

VOICES *of* MEXICO

MEXICAN PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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Indigenous Mexican textiles

Carlos Romero Giordano



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Mexico: Shock and change

Hector Aguilar Comín

Parties and Reform

Rafael Segovia

Between anguish and hope

Interview with Arturo Rivera



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VOICES of MEXICO

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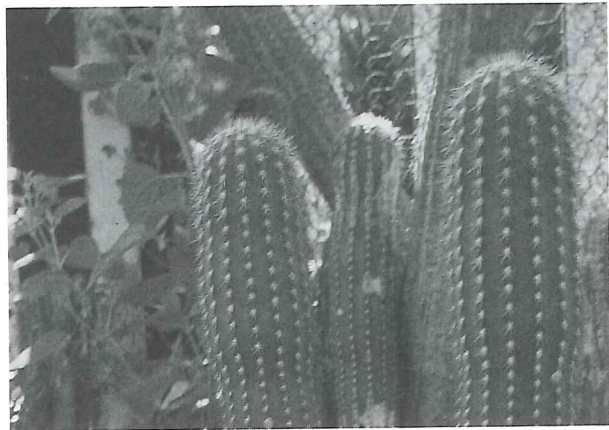


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Cover: Arturo Rivera, *The Key*, oil on cardboard, 1993.
Photo by Jesús Sánchez Uribe.

Our voice

October's meeting in Washington between presidents Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and Bill Clinton of the United States was an undoubted success. A team spirit characterized the speeches and meetings, talks with political and economic leaders, as well as those invited to the ceremonies and perceptions on the part of the mass media. This is one more demonstration of the fact that relations between our two countries have reached a level of maturity beneficial to both. We have learned to be friends, both in times of euphoria and during periods of redefinition.

In Mexico and the United States, we finally recognize our differences while respecting the grandeur of our identities. We know that the world has entered an era of globalization, when it behooves us to find mutual windows of opportunity at the same time as we understand, and are prepared to discuss, our disagreements. There is a consciousness that the problems confronting us today go beyond borders and therefore demand a search for joint solutions.

Drug trafficking, migration, human rights and ecology are issues that require broad vision and the willingness of nations' leaders to cooperate, to listen to each other, to create a new consensus. Above and beyond the origins of these problems, only conceptions formulated by leaders of great vision can lead to strategies which demand teamwork in order to provide solutions. We have gone from the stage of assigning blame to the level of perceiving the urgency of beginning to imagine long-term bilateral solutions.

Miguel Mancera writes about the key role played by Manuel Gómez Morín in founding the Banco de México in 1925, during the era when Alberto Pani headed the Secretariat of the Treasury. The Banco de México, Mancera tells us, is a financial institution which was fundamental

in backing a single form of currency after the uncertainties of the post-Revolution era.

Ambassador José Juan de Olloqui stresses the need to diversify our markets towards the Pacific Rim. In his opinion, we should not seek conflicts with our neighbors to the north, but should try to consolidate significant trade relations in new markets.

In his essay, Emilio Coral invites us to admire the five "Turriana medallions," 18th-century allegorical paintings whose themes allude to history, archeology, hydraulics, navigation and music. Their pictorial majesty currently graces the National Library, which is part of our country's highest educational institution (UNAM).

Some countries have to exploit their limited arts and crafts in order to attract tourism. In contrast, Mexico displays a wealth of arts and crafts admired around the world, which has translated into a renewal of that which is profoundly Mexican. Nevertheless, Romero Giordano warns us of the danger that our ethnographic legacy may disappear. He shows how the nation's textile art, which continues to use natural dyes of great beauty, has been admired since the arrival of the first Spaniards. However, male garments have almost ceased to exist, while those for women increasingly tend to disappear.

In the article on Frida Kahlo, Martínez Zalce tells us about the painter's *Diario íntimo* (Intimate Diary). He invites us to enter the writings and images of a unique woman who was a mixture of genius, passion and suffering.

The doors of the National Archive at Lecumberri are opened to us by the archive's Director, Patricia Galeana. She mentions some of the invaluable documents safeguarded there, among them Hernán Cortés' "Judgement of Residence" (1526).

Roberto Torres Escalona's article refers to a Renaissance masterpiece entitled *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, by Andreas Vesalius, a book which contains a very beautiful collection of engravings explaining the functioning of the human body. Vesalius had a thorough knowledge of the human body, since he was the first to dissect cadavers.

We should not forget that the National University is an institution from which men and women of great value have graduated. Mario Molina, who received the 1995 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, is one of them.

In "The Forgotten Muralists," Julieta Ortiz Gaitán tells us how José Vasconcelos supported the development of muralism in Mexico. In line with his great goal of educating the illiterate masses, he conceived of a project in which painters would be able to give free rein to their imagination on the walls of public buildings. The result is the majestic work of painters such as Revueltas, Zalce, Anguiano, González Camarena and O'Higgins. According to Ortiz Gaitán, while some painters' work highlighted more universal values—as was the case with Montenegro, Mérida and Rodríguez Lozano—all of them expressed a sense of nationalism and social conscience. He also reminds us that, on our National University's campus, we can admire impressive works by Eppens, Chávez Morado, O'Gorman and Mérida, artists who were all greatly influenced by the muralist movement.

We also include an interview with one of Mexico's most important contemporary painters, Arturo Rivera, whose work is distinguished by its highly symbolic and conceptual content.

In this issue we pay a visit to the Museum of Cultures, where we can find artistic collections of great value from almost every corner of the planet.

Héctor Aguilar Camín locates the origins of Mexico's crisis in the reforms which had to begin in 1982. Nevertheless, he points out that, unlike the bankruptcy occurring in that year, today there is no deficit and exports have increased.

In the article "Poverty and Health: Two Challenges for Mexican Social Policy," Silvia Núñez mentions the efforts made in Mexico with regard to health care. She points out, however, that much remains to be done. She considers that all possibilities should be discussed and analyzed, and that privatization should even be considered, in order to find the most effective social policy in this field.

In her article "Women Clearing New Paths," Gabriela Delgado describes what happened at the Fourth World Women's Conference. She emphasizes the fascinating diversity of the women who attended from the world's most distant countries. She comments on the difficulty of reaching agreements, due to the diversity of ideologies, cultures and religions which were represented. Despite the obstacles, consensus accords were reached on the human rights of women and girls, access to education, jobs and defense of the family, among other issues.

Rafael Segovia tells us about the history of political parties in Mexico. He stresses the fact that in the case of Mexico the government has been a fundamental player in the formation and consolidation of the party system. In his opinion, the great beneficiary of the 1977 electoral reform was the PAN (National Action Party), while he considers that in contrast the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) has been losing followers over the years due to its internal strife.

Our university is in mourning. In this issue, Voices of Mexico pays tribute to the Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman, who passed away in September after having produced an important body of historical work on our country.

Our university's Rector, José Sarukhán, introduces us to the fascinating world of biological diversity, whose magnitude is such that recent estimates state that we know less than ten percent of the species inhabiting the earth. He reminds us that Mexico is one of the five countries with the greatest number of species within their territory, and adds his voice to those fighting for conservation of our planet's rich biological patrimony.

Julián Castro Rea notes that Canada's foreign policy has always reiterated that country's support for multilateral institutions. Nevertheless, he indicates that since the Liberals were reelected, foreign policy has become more pragmatic, focusing on Canada's economic development.

Finally, in the review section, Alberto Ruy Sánchez invites us to savor Octavio Paz's book *Vislumbres de la India* (*Glimpses of India*), and we find ourselves sharing his experiences in that country. Claire Joysmith reviews Norma Elia Cantú's book *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* and helps us better understand what it means to live on the border. ❧

Manuel Gómez Morín, creator of the Banco de México¹

*Miguel Mancera Aguayo**

Since it was established, our central bank has been of great importance for Mexico. In commemorating its foundation, we face the welcome obligation to evoke the memory of an exemplary citizen, Manuel Gómez Morín, who played a crucial role in the bank's takeoff.

The figure of Manuel Gómez Morín and the establishment of the Banco de México are inextricably linked in the financial history of Mexico. I do not believe it is an exaggeration to state that Gómez Morín's was a multi-faceted talent: he was a man of reflection, convictions and action. His sharp intelligence, broad vision, wideranging culture and juridical erudition gave rise to projects, laws, works and institutions. It is this latter facet, that of the designer of institutions, that we seek to stress today.

Manuel Gómez Morín began his career as a lawyer, university official and public servant at an early age. He established his successful law office in 1919, and by 1921, at the age of 24, he was already Undersecretary of the Treasury. Nevertheless, the real upsurge of his creative activity, when he used his entire potential as a national designer and builder, began in 1924, with the most ambitious and all-sided project undertaken by a Mexico which was beginning to bid farewell to arms.

With Alberto Pani heading the Secretariat of the Treasury, the administration of General Plutarco Elías

Calles set itself the objective of transforming the nation's economy. The program was oriented to the entire economic spectrum, from banking and treasury reform through the promotion of foreign trade, industrialization, colonization of the nation's territory and the promotion of agriculture.

Manuel Gómez Morín was probably the inspirer and main executor of Pani's program for rehabilitating the public treasury and reorganizing the country's financial system. In 1925 he presided over the First National Fiscal Convention, served as advisor to the Technical Fiscal Department, drew up the new General Law on Titles and Credit Operations, worked on several fiscal laws, prepared the law and statutes governing the Agricultural Credit Bank, outlined a plan for social security, and also put forward a low-income credit plan. Yet the most significant contribution he made that year may have been his key participation in formulating the law, statutes and charter of the Banco de México, which opened its doors on September 1, 1925.

Gómez Morín had shown special interest in this project since the enactment of our Constitution. In 1921 he drew up a number of documents regarding the creation of a "single bank of issue." In one of these documents he objected to the initiative General Alvaro Obregón presented to Congress, which proposed to delay the establishment of the single bank and created eight regional currency issue banks in its place. Another criticized the plan put forward by Minister De la Huerta, proposing the creation of an institu-

* Governor of the Banco de México.

¹ Speech by Miguel Mancera Aguayo, during the inauguration of the symposium "The Banco de México and national reconstruction."

Photos: Archivo Gómez Morín



Manuel Gómez Morín.

tion which would be administered by the government alone. Gómez Morín's opinions, as well as the proposals contained in other pertinent documents from the period of the Carranza administration, were included in a personal report presented to the Chamber of Deputies in July 1921. This report recommended the foundation of what was then called the "Single Bank of Issue," and some guidelines were put forward for organizing the bank. Nevertheless, this work was interrupted due to the crisis between the oil companies and the government of General Alvaro Obregón.

In late 1921 Gómez Morín moved to New York in order to take charge of the Mexican Financial Agency located in that city. Having settled there, the young official enrolled at Columbia University with the central objective of studying the functioning of central banks, in particular the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank. From his outpost in New York, in his correspondence with De la Huerta he insisted on the need

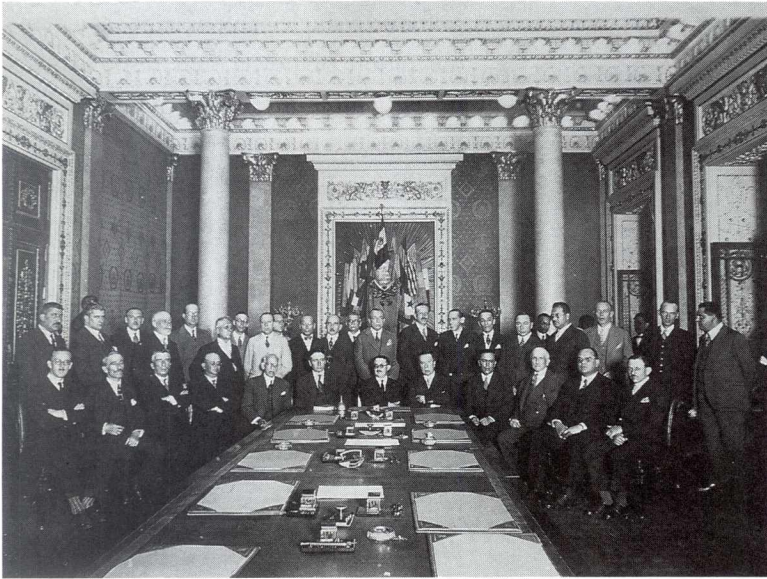
to found a single bank of issue "as a demonstration of power and responsibility in the face of pressures from American bankers and oilmen."

Towards the end of 1924, thanks to a very scrupulous handling of public finances, Minister Pani achieved an objective that had remained unfulfilled since the promulgation of the Constitution during the Carranza administration: accumulating the surplus needed as capital for the hotly debated and much-desired single bank. Pani then proceeded to form and preside over a commission charged with drawing up the law, statutes and charter governing the bank.

The extraordinary powers which Congress conferred on the executive branch regarding treasury matters meant that the work aimed at setting up a central bank did not have to be drawn out in extensive legislative debates such as those

which had prevented the formulation of a definitive project over the course of the previous seven years. The commission for drafting the bill was made up of three people: Manuel Gómez Morín, the Sonora lawyer Fernando de la Fuente and a very experienced foreign banker, Elías de Lim. This group was humorously dubbed "the three musketeers."

Despite rumors alleging that Gómez Morín sympathized with the De la Huerta movement—known for the uprising of 1923—Pani chose him as a member of the drafting commission. Fernando de la Fuente—a figure who maintained close ties to his fellow Sonorans Calles and Obregón—interceded in favor of Gómez Morín's appointment. Gómez Morín's participation in the commission's work was so outstanding that when the Banco de México was inaugurated on September 1, 1925, President Calles decided to name him president of the new bank's Administrative Council. In his message to the nation on that occasion, Calles specifically mentioned the three men who had



Meeting of the Administrative Council in Gómez Morín's directorship.

worked hardest on founding the central bank. This kind of recognition was at that time unprecedented in presidential reports.

A group of highly knowledgeable and prestigious individuals was chosen to make up that first Administrative Council: experienced lawyers, successful businessmen and veteran financiers. Yet no member of the group displayed as much economic knowledge and vision as Gómez Morín.

From the foundation of the Banco de México in September 1925 until his resignation in 1929, Manuel Gómez Morín was not only the leader and guide of the bank's Administrative Council but the person whose technical opinion was indispensable in the strategic decision-making process in the institution's governing bodies as well as in its daily operations. In the final analysis he also served as the bank's critical conscience.

As president of the Administrative Council, Gómez Morín had a record of correct judgment calls and a capacity for foresight, in line with his particular view of "technique." In his words: "Technique does not mean science. It presupposes science, but at the same time goes beyond it by realizing it and subordinating it to a moral criterion, a human ideal. This involves a knowledge of reality, a grasp of the means for action, the concrete determination of a goal whose

realization is possible in accordance with our real abilities, the review of concepts and institutions in order to make action a noble deed." Our duty, he maintained, "is to know where the evils lie which demand action, and to concretize, in achievable programs, the indeterminate common wish for betterment."

According to Gómez Morín, the central bank had been formed "during a time of grave uncertainty, in the midst of an economy that lacked activity as well as values, as the starting point for an optimistic program of action undertaken amidst the greatest pessimism, as a cornerstone rather than a keystone in

the edifice of the nation's economy."

Clearly, an institution arising in such circumstances would require guidance and orientation, and these were provided by Gómez Morín himself. During the first years of the Banco de México's existence, when its operations included those of commercial banking, it exercised a significant influence in making credit more flexible and improving the conditions in which credit was granted. Yet the most important thing was the strengthening and consolidation of the bank, the increase in its resources and the rise in its prestige and authority. This led to Gómez Morín's 1928 statement that, until then, the institution's work had been "oriented especially to consolidating the bank and making it an effective instrument for the tasks it would later fulfill." In 1928 the Council's dynamic young president said that the Banco de México had not been "conceived as an isolated, programless institution. It was not founded in order to provide the country with yet another bank at the same level as the nation's other credit institutions." He added that the bank could not function fully, "nor bear the fruits expected of it, until it develops into what it must be: a central institution among the ensemble of the nation's economic bodies."

Of particular importance were Gómez Morín's conceptions on monetary policy, which the Administrative

Council adopted as its own until the time he left the bank in 1929. He had a clear understanding of the meaning of fiduciary money, which was little understood at that time. He maintained that currency could be exempt from oscillations and upsets only when its issuance and circulation were strictly correlated with demand. This was a way of refuting the “metalistic” beliefs which were still very much in vogue at the time. The value of a coin or currency unit can never depend on the existence of a regulating fund or the availability of metal reserves, nor on its intrinsic value or the “faith invested in an official mint” or the “problematic calculations of a public office.” In brief, the monetary issue was a question of strictly abiding by the thesis he put forward, keeping currency “free from contingencies and the necessities of politics” and making it independent of “any and all idea of barter.”

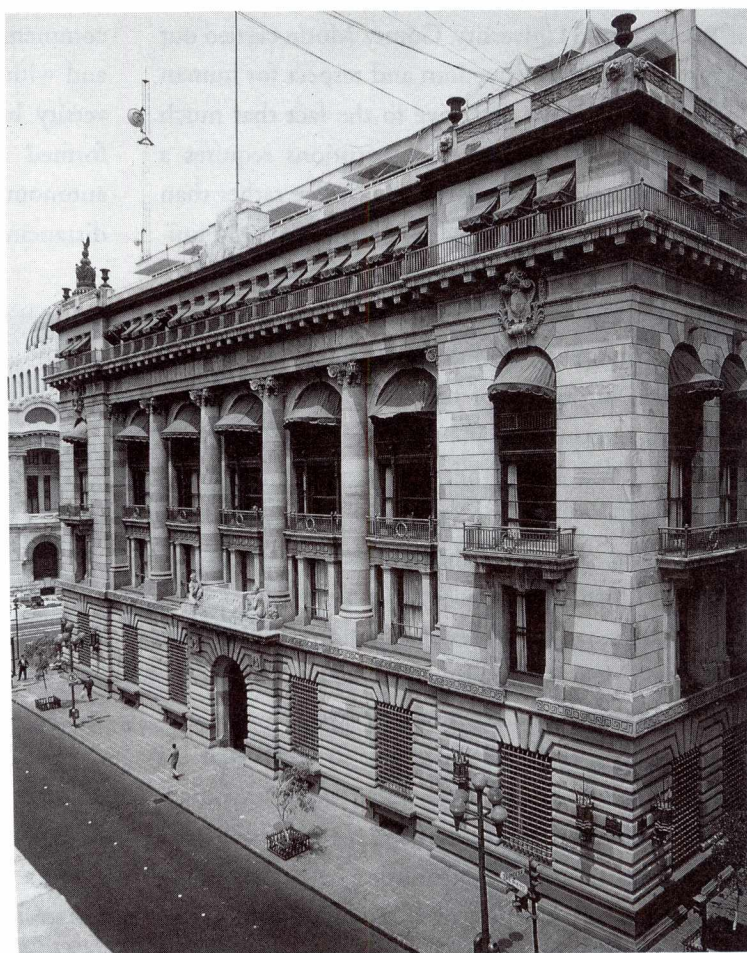
The behavior of the Banco de México in its early years should be judged in light of the economic and political circumstances of the day. The bank arose at a time when memories of the Mexican Revolution’s armed phase were still fresh in the population’s memory; that era of uncertainty meant that citizens were suspicious of paper money. Even after the bank’s inauguration, a number of military risings broke out in Mexico. Thus, while Gómez Morín had said that the bank should keep its distance from the vicissitudes of politics, “so as to avoid being dragged in their wake,” these vicissitudes unquestionably had an effect.

Moreover, the expanding economic cycle Mexico enjoyed at the beginning of the 1920s dissipated rapidly in late 1926; these were the first signs of the great crash of 1929. The prices of Mexico’s two main export products —silver and oil— fell

considerably. To complete the picture, the banking system was prostrated.

The Banco de México’s performance during this period shows that the strategy of consolidation had been correct. There was still no tried and true method for establishing a “single bank of issue” in a country with Mexico’s economic characteristics, let alone one which had gone through ten years of armed struggle. The Banco de México fought to survive and develop, in spite of the dire situation which began in 1927 and prevailed over the course of several years.

The personality of Manuel Gómez Morín did not shine in the financial field alone. At an early age he held important posts in the university milieu. After he resigned from the Mexican Financial Agency in New York, [Education Secretary] José Vasconcelos called on him to head the National School of Jurisprudence,



The Banco de México opened its doors on September 7, 1925.

a post he occupied until early 1925, when he found himself deeply involved in Pani's project for preparing the great banking and financial reform of the Calles years. His position at the head of the School of Jurisprudence was the springboard for his later appointment as Rector of the University in 1934.

*The figure of Manuel Gómez Morín
and the establishment of the Banco de México
are inextricably linked in the
financial history of Mexico.*

The ITAM (Mexican Technological Institute), which is hosting today's symposium, embodies many of Gómez Morín's conceptions regarding education. As Rector of the University, Gómez Morín carried out a crusade in favor of freedom and respect for human beings. He was very attentive to the fact that much of the work of educational institutions requires a genuine vocation and a spirit of sacrifice rather than remuneration, much less compulsion. His 1934 university odyssey also corresponded to the desire to preserve, "tooth and claw," the cardinal principle behind the creation of ITAM: the autonomy of higher educational institutions.

Like ITAM since the time it was first established, in his tenure at the head of the School of Jurisprudence Gómez Morín conceived of and promoted the creation of new professions and specialties, as demanded by Mexico's always dynamic economic, political and social reality. It is fitting to recall that his project for reforming that department included, for the first time, the establishment of a bachelor's degree in economics. Outstanding constants in the attitudes, work and life of Manuel Gómez Morín were the value of continuous improvement and excellence in both thought and deed, as well as the

idea —so clearly appreciated by ITAM's patrons and leaders— that everything should be submitted to a constant process of renewal and change, and that any task always implies a social responsibility. Given this commonality or concurrence in principles and aspirations, it is very fitting that the host institution for the symposium which begins today is none other than the ITAM.

Thought and action were always linked in the spirit and vocation of Manuel Gómez Morín. This was the source of the spirit of foundation that characterized him and was one of the concrete forms of his urge for action, a rational action enriched by technique and, above all, inspired by high moral values. The Manuel Gómez Morín Cultural Center, whose tasks include administering the library gathered by the man we commemorate today, was created in that same spirit and with that same vocation. In honoring the university heritage of Gómez Morín, this center was formed autonomously from the ITAM, but that autonomy means union or association rather than a distancing between the two institutions. In line with



One of the first bills issued by the Banco de México.

the goals in pursuit of which ITAM was founded, the cultural enterprise of the Gómez Morín family, together with the library it administers, have found a home at that cultural center. The organization of this symposium on the foundation of the Banco de México and national economic reconstruction is a clear demonstration of how fruitful this collaboration is.✕

Mexico and the North Pacific

José Juan de Olloqui*

As has been repeated time and again, the fact that Mexico belongs to the North American Free Trade Agreement does not exclude our relationship with other countries and regions, and this is as it should be. In this context, Mexico's interest in the Pacific takes on special importance, given that there has been a relationship lasting several centuries, although the success obtained has been less than satisfactory.

It is, in fact, common to encounter optimistic figures on our relation with the countries of the Pacific Basin, because they incorporate statistics on investment or trade, including those derived from our relationship with the United States, which is not based on our access to a common ocean but on being united as close neighbors. In like fashion, the growing relationship with Canada—and now with Chile, a possible new partner in the Free Trade Agreement—is due to causes having little to do with being Pacific Rim countries.

In the case of Mexico, as a neighbor of the United States it is necessary, more than to maximize, to optimize our relations with that country. I have put forward this conception since 1971, after being named Mexico's Ambassador to the United States, when I noted that "Mexico needs to diversify its foreign trade, without ideological distinctions, with all the world's countries, so as not to depend on a single market," and in order to be able to exercise all its political and economic options. Throughout my activity

in the sphere of foreign relations I have insisted, among other things, on the importance of broadening our capacity for action *vis à vis* the United States, without engaging in unnecessary confrontations with that country, with which we are united by geography and the reality of its power. In other words, we must seriously seek a genuine independence and not limit ourselves to rhetorically antagonizing the U.S. while doing nothing, thereby becoming more dependent every day.

We may take as our starting point the idea that *the seas do not divide; they unite*. Thus we should approach the Pacific nations on the basis that, simply, *we are their other shore*, facing the same ocean.

All the Asian Pacific countries are of great importance for our nation. Examples include Australia and Singapore. Nevertheless, in today's world, it is interesting to take a look at the regionalizations or sub-regionalizations within the overall framework of "globalization."

I think it would be very important to explore the possibility of integrating, to some degree, the countries belonging to the Northern Pacific Basin, that is, Canada, the United States and Mexico, together with Japan and Korea—that will eventually reunify and has a total population of 67 million inhabitants, 44 million in the South and 23 in the North. China and Russia are options which would need to be considered within this schema. The idea of forming a "Sub-Basin" would, moreover, be an additional element that could be used within the Free Trade Agreement.

* Former Mexican Ambassador to the United States.



The Pacific Rim nations.

Our closeness to the United States is very attractive to Japan and China, taking into account such factors as skilled labor, raw materials, etc., so long as the establishment of maquiladoras could be handled in such a way as not to cause problems with United States trade unions.

In today's world, it is interesting to take a look at the regionalizations or sub-regionalizations within the overall framework of "globalization."

In fact, processes of integration are underway in the Pacific, and as the "other shore" it is worth our while to take them into consideration, even if we are not contemplating definitive economic or military commitments.

Contacts regarding North Pacific Rim integration will be academic and informal at the beginning. They will be followed by a growing economic presence and greater political efforts.

While the purpose of this article is not to develop these ideas,

the usefulness of establishing priorities may be outlined. In particular, I consider it fundamental to pay greater attention to the North Pacific. And within that subregion, it is necessary to achieve closer relations with Japan and Korea.

If we put forward prudent, pertinent and fulfillable initiatives in this regard, they could be funda-

The idea of forming a “Sub-Basin” would, moreover, be an additional element that could be used within the Free Trade Agreement.

mental for the future. If the tendency to “regionalization” becomes more accentuated, they would help prevent us —as promoters— from being left out.

This does not mean that the central and southern parts of the Pacific Basin would cease to interest us. Suffice it to say that it has become a ritual, during each administration, for the president to travel not only to the United States, Canada and sometimes a number of European capitals, but also to Japan, China, and formerly to the USSR as well. This is all to the good, if these visits are part of a “foreign policy project” which is followed through. If this is not the case, then they are merely goodwill visits and therefore of a cosmetic nature.

Our geographic location makes us simultaneously North American and Central American, at the same time that we face the North Atlantic, the Pacific and the Caribbean; but, above all, we are Latin Americans. Mexico is a highly multidimensional country, since in addition to the aforementioned characteristics, we are Spanish speakers, and out of the many races that speak Spanish, one of every three individuals is Mexican. We are also multiracial and have our own culture, which in reality has been more a civilization than a culture. Despite everything that is presently occurring in our country, we are an emerging power.

In addition to our geopolitical nature, perhaps the most important thing is that we have a national

character, which we could define as a population’s will to rule its own destiny and determine its level of international activity. It is necessary to continue affirming this in Mexico. Otherwise, setbacks could produce the morale of a defeated people.

Neither is it advisable to engage in imprudent activism surpassing our economic capacities, since this would be counterproductive. History is filled with examples.

In this sense, we should avoid unnecessary conflicts with our NAFTA partners. We should never forget the fact that Bismarck drew closer to some European countries and away from others to the extent

that this served Prussia, but without forgetting that Russia was there as a huge neighbor, and that he always acted in accordance with his country’s best interests. Naturally, we should act in the same way towards the United States.

Despite its current difficulties, Mexico possesses the necessary harmony in the elements making up the nation’s power, such as its territory, natural resources and an abundant population, a civilization more than a culture and, fortunately, a splendid geographical location. This distinguishes it from countries such as Argentina, Australia or Canada, which, despite their size and abundant natural resources, have a limited population, which is unfavorable, or whose geographical position (in the case of the first two) is unenviable.

Singapore and Hong Kong remain city-states, without the basis that a country such as ours can have; on the other hand, it is true that they have had an excellent coordination between the government and the private sector. In our case, private enterprise has been too cautious, perhaps due to a lack of governmental orientation spurring it to participate in our possible adventure in Asia and many other places.

It is important that Mexico, with a certain degree of selfishness, seek to capitalize on its geographical

location and its specific weight in the region. Thus, it is indispensable that, as has been the case so far, the various forums and mechanisms for integration of the Pacific Basin not include countries which lack access to this ocean, even if they carry out more trade with the Asian region than we do —such as Brazil. Let us be frank: competition is a good thing, but when one is competing for limited resources or markets, the less competitors the better, and any element can be of assistance in this regard.

We should not forget that the European bloc is, by definition, closed to non-European countries, although Mexico is the first Latin American country to achieve special treatment.

We cannot belittle the fact that in the '90s there will be a major adjustment in the world's most important markets, such as the United States and Europe. The former needs to correct its trade deficits, while the latter must confront the dismemberment of the Eastern bloc.

In the same way that Switzerland's model of direct democracy, which is closest to that of Athens, cannot be applied to Mexico —due to our territorial dimensions, among many other aspects— one cannot expect to achieve the same economic results from the application of other models, including those coming from within our own hemisphere. Let us see why:

First. The demands of the future will tend to be more stringent, even under development models which were successful in the past. For example, the Asian Pacific Rim countries were very successful in adopting a strategy of outward-oriented growth in the late '60s and early '70s, due to their great discipline and long-term sacrifice —a kind of sacrifice which Latin America should have undertaken. Let us note in passing that these countries did not cease to be protectionist, and continue to be so; one need only note the current U.S./Japan trade conflicts.

Second. The Asian countries' success was largely due to the fact that the United States was experiencing a growth of its markets while, on the contrary, Latin American countries took on debt during the '80s and were unable to compete in exports to the United States. All this led to Latin America's "lost decade," which did away with the over 100-year advantage we had due to our having won independence before those countries (with the exception of Japan and Thailand, which were never colonized).

Third. The Pacific's most dynamic countries succeeded in easily conquering world markets, at a time when they were the only ones following this strategy. Now the number of countries with the same goals has risen considerably.

It might not be a pointless exercise to begin thinking, once again, about a specifically Mexican development model rather than adopting those of other countries which have a different geographical location and neighbors, small populations and different experiences of political development. It is likewise necessary to design a political strategy with clear objectives and a well worked out course of action. This means having the conceptual and action-oriented tools which will provide us with additional advantages with

The demands of the future will tend to be more stringent, even under development models which were successful in the past.

regard to other Pacific Basin nations. Mexico can play a key role in the ongoing shift in the relation of forces.

This is also the time for reflection on what is going on in that section of Latin America that has scarcely begun to involve itself in the processes underway, in the South American Pacific area. Ecuador and Central America are to a certain degree marginal; Colombia has yet to get involved.

Despite his recent visit to Japan, the blood ties linking Peru's president to that country have still not been translated into significant achievements; so far the conditions for massive investment in Peru have not been present. Since their economic situation is improving, the two countries are currently looking towards this occurring. It is worth mentioning that Asian countries are more interested in a country's stability or economic potential than in questions of human rights or democratic conceptions.

Chile is a different case: it has a long Pacific coastline as well as the Easter Islands and a long maritime tradition, although its population is only 15 million. We should keep in mind that, like Venezuela in the Caribbean, Chile could become our rival despite the cordial relations of friendship we have with both countries. Curiously enough, in seeking parity with the region's "Big Three" (Mexico, Brazil and Argentina), Chile and Venezuela could reduce Mexico's position without affecting that of Brazil and Argentina; this could be observed in multilateral agencies in particular. They will not become part of the "Triumvirate," but they could align forces to the detriment of Mexico.

Links with this region must also be attended to, since our ties with Central and South American Pacific Rim countries have derived from historic causes which, until now, have been the key factor in our relations.

We should play even more of a determining role, and have already done so. Costa Rica became conscious of its Pacific location and joined the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) in 1991, during PBEC's 24th General International Meeting, held in Guadalajara; this was largely due to Mexico's initiative and support.

Obviously, to the extent that trade increases and becomes more liberalized, and capital mobility exists, there will be a greater economic growth of our market and a rise in Mexico's ability to exert international influence. Not everything will be as attractive and profitable as previously, given that competition is more intense, but I am convinced that we can achieve this goal.

We are moving in the right direction, but we should not view the opening of trade as a panacea or believe that development will be achieved effortlessly. Nor can we play the role for which we are naturally suited unless we have a plan and clear objectives in the context of the region's political tasks.

Mexico cannot accept any limitation of polarity, bipolarity or tripolarity; instead, it must make its decisions autonomously with the aim of recovering the prestige it has lost, without forgetting that nothing can or should stop Mexico in its path to greatness.^M

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The five “medallions of Turriana.”

Allegories of the past in the old National Library

Emilio Coral*

Man is engaged in a constant search for that which will complement his individuality. Thus he becomes involved in the process we call “knowledge,” expressing the results through symbols and allegories in an attempt to synthesize the given experience or particular idea, so it can acquire collective significance.

The difference between symbols and allegories may be expressed as follows. A symbol is the supreme synthesis of realities or metaphysical determinations; it is the expressive and precise conjunction or condensation of significant differences in a figure or icon, which expresses the perception of a reality which almost always remains invisible. An allegory, on the other hand, is made up of a set of metaphors which may even exclude the real sense of the object they represent. Thus, an allegory leads us to the most varied ideas; it is less synthetic than a symbol and therefore less precise.

The five anonymous paintings described in this article are

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part of the National University of Mexico’s holdings. Their thematic content has to do with various branches of science, while their style is representative of the mid-to late 17th-century fusion between motifs originating in the Greco-Roman Classical style and the Rococo taste for allegories. These paintings were previously held by the old Turriana Library, which was later integrated into the National Library when the latter was located in the Old Temple of St. Augustine.

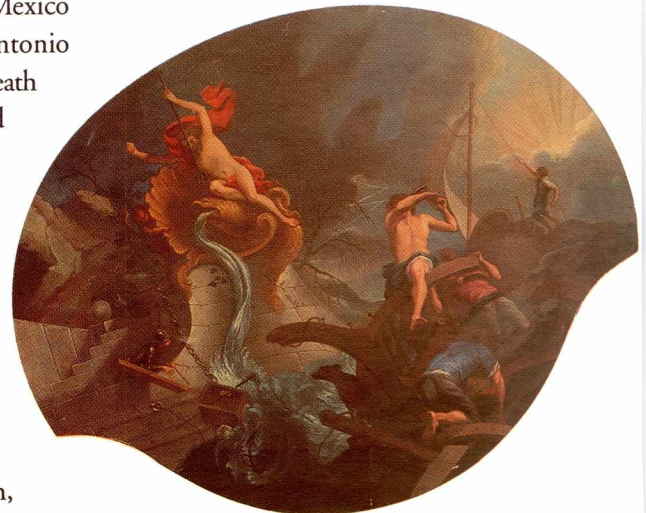
The first sets of books which were to make up the Turriana Library’s collection were originally collected in the early 18th century by the precentor of Mexico City’s cathedral, Dr. Luis Antonio Torres Quintero. Upon his death in 1756 he bequeathed them to his nephews, the brothers Luis Antonio and Cayetano Antonio Torres Tuñón, who were also capitularies at the cathedral. The brothers formalized the library and gave it the name “Turriana.”

After the brothers’ death, the Turriana Library was acquired by the Metropolitan Library in

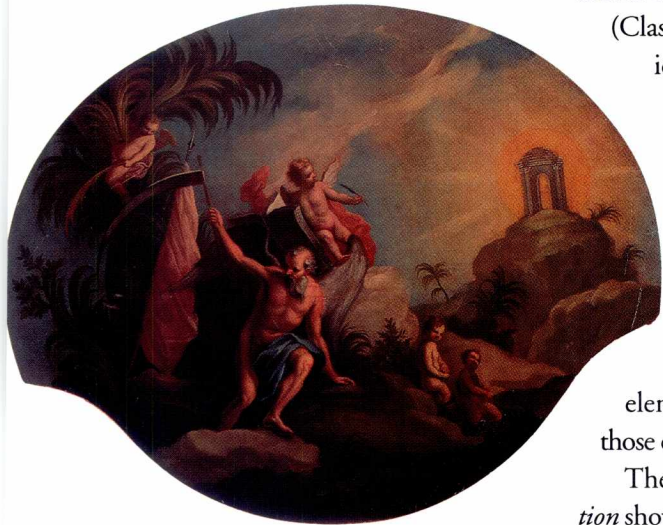
1788; it was closed to the public until 1804. In addition to its collections of books, the brothers provided it with the sum of twenty thousand pesos, which were used for constructing the building which would house the library, located to the west of the cathedral. They also donated a set of medals and pictures, among them the allegorical paintings to which we have referred.

In 1867, when the recently restored government of Benito Juárez seized ecclesiastical properties, the Turriana Library became part of the National Library’s found-

Photos by Arturo Piera



Navigation.



History.

ing collections. José María Benítez, the new library's director, was responsible for receiving the holdings and carried out an inventory which noted the arrival of 10,212 volumes, together with 88 shelves, 40 medallions inscribed with the contents of the shelves, as well as 17 allegorical paintings related to the various branches of the sciences.

The five paintings which concern us here belonged to this set of allegories. Their subjects allude to materials contained in the library's shelves, such as history, archeology, hydraulics, navigation and music. These oil-on-canvas works measure approximately 3 feet high by almost 4 feet wide and are in the form of a horizontal oval flattened on the bottom and placed within a circular composition.

Mexican art historian Francisco de la Maza mentions the paintings on navigation and history in the appendix devoted to illustrations in his work *La mitología*

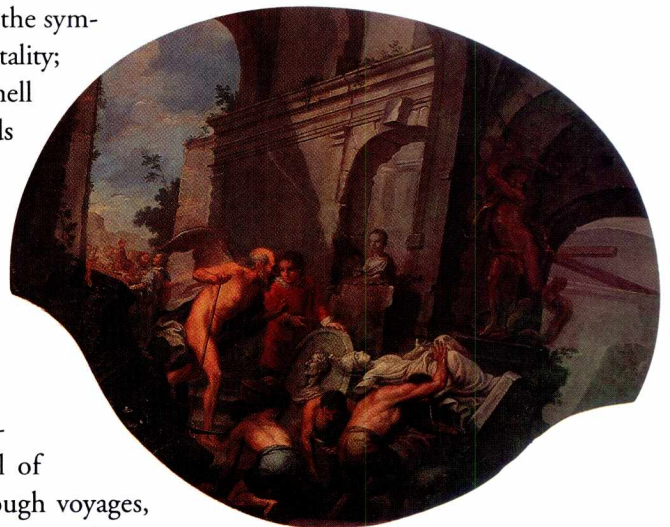
clásica en el arte colonial de México

(Classical Mythology in Mexican Colonial Art). While he states that the theme they depict is based on mythological episodes from Virgil's *Aeneid*, a deeper analysis of the symbolism employed in each of the allegorical paintings reveals elements which differ from those of any episode in the *Aeneid*.

The painting entitled *Navigation* shows a number of interlinked scenes, typical of allegorical representations. The one which occupies the foreground shows several men building a boat near what seems to be a port; looking down from a parapet is a man with a helmet, armor and halberd characteristic of the Renaissance era. In the background we find the image of a man plying the seas aboard a ship, illuminated by the rising sun, symbolizing the search for new horizons. In the upper left-hand part of the painting one can barely make out a representation of the birth of Venus or Aphrodite, the symbol of fertility and vitality; arising from the shell on which she stands is a sea monster, from whose jaws flows the water of the sea. We may consider the figures of the shell and the goddess as allusions to the fecundity of water and the renewal of life that comes through voyages, change and the discovery of new worlds.

The foreground of *History* depicts Cronos or "Father Time" as a naked old man, with wings and a scythe. This painting is an allegory for the return to Classicism: Father Time is walking towards a pavilion which rests on columns and capitals atop a huge, majestically upright rock, a symbol of firmness and plenitude. A splendid sun rises behind the pavilion, illuminating the whole scene, which is filled with stones of various dimensions as well as palm trees. The palms symbolize victorious renewal, the glorious entrance of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem as related in the Evangelists. This is also the significance of the banner placed behind Cronos, a totemic insignia par excellence.

The same representation of Cronos or Father Time appears in the painting entitled *Archeology*. The winged old man with a scythe is depicted as part of an allegory in which a child shows him a medalion of the bust of Julius Caesar,



Archeology.



Music.

while three men carry out excavations in the ground facing them and one unearths a sculpture of Pallas Athena. The image seems to refer, in general terms, to the archeological discoveries made in 1720 near Naples, Italy, when the lost city of Heraklea or Herculano (derived from Herakles or Hercules) was unearthed, as well as the 1748 discovery of Pompeii. Both cities had been covered with lava from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. These discoveries not only gave rise to modern archeology; in the field of art they also led to the gradual abandonment of the Rococo style (derived from the Baroque), with a renewed taste for the patterns of Greek and Romantic Classicism. In the upper right of this painting we also see a sculpture of Hercules, covered with the legendary skin of the lion of Nemea and wielding a club in order to kill a kind of python. The men in the background on the left are contemplating some

of the mural frescos found in the excavations; images from these murals were evoked in the works of many painters who cultivated the Neo-Classical style.

Music shows three musicians in Oriental garb, each holding a different stringed instrument (a cello, violin and bass). Several cherubim appear with them, while on the opposite (left) side of the painting we find the representation of a composer (probably Palestina) in Western dress; a muse with a lute is standing by his side. Two magnificent, Solomonian columns flank the scene, while a number of Classical columns may be observed in the background. These elements bear witness to the integration, in all of these allegorical paintings, of the Baroque style—which had begun to lose its predominance—with the new, Neo-Classical style, which by the last third of the 18th century had come into its own and would then lead to the Academicism characteristic of the first half of the 19th century.

Lastly, in *Hydraulics or Physics* we see, in the foreground, the figure of a personage in Arab dress, directing the activity of several men in Western clothing. To the left, one of these men is pressing down on the end of a lever which lifts the floodgates controlling water for

irrigation. The image seems to allude to the era when Spain had been invaded by the Arabs, who brought such technological innovations as irrigation systems, which allowed for an adequate distribution of water in agricultural regions, through the construction of canals and aqueducts based on the application of the principles of hydraulics or the art of using natural waters.

With regard to the allegories on navigation, archeology, history and hydraulics, it is important to note that their restoration has recently been completed, thanks to which we may now fully enjoy the original qualities of these works, worthy representatives of the emblematic and allegorical painting of New Spain.¹

¹ New Spain was the Colonial name for Mexico. (Translator's note.)



Hydraulics or Physics.

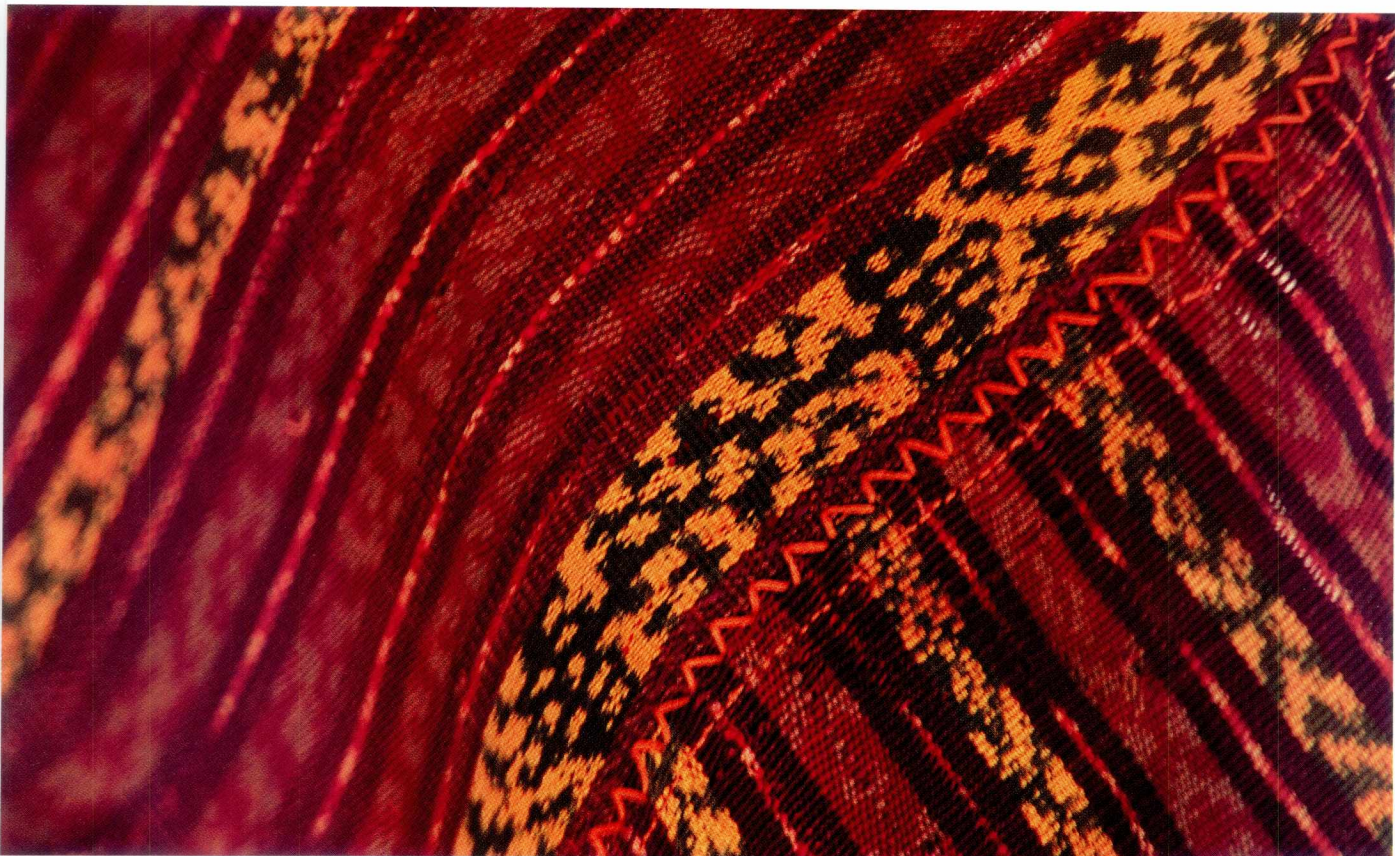
The death agony of indigenous Mexican textiles

Carlos Romero Giordano*

The ambiguity with which the term “handicrafts” is used to describe most hand-made objects has brought about a widespread indifference toward the infinity of traditional national products derived from this human activity. This attitude is understandable when we see stuffed animals, arrangements of artificial flowers, hand-

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made home decorations, costume jewelry, etc., being presented by the mass media as if they had the same importance and cultural value as traditional pottery making, metalwork, basket weaving, lacquer ware or the creation of different textiles woven on backstrap or foot looms. The effect of this “generalization” of handicrafts could not be more disastrous, since the high price of this disloyal competition has been paid by the real artisans.



Photos by Martín Vargas

Quechquemel woven with silk from Toliman, Querétaro.



Meztizo blouse from the coastal Mixtec region.

Stuffed animals may represent Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse and, however well made they may be, they can be produced in Mexico, Berlin or Hong Kong and we will find no substantial difference between them; but lacquer ware from Olinalá can only be made in that old town in the state of Guerrero. And what about any of our indigenous textiles or our mestizo serapes and shawls?

The prevailing indifference in Mexico regarding our extraordinary ethnological heritage is fundamentally due to the lack of adequate information, leading to the unfortunate consequences of today. While many other expressions of our culture have been protected and are proudly exhibited both domestically and internationally, this ethnological legacy, the direct descendant of pre-Hispanic cultures and of the cultural syncretism that originated in the 16th century, is dying out before our very eyes!

At the beginning of this century a cry of alarm was sounded by important personages such as Dr. Atl, Roberto Montenegro, Andrés Molina Enríquez, Manuel Gamio and Miguel Othón de Mendizábal. In the 1950s the voices of Daniel Rubín de la Borbolla and Alfonso Caso were added to the chorus. Yet all their timely observations failed to find the necessary

support. Today, more than ever before, we are forced to rely on foreign museums in order to appreciate what was produced in Mexico only a short time ago.

It is certainly true that some expressions of the misnamed "popular art" have not only managed to survive but even continue to be produced. They can easily be found in any handicraft business; the difference is in the quality of production. In contrast, the splendid heritage of ethnic textiles is going through the last years of its death agony.

There is an ancient tradition of cloth weaving within the cultural area known as Mesoamerica. Unfortunately, because of the climate, we have been left with only a few examples of ancient weaving. Textiles from the central highlands dating from the period between 900 and 500 B.C. clearly show that there was sufficient knowledge to permit the use of cotton fiber threads for weaving, as well as the development and use of the backstrap loom. This loom, however simple it may have been, could only be the result of a long period of technological experimentation.

After the arrival of Hernán Cortés in 1519, the development of textiles achieved by all of the conquered cultures was recorded in the "Historical Sources"



Purépecha sash from the Lacustre region of Michoacán.



Huipil from the High Mixtec region, San Andrés Chicahuaxtla, Oaxaca.

of the 16th century. The most explicit references are found in the writings of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Fray Diego Durán, Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Cortés himself, who, in his *Segunda Carta de Relación* (Second Narrative Letter) to Carlos V, described the admiration caused by the beauty and perfection of the articles of clothing and the many textile gifts that were given to him by the unfortunate captive Tlatoani Moctezuma II.

I have previously pointed out that: “we are quite familiar with the fate that befell documents and objects of every kind at the hands of the conquistadors, both administrators and priests. If it was viewed as necessary to disintegrate the unilaterally subjugated cultures in general, it was particularly imperative to destroy the various polytheistic systems they practiced. On this basis every sign of the former religions and everything derived therefrom was persecuted and punished to the point of cruelty.” Now, “since nearly all the codices were burnt and the majority of political and religious leaders were exterminated, it is possible that some woven clothing took on the role—at least partially— of preserving and transmitting the knowledge contained in the pictographic docu-

ments related to religion itself. It is likely that at least the *huipiles* and *quechquemel*, which because of their daily use were innocuous to the Spaniards, became important elements of resistance to the imposed religion and served as never before to strengthen the threatened view of the universe [held by the conquered peoples].”

How then do we explain the existence of indigenous clothing whose decoration contains the view of the universe held by its maker and wearer? While this question is controversial, I can only pose it here, since space limitations unfortunately do not permit a detailed explanation.

Regarding the symbolic value of colors, it is an accepted fact that some ethnic groups continue to associate the colors blue, yellow, red and black, respectively, with water deities, the sun gods and the gods of the underworld. A concrete example is the cape worn by a medicine man from the Otomí community in San Pablito, in Puebla’s northern mountain range, which because of its colors is associated with the underworld.

The indigenous textiles themselves form a spectacular world. Each ethnic group has its own type, and while there are similarities in the ways they are woven—since most are made with a backstrap loom, an instrument which may be simple or complex—their symbolism and the techniques of weaving, dyeing and decoration give each a special character.

It is little known that most of these garments are colored using natural dyes, almost all of plant origin, as well as snails or cochineal dye of animal origin, in which case the textile is particularly fine and almost always destined for ceremonial use. One example is the *pozahuanco*, a shawl worn by Mixtec women in some coastal towns. It is woven from hand-spun cotton, interwoven with silk threads and dyed with indigo, sea snails and cochineal. The production of the garment with these characteristics ended only 15 years ago.

For the weaver, the above-mentioned dyes represent additional work, not only in the acquisition but also in the preparation of the dyes; as a result, the cost

of the garment increases. Ignorance of these details leads the mestizo buyer to haggle unfairly over the price, which is ironic given that we don't question (and we even inflate) the prices of mass-produced garments.

131 years have passed since 1864, when Maximilian of Habsburg came to Mexico, beginning the "Second Empire," and 129 since the French intervention came to an end at the Cerro de las Campanas. It is interesting that over the course of more than a century, historians of Mexican ethnography continue to omit the fact that Maximilian's government was the first to become interested in building a collection of textiles for the Imperial Museum (today the National Museum of Anthropology), founded during Maximilian's reign. In 1902, 35 years after the intervention, Robert Evans, a Belgian diplomat, gathered a splendid collection of textiles. In particular, he collected *rebozos* (shawls) woven in the 18th and 19th centuries. Fortunately they were acquired by the Franz Mayer Museum in 1994, and these textile treasures were thereby rescued for Mexico.

It must have been around 1915 that Luis Márquez began his collection, containing items which were no longer being produced by the first quarter of this century. As far as I know he was the first Mexican to be interested in collecting indigenous textiles; this collection is now the property of the Cloister of Sor Juana. At the end of the 1930s Roberto Weitlaner and his daughter Irmgard began their textile collection (which remains in Irmgard's possession). During the same period Donald and Dorothy Cordry started their own collection (unfortunately destroyed in 1982), as did Teresa Pomar and Dr. Ruth Lechuga. Teresa Pomar's collection, extraordinary for its detailed

research and complete outfits of splendid quality, recently became part of Banca Serfin's Museum of Apparel. Lechuga's collection, made up of over 2,000 pieces, is without a doubt the most varied of all the private collections, and shows the changes undergone by some garments since 1939.

Despite the extensive holdings of the National Museum of Anthropology, it has unjustifiable gaps in its official collections. The collection belonging to the National Museum of Popular Industry and Art



Detail of embroidery with glass beads. Blouse from Chilac, Puebla.

also suffers from serious limitations. This collection was initiated by Caso and Rubín de la Borbolla and was later submitted to a complicated process of disinfection, restoration and classification after being rescued by the National Museum of Anthropology management. It was then left in the custody of that institution.

The Anthropology Institute of the University of Veracruz has its own collection, made up of many different garments and textiles exclusively from the state of Veracruz. The National University also has its own



Sash stitch (detail) from Tenejapa, Chiapas.

collection, which, when exhibited years ago, gave the public an idea of the importance of these holdings.

Despite the fact that most of these collections are open to the public, visitors are few. It is common to hear statements such as “Oh, it’s Indian clothing,” “People don’t wear these” or “What a shame you can’t buy these anywhere.” There is little information about the pieces on display and, to top it all off, not one of the museums has a publication to explain the fundamentals about the collections.

To complete the overview, the businesses which sell “popular art” or “handicrafts” and which have textile sections charge high prices because of the mark-ups they apply, thereby converting the textiles into prohibitively expensive merchandise, completely out of reach for the middle class. On the other hand, the well-to-do never buy these products; their tastes and economic possibilities lead them to buy imported fabrics.

Under these circumstances some indigenous communities are using synthetic materials like acrylic yarn in order to try to lower costs and be able to sell what they produce. The loss in quality is evident; the product eventually becomes marginal and ends up not being produced at all.

Society as a whole evolves, and of course this includes the Indian ethnic groups. The work of weaving is a special effort: it is much easier to buy a dress made of industrially produced fabric like the ones sold in small town markets than to spend long hours making your own. Not wearing homemade garments also provides a certain guarantee: that of not being exploited

—or at least that is what they hope. The young people in these communities are now the first to look down on their traditions: “That’s something from long ago,” “That belongs to the old people,” “We aren’t Indians anymore.” Such phrases are frequently heard in the countryside.

The problem which affects the production, understanding and study of indigenous Mexican textiles is very complex. It includes a series of very diverse factors which can be looked at from different angles. It is a fact that production of these textiles has decreased to such a degree that their rapid disappearance can be foreseen. With a few exceptions, male garments no longer exist, while those for women are used less and less, to the degree that it is unlikely that even one will remain in the first decade of the 21st century.

Facing this desolate horizon, from April 17 to July 12 of 1995, the authorities of the National University’s Institute of Anthropological Research, conscious of what the loss of this important part of cultural identity would mean, presented a splendid exhibit of many indigenous garments, most of which are no longer in use. The exhibit was made possible by the collaboration of Dr. Ruth Lechuga, who lent valuable pieces from her collection, which were shown to the university community with the hope of awakening interest in the study and rescue of this important facet of our ethnological heritage. The results of this exhibit are promising, since UNAM’s Institute of Biological Research has now become interested in the rescue of Mexican cotton, *coyuche* or *coyoichcatl* (*Gossypium mexicanum*), the raw material necessary for making some of these garments and whose production has been alarmingly reduced.

The student population has also been motivated. This is proven by the visitors’ book made available to the public for registration purposes. It is hoped that in the near future we may have access to professional theses on all levels which would formulate proposals on this subject, since each garment, each design, each dye and the infinity of techniques employed in the creation of indigenous textiles make this both possible and necessary. X

Frida and Frida: From colors to words¹

Graciela Martínez-Zalce*

Like letter-writing, diaries long provided a refuge for the creativity of women deprived of other modes and outlets for literary expression. Very different kinds of people have kept diaries because they wanted to keep a written record of how they spent their days, of their conversations and events ranging from the memorable to the banalities of daily life. A diary can be a genuine memoir of one's most intense and imagination-filled moments, or of the least important ones.

A diary is a hidden, secret text, which strikes us as all the more authentic since it is intended for the diarist's eyes alone. Its fate is an uncertain one: nobody knows whether anyone else will ever read it. Thus we gain access to those which have ceased to be private and have become public writing, thereby revealing the mystery. We gain knowledge of them by vio-

lating their principle: diaries are conceived without thought of publication. This is why they are not considered "works" in the proper sense of the term, since they lack the finish characteristic of other literary texts. Only in some cases, long after they were written, do they go through the vicissitudes involved in publication, distribu-

tion and entry into the commercial circuit. While they may end up in the form of a book, they always retain the characteristic freedom and lack of form that bear witness to their origin. All of this is now the case with the dazzling diary of Frida Kahlo. A door has opened so that we can enter and take a curious look around.

For Kahlo a diary was a form of expression running parallel to her main vocation, painting.

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¹ First published in *Frida Kahlo: Diario. Autorretrato íntimo*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.- La vaca independiente, Verona, Italy, 1995.

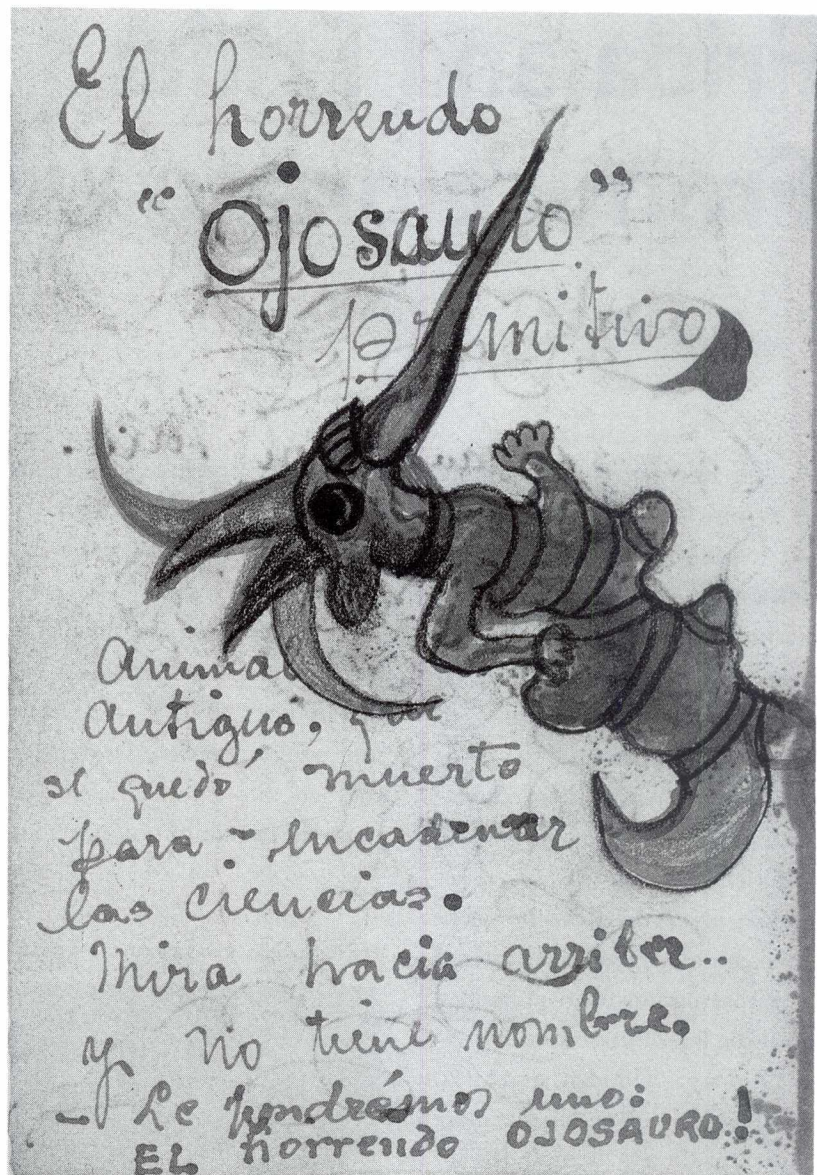
Photo: Eduardo Sepúlveda



The notion of intimacy has always been linked to diary-writing. Is it considered intimate writing because it should evade the indiscreet scrutiny of others? Because it is concerned with private life? Yet in the case of an artist like Frida Kahlo, can one view her diary as the voluntary product of complete confinement? How can we draw the limits of what lies within and without, above all in a text such as this?

Upon reading the text we discover that the internal is but the presence of an "I," a view belonging to the diarist alone, ensuring the continuity and coherence of the text: the personal stamp of the author herself. As is the case with many other artists, for Kahlo a diary was a form of expression running parallel to her main vocation, painting. It was a place for recording her experiences, her projects, even the outline for a theory of art. Opening the diary at random, one immediately sees that it is a kind of chronicle of her creative activity. The text's time frame is a real one (in other words, it is not an artificial reconstruction put together all at once to justify her work), and, for the reader, this makes its intimacy almost irritating, since in these colored pages we find ourselves spying on what is most intimate for the author: her relationship to art. Thus, at first approach, the text is an answer to Kahlo's other work and exists in relation to that work.

More than personal and detailed biographical testimony, Frida's



Diego, "The Ojosaurio."

diary is in essence a dialogue with herself: it is a soliloquy, a privileged place for secrets, a refuge for the woman as individual. This may make it disappointing for those who consult it with *a priori* expectations, since readers are often more attracted to diaries which set forth experiences that can be easily followed. Nevertheless, while it lacks concrete data, names, dates and details, it provides us with

something which makes it invaluable and saves it from the time-worn feeling it would have were it simply a description of its author's daily life. Kahlo's diary tells us about her internal experience. Shut within its pages is a movement of ebb and flow; the text flows easily as the product of confinement, at the same time as it serves as the place where Kahlo took refuge in writing. As a chronicle

of the author's spiritual voyages, it traces the paths traveled by her imagination. In its pages we perceive a tone, a spirit that distinguishes it from a mere essay or book of days. It is a place transformed into sensation.

Frida Kahlo's diary defies scholastic pigeon-holes. Written by a non-professional, it contains a dual movement: the diary makes for coherence, and the very fact of keeping it is a sign of continuity, or at least a certain will to continuity on the part of its author. Where, then, does this coherence lie? The text recognizes no real rules or limits, remaining open to anything and everything. Page after page is given over to composition: drawings, portraits and relics are incorporated, since Kahlo valued them as memorable determinants. But it is possible to find a leitmotif: the coherence of the "I" which writes itself, which draws itself in words and pictures, in letters and colors. The lack of delimitation explains why the diary is marked simultaneously by monotony and great variety: it reflects the tiresome repetition and the infinite diversity that characterize its creator's life. Like all diarists, Frida repeats herself: from one page to another, from month to month and year to year problems return (as is well known by those familiar with her life as well as her work). The characters inhabiting her worlds are identical, her reactions to them are the same, her thoughts are similar.

Thus, the coherence of the "I" manifests itself in the obsessions Frida records in ink on paper, where the pen sometimes refuses to write. Among them are the image of herself, built with words and images, letters and lines; the overwhelming presence of Diego Rivera, made into the noun par excellence, infinitely described in disproportionate terms —Diego the "*Ojosaurio*" [roughly, "Eye-asaurus Rex"], the beloved; illness narrated and portrayed as an extension of oneself. This coherence is also displayed in the fidelity to a vocation: while in her diary Kahlo uses writing, she constructs the text as a work of art and obeys the aesthetic imperatives which play a very important role in it. This is not an illustrated diary; it is a fragmentary text on the verbal level, while visually it is closely related to the rest of the artist's work. While situated on the margins of her abundant artistic expression, the diary itself is a double achievement: it is a theoretical and practical register, a painter's diary mixed together with spiritual meditations as well as extremely free, naked confidences which pass back and forth from one time to another —the time of the experience itself, those of the first draft, the final draft, the successive drafts. Because of its basically discontinuous nature, at times it resembles a set of notes in telegraphic style.

How does Frida Kahlo express herself in the diary? She uses different colors of ink, gives a differ-

ent typographical weight to the words she wants to stress, superimposes some texts on others and illustrates her words; the visual characteristics reinforce the content. But in the final analysis, choosing to keep a diary means something: here, that which is expressed through language matters.

And what does she say? A playful spirit runs throughout this flow, which begins with a list of words. These lists keep appearing: enumerations which are, in the first instance, games of sound, but which may also become games of syntax and even semantics, recalling the linguistic-poetic inventions of the Surrealists. These are poems, at times close to pure musicality, at others to unfettered metaphors and purely verbal imagery.

There is also a series of letters. As a genre, a diary is distinguished from correspondence in that —while neither has well-defined borders— the nature of their relation to "the other," the implicit reader, is quite different. Frida Kahlo was a passionate writer of letters, which have become known as a result of being published in full or in part.² There is a notable difference between such letters, which were sent to someone who would read them, and those included in the diary. The former seem part of an agreeable conversation: they are filled with the picturesque colloquial turns

² Hayden Herrera's biography contains numerous and representative examples of these letters.

characteristic of Mexico City's urban speech, and they relate concrete events from Kahlo's daily life. The latter are introspective; they set forth an analysis of thoughts and emotions in the abstract, without connection to specific events. Many are love letters that make use of poetics, lyrical images constructed with words and directed at the other, Diego, the "you" before which the "I" continuously unfolds in order to refer to itself, sometimes moving into the background. Here the word *Diego* may be found written in different sizes, with different dramatic intentions, as if the diary opened itself to the presence of the other as subject, as a look. Underlying the way this word is written there is the supposition that the text could be read by the person it is addressed to, and this seems to influence the diarist's attitude in portraying this constantly-evoked person. This paradoxical presence, this possible gaze of the other stimulates at the same time as it may annihilate.

Diary-writing always implies a tendency to reflection. In Kahlo's case this manifests itself with regard to her painting: "Who would say that stains live and help others live? Ink, blood, odor." There are literary metaphors directly related to the visual: "I don't know what ink I would use which would want to leave its mark." An outstanding example is the marvelous page with lines of colors: a game in which there is a direct relation between what is said and the color in which

it is written. This is a chromatic and semantic experiment referring both to concrete things (brown is used for the words *mole* [a typical Mexican sauce] and *earth*, green for leaves) and feelings ("distance—tenderness can also be blue"). While less frequent, there is also reflection regarding her ideological and political concerns, as well as about her emotional situation—the latter marked by a strong erotic impulse; the pages are peppered with such words as *alive*, *full*, *sex*, *happiness*, *love*, *tenderness*, and references to fruits, abundance and the enjoyment of life.

Lastly, we encounter stories. Some are fiction, such as the one about a couple who have been taken away from "the country of dots and lines"; this story begins with a balance between written text and pictures and ends as an illustration annotated with just a few words. In the fiction, words are displaced; it is the images which speak with a devastating eloquence.

There are also autobiographical stories, like the one about the origin of the "two Fridas," a childhood story mixing fantasy and reality; or the outline of her life, a text in pure blue, tracing her genealogy. The diary's characteristic tone, belonging to the mode of discontinuity, disappears, giving way to the rhythm of the autobiography, where memory plays an organic and organizing role. Then there is the story of her operations, scrawled in disfigured calligraphy; a prisoner of her illness and a voyager in

her own abyss, the sick Frida keeps a diary which helps her get well. In this case the distance between the events and the time of writing is particularly important. In the midst of her crisis, what remained of her vision? How much of the story has been changed? Because she was an artist, the way in which Kahlo develops all these autobiographical elements—so clearly present in her other, public work—has even more weight.

Nevertheless, I believe it is very important that we not come away with the idea of a Frida made martyr by physical pain. As she notes on one page: "Feet, what do I want you for/if I have wings to fly with?" Wings which gave her a sense of humor. The diary is full of ironic passages such as the one making fun of romanticism: "classic love'... (without arrows), just with spermatozoids." This text is bordered on top by a clothesline with angelic figures hanging from it, and on the bottom by a flock of spermatozoids which travel across the paper towards a winged siren. "Laughter is worth more than anything. Strength is laughing and letting oneself go. Being light" —a proposition that might seem quite post-modern.... And play is ever present, at all levels—artistic and linguistic—throughout the text.

A diary. Writing in freedom. A place where the absence of aesthetic laws established by some "poetic art" allows a more fluid play of the mechanisms of writing. In

these pages, Frida Kahlo is free to say everything, according to the form and rhythm that suits her, with no rule or limit other than those implied by the word *diary*, the discipline of an exercise carried out day after day (despite the interruptions and variations in regularity). The diary is the place where the artist opens herself: a mute confidant which allows her to say everything, paint everything, speak of herself and paint herself completely, to make the leap from colors to words.

What is the impulse we discover in Frida Kahlo's diary? What basic drive pushed her to make this reckoning of her days? It may have been something as simple as the need to write, to write to herself. The need to fulfill a whim which pleased her and which, in itself, was the resolution of her desire. An open form, kaleidoscopic with images and discourse, where the word is more than ever *graphy*, Frida Kahlo's diary is the result of a creative vocation: a symbol of fecundity, a text engendering other texts, a permanent genesis. It is a space of solitude, a solitude at times frightening but indispensable to creation, which, as readers, we enter as voyeurs and leave enlightened, in the company of its final phrases: "I happily await my exit — and hope never to return, Frida." In this mirror writing Frida painted the portrait of herself, that of the other Frida and the same Frida, she of sonorous images, she of words. ^V_M



"Feet what do I want you for / if I have wings to fly with?"

The drawings reprinted here were first published in *Frida Kahlo: Diario. Autorretrato íntimo* (La vaca independiente and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995) and are reproduced here by permission of the Banco de México, trustee for the Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo museums.

The General Archive of the Nation: Discovering the past which made us

Patricia Galeana*

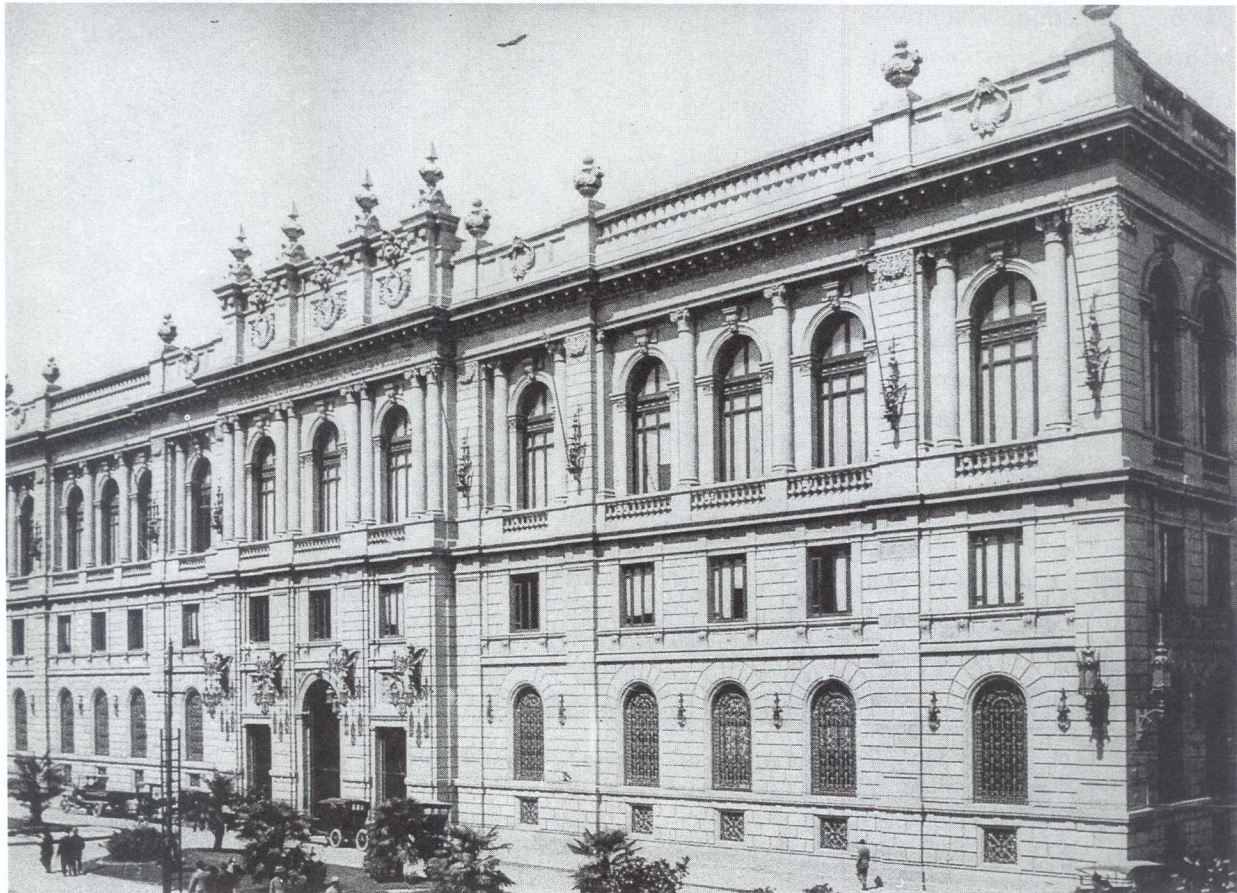
A little bit of history

Since antiquity's oldest cultures, archives have served as the most valuable cultural storehouse of peoples, as well as a source of information essential to a good government's decision-making process. At the same

time as they safeguard one of the highest manifestations of the human intellect —written materials— they create and recreate culture.

In 1790 the Viceroy Juan Vicente de Güemes-Pacheco y Padilla, second Count of Revillagigedo, decided that it was urgent to organize the colony's archives. This being in line with the enlightened policy of strengthening the state, a search was begun for

* Director of the General Archive of the Nation.



Photos: Archivo General de la Nación

The archive was located in the Palace of Communications (above) from 1973 to 1976.

an adequate place to preserve the documents of New Spain (as Mexico was known at that time).

Chapultepec was suggested as an appropriate site, since if kept there the documents would be safe from the floods frequently suffered by Mexico City, which was built in a valley of lakes. Yet this project was not carried through, and the most prized documents of the Spanish crown were placed in the colony's Royal Palace.

In 1823, shortly after Mexico gained independence, Lucas Alamán—a statesman with historical consciousness—promoted the creation of the General Public Archive of the Nation, which was also housed in what today is the National Palace.

The Archive remained there throughout the 19th century and only moved when the Ministry of Internal Affairs (today called *Gobernación*) separated from the Foreign Affairs ministry; it was taken over by the latter ministry because of the importance of historical antecedents for diplomatic negotiations, both in the process of gaining recognition for the country's independence and in the defense of Mexico's rights.

With the passage of time the space available in the National Palace became insufficient; some documents had to be transferred to the Santo Domingo Convent and later to the Temple of Guadalupe in Tacubaya, known as the Yellow House.

In the mid-20th century the proposal was made to relocate the National Archive and provide it with a building of its own, which would have the capacity to store the Americas' largest documentary repository—comparable, in terms of the number of Colonial manuscripts it contains, only with Seville's Archive of the Indies. The first project was to place it in the Ciudadela; then in University City, where the nation-

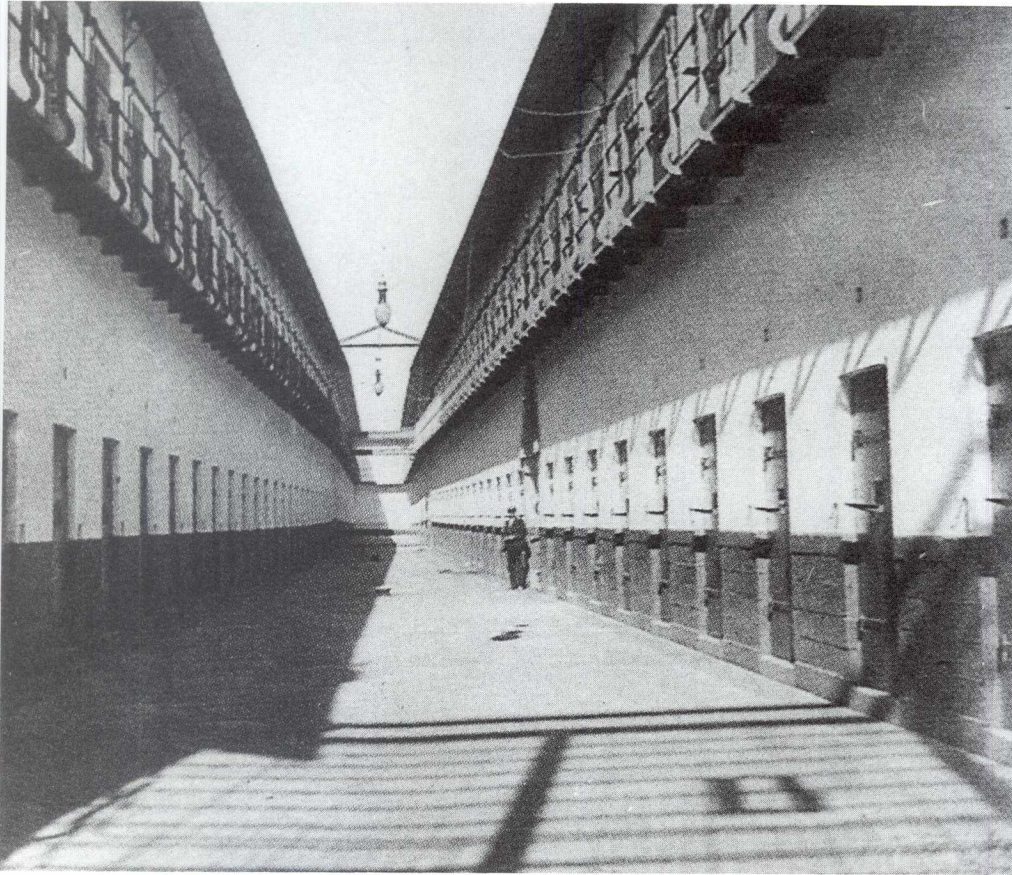


Frontispiece of fray Pedro de Gante's *Christian Doctrine in the Mexican Language*.

al library and periodicals archive are located today. However, in 1973 it was moved to the Palace of Communications, which is now the National Museum of Art—but the space there proved too small as well.

Lecumberri: From "Black Palace" to a storehouse of enlightenment

In 1976, the Lecumberri Penitentiary—inaugurated in 1900 by Porfirio Díaz, as yet another of the monumental works which dictatorial regimes often construct to adorn their regimes—was put out of service due to a new conception of social readaptation put forward by the jurist Sergio García Ramírez. The old



Cells, now used as reading rooms.

prison was better known as “The Black Palace” because of countless bitter hours lived by its inhabitants. This led to the idea of destroying the building so that no trace would be left of these horrors.

However, several voices were raised stressing the importance of conserving the building—whose stone walls were not responsible for what had occurred within them—and the need to preserve monuments which, in one way or another, are part of history and of a city’s identity.

Once the building had been saved, the historian Jesús Reyes Heróles, then Secretary of *Gobernación*, came up with the idea of making Lecumberri the Archive’s headquarters. This project was graced with the creativity of the architect Jorge L. Medellín and the talent of historian Alejandra Moreno Toscano, who recognized the big advantages that the building’s panoptical architecture offered for the construction of a documentary repository, a center for research

and recreation of culture. Instead of watching over prisoners, citizens would now watch over the acts of state; where darkness once prevailed, light would now shine.

Thus, the Black Palace was converted—in the words of one of its first directors, Ignacio Cubas—“into a storehouse of enlightenment, deeds and rights for generations of Mexicans”; into a torch illuminating our past and shedding light on our present.

Where a watchtower once overlooked cellblocks, today there is a huge cupola through which there enters a beam of light which illuminates researchers, students and citizens in general so they may participate in the adventure of discovering the past which made us.

The 860 cells arranged along the former prison’s seven-pointed star pattern house 322 documentary collections, six million images, 7,131 maps, 1,500 Colonial codices and countless public and private archives, ranging from a document by a 13th-century Spanish holy man to documents and images of our times.

Given its peculiar characteristics, the Lecumberri Palace, with its over 82,000 square feet of floor space, has demonstrated its functional character and suitability for the requirements of the General Archive of the Nation’s holdings. Forecasts have been made of the collections’ expansion, as well as the adaptations mandated by modern procedures for storing and reproducing materials. This has meant providing space for the library and periodicals collection. In 1989 the staff began a process of rearranging documents; over 17 linear miles of space were gained by replacing common shelving units with those specially designed for archives.

A priceless collection

Among the documents preserved in the General Archive of the Nation are the various national and state constitutions; Hernán Cortés' 1526 "Judgement of Residence"; Fray Pedro de Gante's "Christian doctrine in the Mexican language" and the "lawsuit" undertaken against Emperor Maximilian. They also include Emiliano Zapata's letters to Francisco Villa and the Aguascalientes Convention's minutes, as well as a great number of codices, edicts, architectural sketches, prisoners' songs, criminological statistics, engravings by José Guadalupe Posada and works that David Alfaro Siqueiros painted during his stay in the prison, lithographs, 1912 brochures of the Anti-Reelectionist Women's Front and the Daughters of the Revolution, amidst many other items.

The National Archive is also an inexhaustible source for both historical research and that related to other disciplines. The nine documentary divisions of its holdings include many as yet unexplored areas of enormous richness. The following are the nine divisions and some of the archives which contain the most information or are the most frequently consulted:

Documentation on Colonial Institutions: Correspondence of or about viceroys, the Hospital of Jesus, *infiendencias* (disloyal acts), the Inquisition, land holdings, etc.

Documentation on Public Administration, 1821-1910: Francisco I. Madero, Alvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, General Government Office, National Agrarian Commission.

Private Archives: Benito Juárez, Carlos Chávez and Emiliano Zapata.

Collections and Documents: Collection of Documents on

the History of the War of Independence, 1810-1821; Collection of Documents of the National Institute for Historical Research on the Mexican Revolution; Felipe Teixidor Collection and Pamphlet Collection.

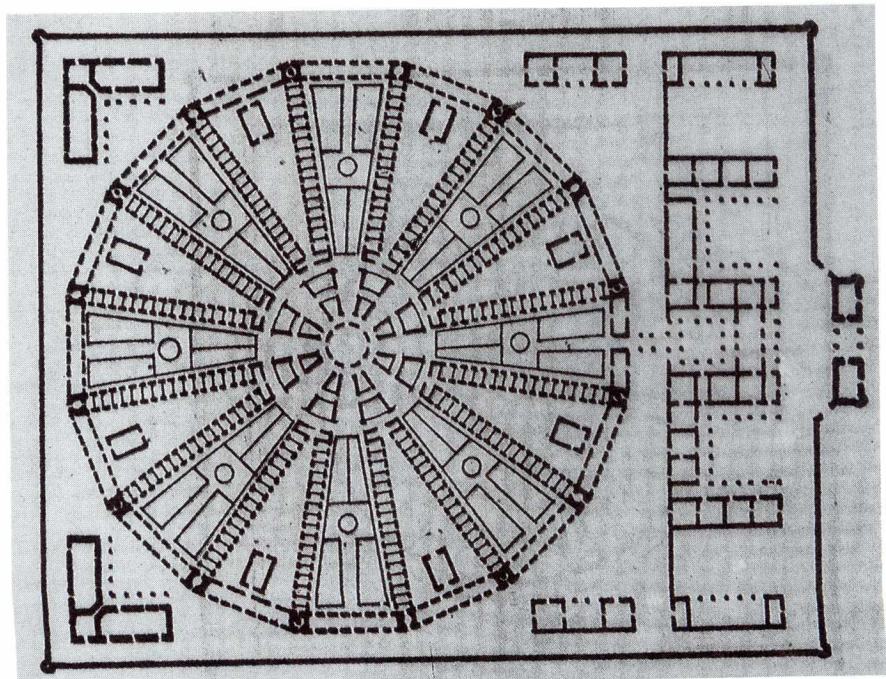
Illustrations and Cartography: Maps, plans and illustrations.

Photographic Archives and Collections: Díaz, Delgado and García Photographic Archive; Mayo Brothers Photographic Archive and Photographic Archive of Artistic and Literary Property.

Archival Microfilm and Photocopies: Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection from the University of Texas, and Mexican Genealogy and Heraldry Academy collection.

A center of information and culture

Disseminating the contents of the Archive's holdings is a key part of its work of preserving, arranging, describing and restoring the documents that make up the collective memory of the Mexican people. Every archive is a center for culture and must, therefore,



Floor plan of the old prisons "Panoptic" layout.

The Lecumberri Palace has demonstrated its functional character and suitability for the requirements of the General Archive of the Nation's holdings.

fulfill its social function of making its documentary legacy available to the citizenry.

We find ourselves not only at the end of a century and a millennium but at the beginning of a new era. This has led us to reformulate the role that archives must play, not just as guardians of our nation's documentary patrimony but as centers of information and culture, in order to contribute efficiently to the development of national culture.

This is why, in addition to organizing various documentary exhibitions, the General Archive of the

Nation plans to create a museum in the upper part of the cupola, where the public will be able to learn about the Archive's history as well as the richness of its holdings.

Other activities include the presentation of newly published books resulting from the research carried out at the Archive as well as every kind of cultural activity: art exhibits, lectures, concerts, theater and film programs.

Also afoot is a project to invite contemporary muralists to use the Lecumberri Palace's interior walls to depict archives' function as a source for the defense of the rights of all peoples, as repositories of culture and information centers, highlighting the need to know our past in order to understand our present. \bar{M}

Colonial-period holdings on CD-ROM

One of the National Archive's priorities is to incorporate digital technology into its daily work in order to provide a greater level of efficiency for the tasks of description, arrangement, classification, cataloguing and public services, but above all to protect documents from excessive manipulation, which causes them to deteriorate.

In collaboration with the National Council on Science and Technology the Archive is cataloguing primary sources. As an example, the *Argena* program has generated a description of holdings from the Colonial period, and a compact disk has been published with the pertinent references. *Argena*, a data base put out as a CD-ROM, contains 170,000 references. The first edition includes information on 22 documentary groups, with themes such as the Ayuntamiento (old city government), religious fraternities, national property, the Inquisition, intestates, markets and landed property. A second edition of *Argena* is presently being prepared and will incorporate 88 more documentary groups as well as updating the 22 included in the first version. This compact disk is slated to contain 370,000 references.

Additionally, in association with the University of Colima, the National Archive has produced the second edition of *Dialex, Legislación al día, 1917-1993*, a compact disk data base on Mexican legislation containing approximately half a million references from the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (the government's daily publication of record), covering 76 years of legislative history. \bar{M}

Two bibliographical treasures in the National Library.

Andreas Vesalius, the anatomist of the Renaissance

Luis Roberto Torres Escalona*

*Genius survives;
everything else perishes.*

ANDREAS VESALIUS

The Renaissance is one of the most luminous periods in the history of the arts and sciences. Yet above all, it was the moment when man was “reborn” and freed his spirit from the old religious dogmatism under whose sway he had lived for so long. Freedom of the spirit nourished freedom of thought. There was a definitive break between the sacred and the profane; now nothing could stop the birth of the scientific spirit. Everywhere there was a flourishing of workshops and guilds where the new science was practiced. History brought forward such figures as Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Giordano Bruno, Michael Servetus and Andreas Vesalius, among others.

One of this period’s signal works is, without a doubt, Andreas

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Photos by Raul Ortega

Vesalius’ *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* (Seven Books on the Construction of the Human Body). The National Library’s

Reserve Fund holds two editions of this work: one printed in Basel in 1555 by Johannes Oporinus, and the other in Venice by F.

Senefem and Johannes Criegher in 1568.

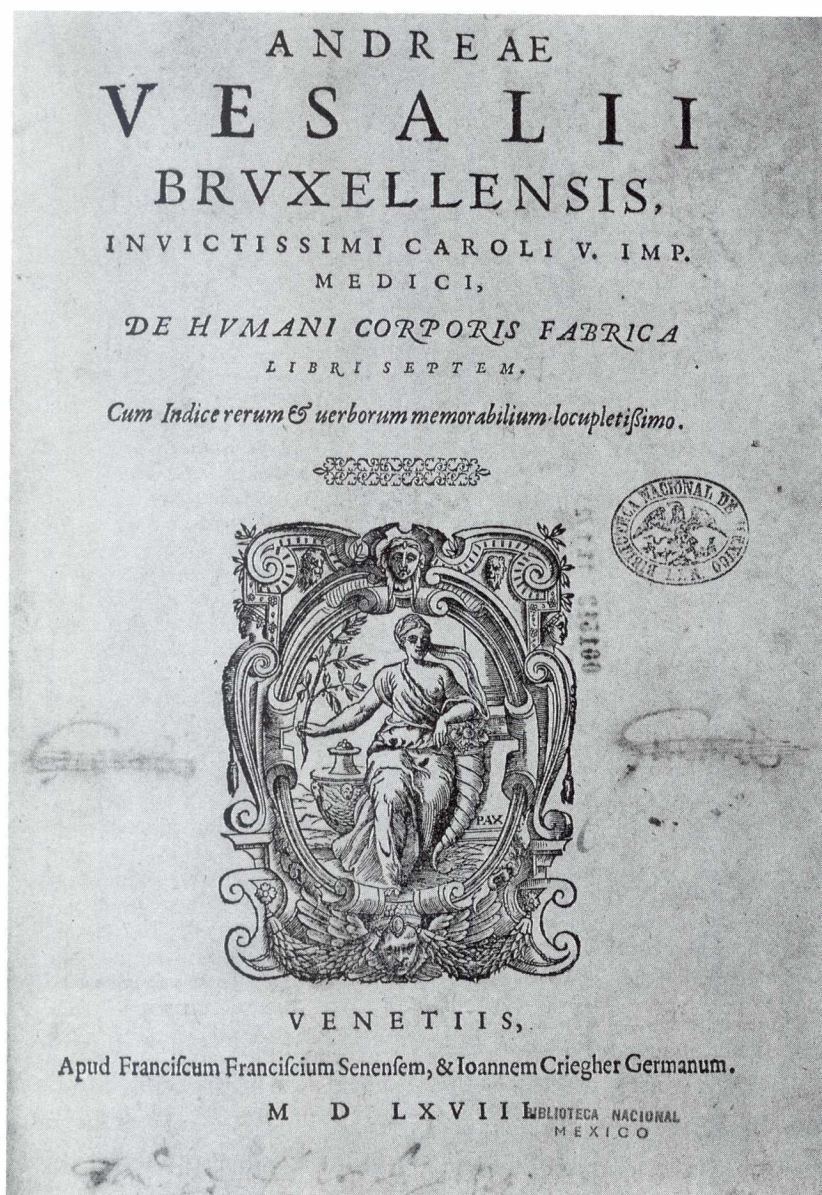
Vesalius was the highest representative of modern anatomy. He gained this distinction by contravening the *noli me tangere* of the teachings of Claudius Galen, which had prevailed during the Middle Ages. Today it is still striking to learn that this mission was fulfilled by a man who was only 28 years old.

De humani corporis fabrica is a folio volume. It consists of seven books covering the analysis of the entire structure of the human body. Its didactic character is extraordinary, not only because of the engravings it contains but because of the many synoptic charts and marginal summaries which assist in the comprehension of the volume's contents.

The first book deals with bones and cartilage; the osteology (study of bones) printed in this section is excellent. The second has to do with muscles and ligaments, and the dissection instruments used at that time are featured at the end of this book. The following book covers the circulatory apparatus, with drawings that may rightly be characterized as perfect and served as the starting point for angiology (the branch of anatomy related to the organs of blood circulation).

The fourth and shortest book is devoted to the nerves. It is generally accepted that the description follows the lines set forth by Galen and the Italian anatomist Mondino da Luzzi. The fifth covers the abdominal and genital organs. The sixth book examines the organs of the thorax; its most interesting feature is the cryptography hidden among the shading in the various drawings. The seventh and final book analyzes the brain and the sense organs. At the end of this volume Vesalius describes his experiences with vivisection (surgical operations carried out on animals in order to study physiological phenomena); this section may be considered the first treatise on experimental physiology.

With regard to the illustrations which grace this work, Vesalius is believed to be the author of the simple drawings, while the anatomical details of some figures, as well as the cover and the

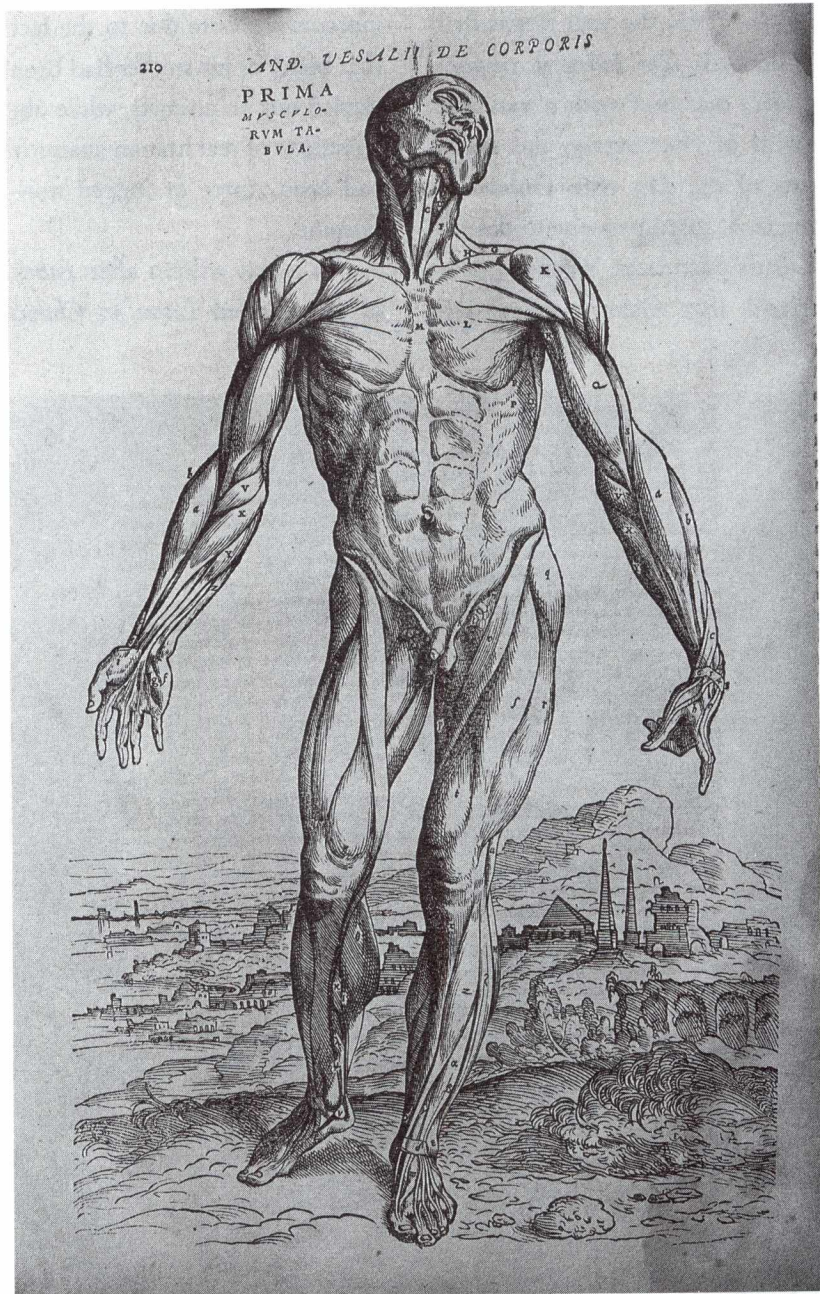


portrait of Vesalius, are attributed to John Stephan Calcar. However, there are those who maintain that the frontispiece of the 1555 edition was made by B. Vitalis and that Tiziano is the author of the most exact drawings. The participation of Domenico Compagnola is inferred from the landscapes.

One of *De humani corporis fabrica's* most fascinating plates is the frontispiece or cover, which depicts a dissection scene taking place in an amphitheater surrounded by a peristyle with seven Corinthian columns. Two Cupids bear the Vesalius family crest, and at the sides an old man and a youth symbolize the past and present, the ancient and new worlds.

The central figures are Andreas Vesalius himself and the cadaver of a woman, whose abdominal organs are exposed. In the center of the engraving a skeleton presides over the dissection. This is not for decorative effect; instead, it is in line with Vesalius' conception that the starting point for anatomical studies should be the bones.

Most of those depicted as attending this demonstration have been identified, among them Realdo Colombo, Charles V, Joachim Cameranus, Paracelsus, Hieronymus Cardan, Philip Melanchton, Martin



Luther, Tiziano, John Stephan Calcar and Johannes Oporinus.

Andreas Vesalius was born in Brussels in 1514 and studied in

Louvain, Montpellier and Paris. At the age of 23 he settled in Padua, where he taught anatomy and carried out the first dissections of cadavers. As previously noted, this went against the assertions of Claudius Galen, which were considered the ruling canon and had been enshrined as dogmas by the Church.

De humani corporis fabrica is a folio volume.

It consists of seven books covering the analysis of the entire structure of the human body.

In 1543, the year it was first published, *De humani corporis fabrica* was met with a veritable storm of controversy: the scientists of the day, with Dubois in the lead, rose up as one to defend Galen's postulates. Vesalius maintained that Galen's errors and

inaccuracies were due to the fact that many of his studies had been carried out on animals, while observations of real human anatomy had been scarce or indeed non-existent.

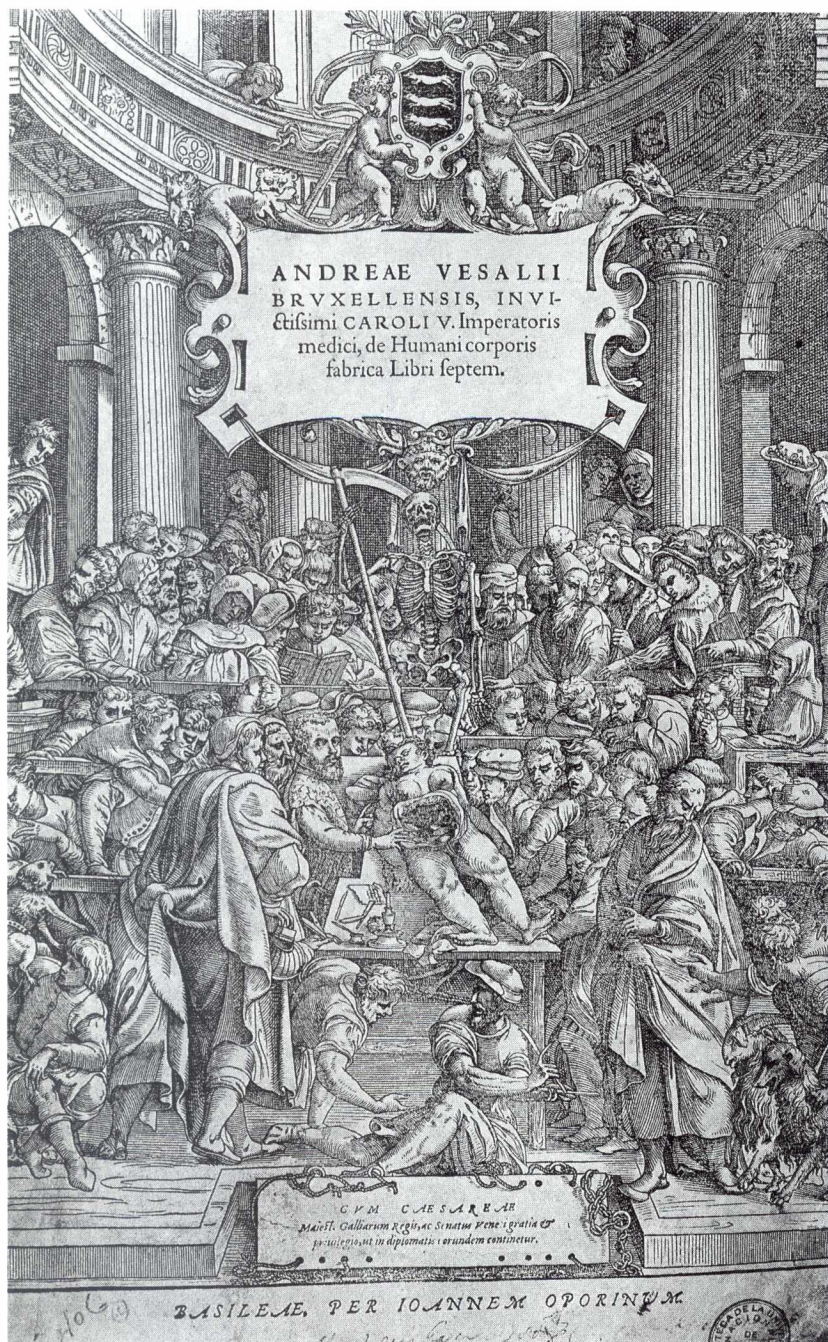
In a text written after *Fabrica* and entitled *Letter on China's*

Root, the anatomist held forth, with a certain degree of vanity, on some of the controversial points of his celebrated study: "People should be thankful to me for having been the first to dare to attack the false opinions of man, to unveil the deceptions of the Greeks and to give our contemporaries an unprecedented opportunity to seek the truth. Yet this is not the case, since, due to Galen's authority, you will find many who, after a merely superficial look at my studies and without having studied cadavers, still maintain that everything Galen wrote is correct."

During Vesalius' era anatomy was considered a philosophical-humanistic discipline. It was as a result of his studies that it became a pragmatic science.

Vesalius practiced medicine at the court of Charles V for fifteen years. Yet it appears that his anatomical studies and sympathy for the Reformation led to his being condemned to death by the Inquisition during the reign of Philip II. It is said that he succeeded in having the sentence commuted by making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. On his return he was beset by a serious illness, which led to his death in 1564 on Zante, one of the Ionian Islands.

In recognition of these volumes' history, uniqueness and beauty, the General Property Office and the Department of Artistic and Cultural Assets present them to the university community and the public at large.^V



Mario Molina, 1995 Nobel Prize winner for Chemistry

One of the positive effects of the Nobel prize in chemistry awarded to researcher Mario Molina, a graduate of UNAM's former National School of Chemical Sciences, is the reawakening of concern among the Mexican scientific community for the development of science and technology in this country.

The first Mexican to be honored with such an outstanding recognition in the area of science and one of the very few Latin Americans to achieve this distinction, Molina shares the prize with Holland's Paul Kurtzen and the American Frank Sherwood, for their discoveries on the effects of the gases known as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) on the ozone layer of the earth's stratosphere. Such

gases, also known as freons, mainly come from the use of aerosols, refrigeration and air-conditioning systems, and have a damaging effect on the ozone layer. As demonstrated by Molina and Sherwood, these gases are in fact the main cause for the destruction of the ozone layer, which has disastrous consequences for life on this planet. Breaking the natural shield that protects us from dangerous ultraviolet rays emitted by the sun leads to such phenomena as the proliferation of skin cancers, severe sunburns and global warming.

Molina's discoveries, made in 1974, caused alarm in the international community. In 1987, the Montreal Conference decided to support research and development for clean technologies and to work out a protocol prohibiting the industrial use of CFCs, to be signed by all countries in 1996.

Although Molina, who is 53 years old, became an American citizen and has carried out a large portion of his scientific activity in the United States, he maintains close ties with the Mexican scientific community through his participation in conferences as well as being a doctoral thesis advisor at UNAM's School of Chemistry. His being awarded the prize shows that there are top-notch scientists and researchers in Mexico, although infrastructure conditions for scientific and technological research are not optimal.

After graduating as a chemical engineer from UNAM, Molina, with support from the university, carried out post-graduate studies at the University of Freiburg in Germany and obtained a doctorate in physical chemistry at the University of California/Berkeley. He has been a researcher and professor at several universities in the United States and now works at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Molina has received 14 international awards for his work and is a member of several scientific organizations, among them the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Mexican Academy of Scientific Investigation. He has also published more than 45 articles in specialized magazines.

Mario Molina is not just a dedicated and rigorous scientist, but also a committed researcher —committed in the first place to scientific truth, but also to the well-being of humanity and the protection of the environment, as demonstrated by his constant denunciations of the effects of chlorofluorocarbons on the ozone layer and the terrible consequences for life on earth. This has led him to confront powerful industrial interests, such as the Dupont company, the main producer of these lethal gases, and even to testify before the United States Congress in order to explain the results of his research.

Molina is also a man of exceptional human qualities, concerned not only about the development of science in his native country, but also the welfare of society as a whole and the state of the environment, above all for the inhabitants of Mexico City. His love for the homeland that provided his basic professional training was demonstrated in his first statements to the media after hearing the news that he had won the Nobel prize, in which he said that he felt proud to be Mexican.^v

Photo: Garcia-UNAM



Between anguish and hope.

Interview with Arturo Rivera

Many and diverse are the currents that have come forward in the new Mexican painting, novel both for their aesthetic vision and the themes they address. Yet one painter who is particularly outstanding for his conceptual quest is Arturo Rivera, who, in his own words, lives and paints the contradiction between anguish and hope.

Rivera was born in Mexico City in 1945. He studied painting and engraving at the National School of Visual Arts and the San Carlos Academy of the National University of Mexico (UNAM). He has presented ten individual exhibitions in Mexico and abroad and participated in 19 collective exhibitions. Rivera uses a wide variety of media, including acrylics, watercolors, casein, graphite, black pencil, oils on canvas and egg tempera.

Many have defined Arturo Rivera's work as "realist." Yet in the prologue to the catalogue for Rivera's exhibition "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", Jutta Rütz states that the appropriate term would be "realism of intensities,"

since the artist's mental work consists of synthesizing diverse theoretical concepts and transforming them into a new pictorial language. Or as Luis Carlos Emerich states in his article "Arturo Rivera in the Infernos," published in the book

Rivera (Grupo Financiero Serfín, 1994): "here realism is the conversion of sensations and reflections into visual images."

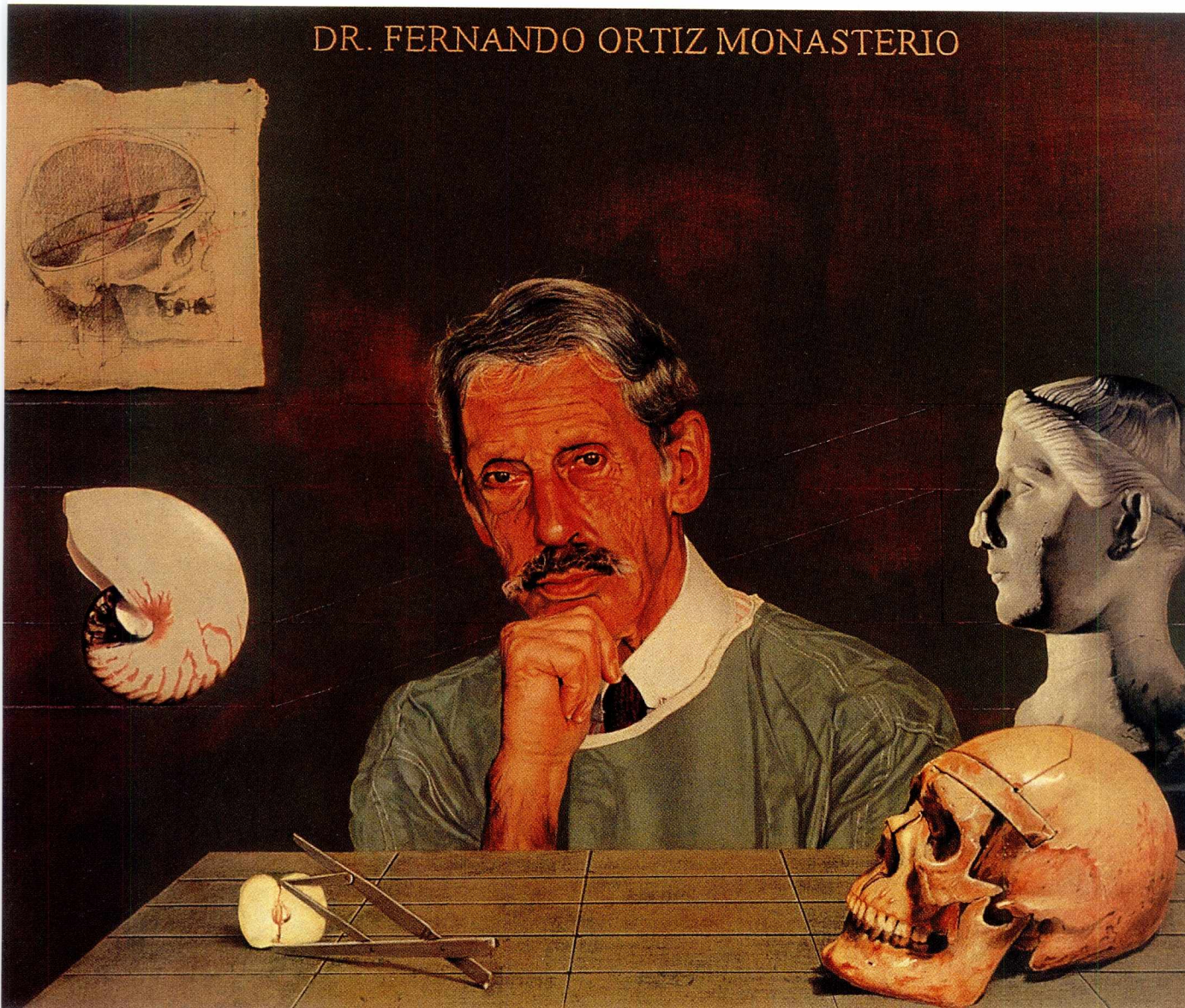
In this sense, Rivera's raw realism, at times aggressive and at others pessimistic, is but the mani-

The key.

Photos by Jesús Sánchez Uribe



DR. FERNANDO ORTIZ MONASTERIO



Portrait of Dr. Ortiz Monasterio.

festation of his quest to present the deepest contradictions of the human psyche in his paintings. The artist himself has declared that his obsession is to find the beauty that exists within anguish, which produces the inevitable human contradiction between good and evil; or, as Herbert Marcuse expressed it, between Eros and Thanatos.

This is the inspiration behind Rivera's latest exhibition, presented at Mexico City's Modern Art Museum from July 14 to October 19, 1995. It was entitled "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"—an idea taken from a literary work by the 18th-century English writer and artist William Blake, who believed that creative energy comes from within man and,

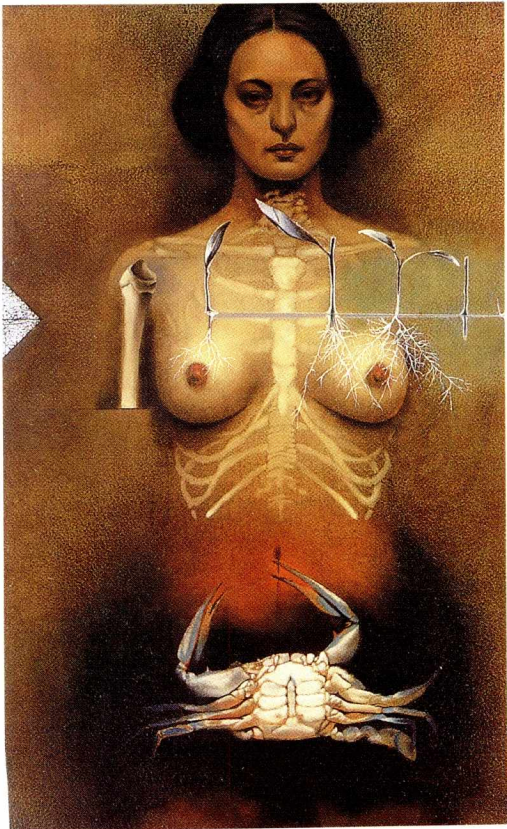
while limited by reason, expresses his passions and contradictions above all.

The paintings referred to in this interview were part of that exhibition. One sees in them the guiding idea of most of Rivera's work: "Without opposites there is no progress. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence."

Voices of Mexico interviewed the painter in order to gain a first-hand look at his opinions on these and other issues, above all since his work may be considered a part of Mexican painting that is well on its way to being classic.

Voices of Mexico: *What does painting mean to you?*

Arturo Rivera: My thinking on this issue has been that, for me, it has no meaning; or rather that it has meaning only for the person looking at the picture. It is the viewer who finds the signs, the meaning. For me, more than a meaning, in the final analysis painting would have a sense. That sense is my life.



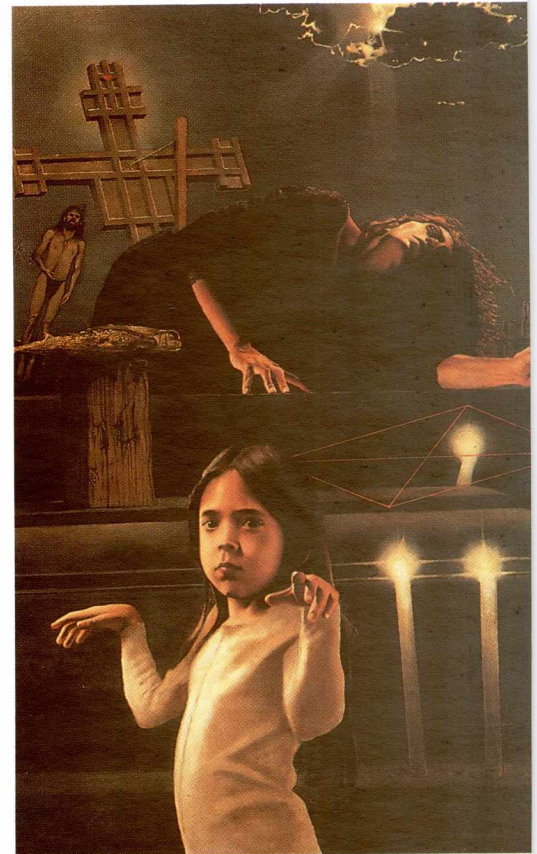
Anatomy of a Goddess.

VM: *When did you find your vocation?*

AR: It's such an old vocation that I no longer recall. For example, in the Colegio Alemán school they gave us very good painting classes. I always liked this, because I think it was the best way I could express myself and understand the world; it was my language. For me, the world entered through my eyes, as for others it enters through touch, hearing or the sense of smell. I even recall that it took a long time for me to learn to speak. So I think it has to do with something akin to a theatrical attitude.

VM: *What is the influence on your painting of the time you spent in New York and Germany?*

AR: The same influence as the fact that I was born in the Nápoles neighborhood [of Mexico City]. Everything is circumstantial. It's obvious that I would be different had I not been in New York or Germany, but this is now inescapably a part of my life. In other words, the years I spent in New York, in Ger-



The Necessary Angel.

many, London and many other places are now a part of me. They are me.

VM: *Culturally, was New York the richest experience?*

AR: Having lived in New York

Rivera's raw realism is but the manifestation of his quest to present the deepest contradictions of the human psyche in his paintings.

many, London and many other places are now a part of me. Thus I am totally influenced by those years, just as I'm influenced by having studied in the Colegio Alemán and many other things. That is, all the things which have happened in my life, whether by acci-

enriched me in many ways. For example, I had to do different kinds of jobs in order to survive. That was enriching. Nevertheless, the answer can be the same as the previous one, because there are people who have never gone abroad and have never needed to. Take



Head of John the Baptist.

the case of José Clemente Orozco, who went to New York when he was already a great painter—I would say a “really great” painter. The case of Diego Rivera was different. Diego was a failure abroad. He went to New York to be part of the vanguard, and he failed. He came back, and never again throughout his life—not even

when he had to go to Russia for an operation, a trip which would have involved a stopover in Paris—did he attend the great centers of the pictorial vanguard. In that case he preferred to get there by another route. Rather than being enriched by his travels he was frustrated by them. His last trip was to Italy; he returned with the idea of mural-

Without opposites there is no progress. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence.

ism, inventing a whole ideological “*rollo*”¹ and—well, I would rather not express my opinion of Diego Rivera, and it doesn’t matter at this point. But it’s an example which helps demonstrate that one doesn’t necessarily have to go abroad in order to be enriched. Travels to other countries can be valuable, or not. It all depends on the person.

VM: *What Mexican painter has most inspired your work?*

AR: Well, at one point it might have been Orozco, although that doesn’t mean he was the first. Another major influence came from the Impressionists, especially Van Gogh. Rembrandt is also a very strong one.

VM: *What is the value of contrary forces, of opposites, in your painting?*

AR: Well, they have the same value as other forces. The same value as black and white; that is, nothing exists outside the context of the dialectic. The dialectic is the play of forces I seek to demonstrate in my exhibition. That’s why I gave it the title “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.” I took this name from William Blake, who says that the marriage between heaven and hell is explained in the sense that they are two forces which all of us have as human beings, which all the cosmos has; and this energy, which is split in

¹ This slang expression is roughly equivalent to “song and dance” or *schtick*. (Translator’s note.)

*For me, the world entered through my eyes,
as for others it enters through touch,
hearing or the sense of smell.*

two, must supposedly be in balance, since one of the forces cannot live without the other and vice versa.

VM: *In the introduction to your catalogue there is a whole explanation about the sense of "beauty in anguish." What do you think about that combination? Can there be beauty in desperation, in anguish?*

AR: On this subject we can go back to the beginning of my previous answer, when we were speaking about dialectics. If I don't stick to a force which I always carry with me, inside myself, a terrifying force, then my work will not be sincere. But if I fail to fit this force into a form which, in the final analysis, could be called beauty, then it would simply explode. That is to say, beauty has to be realistic, above all in the sense that some manifestation of anguish is always shut inside it. In painting it, you always have to consider the problem that it often contains the opposite of what is being expressed. This apparent contradiction is what keeps me in balance. For a good observer, it will always be easy to find a symbol of hope in almost all of my paintings.

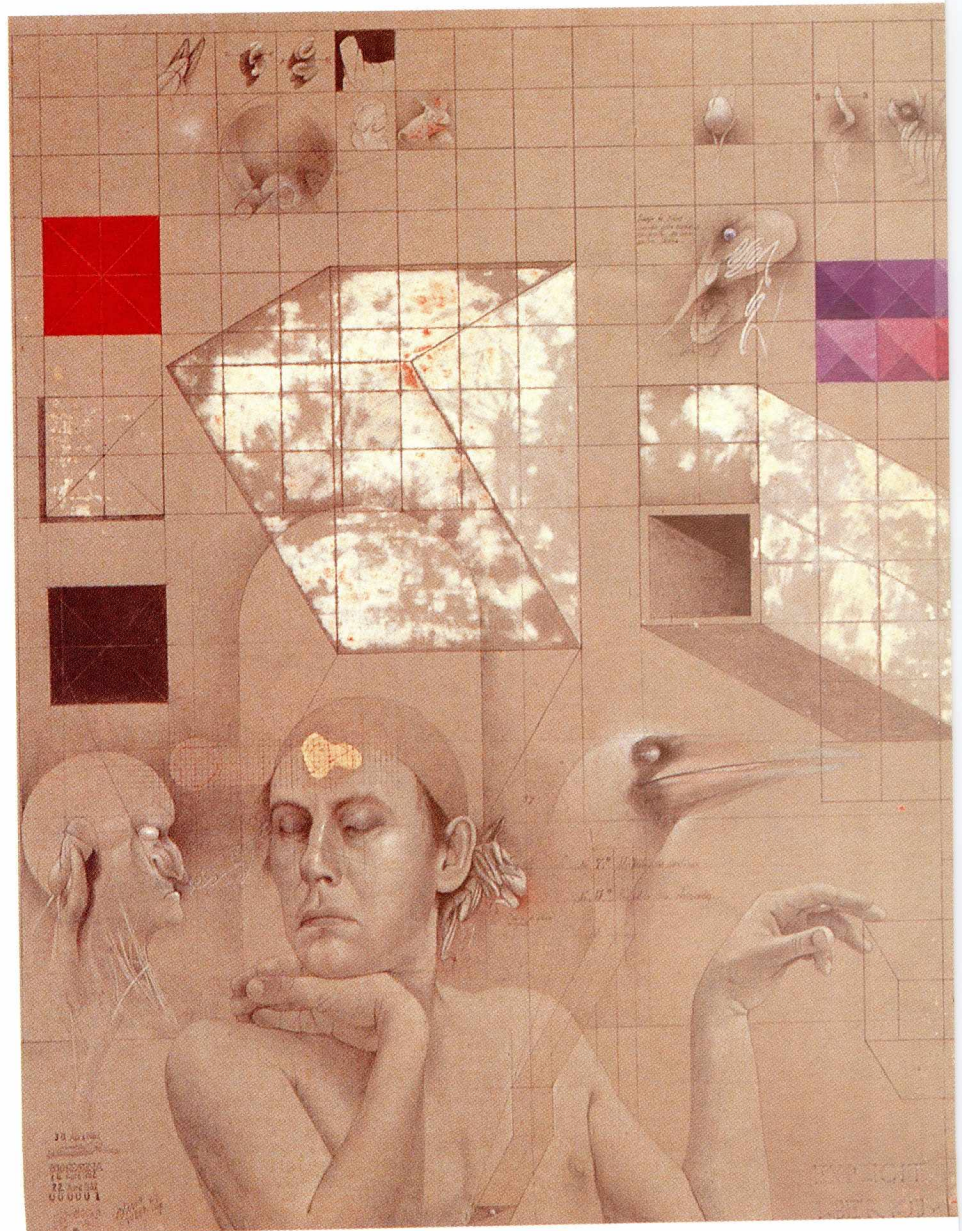
Every human being, I repeat, carries within a negative force and a positive force. One can be cre-

ative only to the degree that one is able to balance them. If we let ourselves be carried away by the negative force alone, this will

destroy us; but it is precisely because we have that negative part that we can express the beautiful and positive part. The dialectic once again.

VM: *Your work shows the strength of the Catholic religion. What relevance does this have in your painting?*

AR: I don't know what you interpret as Catholic. In reality I am not a believer in the Catholic reli-



Sleeping Man in Grey.



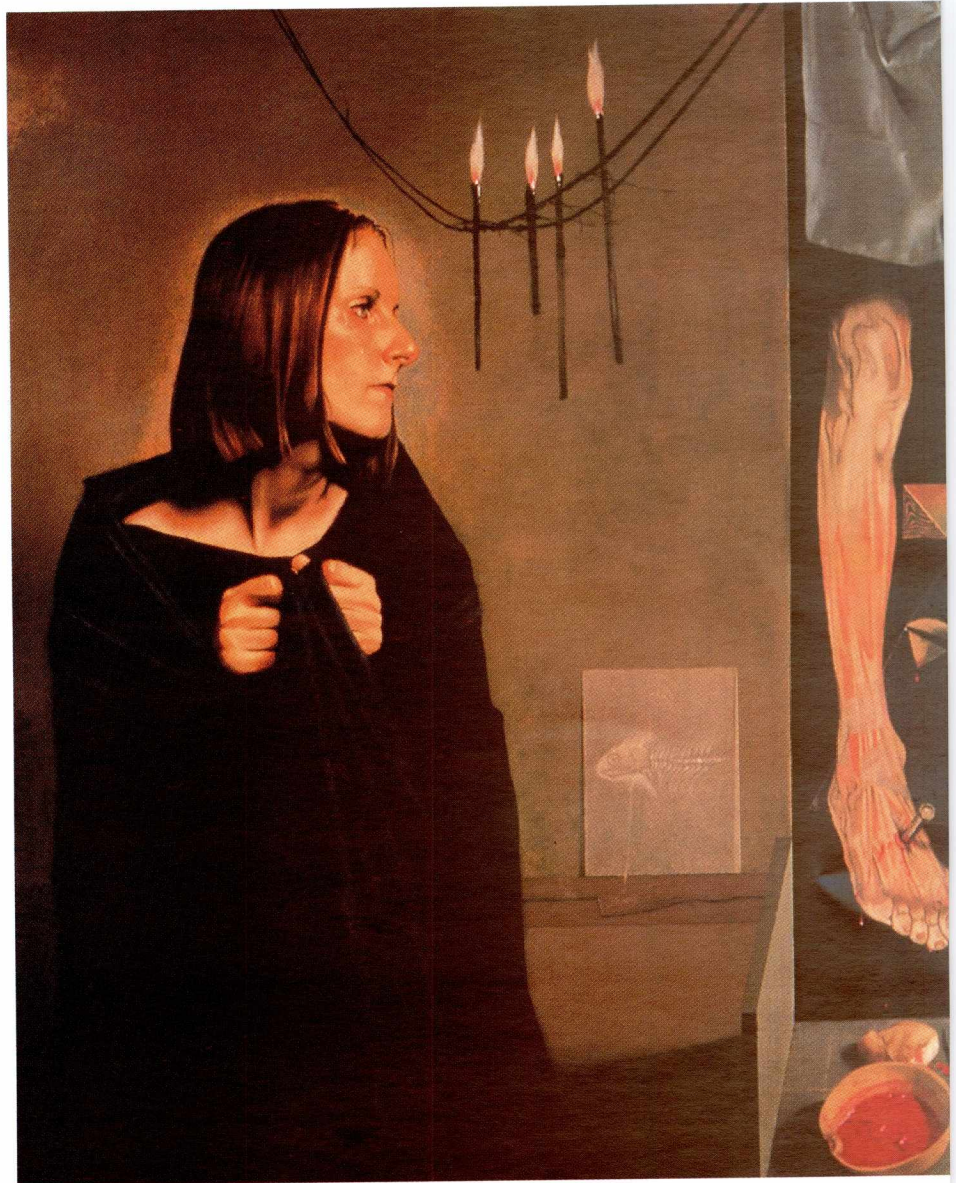
Tribute to García Lorca.

gion, nor any other religion or ideology. I am "a-ideological," which is also an ideological position. So I don't belong to any sect or group. I am irremediably myself, by misfortune and fortune, because absolute individualism is the only thing that can save you now at the end of this century. Instead, I make use of all of human knowledge, whether it be literary or ritual, of which Catholicism is obviously a part.

However, it is true that my painting has a lot of Catholic content. I should add that my relationship to the Catholic religion is not a fortuitous one, since even while studying at secular schools I was always related to a mainly Catholic world. My cousins are Catholic, as are most of my friends and acquaintances, and it's obvious that I belong to and have developed within a Catholic culture, and cannot remove myself from its symbols and influences. The phenomenon of religion can have an unconscious connotation; I don't know what this consists of, but what I am sure of is that I chose symbols from the Bible as well as some from Greek mythology, looking for an archetype. My quest is for an archetype, since for me what is important is to find the essence of things, an essence which is being lost.

VM: For you, what is the significance of the Last Supper and the characters who participate in it?

AR: The Last Supper is also, like everything having to do with the



Stabat mater II.

Catholic religion, or more accurately the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition, a kind of generic symbol, a kind of archetype. In reality not much is known about the Last Supper as a genre within painting. We know that the first comes from the 6th century and the most famous is Leonardo's. I wanted to continue this genre, which so many painters have participated in; it's like nudes or still-

lifes, among the many other genres of painting.

However, while the Last Supper is a symbol which has been very widely reproduced, it is not so common artistically or pictorially. Let me explain: this is a symbol which has instead been reproduced in many kinds of artisan or pseudo-artistic ways. An example is the one by Salvador Dalí; in addition to the fact that I don't like it, I



The last Supper.

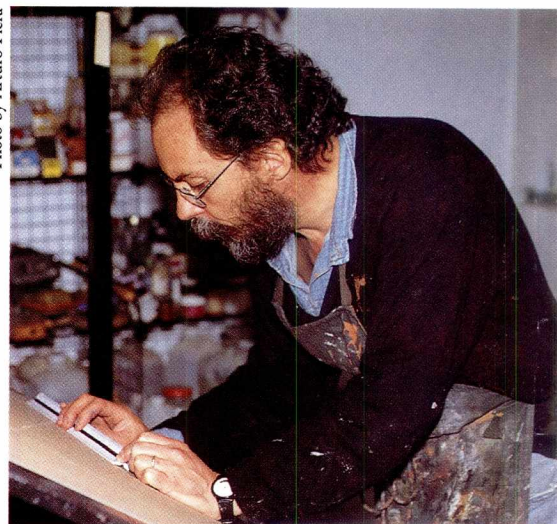
don't think it can be considered artistic in the strict sense. More than an artistic genre, more than a symbol, the Last Supper is an archetypal idea. The symbols are explicit in its content. One cannot conceive of a Last Supper without the blood and bread of the eucharist. These really are symbols. I say this because symbols are often confused with what I call metaphors. When someone asks me what I meant to say when I painted a snail next to a woman's head, as I did in one of my paintings, I answer that this is a met-

aphor. Separately, the two elements are not symbols; alone they don't mean anything, but when placed together they produce a different image with its own meaning. This is what I call a metaphor.

In the Last Supper there are symbols which express the word and the philosophy of Jesus Christ, for example when he said "This will be my blood," etc.

Finally, in terms of the characters who appear in my Last Supper, I just simply wanted to paint a group of friends. ❧

Photo by Arturo Pierra



The artist at work.

The forgotten muralists

Julieta Ortíz Gaitán*

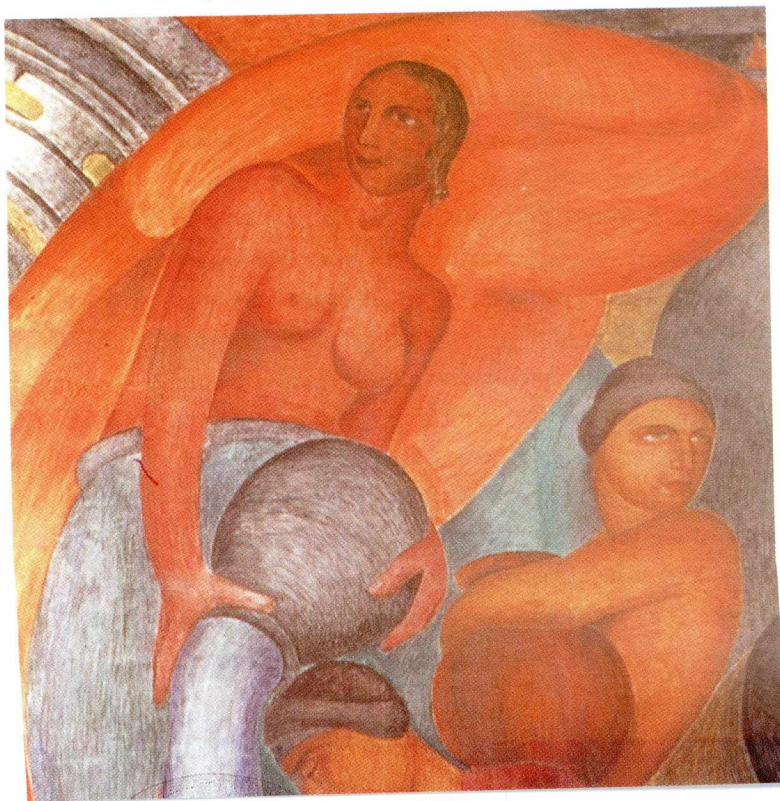
Any discussion of Mexican muralism's golden age brings to the fore the great figures of that threesome of militant and charismatic painters who expressed, on the walls of public buildings, the cultural and social concerns of the post-Revolutionary era: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Yet —despite these artists' fascinating personalities and the unquestionable quality of their work— we should not forget the others who, to a greater or lesser degree, contributed to the nationalist school of which mural painting was one of the foremost expressions. These individuals were also witnesses and protagonists, who travelled different paths in order to come together in a common front in the visual arts. Their work should be viewed as an alternative current, with its own values and qualities.

The muralist movement had various peak moments in terms of its expressive capacity and the aesthetic quality of the works it produced. It passed through several decades, continuing even after the so-called post-Revolutionary era, transforming its precepts and proposals in line with the social and stylistic requirements of the times. The vastness of the mural work carried out in Mexico over the course of the 20th century calls for constant review and a range

of different readings, providing new viewpoints on this important aesthetic-social phenomenon.

Muralism arose in response to an imperious social demand. This doubtless accounts for part of its expressive power and historical legitimacy. In 1922 José Vasconcelos, who had recently been appointed Secretary of Public Education, hired the best painters of the day to “decorate” the walls of public buildings devoted to education and the propagation of culture. The aim was certainly an ambitious one: to extend education to a populace 80 percent of which was illiterate, by means of the visual exaltation of historical episodes and values, above all those related to the

Fermin Revueltas, *Allegory of Industry*, 1922.



Photos: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM

* M. A. in History of Art.



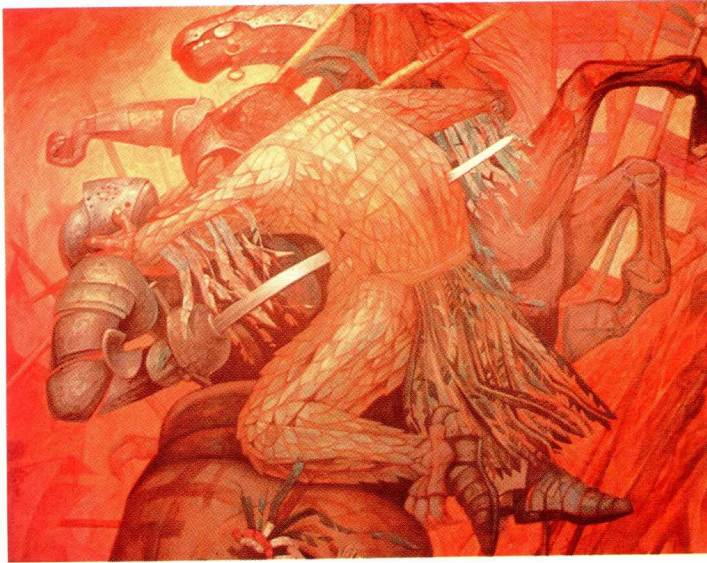
Juan O'Gorman, *Francisco I. Madero*.

recently concluded armed revolution and its goals of social justice. The Revolution was still part of living memory, and it was deemed necessary to entrench it in the collective myths which constitute the physiognomy of peoples, and to make it a force for cohesion deriving from a common past and a shared future.

The Secretary of Education did not put forward any aesthetic theory which would have limited the painters' creative freedom. All he asked for were huge painted surfaces and quick work, given the pressing nature of the objectives being pursued. This was one of the reasons why this first stage in the movement developed within an eclectic framework, based largely on the great themes of Western art with an admixture of concepts from theosophy, esotericism, mysticism and other doctrines of Oriental inspiration. At the same time, one notes traces of *fin de siècle* art in the schemas of formal representation and subject

matter characteristic of Modernism. This is clear in the first set of mural paintings carried out by Dr. Atl, Roberto Montenegro, Jorge Enciso, Xavier Guerrero, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma and Julio Castellanos in the former College of St. Peter and Paul—a building which had been reclaimed in order to provide headquarters for a "Free Discussion Hall."

From that point onwards one decoration project followed another, multiplying the number and quality of ideas, forms and colors appearing in the images painted on city walls. The National Preparatory School, the Secretariat of Public Education, the Benito Juárez primary school and the Abelardo Rodríguez market provided spaces where young painters, most of whom served as assistants to the great masters, carried out work which was simultaneously parallel and alternate, with its own values and qualities. Among the most outstanding of these young artists were Fermín



Jorge González Camarena, *The Fusion of Two Cultures*.

Revueltas, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Fernando Leal, Jean Charlot, Pablo O'Higgins, Leopoldo Méndez, Alfredo Zalce, the Greenwood sisters, Ramón Alva Guadarrama, Raúl Anguiano and Jorge González Camarena.

The first themes were related to historical subjects, *costumbrismo* (local customs and manners), as well as an interest in local landscape and human types. The new subjects of history also came forward, with the working class of the cities and countryside featuring as protagonist, represented through new forms and colors with a new expressiveness and characteristics that identified these works as "Mexican painting." All of this was within the framework of a critical attitude towards the social issues of the day and a clear intention of becoming involved in more or less explicit political commitment.

During the 1950s, the trend called *Integración plástica* (integration of the visual arts) injected new life into muralism, which was now conceived of as going hand in hand with architecture, as part of a "developmentalist" outlook that regarded the post-Revolutionary era as having come to an end. University City was the crowning work of this project, in which such painters as Francisco Eppens, José Chávez Morado, Juan

O'Gorman and Carlos Mérida played a leading role, together with others from later generations.

Thus, large-scale painting was attractive for different reasons and during different historical periods. The monumentality which characterizes this kind of work certainly emphasizes the effect of its messages, which may be why this medium has been so prodigiously cultivated in Mexican art. Also, a large number of mural paintings have disappeared due to a range of causes, leaving both questions and gaps in the decoration of many buildings.

Mural painting also presented a broad and complex vista. Some of its practitioners pursued purely artistic values, related to a more universal humanism based on renewed values, among them Roberto Montenegro, Carlos Mérida, Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Julio Castellanos and Arnold Belkin. Yet within this diversity there is a deep-going sense of nationalism and social conscience, which served as a unifying element in 20th-century mural painting. It was thus, by representing the ideals of an entire era, that muralism acquired far-reaching significance in Mexican art. ^M



Fernando Leal, *The Dancers of Chalma*.

The National Museum of Cultures: A place for reflection

Devoted to the permanent exhibition of collections related to foreign cultures, the National Museum of Cultures is unique in Latin America, both because of its subject matter —international

anthropology— and the origin of the objects it displays, gathered through exchange, donations and sometimes purchase. Inaugurated on December 4, 1965, the museum has remained true to its original objective of placing our culture

within the context of world history by imparting knowledge about other cultures. Thirty years of existence have allowed it to deepen its vision, enter worlds different from our own, and promote a veritable dialogue between the objects displayed and the visitors who come to see them.

Museum with a history

The National Museum of Cultures is part of the same city block occupied by the National Palace, in Mexico City's "Historic Center." It is located on a beautiful side street, which has been called Moneda (money) street since Colonial times, when the building now occupied by the museum housed the first mint for processing the gold and silver extracted from Mexico's mines. This street maintains its original features and its historical value, since the buildings that line it include those of our country's first university, the first printing press and the Archbishopric of Mexico, headquarters for the highest officials of the Catholic Church.

While the building now occupied by the museum displays the architectural traits characteristic of Colonial construction, its history takes us back to pre-Hispanic times. Research has revealed that the second palace of Moctezuma, the last ruler of the Aztecs, was located here. Also known as Tlillanaco or "the blackened house," since many of its walls were paint-



Photos by Leopoldo Hernández

South Sea Hall: pieces from Melanesia.

ed black, the palace was used by Moctezuma whenever he needed to consult the gods regarding a serious issue or when he felt sad and wanted to be alone.

After the Spanish Conquest, when Mexico City was laid out atop the old city of Tenochtitlan, the lands adjoining the central plaza were ceded to those Spaniards who had distinguished themselves most in battle. The site occupied by the palace, together with other buildings, was given to Hernán Cortés himself in 1529. The “new houses of Cortés” were built there, and subsequently sold to the Spanish Crown in 1562. Thus the building became a palace for the viceroys and the location of the first Casa de Moneda (mint —literally “House of Money”). Around 1730 the Palacio de la Moneda was built; the building subsequently went through a series of extensions and modifications.

It also housed a school of engraving, and sheltered a wide range of guests from 1847 until 1866, when it became the city’s first public museum. Called the Public Museum of Natural History, Archeology and History, its collections included archives and documents related to the pre-Hispanic era and the early Colonial period, as well as archeological monuments from the Plaza Mayor (central plaza). The museum subsequently became the National Museum of Archeology, History and Ethnography, and later the National Museum of Anthropol-



The museum’s central patio invites meditation.

ogy. It was simultaneously the headquarters of the National School of Anthropology and History from 1938 to 1958.

When space limitations made it impossible to exhibit all the museum’s holdings, the decision was made to build a new home for the collections of archeological and ethnographic pieces from Mexico itself. Thus, in 1964 the new National Museum of Anthropology was inaugurated, in Chapultepec Park. It was then that the idea arose of creating a museum devoted to the ongoing exhi-

bition of collections from foreign cultures.

This led to the birth of the National Museum of Cultures, under the direction of Dr. Julio César Olivé and the archeologist Beatriz Barba, with the objective of placing our country in the context of world history and promoting respect for cultural diversity through knowledge of other cultures. The museum was started with international anthropological objects which had not been transferred to the new Anthropology Museum; these pieces pro-



One of the entries in the toy car contest.

vided the basis for the first permanent exhibition halls. They include a collection from the South Seas (Oceania) which is considered one of the best in the world.

From its beginnings up to the present day, the museum has built its collections through donations and exchanges promoted by the team of anthropologists who work on the museum's projects. Many Mexican and foreign anthropologists provided pieces from their personal collections, motivated by their enthusiasm for the idea of creating this international museum. At the present time, in addition to loans from private collectors, the museum's holdings grow through donations from various countries, via their diplomatic representatives or academic projects. One of the most recent is the collection donated by the League of Arab States.

Many worlds to discover

The museum's current holdings include approximately 13,000

archeological and ethnographic pieces, which are divided among more than twenty permanent exhibition halls. Exhibits display the typical, the mysterious and the unique, from cultures that have developed in various parts of the world which are both distant and frequently very different from our own, such as those of Africa, the South Seas, the Arab countries, Japan and China, to mention but a few.

A visit to the museum allows one to observe the differences and similarities in the ways man has related to nature and other men over the course of time, and to reflect on the validity of different cultures and the respect they deserve. One example is the magnificent collection of masks from the most diverse regions and eras, displayed in the museum's exhibition halls. The uses of these masks range from the sacred to the profane, but all of them awaken fascination and the desire to discover the viewpoints and feelings of the men and women who hid behind them.

One of the museum's distinguishing features is the constant research activity that its permanent staff of historians, ethnologists and archeologists carry out in order to further the institution's exhibitions. Their objective is to transmit knowledge of the processes of transformation and change undergone by the cultures represented at the museum. A clear example is the hall devoted to Japan,

which leads us through economic, political, religious and social developments over the course of several historical eras.

Yet among the most interesting facets of this museum are the daily visits made by those who possess an unlimited capacity for wonder and curiosity: children. Since the museum includes displays on world history that coincide with study plans followed by institutions of basic education, many of these children are sent by their teachers. Nevertheless, the museum's staff takes advantage of these mandatory visits in



Wood carving of archangel, from Venezuela.

Mexico: Shock and change¹

Héctor Aguilar Camín*

will comment on three different but related aspects of the Mexican transition. First, on the shock or initial crisis that propelled change in Mexico. Second, on the nature of the crisis in Mexico. Third, an attempt to answer the crucial question: How critical is the current crisis in Mexico?

The shock

In my opinion, the shock that propelled change in

* Mexican historian and novelist.

¹ Lecture at the "Societies in Transition Seminar Series," Harvard University/Trade Union Program Seminar, September 29, 1995.

Mexico was the 1981-1982 debt crisis. This crisis had a serious effect on the public finances of a country in which the state held tight control over the fundamentals of economic and political systems. Up until that time, not only Mexico's economy but its political structure as well had long been heavily subsidized and protected from outside competition. In Mexico business people, workers, peasants, and members of the middle class—including intellectuals, journalists, artists and scholars—were subsidized and protected.

Mexico was a country where elections, political opposition parties and the hegemonic official party



Imaginatina—Marco Antonio Cruz

Recent policy changes spell the end of the post-Revolution "ejido" system in agriculture.

were also subsidized and protected. At the top of the pyramid was the president, who was strong, subsidized and protected. Everything with visibility and clout in Mexico—or almost everything—was subsidized and protected under the sheltering cloak of the state. In the final analysis, everything was to some extent financed from the public treasury.

The Mexican government's bankruptcy, therefore, meant not only that the country's economy went bust, but pointed to the beginning of the end of its political system as well. It marked the breakdown of an economic development model, an economy closed to outside competition, characterized by heavy government intervention. But it also inflicted mortal wounds to a model of political stability and negotiation, based on a presidentialist regime with a hegemonic party, whose main instruments were subsidies and protectionism—public money and corporate privileges.

That is why 1982 was a turning point. The Mexican governing class was forced to adopt what they called, at the time, "structural reform." Structural reform was bound to undermine the very basis of the Mexican establishment. It sought to eliminate subsidies and protectionism, to open the economy to foreign competition, and to reduce the omnipresence of the state. This program of reform was intended to place Mexico in the real world at a moment when "new economic miracles" were being performed by countries with highly competitive, export-based economies. This market-oriented liberal reform was begun, gradually at first, during President Miguel de la Madrid's six-year term, gaining a much faster pace during President Salinas' administration. Both administrations focused on transforming Mexico's economy, and were—to differing degrees—resistant to dismantling the political apparatus upon which they stood.

Nevertheless, as economic reform progressed, Mexico's old political structure received, as I have said, a succession of mortal wounds. At the same time, political actors began to appear who were not controlled by the system of protection and subsidy, and with them a movement toward democratic

change. This movement was born of a society that was tired of economic crises, a society that had become modern in many ways. Its emergence had been made possible by a number of silent yet immensely significant changes, including, in particular, the process of urbanization and the formation of an educated middle class.

It soon became evident that the decision to open the Mexican economy to the world market would require not only economic reform and the transformation of the state's traditional systems of political "clientelism." It would also imply a change in cultural values. The transformation of Mexico's old model involved challenging vested interests, overcoming inertias, and overhauling institutional structures. The reform shook the very basis of the nationalistic creed held so dear by dominant sectors of Mexican society.

The current crisis

What is the nature of Mexico's current crisis? First, I think it is important to say that Mexico's current situation is a crisis of the reforms implemented since 1982. Mexico is no longer suffering from the crisis caused by the breakdown of the old system, but rather from the costs of implementing the new model. It is a crisis regarding the feasibility of the reforms which were begun during the '80s and are still being implemented today, basically unchanged, by President Zedillo. Mexico's current crisis has three dimensions: one which is economic in nature, a second which is political, and finally a cultural dimension.

The economic dimension

President Zedillo has pointed to a lack of domestic savings as the principal cause of the crisis which erupted in December 1994. Historically, a lack of domestic savings has been a constant constraint to economic growth. In 1982 the Mexican economy, then heavily protected, suffered a crisis that was

remarkably similar to today's situation. The triggering factor was a huge trade deficit, produced in part—as was the case in 1994—by the decision to avoid devaluating the peso in a presidential election year, and in part on the authorities' firm belief that foreign money would eventually resume flowing to Mexico.

Now, after twelve years of liberal reform, the economic policies applied in response to the current crisis have also been reminiscent of the 1982 experience. The authorities implemented a drastic "adjust-

ment" program, forcing the economy into a deep recession, with an estimated 5 percent decline in overall growth for 1995. On the other hand, inflation and interest rates soared; consumer credit contracted; businesses closed; jobs were lost; and the purchasing power of workers' wages fell.

There are, however, marked differences between the crisis of the '80s and the current situation, although to those who have been affected, these differences matter very little. Today, as opposed to 1982, the government does not have a spending deficit, but rather a surplus. Prices have stabilized rapidly, and exports have remained notably sound, while the industrial

plant that has managed to survive has initiated a process of import substitution. Imports—as in 1982—have dropped sharply, converting 1994's balance of payments deficit into a significant surplus.

Experts today are particularly worried about one of the current crisis' most singular characteristics, which is that for the first time in several decades of recurrent crises, the sectors most adversely affected include small and medium-sized firms, and above all, families' personal incomes. For the first time in Mexico's modern social history, members of the middle class were caught with significant debts on credit card accounts, mortgages, car loans—in short, their ability to meet their most basic consumption needs.

Two structural aspects have intensified the effects of the crisis. The first is sustained population growth, which since 1985 has added 800,000 young people to the labor market each year. Mexico has been unable to substantially modify its rate of population growth over the last decade: this growth was estimated at 2.5 percent annually in 1983, and 2.4 percent in 1994. The second structural

factor that has exacerbated the adverse effects of the crisis is the country's legacy of social inequity and poverty, a situation which was aggravated by the economic stagnation of the '80s and has been further intensified by the current crisis. A 1990 estimate classified half of the population—40 million people—as poor, and of this group 20 million were said to live in abject poverty. A 1993 survey classified "only" 13.5 million as living in absolute poverty, but maintained the broader estimate of Mexico's poor almost intact, at 39 million inhabitants.

Experts are concerned, however, not only about the difficult present, but the immediate future as

Imagenlatina—Ángeles Torrejón



Addressing social inequality remains one of the country's major challenges.

well. The crisis is in its adjustment stage, an elegant name for recession. Yet no one seems to have the formula for pulling the economy out of recession and initiating growth. The question being asked is a very simple one: Where is the money we need for reactivating the economy? Where can effective savings be found that are ready to convert into investment, and thereby trigger economic growth? If anyone has any specific ideas about how the necessary financing could be arranged without selling Pemex or privatizing the country's social security system, they could make a fortune as consultants to the Mexican government in precisely this area.

two urgent tasks at hand: first, political and criminal violence must be contained, and second, a new mechanism for the transmission of power must be set up, as a first step toward the construction of a democratic institutional framework.

Violence. Political violence has reappeared on the Mexican scene with unusual force. A social rebellion in Chiapas and three magnicides—the assassinations of Cardinal Posadas in 1993, and of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio and PRI secretary José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, in 1994—are proof enough that the state's ability to control political violence has suffered from severe deterioration.

In addition, the increasing presence of illegal drug trafficking in Mexico has brought with it an unprecedented expansion of organized crime, including the construction of extensive networks of corruption and impunity that have penetrated the country's law enforcement agencies. The illegal narcotics industry has created a parallel power structure within the judicial system dedicated to combating it.

Economic crisis has, in turn, caused a growing incidence of crime in Mexico's principal cities, placing even greater strain on the already precarious public security system, and underlining authorities' incompetence at effectively dealing with the situation. These

developments have called into question the Mexican state's ability to maintain exclusive control over violence within its territory, which, according to Max Weber, is one of the fundamental rights and responsibilities of the state.

The transmission of power. Along with the crisis of Mexico's presidentialist system and of its hegemonic party, the current crisis has also affected the mechanism which for decades has guaranteed a peace-

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Over recent years the Catholic Church has regained its political rights.

The political dimension

The most crucial political challenge facing Mexico at this time is to contain social unrest and criminal violence through a new, democratic institutionalization of political life. The problem seems to be that the old rules of corporatist politics have finally quit working, while new democratic rules are still being hammered out. In the political arena there are at least

ful transmission of power: the custom which allowed the outgoing president to select his successor. This was an effective, albeit undemocratic tradition. For several decades it solved the main question to be addressed by any political system, which is who will govern.

The development of competitive political parties and elections in Mexico could solve this problem in a peaceful manner. The PAN (the rightist National Action Party) has recently won municipal and gubernatorial elections in several states, including Baja California, Chihuahua, Guanajuato and Jalisco. The elections were freely held, fair and certified. In fact it was through elections of this sort—the first fully certified presidential elections in Mexico's history—that the PRI candidate won the presidency in August 1994. Of all the political novelties of political transition in Mexico, the only enduring institutional change seems to be the establishment of competitive elections. Free elections could replace the traditional mechanism of appointment from above and the virtual hegemony of the PRI. This possibility will be tested with the federal elections scheduled for 1997, in which the opposition could gain a majority in Congress. But the real test will be, of course, the presidential elections of the year 2000, which offer the possibility of seeing a candidate not affiliated with the PRI take office.

The cultural dimension

During most of this century—up until 1982—Mexico's political culture has been systematically built upon a handful of predominant ideas, which may all be summarized by the term "revolutionary nationalism." According to this doctrine, Mexico should be:

First, a *secular* nation, in which the Catholic Church must be excluded from political life;

Second, an *agrarian* nation, which must maintain permanently open the possibility of granting land to the peasants, support the *ejido*,² and limit the expansion of private property of arable land;

² Cooperative or semi-collective farms established after the Mexican Revolution. (Translator's note.)

Third, a *worker-oriented* nation, which must provide permanent support to trade-union organizations, the promotion of labor rights, and the defense of workers;

Fourth, a *nationalist* country, capable of containing the influence and resisting pressures exerted mostly by Mexico's historic adversary, the United States; and

Fifth, a *state-oriented* nation, due to the fact that the state owned the main assets of the country, including petroleum and other energy resources, and the state, as well, guaranteed social stability by distributing protection and subsidies among the principal corporate sectors of society.

The reform initiated in 1982 challenged each of these beliefs. Those implementing the reform advised the secular nation that the Catholic Church would be allowed to recover its political rights. They announced to the agrarian nation that the granting of land and public support of the *ejido* had come to an end. The worker-oriented nation was informed that efficiency and productivity were contradictory to the labor unions' and private sectors' systems of featherbedding, clientage and "negotiation." The nationalist nation was told that if progress was to be achieved, a working relationship must be established—via NAFTA—with the country's longtime adversary, the United States. And the state-oriented nation was advised that the Mexican government was too large and inefficient, and must be slimmed down and reformed.

During the course of this reform, the government sold state-run enterprises, such as the telephone company and the banking system; withdrew its protection from an economy accustomed to captive markets; and imposed restrictions on a government bureaucracy accustomed to an absence of control. The structural reform begun in 1982 was a cultural challenge to old laws, institutions and beliefs which would have been difficult to modify even if rapid and spectacular results had been achieved in terms of economic growth and increased employment. The poor results obtained in these areas have

sparked a tense battle between those who favor reform and those who resist it.

Those resisting reform do not hold key positions within the government. They offer no alternative solution, and they cannot openly defend returning to the former system. Conversely, however, the reformers, who remain in the government, cannot show specific results of their policies. They no longer have enough credibility to affirm that the benefits will be forthcoming, if only the nation will continue to wait. Those resisting reform cannot offer a return to the past as a viable solution to the country's problems, nor can the reformers reliably offer the future.

How critical is Mexico's current crisis?

I will now address the last question on my list: How critical is Mexico's current crisis? It is indeed very critical, because we are facing a major change. As I mentioned before, the reforms that were applied in response to the 1982 debt crisis have had lasting effects, not only on the Mexican economic and political systems, but on many of the most basic assumptions making up Mexico's national identity, whatever that means. I am sure that future historians will refer to these years as a period of spectacular change in the country's history, and as a period of radical transformation, comparable in depth to the Bourbon reforms of the mid-16th century, to the Liberal reform of the 19th century, or the period of industrialization characterizing the 1940s.

It is impossible to implement reforms of such depth and scope without any risk of disruption. For a country emerging from six decades of stability, these changes were tremendously hard to assimilate. However, the country's institutional foundation has remained intact. Competitive elections and more open political negotiations have provided new channels for resolving internal differences, as is illustrated by the elections held this year in several states, and by the dialogue taking place in Chiapas, which has successfully contained the rebellion. The new administra-

tion seems to have finally settled into power, following several erratic months. The economy appears to have survived the worst effects of the adjustment program. Inflation and interest rates have dropped, and there have been signs of improvement in other sectors of the economy as well. Programs have been implemented to alleviate the situation of millions of individuals and businesses overloaded with debt.

Nevertheless, Mexico's situation may worsen if adequate responses are not given to a number of problems. To foster a reactivation of the economy it is crucial to promote positive expectations and reduce the burden of adjustment for the sectors that have been hit the hardest. The consolidation of fair and competitive election processes may be the touchstone upon which new democratic institutions may be built. If a democratic context can be built and maintained, the battle between the forces favoring reform and those who are against it may be effectively and openly resolved.

Improving public security is one area for which no quick solutions appear to be available. There is an urgent need to contain criminal violence—especially that associated with the illegal drug cartels—and to cleanse the country's law enforcement agencies. The nation's political stability depends on the authorities' ability to control violence. However, there are few elements favoring an optimistic outlook in this area.

There are also few if any signs of a possible solution to Mexico's age-old, fundamental problem, which is social inequality. Even if the country were suddenly to achieve high rates of economic growth, and successfully build a democratic political system, a significant reduction in social disparities would not be immediately forthcoming.

The business of foretelling the future is not at the moment the most profitable enterprise in Mexico. Reality has proven virtually everyone wrong. How serious is Mexico's current crisis? I do not know for certain just how critical the situation is, but I can say that it is serious enough to be unpredictable.✕

Poverty and health: Two challenges for Mexican social policy¹

Silvia Núñez García*

In the complex mosaic of Mexican social policy, programs specifically aimed at reducing poverty and promoting the population's health are currently key elements for projecting the nation's future development.

One school of thought in the study of poverty

focuses on analyzing the paradox of contemporary Mexico's development in terms of alternatives for linking economic growth to an equitable distribution of income. Along these lines, we can state that the legacy of the 1980s came down hardest on the nation's lowest-income groups, due to the ravages of inflation and the paralysis of economic activity (Trejo and Jones, 1993, p. 180).

Thus, within the framework of far-reaching changes, since 1988 Mexico has been putting at risk not only

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¹ This article is an advance segment of the essay currently in progress, "Social Policy in Mexico, the United States and Canada," of which the present writer is coauthor.



Imaginatina—Marco Antonio Cruz

Despite government programs aimed at promoting the population's health, medical care remains insufficient.

the living standards of its population —built up over the course of forty years— but the future of several generations as well. According to some calculations, the number of Mexicans currently living below the poverty line² is nearly two thirds of the total population, having risen from 64 percent in 1989 to 66 percent in 1992 (Boltvinik, 1995, p. 51).

During the presidential term of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-94), the attempt was made to stabilize the economy and improve living standards on the basis of strengthening the economic system by raising productivity and efficiency and opening up trade (Salinas de Gortari, 1989).

Instituting the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL), the government sought to introduce new elements of social policy aimed at solving the most serious problems facing the poorest population sectors. Thus, its immediate objective was not to provide solutions from the top down, but “to provide the means whereby... the poorest part of the population may attain well-being in an individual way” (Trejo and Jones, 1993, pp. 184-185).

Assigning resources in a differentiated manner, Pronasol's 14 programs³ came under three main headings which, taken together, sought to assist in the basic capacities of the programs' recipients: social welfare, support to production and regional development. At the same time, from the beginning they were related to one of the reforms viewed as a *sine qua non*

for the consolidation of the neo-liberal state: “slimming down” the government.

Some of Pronasol's objectives established an important precedent, taking into account that the program promoted modifications in the paternalist structure of the Mexican state. It did so by supporting direct participation by the beneficiaries of social policy in the solution of their own problems, through actions for recognizing and promoting community efforts or giving a push to the basic physical and social infrastructure (schools, clinics, etc.). Its real long-term effects are still difficult to measure, given the new outbreak of the national economy's recessive crisis, marked by the December 1994 peso devaluation and the limitation of social spending for the same year, which was set at 10.676 billion new pesos (Velasco and Garfias, 1995, 1A).

With 13 million out of a total population of 82 million estimated to be living in “extreme poverty,”⁴ while in November 1994 it was calculated that in Mexico 53.3 percent of the economically active population (EAP) survived through the “informal economy” —leaving a shortfall of more than 3 million jobs between 1984 and 1994 (Candia, 1995, p. 9)— the effects of the current shock treatment will tend to exacerbate the unjust income distribution pattern. Already in May 1995 the unemployment rate was estimated to be, at a minimum, equivalent to 5.3 percent of the EAP.⁵ This was far above the official forecasts, which, among other things, specifically allude to the 5 percent hike in the value-added tax (IVA) in order to finance job creation through social infrastructure projects, as an additional means of support to social policies designed to assist society's most disadvantaged sectors.

In a climate of threats to jobs and wages, together with the lack of effective support to productive investment (micro, small and medium industries) and

² Those living in poverty are defined as “the population which lives in homes where income is below the poverty line. This line is equal to the cost of the Normative Basket of Essential Goods and Services for the average Mexican home, as defined in studies by the General Office of the National Plan for Depressed Areas and Disadvantaged Groups (COPLAMAR) in 1982. The basket includes goods and services... related to food, housing, health and hygiene, education, culture and recreation, transportation and communications, clothing and footwear and personal appearance” (Boltvinik, 1995, p. 51).

³ The list of programs included: health, education, food, supplies, basic services, urban development, housing, land tenure, women in solidarity, support to production, to regional development and to Indian communities, solidarity funds and programs for agricultural day laborers (Parcerro, 1992, p. 99).

⁴ This refers to incomes below the cost of the above-mentioned Basic Basket of goods and services.

⁵ With regard to unemployment alone, 750,000 jobs are estimated to have been lost in the first ten months of 1995 (Vidal, 1995, p. 10A).



The National Solidarity Program was instituted to alleviate problems facing Mexico's poor.

the deterioration of agriculture, no increase in social spending will be enough to solve existing problems.

We will now take a brief look at institutional policies in Mexico which promote the population's health, starting from the premise that the grave problems of poverty confronting the nation bring with them high risks of malnutrition, poor health conditions and high levels of infant morbidity, among other dangers.

Despite the fact that health is a constitutional right for all Mexicans, in practice health-care services are insufficient and substandard in terms of the protection they provide. Rosalba Carrasco and Francisco Hernández (1994) divide Mexico's health system into three groups: open institutions serving the population at large, social security institutions and private medical facilities.

The first group is almost entirely dependent on the Secretariat of Health (SSA); it operates through direct government financing and has the basic objective of serving the most disadvantaged. It is estimated that this group has the capacity to serve 34 percent of the nation's population (*Este País*, 1995, p. 18).

On the other hand, Mexico's main social security agencies, the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the Institute for Social Security and Services for Government Employees (ISSSTE), are facing serious conflicts given that the impossibility of incorporating the bulk of the population through promotion of sustained economic development ran parallel to the centralized, bureaucratic growth of these agencies' own structures.

Since its creation in 1943, IMSS took shape as the primary and most important public entity charged with organizing and administering the funds derived from the social-security contributions made by wage-earners, employers and the government. Enrollment in the system was made mandatory, as a mechanism for regulating relations between labor and capital, while contributions were set on the basis of workers' wages and employers' incomes.

ISSSTE was founded later with the objective of serving public employees. Its bipartite financial structure—based on contributions from the government and from employees—contrasts with the unique tripartite structure the Federal Labor Law sanctioned for IMSS.

ISSSTE was founded later with the objective of serving public employees. Its bipartite financial structure—based on contributions from the government and from employees—contrasts with the unique tripartite structure the Federal Labor Law sanctioned for IMSS.

Recent statistics state that IMSS and ISSSTE, together with other federal and state agencies, cover 55 percent of the nation's total population. And while between 9 and 12 percent of Mexicans lack health-care services, private medicine covers up to a quarter of the population enjoying social security

benefits and three fifths of those not covered by those benefits (*Este País*, 1995, p. 18).

DISTRIBUTION OF IMSS FEES

	Employer	Worker	Government
Gross contribution	70%	25%	5%
Net contribution	38.5%	32%	29.5%

Source: IMSS, *Diagnóstico*, 1995.

Nevertheless, given current economic straits—in which a 20 percent fall in the population’s buying power is projected for 1995 and it is estimated that 7 million people will be enrolled in the National Health System—preventive health-promotion programs⁶ and those for ongoing supply of medicines should be reinforced in Mexico in order to prevent the exacerbation of the link between poverty and illness.

Mexico invests a lower percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in health than Canada and the United States. World Bank figures state that in 1990 Mexico invested only 4.82 percent, compared to 9.1 percent in Canada and 12.7 percent in the United States (*Este País*, 1995, p. 28).

Among other factors, it is clear that in Mexico, the great diversity of programs involving social security has worked to the detriment of substantial investment of public resources in health, given that the system is able to offer only one doctor for each 2,400 patients (Danell, 1995, p. 8).

If in Mexico the globalization process obliges us to regenerate and rescue our productive base, as a precondition for meeting the parameters of international competitiveness, then the promotion of our population’s well-being must take priority over the political tug of war between the public and private spheres.

Concern for improving the population’s quality

⁶The basic vaccination scheme is currently estimated to cover more than 92 percent of children under the age of five (*Este País*, 1995, p.18).

of life must come first and foremost in the imminent reform of Mexican social policy. This objective must be defended by citizens and government institutions alike, with an eye to eliminating prejudices, rejecting populist schemas and conscientiously analyzing the pros and cons of the possible privatization of some social programs, or even a rise in their fees.

Only by overcoming this debate in practice will it be possible to guarantee both the effectiveness of social policy in Mexico and support to this policy by wage-earners and those enrolled in the social security system, as well as the ability to provide complete coverage for the population and the quality benefits and services to which Mexicans aspire. \bar{M}

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Women clearing new paths

*Gabriela Delgado Ballesteros**

In Beijing our here and now set out to question and reevaluate the past. In that immense city, where the Far East draws near, our voices became reflection.

The experience was not only delightful but provided lessons in the practice of tolerance and comprehension towards the greatest forms of diversity. We entered the process slowly and respectfully, with the firm conviction that from our being as women we are building an equitable and tolerant world. First the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began its work with the conviction "not to take a single step backwards" ...and then the official conference proposed, now more than ever, to free the other half of the world, women, from their corsets and restrictions.

Forum of NGOs in Huairu, China, and Beijing Conference

The governmental conference and

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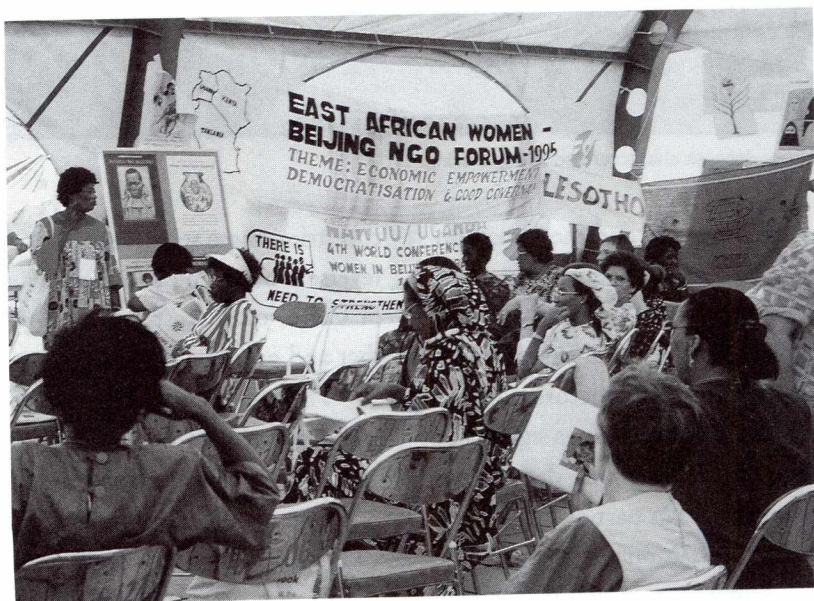
the Forum of NGOs were two very different forms of expression.

The Forum bore witness to the strength of non-governmental organizations and the pressure they exert on governments, as well as their grievances regarding issues which governments ignore or only partly address with regard to women. Among the Forum's most significant results were the documents produced in "caucus" meetings (agreements derived from discussion among the different countries on specific subjects), which

were presented for the consideration of the official government delegations.

The Forum's work methodology consisted of holding more than a hundred workshops, where different subjects affecting women were openly discussed.

For its part, the Governmental Conference was the culmination of a vast amount of preparatory work, carried out all over the world over the course of three years. International women's organizations had mobilized, moreover, to ensure that their demands and interests would be included in the documents approved at the five previous meetings (on childhood, in New York; human rights, in Vienna; the environment, in Rio de Janeiro; population, in Cairo; and social development, in Copenhagen). In Beijing they hoped to move forward in terms of the commitments made previously.



One of the Forums at the Conference.

As expected, there was a high level of complexity involved in achieving consensus, as shown by the fact that the central document, *Platform for Action*, reached the debate stage with 40 percent of its content in brackets.

The problems currently afflicting humanity were considered material for discussion at the Conference. For example, armed conflicts, deterioration of the environment, violation and lack of recognition of human rights, the negative effects of structural adjust-

it even more difficult than in previous conferences to reach consensus. One possible reason for this is the rise and consolidation, over the past ten years, of a large number of civic organizations that work with women and defend their causes. Another is the return of fundamentalism to the Islamic world and, in incipient fashion, to several Catholic countries. In the latter case the reactivation of Catholicism's most conservative sectors is well-known, particularly in Latin America. In alliance with Muslim

- * The disparities, shortfalls and inequality of access in the field of health care and related services.
- * Violence against women.
- * Consequences of armed conflicts for women.
- * Inequality of participation in political and economic structures.
- * Inequality between women and men in the exercise of power and decision-making at all levels.
- * The lack of mechanisms for promoting the betterment of women at all levels.
- * The lack of promotion and protection of human rights for women.
- * The proliferation of stereotypes regarding women, as well as inequality of access and participation in the communications media.
- * Gender-based inequalities in the management of natural resources and environmental protection.
- * The persistence of discrimination against girls and the violation of their rights.



Lively debates characterized the gathering.

ment programs and the transition to market economies in some countries, the growth of poverty, as well as such issues as aid for development and the restructuring of the United Nations. Thus, a significant amount of time was devoted to these themes as part of the debates prior to and during the Conference.

Differences of culture, religion, ideology and development made

countries, these sectors sought to reverse some of the advances made in Cairo, or at least prevent further and greater advances.

The twelve areas of discussion and agreement in Beijing were:

- * The persistent, growing burden of poverty affecting women.
- * The disparities, shortfalls and inequality of access in the field of education and training.

The following parallel activities were carried out:

- * Permanent Assembly, where reports were presented on the condition of women, their particular problems and proposals for development in each of the 181 countries belonging to the United Nations.
- * Establishment of two commissions, each of which dealt with half of the issues to be addressed in the platform of action. Each

country had five representatives to each commission, two with voice in the assembly while the remaining three lobbied and negotiated with the other countries.

- * Various contact groups, charged with fully discussing the conceptual aspects of the action platform.
- * Conferences coordinated by the various United Nations agencies, such as UNESCO, WHO, INSTRAW, ILO, UNICEF, UNIFEM and ONUDI, with specific agendas corresponding to the interests of each agency. Specialists in the various topics participated in these conferences.

Negotiations on the *Platform for Action* and the *Political Declaration* were organized around two blocs of countries: on the one hand the Group of 77 (G77) plus China, and on the other the European Union. The independent voices of various countries were added to the discussions between the two blocs; these states included the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Malta, Switzerland, Mexico, Japan, Israel and the Vatican.

Each bloc sought to reach its own internal consensus beforehand, an effort which had the best results for the 15 countries of the European Union, given their considerable homogeneity. In contrast, the approximately 130 countries adhering to the bloc of the G77 plus China encountered greater problems in reaching consensus due to their heterogeneity in

terms of religion, culture and development strategies.

The European Union (EU) presented the most liberal and advanced positions regarding gender issues, but were the most conservative (together with Japan and the United States) in terms of financial resources and the most sensitive about criticisms against development strategies adopted over the past fifteen years. Canada, Norway, Australia and New Zealand frequently shared the EU's stance on gender questions.

ment by developed countries to increasing the resources they receive for development and for carrying out various of the actions set forth in the *Platform*.

Many of the discussions revolved around words or short phrases that, at bottom, reflected deep-going differences. For example, the developed countries preferred the concept of "sustainable development," while the G77 and China insisted that references to this topic include "sustained economic growth and people-centered

The Governmental Conference was the culmination of a vast amount of preparatory work, carried out all over the world over the course of three years.

Postures were divided within the G77/China bloc: Muslim and conservative Catholic countries joined their voices to hold back any advance on reproductive rights, sexuality, birth control, abortion, sexual orientation and sex education. The Holy See and Malta joined them on this terrain. Several Latin American countries, India, Cuba and the non-Muslim African nations presented more liberal proposals on these questions.

The African and Caribbean countries spoke against structural adjustment programs, charging them with contributing to the impoverishment of their populations, with an unequal impact on women.

For the G77 in general it was important to achieve a commit-

sustainable development." The Holy See came forward with the suggestion that the phrase read "centered on human beings," since the human being would thereby be protected from the moment of conception. Iran proposed that the word "equity" be used each time that "equality" was mentioned, since this would allow it to continue to treat women in accordance with the precepts of its religious laws.

For its part, the United States incorporated short phrases softening the obligatory nature of governments' commitments and emphasized the fact that since what was involved was a (non-binding) commitment between governments, the latter could not oblige

third parties (private enterprise, international agencies, non-governmental organizations) to fulfill these commitments. Thus, it constantly defended individual rights and freedoms.

The European Union systematically sought to include phrases ensuring a commitment to analyzing all public policies and pro-

grams from the standpoint of gender, while avoiding use of the word "family" and mention of women's traditional roles—a vision permeated with defense of women's individual rights. Thus, the *Political Declaration* made few advances.

The *Platform of Action's* most controversial subjects had to do with the definition of concepts

like "gender" and "family," issues related to health, sexuality, sexual orientation and women's reproductive rights, as well as actions aimed at promoting equal access for women to inheritance and property.

Several Islamic countries and a small number of Catholic nations expressed reservations about two of the *Platform's* paragraphs: No. 97, which includes, among sexual rights, women's freedom to choose regarding sexuality and the equality that should exist between men and women in this regard; and No. 107k, which reproduces paragraph 8.25 of the *Cairo Program of Action*, which expressly stated that abortion is not considered a birth-control method and refers to "considering the revision of laws which include punitive measures against women who have had illegal abortions." Reservations were also expressed on paragraph 232f, which seeks to ensure that sexual and reproductive rights will be fully recognized and respected.

The struggle over these questions had subsequent consequences, for example in Mexico, where radical right-wing groups and religious fanatics unleashed a campaign against the actions of the official Mexican delegation, distorting information and quoting out of context. This falsification is contrary to the platform's spirit and to the Conference's call for creating a peaceful, just, human and equitable world which promotes respect and advancement for women all over the planet. X

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Parties and reforms¹

Rafael Segovia*

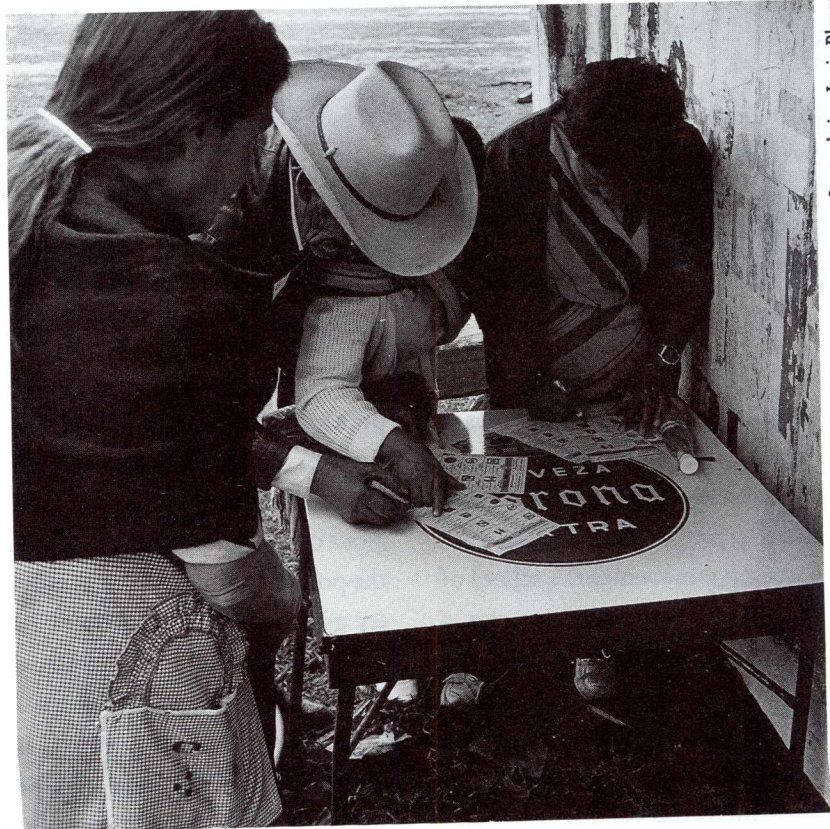
The Mexican Revolution created a multitude of parties, now long forgotten. The National Agrarian, Cooperativist and Border Socialist parties —like all those which in one or another way included the adjective “Revolutionary” in their names— went to the great beyond with the birth of the PNR (National Revolutionary Party, predecessor of today’s PRI) and the process of “revolutionary unification,” which gave rise to the “Sonora dynasty” and later to the “great revolutionary family.”

Today we find ourselves unceasingly in the company of the PNR’s grandson, the PRI, and it is worth asking how this party has managed, with a bit of touching-up, to survive and govern alone over the course of two thirds of a

century, while in Mexico other parties —particularly those on the left— have had an ephemeral existence.

I hasten to note that the fact that the PNR was not the result of intellectual, doctrinal or philosophical considerations —and that it was created rapidly, in all likelihood

with no great concern for matters of form— was an advantage for the party, since this corresponded to ongoing features of Mexican society. Faced with the need to resolve the issue of succession after the assassination of Alvaro Obregón, General Plutarco Elías Calles created a political mechanism which would



Imaginatina—Lucio Blanco

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¹ Paper read at the Second Colloquium on “Society and Politics —Mexico and the United States,” organized by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, Baja California, on September 22, 1995.

The real winner of the August 21 federal elections was the electorate, not the political parties.

provide a way out of the crisis. This mechanism has existed for 66 years now, with the help of the two great repair jobs carried out in 1938, when Lázaro Cárdenas founded the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM), and 1948, when the PNR/PRM was transformed into the PRI under Miguel Alemán.

The realism and practical spirit of the Mexican political class

tion between society and government in Mexico.

The main causes of the nation's current situation cannot—unless we want to commit an intentional mistake—be located only in the immediate past.

Uncontrolled population growth is not only a natural phenomenon but a cultural one as well, and has evident economic and

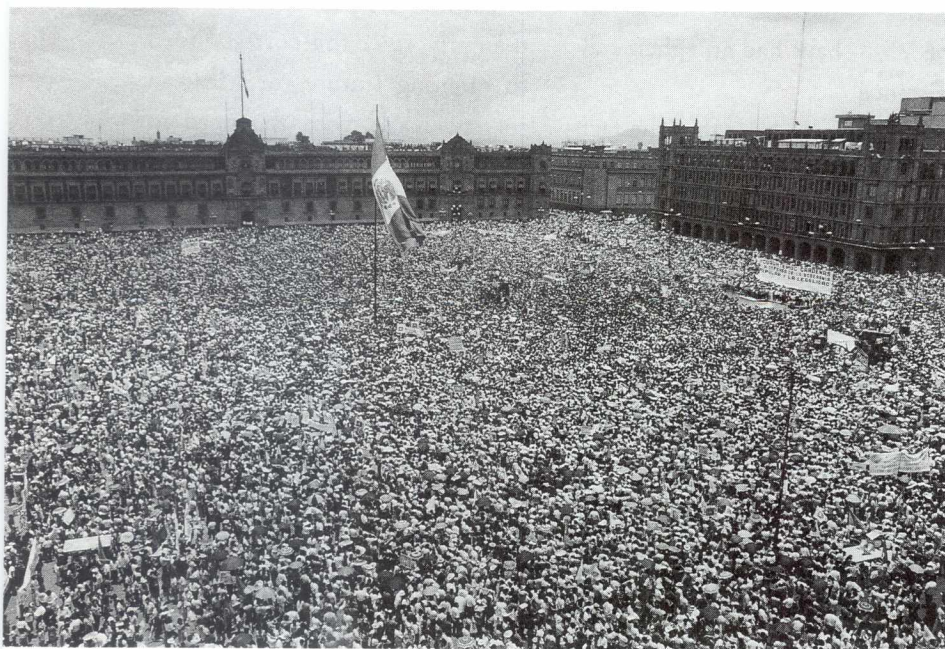
industrial production or mining. Mexico is now a different country; I would go so far as to say a radically different country from the one that witnessed the creation of the PNR in 1929.

Leaving aside these decisive factors, I will limit myself to the political parties.

In Mexico, the domination or hegemony of a single party over the course of more than half a century created a situation seen only in totalitarian or authoritarian countries. Despite this, it would be incorrect and unjust to compare Mexico to the Soviet Union or Mussolini's Italy. While the idea of creating a democratic system had always been an element in the country's ambiguous revolutionary thinking, it was only with the Miguel Alemán administration that the democratic process began to take shape. Curiously, this was by means of a paradox: the centralization of electoral activity, which Luis Medina called the federalization of elections. The federal government took control of the elections, which until then had been in the hands of the states, and imposed the order which continues to the present day.

For the first time, legislation was enacted covering the parties, and the government's concerns were set forth.

In the first place, the formation of state or regional parties was prevented, while anti-democratic parties (the Communist Party) and those with a religious or racist



Imaginlatina—Renato Ibarra

Political participation has grown over recent years.

led to a lack of rigid principles, a constantly adaptive flexibility and an absence of clear borders. More than a party, the PNR/PRM/PRI has been a movement, a school of thought or, to be more precise, a mentality around and under the domination of which the nation's main political institutions were organized. Until recently, this instrument has been able to generate a process of mutual adapta-

political consequences. The solution, or rather palliative, would require support from the religious organizations and, of course, the political parties. When a country goes from a population of 20 million inhabitants in 1940 to around 90 million in 1995, the very nature of that country is transformed. The same can be said with regard to such specific fields as education, transport, cities,

foundation (the Sinarquistas)² were eliminated. Internal elections were prohibited and assemblies were imposed as the means for selecting candidates; the Law on Parties indicates the type of political system the regime sought to establish.

The Federal Electoral Law, in its first stage, led to a series of reforms (women's suffrage, party deputies, etc.) aimed at perfecting an electoral system which was increasingly open but continued to be defective in terms of the forms of representation.

It was a man of genius, Jesús Reyes Heróles, who worked out a new law on the basis of new principles, which were, however, questioned from the very beginning. The proportional distribution of votes was not part of the Mexican political tradition. This method has been demanded by the leftist parties, whose electoral results are always diminished for social and geographical reasons.

The 1977 electoral reform was the result of an agreement between Reyes Heróles and the left, but it was the right that capitalized on it. The great winner and beneficiary of this law was the National Action Party (PAN). Mexico has had a different political history since the "Law on Political Parties and Electoral Processes" was enacted.

² The Sinarquistas were an ultra-right clericalist movement with a traditional base in some rural areas. (Translator's note.)

One should take note of a fact—in my view a crucial one—in Mexican political life: the decisive actor and author in all these changes is the state, through its acting arm, the government. This confirms a phenomenon which is typical of our political behavior, or more precisely of our political system: unlike what happens in the majority of countries, in whose political systems the government and state must defend themselves against the onslaughts and demands of the parties, in Mexico the government has been the most important promoter of the formation and consolidation of a system of parties. Since the revolutionary legitimacy upon which the state based itself began to weaken, a new basis for the state had to be sought. The only one available (because it was the only one existing) was electoral legitimacy. After having based itself on arms and the Revolution, and later on History, there was a return to—or for the first time, a search for, depending on one's interpretation—the ballot box and popular choice.

But the indispensable instrument for preparing elections was not found all at once. No matter how hard one looked, political parties were conspicuous by their absence; they were either embryonic or in ruins, and only the PRI offered the appearance of being at least a consistent political organization. The consequence was the multiplication of a series of pseudo-parties which muddied the

country's electoral waters. It is important to note that the law favored this proliferation. Its measures had been imposed against what could have been big parties. On the right the field was clear; the PAN saw only the decomposed remains of the Sinarquista movement lying at its feet. On the left it was impossible to arrive at fundamental guidelines for an organizational schema.

The reform planned and carried out by Jesús Reyes Heróles was cut short due to a president's whim. There was a return to intransigence and fear; precious time was lost in the attempt to wall oneself into the old, now indefensible structures.

A change, a political transformation, was indispensable. The country followed its own path and drew away from those parties which were alien to change and suffered from unresolved problems which economic and social crises merely exacerbated. The political situation went beyond any sort of traditional political control.

Carlos Salinas had to go through the most complicated elections that Mexico experienced since the Revolution, involving a split PRI, a poorly planned election campaign, a new leftist front and a PAN which was undergoing recomposition. Only his political ability and an unflinching will to govern saved his administration and allowed him to overcome post-electoral conflicts. Necessity, and perhaps cold rational calcula-

tion, led him to make an informal governmental pact with the PAN, which the latter ably seized on in order to develop its political apparatus and broaden its influence, which had been reduced to a few areas where historically it had more vegetated than existed. It was the PAN that harvested the best fruit of Reyes Heróles' electoral reform. The same cannot be said of the left.

The political history, in particular the electoral history of the left, can be summed up in one word: failure. Many different causes came together to produce this unfortunate result.

In Mexico, despite limited industrial development, there has been the basis for a workers movement which the left never managed to conquer. For decades the PRI's greatest triumph, the so-called organized labor movement, succeeded in imposing a populist policy which was ruinous for the state but provided sustenance to the governments of the Revolution. The left took refuge in the public universities, with an inevitable middle-class intellectual leadership more attentive to doctrinal purity and ideological debate than to conquering the masses. This leadership never had direct and sustained contact with the people. The fact that it was constantly fracturing into tendencies, groups and mini-groups meant that it was completely ineffective.

The rise of the Party of the

Democratic Revolution (PRD), based on the neo-Cardenistas' penetration of an electorate that until then had remained faithful to the PRI, revealed the contradictions boiling within the PRI, which culminated in the split of the Democratic Current.³ The essential weakness of the left, its tendency to division and factionalism, seemed to have been overcome, although a colder and closer look would allow one to see the fragility of the new leftist coalition. The union of the former Communist Party, which declared itself dissolved, with the left-wing split-off of the PRI—together with a multitude of parties lacking electoral registration, money and members, filled with ideologies and insuperable resentments as well as the unjustified yet deep-rooted ambitions of unknown minor leaders—was practically unsustainable. Its history is one of rivalries dominated by the major conflict between Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.

In 1988 there was a repetition of the traditional, albeit sporadic, schema of Mexican electoral conjunctures. An active part of the electorate showed a desire for change, albeit in equivocal and diffuse

³ The Democratic Current was the tendency within the PRI led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. Its withdrawal from the PRI led to the 1988 Cárdenas presidential campaign, and subsequently the formation of the Party of the Democratic Revolution. (Translator's note.)

ways. The opposition parties, encouraged by what they considered to be clear signs that the electorate was breaking from the PRI, responded to this desire by entrenching their internal quarrels, which in turn led the voting masses to pull away from these parties in a striking fashion. The popularity of the opposition candidates—the PAN's Manuel Clouthier and the National Democratic Front's Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas—was not enough to withstand the offensive of the well organized PRI machine, which responded to the Cárdenas split more quickly than expected.

The 1988 elections seemed to have a clear consequence: the country entered a classic tripartite system with a left, center and right. This meant the inevitable struggle over the center, in which all parties would have to contain their radical wings, which were driven by politicized intellectuals anxious to exert influence over party leaders.

The political equilibrium devised by Carlos Salinas allowed him to go from extreme weakness when he took over the presidency to enjoying real popularity in December 1993. His *sexenio* (six-year term) actually consisted not of six years but of five years plus one: from the standpoint of the president's popularity, 1994 has little to do with the previous years. José Antonio Crespo, an analyst not characterized by sympathy for Salinas, wrote that his administration gained its legitimacy not at the polls but through the exer-

cise of power. His image at this time is a different kettle of fish.

Carlos Salinas' capacity for maneuver was really quite surprising. After many negotiations he succeeded in sealing a pact with the PAN—one should say with a renovated PAN—and in cornering Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who lost himself in his own political inexperience and self-worship, as he dragged behind him his own party, which he never understood since he was unaware of the role parties play in the world of politics.

The Salinas-PAN rapprochement had a cost, and it was a large one: *concertaciones*.⁴ The state of Guanajuato went to the PAN in a shady, unconstitutional and poorly carried out operation, which provoked scarcely contained rage within the PRI. The PAN won Chihuahua and Baja California fair and square, giving rise to exaggerated speculation as well as panic in the PRD, which deepened its own differences to the point that they produced a split among the party's tops. When the presidential succession of 1994 was posed, the parties' internal situation bore little resemblance to that of 1988.

Never has a president prepared his succession more carefully than Salinas. Luis Donaldo Colosio was a candidate built step by step, without the slightest error

⁴ This neologism, coined to characterize the PRI/PAN relationship, means roughly "concessions which result from a process of coming to terms." (Translator's note.)

being committed and with close attention even to those details which seemed most insignificant. His *résumé* seemed more like an ideal schema than the reflection of a politician's life. Such beauty was not possible.

If the election of Salinas was a problem for Salinas himself, the 1994 vote was a major stumbling block for the political system and

pying second place with 31 percent of the vote in 1988, the PRD went to third place with only 17.09 percent in 1994. The PAN, despite some minor complaints, celebrated the fact that it took second place with 26.69 percent of the votes for president. Even though they lost to Zedillo, the 9,224,697 Mexican citizens who voted for PAN candidate Fernán-



Victor Reyes

Despite losing to Zedillo, the PAN's voting base has grown markedly.

the parties, but a success for the electorate.

The protests raised by the PRD, or more exactly by Cárdenas and his closest advisors—who charged that a 10-million-vote fraud had been perpetrated—could not stand up in the face of 81,620 election observers, the vast majority of whom were opposed to the PRI. Based on imaginary figures, the Cardenista protest sought to blot out a terrible fact for the candidate and the PRD: from occu-

dez de Cevallos gained a historic victory.

It was the electorate as a whole that asserted itself; 77.75 percent of registered voters went to the polls—a total of 35,557,095 men and women. Never in Mexico's history had a vote approached these figures. Thus Mexicans seem to be closer to modernity than their parties are, since not only did eighty thousand observers participate, but during the elections of August 21, 1994, more than 700,000 cit-

izens mobilized themselves and worked for the verification of the election results.

Despite this considerable movement and this expression of civic consciousness, there continue to be inexplicable paradoxes.

Contact between the parties and the citizenry continues to be of minuscule dimensions. The rejection of parties is a universal phenomenon, but in Mexico it is an alarming one. Not only are the real, uninflated membership figures unknown, but the payment of dues to the various parties is non-existent. This is a serious phenomenon, since, instead of living from the contributions of rank-and-file men and women, the parties must seek donations from businesses and thereby find themselves subordinated to decisions made outside the given party itself.

The population's alienation from parties reduces party life to

an internal relationship between leaders and cadres —where the latter exist— with the inevitable distortion of public interests this implies. This discussion, which in principle should be carried out with all levels of society, always occurs through the mass media, which highlight, filter and frequently distort the parties' message and, even more seriously, speak in the name of the *public*, despite the fact that they are always, or almost always, private companies. This poses the question: How and when does a private company represent the public at large?

As opposed to the communications media's claim to be the authentic representatives of the people, this same people —according to opinion surveys carried out in Mexico— expects more from the state and the government, and has more confidence in them, than it does in companies and businessmen. In this rapid, incomplete and

certainly somewhat arbitrary overview, one detects the isolation of the citizen and the secondary role that parties fulfill.

It is not enough to say that a universal trend is involved when we note the personalization of elections and of politics in general, the decline of parties, the rise of individualism and the abandonment of social solidarity in favor of group interests. It is possible that parties, which were necessary in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, no longer have a function to fulfill, and that social and even international organization will be taken over by the great international companies. But in Mexico, given this country's special conditions, parties remain indispensable as mediators between the citizenry and the governmental power. The problem resides in the parties' own confusion regarding this necessity. Asking the state to help maintain a three-party set-up, as the PRD has done, indicates how absurd the current system is. Once again, without wishing to, the state becomes an arbiter among parties, while the latter call for a political reform in which they subsequently refuse to participate given that they have failed to find a solution to their own internal quarrels.

The formation of an effective system of parties is a fundamental political goal of Mexico's governments, as part of the need to find dependable interlocutors able to respond to government programs and to serve as an instrument for



The PRI's new president Santiago Oñate Laborde.

disseminating governmental decisions. This has led to the Mexican state's desire to act as an organizer, extending its field of action not only to the political terrain but to civil society itself.

Historically, all kinds of parties were created in order to assist in the formation of governmental power. In the case of Mexico during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods, government power was the architect of the parties and of their relations to government agencies. Under the present circumstances, particularly over the past two decades, the state has made special efforts to achieve a system of parties which could serve as a liaison between the branches of government and social groups or classes, giving the parties priority over other types of organization such as the so-called non-governmental organizations.

Jesús Reyes Heróles' electoral reforms, approved in 1977, were the origin of today's electoral legislation and forms of counting and distributing votes as well as seats in Chamber of Deputies and Senate. The mixed majority and proportional system was doubtless the basis on which one could have built a system of ongoing, nationwide and well-defined parties with the ability to orient voters. One cannot assume an unchallenged consolidation of Mexico's three main parties; while the existence of the PRI and PAN would seem to be secure, the same cannot be said of the PRD.

Two elections—those of 1988 and 1994—may be considered definitive steps, albeit for diametrically opposed reasons, in the contemporary history of the nation's political life. While the 1988 vote was debated and questioned throughout the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, this did not really succeed in eroding that government's basis of legitimacy. The 1994 elections were met with a level of domestic and international acceptance unknown since the election of Francisco I. Madero (at the beginning of the Mexican Revolution). The protests raised by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and a minority wing of the PRD did not for a moment alter the general acceptance of the results obtained on August 21, 1994.

If the election of Carlos Salinas was a problem for him and for his party, Ernesto Zedillo's was not just a personal triumph; it posed a redistribution of political forces and opened the way for a review of the situation of all the parties.

The presence of nine parties in the Chamber of Deputies did not correspond to the political trends which were dominant in Mexico. Reyes Heróles came up with a procedure which would make it possible to take into account those votes which did not find a place in the big parties or the major currents of public opinion, and even devised a means of accommodating that portion of the political class which found itself excluded from the authentically national

political parties, which rightly complained that votes that really belonged to them were being scattered to the four winds. Whether or not one accepts this idea, the 1994 elections solved the problem: with the exception of the Labor Party (PT), which obtained 2.85 percent in the senatorial elections, none of the other minor parties (PPS, PFCRN, PARM, PDM-UNO, PVEM)⁵ won the 2.5 percent required by the law in order to achieve representation; thus the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate include representatives of just four parties. This is a first step which clears the political playing field and reduces the discussion between parties to manageable proportions.

The parties continue to face problems which are difficult to solve. The most important of these, from the standpoint of the opposition, is the election by consensus of the president of the Federal Electoral Institute, without the nature of this consensus—obviously alien to the principle of majority rule—having been cleared up. For the moment, there does not appear to be a short-term solution acceptable to the three major yet unequal parties of the day.

⁵ These initials stand for: People's Socialist Party, Party of the Cardenista Front of National Reconstruction, Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution, Mexican Democratic Party-National Opposition Union and Green Ecologist Party of Mexico. (Translator's note.)



Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the leader of the PRD.

In August the PRI changed the president of its National Executive Committee; this post is now held by Santiago Oñate, who is known for his ability, intelligence and authority. It is Oñate who will convoke the party's 17th assembly, although it remains to be seen what the agenda will be and what "philosophy" will be followed with regard to the relationship between the PRI and the government, as well as whether candidates for public office will be nominated there. For the time being, a range of tendencies continue to manifest themselves in the legislature, fueled by events such as the investigation into Colosio's assassination; some of these tendencies mask personal or group interests which are ill-disposed towards the internal reform of the PRI. It is impossible to know what kind of measures may be taken against factionalism and the policy of factions—whether they will be tolerated or eliminated. The

recent movements undertaken by the governors of Tabasco, Yucatán and Puebla point towards a hardening of the hegemonic line within the party. The line followed until now is seen as a set of concessions to the opposition, which, in reality, dictates the orientation of national policy without taking on the risks and costs of governing.

After its national and local successes, the National Action Party has encountered the first obstacles in its upward and seemingly unstoppable path. After obtaining 26.69 percent of the votes for president last year, it won the gubernatorial elections in Jalisco, Guanajuato and Baja California Norte. It ran into bigger obstacles in Yucatán, as well as in the renewal of the local legislature and municipal governments in Chihuahua. These stumbling blocks might be considered insignificant were it not for the internal conflicts fanned by these defeats. These will exacerbate the existing differences be-

tween PAN governors and the party's national leadership, behind which there unfortunately lie very long-term ambitions, such as those involving the presidential race of the year 2000 as well as the 1997 legislative elections. Thus, the PAN is beginning to experience the real problems of power faced by any party. For the time being, these problems have put doctrinal debates on the back burner. A final point, which remains to be dealt with and resolved, is the weakness of the "hard-core vote," that is, the authentically pro-party, resolute, doctrinal "PANista" vote, which is often hereditary and is less prevalent than most people believe it to be.

To speak of the PRD inevitably means referring to the intractable conflict pitting party president Porfirio Muñoz Ledo against Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, "moral" chief of the party and of the trend which remains linked to him. After the PRD's fall from an impressive second place in 1988 to a weak third with only 17.09 percent of the vote in 1994, mutual antipathies and accusations have been exacerbated, leading to the brink of a split which was only avoided at the last minute.

The most frightening fact, not only for the parties themselves but for all organizations of the citizenry, is the absolute indifference—or rather abstentionism—which many voters display in each election where the government's very mandate and authority are not put in question. \bar{M}

The Fifth Ibero-American Summit

The Fifth Ibero-American Summit, bringing together presidents and heads of state from 21 Ibero-American nations, had as its central theme the participants' commitment to encouraging education, as a means for confronting the serious economic and social imbalances that exist in most Latin American countries. Held October 16-17 in the city of Bariloche, Argentina, the summit was attended by old and new protagonists. As has become customary, Fidel Castro was one of the most talked-about figures, although the expectation of an explicit pronouncement against the economic blockade suffered by Cuba was not fulfilled. However, in one of the three resolutions signed, the assembled leaders expressed their rejection of the imposition of "unilateral restrictive measures which affect the well-being of the Ibero-American peoples while impeding free exchange and universally recognized open commercial practices, as well as violating the guiding principles of regional coexistence and the sovereignty of states."

Mexican and Colombian leaders drew attention with speeches pointing out that economic vulnerability, corruption and drug trafficking, among other problems, jeopardize the governability of a region which remains far from achieving its objective of economic modernization combined with social development. Colombian president Ernesto Samper kicked off the political debate by questioning "neo-liberal" development policies and underlining the need to reevaluate them, since "The social costs of indiscriminately opening up [economies] could destroy the efforts for democratization undertaken in the '80s." He also noted that Latin American countries' foreign debt is being paid at the cost of creating a social debt, and stressed that the destabilizing effects of corruption and drug trafficking can be fought only through joint action.

Mexico's President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, participating in a summit for the first time, was

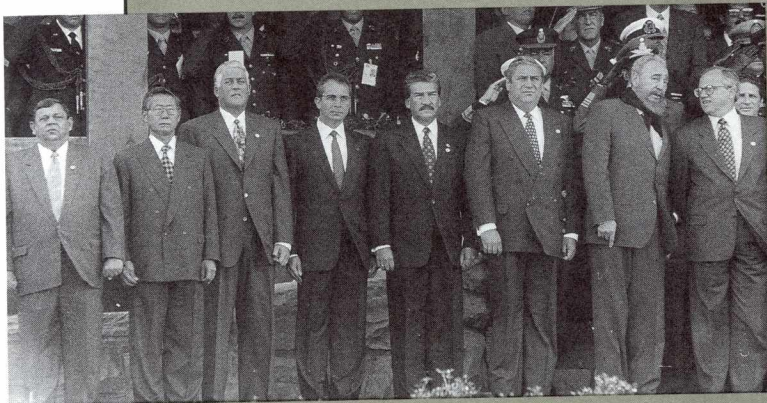


Photo: Presidencia de la República

another who went beyond the initial bounds of the meeting. His speech proposed reinforcing the ideals of economic development, democracy and justice and giving new value to the democratic and ethical exercise of politics. He urged carrying out education today for a democratic culture and practicing open politics with the objective of regaining the "social credibility [which has been] lost."

The meeting was attended by heads of state from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala,

Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain and Uruguay. The presidents of Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Portugal and Venezuela sent representatives.

The summit's final statement was divided into three documents. The main one deals with education, setting forth the commitment to promote the more effective use of resources devoted to education, as well as increasing public and private assets in this field, in light of the fact that education spending is a social investment. The second document refers to issues of a technical nature, establishing a follow-up program for projects derived from these gatherings. The third covers topics of special interest and condemns nuclear testing, calls for a struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking and proposes the carrying out of coordinated actions to reduce unemployment. This last point will be the central topic of the Sixth Summit, to be held in Chile in 1996.

Despite the great publicity surrounding these gatherings, analysts agree that they still have not succeeded in putting forward concrete actions for addressing the most urgent needs of the participant nations.⁵

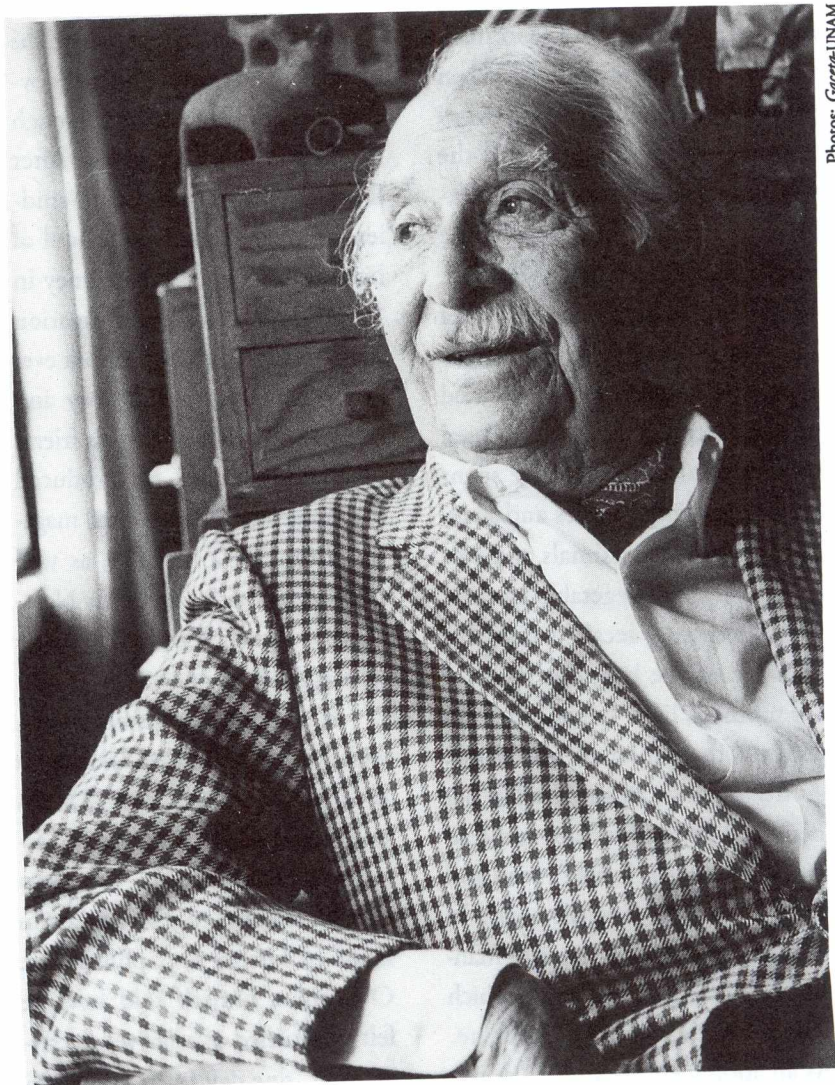
Edmundo O'Gorman: Controversial historian and critic

..I want an unpredictable history, like the course of our mortal lives; one susceptible to surprises and accidents, to fortune and misfortune, a history woven of events that happened in such a way that they may not have happened.

EDMUNDO O'GORMAN

Edmundo O'Gorman, one of Mexico's most important historians, known for the wealth of his work as well as for his constantly critical and innovative stance, died in Mexico City on September 28, at the age of 89. An excellent teacher who helped train several generations of historians, he revolutionized the study of history, refusing to reduce it to the elaboration of causal analyses "which presuppose the predetermination of the historical process." He maintained that the historian should base himself above all on the imagination as a creative and transformative force, since history "is nurtured not only by evidence but also by the historian's life experience, his training, culture and preferences, his likes and phobias."

O'Gorman was born in Mexico City on November 24, 1906. He spent part of his childhood in the city of Guanajuato, where his



Photos: *Clarín*-UNAM



father, Cecil Crawford O'Gorman, worked as a mining engineer. When the Revolution broke out, work in the mines was halted and the O'Gorman family returned to Mexico City, settling in a large house in the San Angel neighborhood. While many homes in that area were taken over by the revolutionaries, O'Gorman's father decided to defend their home and refused to abandon it. The family spent its time making candles and soap, raising domestic animals and cultivating a small vegetable garden.

O'Gorman recalled that this was one of the happiest times of his mother's life. "My mother felt she was the center of our home. At nightfall we all gathered in her bedroom by the fireplace and read out loud.... This is how I read and reread the great English novels."

His parents gave him a humanistic and bilingual education, which led to his great love of literature. As an adolescent he studied at the

French-English College, where the world of 19th-century French novelists was opened up to him through learning a third language. After finishing his pre-university studies, he entered the Free School of Law, graduating as an attorney in 1928. He practiced as a litigation attorney for ten years, without ever losing his interest in history and literature. Together with his friend Justino Fernández he produced the *Alcancia* (Collection Box) magazine from 1932 to 1959, as well as *Cuadernos de Poesía* (Poetry Notebooks), of which only five issues were published in 1933.

His interest in history began with his study entitled *La historia de las divisiones territoriales de México* (The History of Mexico's Territorial Divisions). It was then that he decided to give up law in favor of history and philosophy. O'Gorman himself told how he felt unsatisfied as a lawyer, recalling that "one day I was talking to

a client regarding testimony about a mortgage, in order to begin a lawsuit, when I turned to him and said 'Mr. Miller, I don't care if they pay or not, God didn't bring me into this world to devote my life to this kind of business.'" Thus, in 1938 he exchanged the courtroom for a job as a historian at the General Archive of the Nation.

At the age of 42 he received a master's degree in philosophy with the thesis "Crisis and Future of Historical Science," receiving a doctorate in history three years later with a work entitled "The Idea of the Discovery of America." He joined the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters as a professor, teaching a seminar on historiography, and later became the faculty's director. He is remembered for his critical and polemical attitude, which made him very popular among his students—but not so popular with some of the other teachers. Doctor Jorge Alberto Manrique, one of his disciples, notes: "When it seemed that everyone was in agreement, when everything appeared to be clearly defined, his sharp wit intervened. It was almost as if he was spurred on by something bordering on the Mephistophelian, pushing him to express his dissidence...."

O'Gorman said that it was there that his struggle began against the supposition of historical causality and the zeal for exhaustive data, and in favor of historians' use of the imagination: "I had terrible enemies in the faculty. There was

one person who hated me; he would stand in the doorway of my classroom and tell the students: 'Don't go in, don't go in —that isn't history'. But this only made them more curious."

O'Gorman was always interested in reflections on the history of the Americas and Mexico in particular. Outstanding among his most important works are: *Fundamentos de la historia de América* (Fundamentals of the History of the Americas, 1942); *La evolución política del pueblo mexicano* (The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, 1948); *Dos concepciones de la tarea histórica: Polémica con Marcel Bataillon* (Two Conceptions of the Historian's Task: A Polemic with Marcel Bataillon, 1955); *La supervivencia política novohispana: Monarquía o república* (Political Survival in New Spain: Monarchy or Republic, 1969); *Meditaciones sobre el criollismo* (Reflections on Creolism, 1970); and *México: El trauma de su historia* (Mexico: The Trauma of Its History, 1977). He was also involved in publishing works by classic authors of Mexican historiography as well as fundamental documents in the study of Mexican history.

La invención de América: El universalismo de la cultura de Occidente (The Invention of America: The Universality of Western Culture, 1958) is one of his most controversial texts, the product of more than ten years of research and reflection on what the appearance of the Americas meant in the con-

text of Western culture. According to O'Gorman, the conception that America was discovered one fine day by Christopher Columbus did not satisfactorily explain the problem of its historical appearance: "The key lies in considering this event as the result of an invention of Western thought and not as a purely physical discovery, which furthermore, happened by chance." This book was translated into English in 1961 by the University of Indiana, and later republished by Greenwood Press. O'Gorman himself said that it gave him great satisfaction, since he considered it one of his most original works and "worthy of being exposed to the rigors of public inspection."

His rejection of the use of terms such as "conquest," "discovery of America" and "fusion of two cultures" led to his resignation in 1987 from the Mexican Academy of History (associated with the Royal Academy of Madrid), which he had been a member of since 1964 and directed from 1972 until his resignation. O'Gorman proposed that those terms be replaced with "takeover," "domination" and "invention," among others.

His always-critical posture was reflected in the intense debates he had with other historians, in which he accused them of basing their knowledge solely on the fallible accumulation of rational data. His historical convictions led him into intense polemics with Daniel Co-

ssío Villegas, Miguel León Portilla, Marcel Bataillon, Leopoldo Zea and Octavio Paz. In the words of historian Enrique Krauze: "Like no other 20th-century historian, Edmundo O'Gorman was the crucible of several virtues: imagination, intelligence, a profound knowledge of sources, and passion. Ironic, elegant, provocative, he said that 'themes should come from the gut,' but in his case they also filtered through the mind and heart."

He received the National Award for Letters in 1964, the Rafael Heliodoro Valle History Award in 1983 and the National University Education in Humanities Award in 1986—the latter awarded by UNAM, the institution to which he dedicated his life and which named him Doctor *Honoris Causa* in 1978. The government of Poland also awarded him a medal in 1979.

O'Gorman defined himself as a "skeptical optimist." Possessor of a great sense of sarcasm, he was capable of introducing humor and irony into even his most serious talks. Apart from history, inescapable topics for this exquisite conversationalist included women and love. These themes came together to express what was, until the end, his personal theory of life: "History is like love. It is a hallucination in which a person attributes virtues to someone, who, perhaps, does not even possess them." ^M

Elsie Montiel
Assistant Editor.

Biological diversity: A fascinating world

José Sarukhán*

How many species are there on earth?

Among biologists devoted to studying the ecology of systems or populations, as well as specialists in conservation biology, one often hears the comment that in contrast with what we might call the “physical world,” our knowledge of the other, “biological world” is truly incipient and consequently very incomplete. Let us see if this is the case.

The earth’s equatorial and polar diameters are known with great precision, as is the average distance between the earth, the sun and the moon. We also have an approximate calculation of the number of stars in our galaxy. Since the previous century no corner of the earth has remained unexplored; for many decades we have had precise information about the physical and chemical characteristics of our atmosphere and, more recently, we have obtained information about the many elements that distinguish the oceans and continents, through the permanent observations made by artificial satellites orbiting the earth. At the *micro level*—the other extreme of the “physical world”—numbers and sizes of known atoms and subatomic particles have been precisely measured. A good student of physics, who knows Avogadro’s number, can make a reasonable estimate of the number of atoms contained in this issue of *Universidad de México* magazine.¹

The former are only a few of the many examples of the degree of precision and understanding reached

by humanity with regard to our “physical world.” Not only is there a great quantity of knowledge about the physical environment, but the predictions made by man about how and when the majority of physical phenomena occur are also quite correct.

This is not the case for the biological components that make up man’s environment, despite the fact that—unlike the aforementioned examples—they are found in a much more restricted spatial area at a scale much closer to that of human beings.

If we ask the most basic of questions about this biological world—“How many species of organisms are there on earth?”—we are unable to provide an answer, even in terms of the closest order of magnitude. Estimates vary between 10 million and 100 million species, and are nothing more than that—estimates.

Some biologists, among them the renowned entomologist Edward O. Wilson, have estimated the number of *known* species—that is, those which have been “christened” with a Latin binomial (the species’ scientific birth certificate) and can be found in a museum somewhere in the world. Wilson (1988) calculates that slightly more than 1.4 million species of plants, animals and microorganisms have been named. Most evolutionary biologists believe that this figure represents less than 10 per cent of the species really inhabiting this planet.

An agency of the United Nations (PNUMA) recently promoted a Global Evaluation of Biodiversity, which estimates the number of known species as 1.75 million and the possible total of species as between 7 and 20 million.

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At the beginning of the 1980s, Terry Erwin (1982), an entomologist from the Smithsonian Institute, developed a method of capturing insects living in the treetops of the Panamanian jungle (30-50 meters high). This method consists of fumigating the trees in a controlled way with insecticide and, some hours later, collecting the insects which have fallen to the ground. On the basis of the number of species of coleoptera (Erwin is a specialist on these insects) found in his collection of specimens, he calculates that there should exist close to 30 million species of arthropods in the world's tropical regions. Other research, carried out in Southeast Asian jungles and the forests of England and South Africa using methods similar to Erwin's, led to estimates that there may be close to 10 million species of arthropods in the world.

More than half of known species are arthropods (close to 875 thousand); that is, all animals—such as insects, arachnids and crustaceans—which have chitinous, articulated bodies. Almost 90 percent of these are insects (Fig. 1). At the same time, it is estimated that some 250,000 species of higher plants exist, of which angiosperms (flowering plants) represent nearly 90 percent (220,000).

These estimates were made on the basis of field samples and result from the degree of knowledge we have obtained regarding various groups of organisms. They are obviously subject to a series of unproven

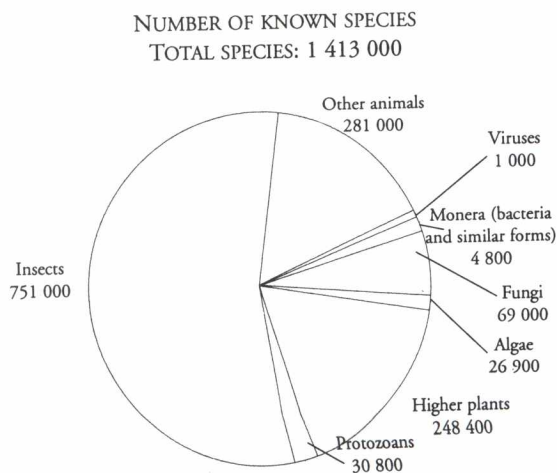


Fig. 1 Distribution of known species among the main groups of organisms, according to E.O. Wilson (1988).

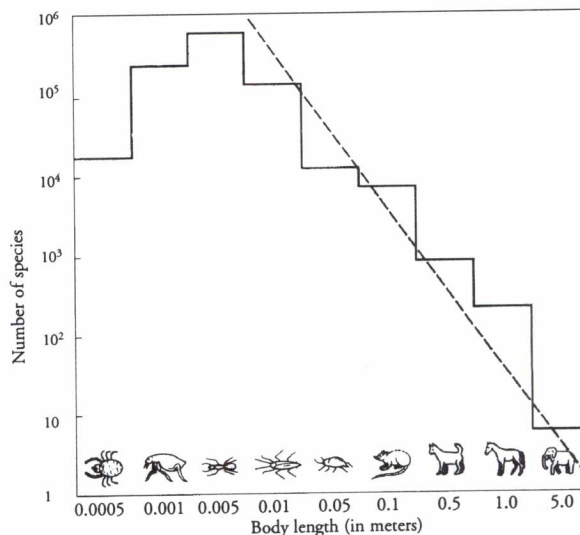


Fig. 2 Relation between the organism's body size and the number of land animal species corresponding to each size. May (1990).

suppositions, due precisely to the lack of taxonomic knowledge, in particular with regard to insects. Any variation in the percentage which a group is believed to represent, in relation to a fairly well-known total, produces very significant modifications in the final estimate. However, Robert May (1990) carried out a theoretical calculation based on the relation between the body size of land-based animals and the number of *known* species corresponding to those sizes. May graphed the number of species as a function of their size on a "log-log" scale and found an almost linear regression, with a slope close to minus two, which predicts a total number of species of *land animals* close to or greater than 10 million (Fig. 2). If we take into account that many of the lesser-known species of land animals are precisely those of the most inconspicuous sizes, and that May was referring only to species of land animals, we see that his data back up the empirical estimates suggesting total numbers of species in the tens of millions.

Thanks to the most recent studies about the ocean floor, J. Frederick Grassle (1991) concludes that in that environment—formerly thought of as a "desert" with low temperatures and almost total darkness, subject to enormous pressure—there should be tens of millions of animal species, most of them minuscule invertebrates.

Our ignorance about bacteria and other microorganisms is truly colossal. Apart from the problems due to their tiny size and their presence in nearly every part of the planet, it is a very complex task to scientifically catalogue and cultivate them in controlled media, in order to study them adequately. Given their prodigious disposition for reproduction and very short life span, they are able to generate new species with relative frequency. J. Goksoyr and V. Torsvik (1990), a pair of Norwegian biologists, tried to define how many species of bacteria were living in the soil of a Norwegian forest by using DNA hybridization techniques on bacterial material they had gathered. The result was that in one gram of earth from this forest there were between 4 and 5 thousand species of bacteria. While this number was similar to that reported in a study of riparian sediment, also in Norway, there was very little duplication of species from one site to the other. If this occurs in two sites which are relatively close together and whose climates are fairly similar, what can we expect to find in different soils and climates as different from each other as a tropical forest, a savannah or a mangrove swamp? Not to speak of the myriad of specialized bacteria which live in strict symbiosis with each of the millions of plant and animal organisms existing on earth (Buchner, 1965).

But we should not have the impression that inconspicuous species, bacteria and other microorganisms are the only ones left to be discovered. Twelve years ago a new species, *Nanalaricus mysticus*, was discovered, which turned out to be so different from any other animal known to date, that a new phylum of organisms (Loricifera) was formed, equivalent to the phylum of vertebrates or that of arthropods. This new category of animals is made up of many new species, which were subsequently discovered in habitats similar to that of the first species. Since 1942 no new family of higher plants had been discovered. Less than ten years ago, Esteban Martínez of UNAM's Institute of Biology discovered a new plant species in the Chiapas jungle: *Lacandonia schismatica*, which constituted a new plant family. The last family of

plants to be identified was found in 1991 (*Ticodendraceae*); its range extends from the Chimalapas in Oaxaca to Panama.

We would all agree that the cetaceans are animals of a conspicuous size. The famous "little cow" (*Phocoena sinus*) from the Gulf of California, now protected because of the danger of extinction, was discovered in 1958. Four years ago, in 1991, a new species of whale was discovered in the waters off Peru (Ralls and Brownell, 1991).

Up to this point I have only mentioned issues having to do with species diversity. But this is not the only biological variant. To all of the foregoing we must add that which exists *within* each species, resulting from the genetic recombination characteristic of organisms which reproduce sexually. This genetic variable is the "raw material" acted upon by evolutionary processes, the result of which is the creation of new species.

The only conclusion we may draw from the information cited above is that the real number of animal, plant, bacteria and microorganism species on earth is extremely large; that we are unfamiliar with more than 90 percent of these species and are far from being able to estimate their number or even to provide an acceptable approximation.

Biological diversity in Mexico

A growing interest in ecological matters, both local and global, has been awakened over the past two decades among all societies. Thus, it is no longer much of a novelty to note that Mexico is among the four or five countries with the greatest number of species in its territory.

In fact, with only 1.5 percent of the continental mass's total area, Mexico has 10 percent of the known species of plants and land animals. Our country has the highest number of reptile species (717); and is second, after Indonesia, in the concentration of land mammal species (455) and fourth in amphibians (282) and higher plants (around 26,000) (Fig. 3). In

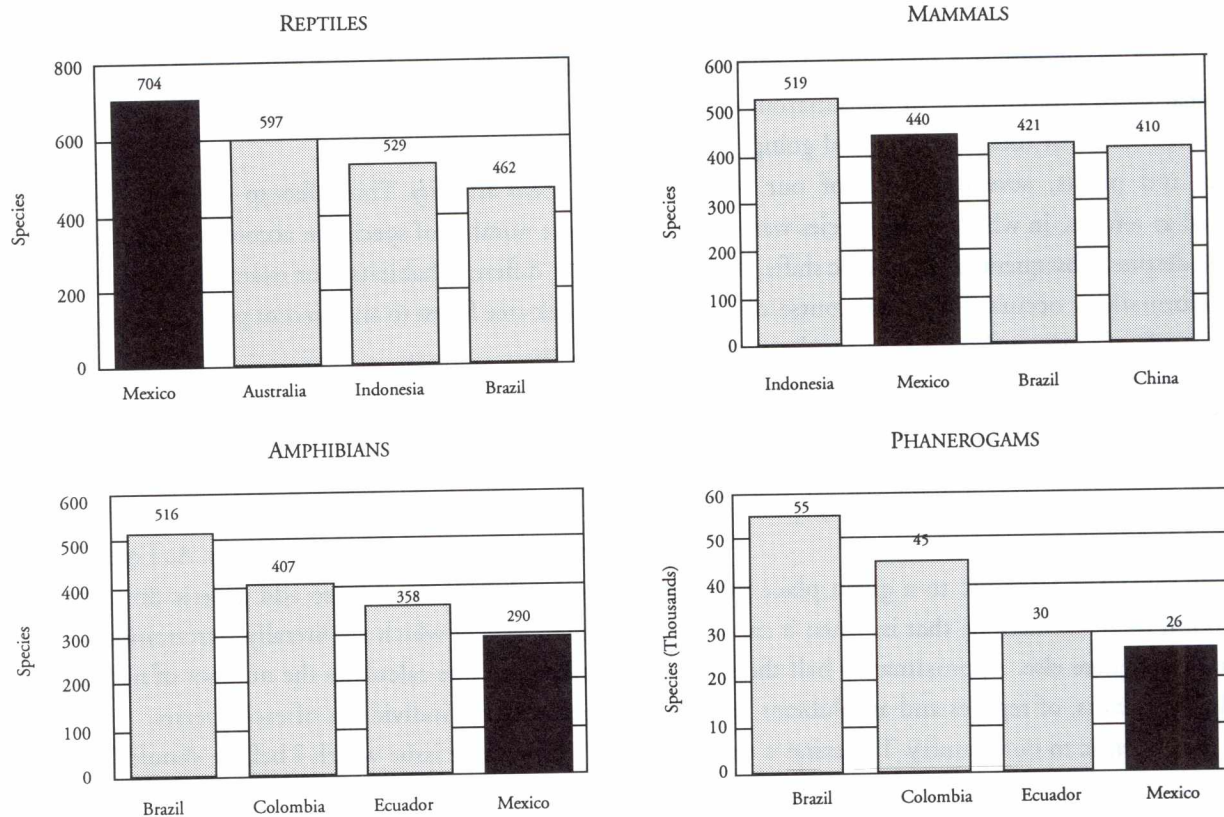


Fig.3 Number of species in Mexico and in other countries of high biological diversity. According to Mittermeier (1992); Arita & León (1993) and Flores (1993).

terms of insects, marine organisms, fungi and microorganisms, our lack of knowledge is such that there is no way to know what proportions of them may be found in our territory.

Practically all of the world's biomes may be found in Mexico. What is the cause of this great biological wealth? In reality there are many causes; I will sum up the most significant. One of the most important is our country's geographical (latitudinal) location. Mexico is situated between the boreal and tropical regions, thereby constituting a sort of hybrid of these two great areas, as a result of which it shares many species with them. Our proximity to the Caribbean has also allowed for the development, in Mexico, of many species typical of that zone.

Another extremely important cause is the country's geological history, which means that it possesses regions of very diverse ages and a great variety of geological substrates. In addition there is an extremely

varied topography dominated by the rugged mountain ranges criss-crossing the country, with the exception of the broad coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico and the Yucatán peninsula.

The latitude at which Mexico is located, its extensive coasts and topography make possible an extraordinary variety of macro- and microclimates. These range from Mediterranean to humid tropical climates; from the hottest deserts to frigid tundra, with all types of temperate climates in between. Each ravine in our mountains may have its own particular microclimate.

As a bridge between the boreal and tropical zones, Mexico has also served as the end point or stopping place for many migrations, as a result of great climatic changes that occurred over the course of different geological epochs. In the most recent of these changes, during the glacial periods of the Pleistocene, many species from the northern region migrated

southwards and settled in our territory. When glaciation came to an end and temperatures rose, many tropical species (originating in the Amazon) migrated northwards. In these comings and goings of animals and plants, several regions of our territory served as refuges, in which many species were able to settle despite subsequent large climatic shifts. All these transformations occurred over the course of tens of thousands of years, sufficient time for the evolution, within these refuges, of species different from the original ones. This was a decisive factor in the existence, in our country, of an enormous number of species of flora and fauna, among them the many species found only in Mexico.

A species is endemic to a given place when it is found there exclusively; that is, when it cannot be found anywhere else. Approximately half the species of higher plants, of reptiles and amphibians in Mexico are endemic to our country. The same is true of a third of the mammals.

Foreign as well as domestic researchers and institutions have made important efforts with the objective of learning more about Mexico's flora and fauna, but very much remains to be done in terms of gathering information on this country's biota, given that —apart from land vertebrates— most animal and vegetable groups are still known only to a limited extent.

Since 1929, UNAM has played a central role in the pursuit of knowledge regarding the flora and fauna of Mexico. As the nation's trustee for scientific collections of animals and plants, in the past as well as the present it has had the country's largest body of personnel devoted to taxonomic and systems research. The Institute of Biology in particular, but also the Institute of Sea Sciences and Limnology, the Faculty of Sciences and the Ecology Center, carry out the work of exploration, collection and systematization of animals and plants, as well as research on their biology and ecology.

Levels at which biological diversity is measured

Biologists measure biological diversity at various "levels":

Alpha diversity. This corresponds simply to the number of species from the same group (spiders, for instance) found in a given place, let us say within ten hectares of oak-tree forest.

Beta diversity. This refers to the rate of increase in the number of species in accordance with samples from different habitats. For example, in going from an oak-tree forest to an adjacent prairie, to a pine forest, etc.

Gamma diversity. This is the total number of species present in a large region, for example Mexico as a whole.

These are what we might call the "orthodox" divisions in the study of biodiversity. As I mentioned previously, one should also add genetic diversity, the dimensions of which are literally astronomical, especially when one calculates the number of nucleotides present in the individuals of each species.

One more issue which I believe should be taken into consideration, even though it has to do with a situation which is not uniquely and directly a result of organic evolution, is the *cultural diversity* of man. This strikes me as quite relevant since, at least in principle, it is intimately linked to the biological diversity, in the strict sense, to which I have referred in this article. In fact, the fundamental substrate for the wealth of human cultures is their relation to the environment in which they develop, in particular the elements of flora and fauna, and physical milieu, which affect them. Along these lines, it is not surprising that many of the richest and most varied ancient cultures and civilizations originated in regions with a high degree of biological diversity. Examples include the civilizations of China, India and Southeast Asia, as well as those of Mesoamerica—in particular the Olmecs and Mayas. All of them include a very particular philosophy regarding the natural environment, based on a deep knowledge of and respect for nature. One must, of course, point out that the civilizations that arose in the Mediterranean area do not conform to this schema.

A direct result of such interactions between society and biological resources is the "invention" of

cultivated plants and the parallel development of a technological culture: *agriculture*. The Mesoamerican region, characterized by colossal biological wealth, provides an enormous variety of cultivated plants which currently feed millions of human beings. Examples include the many varieties of corn, beans, squash, chiles, avocados, tomatoes, cacao, tobacco and vanilla.

The quantity of knowledge acquired regarding fauna and, in particular, flora in this region is paralleled only in India, China and parts of Southeast Asia. Mexico's Indian peoples know and use an enormous variety of plants for different purposes, especially those related to food and medicine. It is estimated that around 25 percent of Mexico's higher plant species are used in some way (Table 1). Mexican herbal medicine is one of the richest in the world — a world in which, according to the World Health Organization, 85 percent of the population still makes use of medicinal plants. Never-



The Mesoamerican region is characterized by colossal biological wealth.

theless, the enormous wealth of knowledge possessed by our country's indigenous ethnic groups is, like many of the nation's plants, in danger of disappearing due to the intense processes of "aculturization" all these groups are experiencing, among other reasons as a result of the shift to urban areas.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF SPECIES UTILIZED AND NAMES AMONG
SOME INDIANS GROUPS IN MEXICO

Ethnic group	Species present	Species named and utilized
Tarahumaras (Chihuahua)	1,000	398
Seri (Sonora)	2,703	516
Nahuas and others (Veracruz)	8,500	1,597
Purhépecha (Michoacán)	500	230
Mayas (Yucatán)	1,936	909
Tzeltales (Chiapas)	10,000	1,040

Source: Caballero and Mapes, 1985.

How can we conserve our biological diversity?

Several mass extinctions have occurred in the paleontological history of our planet. We do not know the causes of these extinctions, with the possible exception of the one which took place about 65 million years ago and caused the disappearance of the dinosaurs and the beginning of the flourishing of mammals and birds. The cataclysm which produced that distinction seems to have consisted of a large celestial object crashing into a point in the north of what today is the Yucatán peninsula. Equivalent to an enormous nuclear explosion, the crash produced a crater approximately 200 kilometers in diameter, as well as an enormous quantity of dust which darkened the earth's atmosphere for a long period of time,

drastically changing the world's climate and, consequently, the environmental conditions that had permitted the existence of these enormous reptiles.

The appearance on earth of hominids —our immediate ancestors— less than four million years ago coincides with the moment in which the greatest biological wealth was registered in the history of our planet. Man enters as the last actor in a great work of theater brimming with characters and history. Coincidentally, man also appears approximately at the mid-point of the period during which life will exist on this planet. That is, three or four billion years from now, our sun —the earth's only source of energy— will have become a red dwarf star and will later be extinguished; during this process life as we know it will have been extinguished.



Careful "harvesting" of a range of jungle products is one conservation strategy.

Despite their great richness, the species existing today represent no more than one percent of the total number of species that have existed over the course of this long, four-billion-year history. This is a revealing fact, since while it is true that in different conditions diverse groups of species have known natural rates of evolution and extinction, and that extinction is species' inevitable fate, which only a few succeed in evading for a longer period of time, it is also true that none of the extinction rates is as high as that which human beings are currently producing as a result of demographic growth, industrial activity and social development. If this process of extensive modification of natural ecosystems continues, man will be the cause of the most severe mass extinction in the more than four billion years of the earth's history.

Some may question the importance of losing perhaps half of the species that exist today; some may even think that the broad range of technologies which man generates will be the answer to the problems that could be posed for human life by an extinction of such a magnitude.

There are several reasons that should be sufficient cause for humanity taking firmer steps towards the conservation of our planet's extremely rich biological patrimony. Some of these reasons —those which can most easily be "sold" to man's utilitarian side— are economic in nature. For example, one can mention the great number of organisms —most of them plants, although there are some cases from the animal kingdom— which have been used by the pharmaceutical industry or are potential raw materials for making new medicines. This potential is particularly important now that the great multinational pharmaceutical companies have, once again, become interested in exploring the enormous wealth of flora that exists in tropical areas. Another example is the use of plants by the food industry, whose attention is primarily focused on the areas with the greatest wealth of flora. This is leaving aside the enormous reservoir of genetic variability present in the wild forms of many plants which are cultivated by man.



Some 250 000 species of higher plants exist, of which angiosperms (flowering plants) represent nearly 90%.

Other reasons which should also awaken society's interest have to do with the numerous "services" provided by natural ecosystems, although these are not so easily measured in economic terms. These "services" range from absorbing carbon monoxide from the atmosphere and converting into oxygen, thereby maintaining life—including our own—in the conditions prevailing on our planet, to the conservation of the water sources and hydraulic systems crucial to the existence of agricultural, urban and industrial areas. Who can calculate the economic value of individuals that make up populations which are associated and organized into an ecosystem responsible for the aforementioned "services"? Who can calculate the costs of a severe imbalance within an ecosystem caused by the extinction of key species, resulting in a reduction in the ability to absorb the run-off caused by rain and the drastic decrease in water supplies to a growing city which lacks possibilities for "importing" water?

Lastly, there are other reasons having nothing to do with economic criteria—at least not directly—but which are also important, in my opinion. These have to do with the psychological aspects of man and his spiritual development.

Primitive societies lived in intimate contact with an enormous number of life forms. While their members' minds could only partially confront the challenge this signified, they intensely sought to under-

stand the parts of this world that were most relevant and of the most concern to them, fully conscious that correct behavior vis à vis this challenge led to life and well-being, while mistakes meant illness, hunger and death. This was a process, which might be described as implacable but natural, of the relationship between human beings and their environment. The mark of this process, carried out over tens or hundreds of thousands of years, could not be erased over the course of those

few generations (basically two centuries) in which we have lived our modern, urban existence.

Is it too late to carry out concrete, effective actions aimed at protecting areas of special importance due to their biological wealth and/or the endemic species they contain? The answer is a categorical *no*. While it is true that the situation is critical in some respects and in some places, it is also true that in recent years a greater clarity and consciousness has arisen regarding these phenomena, which has led to some important steps towards at least reducing the rate of destruction or extinction of a large number of species. Hundreds of voices and organizations exert pressure on governments to take action in this field. Nevertheless, much clearly remains to be done and it is up to our generation and those that follow to keep up the struggle to save life as we know it on our planet.

Different ways of preserving species are applied in different countries. We may divide them into two groups which correspond to two major strategies, which are not mutually exclusive.

The first consists of maintaining individuals of species outside of their zone of origin (*ex situ*), sometimes in conditions of cryo-conservation (this is mainly the case with collections of seeds, embryos, tissues or organs); or of a few mature individuals in zoos, aquariums or botanical gardens. While there is quite a bit of experience with this form of conservation and it has proven effective in protecting some species in extreme danger of extinction, it clearly has

very important limitations in terms of the ability to conserve a large number of individuals, species and—in particular—populations, communities and ecosystems which make up and give value to biological diversity.

A second strategy consists of preserving regions or portions thereof with one or several ecosystems which are important due to the large number of species they contain, the endemic nature of these species, or their ecological importance and the “services” they provide to the human community. This *in situ* conservation is obviously the most suitable and effective, and should be the easiest to carry out.



It will be much more difficult to replace the jungles or forests once they are disturbed.

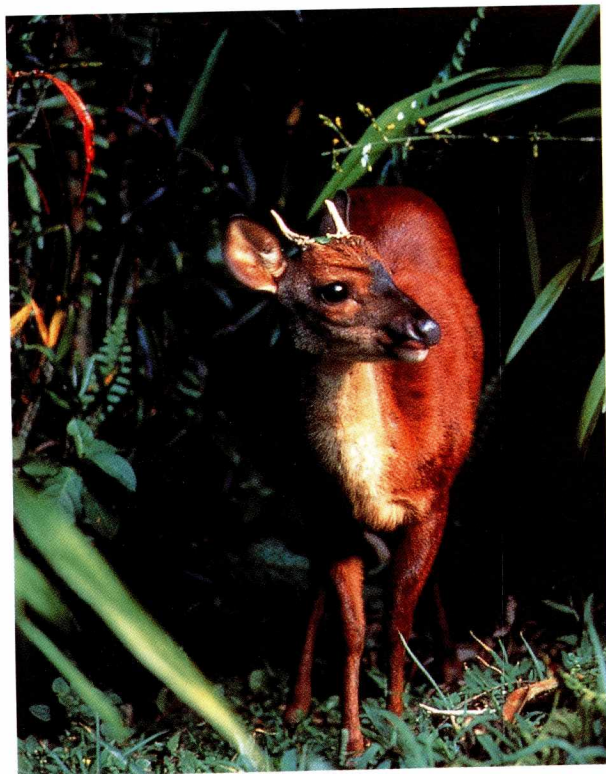
Yet it frequently turns out to be more difficult to achieve, due to the many interests affecting the given regions. Less than 4.5 percent of the planet's land surface is protected by some kind of legal schema (as national parks, biosphere reserves, biological stations, etc.), and this small portion is divided into a multiplicity of small territories in constant danger of being modified.

Of course, maximum efforts would have to be devoted to this kind of protected area in order to seriously influence the conservation—and even the

recovery—of biological diversity. While the purchase of large areas in order to protect them may be appealing as the most effective and direct course of action, it does not turn out to be the most suitable one even in the case of the developed countries which have the resources for doing this. In these countries, moreover, social pressure on such areas is relatively low and there are legal preservation mechanisms whose functioning is satisfactory. In the less economically developed countries, which possess most of the world's biological wealth, there is a high level of demographic pressure on the land as well as greater economic development needs. This strategy is therefore scarcely viable, if not impossible, in such countries.

Many ecologists working in the world's tropical areas believe—and I agree with them completely—that the best way to protect these zones is to find ways they can be exploited which provide economic support to the owners, conservation of the ecosystem—or at least the preservation of the community's arboreal structure—and protection of the soil's fertility. This is far from easy, but it will be much more difficult to replace the jungles or forests once they are disturbed, let alone to recover species which have disappeared.

Isolated examples of such efforts exist in various parts of the world, from the careful “harvesting” of a range of jungle products (butterflies, birds, rubber, plants for decoration, etc.) to jungle-cultivation efforts based on the ecosystem's natural process of regeneration. In my opinion, the main challenge facing such schemas—which are genuinely interesting even if they only point towards some of the ways in which an ecosystem can be conserved while economic benefit may be derived from it—is maintaining an ongoing, predictable market for the products that result from this conservationist effort. The big obstacle such production schemes face—and it may be an insurmount-



Different ways of preserving species are applied in different countries.

able one— is the fight against competition from an economy of free circulation of commodities, against the great industrial corporations which dominate markets and which have no interest whatsoever in this type of product or these forms of production, as well as against the fact that governments provide absolutely no fiscal or economic incentives for maintaining these production systems.

Until and unless a radical change of course makes it possible to overcome these obstacles, I believe that conservationist schemas for using ecosystems will be severely limited and will be unable to reproduce themselves in many other parts of the world. This is a well-defined area of action and responsibility for governments of countries, like our own, which possess this immensely important resource: biological diversity.

Humanity and biodiversity: An indissoluble relationship

Despite the enormous advance of science, modern societies have not fully understood that man is the

product of a process of organic evolution which began approximately four billion years ago and that he therefore shares the elements of his characteristic genetic code with all beings presently living and those that have lived throughout all of those years. The nucleotides of our genes are imprinted, in some part, with a piece of the billions of histories lived by the species that came before us. In Edward O. Wilson's words, humanity has co-evolved with the rest of life on this planet; our genes do not bear the characteristics of other worlds.

The behavior, if not the conceptions, of most people demonstrate an attitude which would seem simply to erase that accumulation of years in which man lived with his environment, as if one had the right to take unlimited advantage of the planet in the same way as tourists do at a vacation spot.

It remains unknown whether the process of organic evolution that occurred on this planet (or a similar one) has taken place in other of the universe's astronomical objects. What is certain, in any case, is that the future of man on earth, and consequently in the universe, depends on him and him alone. No other species on earth, so far as we know, has emerged from the process of organic evolution with the power and ability that human beings have not only to under-



Cultivated plants currently feed millions of human beings.



Biological diversity has developed for billions of years.

stand the process which produced them but to modify it profoundly—whether through the incipient ability to create new species or the infinitely greater, demonstrated ability to exterminate them by profoundly changing the environment in which they

develop. By abruptly modifying this process, which occurred over the course of billions of years, man takes into his own hands not only the future of the large number of species which have accompanied him in his evolution, but also, as I have already noted, his own future.

By putting into practice the ability to modify his environment in the way he has done, man threatens the very stage upon which he is but one more actor. Can there be a play without a stage, without a context, without other basic actors to support the role played by human beings in this performance?

Life on earth will not be extinguished until our sun is extinguished. No matter what atrocious calamity is unleashed by the actions of man—which could make the human species disappear or reduce it to conditions of social, cultural or physical impairment which today seem totally unacceptable and like something out of a science fiction movie—life, the process of biological variation subject to the forces of natural selection, to mutations, will continue and will take unpredictable paths, creating new forms and allowing for marvelous new adaptations to the environment of the future. So long as solar energy exists and it can be collected and transformed by organisms on earth, life on this planet—with *Homo sapiens* or without him—will not cease.

The spirit which distinguishes us from the rest of the earth's organisms originated on the same evolutionary stage on which biological diversity has developed for billions of years. To deny the imperious necessity of preserving this evolutionary stage is equivalent to denying the origin of that spirit. M



The forces of natural selection will continue and will take unpredictable paths.

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The fundamental substrate for the wealth of human cultures is their relation to the environment.

Canada's foreign policy in the '90s

Julián Castro Rea*

The Conservative administrations: Normative approach and rapprochement with the United States

Canada entered the 1990s under a Progressive Conservative Party government. The Conservative administrations led by prime ministers John Diefenbaker (1957-63) and Joe Clark (1979-80) had been distinguished by their audacious approaches to foreign policy.¹ The administrations of Brian Mulroney (1984-88 and 1988-June 1993) and Kim Campbell (June-October 1993) were not exceptions to this trend.

Many of Canada's recent international actions can be interpreted according to the logic of reiteration of the nation's traditional commitment to multilateral institutions (the UN, NATO, OAS, etc.). Canada's traditional contribution to multinational peace-keeping forces² has been a constant. In the early '90s Canada sent more than 4,500 soldiers and police agents³ to participate in multinational contingents. While such participation has diminished recent-

ly, Canada's current contribution to these forces is still 2,892 strong.⁴ The nation also played an active role in the conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and promoted the dynamic expansion of the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) organization.

In January 1990 it joined the OAS as a member with full rights. This decision, which had been delayed for 42 years, has been interpreted as an adaptation of traditional Canadian multilateral strategies to new realities. With the decline of Europe as an ally for diversification strategies, Canada is looking towards Asia and Latin America.⁵

Under the two Mulroney administrations, Canada's foreign policy gradually made an important turn: promotion of human rights on a world scale became a priority for the first time. In 1990 Parliament created the International Center for the Rights of the Person and Democratic Development; Edward Broadbent, former leader of the social-democratic New Democratic Party, was appointed as the center's director. Thenceforth Canada conditioned its international development aid on recipient countries' respect for human rights.⁶

Thus, in the early '90s human rights acquired a prominent place in Canada's international program.

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¹ See David Cox, "Leadership Change and Innovation in Canadian Foreign Policy: The 1979 Progressive Conservative Government," in *International Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Autumn 1982.

² Let us recall that the so-called "blue helmets" were created by the UN in 1956 on Canada's initiative. Since that time, Canada has participated in virtually all multinational peace-keeping missions. From 1947 to 1992, 87,000 Canadian soldiers participated in 35 missions, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs. *Le Bulletin du désarmement*, No. 20, Spring 1993, pp. 6-7.

³ The latter are members of the Royal Gendarmerie of Canada, commonly known as the "Mounted Police" or "Mounties."

⁴ *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, March 31, 1994.

⁵ Peter McKenna, "Canada Joins the OAS: Anatomy of a Decision," in Jacques Zylberberg and François Demers (eds.), *L'Amérique et les Amériques*, Saine-Foy, Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1992, p. 256.

⁶ Cranford Pratt (dir.), *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies: An Appraisal*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, pp. 123-155.

Photos: Canadian Embassy



Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada.

The occasion for this development in foreign policy doctrine was provided by the Francophonie and Commonwealth gatherings, held in 1991 in Kinshasa and Harare respectively. In December of the same year, then-chancellor Barbara McDougall⁷ set forth the country's international priorities, in order of importance:

1. promotion and protection of basic human rights;
2. development of democratic values and institutions;

⁷ While Joe Clark is considered the architect of "Tory" (Conservative) foreign policy, it was Barbara McDougall who most fully carried through a foreign policy linked to the defense of human rights.

3. establishment of responsible governments throughout the world;
4. elimination of barriers to international trade, in order to develop world prosperity.⁸

This emphasis on values gave Canada's foreign policy a "normative" stamp which was so marked that it placed the defense of these values above the sovereignty of states. In McDougall's words:

"We have to reconsider the UN's traditional definition of state sovereignty. I believe that states can no longer argue sovereignty as a license for internal repression.... Some standards are universal: human rights must be respected; democratic institutions must be safeguarded; judiciaries must be free and independent; national sovereignty should offer no comfort to repressors, and no protection to those guilty of breaches of the common moral codes enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."⁹

This normative definition of priorities is consistent with the resolute support Canada gave to the proposal the UN's secretary general presented to the General Assembly in June 1992. In the

document entitled "A Program for Peace,"¹⁰ Secretary Boutros-Ghali advocated that the United Nations participate energetically in favor of world peace, which

⁸ These principles were reiterated a year later in "An Address by the Honourable Barbara McDougall, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at a Seminar of the Centre Québécois des Relations Internationales, 'Peacekeeping and the Limits of Sovereignty,'" Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, December 2, 1992, p. 8.

⁹ Barbara McDougall, "Co-operative Security in the 1990s from Moscow to Sarajevo," Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, May 17, 1993 (Statement 93/36).

¹⁰ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Un programa para la paz. Diplomacia preventiva, establecimiento de la paz y mantenimiento de la paz," New York, United Nations, June 17, 1992 (Document A/47/227, s/24111), pp. 1ff.

in practice would involve four phases: preventive diplomacy, the establishment of peace, peace-keeping and the consolidation of peace after conflicts. The proposal includes the objective of preventing conflicts through international intelligence, preventive troop deployment and multilateral oversight of regions pacified by force. Canada not only agreed with this but proposed even further extension of the powers of international intervention, so as to include operations for preserving the environment, against crime and terrorism, and for peace-keeping in international waters. In the name of values which it considers absolute and universal, Canada supported the creation of a kind of multilateral international police which would pay little heed to the sovereignty of states—a principle which remains sacrosanct in international law.

Beginning in 1991, Canada sent personnel to the former Yugoslavia. In April 1992 it contributed 2,400 soldiers for the creation of the United Nations Protection Force (FORPRONU); it currently maintains a contingent of 1,500 soldiers in Bosnia and Croatia—the fourth largest in the multinational force. While the fact that FORPRONU has had little success in reestablishing peace in that region is not attributable to Canada alone, her citizens are questioning the suitability of a mission which is highly expensive, has involved considerable risks for the troops participating in it,¹¹ and, finally, has not succeeded in establishing peace.

Canada's participation in Somalia was even more controversial. Mainly, because it was the first time Canadians were involved in a peace-making mission with humanitarian objectives, with the assignment of combating belligerents and not simply overseeing a truce.¹² In addition, because in 1993 Canadian soldiers who were members of the multinational force tortured

and killed a Somali teenager and executed three other civilians in that country, under circumstances that remain obscure. Last year, Canadian television discovered and publicized videotapes of members of the Petawawa Paratroop Regiment who participated in the Somalia mission. These videos show the paratroopers making openly racist comments as well as submitting new recruits to degrading hazing. Canadian public opinion was shaken by this confrontation with the real values and behavior of those it had viewed as defenders of a noble, humanitarian cause. The scandal was such that the unit in question was dissolved last March.¹³ Recently, in April 1995, the massacre of 2,000 people in a refugee camp in Rwanda raised serious doubts about the usefulness of the 5,000-strong multinational unit stationed there under the command of a Canadian officer.¹⁴

Despite the fact that Canada remained true to its multilateralist tradition and put itself forward as a defender of human rights and democracy on a world scale, there seem to be two limits to this commitment: defense issues and trade relations. In a word, for Canada national security considerations, whether of a military or economic order, weigh more heavily in the balance than the nation's general foreign policy principles.

The first weighty exception to multilateralism made itself felt in 1991 in the strategic field, with Canada's participation in the Gulf War. Canada participated in combat positions against Iraq, even when the Security Council had not authorized military actions on the basis of Articles 42 and 43 of the San Francisco Charter.¹⁵ While we should in justice recognize that Canada's representatives to the United Nations pushed for a resolution in favor of multilateral intervention, in accordance with UN rules, the

¹¹ Of the 13 Canadian soldiers who died in multinational missions in 1993 and 1994, 10 were killed in the former Yugoslavia. See Jeff Sallot, "Redrawing the Lines of Battle," in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, October 8, 1994.

¹² See Tom Keating and Nicholas Gammer, "The 'New Look' in Canada's Foreign Policy," in *International Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 4, Autumn 1993, pp. 734-739.

¹³ A huge number of articles were published on this topic last year. For a summary, see Jeff Sallot, "Airborne Heads Held High at Unit's Last Parade," in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, March 2, 1995.

¹⁴ Hugh Winsor, "Why the UN Watched This Happen," in *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, April 28, 1995.

¹⁵ These articles define the criteria for multinational military intervention in a conflict involving recalcitrant adversaries.



Canada's government palace.

fact is that Canada actively participated in a military action which, in the eyes of the international community, was led by the United States. Thus, "The Mulroney government's response to the crisis was seen by some as little more than a poor reflection of that being pursued by the Bush administration in Washington."¹⁶ This perception was particularly widespread among Latin American governments, which recalled that in December 1989, a few days after announcing its intention to join the OAS, Canada supported the United States' unilateral intervention in Panama. In light of the end of the Cold War, at a time when Canada was reducing its commitments to the hegemonic military organization of which it is a member,¹⁷ it was legitimate to ask if this support to dubious U.S. military initiatives really corresponded to the defense of strategic Canadian interests or was merely a product of inertia.

In the economic field, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that Canada established with the United States

in 1989 represents another significant nuance to Canada's multilateralist policy.¹⁸ Interpretations of this decision's meaning in terms of foreign policy are not unanimous. For some analysts it represents a radical turn in the way Canada relates to the world;¹⁹ others saw it as merely a tactical adaptation in light of the uncertainty of the world commercial order.²⁰

In any case, the decision was a critical one, not only for the government but for the Canadian people. The long process of negotiating this accord—from 1985 through its ratification in late 1988—allowed the political debate to develop and pro and con positions to become polarized. In power since 1984, the Tories were,

in fact, reelected in November 1988 after a race in which the FTA was the central issue. The Conservative victory was interpreted as consent by the majority of Canadian citizens towards this controversial accord.

On the other hand, Canada participates in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) more as a defensive measure than on its own initiative. In fact, the announcement of the beginning of negotiations between Mexico and the United States in 1990 took Canadians by surprise. After several

¹⁸ In Canada, foreign policy and international trade policy, while managed at the operational level by different groups, are coordinated by a single central agency: the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Thus, in principle there is interdependence and coherence between both policies.

¹⁹ For example, Gordon Mace and Jean-Philippe Thérien draw the conclusion that the Free Trade Agreement represents "...the most important shift in all of Canada's foreign policy behaviour during the twentieth century." See their "Canada in the Americas: The Impact of Regionalism on a New Foreign Policy," paper presented to the annual congress of the Association for International Studies, Acapulco, 23-27 March, 1993, p. 15.

²⁰ For instance, Tom Keating maintains: "The slow progress of multilateral trade negotiation was another reason why the government opted first for the bilateral route." See *Canada and World Order...*, p. 242. This interpretation is in line with the government's justification.

¹⁶ Keating, *Canada and World Order...*, p. 231.

¹⁷ In 1992 Canada began withdrawing its troops stationed in Europe as part of NATO's central front; this included the closing of bases on German territory (Lahr and Baden-Soellingen).

months in which it did not take a clear stance, the Conservative government decided to ask to participate in the North American accord in order to prevent the United States from becoming the privileged center of economic exchanges in North America. Above and beyond its origin, there is no doubt that Canada's participation gave reality to the idea of North America as a geographical entity whose community of interests goes well beyond economic matters.

The Liberal government, or pragmatism as a norm of conduct

The Conservative Party was dramatically thrown out of power in the October 1993 elections. Citizens' votes gave the top hand to Canada's other major party, the Liberal Party, which has governed the country during the greater part of this century. Its leader, Jean Chrétien, became the new prime minister in November of that year.²¹ The new government's foreign policy would be dictated by domestic needs. The Liberals' winning electoral platform centered on a priority objective: job creation.²² The Liberal government was also preoccupied with reducing the government's deficit and the public debt. In short, pressing economic issues took precedence over the nation's international policy.²³

On February 7, 1995, in response to recommendations from the special mixed parliamentary committee charged with reviewing foreign policy, the Liberal government set forth its foreign policy in a document entitled "Canada in the World."²⁴ In this doc-

ument the Liberals define three priorities, in order of importance:

1. Promoting economic growth and jobs, ensuring Canadian products' and investments' access to world markets, and promoting world prosperity.
2. Promoting security within a peaceful world framework. Within this objective, nevertheless, there is a return to economic priorities: "Success increasingly derives from economic wealth rather than from military might."²⁵ Preventive diplomacy and peace-making are still mentioned as favoring world peace, although now as a last resort if conventional policies fail.
3. The international projection of Canadian values and culture: respect for human rights, democracy, respect for the law and protection of the environment. The reasoning is that this protection will advance Canada's interests because it will create a more stable international situation and increase the Canadian economy's competitiveness on a world scale.

One is immediately struck by the way this new policy inverts the order of priorities put forward by

²⁵ *Canada in the World*, p. 2.

²¹ For an analysis of those elections, see Julián Castro Rea (coord.), *Elecciones en Canadá: Cambio y continuidad*, Mexico City, CISAN-UNAM, 1995.

²² In 1990 Canada entered one of the deepest economic recessions in its history. During the election campaign unemployment reached a national average of 12 percent of the economically active population.

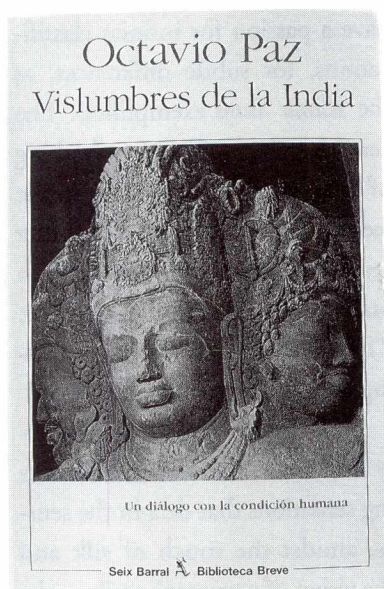
²³ One of the new administration's first actions was to cancel an order for British EH-101 combat helicopters, which meant a savings of 5.8 billion Canadian dollars.

²⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada in the World, Government Statement*, Ottawa, Canada Communication Group, 1995.



The Department of External Affairs.

Reviews



Vislumbres de la India

Octavio Paz

Ediciones Seix-Barral, Mexico City, 1995, 238 pp.

SAVORING THE DANCE OF THE BEES

Indira Gandhi maintained that those who really want to know India must empty their minds of all preconceived ideas. "India is different," she would say; "it is one and many. And it wants to continue to be so. If you want to understand her you must begin from zero." Now, with his *Vislumbres de la India* (Glimpses of

India), Octavio Paz shows us that one of this zero's forms consists of being Mexican. Despite appearances, this statement is neither tragic nor comic. It is not a lament or a joke. "The fact of being Mexican," says Paz, "helps me see India's differences on the basis of my Mexican differences. They are not the same, of course, but they are a point of view."

In any case, throughout the book he makes observations on many of the astounding similarities between Mexico and India, as well as the sharp differences between the two countries. His reflections on food are enthralling, as are his observations on the case of Catarina de San Juan, the *china poblana*,¹ who was from India and immersed herself in the religiosity of New Spain (Mexico's Colonial name) with delirious beatitude. Some time ago I began a novel on this historical character, in the

¹ *La china poblana*, literally "the Chinese woman from Puebla," was an Asian woman residing in that provincial capital, whose clothing set the trend for a style of dress that became traditional in Mexico. (Translator's note.)

spirit of my *Demonios de la lengua* (Demons of the Tongue), and I can state that Paz is right in viewing her as a historical symptom of the encounter between two worlds that were disparate, equivocal and somewhat parallel. Also of a terrible lucidity is the resemblance Paz notes between the obstacles the two countries face with regard to modernity: different anchors, which unite us. I like the way this book subordinates historical and political analysis to the comprehension of art. This scale of values stands opposed to the one we live by daily in our newspapers, some of our literary journals, as well as our publishing industry, which presents gossip in the guise of analysis. Does the same thing occur in India?

Mexico and India are not, as the Caribbean song goes, two wings of the same bird, but they may be two ears of the same elephant. Of course, this would be an elephant with one very big ear and one very small one. Be that as it may, Octavio Paz confronts the problem with the confidence of someone with a passion for disparities, for great cultural differences. Or as an Indian

poet would say, describing the god with an elephant's head, Ganesh: "a dancing heart between two ears." And as we know, in India dance is one of the ways of poetically describing creative thinking, the kind of thinking which is classified as that which induces in us, the readers, a state of lucid happiness. This kind of thinking allows us to ex-

(The Grammatical Monkey), but the entirety of his work, since that time, takes on a new and vital consistency. And, as is well known, it was in India that he met Marie José. "In India," Paz stated in an interview, "I find a tissue of sensations, of ideas, of experiences. Eroticism, for example, neither brings me closer to nor distances me

This is a book by a Mexican writer who, at the end of the 20th century, invites us to witness part of his long, intense amorous dialogue with India.

perience what they call "the delights of reason." *Vislumbres de la India* is clearly a book of that dancing genre: an essay in fluent movements which both analyzes and recalls, synthesizes notions and ventures hypotheses. A book which is a voyage, a ceremony, just as his poems are ceremonies. A ceremony of ritual passion, like dance.

This is a book by a Mexican writer who, at the end of the 20th century, invites us to witness part of his long, intense amorous dialogue with India. India transformed him and it may be that everything he has written since then bears the stamp of that transformation. On the basis of his experience in India, Paz's poetics became erotic. Thus, not only the poetry in his book *Ladera este* (Eastern Slope)—which includes "White" (brilliantly analyzed by Elliot Weinberger in his essay "Paz in India")—or the poetic prose and essays of *El mono gramático*

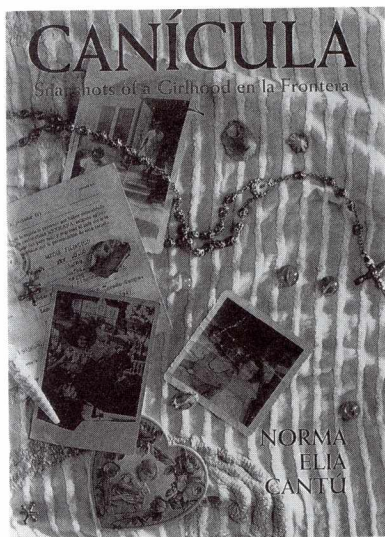
from the sacred; and this experience is quite difficult for someone from the West. Eroticism is sexuality converted into imagination. Love is that erotic imagination converted into the choice of a person. And that is what I discovered in India, and what probably changed my poetry. On the one hand it gave my words more reality, more density; they became fuller. On the other, they became more lucid. In a certain way this was recapturing the reality of this world through the beloved person." This quotation already held the central seed of what, various decades later, would become his book *La llama doble* (The Double Flame), where he makes his poetics/erotics key to life.

In *Vislumbres de la India* I find the operation of a concept that has always struck me when reading Indian art historians (such as Coomaraswamy): they frequently say that a given work has, or lacks, *rasha*. And as far as I understand it,

rasha is the grace of a work, but also its essence, if we understand the latter to be not only a content but a flavor, a taste and a depth at one and the same time. *Rasha* is analyzed in theatrical theory as a work's expressive power to produce different states or feelings in the spectators. These feelings are usually classified into nine categories (Paz rightly notes that the Indians have a passion for infinite classifications, for subtle differences, as the *Kama Sutra* exemplifies). The central *rasha*, *rasharajá*—the king of aesthetic feelings—is the erotic feeling (*shringara*). All the other aesthetic feelings are connected, in one or another way, with this one. The erotic feeling is key to obtaining the delights of reason.

The poetry of India frequently mentions—as one of the exciting sensations that delight the senses, amidst the touch of silk and the vision of a woman's smile—the buzzing of bees: the sound of their dance. And among the classic poems which Paz translates at the end of this book there is one which speaks of "Two lotuses which open, their breasts tight/The house of two bees: their nipples dark." The vital and poetic axis of some books, such as this one, seems to be the *rasharajá* of eroticism, and to our ears this makes them sound like the buzzing of bees searching for their home. Let us listen to their dance, so as to make it our own.

Alberto Ruy Sánchez
Director of *Artes de México* magazine.



**Canícula: Snapshots of
a Girlhood en la Frontera**

Norma Elia Cantú

New Mexico University Press, 1995,
132 pp.

SNAPSHOTS OF A GIRLHOOD
EN LA FRONTERA: THE ART OF
THE LAND IN-BETWEEN

The U.S.-Mexico border: Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa calls it “*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds.” Chicana poet Gina Valdés refers to it as “a wall of barbed lies, a chain of sighs, a heart/pounding, an old wound.” This is the same border another Chicana writer, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, personifies as she writes: “her legs sink in the mud of two countries, both sides leaking *sangre y sueños*.”

In this “land in-between,” as Norma Cantú calls *la frontera*, dreams and nightmares coexist; the boundaries between reality and the imaginary seem seamless; change and exchange are, uniquely, a matter of course. It is from

this “land in-between” that Norma Cantú voices a range of experiences that would remain as mere words stolen by the wind were they not carefully and lovingly shaped, crafted into an aesthetic form, doggedly determined to survive as written words. For, as Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa rightly states in her poem “To Live in the Borderlands Means You,” “*Cuando vives en la frontera* people walk through you, the wind steals your voice.”

But there is no danger of Norma Cantú’s voice being stolen, and one can hardly hear any wind in the *canícula* that lends this book part of its title. *Canícula*, as the author explains in a very brief introduction for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the term, means the dog days, “a particularly intense part of the summer when most cotton is harvested in South

Canícula, the second volume of a trilogy that opens with *Papeles de mujer*—written entirely in Spanish—and concludes with *Cabañuelas*, is subtitled *Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*. And in this book it is these sudden “snapshots”—as the very name onomatopoeically suggests—that freeze a chance moment into a permanent paper memory, holding time within the contours of a faded frame, that trigger spontaneous and associative memories in the narrator-author and lure the narrative flow. *Canícula* smells of musty, parchment-like, sepia-tinted pictures that live suspended in time inside an old shoebox tied with faded ribbon, enclosed in near-oblivion until the miracle of sight, memory and articulated words restore them to life—to a life of their own.

The 86 brief texts in this vol-

*In this “land in-between,”
as Norma Cantú calls la frontera,
dreams and nightmares coexist.*

Texas; at that time because of the intense heat, it is said, not even dogs venture out.” But for the author it has other meanings too: “In my childhood scheme of things, it is a miniseason that falls between summer and fall.” Moreover, the title refers to the time when she wrote most of the book: during the 1993 *canícula*.

ume cross *fronteras*, the threshold of many memories; happy times are retraced, as are fears, deaths, sorrows, moments of the past that have unavoidably become the future and bear markers of inevitable omniscience—an omniscience that shifts reality around, that brightens up even the toughness of cotton-picking under a

thunderous sun with breezy poeticity. The final text in the book—entitled “Martin High” since it deals with the memories triggered by a picture of several Martin High School students—strives to lay bare the variety of roads taken by those characters captured in the picture in a moment of innocence, hope, even a touch of teenage awkwardness. These roads have not been easy or sorrow-free, but cannot simply not be, since they have been, they are. And it is in the multiple-layered meanings implied in the “land in-between” that some remain while others seek new spaces, as this text states at the very end of the book: “Some of us love, and some of us hate, some of us love and hate our borderlands. Some of us remember, some of us forget.” Thus Norma Cantú points to the ambiguous relationship Chicanas and Chicanos have with their past, and to the imperative need *not* to forget that past, even when it is painful, a concept brought into being through the narration itself.

The sense of spontaneity and the fragmentary nature of this volume are closely related to other writings by Chicanas and remind one, for example, of Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* (published this summer in Mexico in a translation by Elena Poniatowska and Juan Antonio Ascencio entitled *La casa en Mango Street*). In *Canícula*, as in Cisneros’ book, the rites of passage of childhood and adolescence become

borders to be crossed by a female narrator.

There is another *frontera* in this book worth mentioning: the elusive border between autobiography and fiction. In the introductory note the author offers the term “fictional autobioethnography” as a means of encompassing the multiple intentions encoded in these texts that are as much autobiographical as fictional, a point she deliberately underscores—although the reader may well have the impression that she is not entirely willing to label her work at all. This need to insist on a difference and distance between

graphical slant and which might straitjacket its sense of spontaneity. Some of the texts begin, literally, with a picture, enriching the reading experience; other texts simply start from the memory of an image, at times solemn, at others humorous and occasionally even ironic, in a style that shies away from any exaggerated or unnecessary ornamentation.

Linguistic *fronteras* are also crossed in this collage of texts. And although Spanish is interspersed in a code that is predominantly English linguistically—though not necessarily culturally—the difference between codes

*The 86 brief texts in this volume cross fronteras,
the threshold of many memories.*

her characters and herself is similar to that of Sandra Cisneros, equally adamant about the reader’s all-too-easy tendency to indiscriminately equate her life with that of her characters.

Canícula crosses other borders as well: those of perception, for instance. Cantú places pictures of herself, her family and other people as visual points of departure for many of the texts, pictures apparently selected at random from an old shoebox, a device that has the effect of nicely eluding a chronological linearity common to literature with an autobio-

is not underscored since, for instance, words in Spanish do not appear in italics. These very insertions in Spanish are integrated as a matter of course in the discourse, much like the oral code-switching common to the border and to Chicano language and culture.

It is nevertheless interesting to note the concessions made by Cantú to readers unfamiliar with the Spanish language; this becomes apparent in the creation and use of several strategies that integrate a natural and unobtrusive translating process into the narration

itself. Here is an example from the text entitled "Las piscas": "Strange insects —*frailesillos, chinches, garrapatas, hormigas*— some or all of these pests— ticks, fleas, tiny spiders the color of sand —some or all of these *bichos*— find their way to exposed ankles, arms, necks

and suck life-blood, leaving welts, ronchas —red and itchy— and even pusfilled *ampulas* that burst and burn with the sun." There is no exact parallel translation and not every word in Spanish is translated; there is, instead, an interesting play with the text whereby

the meaning (in English) is sufficiently suggested, and the translation of something like "frailesillos," for instance, becomes unnecessary.

The consciousness in *Canícula: Snapshots from a Girlhood en la Frontera* of an enunciating voice—that of the female narrator—is complemented by a concern for who the receptor is to be, who is at the decodifying end, across on the other side of the communication border. The "Prologue" (which, contrary to what one might expect, begins the narration process) ends with these words: "The stories of her girlhood in that land in-between, *la frontera*, are shared, her story and the stories of the people who lived that life with her is one. But who'll hear it?" This concern for the potential receptor is, in fact, very present in Chicana literature today: it questions the variety of borders—real and hypothetical—that are actually crossed while seeking to place voices with specific Chicana markers in spaces where those voices may resound, creating echoes. But the question is... for who?—"who'll hear them?"

We could conclude that since it has become as important to determine who speaks—or writes—as who listens—or reads—the reader tends to lose her or his anonymity and recover an identity, whereby yet another *frontera* is crossed.

Claire Joysmith
Researcher at CISAN.

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