the need to stick to the campaign-spending ceiling. During the last two federal electoral campaigns, parties' purchases of air time on radio and television increased noticeably compared to 1994: in 1994, they invested one-fourth of their campaign resources in this area, while in 1997 and 2000, they spent 56 percent and 54 percent respectively. In absolute terms, this means that the amount increased from 365 million pesos in 1994 to 1.311 billion pesos in 2000 (see table 1).

This notable rise in resources spent on media campaigns during recent federal elections reflects the media's increasing importance as competition has grown among the parties. The traditional forms of carrying out electoral campaigns through face-to-face contact with the public in rallies, house-to-house visits, etc. have been discard-

ed in favor of media campaigns, with the consequences that this has for political life. Nevertheless, each of the parties and electoral alliances that ran in the 2000 elections dedicated different percentages of their overall spending to radio and television publicity. While the Alliance for Mexico, which ran Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, spent 41.7 percent of its resources in this area, the PRI spent 63.5 percent and the Alliance for Change, with Fox at the head, spent 52.5 percent (see table 2).

These differences in campaign spending reveal the different political communications strategies of the main political parties; nevertheless, in all cases, the media campaigns were the biggest single item in their campaign budget.

If we agree that the media are indispensable for political campaigns because they make candidates visible, we must ask how much of an impact they have on electoral results.

NO DIRECT LINK BETWEEN AIR TIME AND VOTE COUNT

Both radio and TV monitoring results and the amounts invested in promo-

**TABLE 1. CAMPAIGN EXPENSES
(Mexican pesos)**

Expenses	1994	1997	2000
Radio and TV	25% 365,587,207	56% 1,113,040,261	54% 1,311,183,378
Operations	75% 1,081,878,074	44% 910,435,256	46% 1,114,805,088

Source: Auditor's Report, IFE (1995, 1998 and 2001).

TABLE 2. CAMPAIGN COSTS BY PARTY (2000)
(Mexican pesos)

Expenses	Alliance for Change	PRI	Alliance for Mexico	PARM	PCD	DS
Non-press, Radio and TV Publicity	18.17%	23.44%	23.25%	33.76%	39.04%	26.44%
Campaign Operations	29.36%	13.04%	35.05%	9.71%	32.24%	14.00%
Press, Radio and TV Ads/slots	52.47%	63.52%	41.71%	56.53%	28.72%	59.56%
Total	\$673,695,813	\$901,392,199	\$566,756,040	\$28,612,639	\$28,027,366	\$28,010,494

Source: Auditor's Report, IFE (2001).

tional spots put the PRI in first place among the political parties, but this did not translate into an electoral win precisely because there is no direct proportional relationship between the amount of air time and the results at the polls. It would seem correct to say that more than creating trends, the media reinforce already existing trends in that they are more effective for attacking one's adversary than for presenting alternatives. In the 2000 elections, the center of the debate was the issue of change and this was repeated throughout the campaign by the different candidates.

To put it another way, in a competitive electoral campaign, many elements may be involved, from the positive or negative judgement about the outgoing administration to a simple renovation of electoral posts. In Mexico's 2000 elections, the law was put to the test to see if it was sufficient to guarantee trust in the elections, if it was possible to peacefully defeat the party that had monopolized power for 70

years, if change was possible, if it was possible for parties to alternate in office. This idea was the central nucleus of the electoral campaigns and the fundamental message of political marketing, and, although it is difficult to say that its effective handling was the key for Vicente Fox's victory, undoubtedly his media campaign made it possible to identify him as a figure with sufficient capability and energy not only to lead a change but to make it possible.

In summary, today there are no electoral campaigns without the communications media, nor is authentic political competition possible without all contenders having access to radio and television. And given that the dynamic and nature of the media imposes a specific content on the political messages by forcing them to limit themselves to short times—because it makes the persuasive capability intrinsic to politics depend more on appearances than content—the development of campaigns is necessarily subject to the media framework.

Despite all this, the communications media have played an important role in democratizing the country because they have echoed the existing plurality and the fact that no one can now claim to represent all the different groups and social and political tendencies. The media have come to stay and have spent recent years adjusting to the requirements of political competition. ■■■

NOTES

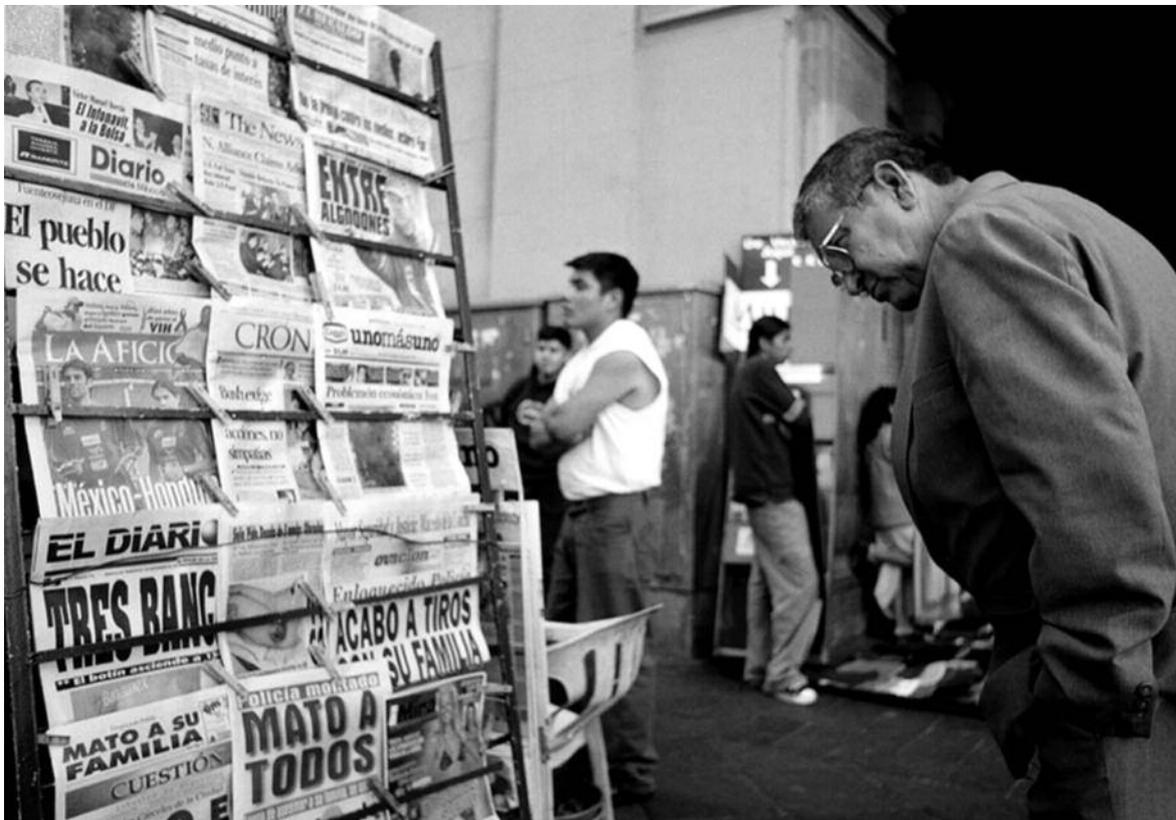
¹ "La dimensión nacional," *La Jornada* (Mexico City), 7 January 2000.

² Pablo Arredondo, "Opacidad en la ventana electrónica: el proceso electoral de 1988 en las noticieros televisivos," Pablo Arredondo, Gilberto Fregoso, and Raúl Trejo Delarbre, *Así se calló el sistema. Comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991).

³ Article 39, Federal Electoral Law, January 5, 1973. (In Mexico, radio and television licenses by law must cede 12 percent of broadcast time for programs, commercials and other messages issued by government bodies and other institutions of the public sector. [Editor's Note.]

Modern Mexico A Look at Media-Government Relations

Tanius Karam*



Antonio Nave/AE Photo

Relations between the media and the government have a history of tension, knowing silences and also violations. Reviewing them can help us understand why the media has certain sociopolitical characteristics and its messages are structured the way they are.

* International coordinator of the International Catholic Press Union's Network of Young Journalists (UCIP).

MEXICO'S HISTORY OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The bases for modern journalism began to be established during the Mexican Revolution, which in its first phase guaranteed freedom of the press. Newspapers with revolutionary ideology emerged and those that opposed Madero were tolerated. During this period, official mouthpieces for the different revolutionary leaders were created.¹ As of

1913, a tendency began for the press to align itself with particular political parties. *El Universal*, founded in 1916, and *Excélsior*, first published in 1917, both still in circulation today, were the first great national newspapers produced along industrial lines; journalists became full-time employees and a division of labor was introduced that included editors, directors, information chiefs, editorialists, columnists and reporters.

During the administrations of Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles, some newspapers were censored or closed down. In 1926, a serious rift in government-press relations occurred when *Excélsior* and *El Universal* began to espouse an editorial line different from the government's about the conflict between church and state: they supported the Cristero movement, which expressed the Catholic Church's social influence, as opposed to that of the secularist state. In 1927, during the conflict, newspaper articles were subjected to strict censorship.²

As of 1929, government press policy changed. With the foundation of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), the forerunner of today's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the press was used for the system's corporatist process. According to Fátima Fernández Christlieb, 1929 was the crucial year not only because of the foundation of *El Nacional*, the fledgling PNR's official voice,³ but also because newspapers that belonged to the established press were brusquely forced into line by the government. This was the case of *Excélsior* in 1929, during the Calles administration, and in 1976 under Luis Echeverría, and that of *Novedades* in 1944 when Miguel Alemán was the Minister of the Interior.

President Lázaro Cárdenas, for his part, broadened out the instruments for controlling the press: he established the Autonomous Press and Publicity Department to centralize state information to the press. His successors would reinforce this control: Manuel Ávila Camacho, through the General Information Office, controlled by the Ministry of the Interior, and Miguel Alemán, through the ministries' press offices. Through government control of production and distribution of newsprint, Cárdenas and later presidents discovered a decisive form of influence. The monopoly on paper production in Mexico has precedents that illustrate the competition among the great news-

The bases for modern journalism began to be established during the Mexican Revolution, which in its first phase guaranteed freedom of the press.

papers of that period. With the creation of the company Paper Producer and Importer (PIPSA) and the Autonomous Press and Publicity Department, Cárdenas created two new channels through which he could exercise influence over the media.

During the Ávila Camacho administration (1940-1946), then-Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán engineered a coup at the daily *Novedades*, founded in 1936 by Ignacio P. Herre-rías, to use it for his political ambitions as a presidential candidate. Just as Calles had with *Excélsior*, when he was president, Alemán took over *Novedades*, which at that point became his official mouthpiece.⁴

In 1949 under Alemán, the first journalism school, the Carlos Septién

School of Journalism, was founded. "Special" and regular payments to journalists were also instituted at the same time that critical journalists were the victims of open repression and "accidents."⁵ Paradoxically, in 1952, Alemán felt it was his destiny to designate June 7 as "Freedom of the Press Day," which continues to be celebrated until today.

Repeated incidents of repression against journalists and publications occurred under the administration of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970). After *Excélsior* criticized the 1968 massacre of Tlatelolco, in 1969 its building was the target for a dynamite bomb. The government accused

the left of the attack, even though most accounts lay the responsibility at its own door. In this same context, employees of the Communist newspaper *La Voz de México* (The Voice of Mexico) were arrested on July 26, 1968, when state security forces occupied and destroyed its printing presses. Prior to that, in 1966, the magazine *Izquierda política* (Political Left) and its editor, Manuel Marcué Pardiñas, had already been the victims of repression.

During the first phase of the Echeverría administration (1970-1976), established newspapers enjoyed almost unrestricted freedom of press. The alternative press, specifically the weekly *¿Por qué?* (Why?), and *Excélsior*, however, were treated very differently, as we shall see.

The administrations of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo (1976-1982) witnessed significant movements and changes in the Mexican media. State participation in the media grew and the supposed “mixed” model of communications was formalized. At the same time, the practical monopoly of private television was consolidated and its influence extended to the broadest variety of cultural expressions and entertainment. On the other hand, attempts at political reform and a broader political participation of alternative forces questioned as never before the structure and function of communications mechanisms in a country where, at the same time, the right to information was formally established,

During the Salinas administration, 645 attacks against the press were detected; under Ernesto Zedillo, by 1999, 764 attacks had been perpetrated against the media and journalists to inhibit freedom of expression and information.

a right whose practical meaning is yet to be determined.

It was not until 1975 that the first bill about the right to information was introduced into Congress; it was an attempt to regulate repression against the press and to modernize the communications law which was so ambiguous that it lent itself to different interpretations.

It is fundamental to mention here the conflict inside *Excelsior* in 1976 when the paper stepped up its criticism of corruption among union leaders and governors. After being expelled from the paper, Editor-in-chief Julio Scherer and some of his staff, as well as staff from the CISA press agency founded the weekly *Proceso* (Process) in

November of that year. A year later, another group of former *Excelsior* contributors and staff headed up by Manuel Becerra Acosta founded the daily *Unomásuno* (One-Plus-One) in November 1977, a newspaper that was a valuable, critical source of information during the López Portillo administration.⁶

The López Portillo administration was very tolerant at first, but government offices’ bribing journalists represented a significant attack on an unrestricted freedom of press. When the economic crisis broke out openly in 1982 and reports surfaced about bad management and corruption in the Mexican oil company Pemex, *Proceso* attacked the president directly. This

time the government sanctioned the magazine by withdrawing all its advertising. That same year, the opposition magazine *Política* (Politics), the radio program *Opinión Pública* (Public Opinion) and the communications nongovernmental organization Cencos were all the object of government reprisals. It was at the end of the López Portillo administration that the Mexican Constitution was amended to include an eight-word reference to the communications media: “The State shall guarantee the right to information.”

From the beginning of his administration, Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) publicly proclaimed that freedom of expression was one of the most dearly held freedoms of our democra-

tic system and that it would be maintained unfettered, free of pressures and restrictions. In his speeches, De la Madrid repeated that without a free, responsible press, there was no true democracy and that freedom of opinion was not something to be bargained over or bought. Actually, many facts reveal the very deficient conditions in which journalists had to work. Suffice it to mention the number of journalists murdered: 6 were killed during Echeverría’s presidency; 12, under López Portillo; 24, under De la Madrid; and 50 under Carlos Salinas de Gortari. In 1986 the offices of Publicaciones Llergo, publisher of the magazine *Impacto* (Impact), which in February of that year had put out a supplement entitled *1985: un año trágico para México* (1985: A Tragic Year for Mexico) were raided. The company was later attached by the government and editor Mario Sojo and assistant editor Javier Ibarrola forced to resign; the operation finished with the confiscation of the company and its “sale” to a dummy purchaser from the Ministry of the Interior.

The 1988 elections were important for the media. From the beginning of the campaign, it was clear that they would be unique in Mexican political history not only because of social unrest, but because of the gradual awakening of broad political sectors. In January 1988, the National Action Party’s presidential candidate, Manuel J. Clouthier, organized a campaign against *24 Horas* (24 Hours), the pro-government news program broadcast by the private corporation Televisa.

The political role of the written press had declined because of a lack of dynamism and quality in the political material it published with the excep-

tion of a few times (1968, 1985, 1988) when its orientation and content had been questioned. The last of those moments were the elections that brought Carlos Salinas into the presidency. The Salinas administration (1988-1994) was one of the most repressive. He took office amidst one of the greatest political and informational controversies in the history of Mexico since the Revolution and a profound credibility crisis, which extended to the mass media. From the beginning of his administration, he exercised censorship (against Radio Educación and television's Channel 11). There were also pressures and intimidation against reporters from the *Excelsior* and *La Jornada* dailies. With regard to the right to information, this government not only did not move forward, it actually retreated.

During the Salinas administration, 645 attacks against the press were detected; under Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), by 1999, 764 attacks had been perpetrated against the media and journalists to inhibit freedom of expression and information.⁷ The figures are of concern because of their magnitude, which shows a framework of aggression and non-compliance of the minimal guarantees universally recognized as necessary for the exercise of freedom of the press and information.

In May 1993, the editor of *Nexos* magazine, Héctor Aguilar Camín, summarized government-press relations as a kind of arranged freedom because the government acts as occasionally the sole client, main source of information and sometimes the most attentive, interested and generous "reader."

Despite the deep-rooted nature of the interventionist state model, the 1994 elections offered a chance to

note its limitations. For Alma Rosa de la Selva, the media was overwhelmed by circumstance during the presidential elections; the mechanisms of the relationship between the state and the media, while they ended up being efficient, were slightly blurred, just as journalistic practices were shaken by expectations.⁸

As with any stage of change, the 1994 elections were a good time to see how the media acted, particularly with regard to election day, August 21. For Blanca Aguilar, "*La Jornada* and *Proceso* were definitely the trenches from which [journalism] resisted with dignity before validating the results of the elections. Others (*Excelsior* and *El Universal*) accepted [them] without

In May 1993, Héctor Aguilar Camín summarized government-press relations as a kind of arranged freedom because the government acts occasionally as the sole client, main source of information and sometimes the most generous "reader."

question and without offering alternate information to make comparisons."⁹ The nongovernmental organization Civic Alliance's reports pointed out the marked influence of the official Institutional Revolutionary Party in much of the capital's press; however, during the ups and downs of the electoral campaign, attacks on the president and the single-party system stopped being taboo for the press.

The Mexican economic crisis of December 1994, which set off the "Tequila Effect," had sharp repercussions in the media: a drop in investment, layoffs and, in general, severe adjustments that also affected relations with the government. The period of tension demanded a new strategy, which con-

sisted in instituting a healthy practice: monthly press conferences for the reporters covering the presidency. On June 7, 1995, Ernesto Zedillo said he would hold regular press conferences with the aim of the government being more open to the scrutiny of the public. However, after three (in June, July and August) in which he was questioned exhaustively about different issues, he held no more, and he also closed an important institution for presidential communication, the Presidential Chronicle Unit, in charge of writing the history of the chief executive's activities. This unit had had 45 employees, all of whom were laid off.

On June 20, 1996, a decree was issued creating the federal govern-

ment's Press Office, whose aim would be formulating, regulating and orienting government communications policy and establishing relations with domestic and foreign media. This office would foster the liaison between the different federal and state press offices and other public institutions in order to unify strategies and actions. Mexico's political parties called the new institution a dark, dangerous and suspicious instrument of control.

Today a transition to a new state of affairs in communications is unfolding. However, just as in social and cultural matters, protectionist, monopolistic practices continue to exist in the context of a more participatory society and increasingly consistent, better

articulated collective bodies demand a new communications set-up. This would include changing the pro-governmental nature of the public media so that it can truly respond to the interests of society, defining precise norms for access to public information, giving state support to specialized or community publications, creating space in the electronic commercial media for organized social groups and legal recognition for community radio and other media.

The communications policy of President Vicente Fox's first year in office will be a matter for another article. A short look, however, tells us that the relationship is tense and complex, judging by Fox's November complaints about

the media criticizing superficial aspects of his presidency and disregarding the important issues, although there is also a clear tendency to freedom of criticism in the media. **NMM**

NOTES

- ¹ *Nueva Era* supported Francisco I. Madero; *El Imparcial*, Victoriano Huerta; *El Constitucionalista* and *El Demócrata*, Venustiano Carranza; and *El Radical* and *Tierra y Justicia*, Francisco Villa.
- ² For example, President Calles accused journalists Félix F. Palavicini, founder of *El Universal*, and *Excelsior* contributors José Elguero and Victoriano Salado Álvarez of insurrection and ordered their deportation to the United States.
- ³ Fátima Fernández Christlieb, *Los medios de difusión masiva en México* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos Editor, 1982), p. 30.

- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 104 on.
- ⁵ Karin Bohmann, *Medios de comunicación y sistemas informativos en México* (Mexico City: Conaculta-Alianza Editorial Mexicana, 1989), p. 77.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- ⁷ Verónica Martínez, Angélica Pineda and Omar Martínez, "Recuento de daños a las libertades de expresión y de información en 1999," *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación* 64, Fundación Manuel Buendía (July-August 2000), p. 22.
- ⁸ Alma Rosa de la Selva "Transitar hacia el cambio," *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación* 38, Fundación Manuel Buendía (Mexico City), 1995, pp. 33-35.
- ⁹ Blanca Aguilar, "Renacimiento del papel político en la prensa de la coyuntura electoral de 1994," Florence Toussaint, comp., *Democracia y medios de comunicación: un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: La Jornada Ediciones-UNAM, 1996), p. 56.

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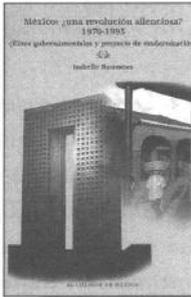
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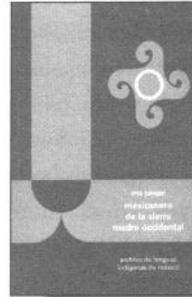
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Panorama of Human Rights in Mexico in the Twenty-first Century

Francisco Javier Acuña Llamas*

INTRODUCTION

Although addressing the current state of human rights in Mexico can be rather reckless and lead to a disjointed discussion, it is of vital importance. The best way is to try to order the different aspects implicit in the matter in a country whose democratic transition is barely expressed in some positive developments mixed with artful and outright resistances to the installation of a republic that—involed in the 1917 Constitution—has gone through a long stage of non-observance and voluntarist application as befitting authoritarian regimes.¹

From 1968 to 2000 the positive signs have increased gradually, reflecting a democratizing process with risks, without preestablished rules and to differing degrees. People's mentality has begun to change, leading them to try out new political and public habits and experiment with new limits on norms to the benefit of society's fundamental rights.

However, having said this, we must recognize that popular mentality is still not completely democratic since it was nurtured and confused with a style of government based on simulation and that for decades practiced a patronage system, cooptation and, to a lesser extent—although very serious—selective repression.²

Many of the social habits of the pre-modern period remain in place, patterns of a still precariously established citizens' attitude vis-à-vis the state and its institutions that reveal generalized ignorance of democracy and its concrete processes (both on the part of the citizenry and that of the political actors). Individual and collective forms of behav-

ior persist, previously a product of fear of the authoritarian regime, today due to the uncertainty, resentment, frustration and impotence vis-à-vis impunity and the unsatisfactory performance of public institutions.

Therefore, skepticism and discouragement are the prevailing attitudes with regard to the state and its agents, supposedly renovated because of the alternation in office of the executive.

RESULTS OF NGO EFFORTS FROM 1997 TO 2002

Long-term efforts by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have led to the following positive developments:

1. *The scandal of Paris*. In 1997 we witnessed the nongovernmental organizations' severe admonition of then-President Zedillo abroad because he had clumsily ignored an appointment that he had first granted and then canceled with Amnesty International General Secretary Jean Pierre Sané. The immediate repercussion of this censure was a shadow cast over the president's trip through Europe to try to achieve the signing of a free trade agreement with the European Union.³

The government reaction was:

- a) To create that very year the Federal Government's Human Rights Inter-ministerial Commission, made up of the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Relations, National Defense and Public Safety and the Attorney General's Office, plus an observer from the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH).
- b) The preparation of an agenda for talks with Mexico's NGOs and Amnesty International chapter; this dia-

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- logue continues in its essential aspects, particularly with the Ministries of Foreign Relations and of the Interior.
- c) The establishment of an agenda for the evaluation of the most delicate situations both from an institutional and a legal point of view and of pending important cases, previously disregarded by the federal government.
- d) Given the “democratic clause” demanded by the European Union for the signing of trade and political treaties with other countries, in 1999 the president’s office, taking advantage of its having a majority in Congress, began to

Revolution (PRD). However, in selecting the three candidates to be considered to fill the post, the proposals of the NGO “All Rights for Everyone” Human Rights Network were ignored. The Senate’s choice, then, Dr. José Luis Sobranes, the current ombudsman, was not backed by the PRD, but was elected with votes from the governing Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), the PAN and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM).

2. *The Mexican state’s acceptance of the full jurisdiction of the Interamerican Human Rights Court in 1998.*

Skepticism and discouragement are the prevailing attitudes with regard to the state and its agents, supposedly renovated because of the alternation in office of the executive.

- instrument its decision to amend constitutional article 102B to turn the CNDH into an autonomous constitutional body.⁴
- e) Once the amendment of Article 102B of the Constitution had been passed—along with several transitory clauses that allowed the Senate to ratify or change the ombudsman (the head of the CNDH)—NGO pressure because of deficiencies in then-ombudsman Dr. Mireille Rocatti’s work coincided with the federal government’s intention of removing her and the position of both the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic

This may well be the single most relevant fact which would lead to other steps forward.

3. *The Supreme Court’s interpretation ranking international treaties signed by Mexico beneath the Constitution and above federal law.*⁵ Although this 1999 decision is somehow confusing, its mere existence has been a triumph since it reinforces the process of adaptation of Mexico’s legislation and the state’s commitments to international conventions and treaties. The problem here lies in the different reservations that the Mexican state has placed as obstacles in fundamental treaties and conventions and in its resistance to signing and ratifying cer-

tain very important human rights agreements.

4. *Mexico’s signing of the Statute of Rome in 2000 for the creation of the International Criminal Court.*

5. *The development of the bill on access to public information.* This was based on a proposal produced by a group of well known jurists from different universities, accompanied by more than 70 different national and local mass communications media. This bill has the backing of the congressional opposition but not the governing party, the PAN, which has announced that it will present a less ambitious proposal to define the meaning of access to public information.

6. *The historic CNDH recommendation to the president to create a special prosecutor’s office to investigate the cases of disappeared detainees.* This office will examine the evidence gathered in the 285 CNDH files about the concrete cases of persons who disappeared during the 1970s and 1980s.

7. *The partial compliance in 2002—after intense legal battles—of some of the Interamerican Human Rights Commission’s (CIDH) recommendations:* two peasant environmentalists unjustly tried in the mountains of Guerrero⁶ were liberated for humanitarian reasons and the sentence of General José Francisco Gallardo was reduced, facilitating his release.⁷ Both these decisions were the result of enormous international pressure and the clear objection to the army, which in different ways and for different reasons had participated in the arrest and trial of the three prisoners.

General Gallardo was released on the legal technicality of having served the minimum sentence, which means



Henry Romero/Reuters



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From left to right, General Francisco Gallardo, defender of the human rights of members of the armed forces; Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, historic leader of the fight for the presentation of more than 500 disappeared detainees; Digna Ochoa, recently murdered defense lawyer and human rights fighter.

that for the Mexican government he continues to be considered guilty of the crimes for which he was tried. It is a compromise that fulfills the first of the CIDH's demands ("immediate release of the general") but leaves unanswered the other demands, above all those that require the investigation and trial of those responsible for his arrest and trial when the military prosecutor who tried his case originally was Mexico's current attorney general, General Macedo.

MAIN OBSTACLES TO RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

All of the following circumstances have a different negative impact on the creation of ideal legal-political conditions for full respect for human rights. Both national and international NGOs have pointed to them as signs for concern about the rhythm of advances in these matters.

1. The Attorney General's Office investigations about those behind cer-

tain cases of genocide have bogged down. This is the case of the massacres at Aguas Blancas, Acteal and El Charco, and constitutes non-compliance with CNDH recommendations in these matters to immediately clarify the circumstances and take the appropriate legal measures against those responsible.

2. Negotiations to create a climate of dialogue with the Zapatista National Liberation Army have failed. The reform of Article 2 of the Constitution voted by Congress is perceived as insufficient in that it is not a full translation of the San Andrés Larráinzar Accords into law.⁸ The congressional efforts were eclipsed by protests from national and international NGOs that consider the reform incomplete and only a first point that must be complied with before peace can be achieved in Chiapas.

3. No headway has been made in the investigation of the murder of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. The general impression about these cases is that at the very least municipal, state and feder-

al authorities have displayed negligence and disinterest in the resolution of the cases of more than 250 young women who have been brutally abused and murdered in this border city.

4. More than three months after the crime, no progress has been made in the murder case of lawyer Digna Ochoa, former member of the Miguel Agustín Pro Human Rights Center.⁹ Currently under the jurisdiction of the Mexico City District Attorney's Office, District Attorney Bernardo Bátiz, has reported that militarily personnel has been questioned in the investigation.

Suspicious have also arisen that the government was negligent in withdrawing CIDH-recommended measures to protect Ochoa's life and safety. At the time of her death, Digna Ochoa was looking into the case of the massacre in Aguas Blancas and the defense of four students accused of bank bombings. She had received constant death threats, all of which were known to the authorities and the public at large.

5. Public security policies have led to the progressive militarization of the

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION																							
Year	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		2000		Total
Half	1o.	2o.	3o.	4o.	5o.	6o.	7o.	8o.	9o.	10o.	11o.	12o.	13o.	14o.	15o.	16o.	17o.	18o.	19o.	20o.	21o.		
Recommendations Made	33	51	75	110	143	117	151	116	48	93	63	53	84	42	87	49	65	48	56	2	24		1,510
Authorities and Bodies	42	55	93	133	149	123	166	139	56	103	77	62	109	56	102	67	78	59	76	4	30		1,779
Not Accepted	3	2	1	2	1	1	4	3	2	4	3	1	4	10	10	7	8	5	16	3	1		91
Accepted with Proof of Total Compliance	39	50	85	121	139	111	133	106	41	86	55	48	75	26	64	33	35	19	42	1	3		1,293
Accepted with Proof of Partial Compliance	0	2	5	9	6	6	18	20	8	7	14	5	22	15	22	26	35	35	35	0	15		305
Accepted with No Proof of Compliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	2		5
Accepted with Unsatisfactory Compliance	-	1	2	1	3	5	11	10	5	6	5	8	8	4	6	1	-	-	-	-	-		76
Accepted in Time to Present Proof of Compliance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2		2
In Time to Be Answered	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7		7

Source: CNDH 2000 Report, p. 239, <http://www.cndh.org.mx>

federal government's police forces. This is the case of the Attorney General's Office's investigators and campaign against organized crime and drug trafficking; the Federal Preventive Police, made up of army troops and officers; and the recent decision to form elite military bodies to fight against kidnapping.

This polemic began with the appointment of General Macedo de la

Concha as federal attorney general, which has kept NGOs at arms length in the dialogue proposed by the Attorney General's Office for Human Rights.

6. A constitutional reform to facilitate the ratification of the Statute of Rome is urgent. This would make Mexico one of the first 60 nations to ratify and therefore allow it to participate in the General Assembly and have a judge on the International Criminal Court.

CONTRADICTORY POLICY

The following are signs of the indecisive or contradictory government policy in matters of human rights.

1. The federal government has been incapable of achieving ratification of some of its appointments, such as in the case of Dr. Mariclaire Acosta as "special ambassador for human rights and democracy," for whom the Vice

Ministry of Human Rights and Democracy was hastily created in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰ This vice ministry's role is fundamental in the Inter-ministerial Human Rights Commission and to move toward the objectives of the agreement signed by the president and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The point where things became complicated was in the federal government's handling of the polemical case of General Gallardo—this complication was perhaps surmounted partially by his release—since from the time of her participation in the Mexican Commission for Human and Political Rights, Acosta had been the general's main defender before the CIDH. The government's partial compliance with the CIDH recommendation and disregard for the rest of it including pinpointing abuses of authority will continue to be controversial.

2. Dr. Ignacio Carrillo Prieto was named special prosecutor to investigate disappearances in the 1970s and 1980s. His appointment was received with skepticism given his background which, while it included activities in academia and the study of criminal law, also linked him to the public sector in places such as the Ministry of the Interior.

Nonetheless, to shore up the special prosecutor's office's credibility, the government offered to create a citizen's council that still has no head. But, in addition to the objections to the specific individual appointed, a shadow hangs over the office itself because of the negative precedents of other special prosecutor's offices created to investigate three assassinations in 1993 and 1994 (the murders of Cardenal Jesús Posadas Ocampo, PRI presidential can-

didate Luis Donaldo Colosio and PRI federal deputy and congressional caucus leader José Francisco Ruiz Massieu). None of these prosecutors has presented credible results.

3. The five months of dialogue between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGOs have not been very productive. The discussions have been divided into five different working groups: harmonization of practice and legislation with Mexico's human rights commitments; indigenous rights; civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; and vulnerable groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The only overall solution for the human rights problem in Mexico is an integral

Social organizations have learned to survive and maintain their permanent monitoring of some specific aspects of state behavior that habitually injure and offend the population.

reform of the state that would reorganize public life and, through the very mechanisms of constitutional democracies, achieve:

- a) Transparency in government, ensuring that this be reflected in the quality of public services which as of now is far from being the case;
- b) Improvement in the quality of justice, currently quite a scarce commodity. Defective law enforcement and slow administration of justice has made justice itself

inaccessible for the ordinary citizen. Therefore, equality, both as a value and as a result of the state's guarantee of opportunities, and effective channels for the distribution of wealth are still frankly a utopia.

Significant steps forward have been made in opening up society, as can be seen in an increasingly intense public debate and more professional, critical media. Social organizations, for their part, have learned to survive and maintain their permanent monitoring of some—though few—specific aspects wherein the habitual behavior of the state and its agents injure and offend the population. Pluralism in Mexican society is more an expression of opposing ideological tendencies' opinions

on isolated issues than a legal supposition recognizing the value of all voices and opinions about exclusion, intolerance and discrimination. Mexico's institutions include the representation of the broadest collection of political forces in elected posts. Lastly, authorities on different levels have begun initially, but I am certain irreversibly, to be accountable for their actions.

While there have been significant, historic advances in the population's exercise of their civil-political rights, the state still has a long way to go in terms of sustained exercise of the rest of the

citizens' fundamental rights and public freedoms; covering that distance would create a better quality of life for the great majority of Mexico's inhabitants. **MM**

NOTES

- ¹ See Juan Francisco Escobedo Delgado, "El régimen cerrado y sus amigos. De la criptocracia a la democracia," *The University Journal* vol. 2, no. 1 (Universidad Anáhuac del Sur) (winter 2001), and "La gobernabilidad autoritaria en México: Los años del salinismo," *The University Journal* vol. 1, no. 2 (Universidad Anáhuac del Sur) (spring 2001).
- ² Francisco Javier Acuña Llamas, "Estado de derecho y derechos humanos," *Aportes para el debate político* (Bogotá: Fundación Friedrich Naumann Stiftung-Perfiles Liberales, 1996), pp. 112-178.

³ Francisco Javier Acuña Llamas, *La CNDH, una institución a medio camino. Propuestas para su urgente transformación* (Mexico City: Grupo Mandala Editores/Universidad Anáhuac del Sur, 1999), pp. 206-208.

⁴ See two different evaluations of this constitutional reform in Miguel Pérez López, "La autonomía alcanzada. La reforma del marco constitucional de los órganos protectores de los derechos humanos," *Quórum* 68 (1999), pp. 49-63, and Francisco Javier Acuña Llamas, "Los derechos humanos en el México de fin de siglo. Reseña de la reciente y magra reforma del artículo 102B de la Constitución," *Quórum* 68 (1999), pp. 35-48.

⁵ Thesis P. LXXVII/99, *Gaceta del Semanario Judicial de la Federación*, vol. X, ninth period (November 1999), p. 46.

⁶ Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera were victimized for opposing excessive logging of local forests. [Editor's Note.]

⁷ General Gallardo had been in prison for eight years on trumped-up charges because of his role as a dissident in the Mexican

army and his campaign for the creation of a military ombudsman. [Editor's Note.]

⁸ After the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) march to Mexico City in February 2001, Congress passed changes to the constitution and legislation on the indigenous population that were very different from the proposal originally agreed upon by the government and the EZLN and representatives of indigenous peoples from all over Mexico in San Andrés Larráinzar in 1997. This led the EZLN to declare that the dialogue had been broken again, putting an end to negotiations. [Editor's Note.]

⁹ The Miguel Agustín Pro Human Rights Center has been one of the most combative and critical of the government and official human rights commissions, particularly the federal one and that of the state of Chiapas. [Editor's Note.]

¹⁰ Dr. Acosta has a long history in the fight for human rights in Mexico; she was president of the Mexican Academy for Human Rights and the first director of *Voices of Mexico*. [Editor's Note.]

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The Thwarted Inevitability Advances in Human Rights Defense In Mexico City

Luis de la Barreda Solórzano*



Getty Images

Today, mass repression like that of 1968 seems improbable in Mexico.

In the last 10 years of the last millennium we witnessed substantial advances in matters of human rights in Mexico, basically in two aspects: individual freedoms and the fight against impunity of those in power. Other matters like the fight against poverty and social inequality, public security and the administration of justice, to mention just a few, did not progress and even retrogressed; but fundamental human rights have been consolidating and are more and more effectively in force. It is true that respect

for human rights does not mean the elimination of all injustices (although they must combat them), disease, gridlock traffic, depression, indigestion, disappointment in love or death; that is, it cannot guarantee the Kingdom of God on Earth. But human rights are the instrument of the governed for defending themselves from the arbitrariness of those who govern.

Human rights do not mean the realization of a utopia or of the absolute, nor do they guarantee happiness: they are a formula for being able to live together in a civilized manner. They are not won once and for all, but then no human achievement is irreversible. They are fragile and constantly threatened —by enemies who are always morally inferior

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but who are often powerful. This makes them all the more desirable and precious. They must be defended day by day. They are one of the most precious products of civilization and we —those who think of ourselves as civilized— are to a great extent the product of their being in force. We are certain that, like in the hell of Erinys, the abuse of power is ethically unacceptable for human beings. Although some lie, bloody and kill for power, I am willing to venture the judgment that no one —not even they— can yearn in the depths of their beings for the violation of human rights to prevail because that would mean that we would all be at the mercy of the abuse

Human rights do not mean the realization of a utopia
or of the absolute; they are a formula for being
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of power. For that reason the victories against these violations —like those of Hercules against the metal buzzards and the dragon, just as monstrous as abuses of power— make us joyful and calm us.

Human rights are based on what Voltaire called “love of the human race, a virtue unknown to those who deceive, to the pedants who dispute and the fanatics who pursue.” In Mexico, the guardians of orthodoxy by temperament or habit, those nostalgic for authoritarianism or for the privileges of arbitrariness, or the supporters of a paralyzed legal system have not been persuaded to their cause, as they could not be. By contrast, the most sensitive, active and influential part of society has been convinced by it and that has been sufficient to change society itself.

CONTEMPORARIES OF ALL MEN

In our country, we have only recently made the old dream of effective suffrage a reality (a banner raised by Francisco I. Madero in 1910 when he called on the Mexican people to take up arms against the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz). This is the first condition of a democratic system. Today freedom of expression and the right to assembly, only a few years ago severely constrained, are broadly respected. Today we can say, with poet Octavio Paz, that “we are for the first time the contemporaries of all men.” Today it seems improbable that hundreds of people assembled in peaceful protest

could be murdered *en masse* with impunity under orders from the president like on October 2, 1968. For the president, as Carlos Fuentes would write, the demonstrators were “trouble-makers, subversives, communists, ideologues of destruction, enemies of the homeland embodied in the presidential colors” because they dared protest.

Fernando Savater reminds us that human rights “do not emanate as much from promises of the light as from dread of the shadows; they do not aspire to an extraordinary imagined good, but to avoid familiar evils.” International bodies’ reports often denounce serious human rights violations in Mexico with reference to only three states (Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca), which are not representative of what is happening in the rest of the country and

where absolute impunity no longer prevails as in the past. We cannot forget that our tradition of unassailable authoritarianism, which included such grave crimes as forced disappearance, was long, powerful and seamless.

The panorama varies from one state to another nationwide. The most significant steps forward have been taken in Mexico City. Some examples are illustrative. In the capital, such discriminatory practices as the following have been eliminated: a) the requirement that women applying for jobs in the public sector be required to do pregnancy tests; b) a worker having to prove he/she does not have AIDS to be hired for a job which involves no risk of contagion; and c) the refusal of public hospitals to treat indigents. The National Pawn Shop considerably lowered its interest rates, thus recovering the original spirit of aid to the most needy for which it was founded by the Count of Regla.¹ Also, the first shelter for women victims of domestic violence has been opened.

AN ILLUSORY AIM?

The fight against torture was considered an illusory aim only eight years ago. At that time, this undisputed king of all the different kinds of abuses of power was an everyday practice in all police stations and prisons. It was encouraged by legislation and Supreme Court decisions that made prisoners’ confessions admissible in evidence even when they had been extracted without the presence of a lawyer or another person of the prisoner’s confidence. Today, with laws that do not accept the validity of confessions made under these conditions and with the ombuds-

man's surveillance of prisoners, torture is sporadic and, for the first time in Mexico, despite the intricate web of cover-ups in officialdom, presumed torturers have been tried and convicted, although still in limited numbers. Only eight years ago these achievement seemed impossible to the disenfranchised and the apathetic. Many were convinced that this "cruelty made legitimate by its use in the majority of nations," as the Italian criminalist Beccaria would call it, was as inevitable as the rising of the sun. But where the impossible ends, there is nothing left but the relentless, which turns individuals into stone icons on the stage where our lives take place. Yesterday and today, the possible strides forward against the inevitable when felicitous circumstances show the way.

Why, then, do we have *gatopardismo*² such as in the words of the nineteenth-century Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, "Everything today is like yesterday, tomorrow like today, and always the same"? Among many other very different reasons, I will name three: a) the human tendency to magnify the evils of today; b) the belief that if we recognize victories we may become complacent and lower our guard; and c) a problem of taste similar to that of those who could not distinguish an excellent wine from vinegar. But, the recognition of real victories, besides being an acknowledgment of fact, does not have to translate into a drag on the fighting spirit. On the contrary, it can serve to encourage us in the struggle because it makes us see that many battles that seemed impossible can be won if we act with firmness, tenacity, conviction, timeliness, appropriate measures... and a little help from the winds of chance.

THE OMBUDSMAN'S TASK

To continue advancing, the federal or state ombudsman must carry out his/her duty with scrupulous professionalism and autonomy. This is only possible if he/she is named taking into consideration solely the protection of human rights and not any kind of partisan considerations. An official with insufficient professional stature or who wishes to be accommodating to the administration will not be an authentic ombudsman.

The struggles and achievements of this public defender of human rights unleashes enthusiastic adherents and ferocious diatribes. Since the institution was born in the eighteenth century, the

For the first time in Mexico, despite the intricate web of cover-ups in officialdom, presumed torturers have been tried and convicted.

causes he/she defends have never convinced everyone, nor, by their very nature, will they ever. His/her banner irritates authoritarian, pre-Enlightenment minds, makes those in favor of paralyzing the legal system uncomfortable, unmasks unscrupulous lawyers who charge enormous sums for getting good results and shows the true face of those who proclaim themselves progressives, revolutionaries or leftists when they condemn the lapses of authorities with whom they do not agree ideologically but close their eyes to the injustices of authorities of their own political stripe.

The latter, the blind who do not wish to see, attempt to justify their selective silence with the curious excuse that denouncing the arbitrary actions of a government they consider progressive works in favor of reaction or the dark forces, whose identity they do

not bother to clarify. Inevitably, their excuse reminds us of the military and intellectuals who, using that same pretext, were silent yesterday or justified the human rights violations by the regimes of Central Europe or are today complaisant in the face of violations by governments that call themselves leftist or anti-imperialist. For an authentic ombudsman, the enemy is always the abuse of power, no matter where it emanates from.

Disturbed by the activity of the Mexico City Human Rights Commission, Deputy Gilberto Ensástiga of the Party of the Democratic Revolution, which governs Mexico City, proposed changing the law so that the commission

could not intervene in certain affairs so as not to become politicized or not confront those in power. An ombudsman who did not oppose, as did the Mexico City Human Rights Commission, individuals with criminal records having posts high up in ministries or the police; who did not fight, as the commission did, trumped-up criminal charges; who did not point to, as did the commission, documented cases of corruption; or who acted in such a way as to not ever make those in power uncomfortable, would not be an authentic ombudsman. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The National Pawn Shop is just that: it loans money in exchange for items, at lower rates and with longer pay-back schedules than commercial pawn shops. [Editor's Note.]

² An expression which means "Everything changes so that everything may stay the same." [Translator's Note.]

Is There an Argentina In Mexico's Future?

Berenice P. Ramírez López*



Undoubtedly, every time we hear something new about the crisis Argentina is going through, we Mexicans ask ourselves if something similar could happen to us. This also happens when someone makes a presentation about the Argentinian economy to more specialized audiences: one of the thoughts that always pops up is, “It sounded like you were explaining the state of the Mexican economy.” Distinguishing what both situations have in common and how they differ is the aim of this article.

In the first place, it should be pointed out that the Argentinian crisis expresses conditions related to the functioning of its economic structure generated at least 30 years ago, together with others of more recent origin linked to economic policy implemented in the last 10 years. The most immediate and obvious has been the explosion of the financial, banking crisis resulting from the end of the dollar-peso peg that has set off social and political mobilizations. However, among the factors explaining what is happening in Argentina are the following:

- a) It is crisis derived from a series of economic policy measures that have brought about a very significant drop in living standards.
- b) It is also the expression of the political and social decomposition of a society that has had an economic model imposed on it that has blurred the project of the nation built from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1970s, a model bent on a “Washington-consensus”-style modernization, which has included measures that have deepened a trend toward increasingly shunting aside the immediate needs of the majority of the population.
- c) The international context, with the dynamic of the international financial system, is also a factor of the first water. This system is more centered on stabilizing economies than reactivating them and establishing sustained growth; it is more concerned with incentives to consumption than with policies to foster production, with indiscriminately opening up markets rather than strengthening spaces for local production.

All of this is similar to what is happening in the Mexican economy and society, particularly because Argentina, just like Mexico and the rest of the Latin American countries, carried out a series of structural reforms that radically changed both economy and society. They implemented policies for stabilization and trade and financial openings; they privatized state companies and reformed the state.

The differences are in the timing, rhythms and intensities with which these instruments were applied. Since the time of Argentina’s military governments in the 1970s, leaders have sought to implement economic policies more linked to the opening and a more dynamic insertion into the world market, but they maintained state participation and ownership in the country’s main economic activities. With the advent of civilian governments, they avoided implementing

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extreme adjustment policies —known as “shock treatment”— in an attempt to combine opening with foreign indebtedness and maintaining high wages and salaries with public spending. The result was a negative growth of the economy and periods of hyper-inflation, annual price variations of over two digits. This resulted in economic stagnation from 1975 to 1991. From 1975 to 1990, the gross domestic product (GDP) averaged only 4.7 percent greater than that of 1974; investment was 2.2 percent less; and consumption, 4.4 percent higher.¹ Between 1980 and 1984, average inflation was 222.8 percent; from 1985 to 1989, it was 444.4 percent.²

In the case of Mexico, stabilization and adjustment policies were implemented with the aim of counteracting the negative impact on income levels and wages, as well as measures that, as a whole, also brought about economic stagnation. Between 1981 and 1990, GDP grew 1.8 percent annually on the average and per capita GDP showed a negative -0.3 percent yearly. Investment also showed a negative -0.1 percent, while inflation was an average of 70 percent between 1981 and 1990.³

It was in 1989 with the inauguration of Carlos Menem’s Justicialista government that the neoliberal structural reforms like the economic opening and privatization would be put into effect, together with the deregulation of the economy, the reform of the state and fiscal and pension reforms. These policies, plus the Convertibility Plan adopted in 1991, turned around the growth of the Argentinian economy and brought down inflation.

The Convertibility Plan implemented as of April 1991 was a stabilization policy that pegged the peso to the dollar, eliminating indexing and

backing convertibility with international reserves. At the same time the Central Bank became autonomous, making it an exchange house, eliminating its ability to finance public deficits. The most obvious result was a drop in inflation, which even turned into deflation from 1999 to 2001. All these policies also served to encourage investment, which grew 14.6 percent a year from 1991 to 1998, compensating for the negative -7.6 percent from 1981 to 1990.

Exports also grew 7.9 percent annually between 1987 and 1996, and imports grew even more (65 percent in 1992 and 21.2 percent in 1994). This produced a continuous deficit in the country’s trade balance in the 1990s which would become one of the central factors in the current crisis and recession.

If we look only at macroeconomic figures for the 1990s, we could be led to suppose that the Argentinian economy was going through a period of dynamic growth with clear indications of recovery. However, the relative increase in economic growth between 1990 and 1997 (3.5 percent GDP increase a year) only translated into a 1.8 percent growth of per capita GDP, a level that could not recover the value of what was being produced nor could it approach the income levels of the first part of the 1970s. The industrial sector, one of the most dynamic during the 1990s, was increasingly structured to depend on external financial cycles. Because of its links to foreign direct investment and the largest multinational corporations, and in the perspective of competitiveness and increased productivity, these dynamic manufacturing activities did not make for more jobs. On the contrary, with the creation of processes

with great technological innovation, jobs were lost overall; also, greater emphasis on assembly and services meant less and less involvement of technoproduktive capabilities. This resulted in very high unemployment, which oscillated between 15 percent and 24 percent of the work force in the 1990s.

At the same time, Mexico’s macroeconomic performance between 1991 and 1999 was relatively successful: the GDP grew 3.1 percent annually; per capita GDP, 1.3 percent; investment, 5 percent; exports, 2.1 percent; and imports 13.5 percent. Inflation dropped from 29.9 percent in 1990 to 9 percent in 2000. However, despite an average 3.5 percent open urban unemployment, the growth of the work force was 3.9 percent and of every 100 jobs created, 60 were in the informal sector.⁴

I have already stated that one of the most important effects of the model imposed in Argentina has been a drop in living standards: median income dropped 30 percent between 1980 and 1998.

Because of Argentina’s history and how it was constituted as a nation, as well as because of the economic model in place since the 1920s, poverty had never reached significant levels. However, in 1980, 9 percent of homes were at the poverty level; by 1999, the figure had reached 16.3 percent. In 1980, 2 percent of homes were indigent and by 1999, the figure had doubled, reaching 4.3 percent.⁵

These indicators do contrast very significantly with the Mexican case, in which the drop in income has been even greater. To index income, taking 1990 as 100, in 1980 the minimum wage was 252.9 and in 1996, it was 76.9. The average wage went from

MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS (AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATES)								
	1970- 1980	1981- 1990	1991- 1999	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
GDP								
Argentina	-	-0.7	3.2	8.0	-3.8	-3.4	-0.6	-3.8
Mexico	6.6	1.8	3.1	6.8	4.9	3.5	7.0	-0.1
Per capita GDP								
Argentina	-	-2.1	3.3	3.5	0.6	-1.2	-1.8	-5.0
Mexico	3.5	-0.3	1.3	5.1	3.2	1.8	5.4	-1.6
Investment								
Argentina	-	-2.4*	-	17.5	6.7	-12.8	-8.6	-15.0
Mexico	9.1	-0.1	5.0	21.7	10.7	7.7	10.0	-3.5
Exports								
Argentina	2.1	7.1	6.6	12.0	9.9	-1.4	1.8	-
Mexico	7.8	7.2	12.1	10.7	12.1	12.4	16.0	-
Imports								
Argentina	-	-	-	26.6	8.1	-11.7	0.2	-
Mexico	12.0	4.4	13.5	22.8	10.6	13.8	21.4	-
FDI								
Argentina	-	-	-	4,924	4,175	22,633	10,553	3,500
Mexico	-	-	-	12,830	11,311	11,915	13,162	24,500
Foreign Debt								
Argentina	-	-	-	124,696	140,489	145,300	146,200	142,300
Mexico	-	-	-	149,000	161,300	166,381	149,300	146,100

Source: ECLAC, *Balance Preliminar de la Economía de América Latina*, several years; and IDB, *Progreso Económico, Social de América Latina*, several years.
* 1975-1990.

128.3 in 1980 to 111.5 in 1996. In 1989, 39 percent of all homes were at the poverty level, a figure that rose to 43 percent in 1996 and dropped again to 38 percent in 1999. Thirteen percent of all homes were indigent. Comparing the Mexican situation with Argentina, the obvious question is why there has not been a social explosion in Mexico. I think that migration to the United States and the informal economy have been structured as escape valves, in addition to the lack of a political culture of citizens' organization.

Clearly the hardest hit sectors in Argentina's current bank crisis are the middle classes, who, accustomed to a certain standard of living based on jobs in the formal sector, have had to deal with a drop in their income, losing their

jobs and the plunder of their savings. In addition, this model made possible what no other before had: a polarization of income, which is a matter for concern because the Argentinian population is resisting greater impoverishment and exclusion from productive life and therefore, from society.

Argentina's per capita GDP is U.S.\$7,000, but 72.5 percent of the population earns less than this average and 44.5 percent earns half the average.⁶

We can identify all these circumstances as the basis for the current social crisis, which can only be resolved with the construction of a viable economic model that will make it possible to establish new social pacts.

In the midst of this dynamic, the peso peg to the dollar came to an end after

the public debt came due, which meant an exchange of U.S.\$30 billion in securities. Given the lack of external financing and the drop in bank deposits, the government was forced to slash public spending with measures such as cutting public sector wages, and pensions higher than U.S.\$500, by 13 percent. Later, in November 2001, given the drop in international reserves, it became necessary to limit withdrawals from bank accounts, and in December the moratorium was declared on the public foreign debt, by that time a hefty U.S.\$142 billion.

Argentina's emergence from the current crisis is still uncertain and the viability of the economic system is at stake. The economic policy measures adopted in the 1990s managed to

contain inflation and reactivate some productive sectors, but at an enormous cost for the population as a whole.

The financial and banking crisis showed its first signs of being played out in 1995 as a result of the Mexican crisis, but it was maintained artificially until now, when all its implications and distortions are showing up. Meanwhile, credit for small and medium-sized firms decreased and interest rates on state bonds in dollars have been higher than those applied to the debts of the more advanced economies.

Stabilization measures are being implemented in Mexico, particularly since the 1994 crisis. Seemingly the only objective is to control inflation; to do this, a flexible exchange rate has been established, controlled by the Central Bank, which maintains a fictitious parity that is currently acting against the exporting sector and encouraging imports, as well as changing productive chains that are now being structured with the external market. It should be remembered that the bill for solving the 1998 banking crisis was presented to the entire population: Mexico's bank bail-out transferring its debt to the public cost U.S.\$60 billion. The head of the Bank Savings Protection Institute (IPAB), the body that took the place of the Savings Protection Bank Fund (FOBAPROA), stated in September 1999 that the debt came to U.S.\$873.1 billion, the equivalent of 19.3 percent of the GDP. In the year 2001, payments on this debt came to 0.87 percent of GDP.

Argentina, like most countries in Latin America, has carried out all the measures dictated by the international financial organizations. The government sold off all its state companies, opened up the market and liberalized the financial sector, causing the virtual disap-

pearance of national banks. And despite important amounts of foreign direct investment and the structural reforms, there was little effect on domestic savings, mainly because the required number of jobs in the formal sector were never created. And despite it all, capital will continue to be transferred out of the country, through capital flight or in the form of foreign debt servicing and payment or in profit remittances. Unfortunately, the cost of all this is coming out of the population's savings because people transferred the results of their life-long efforts to the banks, now foreign owned. They lost money when they changed pesos to dollars and now they will once again lose out when they change dollars back into devalued pesos. We are once again seeing a process of forced savings that will turn into a process of accumulation differing little from the plunder experienced every time capital has required liquidity.

In Mexico, the government has also sold off state companies and merged others; the national banking system no longer exists; we also had a profound banking crisis; and our growth is once again insufficient to generate a sustained reactivation. While the economy managed to recover in 1996, this was thanks to international financial aid and the bank bail-out; this aid has turned into a kind of "financial bullet-proofing" since 1999 to the tune of U.S.\$26.44 billion that was given because of our geographical proximity to the United States, because we have become its second trade partner and because the U.S. economy was growing. We are now entering a recession because we are following the lead of our neighbor to the north, and we have no dynamic domestic market that can revive growth. What is building up

is the lack of jobs, the number of unstable jobs, the highly polarized income distribution, public debt and the financial requirements of fiscal policy.

The Argentinian crisis and Mexico's economic depression, as well as the deterioration of the entire Latin American region brings into question the validity of maintaining economic models that emphasize stabilization, low inflation based on a tight monetary policy and zero public deficit at the cost of impoverishing the population. We must question these policies that insist on economies becoming part of the international market without increasing investment in education and development and try to turn the banking system into simple exchange houses with no impact on public finance or local production or deny any possibility of implementing policies to encourage investment and production. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Carlos Bonvecchi, "Una evaluación del desempeño de la industria argentina en la década de los noventa," Bernardo Kosacoff, comp., *El desempeño industrial argentino. Más allá de la sustitución de importaciones* (Santiago: CEPAL/ONU, 2000).

² CEPAL, "Quince años de desempeño económico" (Santiago: CEPAL/ONU, 1996), and CEPAL (a) "Balance preliminar de la economía de América Latina" (Santiago: CEPAL/ONU, 2001).

³ Ibid.

⁴ INEGI, "Encuesta ingreso-gasto de los hogares en México" (Mexico City: INEGI, 1998).

⁵ CEPAL (b), "El panorama social de América Latina, 2000-2001," (Santiago: CEPAL/ONU, 2001).

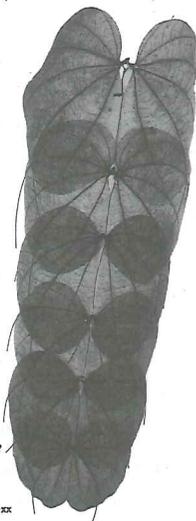
⁶ Idem.



Enero de 2001:
¿el tercer principio?

Astrología
y cronobiología

La física en el siglo xx



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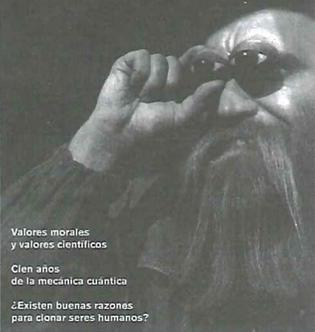
- Enero de 2001: ¿el tercer principio?
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- Astrología y cronobiología: del mito a la ciencia
- Cronobiología humana: en busca del tiempo perdido
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Suscripciones
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The Painting of Rubén Leyva

Eduardo Milán*



Photos by Carlos Alcázar

▲ *The Architect*, 80 x 100 cm, 2000 (oil on linen).

Modern art produces the wonder of apparitions. Since the end of the last century, the moment of the euphor-

ic crystallization of modernity, of the rise of the historical avant-gardes, the art of modernity has had one outstanding characteristic: surprise. For modern art, to surprise does not necessarily mean to invent in the sense of creating new forms, but also to make forms forgotten

* Mexican poet and art critic.
Photos reproduced courtesy of Rubén Leyva.



▲ *Beneath the Waters*, 57 x 76 cm, 1998 (ink on paper).

What we discover in Leyva's painting are the sketches of a forgotten, happy world.

or left aside because of their long usage and the need to generate the illusion of different images by exploring other possibilities appear in the pictorial landscape. These different images are not necessarily new, in the sense that they have been created for an age which needs them and, one way or another, they represent. What is called the postmodern age—a more aesthetic than historical term, as it is based on the recycling of forms from the past, in accordance with Hegel's statement that art, "as it pertains to us, is a matter of the past"—is founded on bringing forms which have been consistent in other times and now irrupt before

us with an astonishing fascination up to date again. This fascination is produced because these forms or images appear only as shapes, empty of their original meaning, be it mythic-symbolic, religious or sacred, and, as such, they are ready to be filled with a new meaning, the one needed by the man of the present. The question is: Which forms are needed by the man of today? This leads us to another question: Is there an aesthetic image that corresponds to the time we are living in?

This concern is pertinent when we consider the work of Rubén Leyva. Leyva's painting has an impact because it presents itself as sit-

uated outside the aesthetic debate that seeks to resolve the question of art according to narrow historical parameters, if not to a specific consideration of the evolution of forms. Precise historical parameters and the consideration of aesthetic forms from the point of view of evolution both involve the idea of a constant creation of new forms. In this way, neo-abstractism or neo-figurativism are the forms which attract the debate on the aesthetic pertinence of this historical moment. Leyva surprises in his paintings since he initially seems to be a painter who returns the sense of painting to a timeless dimension. The cultivation of his forms is animated by the supposition of an ex nihilo creation, placed on the very edge of civilization, bordering on a pictorial notion linked to magical or savage thinking. Essentially figurative, his representations precede the consciousness of what is represented. His human figures are conjectures or, rather, prefigurations. Man, objects, the things of the world seem to be placed before the knowledge of men, things and the world which supports the wisdom of contemporary man. In their linear disengagement, they are figures—in fact, his figuration consists rather of lines moving toward a figuration—of innocent, almost childlike, precariousness, with a touch of childish innocence led by intuition rather than by knowledge, the essence and not the appearance constituted according to the legal cannons of how things are. What appears before the viewer is a landscape which misses the natural spontaneity of line, the nostalgia of an image of the world not so pierced by the angst of a devastating rationality, which wants to say that the world is just as it appears. Given this supposition of apparition as a consciousness of another condition of the image—a condition which lies in our unconscious and manifests itself in neat, elementary forms, deprived of the complexity of a knowledge that frightens—colors and forms mingle in a special dialectical relationship. On a flat surface, in the foreground, full of little men who remind us of the representation of primitive man, of objects



▲ *Medieval Conquistador*, 38 x 34 x 6 cm, 1999 (acrylic on multicolored wood [puppet]).

lowered from the heights of Sense down to an almost original simplicity, colors are presented stridently, with a vitality that destroys by contrast any old feeling of time. It is the colors in Leyva's painting that make us remember that it is happening here and now. Not in the apparent reality of the viewer's world, but in the constant interior of our perception.

At first view, the "problem" of Leyva's painting is time. Not historical time where pictures live, one of the dramatic concerns of our era, but rather the historical time that the painting transmits, what it tells us, what it suggests to us, what it makes us see. The landscape where



▲ *Arcanum*, 200 x 150 cm, 1998 (oil on linen).



▲ *On the Silk Route*, 57 x 76 cm, 1998 (ink on paper).

Leyva's painting takes place looks anachronistic. Or, it looks like the stubbornness of someone who wants to return to the origins of pictorial art, when painting was similar to hieroglyphics or the mimetic representation of the state of the spirit of man, a record of his fears, the graphic conjuring of a curse or a blessing. But the time of the painting is not an account of what it represents but, precisely, what it succeeds in representing. The man who appears in Leyva's pictures is not a finished man. He is not even the design of a man. There is no proposal or theory here, no promise of a better or happier future. Far from any idea of a utopia of representation, for Leyva, the world is made of sketches. The question now is: Is the world sketches because it is only barely on the border of being or because, despite the dynamics of technology and science, we have not yet overcome our condition of being a rough draft? In the case of Leyva's painting, the answer does not seem to manifest any discursive complexity or the hidden assistance of a mysterious power. What we have, the only things we have, are presences: presences freed from history, from science, from all logically organized knowledge. Nevertheless, his painting is far from any possibility of chaos. It is also far from any consideration of existence as a tragic representation, like in a world of puppets governed by something called chance or destiny. There is a memory of being; also a memory of what exists. But it seems that, for Leyva, they are both better placed in the depths of the unconscious. An unconscious not as a Freudian synonym of the emergence of a sudden low blow, but as an archetypal chamber of the essence of being, of what belongs to it by its very nature. That would explain the mean condition in which Leyva represents the world: a state that knows no fear, not too far from a placenta which legitimizes any form and not too close to the strictness of a law of the objective that restrains the founding force of feelings.

If the myth can be defined as a setback, Leyva's painting is a formal setback. It acts against solemnity, against skepticism, against the final

defeat of hope. This world that chose the middle way, to be amidst crystallized forms —this world, literally, without perspective, or worse, without any possibility of improvement or progress; this world, finally, possessing the omnipotence of the foreground of that which breaks the eyes— is a world that proposes joy, a reconciliation with our half-finished creation. It stands against all pedantry of sufficiency, of maturity, of adulthood. That is the world of Leyva's presences; that is the cosmos that redefines or should redefine states of seriousness, of Logos, of law, that, deprived of tenderness, lead to a Thanatotic end. If Leyva's painting returns to a previous instance of painting —which I doubt, and if it does, it does so from a critical level—, then there is no fear: as Deleuze said, seconding Spinoza, "only joy returns".

Leyva's painting could be historically placed in the time of the astonishment experienced by European painters in the early twentieth century when, amidst the avant-garde boom, and having broke all links with past, they still turned their eyes to the so-called "primitive" cultures to take from them something that reminded them of objects' aura. This "re-aurification" did not correspond, of course, to any content of the object as such, to any external property, except for the inhabitants of those places which were almost mythical to Europeans. It was our gaze which gave them a new aura.

The European gaze. Europe literally "turned its eye" to a still idyllic exterior, trying to overlook its responsibility given the "primitivism" of those peoples removed, as a collective possibility, from the overwhelming impulse of the myth of progress. As is well known, that change in Europe's gaze situated those objects outside of time, in this case out of "European time", avid for new objects and fed up with novelties invented at the last minute. What European artists did with that richness abandoned because of velocity is another story. But what really concerns us is that all that object-ness implies an imagery needed by the civilization of progress. They are sources for it. In Latin America,



▲ *We, You and They*, 150 x 200 cm, 1999 (oil on linen).



▲ *The Tenacious Beetle*, 35 x 39 x 7 cm, 2000 (mixed media on wood [puppet]).



▲ *Signs of the Middle Ages*, 80 x 100 cm, 2001 (oil on linen).



▲ *Where Dreams Boarded*, 80 x 100 cm, 2001 (oil on linen).

The postmodern age is founded on bringing forms which have been consistent in other times and now irrupt before us with an astonishing fascination up to date again.



▲ *Lands of the Countryside*, 55 x 75 cm, 1998 (pastels on paper).



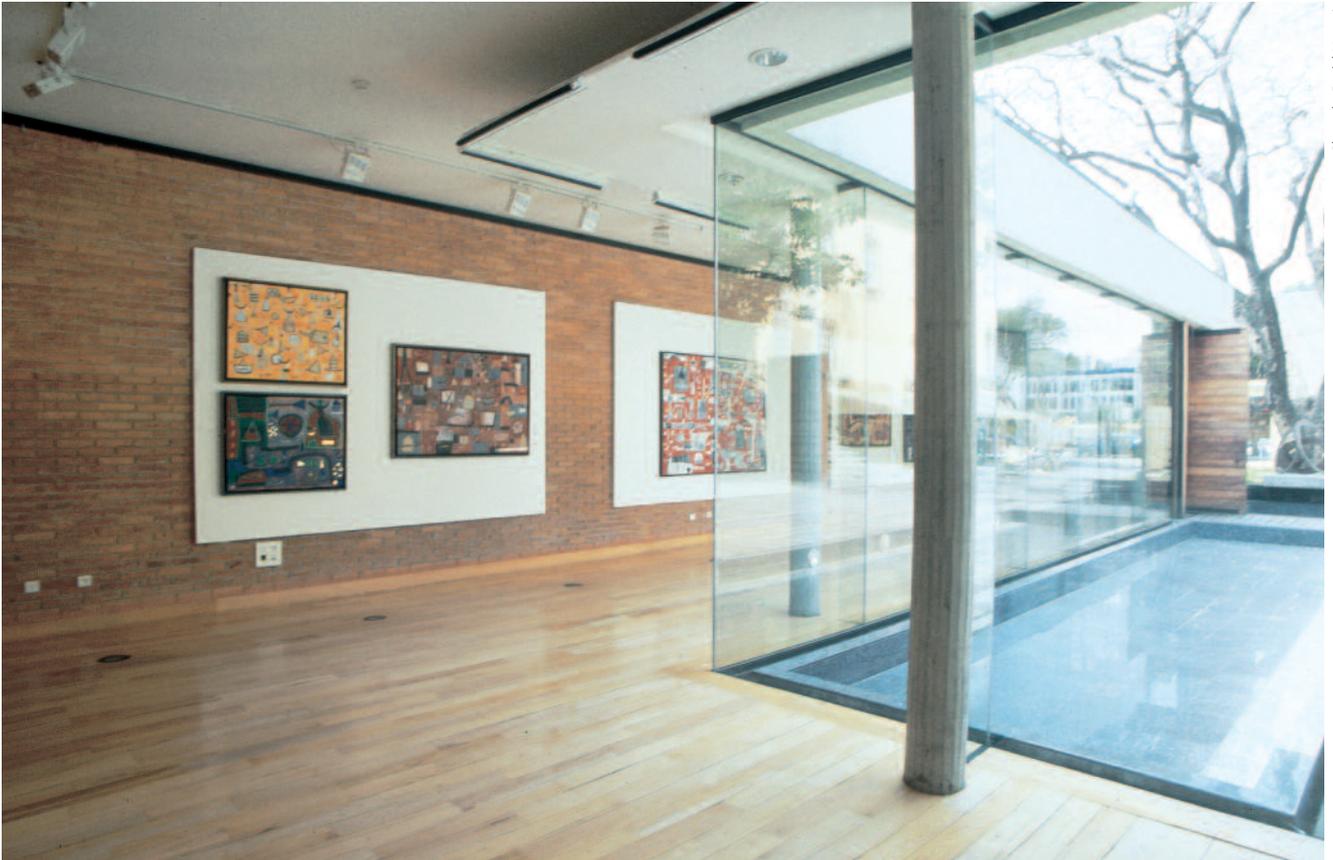
▲ *Traces of the Soul*, 80 x 100 cm, 2000 (oil on linen).

happily —and here we have Leyva as an example— art does not need to strengthen its present in the sources of a primitive or magical past. In Latin America those sources are running waters that flow nonstop everywhere. This cohabitation of all time periods is our wealth, never our handicap. We do not need to discover what surrounds us every day. It is sufficient to show it, to make it a presence. And since aesthetically speaking, the dialectic of before and after does not exist for us, neither does the dialectic of outside and inside, that boundary imposed by the frontier between the objective and the subjective. Latin American art does not need to look to any past: it is sufficient for it to open its eyes and see. That

quality of presence that appears for the first time because it has always belonged to the imaginary space is what dignifies Leyva's aesthetic enterprise, what gives it credibility and acts in the viewer as a discovery. What we discover in Leyva's painting are the sketches of a forgotten world, the sketches of a happy world. But that forgetfulness does not mean belonging to the past or being non-existent here and now. Leyva, rather than going back, gives back: he gives back what exists to the domain of being, that we, blinded by always wanting to look ahead, pass over. Leyva's pictorial lesson seems to be that: because we try to look too high we can no longer recognize —that is to say, see— our true dimension. **MM**

Quiet Strength

Fernando Solana Olivares*



Photos by Daniel Munguia

Through the 15 oil paintings of his latest exhibition,¹ Rubén Leyva's memory concentrates the lessons that the years have left in his visual work. People say forgetting is part of every action. Rubén Leyva has forgotten what he knew pictorially and integrated it into a new visual synthesis in which the characteristics of his previous work—a smiling, childish and profound creative awareness that showed the command of a surprising artist, the complete master of great expressive capabilities—join

with the unprecedented reach always attained in a higher order. So this painting by Leyva absorbs its predecessor, is nourished by it and attains an essential pictorial language that holds both what was already there and what has been achieved for the first time. The artist has climbed the rungs of his being and is moving toward a new formulation: that Leyva plus the new Leyva make for a fortunate, highly creative operation, a charming metamorphosis whose meaning lies exactly in itself, like an ascesis of imagined reality, as subtle and urgent, as severe and kind as any moment of illumination.

* Art critic.



▲ *The Sun's Whim*, 150 x 200 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).



▲ *The Sun's Road*, 100 x 150 cm, 2001 (oil on linen).



▲ *The Fairies Come Out at Night*, 150 x 200 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).

It should be said that, even in the past, Leyva was the artistic father of his own aesthetic genealogy; he had achieved mastery over the chain of influences that make up all personal harmony. Now he is the author who becomes his own father and personifies the quiet strength, the spontaneous confidence and the irrefutable achievement of someone who becomes a true artist and gives up residual knowledge, someone who forgets and leaves the superfluous behind to follow the only law which binds him: the law of what he does, the sovereignty of his own work. In this knowledge granted by the years only when time becomes substance and experience, integration, Leyva paints as if he were learning to paint anew and his single intention lines on the canvas are now the hand, and also the arm, and at the same time the whole body that becomes an incandescent soul and an operative God as he creates.

Painting of painting, painting of the disintegrated, painting of detachment, Leyva's work has its singular fantastic iconography, its abstract figurativism, to the point of purifying powerful chromatics and the combined order in an exceptional play of foregrounds and details that allow him resplendent freedom, a serene joy that moves and multiplies, which only obeys the dictates of a radiance that requires no darkness.

Rubén Leyva does not have to look further because his painting creates the encounters. He has spent 22 years on his artistic path, a period that these 15 works dissolve and memorize as if they had been painted tomorrow, now or yesterday. **MM**

NOTES

¹ "Sketching in Memory" at the Casa de Francia in Mexico City in February and March 2002.



▲ *Araucan Map*, 80 x 100 cm, 2002 (oil on linen).



Ivonne Kennedy

RUBÉN LEYVA was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, and studied at the Oaxaca School of Fine Arts and Kathy MacFadden's ceramics workshop in Portland, Oregon. He has had both individual and group exhibits in important museums and galleries in countries like Germany, Canada, El Salvador, the United States and Mexico. In 1995, the United Nations selected his work to illustrate the publication commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. Leyva currently lives in Oaxaca.

The Very Latest in Mexican Cinema

Leonardo García Tsao*

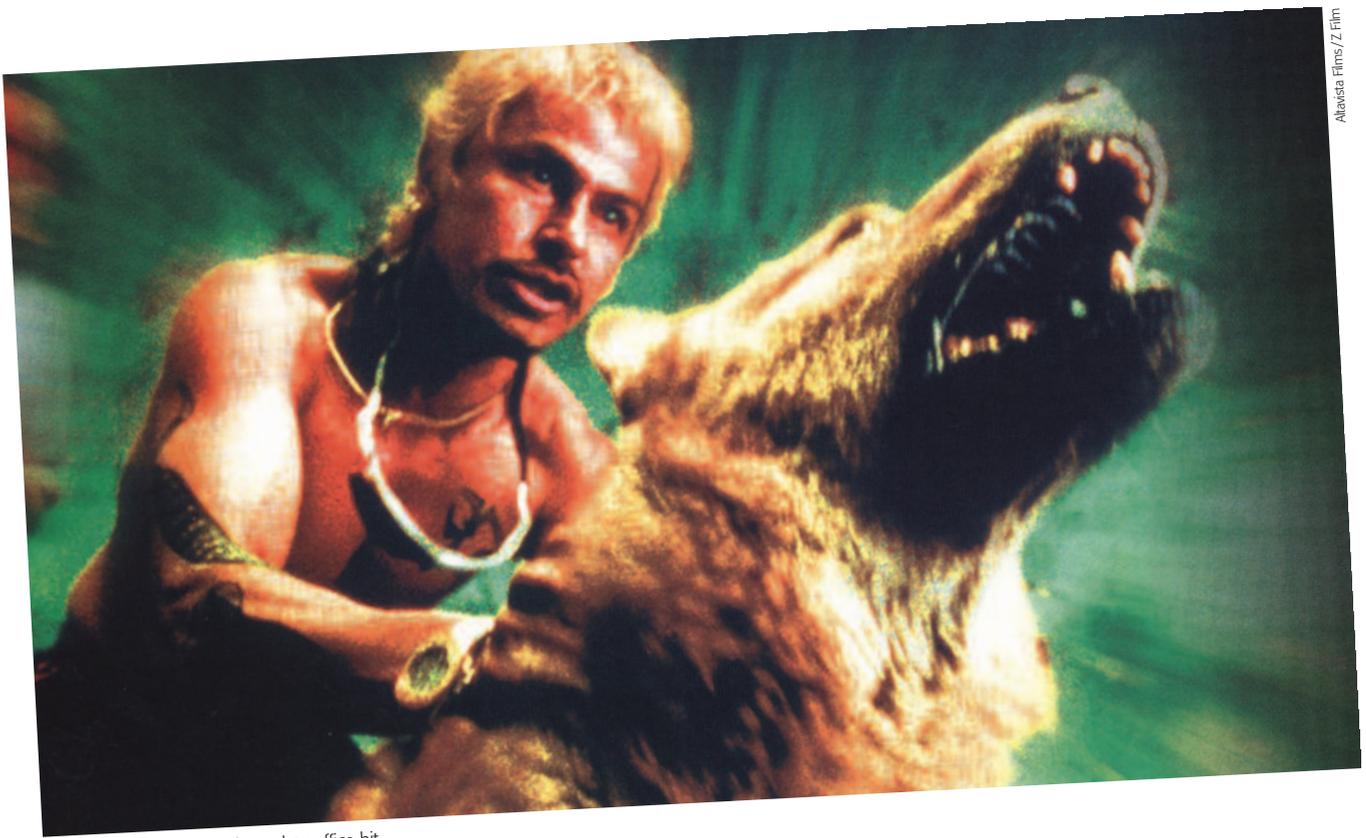
Just when everything seemed lost for Mexican cinema, after the so-called “error of December”¹ and the dismantling of what had once been a solid industry, middle-class audiences decided on its salvation. This is the same middle class that had turned its back on domestically made films for decades. Surprisingly, a 1999 bitter-sweet comedy, *Sexo, pudor y lágrimas* (Sex, Shame and Tears) by Antonio Serrano turned out to be the most successful domestic production in history, beating out Hollywood blockbusters like *Star Wars* prequel *The Phantom Menace*. That success was evidence of a new kind of audience, basically young, that goes to shopping-mall multi-cinemas attracted by films that portray their own culture. While it may be natural to identify with a pair of teen-age lovers aboard the *Titanic*, with all its limitations, *Sex, Shame and Tears* prompted different, more immediate reflexes and ways of thinking.

* Film critic.

Since then, because domestically made films showed important box-office potential, the numbers for the distribution and exhibition of Mexican film changed significantly, and those who had seen the local industry as an inevitable evil began to see possibilities for it. A few years ago, big movie theater chains like Cinemark or Cinemex used different stratagems to get around the legal requirement of putting Mexican films on their screens because they considered them box-office poison, and showed Hollywood products instead.² This is no longer the case. Now Mexican first-run films frequently screen in the same number of theaters as the latest, highly publicized gringo blockbuster. Before, opening a Mexican movie in 250 theaters would have seemed like a pipe dream. Today this is commonplace for films distributed by companies like 20th Century Fox or NuVision, with massive publicity campaigns.

Although it would be premature to call it a resurrection, it is true that production has recovered. This year we can expect about 30





▲ *Love Is a Bitch*, 2000's top box-office hit.

full-length movies from Mexico's industry, which means that the growth rate has been more or less 10 percent a year. And while a great part of this production still depends on state support through Imcine, the government film production institution, private companies have emerged with new strategies, different from the old, obsolete dynasties that ruled Mexican cinema from the time of the so-called Golden Age. Altavista Films, Argos, Producciones Anheló and Titán are some of the companies that have put their money on commercial cinema capable of attracting middle-class audiences without insulting their intelligence.

Amores perros (Love Is a Bitch), Alejandro González Iñárritu's first film, is precisely one example of this rare phenomenon: it is a praised and much-awarded film in prestigious circles that at the same time was the year 2000's top box-office hit, showing that good returns can be achieved by a two-and-a-half hour drama with a complex narrative structure. This Altavista Films production showed that although the public prefers light comedies, it can also be interested in other proposals.

Last year, the same premise was proven by two urban dramas about marginalized young people: *De la calle* (Streeters), the debut of director Gerardo Tort, and *Perfume de violetas. Nadie te oye* (Violet Perfume - No One Hears You) Maryse Sistach's fifth full-length feature. The first is a hyper-realistic adaptation by prominent playwright González Dávila that draws a picture of the nocturnal, violently sordid world of some Mexico City teenagers with an urgency that is never morbid. The constantly moving camera and the abrupt cuts of the editing reinforce that strategy to bring the audience a sense of the immediate.

Although *Violet Perfume* focuses on the specific problem of the growing number of rapes in Mexico, the film avoids sermonizing by situating the conflict in a broader context, that of the interrupted friendship between two lower-class teenage girls; this gives the story its emotional force. Sistach films her story with the verisimilitude of a documentary, allowing it to develop with the naturalness of daily life, even at times when it could have succumbed to melodrama.

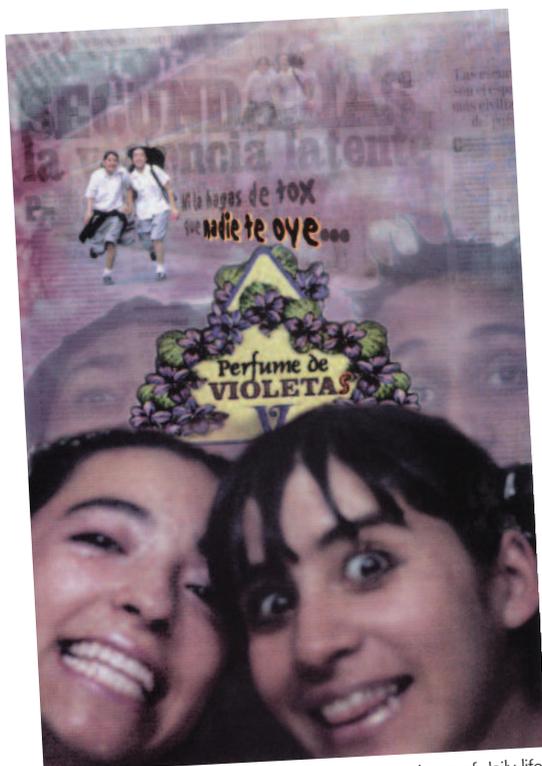
The existence of a large number of women film makers in a country known for being macho is noteworthy. This year we are expecting the commercial release of work by Marcela Arteaga with her documentary *Recuerdos* (Memories); Marcela Fernández Violante, with *Piel de víbora* (Snake Skin); Dana Rotberg, with *Otilia Rauda*; Eva López-Sánchez, with *¿De qué lado estás?* (Which Side Are You On?), to be released abroad as *Francisca* and Guita Schyfter, with *Las caras de la luna* (Faces of the Moon). The time when Fernández Violante was the only active woman director seems very far away indeed.

Without a doubt, comedy is king, whether it be a satirical look at Mexican life or as a friendly allusion to certain neuroses of Mexico City's middle class. Released after audaciously eluding the threat of censorship, *La ley de Herodes* (Herod's Law) (Luis Estrada, 2000) was of capital importance for showing that the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and other sacred cows had stopped being untouch-

able. Although the satire on institutionalized corruption was a crude caricature, the excess was necessary to make effective its virulent critique of a system that was about to come to an end in the very year it was being shown.³

Other satires have been more moderate in their attacks, although they feed on figures and situations that any Mexican citizen who watches the news would recognize. *Todo el poder* (Gimme Power) (Fernando Sariñana, 2000) posits a superficial denunciation of urban crime associated with police corruption and even has a happy ending. *En el país de no pasa nada* (In the Country Where Nothing Happens) (María del Carmen de Lara, 2000) makes pleasant fun of the figure of the dishonest Salinas-administration politician from a woman's point of view, while *Un mundo raro* (A Strange World) (Armando Casas, 2001) focuses on the murky world of commercial television to establish the moral differences between common criminals and the amoral television personalities they admire.

Without a doubt, comedy is king, whether it be a satirical look at Mexican life or as a friendly allusion to certain neuroses of Mexico City's middle class.



▲ Marysé Sistach's films develop with the naturalness of daily life, even when they could have succumbed to melodrama.

Photos on this page reprinted courtesy of Imcine

By contrast, Mexico City comedies have centered in general on the crisis of the couple. The extraordinary success of *Sex, Shame and Tears* had a precedent in *Cilantro y perejil* (Coriander and Parsley, released as *Cilantro and Perejil*) (Rafael Montero, 1996), one of the few good movies that came out during the industry's dry period. Also well received by the viewing public, although panned by the critics, was *El segundo aire* (Second Chance) by Fernando Sariñana (2001), another attempt at presenting infidelity as a symptom of generational malaise.

Certainly, the most unexpected incursion into this genre was *Vivir mata* (Living Kills) (2002), by Nicolás Echevarría, previously a director of documentaries and of the epic-mystical *Cabeza de Vaca*, one of the most highly acclaimed prize-winning films of the 1980s. *Living Kills* tries to bring together two storylines of today's Mexico City comedies: the search for a partner in love and the testimony of just how uninhabitable the city has become.

But the film is flawed: it cannot bring off the comedic tone that would do justice to its ambitions. Instead of transcending mere realism, *Living Kills* is content with being whimsically picturesque.

The preoccupation with love relationships in Mexico City found its teenage version in *La segunda vez* (The Second Time) (Alejandro Gamboa, 1999), whose best feature is its lack of pretension and the honesty with which it treats its female characters. Teen love was also the pretext for existential exploration on trips to the provinces, the subject of the irregular *Por la libre* (released as *Dust to Dust*) (Juan Carlos de Llaca, 2000), the incoherent *Piedras verdes* (Green Stones) (Ángel Flores Torres, 2001) and, of course, *Y tu mamá también* (And Your Mother, Too) (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001), the film with the largest viewing audience last year in Mexico.

Winner of last year's Venice Film Festival and purchased for distribution in several different countries, *And Your Mother, Too*, a film

Moderate satires have fed on figures and situations that any Mexican who watches the news would recognize.

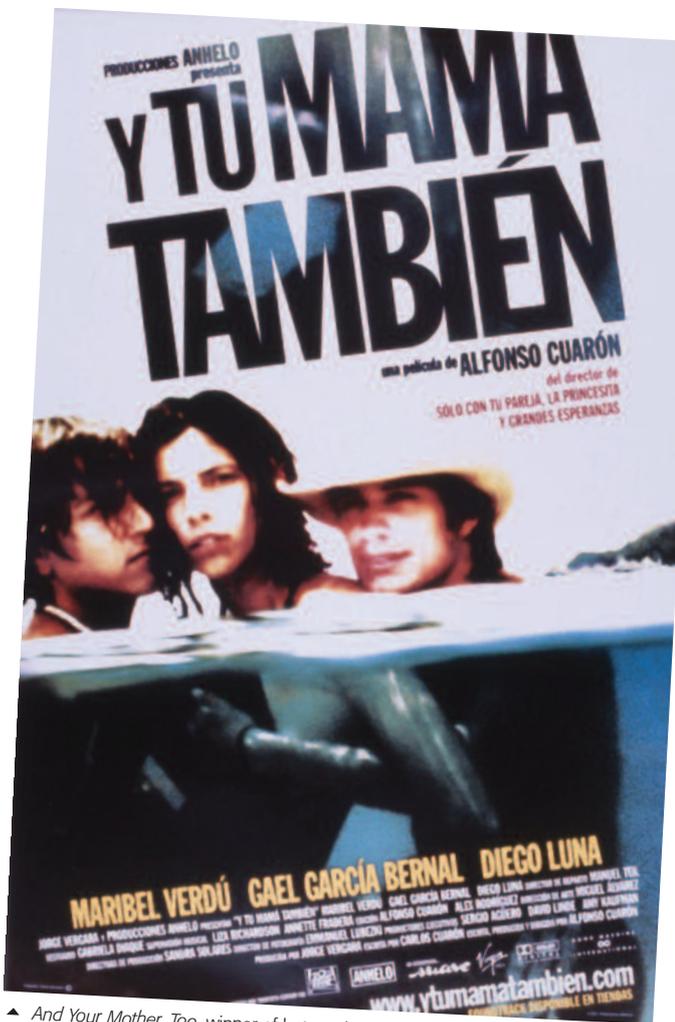


Tiempo y Tono Films, S.A.



Tiempo y Tono Films, S.A.

▲ *Streeters*, the debut of director Gerardo Tort, is an urban drama about marginalized young people.



▲ *And Your Mother, Too*, winner of last year's Venice Film Festival.

Cinefeca Nacional Photo Archive



▲ *A Strange World* focuses on the murky world of commercial television.

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that marks Cuarón's return to Mexican cinema, is a complacent combination of road movie and adolescent comedy centered on a ménage à trois among a Spanish woman and two teenage boys obsessed with sex. The movie slyly suggests a critical view: while the protagonists throw themselves into directionless hedonism, the audience catches glimpses of real problems in the national situation, ignored by these privileged teens. However, *And Your Mother, Too* ends with guilt and punishment for partying, a moralistic discourse rather more suited to past generations. Perhaps it is not happenstance that the three most successful films of recent years —by Serrano, González Iñárritu and Cuarón— share this moral outlook whereby the character that departs from the norm gets his/her just desserts. Could it be

that the broad middle-class audience is unconsciously seeking to reinforce these Catholic precepts?

For this author, the most interesting recent contribution from a novel film maker is *Cuento de hadas para dormir a los cocodrilos* (Fairy Tale to Lull Crocodiles to Sleep), the second feature film by Ignacio Ortiz Cruz.⁴ Despite its pretentious title, this film takes an untraveled road. It is not a comedy, although it has dashes of humor; and the action does not take place in Mexico City, but in the beautiful arid countryside of Oaxaca. This history of a family curse over time (a heritage of insomnia and fratricide) escapes the literary conceits of magical realism to find its own language. This is the kind of production —audacious and rigorously personal— that has kept Mexican



▲ *Sex, Shame and Tears* became the most successful domestic production in history.

cinema alive even in its most unfortunate times. **MM**

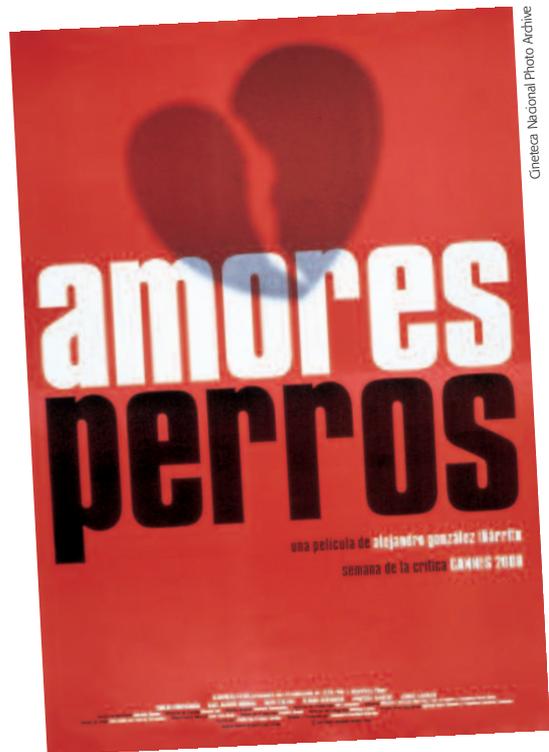
NOTES

¹ "The error of December" is the popular name for economic policy decisions announced in December 1994, a few days after President Ernesto Zedillo was inaugurated, that led to one of the country's worst economic crises in its history in 1995, similar to Argentina's current straits. [Editor's Note.]

² Mexican law requires movie houses to show at least some Mexican films; percentages have varied from 10 percent to 30 percent of the total. [Editor's Note.]

³ Release of this picture was held up for several months before the July 2000 elections, when Vicente Fox won the presidential elections, a first-time victory over the Institutional Revolutionary Party after 72 years in power. [Editor's Note.]

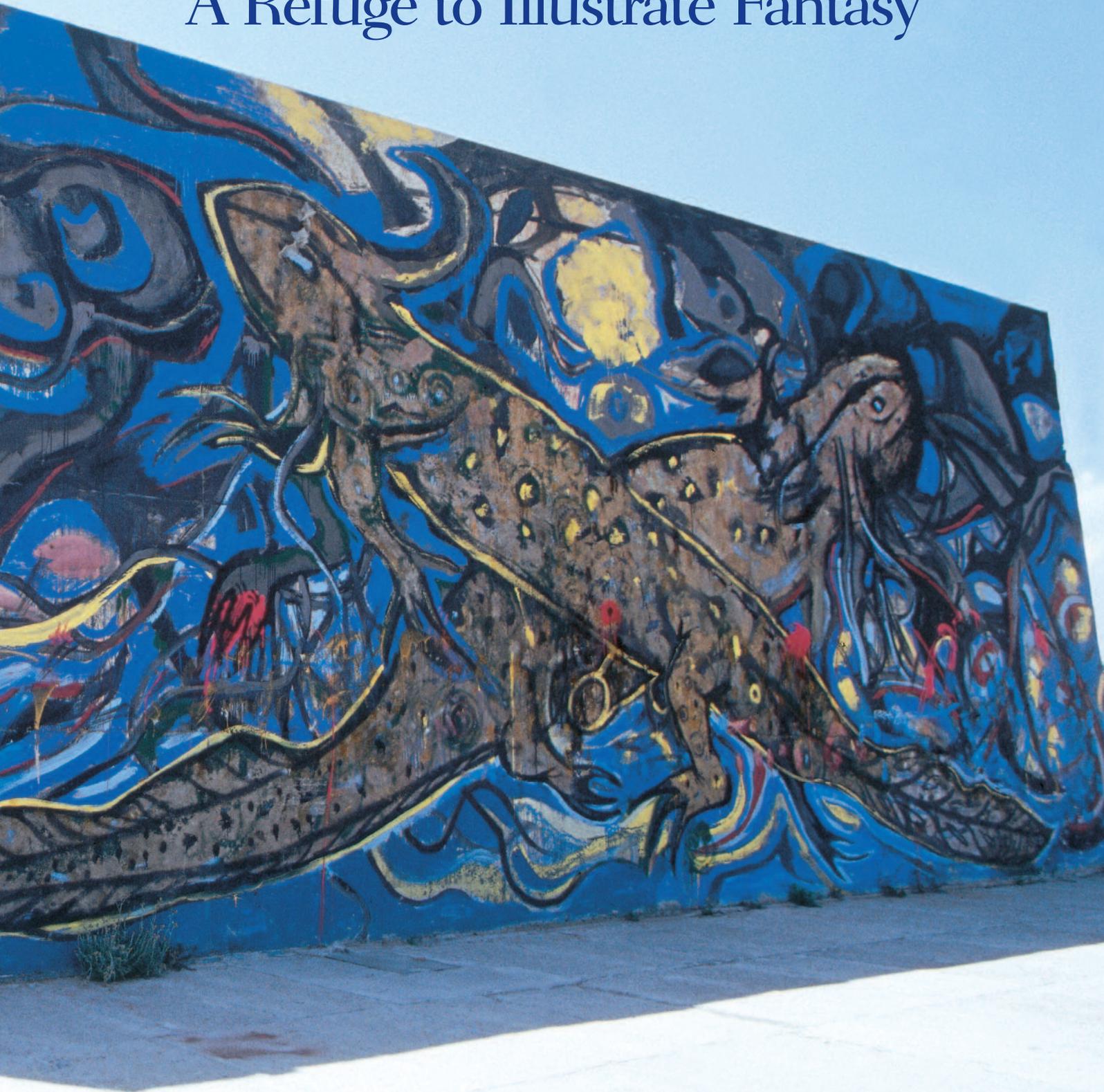
⁴ Ortiz Cruz is currently one of the most prestigious Mexican playwrights.



Gneteca Nacional Photo Archive



The Lighthouse of the East A Refuge to Illustrate Fantasy



Photos by Daniel Munguía

PERHAPS HERE THE CITY SOUNDS DIFFERENT,
ITS ACCENTS LESS LIKE A SINGLE-STRINGED INSTRUMENT...
I THINK THAT IN *EL FARO* YOU CAN BREATHE MORE HARMONY
THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE CHAOTIC DUNES
OF VIOLENCE AND UPROOTEDNESS.

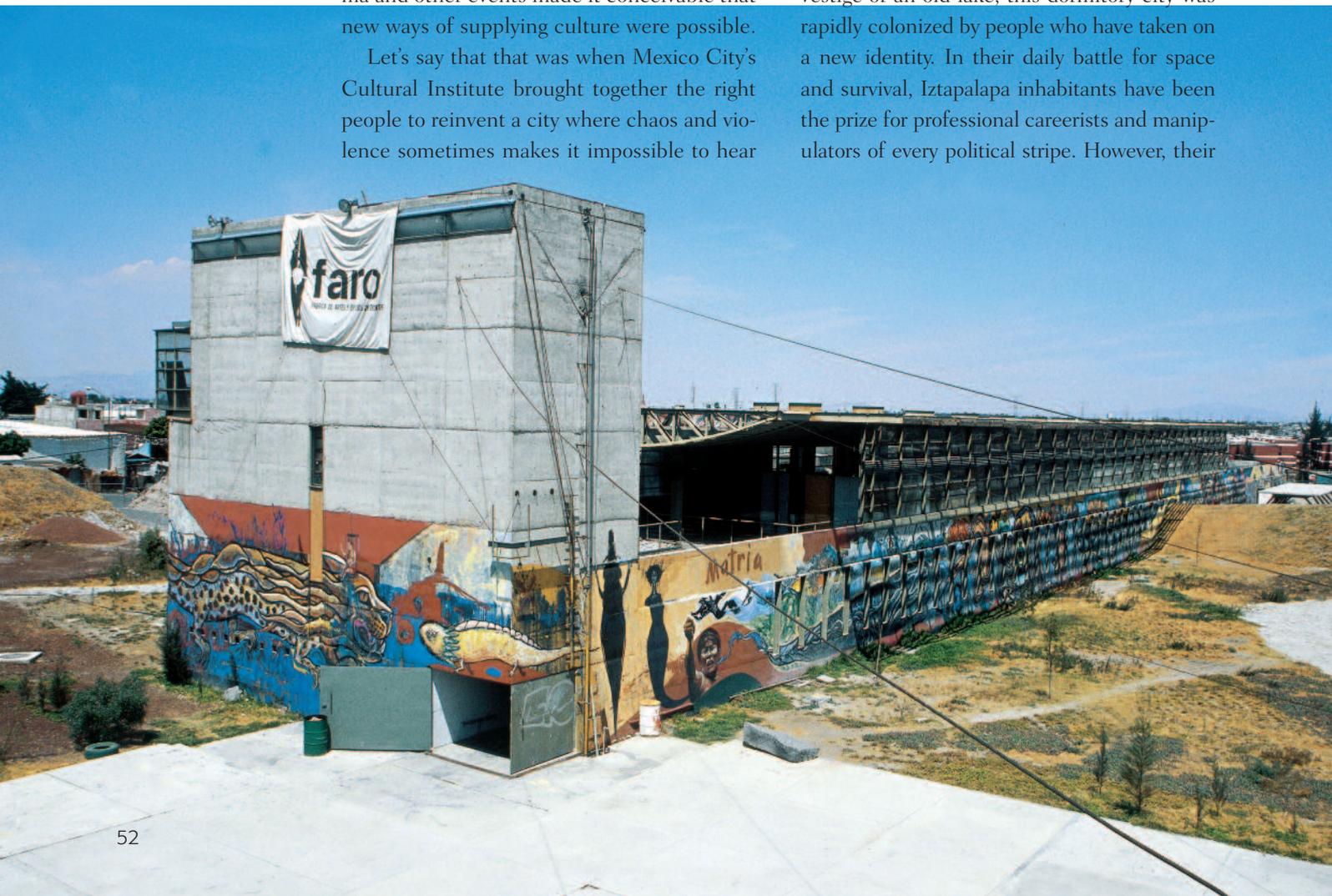
Eduardo Vázquez Martín, ONE OF THE FAITHFUL.

For two years, Mexico City has had a space for encounters, rooted in one of the metropolis' most conflictive areas, disguised as a factory of arts and trades: *El Faro de Oriente*, or the Lighthouse of the East. It represents an emancipating vision of culture for a city that, until 1997, had had no cultural proposal of its own and had concentrated culture in upper middle-class neighborhoods. The "invasion" of urban spaces begun that year in streets, avenues and plazas, flooding them with music, dance, sculpture, cinema and other events made it conceivable that new ways of supplying culture were possible.

Let's say that that was when Mexico City's Cultural Institute brought together the right people to reinvent a city where chaos and violence sometimes makes it impossible to hear

other voices. These people believed that building a cultural space is also a way of improving the quality of life and creating wealth. Meeting with other Faithful, visual artists, theater people, architects, all friends, they took on the task of converting an enormous vacant lot into The Lighthouse of the East Arts and Trades School.

The scene where they nurtured this idea was the East, a part of the city where conflict mixed with the inhabitants' unstoppable determination to progress: Iztapalapa. Erected on dry, nitrate-saturated soil, the only remaining vestige of an old lake, this dormitory city was rapidly colonized by people who have taken on a new identity. In their daily battle for space and survival, Iztapalapa inhabitants have been the prize for professional careerists and manipulators of every political stripe. However, their





struggles have borne fruit: every day they get more and better services, they build more walls for their homes and seek places to meet that do not end in conflicts and disagreements, but in an opportunity for dialogue, like The Lighthouse.

The story seems simple: among the Faithful, there was an architect, Alberto Kalach, who remembered that there was an unfinished building that had been planned as a headquarters for a burrough sub-station. Abandoned for eight years after the foundations were laid, the place had become an enormous garbage dump, a den for criminals and a symbol of the never-ending struggle for improving living conditions. The proposal was to use this site, have a positive impact and return the space to the inhabitants who had never been informed of what was supposed to be built there: some thought it was to have been a jail.

With the support they needed, the Faithful got the resources to finish the building and

adapt it for its new mission: being a factory of arts and trades, a place to provide jobs, begin productive chains. That is, where culture would not only be an instrument for developing creative qualities but also for producing objects for sale.

The building itself is a manifesto of this alternative vision. It looks like a ship, moored at its lighthouse, as a reminder of a city on a lake, lost many years ago. It had to be rugged, without ornament, made of concrete, that would scare no one away.

The Faithful took advantage of the experience of young people who in different parts of the world have dubbed themselves “cultural invaders” of abandoned public spaces, turning them into areas of free expression for artists who have no place in the new global village. That was where the recommendation came from to turn over The Lighthouse’s outer walls to 150 graffiti artists, the crème de la crème



of the Neza Arte Nel organization.¹ But this was not populism: the kids had to sit down and discuss an artistic concept before getting their hands on the walls. For 100 days, with no cops to interrupt them, the new muralists covered the walls with their own homage to the dead Texcoco Lake, with the *axolotl*, animal of legend and former millennium-long inhabitant of its waters, as a unifying factor.

Inside, the building does not frighten you away either; it is conceived to give the feeling of spaciousness with a minimum of materials and elements; its three-story-high roof allows you to go up two levels without ever losing sight of the lower floors. Even in the library, located at one end of the building-boat, the books are piled up to the ceiling. Everyone can freely circulate everywhere.

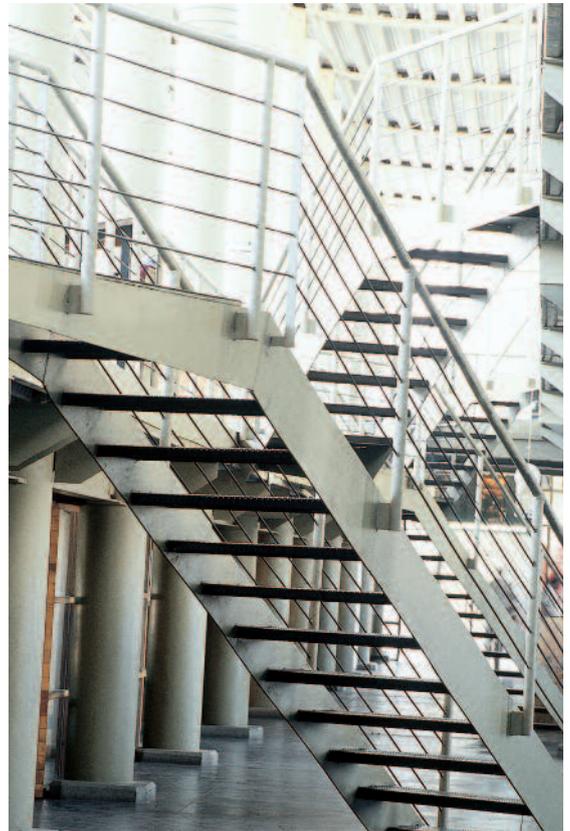


THE JAIL IS OUTSIDE

Since it opened its doors in June 2000, The Lighthouse is a space for liberating the sens-

es, for creating objects that not only express concerns and needs, but also promise a future that, outside, is jailed. So, entering is no problem; it is a place for everyone: neighbors and navigators from the city who want to come to hear voices different from the everyday voices, many voices that tell their stories with their hands. One thing is clear at The Lighthouse: gang youths, outside irreconcilable enemies, leave hostility and belligerence at the door, to remember together that they confront a common enemy: rejection and marginalization that inhibit the expression of their human spirit.

Once the doors to the inside were open, they started with a theater. Fifty young people who had never trod a stage, led by Commander Jesusa Rodríguez, Mexico's theatrical personality with the most proposals in recent decades, produced *El Fuego* (Fire) in four months, with their own scenery and costumes. In addition to performances in The Lighthouse, the work was shown in another theater in the city and has traveled as far as Real de Catorce, San Luis Potosí, outside Mexico City. Then, from



other parts of the city and country, a cascade of other Faithful became part of the project with different trades and crafts commanding more than 20 workshops, among them: installation art, poetry, performance art, engraving, *alebrijes* (fantastic paper-mâché animals), wood carving, hand-made paper, sculpting, silk screening, design and photography. Teaching methods are informal, the meeting of the creator with his/her disciples in a workshop; master artisans training apprentices. It is very demanding; the idea is not to come to pass the time of day, but to learn a trade or craft that in the future will also help to satisfy material needs.

Two years is a very short time to start all this, but the ship has been launched and many other projects are planned: among them, a nursery, the compost workshop, finishing the sandbox and playground for the neighborhood children. The surrounding area has changed also; the park to one side of the factory has been remodeled by the burrough government. It is the beginning of an awareness that we all deserve to open our windows to a friendly urban space.

The resources still come from city hall, which is not always in the hands of people who support revolutionary projects like this one. But, the idea is for those involved to do their own fund raising and become self-supporting to a certain extent and recruit a lot more Faithful who can help to open other lighthouses in other parts of the city, to destroy even more of those jails out there. **MM**

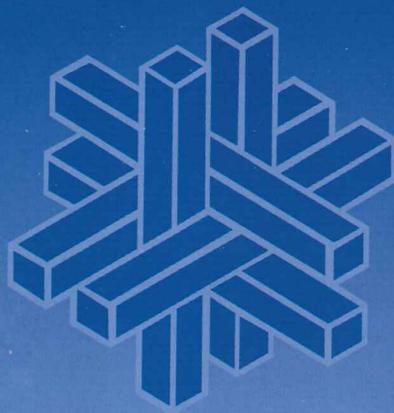
Elsie Montiel
Editor

NOTES

¹“Neza” is short for Nezahualcōyotl, an enormous suburb on the outskirts of Mexico City, traditionally known as a poor, turbulent area; and “nel” is a slang word corresponding roughly to “nope” or “no way”. So the name of this group means roughly, Nezahualcōyotl Art, No Way. [Translator’s Note.]

EL FARO DE ORIENTE
CALZ. IGNACIO ZARAGOZA S/N
COL. FUENTES DE ZARAGOZA
PHONE: 5738-7443





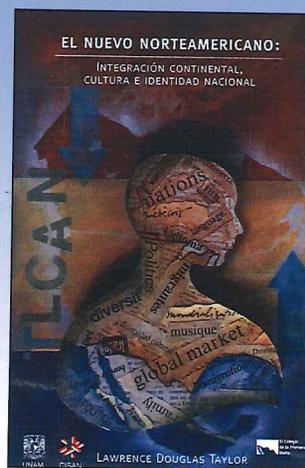
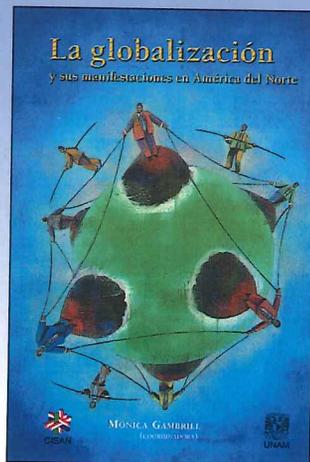
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p u b l i c a t i o n s

La globalización y sus manifestaciones en América del Norte

Mónica Gambrell, comp.

In light of the importance of globalization today, scholars from different countries have contributed articles to this book about issues that it affects: the economy, political power, NAFTA, the labor market, drug trafficking, the environment, the judicial branch of government and cultural industries.



El nuevo norteamericano: integración continental, cultura e identidad nacional

Lawrence Douglas Taylor

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Rosío Vargas Suárez,
Remedios Gómez Arnau
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This work seeks to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the future of the three countries' relations by delving into both current and historical issues: trade integration, drug trafficking and migration, as well as other topics more recently included on the agenda like human rights, democracy and national security.



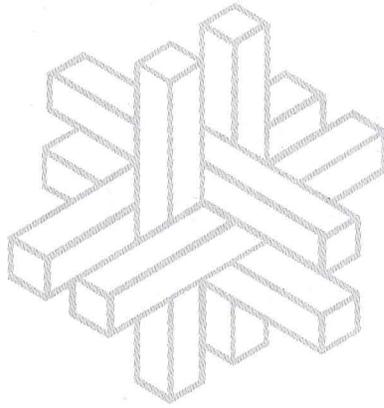
Desde el Sur. Visiones de Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina a principios del siglo XXI, vol. 1

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla,
Germán Pérez Fernández del Castillo
and Remedios Gómez Arnau,
compilers

In this volume, Latin American specialists bring their own perspective to a broad spectrum of theoretical, political, social, economic and cultural issues in the United States, including federalism, foreign policy, national defense and security, the environment and the impact of globalization.

For further information contact:

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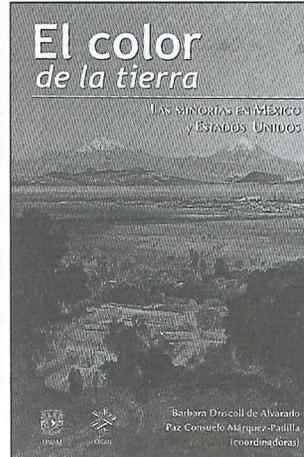
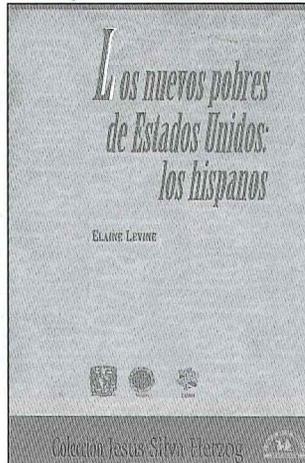
CISAN

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

Los nuevos pobres de Estados Unidos: los hispanos

Elaine Levine

Since the 1980s, Hispanics in the United States, compared with other groups, have dropped back socio-economically in three overall areas: the labor market, the educational system and social security. This book looks at and analyzes this deterioration and its underlying causes.



El color de la tierra. Las minorías en México y Estados Unidos

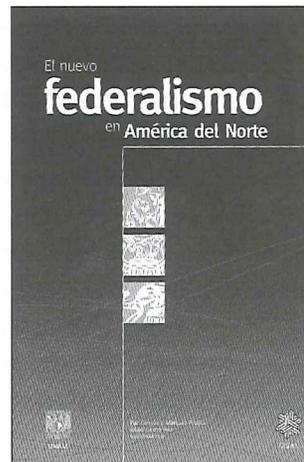
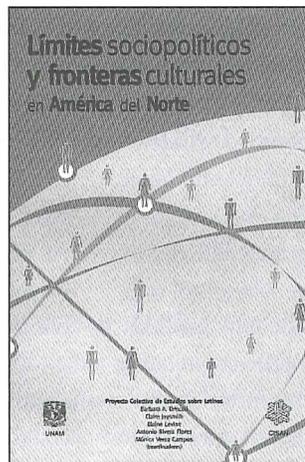
Barbara Driscoll de Alvarado and Paz Consuelo Márquez-Padilla, compilers.

This work looks at diversity from different perspectives: in particular, it deals with the construction of the Afro-American identity and the struggles of this group, the implementation of public policies in support of minority groups and the obstacles to their equal integration into all facets of life in Mexico and the U.S.

Límites sociopolíticos y fronteras culturales en América del Norte

Barbara A. Driscoll, Claire Joysmith, Elaine Levine, Antonio Rivera and Mónica Vereá, compilers.

A multidisciplinary group of Mexican and foreign specialists study the growing presence of the Latino community in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the United States.



El nuevo federalismo en América del Norte

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla and Julián Castro Rea, compilers.

This book explores the origins, successes and contemporary dilemmas of the federal system in Mexico, Canada and the United States. In brief, the book looks at the factors that have an impact on federalism in North America today and recent trends in its transformation.

Forthcoming:

Globalidad y conflicto, Estados Unidos y la crisis de septiembre. Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI. Desde el sur. Visiones sobre Estados Unidos y Canadá desde América Latina, vols. 2 y 3.

The International System Trapped by Its Past Repeating What It Forgets

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*



Pool/Reuters



Win McNamee/Reuters

The three main protagonists on the world scene after September 11.

The consequences of recent events in the United States—including the most serious attack ever suffered by a Western country in times of peace, attacks that shook the entire world—are still unclear and difficult to pinpoint in the long term of world history. They also left a lot of thinking to be done. The 9/11 attacks left the international system circumscribed even more clearly to a complex dynamic with little room for manoeuvre. We also encounter important elements that should be taken into account in defining the world's new issues. Among them: a) the historic relationship between globality and conflict; b) the lack of a balance of power and the preeminence of a single pole of power; c) the non-definition of the relationship of order to justice; d) the absence of interna-

tional institutionalization in accordance with the times; e) the conflict with regard to the civilizing mandate; f) regional instability as a new focus of conflict; and g) the absence of self-criticism regarding our relations with the United States. I will try to develop some of these elements.

I.

The new globality did not bring with it new ways of resolving or conciliating old problems that the Cold War left to the international system and the world. From the seventeenth century and probably from the time of the Renaissance, an overriding principle for preserving “order” in a chaotic, anarchic international system, particularly in Europe and later in the rest of the world, was the “balance of power.”

* Director of the CISAN.

This principle was at its zenith during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a response to the problem of order in the European system and became a centerpiece for the definition of international policies and theory. Realists, idealists, neo-realists, Marxists, post-modernists and structuralists all conceived of this principle not only as a pillar of the international system but also as a guarantee of each country's internal stability. It is a historic fact that war and conflict have accompanied this principle in its chaotic journey, which certainly has not been able to guarantee international order, an international order subjected to the hard facts of the struggle for power and the prevalence of hegemonic aspirations that come from the very center of the international system itself, with no apparent solution and increasingly with critical problems as new as they are unresolved. To a great degree, this makes for the need to rethink the international system and the role that the state and the weight of politics have or should have in the solution of the crises that the system accumulates and does not resolve as diligently as was originally thought.

II.

If the balance of power has not guaranteed order, this is probably due to a contradiction of origin that Martin Wight points to when he says that balancing is comparing weights. The word "balance" has completely lost its meaning of equilibrium.¹ In effect, it would seem that the problem is one of the distribution of force and power on a global and regional level. Without

force there can be no order or security. Without order and security, force cannot be acquired or exercised. Thus, force and its use in the international system is a permanent factor present in the process itself in which it materializes and becomes ongoing. Force in the name of order can condense both force and order at the same time. In this analysis, a policy of balance of power (following Nicholas Spykman)² is, in the first place, a policy for the great powers. Unless they can join together successfully, small states are only "weights" (known as "buffer states") on a scale used by others.

Thus, force can be countered to the extent that its exercise loses the equilibrium that would give order its reason for being. The end of the Cold War abolished with the stroke of a pen the precarious equilibrium that maintained order through a fragile regimen. When the Soviet domain came to an end and its area of hegemony fell apart, fundamentally in Europe, the classical bipolar exercise of power began to disappear and the factors of international power changed substantially, voiding old arrangements that—for better or worse— aided in containing some regional and international conflicts that identified in some way with the objectives and sense of one of the two power blocs. A vacuum was created that had been filled in the past by short-term—if negative— solutions that continue to be polemical today. It is paradoxical that in the war against the Soviets, the Taliban who controlled Afghanistan and presumably an international terrorist network such as the world had never seen, were praised by Reagan as freedom fighters and, of course, supported by the U.S. government in order to beat Moscow in its war of interven-

tion. It was, if not a negotiated solution between the two powers, who did sometimes come to good agreements, an exacerbation of "the other." The Soviets accepted the defeat and Washington obtained territory and access to significant resources, without thinking that it was an arrangement that would backfire mightily, as we see today. The force with which Washington achieved relative order in time and effectiveness was the force—in its most grotesque expression—with which it was responded to on September 11: it was the force used by fundamentalist messianism that broke the precarious order maintained until now with little sense of history.

The past was forgotten and repeated in its worst form, perhaps to ensure that nothing remains the same in the international order, perhaps to inaugurate a new stage of domination and therefore of conflict that could include the exercise of a new single U.S. pole, but now with a more profound messianic meaning: in the struggle of good against evil, the absence of the real "other," and therefore, the symbolic construction of the apparent—and usually non-existent—"other," will more than ever be necessary as a reason of state. The absence of the Soviet challenge left the United States and the world alone face-to-face with themselves in the midst of a new form of theological rhetoric that has always permeated Washington's evaluation of reality and decision making. We should note that given this situation, the international community has not provided itself with realistic institutional mechanisms with which to even partially recover the precarious equilibrium that the existence of two superpowers offered.

III.

The Russian philosopher Mijail Bajtin says, “When we look at each other, two different worlds are reflected in our pupils.”³ This is about placing value on difference from the standpoint of similarity, and of the risk involved in not assuming it with a sense of history. The United States has almost always been an insular nation. Its governments have imposed theological meaning on their policies. There are the theology of security, the theologies of democracy, of free trade, of the market, etc. The civilizing notion of the world goes hand in hand with the exceptional opinion it has of itself and its sense of mission. As Gertrude Stein said, it is the oldest nation in the world because it was the first modern one. It is a nation, in brief, with great power for construction and destruction, and even though it sometimes has a provincial view of the world, it is technologically, economically and systemically very modernized.

Nevertheless, the concept of dominant civilization prevailing in the West has been constructed in the United States with great mastery. The conflict—which becomes a tragedy—has been conceived with an ability seldom seen and the U.S. ability to overcome has been evident. I agree with several recent analyses that say that despite the messianic content of its discourse and action, the United States has become a power that has maintained domestically—and has transferred to many other nations—a complex society in permanent movement and economic and political growth. It is a society that has successfully magnified the highest values of liberal democracy. By contrast and to the detriment of its allies including Mexico, its generally

polemical foreign policy is today facing the destructive power of a concept of civilization that is in the extreme minority like Islamic fundamentalism, which has betrayed the essence of the message of the Koran and its prophet Mohammed, the highest values of whose faith were peace, reconciliation, respect and forgiveness. This is why it is debatable that the answer to the attacks on New York and Washington be followed by a discourse with dual content, leaving to one side the fact that what really matters in this process of recovery of the precarious world order is the new international legality, accompanied by a true re-institutionalization of international bodies that give meaning to the regulations upon which the resolution of conflicts must be based.

The new globality did not bring with it new ways of resolving or conciliating old problems that the Cold War left to the world.

A new international legal system in accordance with the times. In this respect, the United States bears an enormous historic responsibility.

IV.

It is true that the international community never managed to establish a comprehensive order in the post-Cold War world. The absence of the other opponent weighed too heavily. The lack of a counterpart that could avert and, to a certain extent, contain the polarization of regional crises weighed too heavily. The weight of the obligation and the duty of the powers were shunt-

ed to one side. Today, the deadly air attacks in the United States and the different consequences of U.S. retaliations and the probable response by Islamic fundamentalists bring us face-to-face with a new precariousness that could be long and unpredictable. For that reason, the criminal attacks force us to rethink and resolve the paradoxes of the international system to thus aid in resolving the paradoxes and contradictions of the system and the regional systems in a way that allows us to achieve mechanisms to come to solutions appropriate to sovereign national states. We might think that the declaration of a “holy war” would sink the world into a stage of uncertainty and pain. Nevertheless, as scholars of this subject, I think it is necessary to insist

on the development of diagnostic analyses that can enrich the explanations of the new international order at this critical global juncture.

V.

Lastly, it is necessary to mention a few considerations about “anti-Americanism” and the future of U.S. foreign policy in our region.⁴ In the first place, the time has come to make a self-criticism of the intellectual tradition that has predominated in Mexico and Latin America when analyzing relations with the United States. This must be done recognizing that our

national and hemispheric realities are fundamentally our own responsibility, the result of the historic decisions that those governing our countries have made and of the societies that have accepted those decisions. The new U.S. economic and political interventionist propensity that began in 1954 when it overthrew the legitimate government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala has been possible thanks to the by-no-means-subtle submissiveness of the national political classes. In Guatemala, palace-coup-leader General Castillo Armas was supported by the United Fruit Company and the State Department as well as by Guatemala's military, ecclesiastic and business elites who saw the modernization begun by Arbenz as a threat to their enormous,

monic interests negotiate, considering its counterpart's dominant national interests and not from a stance of argumentative belligerence that does not offer practical solutions to the main national problems and those of the bilateral relationship.

Certainly, by definition, intellectuals must be critical, but it is not valid to take refuge in this exercise to justify vacuous thinking with no proposals, lacking in political imagination. The danger is that antiamericanism can be just as simplistic and conservative as anticommunism was in the McCarthy era. Instead of referring always to what is "politically correct" beyond any shadow of a doubt and being subject to, as the poet Vicente Huidobro would say, "the slavery of the slogan," what we

the light of consensus and the participation of the national actors, then balance sheets can be drawn and responsibilities established. South Korea, a classical reference point for analyzing the Mexican case, managed to effectively implement macro- and micro-economic measures to rebuild and consolidate its national industry, generate production of its own technological inputs for export and move forward successfully in the context of a development model that was very similar to Mexico's. Why does Mexico not do the same? This is a question that we must respond to ourselves before seeking the solution beyond the Rio Grande. In practice, September 11 has become a historic opportunity for trying to critically review Mexican antiamericanism. It is also an opportunity to implement proposals that will lead us not only to completely understand our relationship with the United States, but also to reformulate the terms of that relationship. Mexico's modernization strategy will necessarily be the preamble for making this possible. **MM**

The concept of dominant civilization prevailing in the West has been constructed in the United States with great mastery.

corrupt political and economic interests. The United States is a world power that has never hidden its interest in hegemony. Why, then, would it aspire to turning it into a dove of peace? At the same time, understanding all our problems in the light of a neocolonial critique is a regrettable strategic error that plunges the intelligentsia and society into a perverse circle of self-complacency that eventually undermines the substance of the national project, which is that of having clear ideas about how to successfully carry out plans for economic development and the modernization of politics. In addition, this would also have to be the way in which U.S. hege-

need is to come up with ways to modernize our political and economic institutions to eradicate corruption, electoral fraud, unhealthy practices by the national business community, unions of all kinds and political parties, and many other national vices. Although there are historic reasons for antiamericanism, the United States is not responsible for those decisions that, for example, have irresponsibly delayed economic development and political modernity due to our political and economic underdevelopment. An economic model of its own and an efficient political system with checks and balances, such as the United States has, is the challenge of all societies. Once this is achieved in

NOTES

¹ Martin Wight, "The Balance of Power," Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Relations* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966).

² Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1942).

³ Mijail Bajtin, *Yo también soy (Fragmentos sobre el Otro)* (Mexico City, Taurus, 2000), p. 33.

⁴ About this, see Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism. Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Comparing EU and U.S. Foreign Policies after 9/11

María Eugenia Mesta Espinosa*
Simone Lucatello**



Photos by Lary Downing/Reuters

Left: The U.S. national security team. **Right:** Colin Powell and Javier Solana. Friends forever?

After September 11, the U.S. government cautioned us that the war against terrorism would be long, without respite and that it would use all means at its disposal; and that is how it has been up until now. The U.S. war has begun a new phase characterized by increasing unilateralism, the result of which has been the irritation of its European allies and the weakening of the international coalition against terrorism.

After the events of 9/11, the U.S. perception of the European Union as a single, unified actor seems to have deepened. This is indicated in the constant communication

between U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Javier Solana, high representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Solana has congratulated himself that Powell knew what number to dial when he wanted to call Europe, paraphrasing Henry Kissinger's famous question.

Solana and Powell have developed a close relationship since last autumn's crisis. In the beginning, the Europeans maintained a united front expressing their solidarity with the United States in its fight against terrorism. At the same time the Americans have seen how useful European diplomacy can be. Tony Blair and his foreign minister, Jack Straw, worked intensely to reinforce the international coalition in support of the United States. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his foreign minister, Joschka Fis-

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cher, also carried out resolute diplomatic activities, especially by organizing the November 27 meeting of Afghan leaders in Bonn that resulted in the naming of the interim government.

However, with the passing months, tensions have arisen between the European Union and the United States, which seems to be giving in to the overwhelming temptation to extend the war to other regions. In his State of the Union address January 29, President Bush mentioned the possibility of a fight against what he called the “Axis of Evil” (North Korea, Iran and Iraq). Though this rhetoric is more for domestic consumption, the message is also directed at his Western allies, the Europeans, indicating the kind of behavior expected, giving them the option of participating by following this line or facing down more U.S. unilateralism.¹

A qualitative change in the U.S. and European Union international agendas can be observed over the last six months; they have gone from a honeymoon period to a new phase of friction in bilateral relations with regard to anti-terrorist cooperation. The main tensions have arisen about the following issues:

- a) The aims and means of the anti-terrorist war and the definition of the concept of security itself as well as its practical boundaries;
- b) Differences in how to deal with the Middle East problem;
- c) Migratory policies and human rights.

President Bush’s decision to point a finger at Irak, Iran and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil” is the result of the weighing of possible candidates for future military objectives in a broader

war, including countries like Somalia, Indonesia, Philippines and Egypt, countries with presumed terrorist networks, some of them linked to Al Qaeda. The selection of the countries in the “Axis of Evil” has put Europe in a difficult position. On the one hand, pursuing international objectives in the Washington mode, particularly with regard to Irak and Iran, would contradict the kind of very “European” policies based on negotiation, engagement and development, a policy that also includes the establishment of trade relations. On the other hand, refusing to follow the U.S. lead would mean that Europe would have to accept growing unilateralism and run the risk of fracturing

the international coalition and even threatening relations with the Americans.² In the end, the element of commitment for both parties could be geopolitical interest and concern for energy resources in areas like the Middle East, given that U.S. unilateralism could lead to its being the only one to exploit oil resources in the area. These are resources Europe depends on greatly, and therefore it cannot allow ideological positions to come before its participation in geo-politically strategic regions.

The gap between the two regions widened during the annual conference on security in Munich in early February 2002, where European legislators and heads of security expressed their re-

servations about the Pentagon and Bush administration orientation. At that meeting, what could be called the “Rumsfeld Doctrine” began to emerge, proposing the creation of a stronger and more flexible U.S. fighting force capable of waging war in the twenty-first century, using any method within its grasp, without rules or ethical considerations, including pre-emptive strikes against any objective it picked.³

At the same time, the Europeans have expressed concern about the unprecedented increase in U.S. military technology spending. This means that in the near future, the United States could carry out military campaigns relegating the Europeans to mere observer status

With the passing months, tensions have arisen
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to extend the war to other regions.

or, in the best of cases, being multinational peace-keeping forces. NATO General Secretary Lord Robertson’s comment is illustrative: he said that transatlantic solidarity could disappear if “the Americans do the cutting edge while the Europeans are stuck at the bleeding edge; if the Americans fight from the sky while the Europeans fight in the mud.”⁴

The discussion centers on the already marked differences about the way of conceiving security and defense measures. For a long time now, the European Union has maintained that the main way of defending itself is for countries considered potential trouble spots to achieve development, not

through the exercise of enormous military budgets. This principle has characterized the discussion about the National Missile Defense System, or space shield, and the validity of the ABM Treaty. The European Union considers that a reduction of weapons of mass destruction, together with development programs for countries in economic difficulties, would have a more positive impact on world peace. However, for some analysts, precisely the fact that the European Union lacks a high-impact military structure limits its being heard or taken seriously in Washington power circles.

Both the European Union and the United States have toughened up their immigration policies, at the same time that mistrust of racial and religious minorities, particularly Arabs and Muslims, has increased.

Despite this, even after September 11, education and health spending continue to be considered the priority in the European Union. That is why the military budget has been kept low, while in the United States, the attacks prompted a massive increase in military spending. The next U.S. defense budget will total U.S.\$379 billion, representing three percent of the gross domestic product. The U.S.\$49 billion hike given the Pentagon is more than the defense budget of most NATO members combined. Only France and Great Britain spend two percent of GDP on this item.⁵

Another element of friction has been the U.S. perception that countries like Iran, Irak, Libya or Cuba represent a potential danger. The European Union, for its part, perhaps with the excep-

tion of Great Britain, had tried to establish more harmonious relations with countries that they do not consider a serious threat to world peace. For that reason it tried to foster cooperation and economic-trade relations with their governments, while the United States insisted on considering them dangerous states, shoring up its policies of non-negotiation and sanctioning countries that decided to establish links with them.⁶ The simple fact of Bush's declarations considering Iran, Irak and North Korea the "Axis of Evil" seems to indicate the heightening of the already existing tensions between the European

Union and the United States around this issue.

Based on certain recently emerging differences, many observers in the United Kingdom and the United States have expressed their concern about the possibility that the objective of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy is to create a counterweight to U.S. hegemony. While some politicians, particularly in France, perceive it as anti-American, other European leaders have never shared that view. This dual perception generates ambiguity and sometimes confusion in Washington. The case of the Middle East is an example of this.

Although the State Department knows perfectly well that European Union diplomacy could play an important role in attempts to facilitate

relations between Israel and Palestine, the U.S.'s open support for Israel makes it impossible to create the necessary bases for establishing a balanced dialogue for peace.

In effect, the two region's policies on this issue tend to be opposed: the European Union is the main source of financing for the Palestine authorities and in addition recognizes Yasser Arafat as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In contrast, the most recent speeches by members of Bush's cabinet question whether Arafat is the ideal representative of the Palestinians and place the blame for the current wave of violence in Israel on the shoulders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization leader, excusing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for his confrontational policies.

On the other hand, both the European Union and the United States have toughened up their immigration policies, at the same time that mistrust of racial and religious minorities, particularly Arabs and Muslims, has increased among the populations of both regions. Talks about a migratory accord between the United States and Mexico, for example, were suspended to later be reopened with certain caution. On the European side, in addition to the intensification of border controls, an agreement was reached about the creation of a "European arrest warrant," which would take the place of the current system of extradition among member countries, a measure that would allow one nation to directly hand over individuals sought by judicial authorities in another.

Another reason for tension between the two regions is related to respect for human rights. While in theory both have similar positions, their application

differs: this means that certain practices, like the death penalty, the treatment of the Taliban prisoners in Guantánamo and U.S. refusal to recognize them as prisoners of war, etc., tend to create conflicts in the European-U.S. coalition. In addition, inaccuracies during the bombings and the irremediable civilian casualties or “collateral damage” concerns European civil society and cause more internal pressures that will lead to differences in this year of presidential elections in France and Germany.

Despite certain tensions between the two regions over the definition of the term “security,” as well as the

aims and means in the anti-terrorist fight, the differences could be resolved if the Europeans make concessions in order to protect geo-strategic interests, which would probably lead the United States to limit its unilateral policies. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Just like the original name of the campaign, “Infinite Justice,” the term “Axis of Evil” has not been particularly fortunate and has increased frictions with the U.S.’s Western allies, as well as the rejection of the peoples it describes.

² Antony J. Blinken, “A Wake-Up Call to Friends to Be Hard on Rogues,” *International Herald Tribune*, 6 February 2002.

³ Bill Berkowitz, “Let Them Eat Guns,” *Working for Change*, 10 February 2002 (www.workingforchange.com).

⁴ Joseph Fitchett, “Pentagon in a League of Its Own,” *International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2002.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ They did this through the application of extraterritorial laws like the Iran-Libya Sanction Act and the Helms-Burton Act.

NUEVA ÉPOCA NÚM. 18 MARZO DE 2002



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DEL 20 AL 24 DE MAYO

Visible Minorities In Canadian Literature

Mayra Eleonora Inzunza Sánchez*



Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León

CANADIANS, BECAUSE THEY ARE OF SO MANY COLOURS,
ARE ESSENTIALLY COLOURLESS,
IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE WORD.
Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions*.

When talking about the literature of visible minorities in Canada, we cannot yet refer to a body of literary work. What exists is a collection of authors who are considered members of minorities because of their native ancestors or their foreign origin or —compli-

cating the distinctions— because of their contact with them (note the multitude of connotations of the word Indian). More general patterns have yet to be defined. That is, a particular world view exists, but it is difficult to differentiate it from the rest of Canadians, when Canada as a nation is characterized by its cultural pluralism with its different resulting hybrids and heterotexts.

With the conflict of national identity that Canada is experiencing, the general patterns that would help us recognize the cultural production of its inhabitants originating from there are scarce. Elements like the vast expanses of space, its cold climate, hockey, the new feminism, a profoundly reflexive character, the constant presence of na-

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ture, its abundant resources and menacing forces tell us little about the diversity of ethnic groups, races and languages that make up this nation.

So, one of the challenges Canada faces in this millennium is consolidating its national identity. It has been sought in the supposed constants in its different manifestations of art, among them literature. Here, up until now, two more or less hegemonic cultural categories have predominated. I am referring to the Quebecois and the Anglophones, representatives of white political supremacy, with its resulting racism, manifest in the appropriation of the discourses that they themselves legitimize and in which the so-called “visible minorities” barely count.

In my attempt to approach the authentic Canadian aesthetic, I face the increasingly complex problem of the impossibility of putting Francophones and Anglophones together in the same category. The two traditions diverge, not to mention that many Quebecois motifs like Catholicism and family disfunction are barely or completely unrelated to this Anglo-Saxon exploration of the darkness of human relations when day-to-day living has become rarified thanks to the technological imperative. More than being almost diametrically opposed to each other, this stylistic dialectic is complicated by the presence of many other poetical variants, whether aboriginal or racial: the literature of the minority groups, from aspects as determining as the language in which they are written. This is what makes them “visible,” since they differ physically and culturally. Given that in Canada, different communities occupy common spaces —when the first nations are

not confined to reservations— the inclusion of both native and immigrant visible minorities becomes important to the development of Canadian letters.

In principle it is possible to identify common traits among Anglophone and Francophone writing in the work of authors like Himanni Bannerji, Dionne Brand, Ian Iqbal Rashid and M. Nourbese.¹ In their work is also found—to cite just a couple of cases—nature in its different manifestations and that “fortress mentality” that is so often used to describe being Canadian. Nevertheless, in the literature of visible minorities, landscape, so important for the two dominant cultural groups, is neither beautiful nor does it move anyone to thought, but rather suggests a threat: snow appears as something oppressive. One does not take refuge from a climate (more cruel when one is from the tropics, for example), one protects one’s self-esteem. And, as Christl Verduyn has said:

for many Canadians, “the place of imagination” is, as the title of Dionne Brand’s recent novel suggests, “in another place, not here”. There exist, thus, disjunctions between place and identity, place and culture, between nation and imagination that are of consequence when discussing Canadian identity.²

It could be ventured that works like those by Afro-Canadians—for example, the Afro-French—could hardly be described as creating a school in and of themselves since, in addition to there being few authors in this category, they relate events that concern very few people, the minori-

ties. These minorities must either mature as the Chicanos did in the United States, broadening out their unifying vision at the same time that they preserve their culture and join it to the other, or they will be condemned to extinction. However, the opposite argument could be made after simply reading Louise Halfe’s new book; the reverent attention she pays to the voices of her Cree ancestors has led her to sing an epic through which she seems to pay tribute to the origins of all of Canada: the protagonists of *Blue Marrow* (1998) include aboriginal or native people, explorers who came to the continent to trade in furs, the Jesuit colonizers and even the Métis, whose identity is questioned by the Constitution itself because it apparently does not recognize them. I say that it suffices to read these poems of Louise Halfe to confirm how the literature that has been called “minority” literature is very visible and, contrary to what is commonly thought, is outstanding for its power to include and for skill that is by no means minor.

SNOW ON THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

The essential theme of Canadian studies is identity. Its two basic questions would be, “Who are we?” and “How do the parts relate to each other and to the sum of the parts?” These questions could apply to the analysis of discourses like literature to start off with individual histories and infer the role of the social actor. We would then be confronted with an ambiguous, complex and multiple aesthetic impression: that the two more or less dominant cultural categories (Anglo-Saxon and Quebecois,

not to mention French), express a unified conception in crisis when faced with the emergence of other voices. And the question that we still have to come to grips with, in the words of critic and poet Himanni Bannerji “is much more than cultural or historical. It is one of the power — ‘the power to define what is Canada or Canadian Culture’.”³

This same author also suggests that an examination of texts written by non-Anglo-or-Quebecois Canadians conjures images of fear, imprisonment and oppression: “Depending on one’s social location, the same snow on the Canadian landscape... can seem near or far, disturbing, threatening or benign.”⁴ This very negative imaginary is denounced in Ian Iqbal Rashid’s *The Heat Yesterday* and the works by Selena Amati and Hiren Mistry, or in the collection of letters, *Sharing Our Experiences*, whose editor, Arun Murkheje, in “Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Literature and Racial Minority Women,” explains that, “If Canada is ‘enemy territory’ for Brand’s black female narrator and prison for Bannerji’s poetic persona, it is occupied territory in the writing of aboriginal women.”⁵ This kind of claustrophobia contradicts the image of the Canadian nation — internationally accepted and, even more, promoted— as a “communion” of diversities living together in a shared territory. As the titles suggest, the threat is not so much nature with all the fury of a raped mother earth, but a racist society. This means that that recurring figure in the history of Canadian letters known as “the fortress mentality” stems from the need for self-protection in closed social circles, if not burrowing into oneself to the point of autism.

But it is also not enough to face the presumably hostile social, cultural and economic relations among the different groups. The exacerbated cult of ethnicity engenders antagonisms and polarizes the differences among races and nationalities, as well as leading to self-pity if not self-exclusion —there are cases like that of George Elliot Clarke who, despite the fact that his family has lived for decades in Nova Scotia, considers himself semi-Canadian and even, ironically, quasi-Canadian. Also, at times the notion of “Canadian” erroneously implies only the descendants of the pioneers who arrived during the nineteenth century. In *The Saga of the Fine-Toothed Comb*, James H. Grey points out how among Anglo-Saxons there have also been important differences and that they have also grouped together with the pretext of helping each other but with the aim of first excluding undesired others, whether they be English, Irish, Scots and even Poles. In this work, Grey writes:

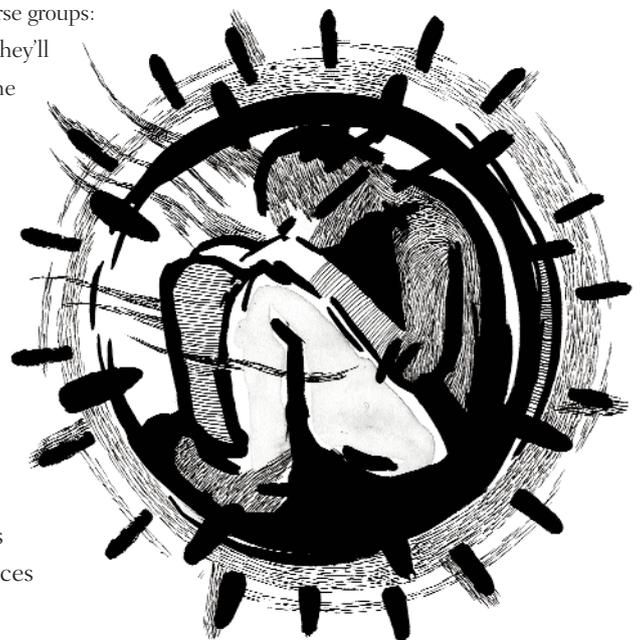
It was curious how one catch phrase was used by so many diverse groups: “Let one of them in and they’ll take over the place.” The Presbyterians used it against the Catholics, the Catholics used it against the Jews. The Irish and English used it against the Scots and all the Anglo-Saxons used it against all the aliens.⁶

This author also points here to language differences

and, in a funny comparison, argues that for Anglo-Saxons it is very difficult to learn the many languages in which school children like to insult each other: so, paradoxically, they are at a disadvantage because, while the newcomers very rapidly learn the obligatory English, the Anglophones can hardly compete against the other, practically inaccessible codes they are faced with.

ULYSSES WITHOUT ITHACA?

Migrant cultures that refused to be transient, both in their novels and short stories and in their poetry, immigrants show everything from uncertainty about the present to relief about having left behind a past full of aggression. In all their writing, ambition and nostalgia, lamentations and hopes appear with the same frequency: from their departure to their arrival and including the adaptation that makes improvement of their capabilities possible and the reflection about the new nationality that they have made their own, this is



the way many of their works develop, parallel to their personal history. For example, we can compare poetic pairs in verse like the following (both published in *Home and Homeland*):

...So I must remember. It cannot be hid

Nor hurried from. As long as there abides

No bitterness; only the lesson learned
And the habit of grace chosen, accepted
Home, we discover, is where life is
Not Manitoba's wheat
Ontario's walled cities
Nor a B.C. fishing fleet.

Home is something more than harbour—

Than father, mother, sons;

Home is the white face leaning over
your shoulder

As well as the darker ones.

Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
The hard doing, and the rest when done;
A wider sea than we knew, a deeper
heart,

A more enduring sun.

(From Dorothy Livesay, "Call My People Home")⁷

versus:

Hybrid

Of mythical roots

The soil of your motherland sticks on
your soles

A graft is forever a foreign body

That bears within the stigmata of origin....

You are what feeds you

You are what makes of your life

You are what you share

You are what you receive

Hybrid

Voyager from a universe out of time

A world that is no more and never was

You are moulded from the lost motherland

You are nourished by the chosen soil
Graft of a stateless life
Hybrid.

(From Jacqueline Barral, "The Immigrant")⁸

Or we can look at narrative passages like the following, both from Nell Hanna's "Where the Hearth Is":

Nicholas [the Deusch] was amazed. Everyone was laughing. Suddenly it struck him as funny too and he laughed more heartily than anyone. It was not so much the incident of the pie that seemed funny as the realization of the fact that he or anyone would start a rousing fight over so small a thing. That seemed completely ridiculous to him now, and he laughed again unrestrainedly, as if in relief, almost as if something dark and heavy had been lifted from his heart. —Poor Dutchy thinks it's funny— said someone as they all left the table.⁹

versus:

—Ah sure, I know. It was like that back ..., but you'll have to forget that now. This is O.K. You'll get to like it after a while. It's big and free. Free, Nick, you understand that, don't you? You told me yourself how it was in old Russia. Nobody'll ever take your land away here even if they give it to you for nothing, and lots of things like that. Look at the way all you folks built that grand church of yours and hold German services in it every Sunday. Nobody's going to stop you. You see we vote for our government here. You don't even know the word "vote" but you will when you take out your papers.

All you got to do is work, work like hell, maybe, but it is O.K. Say you don't know the national anthem yet ... Two lines specially I like. Now listen carefully. "Thou land of hope for those who toil—toil means work and work hard—Thou true north strong and free."¹⁰

C.D. Minni, in *Dollar Fever: the Diary of a Portuguese Pioneer*, confesses, "I am impressed by the size of this country. I have travelled such a great distance that I feel like Ulysses, lost."¹¹ Thus, just like the hero of Ithaca, the first dream of many immigrants seems to be to return to their native land, but they ended up staying, thus reaffirming their loyalty to a culture that is not just the civilization of their fathers that they left behind, but also that of the one they arrived to.

In *Being Brown*, Rosemary Brown alludes to Quebecois racism toward people with dark skin, particularly those from abroad. Her autobiography begins with her parents' decision to send her to Canada to study to avoid U.S. aggressions not only from WASPs but also from other non-Anglo groups toward Afro-Antilleans. But the young Jamaican girl would be rejected because of an attitude that, while cooler than that of U.S. Anglo-Saxons, is no less violent. Here, then, the trope of confinement, which leads to the creation of cultural imaginary different from the surroundings, is owed to being both Afro-Antillean and a woman.¹²

I will not deal here with distribution networks or explore the aesthetic misfortune that often precedes the development of almost any narrative school, that the speaker must first crank out edifying pamphlets fit for political campaigns to only later dis-



cover

little by little

his/her literary vocation.

But it should be told how those Latin American writers who were born or emigrated to the United States, or simply moved to the Anglo-Saxon part of their own country (this is the case of the Puerto Ricans), have had to affirm their presence through works that, even if of doubtful quality of style, have been useful—and I would almost say obligatory—in concretizing their own voice.

THE ABORIGINAL ROOTS

Literature with aboriginal roots expresses the intimate relationship between the First Peoples and nature and the most varied forms of inanimate life. Coming to a great extent out of the oral tradition, they often contain moral teachings to harmonize the links between the Native and his/her surroundings, whether real or metaphorical. Similar to other cultures like the Asians' in terms of their closeness to the land, the most recent version of this literature sometimes tends toward

a blurring
between life and art, letters and religion.

Aboriginal literature seems to have functioned as a link between the present and the past of their authors' situation, at the same time that many tribes have discovered that they are related because they share analogous beliefs. We could apply what Thomas King correctly noted about Harry Robinson and his story "An Okanagan Indian Becomes a Captive Circus Showpiece in England" to the thinking about literature written by Natives in general:

That is a fine example of interfusional literature, literature that blends the oral and the written. In a traditional oral story, you have the stories, the gestures, the performance, the music, as well as the storyteller. In a written story, you have only the word on the page. Yet Robinson is able to make the written word become the spoken word by insisting, through his use of rhythms, patterns, syntax, and sounds, that his story be read aloud, and in so doing, the reader becomes the storyteller.¹³

In addition, in authors like Jeanette Armstrong and Peter Blue Cloud,

we can clearly see Judeo-Christian scatology substituted by a conception that tends toward equilibrium and harmony. Sometimes contemporary-ness and traditions are combined as co-existing realities in a spiritual—if not magical—present; the resulting atemporality suggests a profound communion between beings and things and especially among individuals, and goes beyond the cohesion of the nuclear family, something rare in Anglo-Saxon authors, and also beyond the reservations. This is what happens in the novels of Joan Crate.¹⁴ Although today's problematic condition of the Métis also cannot be eluded, the personification of the forces of nature and the propensity to abstraction while weaving fables survive, as can be seen in the work of Maurice Kenny.¹⁵ I think it pertinent to underline another aspect already sensed by Thomas King: the non-usefulness of traditional forms when the present is divorced, indifferent or even antagonistic to them; I am referring here to Beth Brant, Richard G. Green and Jordan Wheeler who

do not use traditional native characters, nor do they make use of elements from oral literature, or create a strong sense of Native community. Instead, these writers imagine Native people engaged in a broad range of activities which do not, in and of themselves, satisfy the expectations conjured up by the notion of "Indianness".¹⁶

Their respective stories (about the engagement of an aboriginal orphan woman to an Afro-Canadian, the sardonic hunt by a raven and a beach romance while surfing) are not very authentically indigenous by orthodox standards.

AESTHETICS IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

But orthodoxy is not a very viable approach to multicultural literature; it is better for us to read the mixture.

What is more, given that many poets and prose writers are becoming bilingual —like Spanish-speaking writers in the United States— they have created pan-Hispanic or pan-Native readerships, parallel to their fellow countrymen. So, they can be found in English, Spanish or French, translated or written in the original.

Just as an example, compare the following fragments from a writer whose ancestors emigrated from Calcutta to Trinidad and who has lived in Canada since 1973: Neil Bissoondath. Bissoondath opposed multiculturalism not because he was xenophobic or because he attempted to import the U.S. melting pot idea; he made a critique of it in the hope of its truly contributing to the construction of a pluralist society. So, in *Selling Illusions*, he writes:

the multiculturalism interests me rather as an official government policy and, more particularly, as a government-sanctioned mentality: as a way of looking at life and at the world; for the ways in which it shapes our sense of self and our place in human society.... I offer criticism as a way of contributing to the necessary discussion on the shaping of an increasingly unhappy and divided land.¹⁷

More recently, he wrote in his story "A Land Worth Loving" that

In the end, my passion for my country is not mine alone. It is a passion that devolves to my daughter and the future

is hers. Canada is a grand country, and it is that grandeur that I wish to leave to her: its beauties, its immensities, its incomparable diversities, diversities which include the duality that is her heritage from both her parents, for in her are blended white and brown, francophone and anglophone, native-born and naturalized.¹⁸

Thus, writing by visible minorities not only harbors their cultural heritages, but also communicates traditions. But there is no common style: the circle of readers has broadened out but the form has not become generalized. What is of interest here is the re-appropriation of their respective voices, the fact of not appreciating them through negation or as mere characters by Anglophones or Francophones, reduced to a stereotype no more uncommon because it is picturesque. Even so, a few traits distinguish them, such as their enormous strength, a result of the tension among the different presences that inhabit a single space.

The creations that are a product of minority experiences contain within themselves the promise of a communion: the aesthetic of a harmonious global village. **MM**

NOTES

¹ See particularly George Elliot Clarke, *Eyeing the North Star: Directions in African-American Literature* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997); Antonio D'Alfonso, *In Italics—In Defense of Ethnicity* (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 1996); Mordecai Richler, *The Great Comic Book Heroes and Other Essays* (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers/McClelland and Stewart, 1978); Marlene Nourbese Phillips, *She Tries Her Tongue* (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1989).

² Chrystl Verduyn, "Disjunctions: Place, Identity and Nation in Minority Literatures in

Canada," Caroline Andrew, Will Straw and J. Yvon Thériault, eds., *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens* (Montréal: Association d'Études Canadiennes, 1998), pp. 164-176.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁵ Arun Murkheje, ed., "Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Literature and Racial Minority Women," *Sharing Our Experiences* (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women/CACSW, 1993), p. 166. This council no longer exists.

⁶ James H. Grey, *The Saga of the Fine-Toothed Comb*, p. 91.

⁷ Dorothy Livesay, "Call My People Home," Peter Fanning and Maggie Goh, eds., *Home and Homeland. The Canadian Immigrant Experience* (Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley Publishers Limited and Rubicon Publishing Inc., 1993), p. 78.

⁸ Jacqueline Barral, "The Immigrant," Peter Fanning and Maggie Goh, op. cit., p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ C.D. Minni, *Dollar Fever: the Diary of a Portuguese Pioneer*, quoted in Peter Fanning and Maggie Goh, eds. op. cit., p. 61.

¹² For more on this, see the work of George Elliot Clarke, like *Eyeing the North Star: Directions in African-American Literature* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997) and, specifically, Makeda Silvera, ed., *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1995).

¹³ Thomas King, *All My Relations. An Anthology of Canadian Native Fiction* (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1990), p. xii.

¹⁴ A complete anthology that includes a representative sample of Canadian aboriginal women authors is *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1990).

¹⁵ About Inuit writers, see, for example, *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

¹⁶ Thomas King, op. cit., p. xv.

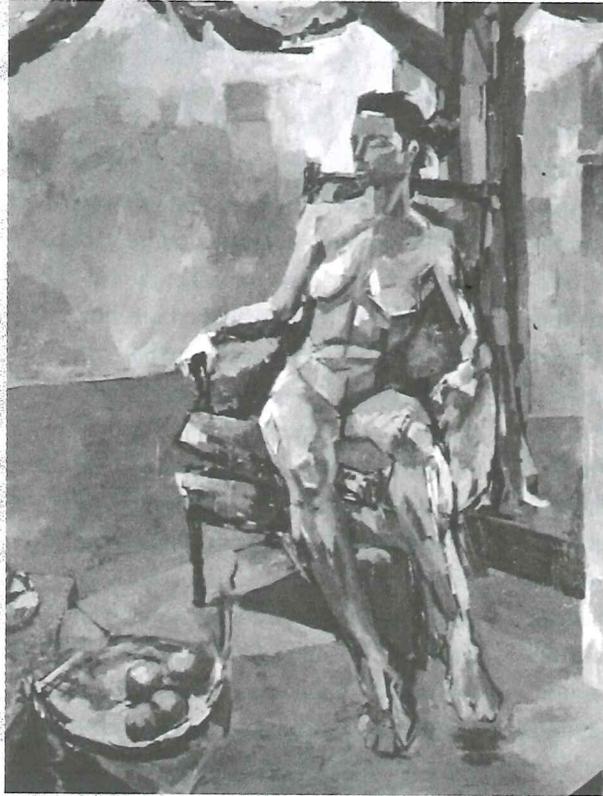
¹⁷ Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 7.

¹⁸ Thomas King, op. cit., p. 8.

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¿factores claves para la generación
y difusión del conocimiento?**

*Yenia Melo Hermosilla y
Abelardo Castro Hidalgo*

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The Reflection of a Surrealistic Life In Las Pozas de Xilitla

Jaime Abundis Canales*



Photos by Jaime Abundis

Floral Columns.

Eccentric, attractive, offensive, incredible, costly, extraordinary, free, senseless: these are just some of the adjectives used to describe Las Pozas, near Xilitla, a town in the San Luis Potosí Huasteca region. On the rugged southeastern side of the Xilitla Mountains, a part of the Sierra Madre Oriental range next to Querétaro's Sierra Gorda,¹ amidst the exuberant vegetation of indescribably beautiful scenery, the Augustinian hermit friars established a monastery on the little site of Xilitla in

the mid-sixteenth century, the nucleus of today's settlement.

Toward the bottom of the canyon on the northeastern edge of the town flows a little stream. On the banks of this stream, millionaire Edward James acquired a coffee-growing estate in 1948, where he would express his deepest feelings in one of the most expensive of ways. Visitors to the area have very different and contradictory reactions, but everyone is excited and surprised.

Edward Frank Willis James was born in Gullane, Scotland, August 16, 1907. His father, a U.S. businessman and landowner married

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the daughter of a Scots nobleman; they had five children, of whom Edward was the youngest and the only boy. The death at a young age of his father and his mother's desire to turn him into an aristocrat imbued with the values and aspirations of his class meant that James first went away to school at Eton and then to



Large Multicolored Flower.

Oxford. He showed inclinations toward literature, particularly poetry, rather than the politics or business favored by his mother. But, he also entered into the spirit of new philosophical trends espoused by the avant garde.

André Breton and Philippe Soupault wrote a series of texts together published under the name *Magnetic Fields* in 1920. These have been considered the main starting point for the surrealism that Breton formalized in 1924 with his *Surrealist Manifesto*. His followers tried to bring together the individual's external and internal realities in order to liberate his/her perceptive abilities and increase action, thereby generating an "over-reality" (*surréalité*). This proposal drew from what were then the novel ideas of Sigmund Freud about the subconscious and proposed the free expression of thought without the conventional ties or moral or aesthetic concerns. Different visual artists like René Magritte, Salvador Dalí, Wolfgang Paalen and Alice Rahon used these ideas to begin to express themselves in the direction indicated by Breton.

While he studied at Oxford and after a few attempts at poetry badly received by the critics, James was attracted by these ideas, particularly the so-called "critical-paranoid method" proposed by Dalí, before surrealism made its official debut in England at the June 1936 International Surrealist Exposition. On the death of his mother Evie in 1929, James inherited an enormous fortune and left Oxford shortly before graduating to live a creative life supporting visual artists and composers. His fascination for the surrealists increased and, just like them, he tried to reconstruct his reality, frequently flying in the face of established values. His failed marriage to the Austrian dancer Otilie (Tilly) Losch and fleeting funding of the Les Ballets 1933 company were followed by his beginning to collect art works during his constant travels through Europe and his patronage of new composers. By the end of his life, his painting collection was enormous. James met Dalí around 1934 and established a close

friendship and fruitful collaboration. Together they explored interior design in an attempt to “surrealize” daily life in James’ London residence and at his Monkton cottage in West Sussex. In 1939, James and Dalí went to New York to set up the Dream of Venus Pavilion at the World’s Fair; this would be their last project together. A year later, James moved to Taos and then to Los Angeles, where he would live for almost 30 years.

An old Oxford schoolmate invited James to take a vacation at his Mexican home in Cuernavaca. During his 1944 visit there, James met painter Leonora Carrington and telegraphist Plutarco Gastélum Esquer, a Yaqui Indian who would become his intimate friend and faithful companion. On a trip to look for a place to set up an orchid garden, the two went to Xilitla in 1945, where three years later James would buy the La Conchita estate and build a little hut there. James frequently traveled throughout the world, returning every year to Xilitla laden with orchids, exotic plants and wild animals to spend a few weeks with Gastélum and his family. His hobby of collecting animals prompted him to build cages and special spaces for them on the estate that he baptized Las Pozas because of the many pools that formed along the stream crossing the land.

An unexpected frost put an end to the orchids in Las Pozas, but also made James decide to create something that would resist the elements, house his beloved animals and allow him to continue “surrealizing” his fancies.

With the help of a few local masons and the carpenter José Aguilar, over a period of almost 10 years, James’ designs were turned into poured concrete structures that populated the forest and stream of Las Pozas. The sale of a few works from his art collection financed the enterprise. About 20 units and other isolated elements with such suggestive names as *Homage to Max Ernst*, *Column of the Stegosaur*, *Structure of Three Floors That Could Be Five*, *Door of Saint Peter and Saint Paul*, *Homage to Henry Moore*, *The Movie Theater*, *Bat*

Vault or *Eduardo’s Plaza* sprang up, scattered through the property as an expression of his life force more than as a surrealist experiment. These structures, with no logic whatsoever, columns holding up nothing, stairways going up or down to nowhere, phytomorphic towers contrasting with the surrounding trees



Waterfalls abound in Las Pozas.



Homage to Henry Moore.



Exit through *The Serpent's Corridor* and *The Queen's Ring*.

and flowers or concrete bamboo curtains that compete with the extraordinary natural surroundings of musical cascades and transparent water make up James' playful labyrinth that never stops surprising the visitor.

While many have seen Las Pozas as genuinely surrealistic—it remains to be decided whether sculptural or architectural—its origins in its maker's conscious and subconscious go beyond that. In the last years of the eighteenth century, the aesthetic taste of the educated British nobility had turned its attention both to the classical Mediterranean and its own medieval worlds, amidst the dominant romanticism. The appeal of Piranesi's engravings of imagined jails, the journeys through the Mediterranean seeking out the ruins and monuments of classical antiquity, the fascination with nature echoed in landscape artists, the creation of elaborate gardens and the reemergence of Gothic architecture that gave rise to the revivals were all factors that continued to live among young British aristocrats for many years. James did not escape their influence. He spent his childhood in the neo-Gothic mansion his father bought in 1891 in West Dean, surrounded by vast, well tended gardens. In Las Pozas, with the appearance of a garden full of ruins, all these manifestations joined together to the benefit, finally, of those who value them.

James divided the last years of his life between Las Pozas and the creation of the foundation that bears his name, to which he donated his property in West Dean and most of his art collection. When he died in San Remo, Italy, in December 1984, Edward James had realized his desire of fostering creative ideas, but, above all, of liberating his life force to its full capacity. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Xilitla is a mere 87 kilometers east of Jalpan de Serra, the main town in the Sierra Gorda Mountains, on the road that joins Tamazunchale to San Juan del Río.

Colonial, Baroque Querétaro

Jaime Ortiz Lajous*



Eumelia Hernández/INE Photo Archive



Guillemina Ramírez/Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas (IIE) Photo Archive

▲ House of the Count of Ecala. Left: one of the exquisite patios. Right: facade with wrought iron work, *talavera* tiles and carved stone.



Jaime Ortiz Lajous



Jaime Ortiz Lajous

▲ Santa Rosa de Viterbo Church. Left: the sacristy with its Eastern-style central table. Right: side facade. Since it was a convent, it did not have a main facade.

Mexico boasts several cities laid out like checkerboards from the sixteenth century on. Most of them were founded as a result of the great rise in mining. Many towns that later developed into cities were originally sites for garrisons or protection along the routes of gold and silver shipments and were initially called way stations.

Querétaro is a city with a reticular lay-out of particular interest, whose foundation was the basis for colonizing the

Bajío region, part of Mexico's arid north and temperate central area. In the sixteenth century, Querétaro was the center of the colonization of new lands and by the end of the century one of the areas where the most cities were founded. It increased in importance when rich mineral deposits were discovered in Zacatecas in 1546.

To protect the silver highways the Spaniards broadened out their borders: in 1571 by order of Viceroy Enríquez, they founded Celaya, a great agricultural center initially named Villa de la Purísima Concepción de Celaya. Aguascalientes was founded in 1575 and León in 1576.

* Architect and author of several books about Querétaro.



Eumelia Hernández/INE Photo Archive

▲ Felipe Neri College, one of the most attractive facades in religious architecture.

Continual Chichimec attacks led to a pacification plan for the new territories: about 1580 much of them were conquered thanks to the intervention of the mestizo Caldera and De La Magdalena, a Jesuit, who established San Luis de la Paz. Guanajuato was divided into the municipalities of Guanajuato, Celaya and León, and the areas of San Miguel, San Felipe and San Luis de la Paz district were the base for colonizing San Luis Potosí, another important mining center.

Litigation about territorial jurisdiction between the dioceses of Michoacán and Mexico led to the territory of Querétaro being ministered to exclusively by the Franciscans, and in the middle of the sixteenth century it became

a spiritual center. It would not be until August 22, 1586, that Querétaro would become part of the archdiocese of Mexico.

Querétaro was the Spaniards' first permanent urban settlement in the Bajío region. Its agricultural production satisfied the needs of the northern territories. First it was founded as a center exclusively for indigenous people, but later, when the Spaniards understood its strategic geographic location, they became large landowners there. In 1590, it had 1,000 inhabitants and the number of Spaniards, indigenous, blacks and mestizos increased year after year. The city was an example of the urban relationship between indigenous and Spaniards who ended up mixing their urban areas.

In the seventeenth century, different religious orders established themselves there, increasing the city's wealth and concentrating urban land, made up mainly of donations. As a mere way station, initially it did not have an archbishop, which gave the religious orders great freedom

“Querétaro is very handsomely laid out
in the form of a chess board
with large spacious streets arranged
in good concert and order.”

and meant they did not have to make constant economic contributions to the bishopric. Also, instead of a governor, it had a *corregidor* or magistrate.

URBAN ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Establishing the Santa Cruz Church was definitive for the urban organization of Querétaro: together with the monastery, the *Pueblo de Indios*, or “indigenous town” was built in the upper part of the La Loma neighborhood. The “Spanish town” was laid out in 1550 by Juan Sánchez de Alanís. In *Relación de Querétaro* (Querétaro Chronicles) it is written that “Querétaro is very handsomely laid out in the form of a chess board with large spacious streets arranged in good concert and order.” Although we do not have the original plans for the city, we can deduce that it was built in two parts: the original “indigenous town” and a checker-board rectangle that was the lowlands initially inhabited by the Spaniards.

The rectangle had streets 16 varas wide (about 13.2 meters) with two main boulevards: one that ran east-west, Real Street, that ended in the San Francisco monastery, and the other that ran north-south that corresponded to what is now Benito Juárez Street. Every block was 200 varas wide (approximately 166 meters). This is the same design as in most cities founded in New Spain between 1520 and 1580.

In the seventeenth century, Querétaro underwent important changes: commercial activity increased notably and the religious orders were established there. Juan Caballero y Ocio, former infantry captain of His Majesty's armies, former sheriff of Querétaro, priest, officer of the Court of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and ecclesiastic judge of the city of Querétaro and governor of California, a man of immense wealth, financed several of the large religious buildings built in the second half of the seventeenth century. This man's enormous wealth and that of his works show the strength, power and riches that the Spaniards achieved in

The noble and loyal town
of Santiago de Querétaro was finally
granted status as a city on 1656,
and confirmed on 1712.

New Spain. He financed the construction of the San Antonio Church and Monastery, the Del Carmen Church, the San Ignacio de Loyola Jesuit College, the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the provisional monastery that would later make way for the important Santa Rosa de Viterbo compound. Toward the end of the century, he financed and finished the Santo Domingo Church.

The noble and loyal town of Santiago de Querétaro was finally granted status as a city by the Duke of Albuquerque on January 25, 1656, and confirmed by King Felipe V on September 29, 1712. During the eighteenth century, the most important construction was the aqueduct to supply the city with purified water because the religious orders and the Spaniards were greatly concerned that there would be epidemics if the inhabitants drank contaminated water. Work was begun on the aqueduct in 1726 with money from Don Juan Antonio de Urrutia y Arana, the marquis De la Villa del Villar del Águila, whose statue is now on display in the Plaza de Arriba.

One of Querétaro's main attractions is its architecture, with unique examples of the baroque. The Santa Rosa de Viterbo and Santa Clara Churches, together with the cloisters of the former San Agustín and San Francisco monasteries are exceptionally valuable. It is important to visit the museums in the former San Francisco Monastery and the cloister of San Agustín which house exceptionally valuable art work. This visit is completed by the Carmelita church and cloister, the Jesuits' San Ignacio and San Xavier, the Congregation Church, Santo Domingo and the San Felipe Neri College.

Jaime Ortiz Lajous



▲ Santa Rosa de Viterbo. The pulpit shows both Islamic and Chinese influence, with its tortoiseshell inlay in wood.

Ana Luisa Brenhas/IE Photo Archive



◀ The La Marquesa House patio.

The city has important colonial homes; outstanding among them is the Ecala House on the Plaza de Arriba. This plaza has a series of buildings that were homes like that of the marquis de Rayas and an old inn, today an elegant hotel. The Corregidora’s Palace is complemented by the Escandón house, the home of “the count of Sierra Gorda”. Very near the Santa Clara church is the magnificent House of La Marquesa, at the corner of Madero and Allende; another example of outstanding architecture is the House of the Dogs, on Allende Street. All these buildings have a clear Arabian influence seen in their use of trefoil arches.

Neoclassical influence can also be seen in the Teresas Church and the Neptune Fountain outside the Santa

Clara Church. Neoclassicism corresponds to the beginning of the fight for independence in which Querétaro played an important role: neoclassical art is taken as a symbol of freedom of thought, a movement which began in Europe in 1750. In Mexico, baroque altarpieces were burned in the plazas, such as the case of the Santa Rosa Church, which today has a neoclassical altarpiece.

Querétaro is one of Mexico’s most important colonial cities, its downtown area paved in stone with delightful pedestrian walk-ways and notable production of precious stones, particularly opal. Despite its industrial development, Querétaro continues to be one of the most beautiful cities in Mexico. **MM**

One of Querétaro’s most famous sites, the San Agustín Cloister. ▶



Maricela González/IE Photo Archive

The Querétaro Regional Museum

Guadalupe Zarate Miguel*

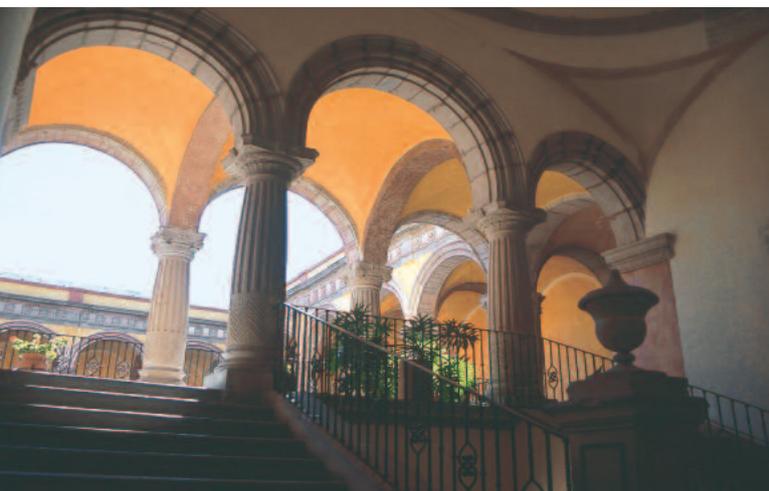
THE FORMER SAN FRANCISCO MONASTERY

The Museo Regional de Querétaro (the Querétaro Regional Museum) occupies one of the most significant buildings in the Querétaro state capital, the Large Monastery of San Francisco. Built about 1540, it was linked to the conquest and the settlement of the region begun by Otomí strongmen and the Franciscans. At its largest, the monastery included the great atrium, with its cemetery and four chapels; the main church; the monastery itself; an infirmary; and gardens and corrals. But very little is left

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A baroque, neoclassical and eclectic building.



A monumental stairway up to the top story.



For decades, the viceregal art works were the main attraction.

of the original construction because most of the building has been demolished over the years. In the sixteenth century the area belonged to the province of San Pedro and San Pablo de Michoacán, as the center of the faith for missionary activities and a hospital. It was the first and only parish in Querétaro from its foundation until 1759 when it was turned over to the secular clergy. By the end of the eighteenth century, the economic boom that had financed buildings, altars, paintings and sculptures was over. Large benefactors disappeared as production dropped in workshops and haciendas. The independence movement increased regional economic problems and, after independence, Mexico entered one of the most difficult periods of its history.

As the presence of the clergy diminished in Mexican political circles, the physical dimensions of the monastery also diminished and its uses diversified. Measures against the entire Franciscan complex began in 1860 with confrontations between Liberals and Conservatives, and when the republic was restored, work was begun to remodel the center of the city. In 1874, Governor Benito Santos Zenea built a garden in what had been the atrium. Another part of the grounds was earmarked as the site for the Government Palace, but when the construction could not be concluded, it was sold in 1886 and the Grand Hotel was built on it (today it is occupied by a restaurant). In what had been the garden, the Pedro Escobedo Market (today the Constitution Plaza) was built. In 1885, the Franciscans established the Pío Mariano College in the cloister. With the Mexican Revolution, a new stage was inaugurated in the history of the building, a stage that ended in 1936 with the creation of a museum to preserve, disseminate and study our cultural patrimony. This is the museum that continues to exist today.

The Querétaro Regional Museum occupies what used to be the entrance and the four patios with their series of rooms. The main patio with its high and low cloisters, a second called “de los Naranjos” (the Orange-Tree Patio), the patio of the novices and another small one to the back. At the center of the main patio is a baroque fountain with a foliated base and, in the eastern side hallway is a monumental stairway up to the top story; on either side of the landing two plaques commemorate the beginning and end of the construction of this part of the building. After all the transformations in the building, three different architectural styles can be discerned: baroque, neoclassical and eclectic.

THE FOUNDATION

The first activities in favor of establishing the museum were carried out in 1928 when the Finance Ministry gave the building to the state government to set up a religious and colonial art museum. That institution was never opened and the former monastery was returned to the federal government in 1932. Three years later it was handed over to the Public Education Ministry together with the art work amassed during the *Porfiriato* (the 30-year regimen of Porfirio Díaz) and recovered from churches during the 1910-1917 Revolution in collections formed by Don Germán Patiño. The project of giving this valuable collection a home was never abandoned by the federal government, and in 1936 the museum was opened, with Patiño as its director. In 1939, it became part of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. From then on, it has been open to the public with the name of Querétaro Regional Museum.

THE COLLECTIONS

The collections have taken almost an entire century to form. Its objects have different origins, are from different periods and are extremely varied. They range from pre-Columbian to contemporary pieces including furniture, ceramics, apparel, paintings, photographs, documents, weapons and sculptures, among other items.

From the point of view of their origins, there are five different kinds of collections: 1) the one assembled during the *Porfiriato* with pieces donated by Mexico City's San Carlos Academy and from people in the city of Querétaro; 2) another made up of art works recovered from churches and monasteries in the city of Querétaro during periods of political instability; 3) pieces from the Museo Patrio (Museum of the Nation), donated by the state government in 1936, which form the historical collection; 4) donations from individuals, the clergy and the Querétaro city government; and 5) the collection bestowed by the National Institute of Anthropology and History itself.

For decades, the viceregal art works were the museum's main attraction, until 1988 when many of them were loaned to the Museo de Arte de Querétaro (Querétaro Art Museum), where they are currently on display. At that time, the Regional Museum was restructured to emphasize local history in its permanent exhibitions.



The rooms are organized chronologically and by topic.



Collections have taken almost an entire century to form.



The museum exhibits pre-Hispanic pieces of stone, ceramics and sculptures.

A TRIP THROUGH THE MUSEUM

The rooms are organized chronologically and by topic, beginning with the pre-Hispanic Querétaro room, which deals with societies that existed in the state's three geo-cultural areas: the valleys, the semi-desert and the mountains. The room exhibits pieces of stone, ceramics and sculpture representative of the hunting and gathering societies and agricultural peoples of those times. The environment and architecture are illustrated with maps, drawings and models.

A second room contains materials linked to the indigenous societies of Querétaro, showing the continuity of certain cultural traits of the Americas and the dynamic of contemporary Querétaro indigenous populations. The room exhibits tools, musical instruments, apparel, the doorway of a family chapel and photographs. In the Querétaro in New Spain Room, the process of the state's conquest and colonization and its social, economic and cultural organization are displayed. This room includes important paintings depicting local history, as well as works of art, charts, maps and facsimiles.

The Independence Room emphasizes Querétaro's role in the 1810 insurgent movement, exhibiting portraits of local and national participants and objects from that period that evoke the contribution of Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, who, on the eve of the independence movement, was locked in a room by her husband, Querétaro's magistrate, to prevent her from warning the conspirators Allende and Hidalgo that he was going to have them arrested. She managed to get word to them, thus averting their arrest. The room also holds weapons, sculptures and facsimiles.

The rooms dedicated to Querétaro as a sovereign state examine the Constitution, its defense of the fledgling nation of Mexico and the conflicts between Conservatives and Liberals, using documents, maps, flags and some weapons of the period.

The room The Triumph of the Republic describes Querétaro's participation in the struggle against the second empire, particularly the defeat of Maximilian in the state capital, using objects, sketches, paintings and documents.

The Nineteenth Century Room displays portraits, furniture, paintings and photographs to depict the state's economic, political and social reorganization once the war had ended.

The room that covers the *Porfiriato* includes furniture, medals, documents and photographs linked to the state's

economic promotion in international fairs and the centennial celebration of the independence movement.

The Revolution Room shows Querétaro's role in the 1910-1917 Mexican Revolution and as the site for the Constituent Congress through an exhibition of the congress' speakers rostrum, a Villista operations table, portraits and other furniture.

The museum also has a monastery library, with valuable old books from monasteries both in Querétaro and other parts of the country. The main topics are theological, but other books about mathematics, chemistry, physics, literature and music can also be found among the collection. The library is open exclusively to specialists' perusal and has a catalogue on compact disk. ■■■

MUSEO REGIONAL DE QUERÉTARO

Corregidora 3 Sur

Centro Histórico

Querétaro, Querétaro 76000

Phone: 01 (442) 212-48-88, 212-20-341

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The monastery library is open exclusively to specialists.

Ecotourism and Community Development In the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve

Querétaro's Sierra Gorda Mountains, an intricate natural system of the Sierra Madre Oriental declared a biosphere reserve in 1997, are a world-class refuge for natural life. The 383,000 protected hectares in the Sierra Gorda, included in the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2001, are the scene for a growing grassroots movement for harmonious regional development and the conservation of natural resources.

MOUNTAIN DWELLERS' MODEL FOR MANAGING THE PROTECTED AREA

In 1987, a group of local inhabitants, inspired by the call of Mother Earth and alarmed by the patent, rapid destruction of the forests, the drop in water levels in the springs and the disappearance of abundant fauna and growing soil erosion, decided to join forces and work to conserve the region's natural wealth. They





Daniel Munguia

▲ Community development is an important strategy in managing the protected area.

founded the Sierra Gorda Ecological Group (GESG), a non-profit, nongovernmental organization, whose aim was the protection and rehabilitation of the Sierra Gorda sanctuary for flora and fauna using an integral strategy that involved social and economic development for its inhabitants. After 14 years of hard work, GESG has managed to position its strategy in the region through three main programs: one on community development, another on sustainable production; and a third on public relations and fund raising. Today, GESG works with 30,000 local inhabitants, the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve Office, local, state and federal authorities and numerous national and international organizations in the consolidation of a unique model for managing a natural protected area which grows stronger every day.

The Sierra Gorda, one of Mexico's historical, cultural and natural gems, is a region in which the human and natural systems enter into great contradiction. On the one hand, the existence of 14 different types of vegetation makes the Sierra Gorda the country's most ecologically diverse area. On the other hand, of its 100,000 inhabitants, 77 percent of those of working age earn less than U.S.\$7 per day. Natural wealth and human poverty in the same area plus inappropriate technological and political schema have increased the pressure on natural resources.

Given this situation, the GESG and the Reserve Office have turned to alternative social and economic development models in which resource sustainability and incorporating conservation into daily life emerge as a result of a love for the Earth and the knowledge of her essential cycles for maintaining life.

FORESTS, COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVATION

In a corner of the Sierra Gorda, among green spots where breathing in tranquility is a daily experience, are the communities of Soledad de Guadalupe, El Cañón and San Juan de los Durán in the municipality of Jalpan de Serra. Baroque Franciscan missions, healthy pine and helm oak forests, the transparent Santa María River and attractive hilly landscape come together in a beautiful mountain portrait where its communities work to improve their living conditions and to preserve their beautiful natural surroundings. Going through these spots undoubtedly offers a wonderful opportunity for rediscovering the Mother.

To begin the adventure, we can visit the Tancoyol Mission, built by Friar Junípero Serra more than 250 years ago in the little town of the same name nestled in a small valley. Leav-

ing behind Tancoyol, we start climbing the craggy mountain slopes toward the San Juan de los Durán forests. In the matter of a few meters, the vegetation changes and cool air begins to surround everything. Halfway there, as though pointing to the transition between two types of vegetation, we arrive at Soledad de Guadalupe. Here we find a ceramics workshop operated by the women of the community: it is the result of inter-institutional efforts headed up by GESG with support from the Reserve Office, the Jalpan city hall and the Solidarity Fund. Among the pieces produced with local clay are cups, pitchers and simply designed plates, kaleidoscopic with the women's creativity.

The road continues and we come into the high part of the Green Valley mountain area. The wind is cool and the mountains seem to be covered with a green blanket. We come to the



Daniel Munguía

▲ Visitors will have the opportunity of interacting with the mountain community and taking short trips to different parts of the surrounding area.



Daniel Munguía



Daniel Munguía

▲ Each project is the fruit of more than a decade of ongoing work.

community of El Cañón. Here the inhabitants have organized to raise exotic birds. This productive project is also operated by different institutions and the community itself.

To get to San Juan de los Durán, we will have to go off the dirt road and take a little path that crosses a small green valley, at the end of which is this town made up of friendly, hard-working people. The carpenter's shop is the product of GESG promotional work which involved several government agencies and Shell Oil. Local inhabitants decided to build the Sierra Gorda's first community ecotourism site where they erected wooden cabins surrounded by wild foliage. Visitors have the opportunity of interacting with the mountain community itself; taking short trips to different parts of the surrounding area; eating regional dishes; taking horseback

or mountain bike rides; visiting caves and small waterfalls; taking high-impact walks to the Santa María River canyon; and seeing the Swallows' Sink Hole in the state of San Luis Potosí, an imposing abyss both for its size and because it is home to parrots and thousands of black-martins, whose comings and goings in the sink hole make for a unique, astonishing spectacle.

San Juan de los Durán and Soledad de Guadalupe are two of the productive projects the GESG and the mountain communities operate in the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve. The model of inter-institutional and intersectoral work (including communities, authorities and civic organizations) that the GESG has developed in the Sierra Gorda is the fruit of more than a decade of ongoing work. Each project has different phases based on community organization, inter-institutional coordination, the donation of the land, support for the construction of necessary infrastructure and its equipping, basic and specific training, promotional activities and marketing and, finally, constant evaluation and monitoring.

The experience gained in the field has made it possible for the GESG to do effective fund raising for these projects, basing itself on the principles of co-responsibility and co-participation. The GESG hopes to improve the living conditions of the population and recover and conserve life in the sanctuary of nature that is Querétaro's Sierra Gorda. **MM**

INFORMATION

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Of Memory and Forgetfulness¹

Juan José Arreola



Enrique Vilaseñor

"I have not had time to practice literature. But I have spent as many hours as possible loving it."

Ladies and gentlemen, am from Zapotlán el Grande. A town so large, they turned it into Ciudad Guzmán 100 years ago. But we continue to be so much a town that we still call it Zapotlán. It is a round valley of corn, a circle of mountains with no more ornament than its good temperament, a blue sky and a lagoon that comes and goes like a slender dream. From May until December you can see the even, growing stature of the corn fields. Sometimes we call it Zapotlán de Orozco because that's where José Clemente was born, he of the violent paint brushes. As his fellow townsman, I feel I was born at the foot of a volcano. On the subject of volcanoes, the orography of my town includes two other summits in addition to the painter: the peak called Nevado de Colima, even though in its entirety it is in Jalisco. Extinguished, the ice in winter decorates it. But, the other is alive. In 1912, it covered us with ash and

old people remember with fear that brief Pompeii-an experience: night fell in the middle of the day and made everyone believe in Judgement Day. We need go no further than last year when we were frightened by fountains of lava, roars and fumaroles. Attracted by it, geologists came to greet us; they took our temperature and pulse; we invited them to a cup of pomegranate punch, and they calmed us scientifically: this bomb we have under our pillow may explode tonight or any day in the next 10,000 years.

I am the fourth child of parents who had 14 and are still alive to tell the tale, thank God. As you can see, I am not a spoiled child. Arreolas and Zúñigas fight out their ancient domestic quarrel of non-believers and the devout in my soul like dogs. They both seem to join together in their distant common Basque roots. But mestizos in good time, in their veins flow without discord the different bloods that

made Mexico, together with that of a French nun who came into the picture who knows how. There are family stories that were better left untold because my last name is won or lost biblically among the Sephardic Jews of Spain. No one knows if Don Juan Abad, my great-grandfather, took the name Arreola to erase the last evidence of the convert (Abad, from *abba*, meaning “father” in Aramaic). Don’t worry, I am not going to plant my family tree here, nor trace the artery that brings me plebeian blood all the way down from El Cid’s scribe or the name of the spurious Tower of Quevedo. But, there is nobility in my word. My word of honor. I descend in a straight line from two ancient lineages: I am a blacksmith on my mother’s side and a carpenter on my father’s. This is where my artisan’s passion for language comes from.

I was born in 1918 during the ravages of the Spanish flu, on the day of Saint Matthew the Evangelist and Saint Ifigenia the Virgin, among chickens, pigs, goats, turkeys, cows, burros and horses. I took my first steps followed precisely by a black sheep that got out of the corral. Such is the precedent of the lasting anxiety that gives color to my life, that concretizes in my self the neurotic aura that envelopes the entire family and that fortunately or unfortunately has never resolved itself into epilepsy or madness. This evil black sheep continues to pursue me, and I feel that my footsteps tremble like those of the troglodyte pursued by a mythical beast.

Like almost all children, I also went to school. I could not continue there for reasons that are relevant but that I cannot tell: my childhood transpired amidst the provincial chaos of the Cristera Revolution. With the churches and religious schools closed, I, the nephew of priests and hidden-away nuns, could not step into government school-rooms under pain of heresy. My father, a man who always knows his way out of blind alleys, instead of sending me to a clandestine seminary or a government school, simply put me to work. And so, at the age of 12, I became the apprentice of Don José María Silva, master bookbinder, and then to Chepo Gutiérrez, printer. Thus was born my great love of books as physical objects. The other, my love for their contents, had been born before with a primary school teacher as midwife, to whom I pay homage here: thanks to José Ernesto Aceves I found that there were poets in the world, in addition to tradesmen, small industrialists and farmers. Here I should clarify one thing: my father, who knows about everything, has dedicated himself to commerce, to industry and agriculture (always small farming), but he has failed at it all. He has the soul of a poet.

I am self-taught, it is true. But at the age of 12 in Zapotlán el Grande I read Baudelaire, Walt Whitman and the cornerstones of my style, Papini and Marcel Schwob, together with half a hundred other names, both more and less illustrious. And I heard songs and popular sayings and I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation of people from the countryside.

Since 1930, I have had more than 20 different trades and jobs. I have been an itinerant salesman and a journalist; a day laborer and bill collector; printer, comic actor and baker. Whatever you will.

It would be unfair if I did not mention here the man who changed my life. Louis Jouvét, whom I met on his way through Guadalajara, took me to Paris 25 years ago. This trip was a dream that in vain I have tried to relive: I tripped the boards of the Comédie Française, a naked slave in the galleys of Anthony and Cleopatra, under the direction of Jean Louis Barrault and at the feet of Marie Bell.

Upon my return from France, the Fondo de Cultura Económica publishing house took me into its technical department thanks to the good offices of Antonio Alatorre, who presented me as a philologist and a grammarian. After three years of correcting proofs, translations and originals, I joined the company’s catalogue of authors (*Varia invención* [Other Inventions] appeared in Tezontle in 1949).

One last melancholic confession. I have not had time to practice literature. But I have spent as many hours as possible loving it. I love language above all things and I venerate those who through the word have revealed the spirit, from Isaías to Franz Kafka. I distrust almost all contemporary literature. I live surrounded by classical, benevolent shadows that protect my writer’s dream. But also by those young people who will make the new Mexican literature: to them I delegate the task that I have not been able to analyze. To make that task easier, I tell them every day what I learned in the few hours in which my mouth was governed by the other. What I heard, for a single instant, from the burning bush. **MM**

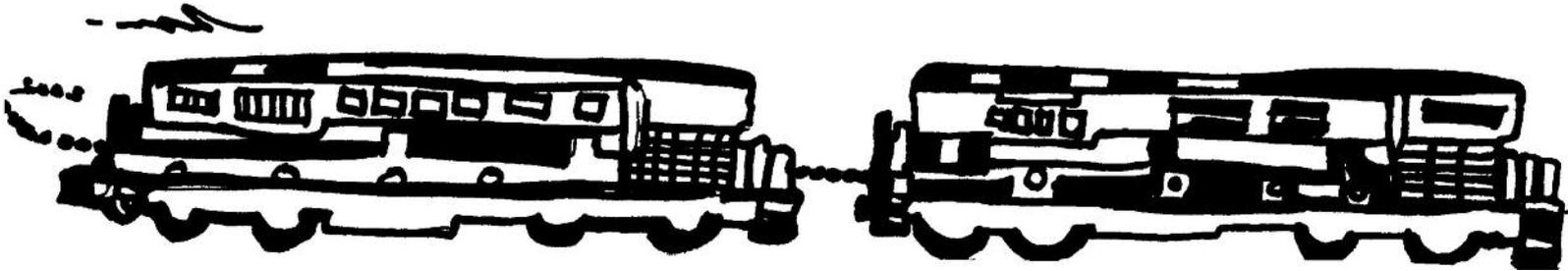
NOTES

¹ Fragment, published and translated by permission of J.J. Arreola’s widow, Sara Sánchez. Taken from *Narrativa completa*, J.J. Arreola (Mexico City: Alfaguara, 1997), pp.183-185.

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The Switchman¹

Juan José Arreola



The stranger arrived at the deserted station out of breath. His large suitcase, which nobody carried for him, had really tired him out. He mopped his face with a handkerchief, and with his hand shading his eyes, gazed at the tracks that melted away in the distance. Dejected and thoughtful, he consulted his watch: it was the exact time when the train was supposed to leave.

Somebody, come from heaven knows where, gently tapped him. When he turned around, the stranger found himself before a little old man who looked vaguely like a railroader. In his hand he was carrying a red lantern, but so small it seemed a toy. Smiling, he looked at the stranger, who anxiously asked him: "Excuse me, but has the train already left?"

"Haven't you been in this country very long?"

"I have to leave right away. I must be in T—tomorrow at the latest."

"It's plain you don't know what's going on at all. What you should do right now is go look for lodging at the inn," and he pointed to a strange, ash-colored building that looked more like a jail.

"But I don't want lodging; I want to leave on the train."

"Rent a room immediately if there are any left. In case you can get one, take it by the month. It will be cheaper for you and you will get better attention."

"Are you crazy? I must get to T—by tomorrow."

"Frankly, I ought to leave you to your fate. But just the same, I'll give you some information."

"Please—"

"This country is famous for its railroads, as you know. Up to now it's been impossible to organize them properly, but great progress has been made in publishing timetables and issuing tickets. Railroad guides include and link all the towns in the country; they sell tickets for even the smallest and most remote villages. Now all that is needed is for the trains to follow what the guides indicate and really pass by the stations. The inhabitants of this country hope this will happen; meanwhile, they accept the service's irregularities and their patriotism keeps them from showing any displeasure."

"But is there a train that goes through this city?"

"To say yes would not be accurate. As you can see, the rails exist, though they are in rather bad shape. In some towns they are simply marked on the ground by two chalk lines. Under the present conditions, no train is obliged to pass through here, but nothing keeps that from happening. I've seen lots of trains go by in my life and I've known some travelers who managed to board them. If you wait until the right moment, perhaps I myself will have the honor of helping you get on a nice comfortable coach."

"Will that train take me to T—?"

"Why do you insist that it has to be T—? You should be satisfied if you get on it. Once on the train, your life will indeed take on some direction. What difference does it make, whether it's T—or not?"

"But my ticket is all in order to go to T—. Logically, I should be taken there, don't you agree?"

"Most people would say you are right. Over at the inn you can talk to people who have



Drawings by Lydia Peña



taken precautions, acquiring huge quantities of tickets. As a general rule, people with foresight buy passage to all points of the country. There are some who have spent a real fortune on tickets—”

“I thought that to go to T— one ticket was enough. Look here—”

“The next stretch of the national railways is going to be built with the money of a single person who has just spent his immense capital on round-trip passages for a railroad track that includes extensive tunnels and bridges that the engineers haven’t even approved the plans for.”

“But is the train that goes through T— still in service?”

“Not just that one. Actually, there are a great many trains in the nation, and travelers can use them relatively often, if they take into account that it’s not a formal and definitive service. In other words, nobody expects when he gets aboard a train to be taken where he wants to go.”

“Why is that?”

“In its eagerness to serve the citizens, the railway management is forced to take desperate measures. They make trains go through impassable places. These expeditionary trains sometimes take several years on a trip and the passenger’s lives suffer important transformations. Deaths are not unusual in such cases, but the management, foreseeing everything, hitches on to those trains a car with a funeral chapel and a cemetery coach. The conductors take pride

in depositing the traveler’s body, luxuriously embalmed, on the station platform prescribed by his ticket. Occasionally

these trains are compelled to run on roadbeds where one of the rails is missing. All one side

of the coaches shudders lamentably as the wheels hit the railroad ties. The

first-class passengers—another instance of the management’s foresight—

are seated on the side where there is a rail. But there

are other stretches where both rails are missing; there all the passengers suffer equally, until the train is completely

wrecked.”

“Good Lord!”



“Listen, the village of F— came into being because of one of those accidents. The train found itself in impassable

terrain. Smoothed and polished by the sand, the

wheels were worn away to their axles. The passengers had

spent such a long time together that from the obligatory trivial conversations intimate friendships sprang

up. Some of those friendships soon became idylls, and the result is F—, a progressive town filled

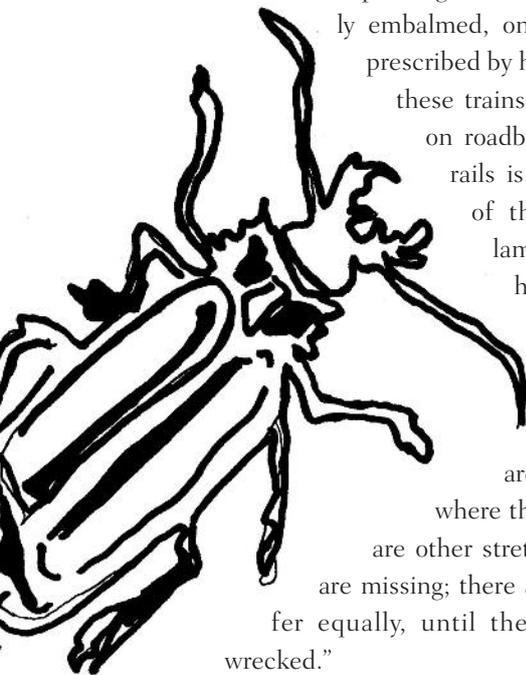
with mischievous children playing with the rusty vestiges of the train.”

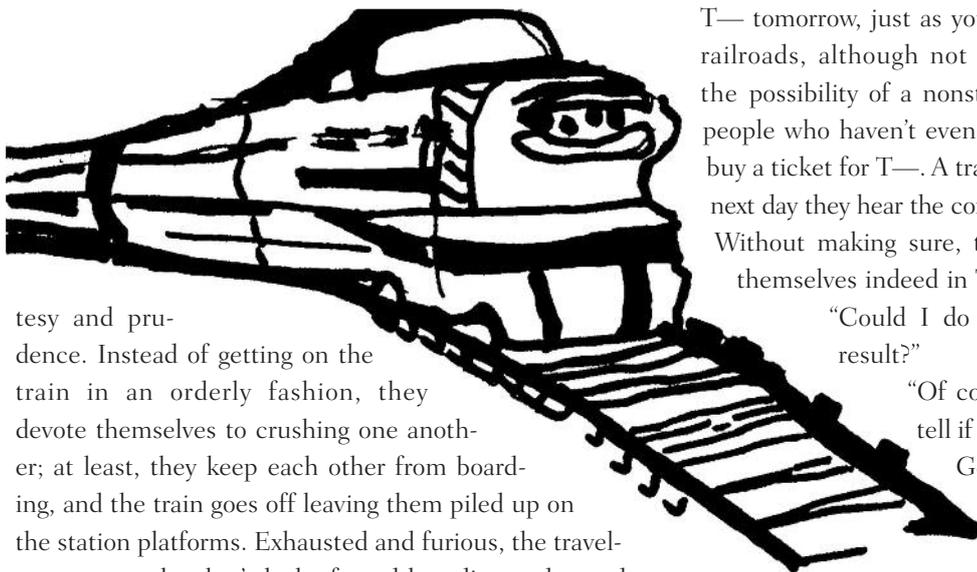
“For Heaven’s sake, I’m not one for such adventures!”

“You need to pluck up your courage; perhaps you may even become a hero. You must not think there aren’t occasions for the passengers to show their courage and capacity for sacrifice. On one occasion two hundred anonymous passengers wrote one of the most glorious pages in our railroad annals. It happened that on a trial journey the engineer noticed in time that the builders of the line had made a grave omission. A bridge that should have spanned an abyss just wasn’t there. Well now, the engineer, instead of backing up, gave the passengers a pep talk and got the necessary cooperation from them to continue forward. Under his forceful direction the train was taken apart piece by piece and carried on the passengers’ backs to the other side of the abyss, which held a further surprise: a turbulent river at its bottom. The management was so pleased with the results of this action that it definitely renounced the construction of the bridge, only going so far as to make an attractive discount in the fares of those passengers who dared to take on that additional nuisance.”

“But I’ve got to get to T— tomorrow!”

“All right! I’m glad to see you aren’t giving up your project. It’s plain that you are a man of conviction. Stay at the inn for the time being and take the first train that comes. At least try to; a thousand people will be there to get in your way. When a train comes in, the travelers, exasperated by an overly long wait, stream tumultuously out of the inn and noisily invade the station. Frequently they cause accidents with their incredible lack of cour-





tesy and prudence. Instead of getting on the train in an orderly fashion, they devote themselves to crushing one another; at least, they keep each other from boarding, and the train goes off leaving them piled up on the station platforms. Exhausted and furious, the travelers curse each other's lack of good breeding and spend a lot of time hitting and insulting each other."

"Don't the police intervene?"

"They tried to organize a police force for each station, but the trains' unpredictable arrivals made such a service useless and very expensive. Besides, the members of the force soon showed their corrupt character, only letting wealthy passengers who gave them everything they had board the trains. Then a special kind of school was established where future travelers receive lessons in etiquette and adequate training so they can spend their lives on the trains. They are taught the correct way to board a train, even though it is moving at great speed. They are also given a kind of armor so the other passengers won't crack their ribs."

"But once on the train, aren't your troubles over?"

"Relatively speaking, yes. But I recommend that you watch the stations very carefully. You might think you had arrived at T—, and it would only be an illusion. In order to regulate life on board the overcrowded coaches, the management has been obliged to take certain expedient measures. There are stations that are for appearance only: they have been built right in the jungle and they bear the name of some important city. But you just need to pay a little attention to see through the deceit. They are like stage sets, and the people on them are stuffed with sawdust. These dummies easily betray the ravages of bad weather, but sometimes they are a perfect image of reality: their faces bear the signs of an infinite weariness."

"Fortunately, T— isn't very far from here."

"But at the moment we don't have any through trains. Nevertheless, it could well happen that you might arrive at

T— tomorrow, just as you wish. The management of the railroads, although not very efficient, doesn't exclude the possibility of a nonstop journey. You know there are people who haven't even realized what is going on. They buy a ticket for T—. A train comes, they get on it, and the next day they hear the conductor announce: 'We're at T—.' Without making sure, the passengers get off and find themselves indeed in T—."

"Could I do something to bring about that result?"

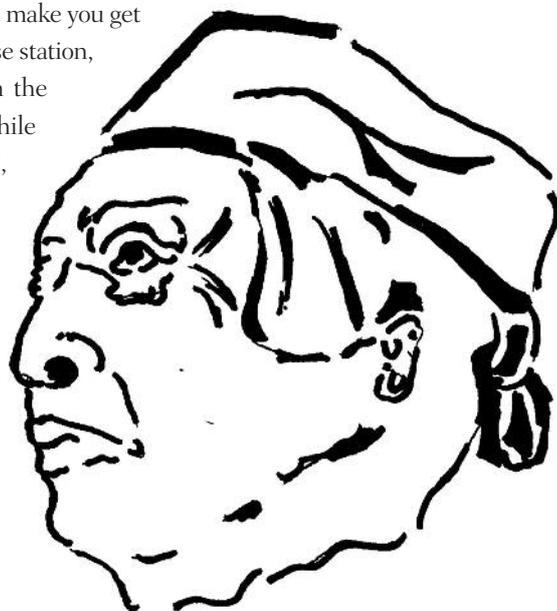
"Of course you could. But it's hard to tell if it will do any good. Try it anyway.

Get on the train with the firm idea that you are going to reach T—.

Don't talk with any of the passengers. They might disillusion you with their travel tales and they might even denounce you."

"What are you saying?"

"Because of the present state of things the trains are full of spies. These spies, mostly volunteers, dedicate their lives to encouraging the company's constructive spirit. Sometimes one doesn't know what one is saying and talks just to be talking. But they immediately see all the meanings in a phrase, however simple it may be. They can twist the most innocent comment around to make it look guilty. If you were to commit the slightest imprudence you would be apprehended without further ado; you would spend the rest of your life in a prison car, if they didn't make you get off at a false station, lost out in the jungle. While you travel, have





faith, consume the smallest possible amount of food, and don't step off onto the platform until you see some familiar face at T—."

"But I don't know anybody in T—."

"In that case, take double precautions. There will be many temptations on the way, I assure you. If you look out the windows, you may fall into the trap of a mirage. The train windows are provided with ingenious devices that create all kinds of illusions in the passengers' minds. You don't have to be weak to fall for them. Certain apparatuses, operated from the engine, make you believe that the train is moving because of the noise and the movements. Nevertheless, the train stands still for whole weeks at a time while the passengers looking through the window panes see captivating landscapes pass by."

"What object is there in that?"

"The management does all this with the wholesome purpose of reducing the passengers' anxiety and, as far as possible, the sensations of moving. The hope is that one day the passengers will capitulate to fate, give themselves into the hands of an omnipotent management, and no longer care to know where they are going or where they have come from."

"And you, have you traveled a lot on trains?"

"Sir, I'm just a switchman. To tell the truth, I'm a retired switchman, and I just come here now and then to remember the good old days. I've never traveled and I have no desire to. But the travelers tell me stories. I know that the trains have created many towns besides F—, whose origin I told you about. Sometimes the crew on a train receives

mysterious orders. They invite the passengers to get off, usually on the pretext that they should admire the beauties of a certain place. They are told about grottos, falls, or famous ruins: 'Fifteen minutes to admire such and such a grotto,' the conductor amiably calls out. Once the passengers are a certain distance away, the train chugs away at full speed."

"What about the passengers?"

"They wander about disconcertedly from one spot to another for a while, but they end up by getting together and establishing a colony. These untimely stops occur in places far from civilization but with adequate resources and sufficient natural riches. Selected lots of young people, and especially an abundant number of women, are abandoned there. Wouldn't you like to end your days in a picturesque unknown spot in the company of a young girl?"

The little old fellow winked, and smiling kindly, continued to gaze roguishly at the traveler. At that moment a faint whistle was heard. The switchman jumped, all upset, and began to make ridiculous, wild signals with his lantern.

"Is it the train?" asked the stranger.

The old man recklessly broke into a run along the track. When he had gone a certain distance he turned around to shout, "You are lucky! Tomorrow you will arrive at your famous station. What did you say its name was?"

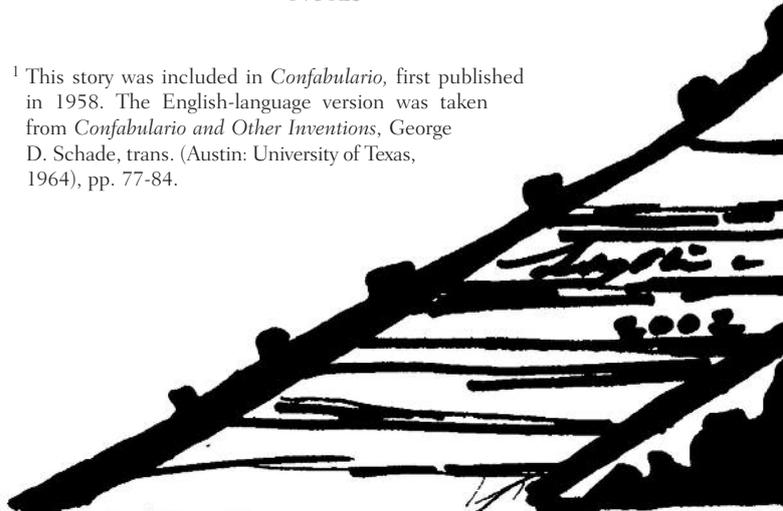
"X—!" answered the traveler.

At that moment the little old man dissolved in the clear morning. But the red speck of his lantern kept on running and leaping imprudently between the rails to meet the train.

In the distant landscape the train was noisily approaching. **MM**

NOTES

¹ This story was included in *Confabulario*, first published in 1958. The English-language version was taken from *Confabulario and Other Inventions*, George D. Schade, trans. (Austin: University of Texas, 1964), pp. 77-84.



The Rhinoceros¹

Juan José Arreola

For ten years I fought with a rhinoceros; I'm the divorced wife of Judge McBride. Joshua McBride possessed me for ten years with his imperious egoism. I knew his furious rages, his momentary tenderness, and, late at night, his insistent and ceremonious lust.

I renounced love before I knew what it was, because Joshua showed me with judicial allegations that love is just a story good for entertaining servant girls. On the other hand, he offered me his protection as a respectable man. According to Joshua, the protection of a respectable man is the highest ambition of every woman.

Ten years I fought with the rhinoceros, body to body, and my only triumph consisted in dragging him to divorce.

Joshua McBride has remarried, but this time he has made a mistake in his choice. Seeking another Eleanor, he met his match. Pamela is sweet and romantic, but she knows the secret that helps to subdue rhinoceroses. Joshua McBride attacks head on, but can not turn about rapidly. When anyone gets behind him, he has to wheel completely around to attack again. Pamela seizes him by the tail, shakes it, and won't let go. Having to circle around so much, the judge begins to show signs of fatigue, relents, and gives in. His rages have become slower and more melancholic; his harangues, like a disconcerted actor's, no longer are convincing. He is like a subterranean volcano with Pamela sitting on top, smiling. On the seas with Joshua I was shipwrecked; Pamela floats like a paper boat in a wash basin. She is the daughter of a prudent vegetarian pastor who

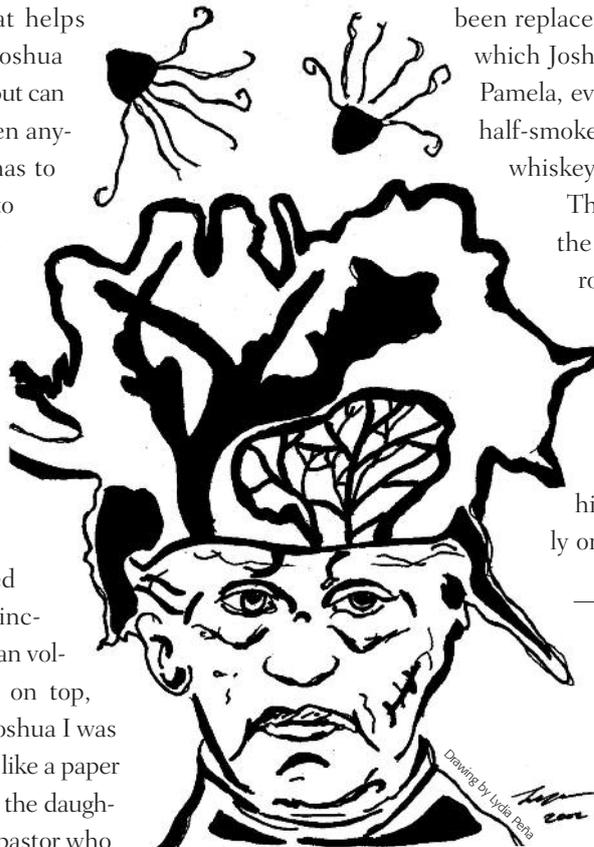
taught her how to make tigers turn prudent and vegetarian too.

Not long ago I saw Joshua in church devoutly listening to the Sunday services. He seems enunciated and flattened. Just as though Pamela, with her two fragile hands, has been reducing his volume and folding up his spine. His vegetarian pallor gives him a smooth, sickly cast.

People who visit the McBrides tell me surprising things. They speak of incomprehensible meals, lunches and suppers with no roasted beef; they describe Joshua devouring enormous platters of salad. Naturally, from such nourishment he can not extract the calories that made his former rages so impressive. His favorite dishes have been methodically altered or suppressed by grim and implacable cooks. Patagras and Gorgonzola cheese no longer permeate the dark oak dining room with their strong odor. They have

been replaced by insipid and odorless cream cheeses which Joshua eats in silence, like a punished child. Pamela, ever amiable and smiling, puts out Joshua's half-smoked cigar, rations his pipe tobacco and his whiskey.

That's what they tell me. I like to imagine the two of them alone dining at a long narrow table under the cold light of the candelabra. Watched by the wise Pamela, gluttonous Joshua sullenly munches his light meals. But I especially like to imagine the rhinoceros late at night, in his slippers, his great shapeless body under his robe, knocking timidly and persistently on an obstinate door. **MM**



NOTES

¹ This story was included in *Confabulario*, first published in 1958. The English-language version was taken from *Confabulario and Other Inventions*, George D. Schade, trans. (Austin: University of Texas, 1964), pp. 69-71.

Checkmate to the Switchman¹

Homero Aridjis*



Carlos Alcázar

Rubén Leyva, *The Chess Player*, 80 x 100 cm, 1999 (oil on canvas).

Death is now playing with the white pieces, according to Juan José Arreola's "Telemaquia."²

Often, a writer's best crafted character is himself, and seldom has this been truer in our literature than in the case of Juan José Arreola. To write about "the most outstanding

short-story writer to emerge in Mexico" (in the words of literary critic Emmanuel Carballo), I must resort to my own past, since Juan José Arreola forms a part of my literary youth.

I was about 18 years old when one Wednesday in the 1950s I went to the Mexican Writers' Center, on Río Volga Street, where Juan José Arreola was holding a literary workshop, perhaps the first in Mexico. I clearly remember my timid arrival at the little room that looked like a garage, frequent-

* Writer and environmentalist. President of Mexico's Group of 100.
Painting reproduced courtesy of Rubén Leyva.

ed by beautiful young Jewesses and fledgling writers. Juan Martínez, a poet from Guadalajara, was speaking, and everyone turned to look at me. The session had already begun and I had to stand. There were no empty seats.

Afterwards I explained to Arreola that I wanted to join his literary workshop, but when he heard about my lack of money, he hardly reacted at all: they charged for the workshop. Later I would find out that those who wrote the most were the ones who paid the least. Arreola asked someone to come to play chess and I asked if he played. Looking at me with sudden interest, he asked if I knew how to play the game of the ivory figures. I told him that in my adolescence I had played at the Carlos Torres Club in Morelia with Carlos Sansón, the state champion. He immediately invited me to his apartment on Río Elba Street. We left together. But, suspicious of my ability in the game, he sat me down at the chessboard with the writer Eduardo Lizalde. I won several games in a row and then Arreola played me. I beat him too, and since it was midnight, I left saying that we would see each other the following week. "What do you mean 'See you next week'? Next week is too far away for my re-match. See you tomorrow afternoon." I went back the next day and with re-match after re-match, we became friends in literature and in the game. Playing with Arreola was a pleasure because during the games he recited poetry or invented characters capable of unimaginable feats (particularly amorous feats, like that character Marcello da Papaviglia). "Don't get mixed up with Arreola; he's a bum and he's going to mess you up. Come with me to the cantina instead," warned Juan Rulfo at the time, with whom Maestro Arreola had interminable arguments about Zapotlán el Grande, his hometown.

Little by little, I became a friend of the family, of his wife Sara and his children Claudia, Fuensanta and Orso. The only time he ever reproached me was once in 1961 when I gave the erotic prose poem "La tumba de Filidor" (The Grave of Filidor) to his daughters Claudia and Fuensanta. He himself praised it, but he wanted it kept "just between us," since he was always courting some young girl. Watching his amorous exploits was a spectacle of poetic eloquence and comic situations. His agoraphobia and claustrophobia precipitated in him uncontrollable fears, making him avoid elevators; one night he went to the extreme of putting a friend under his bed of amorous surrender to come out and rescue him if he had a panic attack. Faced with the lady of his thoughts, this seducer with words

would suddenly vigorously attack because, as he put it very well in "El mapa de los objetos perdidos" (The Map of Lost Objects): "from time to time a lost woman appears on the map who mysteriously fits my modest resources."

On the basis of these chess and poetic encounters, I followed him from house to house on Río Elba, Río de la Plata and Río Guadalquivir Streets in what was the Cuauhtémoc neighborhood before Professor Hank González split it down the middle.³ And for some years I would be his neighbor when I lived on Río Elba with my wife Betty.

Times were hard for Arreola: he survived on credit from the corner grocer, what he published in *Cuadernos del Unicornio*, advances from other publishers and loans from friends. A great squanderer, he went out right away and spent his money on wine, exorbitantly-priced taxis and flamboyant vests (years later he would fall in love with Art Nouveau Gallé crystal vases). He used to arrive at his readings with a bottle of cognac in his jacket pocket.

Authors like Julio Cortázar celebrated him as a writer who drew us into the atmosphere of a piece in the first sentence.

These times of economic difficulties were also years of literary creativity, in which he wrote *Bestiario* (Bestiary) and *La feria* (The Fair). I can still see him sitting at the chess board polishing plots and phrases that little by little would turn into impeccably finished texts and perfect verbal machines. Sometimes he would laugh, savoring the findings of his own ingenuity, like in "Alarma para el año 2000" (Alarm for the Year 2000): "Careful. Every man is a bomb on the point of exploding." A phrase that could be dated 2001, referring to Muslim fundamentalists.

Or like in "Homenaje a Otto Weininger" (Homage to Otto Weininger), in which an impassioned male dog confesses: "In the light of the sun, mange is insufferable....Like a good romantic, my life was spent following a bitch."

Amidst day-to-day anxieties, his love for words was limitless. That was why at the end of the 1950s when he was appointed director of the Lake House in Chapultepec Park,⁴ the first thing he did was to form poetry groups. But his sense of humor was never far away: when the National Autonomous University of Mexico sent him dozens of graduates to keep them busy, he organized chess tournaments for them.



Enrique Villaseñor

The great taster of words.

And not only did he sit us down at the chessboard across from national masters and make us play simultaneous games with world champion Tigran Petrosian and runner-up Paul Keres, but —as his friend, actor Enrique Rocha tells us— Arreola himself dressed up in black and white, the colors of the chessboard, as a king or jester.

Being Arreola's friend had its price, and frequently the enemies of my friend were my enemies, too, since writers who have been dumped in the trash bin of literary history often pooh-poohed him despite his talent and despite authors like Julio Cortázar's celebrating him as a writer who from the first sentence drew us into the atmosphere of a piece. Jorge Luis Borges also recognized him in his own fashion. I still think that the five most important twentieth-century Spanish-language short-story writers are Quiroga, Borges, Cortázar, Rulfo and Arreola.

Playful man that he was, and indifferent to the block he suffered from, Arreola played chess and quoted his favorite authors from memory: Rainer Maria Rilke, Paul Claudel, Ramón López Velarde, Pablo Neruda, Carlos Pellicer, Franz Kafka, Francisco de Quevedo. But evoking chess

players like Filidor, Ruy López, Lasker, Morphy, Capablanca, Alekhine, Botvinnik and Bobby Fischer, the games became a literary game, with verses by Ezra Pound, Fernando Pessoa and Borges, the latter with his "Ajedrez" (Chess): "In their grave corner, the players/ rule over the slow pieces. The board/ delays them until dawn in their severe/ surroundings in which two colors hate each other."

Because of this love of poetry, I was enormously happy to have included him as a poet in the anthology *Poesía en movimiento* (Poetry in Movement) (1966). And to have taken charge of selecting his works. Years before, in his *Confabulario total*, he had dedicated to me these generous words: "Homero: Watching the development of your talent as a poet has been one of my greatest joys."

The great taster of words and the best workshop leader Mexico has ever had has died. With his trade of writer he guided several literary generations, frequently at the cost of his own work. Though an illness kept him unconscious for three years (the last time I saw him, he did not recognize me), it was no longer necessary to speak with him. To find him alive, with his wild mass of hair and his sparkling eyes, you only had to go back in time, walk up the stairs of the building on Río Elba Street and knock on his door. When it opened, we would again find his anxieties, his loves and, above all, his word as a teacher. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Taken from the *Reforma* newspaper web site: http://www.reforma.com/ed_impresa/notas/011209/pagedit/textos/rhomeroaridjis.htm. (The title of this article alludes to a short story by Arreola called "El guardaguas" [The Switchman] about a railway employee who gives information to a passenger about train schedules. [Translator's Note.]) Reproduced by permission of the author.

² This is an allusion to the end of Arreola's short story "Telemaquia," which reads, "Man against man. Does anyone want to bet? Ladies and gentlemen, there is no salvation. In us, the game is being lost. The Devil is now playing with the white pieces." From *Bestiario*, collected in *Arreola, Narrativa completa* (Mexico City: Alfaguara, 1997). [Editor's Note.]

³ This refers to Mexico City Mayor Carlos Hank González' widening many of the city's streets. [Translator's Note.]

⁴ The Lake House is a National Autonomous University of Mexico cultural center. [Editor's Note.]

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Arreola The Magician of Midday¹

Christopher Domínguez Michael*



Enrique Villaseñor

In Arreola we have lost the last of the great twentieth-century Mexican writers. Without José Revueltas, without Juan Rulfo and without Octavio Paz, and now, without Juan José, we have been orphaned, something no less painful because it was predictable. Arreola's work was written essentially between *Confabulario* (1949) and *La feria* (The Fair) (1963). Through "other inventions" his work parallels the "fictions" of Borges, his older brother, who offered him the recognition that cannot help but be repeated: "I have seldom seen him; I remember one afternoon we talked about the last adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym." In prose, Arreola's brevity fed imaginations like Julio

Cortázar's —something he told Juan José in a letter in 1954— and many other Latin American writers. Neither Martín Luis Guzmán nor Alfonso Reyes had the influence that Arreola did on the community of the language, because of his facility for introducing the fantastic into everyday life, always creating perfect pieces that would be read as stories or as prose poems. While some writers' example frightens and paralyzes like Rulfo, others lavish themselves on creating a school. Arreola's touch is visible in authors as distinct as the Uruguayan Armonía Sommers, Augusto Monterroso or the Catalanian Enrique Vila-Matas.

In a literature that prided itself on its cartridge belts, like Mexico's at the end of the 1940s, Arreola (1918-2001) took Julio Torri's road and eliminated all ostentation, vulgarity

* Literary critic.

and didacticism from our prose. His narrative —to give it a name— was like a limpid dawn after the bellicose terrors of the night. A curious kind of fantastic writer covered with fairies and not by fabulous monsters, a kind of clock-maker who broke the span of hours of light.

A half century ago, a critique —always risky— tried to counterpose Rulfo to Arreola, Mexicanism to universality, realism to fantasy. A false dilemma: the Scandinavians consider Rulfo a national author because his theme is not the Altos de Jalisco, but the myth, common to all civilizations, of a city of the dead that dreams after the destruction of the agrarian community. Arreola, his pride perhaps wounded by that complaint, tried a novel, *La feria*, whose parts were brilliant, but, in my opinion, was flawed as a whole.

Friends and accomplices, Rulfo and Arreola were both writers of fantasy, if by fantasy we understand freedom of imagination, a transit back and forth between Hades and

Arreola had a facility for introducing
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everyday life. Brothers, Rulfo and Arreola divided between them the hours of Mexican prose. One personified night; the other, day.

Fortunately, many of Arreola's students will remember now an education that went beyond words, a provider of ingenuity and practical enterprises, like literary workshops or independently publishing what were at the time very young authors like Carlos Fuentes, Fernando del Paso, José Agustín, José Carlos Becerra, Beatriz Espejo, Eduardo Lizalde, Vicente Leñero, José Emilio Pacheco, Sergio Pitol, Tita Valencia, in the *Los Presentes* and *Cuadernos del Unicornio* [book collections] and [the magazine] *Mester*. It is an impressive list, as is the affection for him of three generations of writers, who had in Arreola something more than a university: an entire literature, that included everything from galley correction to Marcel Schwob and the Golden Age.

Christian and sinner, minstrel and deceiver, actor of the *Comédie Française*, enemy of all forms of solitary life, a man in search of communion with his brethren to the point of becoming lost, Arreola also had his failings. I remember with shame those television programs which ended up being grist

for the malicious mill of boorish sports commentators. A small matter, undoubtedly, next to the moral and intellectual mistakes that we writers often make.

I met Juan José in my childhood since my father, José Luis Domínguez Camacho was his psychiatrist, who he was very grateful to, according to Orso Arreola in *El último juglar. Memorias de Juan José Arreola* (The Last Minstrel. Memoirs of Juan José Arreola [Mexico City: Diana, 1998]). I saw him for the last time in Guadalajara in December 1996 when I accompanied him to his launch of *Antiguas primicias* (Old First Fruits), a handful of verse from his youth, which was the pretext for Juan José talking about Jean Paul, Schopenhauer, Léautaud, Saint Teresa, Papini, Saint Paul, whose spirits turned the lecture hall into a devil's cauldron.

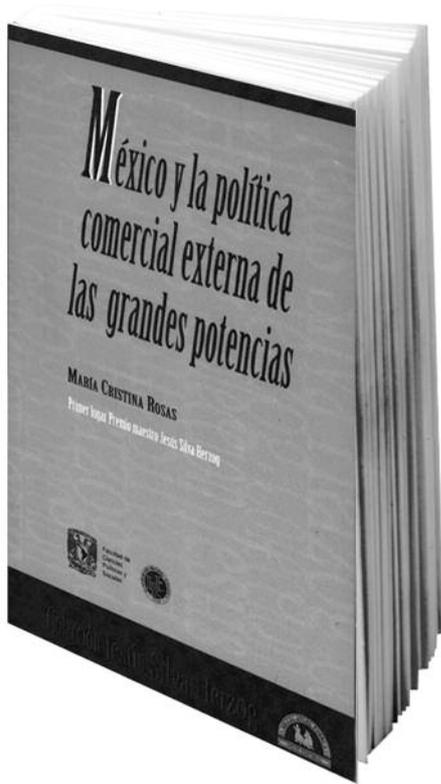
I remember my father and Arreola playing chess for long, inevitable hours, and once, playing tennis, dressed in clothing that made Juan José look like a combination of elf and dandy. Each of Arreola's visits to the house brought with it the possibility that Pandora's box would open up and out would come not all the ills of the world that Prometheus had gathered, but a gush of quotes, poems and books. One day Arreola was very frightened when he arrived: he had fallen asleep while reading *Monsieur Proust*, the work that Céleste Albaret, Proust's housekeeper, dedicated to the French novelist. When he awoke, a dream within a dream or a terrifying ghost, Proust himself appeared to Arreola and reproached him, according to Juan José's tortured narrative, his neglect of his literary obligations. I never knew, given the confidential nature of the psychiatrist's couch, how my father managed to calm him down. But ever since then, my whole family reads Proust. Since at the bottom of Pandora's box all that remains is hope, we will not falter until there is another apparition. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Reprinted with the author's permission, from the magazine *Letras Libres* 37 (Mexico City), January 2002.

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Reviews



México y la política comercial externa de las grandes potencias

(Mexico and the Great Powers' Foreign Trade Policy)

María Cristina Rosas

Miguel Ángel Porrúa/Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales/Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas-UNAM
Mexico City, 1999, 478 pp.

Together with the United States, Mexico has suffered the effects of an economic recession, sharpened after the September 11 terrorist attacks. This is not fortuitous. In 1999, foreign trade made up 63 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product, a clear contrast with the modest 17 percent it represented in 1970 according to the World Bank's World Development Indicators for 2001. At the same time, according to the Ministry of the Economy, the United States accounted for 82.89 percent of Mexico's foreign trade in 2000.

These two phenomena, Mexico's noticeable integration into the world economy and its particular dependence on the U.S. market, were the incentives for the author to carry out this research. *México y la política comercial externa de las grandes potencias* offers a panorama of Mexican foreign trade options with an eye to diversifying the risk of dependence on a single market. Among the pieces of information that demonstrate the existence of opportunities that have not been taken advantage of, the author mentions India's 100-million-strong middle class.

Rosas selects six great powers according to criteria well established in international relations theories. Three are developed economies (the United States, the European Union and Japan), another is an economy in transition (Russia) and two are developing countries (China and India). Separately and jointly, they possess several of the different characteristics used to define great powers: criteria such as the volume of their gross domestic product (GDP), population, armed forces and nuclear capabilities; the countries that are home to the world's 20 most important arms producers or largest banks and corporations; and which are the world's main exporters. Economic and military capabilities are often defined as "hard power", while scientific-technological development and the ability to have an impact on the world through different channels (like in international institutions) are known as "soft power."

With a leadership role in many of these categories, the great powers are particularly important in the field of trade. The book's second chapter presents elements characterizing the recent evolution of their trade policies (in the 1990s). Among the aspects mentioned are the end of the Uruguay Round negotiations under the aegis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the creation of the World Trade Organization, the trend toward regionalism, the unilateral liberalization of trade by developed countries and economies in transition, increased trade tensions and the emergence of new issues that force a review of the links between domestic and foreign policies, for example, labor standards and the environment.

The next six chapters look individually at each of the great powers selected. What is interesting is that the author

does not limit her analysis to commenting on chronologically presented statistics linked to trade policy issues, but begins with a general sketch of the history, culture and economic development of each power, according to the influence that its particularities have on the capacities and performance of these economies with regard to trade.

These chapters can be read several ways. Each has a very precise structure and objective: coming to an understanding of the elements behind trade policy in the case of each economy, then defining it and examining it vis-à-vis its most important trade partners. The footnotes are often short articles about very specific issues that allow the reader to look more deeply into recent controversies and debates. The tables she has included offer extra information, making the book not only an analysis of its topic, but also a reference book, for which the index of tables listed at the end and the index of Internet addresses of international institutions and national governments are very useful.

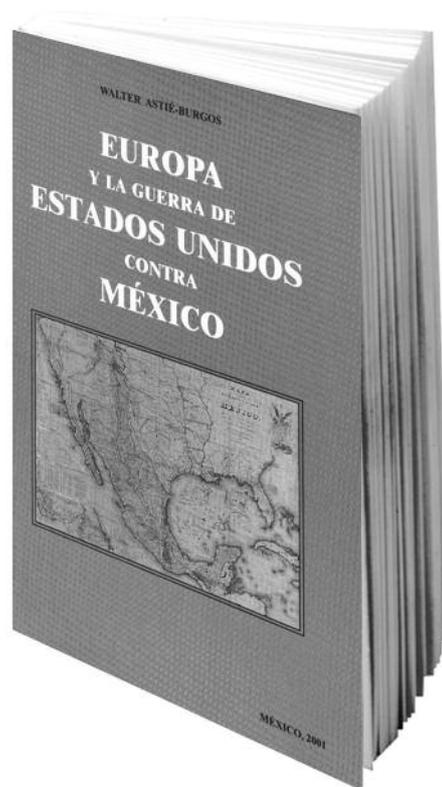
The author includes aspects that usually go beyond the scope of this kind of analysis. For example, the chapter on China has segments dedicated to the recent situation of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao, important Asian economies. The chapter on Russia briefly examines the possible unification of Russia and Belarus, today independent countries but that have been and continue to be complementary economies. When dealing with the European Union, the author does not skip over the issue of its broadening out to the East; the chapter on India includes a section on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; and the section about Japan describes and analyzes the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC). In a particularly long chapter, she uses the same approach to analyze Mexico's trade policy.

The final chapter, describing Mexico's trade relations with the six powers, is shorter. This is because of the scant importance that all these countries—with the exception of the United States—have in trade with Mexico. However, the author does not describe how Mexico's trade balance with them is structured, what kinds of goods and services we sell and import, which would have been much more useful than stating only the amounts, the growth rate and whether there has been a trade deficit or surplus for each one over the last 10 years.

In summary, this book is timely, and the actors in the Mexican economy, both government and business, should take advantage of it to reestablish a balance in what drives

its expansion given Mexico's sustained tendency to increase trade.

César Guerrero
Writer



**Europa y la guerra de Estados Unidos
contra México**

(Europe and the United States War against Mexico)

Walter Astié-Burgos

Mexico City, 2001, 313 pp.

Power and world hegemony have had significant weight in the origins of what we today call international relations. For more than 500 years, the construction and consolidation of Western predominance has to a great degree guided the edification of the international order.

Specifically, the century that just ended is testimony to the formation of a new world power that not only influenced the fundamental lines of the international order for 100 years, but has also managed to remain until now the

world's greatest power; I am referring, of course, to the United States. The question arises: What factors turned this eighteenth-century nation of protestant immigrants into a twentieth-century super-power? For Walter Astié-Burgos, the answer is partially to be found in a fundamental historical event in Mexico-U.S. relations: the War of 1847, in which Mexico lost more than half its territory and the United States extended its borders enormously through an expansionist policy based on a strategy of provocation and simulation.

The author's aim is to emphasize the importance of this historic event—little recognized by historians and internationalists—in the construction of U.S. hegemony. Astié-Burgos takes a new look at the War of 1847, considering it not just an isolated event pertinent only to the history of Mexico or the United States or of both, but rather a contribution to the creation of a new and vigorous power that would first establish hegemony over the Western Hemisphere and later over the world. Therefore, the implications of this event were transcendental for the development of contemporary international relations.

It should also be said that the author tries to explain this specific historic event in the light of the evolution of the international relations of the time. U.S. expansionism, he stresses, is a product of its European heritage, which is why he seeks to reconstruct the European legacy in North America and its repercussions on the regional and international level from the point of view of an internationalist and diplomat.

In the first part of the book, after a review of the economic and political formation of Europe from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, the author points to the power the European nations acquired after the conquest and colonization of the Americas, making them the only world power from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. As a product of this Western supremacy, territorial expansionism was key in European domination and the main motivation behind the rivalries among the European nations themselves. Spain and England became not only the most important colonial powers, but also the source of two very differentiated historical legacies, which in the long run propitiated the creation of “two different social, political, economic and administrative structures in North America.”

With the English recognition of the newly constituted United States in 1783, the geopolitical space in North America was redrawn; a new relationship of forces was born. The

young republic would reinstate territorial expansionism as a fundamental principle of its political agenda, although, in contrast with European expansionist policy, it would actually buy territory after fabricating incidents that would prompt the sale. This is what it did in the cases of Louisiana and Florida, purchased from the French and the Spanish, respectively.

In the second part of the book, the author deals with the implications of this expansionism once Mexico became independent in 1821. After that, once again U.S. expectations changed with an increase in its territorial ambition given the difficulties the new Mexican nation was facing. European hegemony was soon replaced by that of the United States, and thus began a relationship with Mexico that, far from being friendly, was fraught with continual clashes between the two countries leading up to war.

Texan independence from Mexico in 1836 reactivated U.S. expansionist aspirations. In the aftermath of the U.S. annexation of Texas in 1845, pointing to greater expansionism, came one of the most serious and costly wars that Mexico ever fought, a war that would change the destiny of both countries, turning one into a victim of an outrage and the other into a burgeoning world power.

Undoubtedly an unjust war, as the author maintains, the conflict of 1847 was a contradictory initiative by a young republic that waved the banner of the values of democracy and progress, but acted under the impetus of an absolute monarchy. Thus, Astié-Burgos concludes that “while the war essentially stemmed from the situations that existed at the time in the United States, in Mexico and in their bilateral dealings, it also was part of a general trend that had begun elsewhere and in earlier times.” Certainly, the European expansionist legacy had taken on renewed strength in the United States. The annexation of California and New Mexico in 1848 would increase U.S. territory, making it reach from ocean to ocean, and was a turning point in the construction of U.S. hegemony.

Astíé-Burgos, then, in a book that does not pretend to be exhaustive, but does aspire to historic rigor, contributes as an internationalist to resituating the significance and implications that a specific historic event had for the development of international relations.

Bibiana Gómez Muñoz
Internationalist



Appel