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*Myth and Images  
in Mexican History:  
Foundations and Legitimacy*

I

IN 1990 THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT mounted an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York entitled: “Mexico: Splendours of Thirty Centuries,” which presented a spectacular range of artefacts, derived in equal measure from the three periods of Mexican history, which was to say, the Mesoamerican empires, the viceroyalty of New Spain and the Mexican Republic. In the monumental catalogue, Octavio Paz averred that despite the peculiar heterogeneity of the cultures represented in the exhibition, a perceptive eye might observe “the persistence of a single will [...] a certain continuity [...] not the continuity of style or idea, but something more profound and less definable: a sensibility.” The contemporary nation-state was thus the legitimate heir of three thousand years of history. In *Posdata* (1970), however, Paz had discerned a different kind of continuity, when he declared that the decision of Hernán Cortés to build his capital amidst the ruins of Mexico-Tenochtitlan perpetuated the dominance of the city over the national territory until the present day. What were modern presidents and Spanish viceroys but Mexica *tlatoanis* writ large? In these successive regimes there could be found the same forms of authoritarian, centralized government. To illustrate his argument, Paz cited the National Museum of Archeology, a magnificent building, in which all the variegated cultures of Mesoamerica were implicitly presented

as antecedents of the Mexica empire, the array of exhibition rooms converging on the final, central hall, where the Calendar Stone and other monuments of Mexico-Tenochtitlan were presented as symbols worthy of patriotic veneration. In effect, the museum had been designed as a secular temple, built to celebrate the foundation and authority of the Mexican state.

The recourse to historical myth and images to interpret current politics, so obvious in the writings of Octavio Paz, demonstrates the significance of *Los pinceles de la historia* (1999-2003), a set of magnificently illustrated books, which served as commentaries and catalogues of the touring exhibitions mounted by the National Museum of Art in Mexico City. Although the essays in these books begin with the Spanish Conquest and end, more or less, with the Mexican Revolution, they demonstrate that the sheer grandeur of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the dramatic narratives of its fall continued to haunt the Mexican mind until the present day. But it is equally clear that the collective memory of the city and its culture consisted of a select number of myths and historical figures. Quetzalcóatl and Cuauhtémoc—for example—came to form a cultural repertoire which demonstrated the singularity of Mexico and its radical difference from Spain or Europe. And yet Anáhuac offered few practical lessons, be it in morality or politics, to posterity. In reality, therefore, Mexican history consists of two rather than three epochs, which is to say, the viceroyalty and the republic. Moreover, whereas the Spanish Conquest entailed a radical *censura*, followed by republican liberals and Mexican nationalists, the country still has to contend with forms of religion and culture that derive in unbroken line from New Spain.

By its match of extensive commentary and illustration, *Los pinceles de la historia* raises the question of the ambiguous relation which exists between image and word, painting and writing and, furthermore, indicates the changes in that relation which have occurred over the centuries. Thus, for example, in his *Imagen de la Virgen María Madre de Dios de Guadalupe* (1648), Miguel Sánchez addressed this problem in these words: “To see a painting simple causes one to praise it; to see some writing moves one to read it, so that the painting provokes wonder, the writing understanding; the former remains in praise, the latter passes over into mysteries.”

No matter how powerful the devotion elicited by Our Lady of Guadalupe, the significance and reality of that image could only be understood by reading or hearing the “public history” of the heavenly apparitions of the Virgin Mary and the transfiguration of the flowers gathered by Juan Diego into the image

of Guadalupe. It was precisely the startling claims of the apparition narrative that accounted for the vertiginous ascent of the Mexican Virgin rather than the impact of the image itself, no matter how moving were the emotions it aroused.

The words of Sánchez enable us to distinguish between certain religious images and cycles of secular painting. What was true of the *Guadalupeana* was even truer of the images of Huitzilopochtli and other pre-Hispanic deities. By reason of the mythology which gave birth to such figures, the physical images of these gods exerted a terrifying power over the worshippers. In this sphere, there is a dialectical relation between image and myth, so that in the case of Guadalupe, a chaplain at her sanctuary, Jerónimo de Valladolid, could assert that the image speaks for itself and testifies to its miraculous origin, adding that "in her image and through her image the Sovereign Lady speaks of the miracle [...]. She herself is the writing, written in the hand and form of God himself on the membrane of our hearts." Such sentiments, however, were only possible after the publication of the apparition narrative.

Between the visual and textual utterances in the myths referring to the beginnings of Tenochtitlan, there is a similarly elastic relationship. This relationship is particularly notable in the aspects concerning omens, heroes and gods at moments of the city's foundation. In post-Conquest narratives, references can be found to the heavenly and hellish roles played in the formation of their city, their costumes, and the qualities of their leaders.

These texts, sometimes crafted as metaphorical expressions of current realities, constantly reappeared in their visual counterparts. However, painters rarely used these written texts dispassionately. The relationship was not only one of metaphoric interpretive exchange and disagreement, but one in which the painted object would be miraculously interpolated into the shifting narrative itself.

The Aztecs were a nomadic tribe that abandoned the coastal regions of what is now northwestern Mexico. The Aztec costumes (both pacific and combative) came from a different tradition to the costumes of the tribes that inhabited the central plateaus in which they settled. The differences and similarities between these previous inhabitants and the newcomers as well as the Aztecs' migratory quest itself both played a role in the published narratives of the time. These stories, just like the apparitions of Guadalupe, were subsequently disputed and reinterpreted through both word and image.

The Dominican historian fray Diego Durán described the epic march of the Aztecs. He told of a journey that was punctuated by signs of divine in-

tervention, and how on entering the Valley of Mexico their ferocity brought them such enmity that they were forced to take refuge in the swampy mudflats of the central lake. There, the priests saw an eagle with wings outstretched, perched on a cactus rooted in a rock, and with a bird in its claws, an omen devised by Huitzilopochtli to indicate that there was to be the site of their future city. It is one of the curiosities of this myth, that the captive bird was only later replaced by a snake, presumably since an imperial eagle at war with the serpent could be interpreted in Christian fashion. Both Acosta and Torquemada compared the northern wanderings of the Mexica to the Israelite journey across the desert of Sinai and identified Huitzilopochtli with Satan, who employed oracles, visions and dreams to lead the Mexica ever deeper into barbaric, blasphemous parody of the Christian religion.

Since subsequent calendrical calculations indicated that the Mexica pitched their island-home in 1325, then all doubts about the precise beginning of the Mexican nation should be removed. However, the foundation of this imperial city demanded a divine intervention that was far more dramatic and mythically appropriate than any mere omen, no matter how accurately dated. If we turn to Torquemada's accounts of Huitzilopochtli, we encounter the true foundation myth of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. It was near Tula, on Mount Coatepec, that Coatlicue, the earth goddess, became pregnant when an eagle feather fell on her bosom. Her numerous offspring led by the sudden birth of her son, Huitzilopochtli, who was born fully grown and armed, and whose first action was to slaughter all his brethren. It was at Coatepec that the Mexica first began the practice of human sacrifice and the offering of human hearts to their god. Moreover, in Mexico-Tenochtitlan the great pyramid temple which dominated the city was dedicated to Huitzilopochtli and Tláloc, the god of water, and from the summit of this new Coatepec the bodies of victims were cast down the steps to land on a great stone disc on which was carved the broken figure of Coyolxauhqui. In effect, the mythical foundation and cosmic legitimacy of the Mexican capital rested on the sudden, violent irruption of Huitzilopochtli and his voracious appetite for human hearts.

It was also in Torquemada's *Monarquía indiana* that careful readers could find several descriptions of the mysterious Quetzalcóatl, the Plumed Serpent, an ancient god of Anáhuac, whom the Franciscan identified as high priest and pontiff at Tula, where he encouraged agriculture and the arts of peace, but disapproved of warfare and human sacrifice. After quarrelling with the evil king Huemac, he fled to Cholula, where he was later to be worshipped as a god,

and thereafter travelled to the coast to encounter the sun. In a separate chapter, Torquemada asserted that in the eighth century "nations" men dressed in black gowns arrived in Pánuco from the North and travelled to Tula, where their skills in metal work and stone were highly regarded. Their leader was Quetzalcóatl, described as "of very good disposition, white and blond bearded." Finally, when Hernán Cortés arrived in Tabasco, he was greeted by ambassadors sent by Moctezuma who gave him, as Torquemada affirmed, presents appropriate for Quetzalcóatl. Moreover, the emperor admitted the Spaniards into Mexico City still under the impression that they had been sent by that god. Here was a source of the myth of an apostolic mission to the New World.

## II

Not least among the offerings of *Los pinceles de la historia* are the magnificent reproductions of several series of paintings, done on canvas or on screens (*biombos*), devoted to the battles of the Spanish Conquest. These colourful scenes, painted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, demonstrate that it was a widely held opinion that New Spain owed its foundation to an act of conquest. Indeed, every year in Mexico City the feast of San Hipólito, the day on which the Mexica capital fell to the Spaniards, was celebrated by the colonial authorities with great pomp.

Although the letters of Cortés to Carlos V did not become widely available until 1770, when Archbishop Francisco Antonio Lorenzana prepared a new edition, accounts of the Conquest could be found in Torquemada, who drew upon Francisco López de Gomara's *Historia de la Conquista de México* (1552), a work which was also plundered by Antonio de Solís y Rivadeneyra in his highly popular history of the Conquest published in 1684. What the paintings could not convey save indirectly was that Cortés had reported that once Moctezuma had welcomed him into Mexico-Tenochtitlan he explained that the Mexica were newcomers who had been led by a lord who had subsequently left them, warning them that his heirs would one day return to recover their patrimony. Thereafter, Cortés had succeeded in obtaining peaceful cession of power, a legitimate *translatio imperii*. This transaction was represented in the paintings by the scene where Moctezuma salutes or embraces Cortés, dismounting from his throne, which was left vacant as a symbol of this transfer of sovereignty.

In this letter to Carlos V, Cortés did not hesitate to compare the sovereign and fall of Mexico-Tenochtitlan to the one of Jerusalem and informed his sovereign that “Your Highness [...] may call himself once more emperor and with no less merit than that of Germany [...]” When he came to describe the conquest, Torquemada boldly defined Cortés as a leader chosen by God to liberate the peoples of Anáhuac from the abominations of idolatry and human sacrifice. That the Spaniard had been born in the same year as Martin Luther, so he misguidedly averred, signified that the conversion of the Mexican Indians was a divine recompense for the loss of Germany and other northern nations to the Catholic Church. Moreover, in that same year of 1485 the last great extension of the Templo Mayor in Mexico-Tenochtitlan had been accompanied by the slaughter of over 80 000 victims. Turning to biblical antecedents, he compared Cortés to Moses, who had led the children of Israel out of the house of bondage, which was to say, he had liberated the Indians from an Egyptian idolatry and led them into the promised land of the Christian Church. Like Moses, Cortés had not been able to talk directly to Moctezuma, but in place of a single Aaron he relied on “the Indian Marina or Malitzin” and the Spaniard Jerónimo de Aguilar. Reflecting on the fall of Mexico, Torquemada adopted an Augustinian dualism, which in itself derived from the book of the Apocalypse and defined the Mexica city and empire as a glittering, horrific embodiment of Babylon, the earthly city that was destined to be replaced by the monarchy of Christ. Indeed, the greatest act of Hernán Cortés had been to kneel in the dust before the assembled nobility of Mexico City, both Spaniards and natives, and kiss the hand of Martín de Valencia, the leader of the newly arrived band of Franciscan missionaries. Out of the Conquest and the conversion of the Indian peoples had emerged a new Church and a capital city that by 1600 could be compared to Rome, once the capital of a pagan empire and now the head of Christian kingdom. Moreover, if Mexico-Tenochtitlan had figured as another Babylon, it was now a New Jerusalem, with the fires of human sacrifice replaced by the incense and candles of over 600 masses which were daily celebrated in its array of churches.

So powerful was the exuberant providential celebration of the Spanish Conquest advanced by Torquemada that the Spaniards born in Mexico, especially the Creole clergy, readily welcomed the identification of their capital city with the New Jerusalem and took it as a demonstration that the heavenly powers took a more direct interest in their land and people. And indeed, only six years after the publication of Torquemada’s great work, a Mercedarian

professor of scriptural theology, Luis de Cisneros, published a *History of [...] the Holy Image of Our Lady of Los Remedios* (*Historia de [...] la santa imagen de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*), in which he related how the Virgin Mary had appeared to a noble Indian, Juan, to inform him of the whereabouts of her image, which had been brought over by the Spanish conquerors and lost during the flight of the *noche triste*. Here was the beginning of an entire literature devoted to holy images in New Spain and which reached an astonishing climax in Francisco de Florencia's *Zodiaco mariano* (1754), where over a hundred "miraculous images" of the Virgin were described and acclaimed. In that work, Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated as the sun among planets, and as the moon surrounded by stars, since by then the Virgin Mary in her image of Guadalupe had been proclaimed as the principal and universal patron of New Spain.

In the light of Jaime Cuadriello's brilliant essays in *Los pinceles de la historia* and elsewhere on the Virgin of Tepeyac, this is no place for any extended reflection on this subject. Instead, I offer a series of annotations based on my book, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and subsequent reflections.

1. The work of Miguel Sánchez, *Imagen de la Virgen María* (1648), rests on a complex theology of holy images, taken from St. John Damascene and on biblical typology similar to that used by Torquemada. It also draws on the work of Luis Cisneros on Our Lady of Los Remedios and Diego Murillo's treatise on Our Lady of the Pillar at Zaragoza, published in 1616.
2. Sánchez identifies the image of Guadalupe as the likeness of the woman described in chapter twelve of the Apocalypse, and invites his readers to contemplate this identity "in the image of heaven by prophecy and, in the image of earth, by miracle." It was left to José Vidal de Figueroa in a sermon preached in 1650 to invoke neo-Platonic theology and define the Guadalupe as a portrait image of the idea of God, conceived in the divine mind prior to the creation of the world.
3. Sánchez asserted that Mary was present in her sanctuaries, defending the faithful from the assaults of the devil. In 1671, Juan de San Miguel, a Jesuit, defined the image as a living sacrament and compared the transfiguration of the flowers in Juan Diego's cape into the image of Guadalupe with the transubstantiation of blood and wine into Christ's Eucharist, thereby postulating that Mary was as much present in her

image as was Christ in Mary. This was further supported by the heterodox, much cited work, *Nova Apocalipsis* of the Blessed Amadeus of Portugal, a fifteenth century Franciscan reformer, to whom the Virgin revealed that she would be present in her miraculous images until the end of the world.

4. Sánchez modelled the apparition narrative on the accounts in Cisneros and Murillo, especially the latter, since Juan Diego acts as the Santiago of Mexico, accepting a heaven-sent image from the Virgin. But Sánchez also draws on the book of Deuteronomy to present Juan Diego as another Moses. Like God in the burning bush, the Virgin appears bathed in light. Juan Diego is told to see Archbishop Zumárraga, like Moses to pharaoh. But the scene then changes to Moses on Mount Sinai and Juan Diego descends with flowers in his cape which when transfigured are both the Mexican Tablets of the Law and the Ark of the Covenant. The originality of the account lies in the choice of flowers and *agave* fibre cape, both of course symbols or representative products of Mexico which will be transfigured into a heavenly image.
5. Biblical typology has often been used as a source of metaphors designed to enhance or interpret current realities. In the book of the Apocalypse Old Testament figures were projected into the future. In the case of the apparition narrative devised by Sánchez, biblical figures and scenes are employed not as metaphors but to inspire re-enactments. Juan Diego is the Mexican Moses and Tepeyac the Mexican Sinai (and later Zion), and the *Guadalupeana* Mexican Ark of the Covenant. Personification rather than metaphor is the best figure of speech to describe the operation.

In the generation following Miguel Sánchez there was a concerted effort by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Luis Becerra Tanco, Francisco de Florencia and Antonio de Gama to strip Sánchez of his authorship of the apparition narrative and to affirm the existence of a sixteenth-century account, written in Náhuatl by Antonio Valeriano, a leading native disciple of the Franciscans at the College of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco. The chief influence here was Sigüenza y Góngora, a great savant, who sought to undermine Torquemada's authority by invoking Athanasius Kircher to support his thesis that the pre-Hispanic civilisation of Mexico derived from immigration from ancient Egypt, since the common use of hieroglyphics, not to mention pyramids, pointed to physical descent. At the same time, in 1680, he designed a wooden triumphal arch to



welcome the new Viceroy, the Marqués de la Laguna, which bore statues of the twelve Mexica monarchs, each of whom was taken to embody particular political virtues. In effect, he celebrated the “heroic [...] imperial virtues” of these rulers and expressed the hope that “on some occasion the Mexican monarchs might be reborn from the ashes to which oblivion has consigned them, so that, like Western phoenixes, they may be immortalised by fame.” By the time he wrote, various chroniclers had claimed that St. Thomas the Apostle had preached in the New World, arguing that the morality and certain beliefs of native peoples indicated that probability. Sigüenza adopted this theory but innovated by suggesting that in Mexico St. Thomas could be identified with the native god Quetzalcóatl. However, his treatise on this subject, if actually written, has never been found. It was by reason of his possession of the historical manuscripts of Fernando de Alva Ixtlixochitl, the *mestizo* collaborator of Torquemada, that Sigüenza y Góngora not merely demonstrated that Nezahualcoyotl, the celebrated philosopher king of Texcoco, had attained knowledge of one true god, but also claimed to possess Antonio Valeriano’s account in Náhuatl of the Virgin’s apparitions to Juan Diego. At all points, this creole priest sought to enhance the native foundations of his *patria*, endowing it with an Egyptian migration, an apostolic mission, and the special patronage of the Mother of God.

In the middle decades of the eighteenth century the Creole elite of Mexico was possessed of a collective euphoria, when the Virgin Mary in her Guadalupe advocacy was acclaimed principal and universal patron first of Mexico in 1737 and then of the kingdoms of New Spain, New Galicia, New Vizcaya and Guatemala. When Benedict XIV provided papal sanction for these proceedings, any number of sermons celebrated the extraordinary favours the country enjoyed. This euphoria found expression in the commissioning of a profusion of paintings of the *Guadalupana*, some of which conveyed visual equivalents of sermons preached at this time, when, for example, God the Father or God the Son were depicted, brush and palette in hand, painting the Mexican Virgin. So too, in one engraving, the very soul of the Virgin Mary was portrayed as the *Guadalupana*, the visual demonstration that the image represented the idea of Mary conceived by the Holy Trinity prior to the creation of the world. Underlying these celebrations was the conviction that the Mexican Church and by extension “America Septentrional” owed its foundation not to the Spanish Conquest nor even to the Franciscan mission, but rather to the apparition of the Virgin at Tepeyac in 1531. At this time, such a

belief was not necessarily subversive. In a prophetic sermon, preached in 1748, Francisco Javier Carranza affirmed that in the last days of the world when Anti-Christ would seize control of the Old World, the New World would be defended by "the American empress of the Angels." At that moment, the pope and the king of Spain would abandon Europe and take up residence in Mexico and there establish the capital of the last universal monarchy.

It was during the same euphoric years that learned patriots read *Idea de una nueva historia general de la América Septentrional* (1746), written by Milanese nobleman Lorenzo Boturini Benaducci, who had discovered any number of codex and manuscripts dealing with the civilisation of ancient Mexico. Here is no place to discuss the value of his research and conclusions: suffice it to say that he banished the devil from any historical role and found evidence of the presence of St. Thomas in the form of Quetzalcóatl. His work had immediate effect, as can be observed by the unpublished history of his Mexican disciple, Mariano Veytia, who equally espoused the identification of Quetzalcóatl as St. Thomas. So commonly held was this belief in an apostolic mission that a native parish priest and nobleman of Tlaxcala, Ignacio Faustino Mazihcatzin, commissioned an artist of Puebla, Juan Manuel Illanes, to paint the scene of St. Thomas preaching the gospel to the Indians of Tlaxcala. All this contributed to the growing assumption that the ancient civilisation of Anáhuac was a fitting antecedent to New Spain and as such a source of patriotic pride. The final stage in this recuperation of Anáhuac came in 1780-1781, when Francisco Javier Clavijero, an exiled Jesuit, published in Italy his *Historia antigua de México*, in which he presented a sober, neo-classical description of pre-Hispanic civilisation, stripped of an appeal to myth, be it of apostolic mission or Egyptian migration, but designed to exhibit the Mexica empire as comparable in its cultural achievements to its Old World counterparts.

By the time Clavijero published his work, Mexico had been transformed by the expulsion of the Jesuits, the creation of a New State, based on fiscal bureaucracy and a colonial army, not to mention a mining bonanza and cultural renewal. The impetus for change derived from the Bourbon monarchy which the great painter of the 1750s had been Miguel Cabrera, a native of Oaxaca; from the 1780s onwards the dominant artistic figure was Manuel Tolsá, from Valencia, an architect and sculptor. As director of the newly established Academy of San Carlos, he promoted the widespread acceptance of the neo-classic style in the arts. Equally important, he constructed the majestic palace which housed the mining college and its directorate. It was through these institu-

tions that the artistic and scientific ambitions of the Bourbon Enlightenment found expression and were to be perpetuated in the years which followed the achievement of Independence. The transformation of Mexican culture, so palpable at the official level, rarely affected the popular levels of society, and even among the elite provoked varying reactions.

The ambiguous reception of "modernity," as the new currents of thought have been called, can be observed in the reactions to the news of the French Revolution and its subsequent attack on the Catholic Church. During the 1790s preachers frequently recalled Carranza's sermon, so we are told, and expectations that the Spanish king might seek refuge in Mexico moved downwards from the clergy to the masses. When news of the Napoleonic usurpation of the Spanish throne reached Mexico, it required a *coup d'état* to maintain viceregal government, a political manoeuvre which in turn prompted Miguel Hidalgo to call out the masses of the Bajío in rebellion against the Spaniards, acting, so he alleged, in name of the "Mexican nation" so as "to recover the holy rights conceded by God to the Mexican and usurped by a few cruel conquerors." He also gave his followers an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and thus converted the Mexican Virgin into the mother and symbol of an insurgent nation. In no other Spanish colony was a holy image to play such a peculiar role.

It was left to Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, an exiled Dominican priest, to publish in London his *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España antiguamente Anáhuac* (1813), where he forcefully cited Bartolomé de las Casas on the cruelties of Spanish conquerors, only then to argue that the royalist commanders who fought the Mexican Insurgency led by Hidalgo were guilty of similar excesses. Already, in a sermon preached in 1794, Mier had boldly declared that St. Thomas the Apostle, known to the Indians as Quetzalcóatl, had preached the gospel in Anáhuac and had brought with him a cape on which the Virgin Mary had miraculously imprinted her image of Guadalupe. When the Indians fell into apostasy, the image was hidden, until its whereabouts were revealed by the Virgin to Juan Diego. It followed that in the same way that St. James founded the Spanish Church, assisted by the heaven-sent image of Our Lady of the Pillar, so equally St. Thomas had introduced the Christian religion into Mexico, since, as Mier exclaimed, "what was the religion of the Mexicans but Christianity confused by time and the equivocal nature of the hieroglyphs"? Even the sacrificial consumption of human flesh was but a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Eucharist. In 1829, in his *Carta de despedida*, Mier

pleaded that Mexico should reject the Spanish Academy's recent decision to substitute *j* for *x* in all Mexicans names. For "Mexico," as distinct from "Mejico," derived from the Indian pronunciation of "Mescico," which meant, so he argued, "where Christ is or where he is adored, so that Mexicans are the same as Christians," an argument based on the thesis that "Mexi" was the Indian pronunciation of the Hebrew "Mesias." Although Mier thus sought to undermine the significance or legitimacy of the Spanish Conquest, he did, nevertheless, reject the idea that New Spain had been a mere colony and affirmed that it had been a true kingdom endowed with its own government, university, courts and laws. For all that, he further argued that its future government had to be republican, since monarchy was the tainted fruit of European history and had no place in the New World. As much as Hidalgo and Morelos, Mier thus transmuted the myths and sentiments of Creole patriotism into an incipient Mexican nationalism.

On 28 September 1821 Agustín de Iturbide, *generalísimo* of the imperial army which had liberated Mexico from Spanish rule, rode into Mexico City, accompanied by a cavalcade of army officers and guards. The event was commemorated in any number of paintings and clearly constituted an *entrée joyeuse*, since the cavalcade rode under a triumphal arch and thereby imitated the traditional style of entry of the Spanish viceroys. That Iturbide was received by Juan O'Donojú, the last viceroy to arrive in New Spain, demonstrated that Iturbide had achieved the independence of the sovereign Mexican nation in a peaceful *translatio imperii*.

But Independence had been assured by the prior proclamation of the Plan of Iguala and the Treaty of Córdoba, signed by Iturbide and O'Donojú, in which it was agreed that "America Septentrional" should become a Mexican empire, governed by a constitutional monarchy, occupied preferably by a Bourbon prince from Spain. The very Act of Independence paid tribute to "the first chief of the imperial army" for his "superior genius" in framing these texts. In effect, Mexico had gained its Independence through the rebellion of the royalist army which had defeated the insurgents in battle and thereafter had sought to suppress their threat to Spanish rule.

If conservative and Catholic opinion welcomed Iturbide's entry into the capital so warmly, it was because of the widespread alarm caused by the liberal, anticlerical measures promulgated by the courts in Madrid which swept to power in 1820. The hope that Mexico might become a Catholic bulwark, immune from revolutionary excess, found expression in the re-publication of

Carranza's prophetic sermon in which he envisioned New Spain protected by Our Lady of Guadalupe from the assaults of Anti-Christ. It was in a sermon preached at Tepeyac in the presence of Iturbide that Julio García de Torres denounced Spain as now dominated by "the execrable maxims" of Voltaire and Rousseau and corrupted by "the pestilent fevers of the French contagion." What was the courts but "a conventicle to attack religion," which had expelled the Jesuits, closed monasteries and attacked the authority of the bishops and the Holy See? In the peaceful achievement of Mexican Independence, Torres perceived "the providential finger of the Eternal Being" and direct intercession of "his Mother in this advocacy of Guadalupe." Indeed, it was clear that God Almighty had singled out the Mexicans from among the nations, so that "America will always glory in being the chosen favourite of the Lord." Animating the sermon was the preacher's conviction that Independence afforded the best protection from the inroads of liberal doctrine and policies.

But it was in the same year of 1821 that Carlos María de Bustamante, a former insurgent lawyer, published in leaflets of 12 or 16 pages the first "letters" in the series, which, were later published in five volumes under the title *Cuadro histórico de la revolución de la América mexicana* (1823-1827). After a prefatory tribute to Servando de Mier, Bustamante moved quickly to describe the great rebellion launched by Hidalgo and continued by José María Morelos and other heroes. As much as Mier, he drew upon the chronicles of the sixteenth century, and in particular Las Casas, to compare contemporary royalist commanders to the Spanish conquerors and to evoke the shades of his heroes and anti-heroes. After describing the slaughter of Spaniards during the siege and capture of the Alhóndiga de Granaditas at Guanajuato, he invoked the shades of Cortés, Alvarado and Pizarro, whom he depicted as weeping over the corpses of their compatriots, only to be sternly reproached by the *Spirit* of America who reminded them of the massacres at Cholula and Tenochtitlan and of the murders of Moctezuma and Cuauhtémoc, vengeance for which had at last been taken. At the conclusion of his long work, which presented a gallery of patriotic heroes and scenes, which were to figure thereafter in all accounts of the Insurgency, Bustamante described Iturbide's triumphant parade through the streets of Mexico, only then to observe in his mind's eye, so he claimed, the shades of the ancient Mexica emperors rising from their tombs in Chapultepec to lead the procession. In effect, Bustamante acted as the spokesman of a numerous class of former insurgents who remained active in politics and who fervently maintained that it was Hidalgo and Morelos,

and not Iturbide, who should be regarded as the true fathers of Mexican independence. Through his *Cuadro histórico*, which was to be republished in amplified form in 1843-1846, he snatched an ideological victory out of the jaws of military defeat, even if conservative opinion still acclaimed Iturbide as the Liberator. It should be noted, however, that despite his fervent Anti-Spanish sentiments, Bustamante was an equally fervent devotee of Our Lady of Guadalupe who accepted that St. Thomas had preached the gospel in Mexico under the name of Quetzalcóatl.

Here is no place to describe the countless "revolutions" and changes in government in the decades which followed Independence. Despite the attempts of former insurgents and new liberals to seize power, the country was governed by the generals of the former royalist army, who constituted a praetorian guard endlessly fighting for power. Under the political surface, however, the structures of society and the economy remained much the same as in the late eighteenth century. The Church still occupied a central place in people's lives, and religious processions still periodically filled the streets. For foreign visitors Mexico still appeared a picturesque country, its variegated inhabitants clothed in costumes rarely to be seen in Europe. At the same time, both its ancient history and the splendour of its colonial architecture captured the attention of travellers. For the learned there was Alexander von Humboldt's *Vues des cordillères et monuments des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique* (1810), in which he presented a set of plates depicting volcanic mountains and other picturesque landscapes, combined with reproductions of Mesoamerican codex.

After Independence, any number of foreign visitors and merchants entered Mexico, among them British authors such as H.G. Ward, W. Bullock, R.W.H. Hardy and G.F. Lyons, who left valuable accounts, their books at times offering plates depicting cities and scenes of nature. Although Claudio Linati installed the first lithographic machinery in Mexico and brought out in Brussels in 1828 a series of plates depicting Mexican costumes and personages, Mexican artists were relatively slow to acquire the new techniques. Indeed, the best Mexican portraits and figures undertaken at this time employed coloured wax. In the 1830s and 1840s artists such as Pedro Gualdi, Daniel Thomas Egerton, John Phillips and Carl Nebel all produced significant collections of lithographs based on paintings or water colour sketches. The most ambitious of these works, if not the most artistically realised, was that of Carl Nebel, *Viaje pintoresco y arqueológico sobre la parte más interesante*

*de la República mexicana* (1840), which presented fifty plates with commentaries, accompanied by a commendation of Alexander von Humboldt. Here we encounter remarkably fine depictions of the Zócalo of Mexico dominated by the Cathedral and of a string of provincial cities, including Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Guadalajara and Veracruz. The scenes illustrating social types and faces in Mexico are both picturesque and sympathetic and range from *hacendados* to *rancheros* and *arrieros*, to various classes of Indians. The book concludes with visits to archeological sites, such as Xochicalco, El Tajín and La Quemada and vivid reproductions of such famous sculptural monuments as the Calendar Stone and monstrous figures such as Coatlicue. It is notable that Pedro Gualdi confined his illustrations to the city of Mexico, where he established a lithographic business and recruited Mexican disciples, chief of whom was Casimiro Castro, who in 1855-1856 took advantage of the introduction of an aerial balloon to prepare a collection of lithographs entitled *México y sus alrededores* (1856, 1864). Here, at last, were the streets of the capital, with their highly variegated population, exhibited with an assured realism, so that for the first time since the great *Plaza Mayor de México* of Cristóbal de Villalpando, the inhabitants of capital were depicted with accuracy and sympathy.

The war between Mexico and the United States appears not to have inspired much artistic activity in Mexico. By contrast, lithography was at its height in the United States in the years before the introduction of photography, so that the fortunes of the invading American forces were illustrated at every turn. In *Los pinceles de la historia* the fine paintings of James Walker depicting various battle scenes are reproduced. Another masterly series was painted or engraved by Carl Nebel to illustrate George W. Kendall's *The War between the United States and Mexico* (1851). Since by then Nebel resided in Europe, many of the scenes were imaginary or based on rough sketches. However, the last plate depicted the entrance of General Winfield Scott into the Zócalo of Mexico, a scene based on the engraving he had made for his *Viaje pintoresco* of the *Plaza Mayor*. It is striking to consider that both the Spanish and US conquests of Mexico were extensively celebrated in paintings. The analogy between the two events was not lost on contemporaries and not for nothing did the aged Carlos María Bustamante entitle his last work, which described Mexican reactions to the North American invasion, *El nuevo Bernal Díaz del Castillo o sea historia de la invasión de los angloamericanos en México* (1848).



## III

In 1863, as French troops marched on Mexico City, "the Supreme Powers of the Nation" fled northwards and on June 6 arrived at Dolores Hidalgo, where Benito Juárez visited the house of Miguel Hidalgo and decreed that henceforth a register should be kept there for visitors to sign their names. The president, his family and cabinet ministers were the first to enter their names. Thereafter, in the years which followed, both imperialists and republicans visited the house and it soon became the custom not merely to sign the register, but also to inscribe some fitting sentiment. Nothing is more surprising than the manner in which many pilgrims to this national shrine addressed Hidalgo, as if the spirit of the father of their country still dwelt in the house. On 18 July 1867, Colonel J. Serra identified himself as the commander of the firing squad which had executed Maximilian, Miramón and Mejía at Querétaro and then wrote: "You are now avenged, our country is vindicated, and independence is assured forever." By contrast, the patriotic junta of Silao, which arrived on 27 September 1870, saluted both Cuauhtémoc and Hidalgo as heroes who had given their lives to preserve "the independence and honour of Anáhuac." But there were recurring comments which identified Hidalgo as the virtual patron saint of the Mexican republic. Thus, on 26 November 1872, José Procopio Herrera wrote: "Minister of Jesus Christ, how well you imitated your master. He died on a cross to redeem us, and you in a cell to save us." Nor were members of the clergy exempt from the common devotion, since in September 1868, Juan N. Enríquez Orestes identified himself as a Mexican priest and confessed to being profoundly moved by his first visit "to his sacred place, the most pure source of our beloved independence." He saluted with a solemn vow "the most holy of all Mexican priests and the first and most enlightened of the heroes of our independence, the martyr and *cura* of Dolores, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla." In years when Mexico was engaged in a desperate war of resistance against the French invading forces which had installed Maximilian on the Mexican throne, the simple house at Dolores was converted into a national sanctuary where pilgrims entered to commune with the spirit of the father of the country.

If the neo-classical cult of republican heroes was promoted so widely throughout Spanish America in the late nineteenth century, in part it was because democratic liberalism did not possess a strong theory of either the State or the Nation. In Mexico the Liberals of the Reforma were determined



to transform society so as to incorporate the republic into the civilisation of the nineteenth century. But this entailed a violent rejection of the past, be it Anáhuac or, most obviously, New Spain. Ignacio Ramírez, the minister of Justice under Juárez, declared that Mexicans could not return to the epoch of the Aztecs, still less consider themselves Spaniards; instead: "We come from the village of Dolores. We descend from Hidalgo." In uttering the *Grito de Dolores*, Hidalgo had provided the Mexican people with a radical birthright, the inviolable duty of insurrection against domestic tyranny and foreign invasion. But the determination of radicals like Ramírez to destroy the institutions and influence of the Church threw Mexico into a bitter civil war and led directly into the French Intervention. Yet when Juárez returned to Mexico City in 1867, he and his cabinet, supported by state governors and loyal generals, installed an authoritarian regime, which controlled elections through coercion and bribery. Examining the course of events in retrospect, Justo Sierra concluded that whereas in 1861 Mexico had been threatened with dissolution, owing to the factionalism of the Liberals, by contrast 1867 was the first year in which the country had been properly governed since Independence.

In *Los pinceles de la historia* there are two paintings which exemplify the sentiments of this period. *The Tomb of Hidalgo* (1859), painted by Felipe Castro during the War of Three Years, depicts a young woman reclining on the marble tomb of Hidalgo and before her a recumbent Indian, head bowed, armed with bow and arrow. To one side, there is an unfurled flag of Independence, with the *Guadalupana* half revealed and behind some Indian relics barely visible. Although the young woman, classically attired with a republican cap was identified as the goddess Liberty, she could as easily be the liberal *patria*. The unfurled flag, the names of Hidalgo's battles inscribed on the ground, all suggest that Mexico, embodied in the prostrate Indian, no longer responded to the example of liberty provided by Hidalgo; Republican liberty languished. In contrast to the uncertain meaning of Castro's paintings, Petronilo Monroy's *Allegory of the Constitution of 1857* (1869) conveys a simple message. It depicts a handsome young woman, dressed in classical robes, with a bronze crown, a laurel in one hand and a tablet of stone inscribed with the words, "Constitution of 1857," suspended in the heavens, against a radiant blue background. More than an allegory, this is simply a symbol. But the woman, despite her classical attire, had individualized features and is recognizably Mexican in type. A skeptical reading of the painting would suggest that the angelic posture of this figure, floating free in the heavens, accurately

indicated the role of the 1857 Constitution in Mexican political life. Justo Sierra described that document as “a generous poem,” and other commentators noted that Juárez governed the country after 1867 by frequent Congressional concession of “extraordinary powers,” which effectively suspended the application of the Constitution. For all that, Monroy’s figure was popular at the time and was reproduced, albeit in a miserable copy, as the frontispiece of the last volume of *México a través de los siglos* (1884-1889).

Although Juárez suppressed all rebellions against his government with exemplary severity, he still allowed considerable liberty of expression in the press. Amusing instances of this liberty can be found in the caricatures of *Padre Cobos*, where the president is depicted as Juan Diego before a vision of the presidential chair and of various politicians scrambling into that chair. More pointed was the depiction of Juárez as Huitzilopochtli, a veritable god devouring his enemies.

The editor of *Padre Cobos* was Ireneo Paz, a young lawyer who engaged in repeated uprisings against the regime of Juárez, animated, as he later explained, by the conviction that he was the victim of tyranny and was moved by a hunger of “glory, liberty and vengeance.” In his memoirs of this period, *Algunas campanas* (1885-1886), Paz recalled his disillusionment on finding that in 1867 the Constitution was nothing more than a printed booklet “and that Juárez was determined to remain in office no matter what the cost, be it in bribes to purchase votes or in the corpses of defeated enemies.” In a striking image, he declared that Juárez and the presidential chair formed a “compact mass,” which could be dissolved only through death.

Although intellectual radicals such as Ignacio Ramírez dismissed pre-Hispanic civilisation as offering no lessons for the republic, nevertheless, the volumes of *Los pinceles de la historia* demonstrate that it was from the 1870s onwards that Mexican artists began to paint scenes of that period. It is striking that there are no less than three canvases dealing with the foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in which a few half-naked Indians observe the eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its claws. The landscapes in these paintings are left vacant, for all the world as if the event occurred in some American wilderness rather in the densely populated, intensely cultivated Valley of Mexico. For the rest, there are scenes taken from mythology, albeit of a generally peaceful character, as contrasted with the violence of the Spanish Conquest depicted by Félix Parra. It is striking, however, that the greatest artist of this period, Jose María Velasco, abstained from any portrayal of historical

figures or scenes and instead concentrated his considerable talent in the depiction, not to say, celebration, of Mexican landscape and in particular of the Valley of Mexico. Whereas an earlier generation of mainly foreign artists had fixed upon the great square and Cathedral of Mexico City, so now Velasco returned time and again to paint the mountains and sky of the Valley of Mexico. Several of the historical paintings of this epoch were destined to become familiar to generations of Mexicans owing to their reproduction as coloured plates in the early volumes of *México a través de los siglos*, a monumental work edited by Vicente Riva Palacio and printed in Barcelona. Although it is often now described as a typical work of the Porfirian regime, in fact its authors were more liberal than positivist in outlook and approach. The first volume, written by Alfredo Chavero, a noted playwright of the epoch, innovated by contrasting the Maya and Nahua civilisations, asserting that the Nahuas had migrated from the lost island of Atlántida (whence also departed the Basques), whereas the Mayas derived from a migration from Egypt. However, these speculations did not prevent Chavero from exhibiting a remarkable range of erudition, which derived from the publication of codex and sixteenth-century chronicles in earlier decades of the century. His volume was profusely illustrated by drawings based on codex, by photographs of ancient ruins and coloured plates. It was also prefaced by a bibliographic study, which relegated Torquemada to the rank of a late, secondary source. Moreover, Chavero scrutinised the identification of Quetzalcóatl with St. Thomas, so popular among earlier authors, and dismissed it as unfounded.

In the second volume of *México a través de los siglos*, Vicente Riva Palacio, a Liberal general and Economic Development minister under Porfirio Díaz, praised Bartolomé de las Casas for his defence of the Indians after the Spanish Conquest, but innovated when he praised Juan de Zumárraga, the first archbishop of Mexico and his fellow Franciscans for preaching "The liberty and good treatment of the Indians," since many Liberals had attacked the mendicants for their obscurantism in destroying native codices. In all this he confessed his debt to the works of Joaquín García Icazbalceta, who had devoted his resources to the publication of sixteenth century chronicles and other documents. A wealthy landowner and a devoted Catholic, García Icazbalceta was the finest scholar of his age in Mexico, and he succeeded in restoring the reputation of the early Franciscans, publishing a life of Zumárraga in 1881. For all that, Riva Palacio emphasized the tyrannical procedures and cruel punishments of the Inquisition in New Spain and penned a fervid denunciation of

the Society of Jesus. As with Chavero, his volume was lavishly illustrated. But in the last resort, what rendered Riva Palacio's work important was his affirmation that the mestizos of Mexico formed a new race and that this new race was the very type of "the true Mexican, the Mexican of the future." Here, in embryo, was the source of the nationalist theory that was to become dominant in the twentieth century.

The remaining volumes of this collective work dealt with the periods of Independence and the Reform and were written from an orthodox liberal viewpoint. When Justo Sierra reviewed the work in 1889, he praised the sumptuous illustrations, saluted Chavero for his "poetic" description of pre-Hispanic civilisation, and acclaimed the intellectual ambition of Riva Palacio. By contrast, he adopted a critical view of the remaining volumes, since they were all animated by the spirit of party and resurrected old passions. In this account of the Reform, José María Vigil had written a mere "political history" and acted, not as a judge but as the attorney for the prosecution. And to be sure, no criticism of the authoritarian mode of government after 1867 was allowed to disfigure the image of Juárez as an immaculate leader.

The collective work of history that best expressed the positivism of the late Porfirian regime was *Mexico. Su evolución social* (1900-1904), three monumental volumes, edited by Justo Sierra and Santiago Ballescá. Sierra contributed two thirds of the first volume, a text later republished as *Evolución política del pueblo mexicano* (1940). He also wrote the conclusion to volume three, entitled *La era actual*, which before printing he read out aloud to Porfirio Díaz in the Palacio Nacional. It was here that he declared that "the political evolution of Mexico has been sacrificed to the other phases of its social evolution," which was to say, government stability and economic progress. Since 1884, so he averred, Díaz had assumed control over all the machinery of state, invested by popular will with "a de facto lifelong magistracy." This popular submission signified that the regime could be called "a social dictatorship, a spontaneous dictatorship," eminently authoritarian yet constitutional in form. But Sierra piously concluded that "all of Mexico's social evolution will prove to have been abortive and frustrated if it does not reach its final end: liberty."

It was at the close of the Porfirian regime that the republican cult of heroes reached its conclusion with the commemoration of the birth of Benito Juárez in 1906 and the centenary celebrations of the "Grito de Dolores" in 1910. By then, a curious contrast had emerged in the public iconography of Mexico's two great presidents. Be it in photography or in painting, Juárez was always

depicted in identical fashion, dressed in black and with impassive countenance. By contrast, as late as 1889, in the pages of the last volume of *México a través de los siglos*, a photograph of Díaz shows him dressed in civilian clothes, the model of a citizen president, whereas in the first volume of *México. Su evolución social* (1900) he appears in military uniform, white-haired, his breast adorned with medals, the “Don Porfirio” of revolutionary propaganda.

Preparations for the civic canonisation of Juárez were disturbed, however, by the appearance of *El verdadero Juárez* (1904), in which Francisco Bulnes, a controversial positivist, argued that the president’s role during the French Intervention had been essentially passive and that all the danger and toil of resistance had been borne by the generals who fought the war. In particular, he drew upon a brief history of Mexico published by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, in which Juárez was condemned for his implacable persecution of his political opponents, even if he pardoned: “al enemigo de sus ideas [...] y elevó a traidores a la patria con tal de que no hubieran atacado su persona, y proscribió y persiguió tenazmente y mandó fusilar a liberales sin mancha, a patriotas esclarecidos, si habían tenido la desgracia de haberle sido adictos personalmente o de ofenderlo de algún modo.”

Like Ireneo Paz, Altamirano had turned to Porfirio Díaz, supporting his campaign for the presidency. But Bulnes also drew, consciously or not, on the caricatures of *Padre Cobos*, when he claimed that Juárez had all the aspect of “una divinidad de *teocalli*, impasible sobre la húmeda y rojiza piedra de sacrificios,” which was to say, a veritable Huitzilopochtli. Moreover, he complained that Juárez had been hailed as a political colossus, venerated as a “Zapotec Indian Buddha” whose apotheosis sprang from the residual Catholicism of the Mexican people, “which always looks for an image, a cult, a motive for social emotion.” When Bulnes was subjected to violent abuse for his criticism of the great president, he returned to the attack in his *Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma* (1905), mocking those journalists who depicted Juárez as a real democrat with the assertion that “the effective force of the Mexican Liberal party has always been the *caciques*,” the regional chieftains and state governors, who raised the *militia* forces that defeated the conservatives. He concluded that “it is a palpable fact that we have never had democracy and will never have democracy within a hundred years. It is another fact that the great enemy of Mexican democracy was Juárez from 1867 to 1872.”

It was Justo Sierra who responded to Bulnes, by framing a stirring biography of Juárez, based on his own youthful memories and the reminiscences

of older contemporaries. But he concentrated on the Reform and The Three Years War and brought his narrative to an end with the president fleeing northwards. Above all, therefore, he emphasized “the character and *unbreakable* will-power” of Liberal leaders who, although “a small minority, had to overturn the belief, the preoccupations, the habits, the superstitions, the false doctrines” inherited from the colonial period. The Reform was based on the principles of the French Revolution and the implementation of its policies, especially the separation of Church and State, which effectively transformed the country. Throughout the biography, Sierra drew attention to the Indian origin of Juárez and his inflexible will-power. Moreover, there is evidence within his work that Sierra agreed with much of what Bulnes had affirmed, since on discussing the fatal year of 1861, when the republic was threatened by anarchy, he cited Juárez as complaining to his minister of war, Ignacio Mejía, that: “In these conditions it is not possible to govern. No one obeys and no one can be obliged to obey.” By contrast, when Juárez entered the Palacio Nacional in 1867, he told him: “Now indeed you will make yourself obeyed, I promise it.” In a word, Juárez was the founder of the Mexican State and it was a State built not on the written Constitution of 1857, but on “the real Constitution” of Mexico which demanded strong presidential government. No matter how incomplete, Sierra’s biography probably ranks as the greatest literary achievement of any Mexican historian, and such was the force of its prose that it enshrined the Zapotec president as the greatest incumbent of that office and the founder of the secular Mexican State.

#### IV

To the Catholic cult of patron saints and holy images there succeeded the republican cult of Founding Fathers and their civic icons. The creole *patria* gave way to the liberal republic. In both phases of Mexican history universal ideologies were transmuted by their idiosyncratic application. Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe was promoted by the elaboration of a complex, distinctive theology which was animated by an amalgam of patriotic and religious sentiment. The liberal Reform had as its official objective the incorporation of Mexico into the civilisation of the nineteenth century. But if its leaders succeeded in ousting the Catholic Church from the public domain, they were obliged to forswear their principles and create an authoritarian state. By way

of eventual compensation there emerged the image of Juárez, the father of the second independence and an immaculate democrat. But whereas the Spanish Conquest destroyed forever the worship of Huitzilopochtli and Coatlicue, by contrast the Liberals failed to crush the Catholic Church. Indeed, the coronation of the Virgin of Tepeyac in 1895 demonstrated the resilient vitality of the Mexican Church and its patron saint.

Although Francisco Madero sought to obtain a constitutional *traslatio imperii*, like Iturbide before him, he failed. The forces which had mobilized to overthrow the Porfirian regime eventually succeeded in establishing a new revolutionary order, in which the state actively engaged in the transformation of society. To legitimise their conquest of power, a generation of political leaders patronised the arts and promoted national culture. The most obvious beneficiaries of this patronage were the famous muralists. Yet despite the modernity of their techniques and style, these painters were obliged, either by preference or by the nature of the commissions they received, to pillage and perpetuate the repertoire of patriotic images which had been slowly assembled during the nineteenth century. Hidalgo and Cuauhtémoc, Juárez and Zapata: few official artists could escape the obligation to commemorate these figures. Although the Revolution was acclaimed as the inauguration of a new epoch in Mexican history, the Constitution of 1917 was deliberately framed as an amendment of its liberal predecessor of 1857. Despite his subservience to Porfirio Díaz, Justo Sierra's works on Mexican history were republished and continued to be employed in schools. If the Revolution brought in a new pantheon of heroes, from Zapata to Carranza, the Liberal pantheon continued to be honoured. Moreover, if pre-Hispanic civilisation was increasingly incorporated into the national tradition, the grandeur of the newly excavated pyramids of Teotihuacan were resplendent proofs of the status of civilisation, for all that it remained a "classical past" rather than a living presence. By contrast, New Spain's greatest cultural achievement, the cult and image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, survived the Revolution untouched and indeed, in the banners of both Zapatistas and Cristeros, emerged as a potent presence. ❀

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