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“Without Any of the Seductions of Art”

On Orozco’s Misogyny and Public Art in the Americas

WITHIN THE SCHOLARSHIP on Orozco there exists a tacit consensus about the artist’s misogyny. So apparent is this attribute of his oeuvre that it barely requires argumentation, so obvious, it merits no real interrogation, so accepted, it can be tossed off as an aside en route to more important analytic pursuits.¹ Indeed even a cursory survey of Orozco’s painting, drawings, and frescos would seem to confirm this thesis, riddled as they are with grimacing prostitutes, grotesque society ladies, and pathetic waifs representing a variety of victims who never quite elicit the viewer’s sympathy. Leaving aside for the moment that one could query with equal criticality the alternative visions of woman one finds in the work of Siqueiros and Rivera, I want to interrogate this consensus (one that I am implicated in as

1. As a case in point, Renato González Mello refers in passing to the artist’s “persistent misogyny” at the end of his essay “Orozco in the United States: An Essay on the History of Ideas,” in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934*, eds. Renato González Mello and Diane Miliotes (New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company for Dartmouth College, Hood Museum of Art, 2002), p. 59. By quoting González Mello here I do not mean to castigate him in particular for de-emphasizing Orozco’s gender politics. González Mello has done more than any scholar to shed light on the artist’s complicated relationship with women patrons, friends, and critics. Rather, I invoke his comments here as emblematic of the consensus within the scholarship on this point. The ideas developed in this essay are indebted in many ways to González Mello’s rigorous scholarship and generous friendship.

both a scholar and a teacher).² I want to ask if we might not more productively read Orozco's gendered iconography beyond the reductive exegetical practice that feminist historiography has dubbed "the images of women" paradigm?³

With this question in mind, I begin with one of the most vivid examples of Orozco's purported misogyny, his 1934 fresco *Catharsis*. Commissioned by the Mexican government for the newly completed Palace of Fine Arts, this mural monumentalizes some of the most repulsive images of women within the Western canon. *Catharsis* was Orozco's first public fresco after his return to Mexico from the US, and it represents the culmination of much of what he had accomplished there. Formally it benefits from the experiments in scale, technique, and composition he was able to undertake at Pomona College, the New School, and Dartmouth College, respectively. Thematically, it elaborates motifs that first appeared and evolved in that work as well. Most significantly, the articulation of sexuality and technology in *Catharsis* is indebted to his encounter with the cultural effects of industrial modernity in depression-era New York. But to the extent that *Catharsis* draws upon Orozco's experiences in the US, it also derives its specificity from the social and aesthetic milieu of the Mexico he left and the Mexico he encountered upon his return. Therefore, rather than simply condemn the artist's representations of women through an a-historical appeal to a generalized misogyny, I want to locate his gendered

2. See, for example, Mary Coffey, "Promethean Labor: Orozco and the Gendering of American Art," in *José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus*, ed. Marjorie L. Harth (Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Perpetua Press for Pomona College Museum of Art, 2001), pp. 63-77.

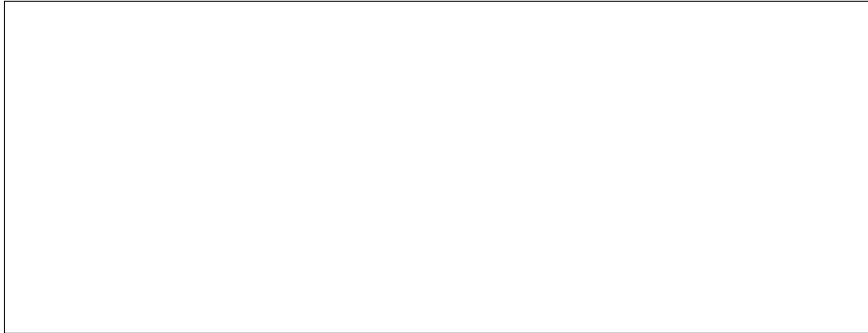
3. For a succinct discussion of the emergence and critique of the "Images of Women" paradigm in feminist historiography, see Griselda Pollock, "What's Wrong with 'Images of Women'?" in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85*, ed. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London and New York, Pandora Press, 1987), pp. 132-38. In short, this type of analysis proceeds from a concern to distinguish "good" and "bad" representations of women. This approach tends to reify woman as a referent, and it treats representation as a simple reflection of an often under-theorized "patriarchy." Needless to say, I prefer to view woman as a construct produced and reproduced through representation. Furthermore, I prefer to treat visual culture as productive discourse rather than unmediated reflection or ideology—understood as mystification or distortion. Both the reflection and ideology theories of representation presume a platonic paradigm predicated on a metaphysics of being that presumes a stable identity for the "real" that precedes representation. For an elaboration of my position on this point, see Mary Coffey, "What Puts the 'Culture' in 'Multiculturalism'? An Analysis of Culture, Government, and the Politics of Mexican Identity," in *Multicultural Curriculum: New Directions for Social Theory, Practice, and Policy*, eds. Ram Mahalingam and Cameron McCarthy (New York and London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 37-55.

iconography within an aesthetic and political imaginary forged in the historically specific intersection of European-derived, but internationalized modernism, an industrial modernity emblemized by the US, and Mexican nationalism in the inter-war period. In so doing we might generate productive insights about the persistent inscription of the feminine as dangerous ‘other’ in Western culture in general while maintaining the critical possibilities that inhere in modernist visual culture nonetheless.

Mass Culture and Modernism in Orozco’s Catharsis

Catharsis confronts the viewer with a purgatorial image of human conflict, mechanical destruction, and moral decay.⁴ The mask-like visage of *La Chata* addresses our gaze like a pornographic centerfold splayed on a metallic bed against an orgiastic backdrop of agitated crowds, corrupt leadership, and the implements of industrialized labor and war. The steel girder of sky-scraper construction lies crushed below a garbage heap of twisted cog-wheels, automated weaponry, and men engaged in protest and hand to hand combat. This nightmare-vision of humanity over-determined by technology spirals outward from a slightly off-center struggle between two anonymous men, one in the white-collared shirt of the bourgeois businessman, the other naked but possessing a brute physical strength that suggests the primal force of the repressed popular classes. Orozco enhances the inherent dynamism of their leaning bodies with two jutting rifle-butts in the extreme foreground that violently cleave the composition, establishing a centripetal vortex: a center that cannot hold. It is a dystopian image of machine-man in which human agency has been reduced to base sexual desire and a primitive will to power unchecked by intellect or heart. Aside from the obscured portraits of political ideologues along the right side of the mural, the only individualized figures are the demonic whores whose distorted faces evoke Charcot’s hysterics. Their gaudy jewelry, heavy make-up, and gangrenous skin-tone seduce and repel with the inau-

4. It is important to note that the title of this work, “catharsis”, was not Orozco’s invention, but rather, it was suggested by the art critic Justino Fernández. Orozco simply described the work as a statement about the “contemporary world.” While it is clear that Orozco did not object to Fernández’ title, we should keep its genealogy in mind when interpreting the image so as not to lend too much intentional significance to the associations that “catharsis” calls up.



The mural *Catharsis*, 1934, located in the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, should appear in this place.*

thentic charms of commodified beauty. As ciphers of artifice these vamps suggest the uncanny of the automaton and thus the diabolical threat of technology's triumph over nature.⁵

Just three years after its public debut, Orozco's *Catharsis* was cited by Mexican art critic and scholar Justino Fernández as evidence of an artistic decline brought on by too much time spent in the US. "The North American environment has infected him", Fernández exclaims, "The fresco at the Palace of Fine Arts lacks the magnificent hand of his first frescoes; it reminds one of a *Saturday Evening Post* illustration, done rapidly like a large-scale sketch."⁶

5. For one of the best discussions of the anxiety produced by the automaton as an uncanny exemplar of the traumatic effects of industrial capitalism on the experience of individuality, see Hal Foster, "Exquisite Corpses," *Compulsive Beauty* (London and Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1993), pp. 125-153.

6. Justino Fernández, *El arte moderno en México: breve historia-Siglos XIX y XX* (Mexico, Antigua Librería Robredo, José Porrúa e Hijos, 1937), p. 233. Translated by Alicia Azuela, Renato González Mello, and James Oles in "Anthology of Critical Reception", in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, p. 313.

* *Nota de la dirección*: Lamentablemente, un particular negó uno de los permisos necesarios para publicar una fotografía del mural de José Clemente Orozco titulado *Catarsis*, aduciendo discrepancias con el texto.

Esta obra se encuentra en el primer piso del Palacio de Bellas Artes, en la ciudad de México, y sugerimos a nuestros lectores visitarlo. Otra opción es consultar alguno de los muchos libros donde fue reproducida esta pintura, por ejemplo, recientemente en el catálogo titulado *José Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934*, Nueva York, Hood Museum of Art-Dartmouth College, 2002, pp. 234-235.

While it is true that compared with the structural architectonics of his frescoes at the National Preparatory School or the Industrial School in Orizaba, *Catharsis* reveals a bravura and looseness in execution that the artist cultivated while working in the States. However, Fernández' allusion to the infectious influence of the North American environment belies more than mere national chauvinism. Specifically, his invocation of the *Saturday Evening Post* singles out a very particular aspect of commercial culture and partakes of a familiar modernist lament about the threat to genuine art posed by those cultural products patronized by women and the herd. Thus, what is not explicit in Fernández' critique, but I think implied nonetheless, is the long-standing association between mass-culture and the feminine that Andreas Huyssen argues persisted into the 20th century Frankfurt School critique of the 'culture industry.'⁷ Citing a progression from the Goncourt Brothers' attack on the sentimental novel to Nietzsche's diatribe against the theatricality of Wagner, Huyssen asserts that the assignation of feminine attributes to the masses and mass culture was a masculine projection of anxieties wrought by modernization and the political threat posed by proletarian and petit-bourgeois social movements. "The fear of the masses in this age of declining liberalism," Huyssen writes, "is always also a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass."⁸

By 1937, when Fernández was writing, the US with its Fordist assembly lines and Hollywood spectacles had come to embody the homogenization and sterility of mass production and consumption, and thus his assertion of Orozco's decline reflects persistent nationalist anxieties about the disintegration of Mexican sovereignty mobilized through a hidden logic of gender difference in which the feminine term is always devalued. Here Orozco's early murals are dynamic and strong, while those painted after his stay in the US are weak and feminized via their kinship with kitsch. On the other hand, Mexican cultural sovereignty, represented by Orozco himself, reveals its essential *malinchismo* through its openness to the North American environment. That mass culture can be configured simultaneously as the seductive courtesan and phallic dominatrix demonstrates the flexibility of the strategy as well as the paradoxes

7. Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 44-62.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

introduced into the binaries of semiotic systems by the colonial subject.⁹ In either case, the negative stereotypes of femininity attach to the denigrated term.

While the relationship between *Catharsis* and the *Saturday Evening Post* is dubious, the fresco does bear a striking aesthetic and thematic resemblance to that other mass cultural form: film. In particular, to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, a film Orozco saw while living in New York and reportedly liked.¹⁰ Like Lang, Orozco conceived this monumental work after a stay in the real-life metropolis of New York.¹¹ Both works derive their dramatic form and content from German Expressionism's dark vision of the machine-cult of modernity, and finally both interlace male fantasies about women and sexuality with anxieties about technology and mass uprising. In fact it seems very plausible that *La Chata*, the shameless hussy who grins deliriously amidst the fires of purifica-

9. The European discourse reflects a similarly paradoxical formulation of mass culture wherein the artist is simultaneously the masculine subject warding off the temptations of a feminized kitsch and the neurotic feminine anxious about the devalued status of the artist and consequently identifying with the supposed passivity of woman, as in Flaubert's famous "Madame Bovary, c'est moi", *ibid.*, p. 45. However, I would argue that for the colonial or postcolonial subject, this dialectic of sexual anxiety and compensatory masculinity is even more pronounced given the compounding inscription of the feminine onto the colonial 'other'. Thus I think we can read the chronic lament within Mexican cultural discourse about the nation's susceptibility to foreign influence and the allegorization of Mexicanness through the historical figure of the *chingada*, as a paradoxical reiteration of this already doubled discourse. For a discussion of *Malinchismo* in Mexican national discourse see Octavio Paz, "The Sons of La Malinche," *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, and Rachel Phillips Belash (New York, Grove Press, 1985), pp. 65-88; Roger Bartra, "A La Chingada," *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, trans. Christopher J. Hall (New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1992), pp. 147-162; and Jean Franco, "On the Impossibility of Antigone and the Inevitability of La Malinche: rewriting the National Allegory," *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 129-146. For a discussion of the doubled colonial subject, see Homi Bhabha, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency," *The Location of Culture* (New York and London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 171-197, and for an analysis of the problem of the colonial subject that is sensitive to gendered asymmetries of power, see Anne McClintock, "The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism," *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 21-74.

10. Lang's film had its Mexican debut in December of 1928. However, Orozco apparently didn't see it until his sojourn in the US, where the film was released in 1933 in a highly edited form. I'm indebted to Jennifer Jolly for informing me about the Mexican release of *Metropolis*.

11. It is a well-known fact that Lang based his vision of the city in *Metropolis* on Manhattan after a trip to the US.

tion, was directly inspired by Lang's machine-vamp Maria, the robotic witch burnt at the stake by the very masses she incites through her irrepressible sexuality. As Huyssen has observed, Maria embodies the technophobia that followed the battlefield atrocities of WWI. As a manufactured woman she exceeds the control of her creator and thus evokes fears about the technological subordination of man's external and internal life.¹² While there is no evidence that *La Chata* was conceived as a literal robot, her proximity to the metallic junk heap suggests an articulation between sexual desire and mechanized destruction. However, as Huyssen demonstrates, Maria is not only an image of female sexuality/technology run amok, she is also a veiled signifier of the rioting mob (the crowds in *Metropolis* are comprised of frenzied worker's wives who, in Huyssen's argument, represent "the major threat to not only the great machines, but to male domination in general").¹³ Therefore, we can also interpret *La Chata* as a figure of the mob, derived in Orozco's case from his firsthand experiences as a chronicler of Mexico's ten-year revolution. This association is self-evident in one of Orozco's cover illustrations for *La Vanguardia* from 1915, wherein an ax and dagger frame the smiling face of a coquettish schoolgirl above the caption, "I am the revolution, The Destructor..."¹⁴

Catharsis diverges from Lang's narrative, however, in that unlike the film the fresco does not reconcile the conflicts of capital and labor or purge the dangers of female sexuality through a renewed investment in technocratic management. Rather it retains the expressionist skepticism toward both the mass and machine and thus elaborates a thematic concern first broached in the *Prometheus* mural but which receives its ultimate expression in the masterful fresco cycle at the Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara. Renato González Mello argues that the image of suffering humanity at the base of Orozco's Pomona College mural marks the emergence of the artist's treatment of the mass-as-subject.¹⁵ Under the influence of Sikelianos' Delphic Circle and relying on romantic sources for the Promethean myth, Orozco approaches humanity with empathy, commenting on the tragic insignificance of the indi-

12. Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*," *After the Great Divide*, pp. 65-81.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

14. Reproduced in *Orozco! 1883-1940* (Oxford, Museum of Modern Art, 1980), p. 14.

15. Renato González Mello, "Mysticism, Revolution, Millennium, Painting," in *José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus*, pp. 47-61.

vidual in an age of mass politics. By the time Orozco began his Dartmouth cycle, however, the suffering masses had become the robotic students of Anglo-American standardization, again associated with woman (in this case the school teacher). Along the north wall of Baker library the stultification of Protestant education follows from the horrors unleashed on the Americas by Cortés' Catholic conquest (when we recall that Dartmouth College was founded to "civilize" the native inhabitants of New England the homology becomes more pointed). Significantly, a depopulated factory-scape, entitled *The Machine* mediates between panels depicting the Conquistador's destruction and a severe schoolmarm towering over docile pupils and gray organization men. As Jacquelynn Baas observes, the machine's "gray and jagged mass appears to feed on the piled human bodies at Cortés feet like some demonic incarnation of antihuman materialism."¹⁶ I think we can read the murderous mise-en-scène presented in *Catharsis* as a further elaboration on this theme, now lent new urgency by the rise of fascism in Europe.

In *Catharsis* Orozco amalgamates man and machine: knife-wielding arms append headless gears, steely flesh is embedded with bolts, and skeletal remains are molded into fantastic dynamos. Undifferentiated crowds with fists raised in unison comprise part of this grisly scene and ambiguously implicate social protest or mass mobilization in mechanized warfare. In the three-panel sequence at the Hospicio Cabañas entitled *The Dictators*, *the Mechanized Masses*, and *Despotism* the ideological link between technophilia, fascism, and the mindless masses comes to the fore through a transmutation of human crowds into regimented I-beams marching in geometric unity. In *Mechanized Masses* all vestiges of individuality have been subordinated in a choreographed spectacle that calls to mind Siegfried Kracauer's description of the "Tiller Girls" in his essay on mass ornament. He writes "These products of American distraction factories are no longer individual girls, but indissoluble girl clusters whose movements are demonstrations of mathematics."¹⁷ And just as Kracauer emblemizes the alienation of the individual under capitalism through the disassembled bodies of the "Tiller Girls," in *Catharsis* Orozco implicates

16. Jacquelynn Baas, "The Epic of American Civilization: The Mural at Dartmouth College (1932-1934)," in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, p. 172.

17. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 75-76.

the disembodied heads of the prostitutes and their ornamental accoutrements in his violent conflation of man, mass, and machine.¹⁸

Public Art and Female Allegory in the Americas

The foregoing interpretation of Orozco's representation of woman and the machine-age situates the artist vis-à-vis discursive trajectories generated by European intellectuals who ultimately found their examples par-excellence in the advanced capitalism of the United States. While these discourses make distinctions of degree between the so-called Old and New Worlds, they remain insensitive to the specificities of the American context, reducing it in effect to the dark mirror or logical consequence of European cultural decadence. What is more, they do little to elucidate the “alternative modernity” of Mexico, which becomes elided in the universalizing and a-historical paradigms of critical philosophy and psychoanalysis.¹⁹ I don't mean to imply that

18. The preparatory sketches for *Catharsis* published in J. Clemente Orozco, *Orozco, Verdad cronológica* (Guadalajara, Universidad de Guadalajara, 1983), pp. 297-313, seem to suggest that the prostitutes were not initially part of the composition, save for a disembodied head of ambiguous gender. However, as the image evolved, *La Chata* emerged and became more prominent as a thematic and compositional device. Interestingly, the hideous woman's head along the lower right edge of the image appears at times as a bag of coins in these same sketches, suggesting a strong identification between money/greed/capital and woman/prostitution/moral decay.

19. My use of the term “alternative modernity” is derived from Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, “On Alternative Modernities,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 1-19. In his introduction to this special issue of *Public Culture*, Gaonkar militates against the refrain among some scholars that modernity is over, or that it has been super-ceded by a new phenomenon (i.e. postmodernity, or the “end of history”). On the contrary, he argues that “modernity is best understood as an attitude of questioning the present,” that not only persists, but which has “gone global” and thus is no longer anchored in a singular “master narrative.” He suggests that scholars explore culturally specific and site-based readings that complicate our understanding of the relationship between societal modernization and cultural modernity. Not for the purposes of denying or even negating the Western discourse on modernity, but rather to provincialize it, by “thinking through and against its self-understandings... [to] destabilize the universalist idioms, historicize the contexts, and pluralize the experiences of modernity” (pp. 13-14). Néstor García Canclini does this in his influential book on aspects of modernity in Latin America, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1995), from which I have drawn many insights.

Orozco, as a Mexican artist, was somehow outside of the critical and aesthetic discourses of his peers in Europe—he was not and reacted violently to the recurrent attempts by critics in the US to suggest as much. I do, however, want to turn now to the Americas in order to locate his vision of woman and the machine within the particularities of the US and Mexican cultural context.

Nearly all of Orozco's critics and scholars comment on the extent to which his vision ran counter to the utopian embrace of the machine-age best embodied in the work of the precisionists and the state-side murals of his arch-rival, Rivera. Similarly, many scholars have investigated the politics of the body in Orozco's work, with a particular emphasis on his critique of academic approaches to heroic *male* nudity.²⁰ But few have really interrogated his approach to the *female* form. Certainly the male nude figures more prominently in his public murals, and by comparison, the women all but disappear from his late frescoes. Furthermore, as the foregoing analysis makes clear, images like those in *Catharsis* seem to replicate a familiar and self-evident modernist gambit that leaves no questions begging. But do they? Or more precisely, is the misogyny on display in *Catharsis* of a generic Euro-American provenance, or does it provide insight into a different constellation of social, political, and aesthetic concerns?

We might broach this question through a comparison between *Catharsis* and a contemporary fresco by Rivera, his 1931 *Allegory of California* painted for the San Francisco Pacific Stock Exchange. As in all of his US murals, Rivera fashions a veiled Pan-American allegory that naturalizes the technological exploitation of nature through an appeal to gendered labor. In it, a monumentalized Helen Wills Moody is presented not as an active tennis champion but rather as an icon of an indigenized and sexualized landscape. She offers the bounty of California's mineral and agricultural wealth to a compendium of male workers who investigate, mine, and farm the caverns of her ample body. Here the forces of production and reproduction trope the new comradely ideal of compassionate marriage that Barbara Melosh identifies as a dominant motif in the nostalgic iconography of the public art inspired by New Deal liberalism.²¹

20. Both, González Mello and Karen Cordero Reiman, have done much to elucidate the politics of the male nude in Orozco's work. See Renato González Mello, "Mysticism, Revolution, Millennium, Painting," in *José Clemente Orozco: Prometheus*, pp. 47-63 and Karen Cordero Reiman, "Prometheus Unraveled: Readings of and from the Body: Orozco's Pomona College Mural (1930)," in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, pp. 98-117.

21. Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

Unlike Orozco, Rivera was equivocal about the machine age; his iconography consistently displaces the potential threat of technology onto the political disposition of those who use and/or control it. Thus *Allegory of California* advocates for the socialist domination of nature by industry through a hemispheric partnership in which the oil reserves, flora, fauna, and mineral deposits of the American South could be exploited by the advanced technological know-how of the North for the mutual benefit of all. Despite Rivera's radical political convictions the *Allegory of California* is a remarkably conventional work of art. Not only does it configure a neo-colonial relationship between the two Americas (one eerily reminiscent of the policies of the *Porfiriato* that promulgated the Revolution of 1910), but also, it reifies gender difference through the academic tradition of female allegory.²² In a letter to Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna of 1931, Orozco savaged Rivera's design, which he had just seen in an etching reproduced in the San Francisco *Examiner*. Outraged at Rivera's "Pre-Raphaelism," which he decries as the "weakest, sweetest, most effeminate sort," he writes:

the poor belly has been inflated overnight. Of the worst American academicism, the kind that fills banks, State Capitols, and other skyscrapers by the square mile, and which by now is only done by girl painters!... the note says he's going to paint California's prosperity or fecundity as a lady with Greco-Roman clothing with a Greek nose, high bosoms, hips and everything, with fruits and other attributes... not even in the Academia!²³

22. Anne McClintock has discussed in great detail the way gender difference symbolically defines the limits of the nation and differences of power between men. Noting that women are often excluded (formally and informally) from full citizenship, they are nonetheless symbolically deployed to configure the body politic through allegorical figures (*Belle Marianne*, *Miss Columbia*, *Malinche*). Through this strategy, women are granted a symbolic relationship to the nation (as its bearers or boundary markers, its metaphoric and genetic limit) but not its agents. See McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven: Nationalism, Gender and Race," *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 352-390.

23. Letter from Orozco to Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna, January 31, 1931, reproduced in Carodoza y Aragón, *Orozco* (Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1959), pp. 284-285. Translated by Azuela, González Mello, and Oles in "Anthology of Critical Reception" in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, p. 315.

Orozco's hostilities toward Rivera are legendary and at times paranoid, but in this case the substance of his critique bears inquiry. Undoubtedly his potshots at "girl painters" scapegoats the comparatively large number of women artists employed under New Deal relief programs for the retrenchment of form and content these programs encouraged. Yet if we can see past this misplaced ire, what emerges is a bitter indictment of Rivera's reversion to the classicism and tired symbolic rhetoric of academic allegory. We know that Orozco promoted a new art amenable to the "new values" embodied in the architecture of Manhattan, and for this reason he scorned the servile return to the "antiquarian" or "aboriginal" models that Rivera represented.²⁴ For him mural art should find painterly analogs to the novelty of the New York skyscraper. As a genuinely public art it should be "disinterested," above the partisan motives of the privileged few or those in political power.²⁵ For Orozco allegory partook of the elite tastes of corporate and state sponsors, representing a paradox for its exaltation of democratic ideals proceeded through a rarified visual language that few could interpret.²⁶ In Rivera's mural he recognized the hermeticism of academic traditions. In particular, Rivera's *Allegory* recalled public works sponsored by Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz in the last decades of the 19th century.

Porfirian propaganda is writ large across Mexico City in the beaux-arts architecture of its many federal "palaces" and the plethora of monuments that line the Paseo de la Reforma and its *glorietas*. Displaying the cosmopolitan yearnings and "Creole nationalism" that characterized the ideological project of the *Porfiriato*, these monuments typically commemorate national heroes such as Columbus, Cuauhtémoc, and Benito Juárez while utilizing female allegories to embody national virtue.²⁷ The most significant of these monu-

24. Orozco, "New World, New Races, New Art," originally published in *Creative Art: Magazine of Fine and Applied Art* (N.Y.) 4, no. 1 (January, 1929): n.p., reproduced in *Orozco!*, p. 46.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

26. As González Mello's analysis of esotericism in Orozco's mural art reveals, the artist's critique of rarified aesthetics was somewhat disingenuous. See "Orozco in the United States: An Essay on the History of Ideas," and "Public Painting and Private Painting: Easel Paintings, Drawings, Graphic Arts, and Mural Studies," in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, pp. 22-97.

27. "Creole nationalism" refers to the nascent nationalism that developed during the colonial era among Creoles, which ultimately fueled the struggle for Independence. It is distinguished from post-revolutionary nationalism in that it appropriated elite aspects of pre-Columbian cul-

ments is the “Angel of the Republic” commissioned in 1900 to memorialize Mexico’s Independence from Spain. Designed by Antonio Rivas Mercado, a Mexican architect trained in France, the monument took a decade to build and was unveiled on the eve of the outbreak of the Revolution, a conflict not entirely unrelated to its exorbitant cost and its embodiment of the Francophilic pretensions of the *Porfiriato*.²⁸ The column itself emulates the Place Vendôme, a fitting template given its location on a grand boulevard modeled after Haussmann’s Champs Élysées. Yet even as the Independence monument apotheosizes the duplicity of the Porfirian regime and its willingness to sacrifice the welfare of its population in pursuit of foreign investment and respectability, the gilded Angel that crowns its column has become a revered icon of national sovereignty. The Academy of San Carlos, as a state-funded institution, actively participated in the symbolic construction of Díaz’ self-proclaimed legacy of “Peace, Progress, and Prosperity.”²⁹ The ideological coherence between art and the Porfirian state produced in Orozco a deep mistrust of academicism,³⁰ which accounts for his bilious reaction to Rivera’s return to allegory. Perhaps he was also expiating his own demons, for in his first frescoes

ture that it classicized and sanitized, whereas post-revolutionary nationalism embraced both pre-Columbian and extant indigenous traditions in its cultural politics. So while pre-revolutionary nationalists demonized living Indians, post-revolutionary nationalists celebrated them. Furthermore, Creole nationalism emphasized high culture and elite castes, while post-revolutionary nationalism incorporated *artesanías* and folk traditions predominant among the popular classes.

28. Barbara A. Tenenbaum, “Streetwise History: The Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910,” in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, eds. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, Scholarly Resources Press, 1994), pp. 127-150.

29. Enrique Krauze, “Introduction: Past, Present and Future,” *Mexico Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*, trans. Hank Heifetz (New York, Harper Perennial, 1997), pp. 1-24.

30. As González Mello describes, Orozco had a contentious relationship with the Academy during his student days. While he didn’t support the student movement to create an alternative open air school of painting, he did criticize the conservatism of the Academy and demonstrate his rejection of its rigid and hierarchical training by embarking on a career as a political cartoonist and painting Mexico City’s demi-monde in the spirit of the *flâneur* pioneered by French artists at the turn of the century. Later in life he claimed to have been inspired by graphic artist José Guadalupe Posada, whose studio and medium he characterized as the antithesis to the Academic classroom and its stultifying pedagogy. González Mello, “Orozco in the United States: An Essay on the History of Ideas,” p. 23.

at the National Preparatory School Orozco initially planned a cycle based on the theme "The Gifts of Nature to Man," depicting allegorical embodiments of "Virginity," "Youth," "Grace," "Beauty," "Intelligence," etc., all but one of which he destroyed. Only *Maternity* remains, an anachronism amidst the raw execution and cynical commentary of the subsequent cycle. By contrast, its Botticellian decorum and trite symbolism testify to the path the artist refused (it is interesting to note how similar in appearance the angels who fly in to crown the central figure in *Maternity* are to the winged victory atop the Monument of Independence).

With this refusal in mind, I think we can read the prostitutes in *Catharsis* as defiled allegories, emblems of the corruptions of the new political regime of the post-revolutionary state instantiated by the Calles administration. It was Calles, the *Jefe Máximo*, who created Mexico's single-party rule, and under his direction, Mexico's ten-year civil war was converted into *La Revolución* an institutionalized myth of national unity that foreclosed further rebellion while endlessly deferring the promise of reform.³¹ Patrice Olsen argues that during the *Maximato* this consolidation of power was symbolized in the architectural improvements of the capital city.³² Undertaking the construction of new hospitals, schools, and public housing, the presidents sought to visually manifest the rhetoric of *La Revolución* on the public landscape.³³ However, political and economic power was concentrated within a small elite comprised of politicians and military caudillos as well as local businessmen who had profited from the chaos of the Revolution. These men, such as Alberto J. Pani, Aarón Sáenz, and Miguel Alemán, grew rich from the sale and development of pri-

31. Thomas Benjamin uses the term *La Revolución* to designate the mythified collective memory of Mexico's ten-year civil war. Arguing that "*La Revolución* emerged as successive official memories in a process not unlike geologic formation: an uneven sedimentation of memory, myth, and history," he traces its elaboration from the immediate post-revolutionary period through 1968 in presidential rhetoric, national history, and federally commissioned monuments. He argues that the construction of this collective myth was the outcome of an urgent need to assuage the bitter factionalism and *caudillismo* that posed a chronic threat to the fragile political unity forged by post-revolutionary regimes. "Introduction: The Revolution with a Capital Letter," *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2000, pp. 13-24.

32. Patrice Olsen, "Artifacts of Revolution: Architecture", *Society and Politics in Mexico City, 1920-1940*, Ph. D. dissertation (Pennsylvania State University, 1998).

33. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

vate real estate holdings in their capacity as governmental functionaries charged with overseeing public projects throughout Mexico City.³⁴ *Catharsis* was commissioned during the *Maximato* to commemorate the inauguration of the Palace of Fine Arts, a Porfirian project that lay fallow during the revolutionary conflict but which had been salvaged to anchor the civic renewal of the Federal District in the early 30s.³⁵ While its exterior served as a reminder of Porfirian decadence, its interior was designed to testify to the “artistic and intellectual spirit of a new generation.”³⁶ Employing indigenous building materials (regional marbles, woods, and stone, and locally produced cement and steel), its architects engaged in an aesthetic polemic in which the art deco style, Mexican artisanal labor, and national industries were increasingly employed to proselytize the progress and prosperity of the new regime.

The Palace of Fine Arts is located at the terminus of the Paseo de la Reforma, which connects the Historic Center of the city with Chapultepec Park, the former location of the Presidential Palace and the Military Academy. Situated on the Alameda Park the Palace anchors another symbolic artery, the Paseo de la Reforma a business corridor that provides a ritual procession to the Monument to the Revolution, a colossal arch constructed out of the remains of Díaz’ monument to the accomplishments of his reign (like the Palace of Fine Arts, this project—a Legislative Palace— was interrupted by the outbreak of the Revolution). The completion of the Palace of Fine Arts, Monument to the Revolution, and Paseo were all of a piece and coincided with Orozco and Rivera’s return from the US as internationally sanctioned artists. Their highly public commissions represented the first step in the official canonization of what had been an experimental and often ad-hoc movement by the newly established Institutionalized Revolutionary Party.³⁷ While each artist had left

34. Ibid., pp. 102-169.

35. The *Maximato* refers to the period from 1928-1934 during which Plutarco Elías Calles exercised behind the scenes political control over the newly created party and the presidency through elected proxies Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo Rodríguez.

36. Alfred Louis Deverdun, *The True Mexico, Mexico-Tenochtitlan* (Mexico, by the Author, 1938) cited in Olsen, p. 164.

37. For a detailed discussion of the completion of the Palace of Fine Arts after the Revolution of 1910 and the Rivera and Orozco commissions, see Mary K. Coffey, “Palacio de Bellas Artes: Consolidating a Movement,” in “The State of Culture: Institutional Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary Mexico”, Ph. D. dissertation (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1999), pp. 159-221.

Mexico despondent over their public's hostility and diminishing state support, the Palace of Fine Arts commission represented their triumphal return, offering both an opportunity to once again address a national audience. Rivera chose to resuscitate his "murdered" Rockefeller mural (albeit on a much smaller scale), while Orozco opted to condemn the bankruptcy of the very civic project he had been commissioned to ornament. This condemnation proceeded through a critique of civic allegory as handmaiden to political *caudillismo*.³⁸

As Jay Oles argues, the 30s was a dangerous decade for Mexico, having only recently been granted diplomatic recognition, the nation now faced an economic depression and foreign debt that once again threatened its sovereignty from within and without.³⁹ Consequently, Thomas Benjamin posits that the completion of the Monument was one of the first official attempts to shape collective memory by suppressing the personalism and factionalism of Mexican politics and glorifying the contributions of soldier, worker, and peasant, namely the anonymous masses mobilized by the Revolution.⁴⁰ Allegorical figure groupings representing "National Independence," "The Revolution," and the "Redemption of Peasant and Worker" flank the four corners of this colossal triumphal arch whose scale and promotion of the national-popular evoke the public art projects of Europe's fascist dictators.⁴¹ Further as representations of the masses, emblemized through the familial rhetorics of gendered allegory, these figure groupings provided a safe, even sanitized vision of mass politics, which Orozco increasingly characterized as a dangerous agent of chaos and destruction. Furthermore, the Monument's marriage of a nascent brutalism with the art deco style also paralleled Raymond Hood's architectural and decorative program for Rockefeller Center, then under construction in New York. Hood was the emblematic architect of capitalism in the 30s. And Orozco would have been familiar with his style from both the publicity over Rivera's censorship debacle, and his visit to the 1933 *Century of Progress* world's fair in Chicago, where Hood's Radio and Communication pavilion provided

38. *Caudillismo* designates the personalist form of strong-arm leadership that characterizes many Latin American political regimes.

39. Jay Oles, "Orozco at War: Context and Fragment in *Dive Bomber and Tank* (1940)," in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, pp. 186-205.

40. Benjamin, "Monument: From the Ruins of the Old Regime," in *La Revolución*, pp. 117-136.

41. This analogy proves more cogent when we recall that there was a significant fascist presence in Mexican politics during the 30s, most prominently represented by the failed presidential campaign of one-time education minister José Vasconcelos.

a sneak preview of the Manhattan communications complex.⁴² Thus, in addition to invoking fascist aesthetics, the Monument to the Revolution also conjured the corporate theater of advanced capitalism and its private interests.

Returning to Orozco's criticism of Rivera's *Allegory of California*, I think we can read it as a rejection of academicism and a refusal to rely on the conventions of the female allegory to promote a palliative vision of a future-perfect. Furthermore, it depicts an outright rejection of Rivera's socialist politics too, as working-class and peasant factions (along with their ideologues) fight with the same blind fury as the bourgeois forces of industrial capital. To this end, it must be recalled that Orozco's *Catharsis* opposes —metaphorically as well as literally— Rivera's re-painted “Rockefeller Mural” at the Palace of Fine Arts. If Rivera insisted on seeing the utopian possibilities of a socialist future enacted by a collective proletarian subject, Orozco was equally insistent on emphasizing the eternal return of man's inhumanity to man as its dystopian underside (a vision and temperament that Sergei Eisenstein characterized as Dionysian in comparison with the Apollonian quality of Rivera's indigenized

42. In his study of the *Century of Progress* world's fairs, historian Robert Rydell argues that the inter-war fairs not only mobilized prominent corporations and their executives to shore up flagging public confidence in capitalism in the midst of a devastating depression, but also that they were ideological constructs for generating public support for “mobilizing capital on a broad scale.” Corporate leaders expended vast amounts of money to underwrite the fairs while FDR used them as communications platforms to preach the virtues of his large-scale New Deal construction plans. This vision of modernizing capitalism was embodied by both the modernist architecture of the fair's buildings (which contrasted markedly with the ornamental “colonial moderne” that had prevailed in Europe's inter-war fairs) and the emphasis on consumer goods in their exhibitions, which demonstrated a shift in tactics from an earlier concern to showcase industrial production, through the machinery of industry and labor demonstrations, toward a fetishistic interest in goods displayed without reference to the human labor or working processes behind their manufacture. Finally, Rydell also describes the controversial presence of female nudity throughout the exhibits and mid-way spectacles. From Sally Rand's notorious feather dance in 1933 to Norman Bell Geddes' Crystal Gazing Palace (where a woman performed a strip-tease in a hall of mirrors that allowed viewers to see her multiplied and from all angles at once) at the 1939 New York fair, women's bodies were a prominent feature of how the fairs crafted the concept of liberation and modernity through the commodification of the feminine sex-appeal. The articulation between industrial modernity, capitalism, and female sexuality at the fairs must have made an impression on Orozco possibly shoring up his dismal view of women and public spectacle. See Robert Rydell, “Future Perfect,” in *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 115-156.

neo-classicism).⁴³ And it is in the figure of woman that we can locate their aesthetic and political divergence.⁴⁴ Rivera perpetuates the academic tradition that so dominated the cultural rhetoric of Porfirian Mexico, a legacy being revived in the renewed construction of the Palace of Fine Arts now symbolically resignified by the Calles administration to ideologize the Revolution of 1910. If the glorious female allegories of the *Porfiriato* served to sanctify the Díaz dictatorship through homilies to feminine beauty and national sovereignty, then the resurrection of its fallow projects during the *Maximato* could only auger a new era of political demagoguery. And the contemporary protests of two very different artists' collectives attest to concerns to this effect. In his critical history of art and politics at the Palace, published in con-

43. Sergei Eisenstein, "The Prometheus of Mexican Painting" (date unknown, after 1930), from "Film Essays and Lecture," reprinted in Inga Karetnikova, *Mexico According to Eisenstein* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1991), pp. 159-160, reprinted in and translated by, Azuela, González Mello, Oles, "Anthology of Critical Reception," in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States* p. 314.

44. Rivera's recycling of academic allegory is most pronounced in his earliest murals: *Creation* (1923) at the National Preparatory School, and the fresco cycle at Chapingo Agricultural School (1923-1924). In *Creation* Rivera uses female allegories to represent various arts and elements, which he equated with different *mestizo* types. At Chapingo nude women abound as allegorical embodiments of the land (exploited, enslaved, etc.). At the Secretariat of Public Education (1923-1928) he moved away from this kind of hermeticism opting for a realist aesthetic in his rendering of the political values of *Zapatismo* and his illustrations of proletarian songs and revolutionary *corridos*. However, the allegorical tendency is still visible in the decorative margins of the mural, particularly in the many lunettes devoted to Tehuanas and in the second floor frescos of the Court of Labor. The stylistic and ideological shifts evident throughout this mural cycle provide a visual chronicle of Rivera's slow adoption of both the agrarian platform of *Zapatismo* and the class politics of international socialism. The murals become more militant in their advocacy of a proletarian revolution, and simultaneous to this, we see a subordination of neoclassicism in favor of cubist-inflected "social realism". In his States-side murals, we see a similar shift. Whereas in his two early California frescos the land is represented through the female nude and labor through a monumentalized worker, in Detroit and the Rockefeller mural these gendered differences are communicated less directly (in fact one might easily read both of these murals as almost entirely masculinist in their lionization of industrial labor and their depictions of a predominantly male field of actors). For example, at the Detroit Institute of the Arts monumental nudes represent the "four races" in the register above the factory scenes, thus conforming to a gendered split between nature/culture and reproduction/production. The theme of the industrial exploitation of the land is gendered narratively as well through the vaginal-iconography of the earth's strata and the visual analogy of the fetus with a seed. In the Rockefeller mural, natural resources and women's reproductive labor are even further marginalized. Here, the trop-

junction with celebrations of its 50th anniversary, art historian Francisco Reyes Palma describes a Manifesto published by ex members of the vanguard Estridentista group in which the signers decried the resurrection of the Porfirian project as “a shameful symbol, [and] dictatorial inheritance, whose recuperation established a regressive and sumptuary cultural orientation.”⁴⁵ Similarly, in the first issue of *Frente a Frente*, a journal published by the leftist League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (LEAR), which debuted in 1934, Leopoldo Méndez decorated the frontispiece with a caricature of Carlos Chávez and Diego Rivera satirizing the national cultural enthroned at the Palace by characterizing their populist politics as hypocritical and visually articulating the newly formed PNR with Nazism.⁴⁶ These different attacks demonstrate the

ical landscape at the base of the mural once again resembles female genitalia (this time being penetrated by the phallic controls handled by the male worker at the mural's center), while brief citations of women's reproductive labor (breast feeding, pregnancy, and motherhood) are included in the famous Lenin detail. In an unpublished paper, I've argued that we can understand these invocations of a feminized land as veiled references to the natural resources of the “South” (i.e. Mexico) and that this tropes a long tradition within Mexican visual culture that we can see in everything from Porfirian art to Posada's popular graphics to contemporary tourist posters. For a discussion of the political and aesthetic development of Rivera's early murals, see Mary K. Coffey, “‘The Mexican Problem’: Nation and ‘Native’ in Post-Revolutionary Muralism and Cultural Discourse,” *Cultural Studies: A Research Annual*, vol. 5 (JAI Press, 2000), pp. 147-189.

45. Francisco Reyes Palma, “50 Años de artes plástica y política en México (1934-1984) I,” *Plural* 17-18: 200 (May 1988), p. 34.

46. As Reyes Palma describes it, Méndez' image depicted Chávez (then director of the Palace) surrounded by his orchestra—rendered as skeletons (in homage to 19th century graphic artist José Guadalupe Posada's iconography)—receiving applause for a performance of his *Proletarian Symphony* with canons arrayed behind him. In a central theater box Rivera applauds while a pair of workers are ejected from the theater by armed guards. Rivera, whose seat is decorated with dollar signs, is identified with a Trotskyite slogan while his companion holds the initials “PNR” and the Nazi emblem. Clearly Méndez's critique was aimed as much at Rivera's brand of socialism as the cultural politics of the state. The epic battle between Stalinists and Trotskyites on the cultural left was just heating up. Furthermore, throughout the early 30s Rivera had dominated public commissions and his didactic realism was emerging as the hegemonic “Mexican school of painting”, a style that increasingly marginalized artists working along different aesthetic and thematic lines. Therefore, by 1934, even though both he and Orozco were granted government commissions, Rivera was perceived by his fellow artists as the embodiment of a state artist and lampooned as such. As fellow socialists, the members of LEAR would not have shared Orozco's antipathy toward mass politics, however, Orozco did join the LEAR as part of a general anti-fascist orientation in the 1930s. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

contentious and factionalized nature of the art world in 1930s Mexico, as well as the vexed status of the new party and the “official” art attached to its civic projects. Further, they indicate that as early as 1934, artists and leftist intellectuals were concerned with the authoritarian nature of the post-revolutionary government and the ideological role of cultural populism in its ascent. These criticisms demonstrate that within the artistic milieu there was concern that the Palace represented a return to Porfirian politics. Consequently the opportunity to revive his Mexican career in the service of the Calles regime must have been bittersweet for Orozco.⁴⁷ Committed to disinterest in public art, he eschewed the parochial nationalism in Rivera’s work. For Orozco, this kind of work lent itself too easily to the corruptions of politics, as Oliverio Martínez’ sculptures on the Monument to the Revolution made clear.⁴⁸ In this context Riveresque art becomes prostituted by a state that pimps the charms of allegory in the ultimate political come-on.

In *Catharsis*, Orozco knocks the Angel of the Republic off of her column, revealing the artifice of her gilded body, and laying her out on the wreckage of Mexican modernity. An emblem of national sovereignty hawked to the highest bidder, his Angel is buoyed not by a classical column but by an arsenal of mass uprising, political mendacity, and war-machinery. And as a monumental icon for the new regime, we might read her finally as the defiled allegory of the “Permanent Revolution.”⁴⁹ Ultimately *Catharsis* is an anti-monument, a critique of the post-revolutionary project, and an indictment of sovereignty in the guise of mass politics sanctified by art’s siren song. In his review of Orozco’s

47. By all indications Orozco was eager to take the commission as he persistently sought public venues for his art. In both the content of his subsequent mural art and his public remarks, he lobbied for an art that transcended the polemics of contemporary political demagoguery on both the Left and the Right. However, he could not have been immune to the attacks against mural art by different factions in the Mexican avant-garde as he both participated in them through his many criticisms of Rivera and found himself embraced at different times by artists associated with the Contemporáneos and the LEAR.

48. Martínez’ figural sculpture groupings on the Monument could easily be blown-up, three-dimensional renderings of Rivera’s frescos at the Secretariat of Public Education. Both artists worked in a cubo-primitivist aesthetic, crafting indigenized national types from Mayan, Aztec, and Olmec sources. Each artist also dedicated his mature career to popular themes, with a particular emphasis on agrarian labor and Zapata.

49. The “Permanent Revolution” was the catch phrase of the emergent Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the political party that dominated Mexican politics at the federal and state level from the Calles administration until the 2000 presidential elections.

prints exhibited by Alma Reed in 1933, US critic Carlyle Burrows applauded what he called the artist's “implacable honesty” and drew parallels between his works on paper and his monumental frescoes, claiming “[Orozco] strives to put the bald facts of the case to you without any of the seductions of art.”⁵⁰ Burrows' praise invokes once again the specter of feminine danger only to assure us that Orozco refuses her charms, and in the process causes the “spectator physical pain.”⁵¹ With the feminine wiles of art safely in abeyance, the masculine principles of aggression and brutality “convert” us instead. Burrows could just have easily been commenting on the defiled allegory of *Catharsis*. Stripped of its ability to seduce, Orozco's art offends decorum; his allegory reveals rather than masks. Are the terms of critique misogynist? Certainly. We need only look at Frida Kahlo's art to understand just how insensitive Orozco was to the violent implications of the construction of woman in the visual discourses of Mexican nationalism and aesthetic modernism.⁵² Nonetheless, by attending to the historical and national specificity of his iconography, Orozco's critique becomes clearer. And in the process, the articulation between woman, public art, nationalist discourse, and the modern state becomes visible. Thus we can rehabilitate Orozco's critical project, as well as the politics of his dyspeptic vision, without either reifying his image of woman or turning a blind eye to how gender difference functions in this fresco.✽

50. Carlyle Burrows, review of Reed's *José Clemente Orozco*, in the *New York Herald Tribune*, cited in “The Orozco Book,” *Art Digest* 7:7 (January 1, 1933), p. 22, reprinted and translated by Azuela, González Mello, and Oles, in “Anthology of Critical Reception”, in *José Clemente Orozco in the United States*, p. 318.

51. Ibid.

52. For an important analysis of the politics of the female nude in the Mexican vanguard, see Adriana Zavala, “Constituting the Indian/Female Body in Mexican Painting, Cinema and Visual Culture, 1900-1950”, Ph. D. dissertation (Brown University, 2001).