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Photographing the Nation: Early Female Photographers in Mexico 1870-1930

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Abstract

This analysis examines photographs created by three female photographers in Mexico: Alice Le Plongeon, Sara Castrejón, María Santibáñez, and how their images are reflective of the political and social-cultural environment in which they were created. These images span 1870-1930 and highlight elite conceptions of national identity, the role women played in forming this national narrative. This thesis provides a multidisciplinary approach that examines the photographic composition, the identity, and background of the photographer as well as the context in which the images were created and viewed. Additional primary documents including written publications, journals, and magazine publications have also been utilized when applicable. To contextualize these images to illustrate how they are connected to a larger narrative of self-expression and identity formation, a variety of secondary sources have been utilized. The analysis also focuses on the individual lives of each photographer, their contributions to the field, and how each woman challenged the boundaries of what was perceived to be socially acceptable.

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Image 1. Photograph of Colonel Amparo Salgado created by Sara Castrejón in 1911.¹

¹ Marta Dahó, Esther Gabara, and John Mraz. *Revolution and Ritual: The Photographs of Sara Castrejón, Graciela Iturbide, and Tatiana Parcero*, (Claremont, Ca: Scripps College, 2017), 45. Original image courtesy of the Consuelo Castrejón family.

Introduction

In 1911, Sara Castrejón took the above photograph of Colonel Amparo Salgado. Castrejón was one of only a small number of women who documented the Mexican Revolution, the first heavily photographed and filmed, altercation of the 20th century. Her images include those of women, soldiers, and families all of which were taken within a heavily volatile and dangerous atmosphere. The woman in this image achieved the rank of colonel during a period when the socially acceptable roles for women in the war were that of caretaker, cook, or companion. Such roles would keep them far away from the fighting and safely ensconced at home where they would remain until their men returned. This female fighter stretched those boundaries as a Zapatista colonel and this image captures that social conflict. Women who participated in the Revolution were represented in one of two ways: the romanticized feminine character valiantly following her man into battle or that of an overly muscularized and undesirable woman.² These representations were repeated in radio commentary, drawings in newspapers and, to some degree, in photography. Castrejón's image contains aspects of both stereotypes and forces them into an interesting juxtaposition.

Colonel Salgado is not simply following her husband as he moves from battle to battle but is actively arming herself and participating in the Revolution to such an extent that she was achieved the rank of colonel. This is a role that required that she led men into battle, men who may have been displeased with a female commander. Unlike other

² Zuzana Pick, "Reconfiguring Gender and the Representations of the Soldadera in the Mexican Revolution Film" (*Studios in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 2014), 76, 85. She would have been undesirable based on a male standard of beauty.

female colonels, Salgado is not represented in a masculine manner.³ Her hair is neatly drawn back in a fashionable style and her clothing is an attractive floor-length dress sporting ornate leaves and ribbons throughout. This outfit would certainly not have been a common sight in Revolutionary camps. The colonel also sports a very serious impression which causes the viewer to take her military position seriously. This woman was deliberately posed in this manner by either Castrejón, or by the Colonel, and displays important political choices in the creation of this image. Her dress represents her femininity while the gun belt draped across her chest and the rifle in her hand showcase her military involvement in the Revolution.

A century after the revolutionary conflict had ended, photographs are an important tool for historians examining Mexican social and cultural life. Photographs play an important role in creating popular history, as some images are more popularized than others, and can provide powerful insight into how people lived, the issues they faced, and how they wished to be represented. This was accomplished through the physical stance they took in the photographs, their facial expressions, the clothing they selected, and any props they chose to include. It is particularly important to explore the images captured by female photographers as they often place a different emphasis on what they photograph, have access to different areas of society, and in some cases have different motivations behind their photography than their male counterparts. This is particularly important in the case of Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

³ For a more masculinized photograph of a *soldadera* view: *Mexico: The Revolution and Beyond: Photographs by Agustín Víctor Casasola 1900-1940/ Edited by Pablo Ortiz Monasterior (New York, N.Y: Aperture Foundation, 2003),* 186.

century as female photographers represent a minority compared to the number of male photographers operating during the same period.

In this thesis, I will analyze the photographs, and other important primary sources, of three female photographers in historical, social, and cultural context during a pivotal period of dramatic change in Mexico. Alice Le Plongeon's photographs highlight the years of Mexico's transition into the Porfiriato in the 1870s and early 1880s, and the struggle between foreigners, the Mexican elite, and the indigenous population in Yucatán. Sara Castrejón focuses on the Mexican Revolution between 1910 and 1920 and was one of the few female photographers to capture the conflict. María Santibañez focuses on Mexico after the Revolution and the developing dialogue between modernity and tradition during the cultural renaissance of the 1920s. These photographers were impacted not only by their individuality but also by the political and social conditions in which they operated. This is an important topic to explore as there is very little published regarding female photographers in Mexico before those of the late 1930s. This analysis will demonstrate that in photographing people, these photographers were showcasing those social and political issues important during that period. For example, the 1870s focused on documenting and highlighting the desirable aspects of rural Mexico and the pre-Columbian past that could compete with Europe and improve Mexico's international image. The 1910s were focused on armed conflict and participation in the war effort while the 1920s were focused on modernity and new forms of female self-expression through the adoption of the deco body.

Historical Background: Mexico 1870-1940

The Porfiriato

The Porfirian period, also referred to as the paz Porfiriana or Porfirian peace after the dictator Porfirio Díaz, lasted from the mid-1870s until the Revolution of 1910. Díaz ran, either directly or indirectly, Mexico for over thirty years and drastically altered Mexico's identity. Díaz launched campaigns to improve Mexico's international image through involvement in foreign expositions and permanent exhibits as well as more ethically questionable methods such as bribing both the national and international press to portray Mexico in a favorable light.⁴ These efforts were very successful in encouraging both foreign investment and foreign immigration.⁵ The level of immigration did present a problem, however. With so many foreigners living in Mexico, the government had essentially created a nation within a nation that could potentially overpower the current status quo.⁶ In addition to publicly encourage immigration, custom agents along the U.S. border acted as the eyes and ears for Díaz by reporting political refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. and U.S. citizens searching for economically profitable opportunities. These custom agents were extremely valuable to Díaz and his regime.⁷ Throughout his political career, Díaz kept a watchful eye on both his political supporters and his rivals, responding quickly by either rewarding or punishing their behavior.

⁴ Richard Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market: Economic Culture in Porfirian Mexico* (University of Arizona Press, 2004), 27.

⁵ Weiner, Race, Nation, and Market, 57.

⁶ Weiner, Race, Nation, and Market, 61.

⁷ Paul J Vanderwood, *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 134.

Díaz's top-ranking military officials were extremely loyal and were often generously rewarded with political appointments, monetary subsidies, or military advancements.⁸ At the enlisted level, life was not as pleasant. Desertion rates, alcoholism, and general poor behavior occurred frequently, resulting in high turnover rates.⁹ The Porfirian Army also had a rather unfavorable reputation among Mexico's citizens and were sometimes referred to as the "Sons of Lucifer" by those living in rural northern Mexico.¹⁰ While foreign investors and high-ranking military officials enjoyed the opportunities Díaz provided them, the average Mexican citizen became increasingly less supportive of his regime as wealth inequality continued to rise. Despite this, the Díaz years were ones of relative peace. Any political challenges were quickly squashed, and negative press silenced. Those who supported him flourished in the new political climate he had created while those who challenged him faced serious repercussions.

One contributing factor to this continual poverty was the fact that Díaz preferred to choose foreign companies over domestic ones and was more apt, in general, to provide preferential treatment to foreigners anytime money was involved. If a foreigner, or foreign company, wanted to start a business or buy land they would contact a government official who would help broker a deal, whether the owner wanted to sell or not. Additionally, these individuals received favorable government concessions and benefited from tax exemptions and favorable legal treatment among other things.¹¹ Such favorable treatment was often at the expense of local companies, workers, and landowners who

⁸ Vanderwood, The Power of God Against the Guns of Government, 241.

⁹ Vanderwood, The Power of God Against the Guns of Government, 245.

¹⁰ Vanderwood, The Power of God Against the Guns of Government, 15.

¹¹ Mark Wasserman. "Foreign Investment in Mexico, 1876-1910: A Case Study of the Role of Regional Elites." (*The Americas* 1979), 4-5.

were very aware of the discriminatory practices. With such blatant favoritism resistance to the regime increases rapidly.

The only people who benefited from these relationships were those of the upperclass who still revered European language and culture. For instance, French was the preferred language of communication and education for the Mexican elite in the 19th century and they preferred French philosophical traditions to those translated into Spanish.¹² It was also believed that foreign immigrants, rather than indigenous workers, would fill the present labor shortage that faced Mexico.¹³ Official immigration was widely promoted, and financed, by Díaz's administration until the 1890s.¹⁴ It was believed that introducing foreign blood into Mexico, it would bring economic prosperity and help strengthen Mexico's position on an international level. Ironically, however, they were also concerned that this would result in foreign domination if the state was not properly involved in regulation.¹⁵ This elimination of foreign domination in Mexico would become one of the cornerstones of the Mexican Revolution.

Another major cornerstone of the Mexican Revolution was the issue of land reform. The Díaz regime continued to allow dept peonage and failed to prevent larger *haciendas* from taking land from smaller, lower-income, families. Díaz initially appeared to favor land reform however, by the late 1870s he had taken a clear stance against it.¹⁶ Under these practices larger *haciendas* stole communal land, or land in which the owners

¹² Charles A Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton University Press, 1989;1990), 180-81.

¹³ Weiner, Race, Nation, and Market, 35.

¹⁴ Weiner, Race, Nation, and Market, 41.

¹⁵ Weiner, *Race, Nation, and Market*, 49.

¹⁶ John M Hart. "Agrarian Precursors of the Mexican Revolution: The Development of an Ideology." (*The Americas* 1972), 143.

were unable to prove ownership, to increase their landholdings. This led to major discontent among rural farmers and there was growing anger among rural peasants regarding these practices. This discontent led individuals such as the Flores Magón brothers, the founders of the Mexican Liberal Party and creators of the revolutionary philosophy that influenced the slogan "land and liberty" to begin calling for a widespread uprising against the Díaz regime.¹⁷

The Revolution

The Mexican Revolution was the first political altercation of the twentieth century and lasted from roughly 1910 to 1920 with several periods of intermittent peace disrupted by various assassinations. The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 in response to Diaz's most recent staged election presidential victory and after decades of discriminatory policies.¹⁸ While Mexico, on a national level, had benefited from the outward image of solidarity and stability that Díaz had created, the average Mexican had suffered as a direct result of many of his policies. Decades of favoritism and wealth inequality had left the Mexican people tired of the Díaz regime and ready to install someone who would listen to their grievances and put their well-being above that of Mexico's foreign image and foreign control. The slogan of "Land and Liberty" became widely used as

¹⁷ Shawn England, "Magonismo, the Revolution, and the Anarchist Appropriation of an Imagined Mexican Indigenous Identity." In *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History*, (University Press of Florida, 2015), 243-244.

¹⁸ Peter V. N. Henderson, *Félix Díaz, the Porfirians, and the Mexican Revolution* (University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 29.

revolutionaries sought to reclaim the agricultural land acquired by large *haciendas* and redistribute it to those who had previously owned it.¹⁹

The Revolution consisted of a considerable number of brutal battles which were broken up by various revolutionary presidents promising new political policies. Between 1911, when Díaz fled Mexico, and the end of the Revolution in 1917, when the new constitution was signed, there were only temporary periods of peace. Each new presidential candidate would claim to institute land reform policies, remove government policies that favored foreigners, improve workers' rights and break up large haciendas. These promises would get him elected, or at least gain himself enough political and military strength to pose a threat to the current administration. He would later renege on those promises which would cause revolutionary leaders, like Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata, to rebel against him. It was a seemingly endless endeavor with revolutionary leaders constantly changing sides, an issue that became even more convoluted with foreign intervention.

The country was engulfed in war and many citizens were involved in the war effort to some extent. This included everyone from men and women to the young adolescent children who were fighting alongside their parents. During this period families were separated, crops burned, civilians and soldiers killed, birth records were lost, and thousands migrated to the United States. The official numbers recognized by Mexico place the demographic loss at close to a million people.²⁰ However, estimates differ

¹⁹ Steven W Bender, *Tierra y Libertad: Land, Liberty, and Latino Housing* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 1.

²⁰ Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution." (*Mexican Studies* 19, 2003), 371. This is said to include both deaths and those who emigrated.

greatly depending on which source is consulted. Some sources place the cost at upwards of two million people.²¹ The conflict officially ended with the creation of the 1917 constitution that addressed agrarian reform, labor rights, secured education for children under 15, prevented presidential reelections and placed limits on the power foreigners' nationals could exercise.²² While this was a step in the correct direction, there was still a great deal of political and societal unrest. Particularly concerning the regulation of the Church and how to address the Catholic political groups who had fought against the revolutionary cause.

Defining Lo Mexicano

The 1920s and 30s were a transformative period for Mexico. With the Revolution over, the country had begun to rebuild. To create a sense of national solidarity, the Mexican government began to elevate indigenous culture and its relationship to the nation-state, otherwise known as *indigenismo*. This was encouraged to such a drastic extent that people even went to the effort of creating false burial sites, like the church in northern Guerrero which claimed to house the remains of the last Aztec king, simply to be considered a part of this larger narrative.²³ This was a pervasive effort that took place across Mexico, yet also took on different forms depending on the location. While *indigenismo* had been around since the nineteenth century, it took on an entirely different

 ²¹ McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution.", 396.
 ²² 1917 Constitution of Mexico. June 7, 2010.

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2013/11/08/constitution 22.pdf.

²³ Paul Gillingham, *Cuauhtémocs Bones: Forging National Identity in Modern Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 44. In reality, these remains belonged to five separate individuals and were much more contemporary site. Gillingham, *Cuauhtémocs Bones: Forging National Identity in Modern Mexico*, 71.

and more extensive image in the 1920s through the 1940s. It led to the recruitment of muralists, such as Diego Rivera and José Orozco, the creation of new textbooks that emphasized Mexican historical themes, art campaigns, and public speeches in indigenous languages.²⁴ Emphasis was placed on all things Mexican and documenting traditions, music, recipes, and creating films that focused on the diversity and uniqueness of Mexico.

Additionally, part of the newfound responsibility of Mexican citizens was to remain healthy and ensure their children received a proper education. Children in postrevolutionary Mexico were an important part of the nationalistic movement of the government. Children, ages eight to fifteen, were encouraged to create art that reinforced government ambitions and created a unifying identity. Diego Riviera also included children in some of his murals to enable them to feel connected with the painting and understand their role in society.²⁵ In the classroom, and on school field trips, children were encouraged to create their own art. This was purely for nationalistic use however and children who did not create unique art that displayed these new Mexican ideals were penalized and asked to create a new submission that better exemplified these traits.²⁶ Government-sponsored radio broadcasts were used to educate children on personal hygiene, education, and family life.²⁷ Theater was used in a similar fashion. Puppet

²⁴ While Mexico was promoting indigenous culture, it was still a Europeanized version that favored lighterskinned individuals dressed in indigenous clothing.

²⁵ Elena Jackson Albarràn. *Seen and Heard in Mexico: Children and Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism* (Lincoln: UNP- Nebraska, 2015), 59.

²⁶ Albarran, Seen and Heard in Mexico, 89-90.

²⁷ Albarràn, Seen and Heard in Mexico, 110.

promote *indigenismo*.²⁸ Both radio and theater were used by the government to connect to children directly and bypass the family to create ordered, clean and loyal members of society who were unified under the banner of lo Mexicano. These platforms provided children with an opportunity to voice their concerns and showcase their brand of nationalism.

As a result of the Great Depression, the number of women in the 1930s who were employed dropped dramatically and heightened the demands of women. They began to demand equal opportunity to acquire land, receive better working conditions, and access to education in rural areas.²⁹ These demands were all essentially desires that had helped fuel the Revolution. Yet, policymakers did not recognize nor thought them sufficiently qualified to receive these rights and benefits. President Lázaro Cárdenas did eventually recognize some of the rights of Mexican women and they were allowed to vote in small local municipal elections. Cárdenas also appointed the first female ambassador and Mexico became the first country in the Americas to accept a female state representative.³⁰ Despite these advancements, women would have to wait over a decade before their suffrage campaigns would succeed.

Primary Sources

To support my argument, I will be primarily be utilizing 214 photographs along with supplemental written material when it is available.³¹

²⁸ Albarràn, Seen and Heard in Mexico, 133.

²⁹ Anna Macías, *Against all Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Greenwood Press, 1982), 125-127.

³⁰ Macías, Against all Odds, 140-141.

³¹ I currently have access to 214 images spanning the three women's photography careers.

For Alice Le Plongeon, I will examine the photographs she took during her stay in Latin America between 1873 and 1884. Some of these photographs were included in published literary works such as Here and there in Yucatan which includes ten images.³² Other photographs also appear in Lawrence G. Desmond's publication Yucatan Through Her Eye.³³ Additionally, one photograph was located in Tripp Evans's Romancing the Maya. These nineteen images represent the photographs to which I have access, and include images of landscapes, the local inhabitants, and Mayan ruins. I will analyze her diary and the articles she published in several journals. Her diary spans the years 1873-76 and was provided by Desmond in Yucatan Through Her Eye. This diary is an important addition as it provides a valuable first-hand account of Mexico during the late 19th century and illustrates how Alice viewed the world around her. I also examine twentyone different articles, or compilations of articles that she wrote for various journals including Proceedings, Scientific America, and The American Architect and Building *News.* The articles will represent her professional contributions to the field of archaeology.³⁴ In addition, I also have six reviews of her publications and lectures which were published in notable magazines including *The Washington Post, Scientific* American, and The American Architect and Building News.

³² Alice D Le Plongeon, *Here and there in Yucatan. Miscellanies* (No place, unknown, or undetermined: J. W. Lovell, 1889)

³³ Lawrence Gustave Desmond, *Yucatán through Her Eyes: Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, Writer & Expeditionary Photographer* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009)

³⁴ The majority of the photos that Alice took, along with all their research material are housed by the Getty Institute in Los Angeles. This collection comprises roughly 1,200 images taken by the Le Plongeons. Another trunk of photographs made it to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. There are is also an additional collection at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. It is unclear, however, how many of these photographs were taken by Alice herself. This is discussed in Desmond's book: *Yucatan through Her Eyes*

The majority of information concerning Sara Castrejón resides within Samuel Villela's publication, *Sara Castrejón: fotógrafa de la Revolución* which includes 143 of her images as well as historical information about her life and photographic career. Seventeen additional photographs were published in *Revolution and Ritual* by Scripps College in Claremont California in conjunction with a photo exhibition in 2017.³⁵ Samuel Villela also published an article in 2015 entitled *Sara Castrejón. Fotógrafa de Teloloapan* which includes interviews with Castrejón's neighbor Lucila Figueroa and her niece Consuelo Castrejón. These interviews provide insight into her personality and how people of the time viewed her work. I have a total of 160 images taken by Castrejón which span the years 1908-1958.

The majority of the information provided about María Santibáñez is in José Antonio Rodríguez's *Fotógrafas en México 1872-1960* which contains nine of her photographs.³⁶ I have been able to locate twenty-six additional photographs taken by Santibáñez online. Her work was published in magazines including *El Universal Ilustrado* and *Jueves de Excélsior*. I have been able to locate eight of her photographic publication in these magazines, two in *Jueves de Excélsior* and six in *El Universal*. These publications shed light on who the intended audience was and the possible political implications of her work. I have a total of thirty-five images taken by María Santibáñez between 1920-1926.

³⁵ Dahó, *Revolution and Ritual*, (Scripps College, 2017).

³⁶ José Antonio Rodríguez. Fotó-Grafas En México, 1872-1960 (Madrid: Turner, 2012)

Methodology

These three female photographers operated within very specific confines of Mexican social expectations and political policies unique to their given historical context. Their photographs cover sixty years and a historical timeframe that was filled with a great deal of political, social, and ideological unrest. I will argue that the photographs created by these women were impacted by the policies of the political period and reflect the social-cultural environment in which they operated. I will specifically be examining photographs that they took of individuals and if their photographs provide insight into the changing social-cultural environment or if they were photographing opposing identities. The analysis of the photos themselves involves an examination of the essential elements of photography including the desire for the photographer to bear witness to the events around them, the tendency to place subjects into categories or classifications, and the facility to employ text in conjunction with photographs. I will also be examining the photographer's frame of reference, their point of view, and their role in the construction of the image whether it be as a participant, observer, or director.

I will examine the role each photographer played in molding the images they created through the analysis of the subject's stance and whether the photographer intentionally staged her subject or if their images represent "an act of non-intervention" in which the photographer appears to be refraining from altering her subjects.³⁷ Additionally, I will analyze aspects of photographic composition including their use of dimensionality within their images and if they chose to alter the background of the image

³⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 8.

by introducing a studio curtain or backdrop. Many of these photographs utilize props and elaborate outfits to adhere to a specific set of socio-political ideals which requires additional examination in the photographs of Sara Castrejón and María Santibáñez. It is also important to acknowledge who these women were photographing, whether it be rural indigenous inhabitants, soldiers or prominent actresses, and the client's social demographic group. By analyzing all these aspects of the photograph, it will become clear that these women were attempting to adhere to very specific ideals.

In each of the three chapters that follow, I will examine the photographs created by these women and any additional primary sources relevant to them, including letters, articles, and diaries. The additional primary source materials will be examined to provide an overview of who the photographer was and how she became involved in photography. Each chapter will include a brief discussion of what the photographer's primary motivations were behind capturing these specific images, what role they played in their creation, and who was mean to view the images. The photographs will be used as the main primary source material and a historical analysis, similar to the one provided in the introduction, will accompany each section to contextualize the images.

This thesis represents unique scholarship as there have been no in-depth analyses of these photographers or any female photographers in Mexico during this period. The bulk of existing research focuses on female photographers during Mexico's reconstructive phase, post-1920, and very little attention has been paid to female photographers who operated before those of the 1930s. This thesis will therefore represent an entirely new perspective on female photography in Mexico and will add to the existing field of analyzing female societal involvement in late 19th and early 20th century Mexico. These three photographers were specifically chosen as they represent the few female photographers in Mexico during the years in question.

Historiography

Beginning in the 1980s scholars began to focus on the role of women in Mexican history. These publications cover a variety of topics from an overview of feminist history to female participation during the war and female photographers. This last topic has only been addressed partially. Much of the literature produced about female photographers in Mexico focus on select women such as Tina Modotti and Lola Álvarez Bravo. Little has been published concerning those who took photographs during the Revolution or those of the nineteenth century. There have also been no notable publications that address female photographers in general or how the political and social atmosphere of Mexico impacted their existence. The period in which these photographs were taken spans over sixty years of Mexican history and crosses three major political periods. This section deals with Mexican photographers, their images, and how their images have been interpreted.

Photography

Mexican Suite: A history of photography in Mexico was originally published by Olivier Debroise in 1994. Debroise traces the history of photography in Mexico through the nineteenth and twentieth century while highlighting all notable photographers during this period. The only women mentioned are the well-known female photographers such as Tina Modotti and Lola Álvarez Bravo. The photographs he highlights cover a wide variety of topics from the Revolution, landscapes, architecture and the ethnographic photos taken of the indigenous population. The photographers all slip into various sections based on the subject matter and period the individual was photographing. This aspect makes the publication extremely useful in identifying photographers of specific objects and creating a baseline for many of the notable photographers in Mexico. For those interested in photographers, there are also publications dedicated to one specific photographer such as the biographies discussed below regarding Tina Modotti.

Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary published by Margaret Hooks in 1993 takes a much more dramatic approach to Modotti than other biographers. While other researchers take a chronological approach to examining her life, Hooks begins with one of the most dramatic, sensationalized, and publicized moments of Modotti's life, the death of the Cuban revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella.³⁸ This is the trajectory that the remainder of the book follows as well. That Modotti's life was sensationalized and full of multiple scandals that helped shape the woman she became.

Tina Modotti: Between Art and Revolution published by Letizia Argenteri in 2003 examines how Modotti's political involvement shaped her identity while she was in Mexico and how this, in turn, impacted the photographs she took. Unlike previous publications on Tina Modotti, Argenteri places a great deal of emphasis on Modotti's voice and how her own beliefs and activities changed over the years. While the men in Modotti's life impacted what she was exposed to, Argenteri argues that this is more a result of Modotti surrounding herself with those of like minds rather than those minds being solely responsible for who she became.

³⁸ Margaret Hooks, *Tina Modotti, Photographer and Revolutionary* (San Francisco; London:Pandora, 1993), 4.

Publications that focus on the lives of specific photographers are extremely useful in establishing what their goals were in their photography. Whether it be for personal pleasure or various political aims. It is unfortunate that there are not biographies available for all the photographers in Mexico. The majority of those that have been published focus on the most well-known photographers of the 1920s and 1930 such as Tina Modotti, Edward Weston, and Agustín Casasola. Perhaps the most widely available publications concern not the individuals themselves, but specific photos and groups of images held in archives.

Mexico: The revolution and Beyond is a compellation of photographs of the Mexican Revolution from the Casasola Archive. The beginning of the work features a brief introductory essay by Hamill in which he provides historical context as to who Agustín Casasola was, what he did, and the political atmosphere of the country he grew up in. The images fit into several different categories which include the era of "Porfirian Peace", the Revolution, trade, images of modernity, images representing *indiginismo*, nightlife, justice, and famous individuals.

Las Soldaderas: women of the Mexican Revolution published by Elena Poniatowska in 2006 is a compilation of photos taken of women during the Mexican Revolution by a variety of photographers. Much of the book is centered around these photographs and relatively few literary explanations are provided. The commentary that Poniatowska does provide is centered around the difficulties faced by women during the revolution rather than the photographers themselves.

The Sovereignty of Things: Nationalism and its Materials in Mexican Photography (1920s-1940s) written by Erica Segre is an article that examines visual representation of cultural artifacts. She focuses on how artifacts, such as a water jug, contain much larger cultural significance than a simple functional item. She examines photographs of pottery taken between 1920 and 1930 during a period when photographing pottery was a common practice.³⁹

Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons by John Mraz examines photographs taken between 1910 and 1920. Rather than focusing on a specific photograph, or group of photographs, Mraz highlights the photographer themselves and the political atmosphere they exist within. Unfortunately, Mraz, like many other authors, highlights the contributions of primary male photographs. He does, however mention several female photographers in passing that are either unknown or overlooked by other researchers which allows this to be a good stepping-off point for researchers to gain information about these female photographers which they can use to dive into their research further.

Revolution and Ritual: The Photographs of Sara Castrejón, Graciela Iturbide, and Tatiana Parcero was published in conjunction with the exhibition at the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College that was held between August of 2017 to January 2018. The publication, as well as the exhibition, focused on three female photographers in Mexico from the Revolution to the present. These photographs span over a hundred years which address the changes in Mexican identity and personal expression. The collection also seeks to address the personal expressions of each photographer and their overlap between documentary photography and poetic expression.

³⁹ Erica Segre, "The Sovereignty of Things: nationalism and its Materials in Mexican Photography (1920s1940s) ("*Bulletin of Latin American Research* 29, no. 3, 2010), 316.

The Mexican Revolution/Cultural Change

As the Revolution is such an important historical setting for many of the photographs the second part of the historiography focuses on the Revolution and the resulting societal change. This section primarily focuses on the roles women held during the Revolution, how representations of the Revolution have changed as well as cultural and societal changes which took place.

Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive published by Zuzana M. Pick in 2010 is a monograph that examines the political nature of visual media in conjunction with the Mexican Revolution. Pick highlights the political implications of having foreign companies produce many of these films, the struggle of creating a larger national identity spanning economic and ethnic boundaries as well as the gender dynamics at play both during and after the Revolution.

Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico edited by Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano in 2006 is an anthology focusing on the representations of gender both during the revolution and during reconstruction. A unifying theme that is present throughout the articles is the belief that one cannot fully understand the events of the past without examining the importance and role of gender in that society. They also move away from examining middle-class educated women and highlight the lives and contributions of rural and indigenous women.

Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy published in 2009 by Stephanie J. Smith examines the influence of the revolution on patriarchal policies in the Mexican state of Yucatán. Smith examines court documents both during and after the revolution to produce a gendered class and ethnicitybased analysis of the courts. Smith uses these documents to illustrate that while under revolutionary jurisdiction women were more likely to have their accusations recognized and their preparators punished to some degree. After the Revolution had ended Smith argues that when similar cases were brought to the court women were not taken as seriously and testimony from multiple women was needed to condemn a man.

Women in the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990: creating spaces, shaping transitions published by Heather Fowler-Salamini in 1994 is a compilation of articles focused on women's experiences in rural Mexico. The articles focus on women's roles in agriculture, the revolution, and their experiences during urbanization. Salamini's goal in combining these various publications is to bring the lives of rural women into view, following their contributions as Mexico moves from an "agrarian republic to industrialized nation-state".⁴⁰ These articles are sourced from both Mexican and United States scholars resulting in a diverse array of ideas and theology.

Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition is a gender studies centered monograph written by Adriana Zavala in 2010. Zavala, who has an art history background, examines a series of artistic productions created by male artists that focus on the female body. Through this analysis, she claims that art produced in the early twentieth century was still centered around nineteenth-century ideals of gender. The only difference is that the women are shown in indigenous clothing and thus supported the nationalistic push of showcasing indigenous heritage. In terms of the ideal femininity, these artistic interpretations are centered around nationalistic belonging and differences between

⁴⁰ Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary K. Vaughan, *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850-1990: Creating Spaces, Shaping Transitions* (University of Arizona Press, 1994), xi.

sexes.⁴¹ This publication is largely an analysis of gender relations and how they related to the cultural and societal values of the early twentieth-century Mexico.

Reconfiguring Gender and the Representations of the Soldadera in the Mexican Revolution Film is an article published by Zuzana Pick in 2014. The article examines a series of films that were produced about the Mexican Revolution. Pick acknowledging the traditional interpretation of the war and how the popular narrative has favored legend over factual events. Such activity has sought to continually downgrade women's participation in the war or turn these women into a masculinized character that could fit within the gendered norms of society.⁴² Pick focuses primarily on the role of ethnicity and gender within these productions.

These publications which address the representations of women in popular culture are important to consider as they present, and often shape, how society views women. The photographs, films, and art that depicts women are often produced by men and thus showcase their internal opinions about women in the public sphere. By analyzing these productions researchers can better understand the expectations of gender and societal unrest within the community. Many of these publications go in-depth into the historical and cultural context that created many of these gender norms.

The Mexican Revolution's Wake: The Making of a Political System, 1920-1929 by Sarah Osten focuses on the development of socialist groups in Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Yucatán in the mid-1920s. Osten also attempts to dissect the newly

⁴¹ Adriana Zavala, *Becoming Modern, Becoming Tradition: Women, Gender, and Representations in Mexican Art* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 9.

⁴² Pick, "Reconfiguring Gender and the Representations of the Soldadera in the Mexican Revolution Film.", 76.

developing relationship between the post-revolutionary government and the average citizen. This involved the installation of more progressive political reforms and an attempt to address the needs of the masses.

Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960 by Thomas Rath explores the myth of Mexico "demilitarizing" after the Revolution and how the country was, and still is, impacted by military involvement in politics. Rath focuses primarily on the presidents of the 1920s as they were the ones who had to sell this idea that the government has been demilitarized to the average citizen and convince them that the fighting had stopped, and military coups were no longer a threat. He discusses how this was implemented and whether it was successful. Roth also mentions how society had begun to change after the revolution and how they viewed the demilitarization.

The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940 is an anthology compiled by Mary Vaughan and Stephen Lewis that focuses on the cultural policies implemented after the Revolution. This includes artistic endeavors, such as the large-scale murals which were painted, indigenous statues that were erected, changes in education and health reform policies. This publication also discusses how these policies were influenced by how politicians wanted Mexico to be perceived on the international stage and how many of these policies faced resistance on a local level.

Women's History

The publication *Against all Odds: the feminist movement in México to 1940* by Anna Macías examines the role that feminism played in the development of modern Mexico. While documents concerning these movements had existed for decades there had never been an endeavor to analyze them holistically. Macías is the first in her field to analyze these events and brings to light the issues that women faced in the struggle for full citizenship. This is a foundational text for the academic analysis of Mexican feminism and is a documentary history of notable female accomplishments during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Women School Teachers in the Mexican Revolution: The Story of Reyna's Braids written by Mary Vaughan in 1990 examines the incorporation of three different female schoolteachers into the school system during the revolution. Vaughan's analysis examines the difficulties faced by these individuals to gain an education, break through the glass ceiling in gaining a job, and their role as leaders of social reform. She highlights the experience of these women, their beliefs, and negotiating power that they had over the education of their students.

Fearless Women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War by Alexa Linhard Tabea in 2005 examines the role of women in the war, the violence they faced, and how their contributions were silenced both during and after the war had ended. Linhard bases this analysis on the similarities of the patriarchal structure in both Spain and Mexico, the way women's contributions were silenced, and how they were represented during and after the war. In each of these categories, Linhard argues that there is a multitude of similarities.

In Search of the Female Bandit in the Novel of the Mexican Revolution: The Case of la Pintada is an article published by Pascale Baker in 2012 out of the University of Sheffield. The article examines the lack of presence of female bandits in Mexican popular culture. She notes that many of these powerful soldaderas were shown to be tamed by men.⁴³ A belief that was certainly representative of the national imagery of *soldaderas* after the war. Baker examines several books, films, and artistic representations of bandits and soldaderas.

Picturing Soldaderas: Agency, Allegory, and Memory in Images of the 1910 Mexican Revolution by Jessica Lynn Orzulak uses images from the Revolution, and well as postwar images, of *soldaderas* to show how these images attempted to create one image of these women as symbolic figures rather than active participants. She makes the argument that *soldaderas* should be considered as any woman involved in the Revolution, not just those that chose to fight.⁴⁴ She discusses the duality of these photographs being images of specific women but then how their identity seems to disappear, and the photograph becomes an icon.

Seeing Women Photographed in Revolutionary Mexico written by Horacio Legrás in 2016 takes a very skeptical view of what photographs of women represent. He provides a history of how media and technology were viewed by Díaz and illustrates how its management begins to change in the twentieth century. He argues that while women were photographed, they are "not represented as subjects of history in their own right".⁴⁵ This specifically discusses how women who were involved in the Revolution were not recognized by the federal government until decades after the war and their contributions were mitigated.

⁴³ Pascale Baker, "In Search of the Female Bandit in the Novel of the Mexican Revolution: The Case of La Pintada." (*Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 89, no. 7, 2012), 725.

⁴⁴ Jessica Lynn Orzulak, *Picturing Soldaderas: Agency, Allegory, and Memory in Images of the 1910 Mexican Revolution* (University of California, 2014), 17.

⁴⁵ Horacio Legrás, "Seeing Women Photographed in Revolutionary Mexico." (*Discourse* 38, no. 1 (2016):
3-21), 11.

Working Women, Entrepreneurs, and the Mexican Revolution: The Coffee Culture of Córdoba, Veracruz published by Heather Fowler-Salamini in 2013 examines women's agency in the coffee industry. The years discussed in this monograph are mainly between 1900 and 1950, and the women interviewed are discussing their experiences as young women. Salamini's analysis focuses on social class conflict within the coffee industry in Veracruz and how women stretched gender norms by being involved in unions. While not directly dealing with the revolution the advancements in the labor industry that took place in Veracruz were a direct result of the Revolution's ambitions.

The article *Zapatistas en Sanborns (1914): Women at the bar* published by Andrea Noble in 1998 focuses on a photograph sourced from the Casasola Archive in Hidalgo, Mexico. The photograph known as *Zapatistas en Sanborns* depicts two women behind a bar in Mexico City serving Zapatista soldiers during their occupation of Mexico City in 1914.⁴⁶ The article itself seeks to examine the position of various individuals, particularly women, to explain the gender dynamics present.

The monograph Occupying Our Space: The Mestiza Rhetorics of Mexican Women Journalists and Activists, 1875-1942 by Christina Devereaux Ramírez examines the use of mestiza rhetoric by women journalists to argue for greater female involvement in the public sphere. Ramírez focuses primarily on individuals that she argues paved the way for future generations rather than on a linear progression. While the title suggests that the work primarily focuses on the contributions of female journalists from 1875 to 1942

⁴⁶ Andrea Noble, "Zapatistas En Sanborns (1914): Women at the Bar." (*History of Photography* 22, no. 4, 1998), 366.

Ramírez also highlights the development of *mestiza* identity and traces it back to the arrival of the *conquistadors*.

The Women's Revolution in Mexico, 1910-1953 is an anthology compiled and published by Stephanie Mitchell in late 2006. Mitchell and her co-authors examine the feminist movement in Mexico as well as the women who opposed such beliefs. While the articles focus on diverse topics such as female revolutionary veterans, the Catholic Church, and temperance movements they all center around the idea of citizenship and suffrage.

The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis written by Maria Herrera-Sobek in 1990 takes a feminist analysis to examine Mexican *corridos*, also known as ballads or songs. While previous researchers have published about the creation and use of *corridos* in Mexican society, Herrera-Sobek is the first to examine how women are represented within these songs. Through her analysis, she notes that women's presence within these songs can be classified into one of the flowing five categories and she includes several *corridos* in each section to illustrate her argument.

Deco Body, Deco City: Female Spectacle and Modernity in Mexico City 1900-1939 by Ageeth Sluis focus on the movement of women to larger cities and towns in the early 20th century. She ties their changing identity and gender roles to deco art and theater in Mexico City and the changing city skyline. She discusses how the idea of the deco body often clashed with the heavily popularized indigenous policies of post-revolutionary Mexico and tied their bodies to the cityscape rather than the romanticized rural countryside. The most heavily studied aspects of women in Mexico during the early twentieth century were from a social and gender perspective. These analyzes utilize a diverse array of methodologies. Particularly aspects of popular culture. However, there is certainly room for additional research. Several of the previously mentioned publications also touch on the issue of ethnicity and how perceptions of race began to change after the Revolution. Beginning in the 1920s, the federal government chose to unify the country by promoting indigenous culture. These nationalistic endeavors included giving bilingual speeches, promoting indigenous history in classrooms, and erecting statues of indigenous figures. Representations of gender are also often examined in conjunction with ethnicity. These new policies would have undoubtedly impacted the photography of that era.

Conclusion

In my analysis, I examine the photographs of these three female artists, in conjunction with their literary productions, and the political and cultural history of Mexico to illustrate that their work reflected and resonated with major political and cultural issues that surrounded them. Within this, I will argue that these women's photographs are representative of, and are formed by, the prominent cultural policies of the period. Such an examination is valuable as it will contribute to women's history as well as the history of photography in Mexico. This will be accomplished by using a political and social-cultural method of analyzing photographs. This is a unique method that is normally attributed to more recent photographic works and does not normally highlight the female perspective. Many of the women mentioned are also normally overlooked when discussing photography in Mexico during this period.

These three photographers will fall into three distinct political categories. The first chapter will focus on Alice Le Plongeon, the beginning of the Díaz administration, and how she operated within the political policies of his transition to power. The second chapter will focus on Sara Castrejón and the turbulent years of the Revolution. The final chapter will focus on María Santibañez and the reconstructive phase of Mexican history during the birth of the Cultural Renaissance.

Chapter I. Alice Le Plongeon

Alice Le Plongeon was an avid writer, photographer, and archeologist who wrote extensively about the lives of Yucatan Mayans during the late 19th century. Le Plongeon helped excavate Mayan ruins, leading to the discovery of some of Mexico's national treasures, and presented an elitist perspective of Mexican life to her U.S. audience. Le Plongeon lived in Mexico from 1873-84, traveling throughout the country and its neighboring island communities. Le Plongeon's photographs capture indigenous lifeways operating in tandem with the nation's efforts of modernization as well as the wealth disparity that was present in rural Mexico. These images comment on traditional gender roles, perceptions of individuality, and the formation of a new Mexican identity centered around mestizaje. The portraits Le Plongeon created highlight the important influence of foreigners, and French culture, in creating an upperclass Mexican identity while her images of cityscapes and archaeological sites document government policies towards promoting Mexico's rich history. Her writing touch on topics such as local religious practices, gender inequality, and indigenous persecution by the local government. Le Plongeon's photographs and written publications presented an elitist, European vision of 19th century Mexico that adhered precisely to Porfirian policy.

The Road to Mexico

Alice Dixon was born to a middle-class British family in 1851 and learned photography at an early age from her father who ran a small family photography business

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in London.⁴⁷ She had aspirations to become a writer, however, she had no aristocratic ties, and this would have made becoming a well-known author in England a dismal possibility. At age nineteen she met Augustus Le Plongeon, an avid traveler, medical practitioner, and archeologist who was twenty-five years her senior. Augustus was preparing for an archaeological excavation in Mexico and traveled to London in search of information on Mesoamerica. This caught her interest and she decided to travel to New York, and then proceed to Mexico, with him.⁴⁸ This was highly scandalous as Alice had decided to travel to the U.S. as an unmarried woman, and had also decided to accompany him to Mexico, a country whose questionable reputation would have likely had her family worried about her welfare. She was embarking to a country that was still attempting to establish, at least an outward image of peace.

After marrying Augustus in New York, she traveled to Mexico in 1873 and lived in Belize and the Yucatán region until 1884.⁴⁹ During these eleven years, she traveled throughout Yucatán, explored Isla Mujeres, Cozumel Island, and Mexico City.⁵⁰ During their travels, the Le Plongeons were dedicated to documenting the Yucatán Peninsula and were the first photographers to document Mayan ruins using hundreds of small glass plates to create 3-D images of the buildings.⁵¹ They were thus able to document a great number of Mayan ruins that no longer exist or have fallen victim to erosion and

⁴⁷ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, 7, 10. Her father attempted to keep up with the latest photographic technology and would often photograph museum objects and historic buildings. The family business was run by several of the Dixon children including Alice. The business was taken over by one of the sons, Thomas James, after Henry's death.

⁴⁸ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 1-3;7

⁴⁹ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, 23. There were several discrepancies in their marriage certificate, their ages were modified and their address shorted, or omitted, and their ages changed from 19 to 20 and from 45 to 44.

⁵⁰ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 2.

⁵¹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 2.

vandalism. To pursue such a large undertaking, the Le Plongeons decided to utilize a large number of "smaller stereo glass plate negatives".⁵² They carried with them two Scovill Manufacturing Company view cameras and several different lenses. The equipment was stored in a specially made box that could double as a dark room.⁵³ A contraption that occasionally brought them grief while traveling over rough terrain.

Le Plongeon and her husband largely operated as a team with Le Plongeon often responsible for developing the negatives while her husband took the camera to precarious locations.⁵⁴ However, Le Plongeon had been exposed to photography from a very young age in her father's studio and she played an important role in photographing 19th century Yucatán, even taking some of the photographs herself. Due to her upbringing, and her father's experience documenting artifacts in London Museums and photographing workers for the Holborn project, she played an integral role in deciding how they photographed Mayan workers and the artifacts they unearthed.⁵⁵ In the majority of previous publications regarding their explorations, Le Plongeon is mentioned only in passing and mainly as her husband's assistant. While her husband also had a background in photography, Le Plongeon likely had more influence on how their photographs were taken. The documentary style they chose was mainly influenced by the fact that the ruins were degrading, and they wanted to capture as much as possible.⁵⁶ While there are nearly 2,400 photographs taken by the couple during the eleven years they spent in Latin

⁵² Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 26.

⁵³Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 27-28.

⁵⁴ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 246.

⁵⁵ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 10.

⁵⁶ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, 13. This represented the largest documentary endeavor of Mayan ruins since John L. Stephens' publication *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*.

America, her husband appears to have taken most of them.⁵⁷ However, there are some which have been specifically identified as being produced by Le Plongeon, largely based on the subject matter. These images include portraits of her husband and women Le Plongeon met while in Mexico, cityscape photography during her travels throughout islands communities and the Yucatán peninsula as well as photographs of their archaeological excavations.

The Role of Foreigners in Porfirian Mexico: The Le Plongeons

Le Plongeon captured images of rural Mexico during a period of consolidation, globalization, and nationalism known as the Porfirian period, lasting from 1876-1910. The goal of the Díaz regime was to create a national identity through economic organization.⁵⁸ Díaz launched campaigns to boost Mexico's international image which included traditional methods such as involvement in foreign expositions as well as more ethically questionable methods such as bribing the national and international press to publish favorable images of Mexico.⁵⁹ They, the elites and specifically Díaz himself believed that they could change any perception of Mexico, for a price.⁶⁰ Everything that the Díaz regime produced, from architectural traditions to the orchestration of public speeches, was used to create an image of modern Mexico centered around progress, science, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle.⁶¹ Emphasis was placed on modernization in the form of increased foreign investment, creation of new infrastructure, increased exports,

⁵⁷ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 118.

⁵⁹ Weiner, Race, Nation, and Market, 27.

⁶⁰ Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 58.

⁶¹ Tenorio-Trillo, Mexico at the World's Fairs, 47.

and the revitalization of sectors such as the mining industry.⁶² This led to an increased number of Europeans either migrating to Mexico or investing heavily in its infrastructure. Mexico, in the eyes of the average citizen, had begun selling itself to the highest bidder.

The push for foreign immigration began in the 1880s with tax exemptions being the primary incentives put forth by the Mexican government. Mexico primarily wanted Caucasian immigrants as it was argued that those of a darker complexion would only further contribute to the nation's problems as they did not belong to the class of industrialists and thus did not serve the nation.⁶³ The settlement of foreigners was thought to improve Mexico by modifying its "racial mixture". Porfirio Díaz and his cronies believed that introducing foreign blood into Mexico it would bring economic prosperity and help strengthen Mexico's position on an international level by transforming the indigenous population into one of mixed heritage. Mexican elites considered the indigenous population to be backward thinking however, they believed that this was a result of a degraded culture. An aspect that could be modified to conform with the national image of productive members of society, primarily through their education.⁶⁴ Aspects of these indigenous education projects can be seen in some of Le Plongeon's photographs where she documented a school for young women.

⁶² Weiner, Race Nation and Market, 15.

⁶³ Tenorio-Trillo, Mexico at the World's Fairs, 35-36.

⁶⁴ Christina Bueno. The Pursuit of Ruins, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 53-54.



Image 2. Photograph of a school room in Huctun, Yucatán. Image by Alice Le Plongeon 1874.65

Image 2 is of a schoolroom of young women in Hoctun, Yucatán in 1874. In this photograph, there are at least three large tables with girls in the latter years of primary education. A handful of girls can be seen with writing instruments in their hands, presumably practicing their penmanship. An older gentleman in a white suit can be seen on the left-hand side of the image with his arms crossed starring over the children intently as they work. It is unclear exactly who this individual is, however, he was likely the instructor or a government official overseeing these girl's education. Education was an extremely important aspect of political policies dealing with women and the indigenous population during the latter half of the 19th century. This image illustrates the importance

⁶⁵ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, 51. Original image held by The Getty Research Institute.

of education, even if it was sporadic and the emphasis on teaching young women domestic skills. In reality, there were few such schools like this in operation in Mexico with rural education projects beginning after the Mexican Revolution. Upon Alice's visit to the school, she wrote that the schoolroom was "occupied by girls ranging from 6 to 18 years of age. Lovable-looking girls clothed with the greatest simplicity. They were employed in fancy needle work".⁶⁶ The placement of these girls may have been entirely for the benefit of Le Plongeon or the government official.

After the Casta Wars of the 1850s, politicians began to argue that assimilation was the best course of action. Rather than having a population of *indios* Mexico would have one of *mestizos*, a more comfortable alternative to their way of thinking. Without this assimilation, they argued that *indios* would never reach the same level of enlightenment and civilized nature that the upper classes of Mexico supposedly possessed.⁶⁷ Educating the indigenous population involved not only teaching them Spanish but also instilling them with the cultural practices, consumption patterns, and hygienic habits that Liberals envisioned as appropriate bourgeois behaviors.⁶⁸ Throughout Alice's travels in Yucatán, she noted that the dire economic circumstances that many Mayans lived in were a result of centuries of oppression and that this led them to rebel in the late 1840s.⁶⁹ While in Colotmul, Alice described a man who "bore many unpleasant marks of the service he had rendered in the war of races". ⁷⁰ She recognized

⁶⁶ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 50.

⁶⁷ Vanderwood, The Power of God Against the Guns of Government, 138.

⁶⁸ Weiner, Race Nation and Market, 40.

⁶⁹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 261.

⁷⁰ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 58.

that many of these individuals had been mistreated however, she did not directly do anything to improve their situation beyond vaccinations.

As mentioned previously, Le Plongeon was born to a middle-class English family and then later immigrated to Mexico for research purposes, and to fulfill her curiosity. While her status as a woman would have automatically placed her in a lower position of lesser social-economic importance in the eyes of the Mexican elite during this period, her position as a foreigner would have been of great interest. She would have been considered, regardless of her actual financial situation, as middle class if not upper class automatically. This would have been further fueled by her knowledge of the French language and her ability to communicate with Mexicans in both Spanish and French, allowing her to enter elite circles with relative ease. Furthermore, her husband was born in France, thus making him the pinnacle of everything that the Mexican elite viewed as desirable.⁷¹ According to the elitist ideals of what was socially desirable, in terms of social class, ethnicity, and demeanor, Le Plongeon fulfilled every aspect. They also contributed to the Díaz's administration's goal of promoting an elitist interpretation of the Mayan by documenting the large ruins, discovering large artifacts, and writing about the glorious history of the Mayan past which likewise make their continued operation in Mexico favorable.

The influence of foreignism in Mexico can be seen in the portrait Le Plongeon created of her husband in 1871. Upon first glance, this appears to be an image of a well-kept middle-aged man. However, on closer examination, he appears as a very rugged

⁷¹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 13.

individual. He is dressed in an ill-fitted suit, or perhaps a jacket, that appears to have been worn extensively. His eyes likewise illustrate a man who has worked all his life with clear wrinkling beneath the eyes.

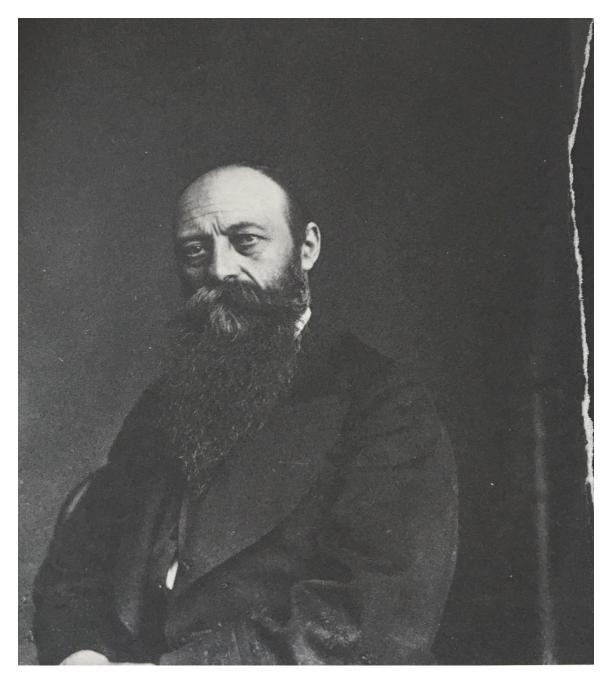


Image 3. Photograph of Augustus Le Plongeon., Image captured by Alice Le Plongeon 1871.72

⁷² Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 15. Original image held by The Getty Research Institute.

His gaze is penetrating yet is also welcoming. One of the buttons on his waistcoat is unbuttoned suggesting that sitting for this photograph was a last-minute decision and that Augustus was unconcerned with his outward appearance. The latter would coincide with Alice's assessment that he viewed certain activities, such as writing, as a waste of time. While his outward appearance is not as refined as the Mexican elite may expect from a Frenchmen, his heritage and role in preserving Mexico's past as well as his efforts to vaccinate rural citizens in Mexico would have still placed him in an elitist class automatically. Alice's image of him represents an elitist perspective of what Mexico desired, both politically and culturally, during this period.

Gender and Society

After the Mexican war for independence, it became apparent that widows were unable to support themselves. Up until this point the primary goal of women's schooling had been to make women better wives, artisans, and mothers.⁷³ The limited amount of training they had meant that if they could not find work in a handful of trades they would likely turn to prostitution as a means of survival.⁷⁴ These movements were led mainly by middle-class educated women who pushed for better education, decent wages, major reform of the civil code, and an equal sexual standard. Throughout her career as an archaeologist and writer, Le Plongeon was always careful to only acknowledge the contributions of her husband and put herself in the background while in public.⁷⁵ This

⁷³ Macías, *Against all Odds*, 6. Women were also instructed in how to become primary school instructors as a way to prevent men from taking advantage of young female students.

⁷⁴ Macías, *Against all Odds*, 8. México in 1907 had twice as many registered prostitutes as Paris with 30% of mothers being single parents and 80% of the children being born out of wedlock. Macías, *Against all Odds*, 13.

⁷⁵ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 25.

was very evident in her writings about their expeditions as she only ever mentions her husband, or "the Doctor" and very rarely mentions herself. However, she was certainly well versed in Mayan history upon her arrival in Mexico and, as evident in her diary, she was fluent in not only English and French but also Spanish and Yucatec Mavan.⁷⁶ This tendency for Le Plongeon to only mention her husband's exploits was likely a result of the social and political atmosphere she lived within. For instance, the Le Plongeon's work in Mexico had caught the attention of Porfirio Díaz, and her husband was invited to meet the president on their tour of Mexico City in 1880. However, although Le Plongeon should have realistically been included in this meeting she was not.⁷⁷ Furthermore, when the Le Plongeons were searching for journals to schedule publications while in New York before their return to Latin America in 1873, her husband received promises regarding the publication of their discoveries while Le Plongeon was told they would examine her work but there was no guarantee of publication.⁷⁸ Due to the gender expectations of the period it much easier for Le Plongeon to discuss their discoveries in terms of her husband's contributions rather than her own.

During Alice's travels, she occasionally created images of young women. Image 4 is of a Carib woman from one of the island communities off the coast of Mexico. While the individual in the first portrait is looking directly at the camera, this woman is looking off to the side of the camera and is not making direct eye contact with the camera which

⁷⁶ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, XXV. She had read *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* by John L. Stephen before arriving in Mexico and even responded to his argument that the current Maya in the Yucatán held no traces of ancient customs, something she argued, based on her journey, was completely incorrect. Desmond, 20;229.

⁷⁷ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 235.

⁷⁸ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 28.

suggests that, while Alice likely asked the woman to look at the camera, the woman felt slightly uncomfortable. The woman is shown wearing a light-colored dress, a shell necklace, and an ornate pattered headpiece. The dress is not tailored with one side falling off her shoulder. The way the clothing lays provides the viewer with the perception that this was a heavily constructed image where the subject was most informed that she should wear something visually pleasing, even if it does not fit in a flattering way. Based on these aspects, one can assume that this woman felt pressured to allow her photograph to be taken. This is exacerbated by the fact that this is a woman of color which would have provided her less opportunity and authority in Porfirian Mexico.



Image 4. Photograph of a Carib Woman. Image captured by Alice Le Plongeon between 1876-77. Image originally published 1886.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Alice Le Plongeon, *Here and there in Yucatan, (New York: J.W. Lovell. 1889), 71.*

The final portrait is of another woman wearing a traditional Yucatecan huipil which Alice entitled "Mayan girl" at the bottom of the photograph.⁸⁰ The woman is resting her elbow against a pillar and is wearing a white dress, with ornate embroidery around the neck and along the bottom of the dress and skirt. She is also wearing several long necklaces, earrings and a shawl draped across her shoulders. The photo itself appears to have been taken in the residence of a financially successful individual as an ornate carpet, or rug, can be seen at the bottom of the photograph. Le Plongeon likely took this photograph during one of the evenings she and her husband were invited to dine with prominent village officials.

It is unclear exactly where this photograph was taken however, it is dated 1875 and was likely captured on their way to Chichén Itzá.⁸¹ Unlike Image 4, in creating this image Le Plongeon is less likely to have orchestrated what the woman wore as her diary during this period mentions several festivals and holidays. Both of these portraits capture two very specific, and unique, cultural traditions that her western audience would have been unfamiliar with. Within her diary entries, Le Plongeon makes it clear that she was aware of the different social classes in Mexico and how they presented themselves. On one occasion, in early February of 1875, Le Plongeon described a group of women during "carnaval".

A third group came to visit us, of young ladies, dresses as Mestizas. On their entrance they appeared to us, as a shower of beautiful flowers. A charming group for any fairy scene. What an exquisite novelty it would be for a ballet. The girls of Tizimin are very pretty. Today unusually so. The dress became them and shewed off their fine forms to advantage. The abundance of jewels and many colored ribbons, were very effective.

⁸⁰ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 61.

⁸¹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 58-84



Nor had they forgotten their snow white powder and a little carmine for the cheeks and lips. A jaunty hat completed this costume, proper to Yucatan, and seen nowhere else.⁸²

Image 5. Photograph of a Mayan Girl. Image captured by Alice Le Plongeon, 1875.83

⁸² Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 62.

⁸³ Desmond, *Yucatán Through Her Eyes*, 61. Original image held by The Getty Research Institute.

The Indigenous Population, Archaeology and Porfirian Cultural Policy

Residents of Mexico's countryside in the mid 19th century often thought of themselves as "members of a village or town rather than citizens of a nation".⁸⁴ Díaz sought to create a form of unity between these groups to prevent divisions. A key part of this national unity Díaz was attempting to create was based on a shared national past that would provide the inhabitants, both *indio, mestizo,* and Spanish with a shared heritage and origin.⁸⁵ This presented a great deal of difficulty. If they chose to focus on a shared past during the colonial period, they ran the risk of illustrating that their history began with European intervention and that they had no history of their own. If they chose to focus on their pre-Columbian past, they ran the risk of appearing as a backward nation stuck in the past.⁸⁶ Eventually, the elite of Mexico decided that focusing on the pre-Columbian period was the best option. By focusing on antiquities Mexico could show the world that it had a rich past that could place them on equal footing with major European powers.⁸⁷ This led to the need for the federal government to take control of the ruins.⁸⁸ Certain ruins were highlighted over others, such as those of Díaz's home state of Oaxaca. This helped legitimized the Mexican state by providing it with a history that could be traced back to the Aztec empire.⁸⁹ Objects of particular interest included large pre-Columbian ruins and artifacts.

⁸⁴ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*, 6.

⁸⁵ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*,6.

⁸⁶ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*,7.

⁸⁷ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*, 7.

⁸⁸ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*, 8.

⁸⁹ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*, 42.

Antiquities, in the 19th century, had become objects of fascination and status symbols and a sign of western superiority and sophistication. Pre-Hispanic antiquities quickly became one of the newest objects of fascination for these collectors.⁹⁰ Foreigners were extremely fascinated by the Mayans and even visited the Yucatán peninsula during the middle of the Caste War, as is evident by the presence of Le Plongeon and her husband. Foreigners considered the Maya to be more "Western" than other Mesoamerican cultures and more worthy of exploring.⁹¹ Many foreigners traveling through Mexico claimed that they were preserving artifacts and protecting them from Mexicans who they did not think would properly care for them.⁹² The Diaz regime sought to put an end to the exportation of artifacts by taking control of these monuments and turning them into objects of the nation. These laws only applied to the "ancient Indians" and their artifacts. No concern was paid to contemporary groups or any research that was conducted concerning contemporary groups, even if it involved human remains.⁹³ Essentially, as long as Le Plongeon was dealing with a contemporary group, she could conduct any type of research she wished and take any objects she fancied without facing any serious repercussions or regulations from the federal government.

Le Plongeon spent seven months in these island communities between November 1876 and June 1877. The photographs she took while there are primarily street scenes and images of boats, or boatyards, with individuals scattered throughout the foreground and background in each image. These individuals appear to be going about their daily

⁹⁰ Bueno, The Pursuit of Ruins, 21,24.

⁹¹ Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins*, 35.

⁹² Bueno, The Pursuit of Ruins, 29.

⁹³ Bueno, The Pursuit of Ruins, 17, 125.

lives with relatively little attention being paid to the camera. While there are individuals in each image, the primary focus of the image itself appears to be centered on capturing the essence of the community to showcase its uniqueness to a Western audience.



Image 6. "Street in Island Mugeres" Image captured by Alice Le Plongeon 1876-77. Originally Published 1886.94

Image 6, entitled "Street in Island Mugeres", contains at least eight individuals however, the eye of the viewer is drawn towards to uniqueness of the buildings to the right and how the trees appear to be in designated locations throughout the town.⁹⁵ Collecting images, or objects, from these communities meant Le Plongeon was exempt from many of the laws regarding foreign exploration and provided her more freedom than

⁹⁴ Le Plongeon, *Here and there in Yucatan*, 5.

⁹⁵ Le Plongeon, *Here and there in Yucatan*, 5.

she was able to exercise in their archaeological excavations. This image was published in her book *Here and there in Yucatan* and the nature of the reproduction of this image makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish whether this was a constructed image or not. The group of individuals, on the right, appear to be facing the camera suggesting that they were aware the photograph was being taken and were either watching what Alice was doing or were actively participating in the creation of the image. In either case, the assumption can be made that Le Plongeon exercised a great deal of control in the photographs she took by directing her participants.

Throughout Le Plongeon's travels, her role as a foreigner allowed her to exercise a great deal of control over who, and what, she photographed. Due to this level of social influence, Le Plongeon and her husband were also able to photograph and excavate Mayan ruins. Le Plongeon's images capture archaeological discoveries and excavations such as the discovery of the chacmool in Chichen Itza in 1875.⁹⁶ In the photograph, her husband is leaning against the statue with several workers surrounding him and wooden scaffolding can be seen in the background. The discovery of the chocmool was extremely important not only to the Le Plongeons but to Mexico as well. Within her diary, Le Plongeon documents the statue's discovery and the extreme difficulty they had in removing the statue from its original resting place. ⁹⁷ She was extremely detailed in her account of the number of men it took to remove the statue, the various contraptions they used to move the heavy structure, and their personal feelings over how long it took to remove.

⁹⁶ Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915*, (University of Texas Press, Austin, 2004), 133.

⁹⁷ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 131-133.

The Chacmool statue that they had discovered was taken by the Yucatecan government who temporarily held it before it was confiscated by Díaz and taken to Mexico City. Augustus had originally contacted the Mexican government, then President Lerdo de Tejada, when the Yucatecans had confiscated it in an attempt to protect it and return it to the Le Plongeons. However, this only succeeded in illustrating the importance of the statue and Lerdo de Tejada refused to allow it to be exported.



*Image 7. Augustus Le Plongeon posing with the chacmool, Chichen Itza, 1875. Image by Alice Le Plongeon.*⁹⁸

When Díaz became president, he ordered that it be moved from Yucatán to Mexico City. This greatly angered Le Plongeon because of the time and effort they had put into its excavation.⁹⁹ They, on several occasions, wrote to the Mexican government in an attempt

⁹⁸ Evans, Romancing the Maya, 133.

⁹⁹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 222, 224.

to receive monetary compensation for their discovery.¹⁰⁰ Díaz, while not interested in returning the statue or compensating them monetarily, was interested in meeting them directly which Le Plongeon advised would likely help their other archeological projects. While Le Plongeon's overall experience in Mexico City was favorable, the inability to contribute to such an important meeting would have been aggravating. Le Plongeon and her husband also had some interesting archaeological arguments that caused their work to not be valued by the international archeological community.

Their belief that the Mayans created the Egyptian civilization was also a course of scrutiny for them and this likely led to their exploits receiving little attention. Le Plongeon and her husband, however, were not the first to theorize that the Mayans and ancient Egyptians had a connection. Brasseur de Bourbourg, a French scholar, was the one who convinced Augustus that the New World was the center of civilization which would later lead him to theorize that the Mayans colonized Egypt. Brasseur had also written that the richest archeological evidence was most likely in the Yucatán and his writings led the Le Plongeons to begin their excavations there.¹⁰¹ This theory was accepted at first until mounting evidence in the late 19th century proved that Egypt had much deeper, and older, roots than originally thought. Even with the mounting evidence, Le Plongeon and her husband held firm to their beliefs. This might explain why Le Plongeon's contributions to the field of archaeology and photography to be largely overlooked within the larger historical narrative. Her literary publications and

¹⁰⁰ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 230.

¹⁰¹ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 23-24.

photographs, however, document the life of an extremely adventurous woman during the 19th century and the cultural diversity of the Yucatán Mayan.

Alice the Author: Her Vision of Mexico

The number of publications Le Plongeon wrote was largely influenced by the fact that her husband believed his time was better spent doing other tasks rather than writing editorials.¹⁰² Financial circumstances, however, required that one of them write to supplement their income. She published in a wide variety of newspapers from *Scientific America* to the *New York Tribune* among others. The diversity in journals that published her articles grew as she became a more recognized author. Writing was something that she greatly enjoyed and her adventures with Augustus provided her the perfect opportunity to utilize her literary talents as a source of income. She also seems to have been, at least superficially, versed in linguistics as some of her articles engage this type of discussion. This is particularly highlighted at the end of *Dr. Le Plongeon's Latest and Most Important Discoveries Among the Ruined Cities of Yucatan* which she published in *Scientific America* in May of 1884.

Le Plongeon's publications also appear to be relatively devoid of emotional commentary with the main exception being *Here and there in Yucatan*. These articles documented her travels through the Gulf of Mexico to other regions outside of the Yucatan between 1873 and 1884.¹⁰³ Within this account Le Plongeon describes aspects

¹⁰² Alice Le Plongeon, *Augustus Le Plongeon, (Journal De La Société Des Américanistes, Nouvelle Série, 6, no. ½, 1909), 276.*

¹⁰³ The travel account was originally published in 1886 by J.W. Bouton in New York and then again in 1889 by J.W. Lovell.

she viewed might be of interest to her Western audience. This includes descriptions of the countryside, its inhabitants, their beliefs, practices, and culinary choices. It reads much like other travel accounts from the late 19th century where the writer walks a fine line between praising and ridiculing the cultural differences of their subjects.¹⁰⁴ Other works, such as *Life in Yucatan*, offer a less scientific analysis and a more romantic interpretation of her travels. When she returned to Brooklyn in 1884, Le Plongeon joined women's rights groups and sought social justice for women locally and in Yucatán.¹⁰⁵ She also worked on securing voting and working rights for women and volunteered her time to help fund organizations that fed the poor.¹⁰⁶ Collectively, however, Le Plongeon, for that era, was certainly more culturally understanding than other Western travelers of the nineteenth century. For her part, Le Plongeon recognized the class, and gendered, differences in Mexico and commented on the subject on several occasions.

¹⁰⁴ Le Plongeon, *Here and there in Yucatan*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Desmond, Yucatán Through Her Eyes, 275-76, 279.

Chapter II. Sara Castrejón

Mexico, since Independence in 1821, had numerous revolutionary movements including the war against Santa Anna, the conflicts during the Reform period, and numerous rebellions during Benito Jaúrez's administration. The "Revolution" however, is largely recognized as the revolutionary movement that sprang up in 1910 in response to the authoritarian regime of Porfirio Díaz.¹⁰⁷ During this period Sara Castrejón, a female studio photographer operating in Guerrero, created photographs spanning the first half of the 20th century. Her images capture rising political opposition during the first decade of the 20th century and the decade-long conflict known as the Mexican Revolution. Castrejón's images of the Revolution not only document a period of extensive conflict within Mexico, but also represent an effort to contribute to the nationalistic narrative surrounding the Revolution. This was done by capturing images of officers and soldiers who were had dedicated themselves to various revolutionary factions as well as the harsh reality of finding oneself on the wrong side of the Revolution by documenting executions. Castrejón's images of the 1920s and 30s illustrate modernization and the formation of the new, Revolutionary, government. Photographs created of Teloloapan illustrate a city free of armed conflict and participation in the nationwide modernization effort through the adoption of motor vehicles and an increased connecedness to rural areas of Mexico by road. The photographs created by Castrejón represent a documentary

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¹⁰⁷ Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth & History*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 38.

effort to illustrate one of the most formative eras in Mexican history. One that has become an integral aspect of Mexican identity throughout the last century.

Sara Castrejón: The Wartime Photographer

Castrejón was born to a middle-class family in Teloloapan, Guerrero Mexico in 1888. Her father was a lawyer and her family likely lived in some degree of comfort during the Porfiriatio. She traveled to Mexico City in 1906 at age eighteen to learn photography and spent approximately a year in the city learning various techniques.¹⁰⁸ It is unclear where exactly in Mexico City Castrejón learned photography as there is no record of her attending the two most well-known art schools in the city, Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios para Señoritas or the Academia de San Carlos. However, her family does insist that she received some form of instruction while there. Her travel from Teloloapan to Mexico City would have been strenuous with a long trek by mule followed by an 18-hour train ride to the city.¹⁰⁹ One can infer, based on the journey and the money which would have been required to pursue the necessary training, that Sara was fully invested in this enterprise and did not simply view photography as an artistic hobby, but as a promising economic opportunity. After studying in Mexico City, she returned to Teloloapan as a studio photographer and opened a studio in 1908 where she was assisted by her sister Dorotea and brother Joaquín. Dorotea operated as a photography assistant while Joaquín carried the photography equipment when necessary.¹¹⁰ Financially,

¹⁰⁸ John Mraz, "Sara Castrejón: Photographing Revolution, Representing Women" in *Revolution and Ritual: The Photographs of Sara Castrejón, Graciela Iturbide, and Tatiana Parcero*. (Claremont, Ca: Scripps College, 2017), 23.

¹⁰⁹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 24.

¹¹⁰ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 23.

Castrejón supported herself by creating portraits and selling other photographs as postcards.¹¹¹ She lived in Teloloapan for the majority of her life, even choosing to remain in the city during the Revolution. Although she was presented with multiple opportunities to leave the city, she decided to stay and document the insurrection.¹¹² The photographs captured by Castrejón during the Revolution highlight a unique perspective of Revolutionary Mexico.

The Beginning of the Revolution

Displeased with the current administration and seeking a peaceful end to the dictatorship, Francisco Madero ran for president in 1910. Díaz's vice president, hoping to retain his political position, ordered Madero arrested to avoid any potential threat. When these orders arrived in Mexico City, the inspector of police refused to obey the order. This allowed Madero to continue his campaign, ultimately leading to him securing a presidential nomination from the Anti-Reelection party.¹¹³ Madero's nomination, however, was a failed democratic venture. The Porfirian regime would not allow their influence to be diminished and Díaz was declared the winner of the election while Madero found himself incarcerated.¹¹⁴ Despite clear political opposition Madero continued to promote that Díaz had won through undemocratic means and that this justified a revolution.

¹¹¹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 25.

¹¹² Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 23.

¹¹³ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 25. The current inspector of police was Porfirio Díaz's nephew Félix.

¹¹⁴ Benjamin, La Revolución, 12.

The Revolution officially began in November of 1910 after Madero had escaped custody and safely arrived in the United States.¹¹⁵ Faced with what he now recognized as a powerful opponent, Díaz attempted to qual revolutionary sentiments by appointing younger anti-*científicos* to replace the *científicos* within his cabinet in April of 1911.¹¹⁶ However, this action was too little too late, the flame of the revolution had already been lit. The Porfiriato had ended, and a new age had begun. Despite what could be considered widespread support, not everyone was in favor of the new direction Mexican politics were headed. Even as Madero was in the process of being elected, there was already discontent brewing within the newly formed government as anti-*científicos*, such as Bernardo Reyes and Félix Díaz, began to realize they had no political future under the new administration.¹¹⁷ By limiting the political influence of particular individuals with close ties to the Porfiriato, Madero alienated those with strong political power yet failed to eliminate them.

Conflict Arrives in Northern Guerrero

During the early years of the Revolution, Castrejón was actively involved in photography. She took photographs of the Maderista soldiers throughout the city as they were passing through in 1911 as well as other military factions throughout the decade. According to her niece, Castrejón did not feel the need to worry about her safety during the Revolution as the people of the town cared for her, considered her a respected

¹¹⁵ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 29.

¹¹⁶ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 30.

¹¹⁷ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 40.

member of the community and would come to her rescue if necessary.¹¹⁸ While soldiers were encamped near the city, she would bring those of higher rank inside the garden of her studio home and photograph them against a curtain that provided a more appealing backdrop than the streets of Teloloapan.¹¹⁹ Within the walled garden, she had a contraption that allowed her to change curtain backdrops easily as well as a cloth tent to diffuse the light.¹²⁰ The backdrop pieces themselves were very unique and were constructed specifically for the studio by Castrejón's sister Dorotea.¹²¹ The use of mobile backdrops sets Castrejón's images of the Revolution apart from others taken during the same period, most notably the Cassasola archive. Additionally, her photographs represent the first images of the southern advancement of Maderista troops.¹²² Her photographs are therefore extremely unique in terms of creativity and historical documentation.

Image 8 documents the Maderista-Salgadista southern advancement during the early years of the Mexican Revolution. This image is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, image of the Maderista presence in Guerrero which Castrejón captured from a balcony, possibly from her own home.¹²³ This image was likely created without the knowledge of the soldiers and with the sole purpose of documenting, what Castrejón likely recognized as a major historical event. The image captures two lines of cavalrymen marching down one of Teleloapan's boulevards. This does not appear to be a posed image as the soldiers are in motion throughout the frame and her elevated position would

¹¹⁸ Samuel Villela Flores, "Sara Castrejón. Fotógrafa de Teloloapan." Alquimia. (2015): 20-33, 23

¹¹⁹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 29.

¹²⁰ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 29.

¹²¹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 30.

¹²² Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 28.

¹²³ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución, 50.

have made directing them difficult. The image also represents the contrast between metropolitan life during the first decade of the 20th century and the chaos that the Revolution would bring to Mexican life. The soldiers can be seen in stark contrast to the white walls and delicately planted trees along the street. Unlike other images made by Castrejón of soldiers during the Revolution, she does not identify which military group these soldiers belong to besides the fact that they identify as Maderistas. Other images denote the battalion the soldier or group of soldiers.



Image 8. Entrance of Maderista-Salgadista Troops, Teloloapan 1911. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹²⁴

As mentioned previously, Castrejón would occasionally invite military officials into her studio garden to have their photograph made. Image 9 captures five individuals standing in front of one of her specially made curtains, two of whom are posed in a

¹²⁴ Samuel Villela Flores, *Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución*. México (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 51.

dueling scenario. The other three individuals stand in the background watching the two men. These men appear to be enjoying themselves with two of the men in the back seemingly amused by the situation. In contrast to Image 8, this particular photograph was created with the full willingness and participation of the subjects. It was perhaps, even their idea as none of Castrejón's other images exhibit such behavior. The other portraits of officers, while commonly posed with a weapon, often show them seated in a chair or standing in an orderly fashion and do not capture any degree of movement or fluidity.



Image 9. Military officials from the 18th, 1911. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹²⁵

In addition to being a creative piece of imagery, Image 9 also exhibits interesting social-cultural characteristics. In Europe, dueling was used as a classification of order, or

¹²⁵ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 70.

a transition from anarchy, used to settle disputes in a civilized manner.¹²⁶ While engaged in a fictitious duel, these two individuals are displaying a clear preference for European traditions. Dueling was primarily utilized by the aristocracy and was particularly popular in France, England, and Germany.¹²⁷ During the Porfiriato upper-class Mexicans attempted to model themselves off French culture which was conceived of as being the "natural and universal conclusion of the evolution of modern Western thought".¹²⁸ It is clear by the stance of the two men and how their hands are placed, that they consider this a refined, civilized activity even if they are enjoying the process of creating the fictitious scenario. After examining this image, it becomes clear that while much of Porfirian policy had been cast off by the Revolutionaries, there was still a societal preference for aspects of European culture and society. This becomes even more glaringly evident when examining the images created by María Santibáñez in the 1920s. The individuals in this image may have also been making fun of this societal preference as they appear to be enjoying the reenactment and laughing.

Photographing such an extensive number of different Revolutionary members would have presented challenges for Castrejón. Photographs such as Image 10, below, illustrate that some of the props included in her photographs consisted of alcoholic beverages. It is highly unlikely that these individuals would be willing to pose with such a beverage without also drinking it. Towards the bottom of the image there are at least six visible bottles laying on the ground as if empty suggesting that these men have finished

¹²⁶ Mehrdad Vahabi and Behrooz Hassani-Mahmooei, "The Role of Identity and Authority from Anarchy to Order: Insights from Modeling the Trajectory of Dueling in Europe", (*Economics Modelling* 55, 2016): 57-72, 58.

¹²⁷ Vahabi, "The Role of Identity and Authority from Anarchy to Order", 58; 62.

¹²⁸ Tenorio-Trillo, Mexico at the World's Fairs, 12.

several bottles already before the photo was taken. While these could simply be props and the men not actually drinking any alcohol, it still illustrates that Castrejón was a strong-willed individual who was willing to put herself in uncomfortable, if not outright dangerous, situations while operating as a photographer.



Image 10. Celebrating the New Year in 1912. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 79.

With Madero in control of the government, revolutionary forces were soon disbanded while the federal army continued to remain well-armed. This action caused some revolutionaries a great deal of concern.¹³⁰ Those of higher rank within the federal army likely remained loyal to Porfirio Díaz and the Revolutionary forces had no way of quickly stomping out opposition if federal forces decided to rebel. Additionally, certain members of the military had begun to dislike Madero as he had contaminated the army by allowing individuals such as Francisco Villa to operate within it.¹³¹ Discontent within the new government had quickly begun to culminate. Many of those who had originally supported Madero became dissatisfied with his administration as the reforms he originally promised were not implemented quickly enough or were not progressive enough to begin with.¹³² Madero was faced by opposition on multiple fronts, and it became clear his administration would be short-lived.

Madero's presidency fell to Victoriano Huerta, one of the men Madero had allowed to retain his political power after the ousting of Díaz. After Huerta's successful control of Mexico City, he had Madero arrested and appointed himself provisional president.¹³³ Madero was later killed and Huerta among other prominent politicians, were implicated in his death.¹³⁴ This action forever stained the international perception of Huerta and his presidency. Madero quickly became a political martyr synonymous with the revolutionary cause who would be used to provide future leaders with revolutionary

¹³⁰ Benjamin, La Revolución, 47.

¹³¹ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 52.

¹³² Ilene O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940.* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), *9.*

¹³³ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 77; 79.

¹³⁴ Henderson, Félix Díaz, 81-82.

authenticity. As a result of Madero's death, Huerta struggled to maintain a positive international image and by 1914 his presidential position was under siege with constitutionalists attacking from the north and Zapatistas from the south.¹³⁵ The resurrection of the Porfiriato system of governance had failed and yet another revolutionary leader was to take its' place.

During the Revolution, Castrejón tended to capture images of Revolutionaries in one of two ways. The majority of her images consist of military men in a stationary position most often posted sitting, or standing, with their weapons in hand. The other images consist of "soldiers on the move, of those exhibiting some degree of movement. These images included photographs of soldiers marching through Teloloapan, individuals patrolling the city, and those preparing themselves for battle.



Image 11. Pronunciados in Teloloapan, 1914. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution, 21.*

¹³⁶ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 109.

Approximately sixteen of these images included horses. The incorporation of horses has long provided a strong military advantage over ground force with cavalry playing an important role in warfare throughout the first part of the 20th century. Photographs such as Image 11 illustrate that while assembly lines made automobiles such as the Model T more accessible during the early 20th century and access to guns had become more prevalent, older instruments of war such as horses and swords were still heavily relied upon.

With Madero dead and Huerta left fleeing Mexico, a new revolutionary government was formed by Venustiano Carranza.¹³⁷ Carranza created a public narrative in which Huerta was given a disposition akin to that of Díaz while Carranza himself was said to represent Madero's aspirations.¹³⁸ This represented one of the first instances when Madero was utilized as a symbol of government legitimization. Carranza claimed that his continuation of the Revolution was social while Madero's had been largely political in origin.¹³⁹ Carranza thus provided himself with a separate identity while still aligning himself with Madero. Despite his attempts to align himself with Revolutionary ideals, his public image began to crumble as military leaders began to distrust him.¹⁴⁰ Despite the relative stability that Carranza provided, deep fractional divides persisted.

Despite these divisions, a new constitution was created in 1917 and marked a new era in Mexico. The constitution of 1917 was extremely ambitious and incorporated

¹³⁷ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution*, 71.

¹³⁸ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 51. Carranza also compared himself to Juárez. Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 6162.

¹³⁹ Benjamin, La Revolución, 51.

¹⁴⁰ According to Villa, and his supporters, Carranza betrayed the revolutionary cause by his undemocratic actions and by failing to institute the policies necessary to assist the general population. Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 52-53.

anticlerical articles separating Church and State and prevented Congress from establishing a national religion. Furthermore, it established matrimony as a civil, rather than religious, contract, removed the necessity of swearing on a bible in court, and called for free public education.¹⁴¹ Essentially, this document included what some considered to be extreme revolutionary ideas by limiting the power, and influence, of the Church in Mexican lives. The new constitution also included other notable aspects including the declaration "that private property was a privilege, not an inherent right".¹⁴² Another important tenant of the Revolution was the issue of labor rights, particularly after Díaz's handling of protests during his last years in office. The 1917 constitution established an eight-hour workday, six-day work weeks, a minimum wage, and the right to unionize.¹⁴³ While aspects of the constitution was a landmark event and represented a tremendous step forward in turning Revolutionary ideals into government policy.

Photographs such as Image 12 illustrate that in 1917 revolutionaries had not necessarily disbanded. Despite the accomplishment of creating the new constitution, Mexico remained Revolutionary. Military men, whether federal or fractional, still roamed the Mexican countryside. What is interesting about this particular image is that one of the individuals is wearing a tie. This may suggest that having one's picture created posing as a revolutionary gained popularity as a result of the societal embrace of the Revolution as an ideal. These individuals contributed to the developing national narrative and illustrate

¹⁴¹ Robert E Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1910-1929*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 85.

¹⁴² Haber, The Politics of Property Rights, 140.

¹⁴³ Haber, The Politics of Property Rights, 144.

that being "revolutionary" had transitioned from the participation in armed insurrections to a set of political or social ideals.



Image 12. Silvestre Castro with the officials of Teloloapan in 1917. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹⁴⁴

The True Cost of the Revolution

In addition to portraiture, Castrejón also photographed executions during the war. She took these photographs at the behest of either a military official, to prove that their orders had been carried out, or by the victim's family as a token of remembrance. On these occasions, she would be accompanied by her brother who would carry her equipment and likely also acted as a chaperon. According to her relatives, Castrejón viewed the task of photographing these individuals as a necessary action that she would

¹⁴⁴ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 118.

never forget.¹⁴⁵ Photographing executions would have been a powerful and intense event. These events further establish the fact that Castrejón was operating amid a war zone and that she chose to expose herself to grotesque scenarios that a middle-class woman would have ideally not witnessed. The fact that she photographed such events and then continued to remain in Teloloapan and operate as a photographer illustrates that she viewed photographing these events as a necessary action to contribute to the historical narrative surrounding these events.

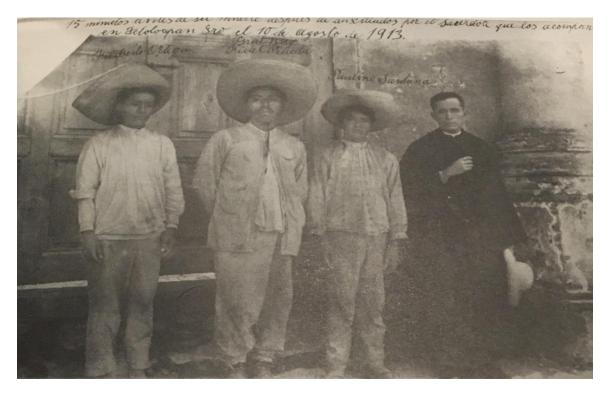


Image 13. Fifteen Minutes Before Death, August 10th, 1913. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹⁴⁶

The series of five images document the brutal cost of the Revolution in terms of the number of young men who lost their lives during the decade long conflict. Interestingly, all five images which have been included in the aforementioned

¹⁴⁵ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 31.

¹⁴⁶ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 103.

publications, date from 1913 suggesting that there may have been an increase in arrests during Carranza's uprising against Huerta. Three of the images, including image 13, date to August 10th of 1913 and document the execution of brigadier general Fidel Pineda.¹⁴⁷ The circumstances in which these images were captured suggest that Pineda may have not been a willing participant in their creation.

The second image in the series, Image 14, represent a different photographic frame of reference when compared to Image 13. In Image 14 Pineda is shown placing his weight on his left leg with his right arm outstretched lightly gripping a sword, somberly looking to whatever lay behind the photographer. Pineda avoids making any eye contact with the photographer and is likely engrossed in contemplating his demise and the decisions which have led him to this point. It is possible, considering that Joaquín often accompanied Sara in these instances, that Pineda is making eye contact with him, afraid to look directly at the camera or at the woman who would be capturing his last fleeting moments. The way in which he is holding the sword, lightly gripped by the tips of his fingers, suggests that he may have been directed to hold the sword. The nature of this image suggests that it was taken at the behest of a family member as a token of remembrance rather than documentation of his successful execution at the request of a military official.

¹⁴⁷ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 103-104. Images 88-90

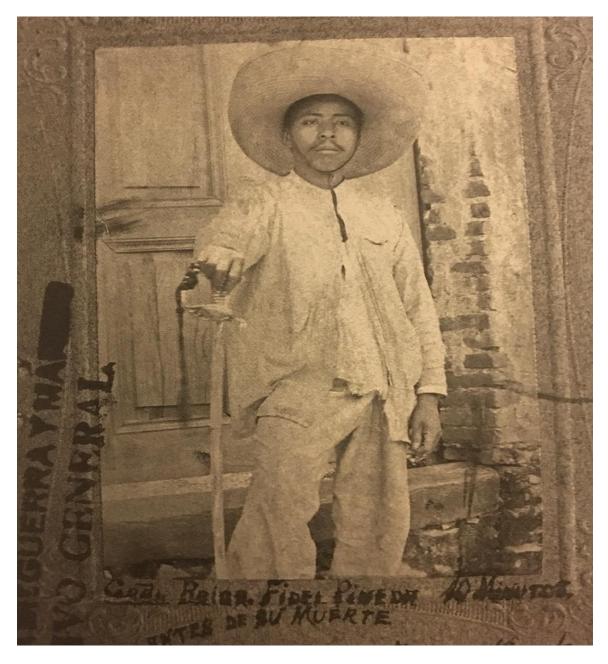


Image 14. Brigadier General Fidel Pineda 10 minutes before death. August 10th, 1913. Photo by Sara Castrejón.¹⁴⁸

Women of the War: Female Revolutionary Participation

Throughout the duration of the conflict women, of all social classes, actively

participated in the war effort.¹⁴⁹ These women believed in the same ideals as their male

¹⁴⁸ Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 104.

¹⁴⁹ Macías, Against All Odds, 25.

counterparts and attempted to combat the stereotypes that women were silent and meek.¹⁵⁰ Women created their own anti-reelections clubs in 1910, including the *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, Pociano Arriaga* and the *Sociedad Protectora de la Mujer,* signed public protests and took part in public demonstrations between 1909-1913. They gathered money and weapons, participated in underground activity, and were even involved in a political conspiracy to bring Francisco Madero to power.¹⁵¹ Other women, such as Col. Salgado discussed in the introduction to this thesis, participated directly in the warfare and on several occasions, when they had proven themselves as warriors, were placed in command of men.¹⁵² While women had made valuable contributions during the war their actions were largely overlooked or modified to conform better to the accepted gender norms of the period.

Many of these women failed to directly benefit from these social advancements as conceptions of gender had not been impacted by the Revolution. The women on the opposing side of the Revolution had become villainized and labeled as radical antirevolutionists, a very dangerous association. After the war, the views of these radical groups became associated with all women and they began to be labeled as antirevolutionary and backward thinking, regardless of their actual beliefs. These assumptions became widespread and were frequently used by anti-suffrage campaigners. This had such a strong impact that women in Mexico did not receive the vote until 1953.

Castrejón took very few images of women during the Revolutionary period. The majority of the photos she took of women were after the Revolution when city life had

¹⁵⁰ Macías, Against All Odds, 26.

¹⁵¹ Macías, Against All Odds, 29; 38-39.

¹⁵² Macías, Against All Odds, 40-41.

begun to return to some degree of normalcy. During the Revolution itself, there are only two images of women in conjunction with the war. The first image, which was highlighted in chapter 1, of Colonel Amparo Salgado. The second image, above, represents a completely different perspective on female military participation. Image 15 is a photograph of two individuals, a man and a woman, against one of Castrejón's studio backdrops. In this photograph, the woman is seated next to a man posing with a gun and is wearing a light, possibly white, dress that appears to have been stained with dirt. This woman was likely a *soldadera*, or camp follower, who followed this man as Maderista troops moved through Mexico. Like the image of Colonel Amparo Salgado, this woman likewise appears very comfortable in front of the camera with her hands lightly placed in her lap.

Castrejón herself did not fight in the Revolution nor, to our knowledge, did she enlist in any of these political groups. However, she did participate through her photography. Sara contributed to this narrative yet also displayed some characteristics which were not traditionally seen as Revolutionary. According to one of her neighbors, Lucila Figueroa, Castrejón spent a great deal of time in church and would tell people how to act properly, particularly how to sit, while there.¹⁵³ Even though fervent Catholics in Mexico were increasingly thought to be anti-revolutionary, Sara was still an avid church attendee. This suggests that while Mexicans during this period either identified as Revolutionary or Catholic, the average individuals found themselves somewhere between

¹⁵³ Villela Flores, "Sara Castrejón. Fotógrafa de Teloloapan", 23

these two conflicting identities.



Image 15. Photograph of a Maderista from the coast of Tanislao Moreno and woman, image by Sara Castrejón 1912.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Dahó, *Revolution and Ritual*, 53.

Revolutionary Memory: Popular Forms of Remembrance

There were three primary leaders of the Revolution, Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, and Venustiano Carranza. Each individual represented a very different revolutionary faction, yet their national images in the 1920s and 30s were blended to provide them with one uniform Revolutionary narrative.¹⁵⁵ Their public images claimed that "the government was revolutionary", it promoted nationalism, "the obfuscation of history; the denigration of politics; Christian imagery and the promotion of Catholic values; and patriarchal values and the "masculinization" of the heroes' images".¹⁵⁶ Zapata and Villa were constantly presented as figures of military strength and as womanizers. This provided them with more "*macho*" appeal than Madero or Carranza and enabled them to become figures of popular culture.¹⁵⁷ Zapata and Villa were also characterized as exotic which exemplified the fact that there was still a degree of prejudice within Mexico that sought to differentiate between Mexico's upper class and the indigenous population.¹⁵⁸ These forms of remembrance in popular culture included visual media such as photography, paintings, and cinematography.

After the war, Castrejón continued to engage in photography and expanded her source of income. Castrejón and her sister opened up the first movie cinema in Teloloapan.¹⁵⁹ Beginning in the 1920s films began to be produced that showed the Revolution in a folkloric sense and cinematography, in general, began to be used to

¹⁵⁵ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution*, 113; 127.

¹⁵⁶ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution*, 113-114.

¹⁵⁷ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution*, 140.

¹⁵⁸ O'Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution*, 121.

¹⁵⁹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 23.

contribute to the narrational narrative surrounding the Revolution.¹⁶⁰ These visual projects, along with photography and murals, were created by a wide variety of individuals from diverse backgrounds which allowed the average Mexican to see themselves within these representations and recognize their role within this narrative. By opening up a cinema Sara was contributing to this narrative by providing the atmosphere for people living in Teloloapan to be exposed to this narrative.

As mentioned previously, many of her photographs were turned into postcards which she then sold to supplement her income. Postcards became a popular collector's item and were sold everywhere from department stores and hotels to theaters.¹⁶¹ It is possible that she also sold her postcards at the new cinema as it was one of the common locals where postcards could be purchased in Mexico. By engaging in documentary photography during the Revolution and then opening up a cinema. Castrejón was contributing to the national narrative in a variety of different forms. She contributed to the remembrance of the Revolution by documenting its' participants and to the new formation of Mexican identity after the war by adopting aspects of "modernization" such as opening the cinema and capturing images of Teloloapan returning to some degree of normalcy. Mexico in the 1920s was not necessarily devoid of conflict however, photographs such as Image 16 illustrate that the focus on the nation had shifted. Castrejón's photographs no longer focus on armed revolutionaries and instead focus on images of Teloloapan citizens. Image 16, taken near Castrejón's studio-house, captures a

¹⁶⁰ Zuzana M Pick, *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution: Cinema and the Archive*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 3-4.

¹⁶¹ Mraz, "Sara Castrejón," 25.

city devoid of military occupation. Like Image 8, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Image 16 was likely taken without the knowledge or permission of the individuals in the photograph.



Image 16. Iturbide St, Teloloapan, 1920; Near Sara's studio-house. Image by Sara Castrejón.¹⁶²

During the 1920s the Revolutionaries created a government, turning the Revolution into an ongoing movement rather than a singular moment in time. It also represented a type of national family that people could be a part of despite their local or ethnic differences.¹⁶³ This was an important aspect to be incorporated into the identity of the Revolution as the decade of warfare had created opposing identities within Mexican society. Many of the revolutionary celebrations and remembrance events that took place

¹⁶² Villela Flores, Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución. 34.

¹⁶³ Benjamin, La Revolución, 68.

in the early 1920s were organized by civilians with government organizations becoming involved later in the decade.¹⁶⁴ The Revolution had transformed from one simple political movement against Díaz into an identity with which the government was quick to identify itself. Unlike other revolutionary movements of the 19th century, Mexico's revolutionary myths and memory were constructed by a diverse group of individuals opposed to one singular government body or administration.¹⁶⁵ What is now understood as the Mexican Revolution has been formed out of a "collective memory, mythmaking, and history writing".¹⁶⁶ The revolutionary identity which was formed in the 1920s became heavily influential in the formation of national identity and self-expression in the 1930s and the work of Sara Castrejón was important to that endeavor.

¹⁶⁴ Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 72. Greater government responsibility of revolutionary remembrance took place during the Calles presidency. Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 73.

¹⁶⁵ Benjamin, La Revolución, 32.

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin, La Revolución, 19.

Chapter III. María Santibáñez

María Santibáñez was a studio photographer in Mexico City in the 1920s who operated during the first decade of the post-revolutionary period. The photographs she created in the 1920s articulate a parallel discourse to that put forth by the postrevolutionary government. In opposition to the indigenismo identity that was prominent during this era, Santibáñez focused on aspects of modern cosmopolitan culture and the evolving flapper presence in Mexico City. By comparing the images created by Santibáñez to the evolving cultural policies of the 1920s, it is clear that the images she created represent the developing Mexican middle-class who still favored Mexico's Europeanized or Americanized heritage despite the upturn in indigenous representation in the media and within popular culture. Her images span the 1920s and touch on subjects such as traditional portraiture, photographs of carefully articulated historical narratives, and images that exude romanticism and dramatization. The stylistic representations within these photographs incorporate aspects of European culture and society to illustrate a clear societal preference that did not align with that of the post-revolutionary regime. These photographs of flappers and actresses were published in local Mexico City newspapers and document Mexico's quick adoption of symbols of global modernity such as the flapper and the so-called Deco body or the independent or working-class woman who no longer lived with her family. These photographs also illustrate the changing gender dynamics within larger metropolitan areas and how these changing gender roles challenged the national image of women as the mother of Mexico. Santibáñez also began to experiment with photography and created images saturated with emotion that had not been captured by other female photographers. Santibáñez continued to comment on local

and regional issues including the conflict between Church and state and the inner struggle that many Mexicans were facing between religious and national identity. In contrast to the images of Alice Le Plongeon and Sara Castrejón, Santibáñez experimented with photographic representation and the artistic nature of portraiture to create images that comment on gender roles, self-expression, and national identity during the 1920s.

Photographing Opposing National Identities

Santibáñez became involved in photography at the age of twelve and acquired a wealth of knowledge while working as an assistant at a studio operated by Martín Ortiz in Mexico City. In 1919, after seven years of apprenticeship, María opened her studio located at 22 Bolivar Street in the center of Mexico City.¹⁶⁷ While operating her studio, Santibáñez created photographs of primarily middle-class women and local actresses. Her studio was initially financially unsuccessful, and it appeared that she would have to close her studio promptly if circumstances did not improve. It was not until she submitted one of her photographs in a local *El Universal* competition that she was able to pay off her debts, keep her studio open and gain local recognition.¹⁶⁸ As she gained notoriety her photographs began to appear in local magazines including *El Universal Illustrado, Jueves de Excélsior*, and *Rotográfico*.¹⁶⁹ The success of this image allowed Santibáñez to

¹⁶⁷ https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/cultura/artes-visuales/2016/06/25/la-belleza-que-redimiomaria-santibanez. She later moved her studio approximately one kilometer to 62 Juárez street in 1927. Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, "El género y la mascarada en la fotografía de María Santibáñez," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n. 71 (2018): 132-157. 141.

¹⁶⁸ La Belleza Que Redimió a María Santibáñez." El Universal. June 27, 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Ángel Corona Villa, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and Paolo Pellegrin. "María Santibáñez." Fotográfica. July 07, 2015.

continue her photographic career and represents the aesthetic style that she utilized in all subsequent images created in her studio.



Image 17. Photograph of Graciela de Lara captured by María Santibáñez. Image published in El Universal Illustrated, April 29, 1920.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, "El género y la mascarada en la fotografía de María Santibáñez," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n. 71 (2018): 132-157. 145.

Image 17presents, an award-winning portrait of Miss Graciela de Lara captured in 1920. This garnered the photographer 200 pesos, allowing her to keep her studio open.¹⁷¹ This image stands in stark contrast to those captured by Alice Le Plongeon and Sara Castrejón whose photographic methods are more documentary and less stylized than Santibáñez's. This photo also includes the addition of color. Santibáñez entitled the image *"Flor del Campo"* or flower of the field.¹⁷² It is unclear when the color was added, whether it occurred before her submission of the photograph in the competition or if it was added after she had already won in preparation for it being showcased as *El Universal's* cover. Regardless of when the color was added, the contrast between the grey background and the green garment is visually pleasing. It creates enough contrast to stand out yet is soft enough to produce a subtle or soft, image.

The subject of the photograph, Miss Graciela de Lara, struck an interesting pose with her eyes downcast and her right hand resting against her collarbone creating a flirtatious and seductive pose. Her green dress is draped around her in a very loose and ill-fitting way suggesting that it may have simply been a piece of fabric or blanket that was wrapped around the woman to allow her shoulders to be exposed. This pose creates an intimate portrait of a woman perhaps finishing her bath. Due to the draping, it is also reminiscent of an ancient Greek or Roman statue. When examining the right side of the dress there is a distinct fold in the fabric creating the perception that it was folded like one would fold a towel around themselves with the tip of the fabric folded in to keep the top portion secure. This photograph was created very early in Santibáñez's career when

¹⁷¹ La Belleza Que Redimió a María Santibáñez." El Universal. June 27, 2016.

¹⁷² La Belleza Que Redimió a María Santibáñez." El Universal. June 27, 2016.

she had very little income therefore, the choice of her subject's attire may have been a simple choice of what she had laying around her studio that would add a creative and unique aspect to the photograph. The choice of attire may have also been used to generate a type of style indicative of her work.

A Nation in Recovery: Women in Post-Revolutionary Mexico City

After the Revolution, women hoped to escape the war-ravaged countryside and sought new forms of societal protection. The countryside during the Revolution did not provide women any assurance of safety. It put one at risk for the advancements of traveling soldiers.¹⁷³ As a result, some parents sent their daughters to the city as they considered it safer than the countryside. Many traveled to Mexico City where street vending, prostitution and domestic service became their primary means of survival.¹⁷⁴ While the Revolution had disenfranchised some women, it also provided them with new opportunities. It allowed them to stretch what had been previously viewed as socially acceptable roles for women by allowing them to occupy traditionally male roles.¹⁷⁵ Subsequently, gender identities were in flux during this period due to the mobility women had been exposed to in the metropolitan areas such as Mexico City.¹⁷⁶ By moving to the city these women were exposed to new "ways of thinking, living, and expressing themselves"

¹⁷³ Katherine Elaine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 73.

¹⁷⁴ Ageeth Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City: Female Spectacle and Modernity in Mexico City, 1900 1939,

⁽Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska, 2016), 1, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 1.

¹⁷⁶ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 176.

through theater, magazines, and exposure to sporting activities and other leisure activities.¹⁷⁷ Mexico City became a melting pot of different ethnicities, languages, and social classes all of which contributed to the formation of a new Mexican identity.

Despite the blurring of gender lines that had taken place during the Revolution, the new post-revolutionary government considered the proper role of women was that of the mother. The mother who would birth Mexico's next generation of men and women who would be imbued with post-revolutionary rhetoric. Therefore, the only campaigning or political involvement that women should participate in, according to this new regime, were those which would elevate Mexico's children and improve the next generation such as education, hygiene, and temperance campaigns.¹⁷⁸ It did not, however, extend to suffrage campaigns. Women who stretched or, in some cases, rebelled against their role as mother of the nation were seen as unpatriotic and against the Revolution, a very negative and sometimes dangerous association. Likewise, the existence, and openness, of public women were considered detrimental to the Revolutionary cause as they broke away from the idealization of the nuclear family and the role of women as mothers.

Image 18 is a photograph made of the Ruiz-Suárez Family in 1930 which exemplifies the importance of the nuclear family in post-revolutionary Mexico. The photograph is of husband and wife with their adolescent child. In traditional family photographs, the woman is typically the one sitting with the child on their lap, however, in this image the father is the one with the child on their lap. In photographic history, the

¹⁷⁷ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 2.

¹⁷⁸ María Aceves, "Guadalajaran Women and the Construction of National Identity" in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, ed. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 297-313. 301.

woman is normally the one sitting as the time necessary to capture an image was thought to put a strain on the "fragile" female body. Additionally, the man is often standing to show his role as protector and provider of the family. The artist's choice of having the woman stand can suggest two possible outcomes: that the family naturally chose to position themselves the way they did or, that the placement of these individuals was a deliberate choice by either the family or by the photographer. If this was a deliberate choice, it illustrates the importance of the mother figure in post-revolutionary Mexico as the protector of the health and morality of the family. This woman is also dressed as a flapper, further illustrating that she is a modern woman.

When analyzing the family, it is clear that they belong to the middle, or even upper class, of society. The father is wearing a well-tailored suit decorative tie and recently shined shoes. The mother likewise is dressed fashionably in an elaborately decorated dress in a contemporary style with a strand of pearls donned around her neck. The background further illustrates their social standing. The image appears to have been made in the living room or drawing room. The father sits upon a decorative couch and a large carpet covers the floor, both of which would have been costly. The background sports very decorative and detailed wainscoting and presumably, if the viewer could see where the wall and ceiling meet, crown molding. Both the wainscoting and crown molding would have cost a considerable amount of money to install and would not have been seen in an average Mexican home. Every detail in this image contributes to the narrative that this was a well-to-do family who invested in contemporary forms of expression. While this family represents the traditional nuclear family, they also clearly readily accepted contemporary fashion trends and adhered to conceptions of modernity.



Image 18. Portrait of the Ruiz-Suárez Family, 1930. Image captured by María Santibáñez.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, "El género y la mascarada en la fotografía de María Santibáñez," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n. 71 (2018): 132-157. 153.

The family unit portrayed in image 18 would not have challenged the fundamentals of the post-revolutionary government however, the existence and operation of some women, particularly public women, were a cause for concern. "Public women" were considered to be anyone seen to be an actress, *chica moderna* or single woman living outside her family home, working-class woman, or prostitute. In an attempt to confine these women and prevent them from corrupting others the government created indoor markets, theaters, and designated zones of tolerance.¹⁸⁰ The creation of these areas impacted more than just the business operations of these women. These "zones" of ill repute received negative governmental oversight with their existence being used to justify the failure to pave roads in these neighborhoods.¹⁸¹ Essentially, these zones created an even wider disparity in the implementation of post-revolutionary, or "modern" advancements, particularly in terms of infrastructure, within the poorer regions of the capital. It also created a negative perception surrounding working women and certain social classes. Any location where men and women interacted became potential areas for improper solicitations and were thus subject to government oversight and intervention.¹⁸² This regulation was not necessarily directed towards promiscuity but to the lack of hygiene and the potential threat of disease.

Forming a National Identity: Indigenismo Vs. La Chica Moderna

The 1920s marked the culmination of different thoughts and identities which came together to create a much more diverse society than previous periods. This

¹⁸⁰ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 2.

¹⁸¹ Bliss, Compromised Positions, 157.

¹⁸² Bliss, Compromised Positions, 88.

produced a collective narrative that Santibáñez contributed to through her photography. This was a period when Mexican intellectuals who had fled to Europe during the Revolution were returning to Mexico fraught with new ideas.¹⁸³ The decade-long conflict had left the country fragmented with revolution vs. religion, foreignism vs. nationalism, and modernity vs. tradition. The post-revolutionary government needed a single theme, or identity, to unite Mexicans if the country ever hoped to move past these differences. Due to the high percentage of citizens with indigenous heritage, *indigenismo* was particularly attractive. *Indigenismo* is "a network of intellectual, political, and artistic ideas that argued, among other things, that the toots of Mexican national identity could be found in Mexico's Indian culture".¹⁸⁴ This concept of *indigenismo* began to permeate society and became an integral aspect of Mexican identity through education, art, and cultural policy in the 1920s. This national identity did not go unchallenged, however. The 1920s also saw the adoption of the global phenomenon "the flapper" which challenged traditional gender roles and failed to align with the national rhetoric of the period. In terms of beauty, Mexico celebrated indigenous heritage through Indias Bonitas contests yet simultaneously viewed flappers in a more favorable light due to their consumer conformity.¹⁸⁵ In 1920 Santibáñez created a portrait of Mercedes Navarro, image 19, which demonstrates the popularity of this "modern" form of expression.

¹⁸³ Rick A. López, "The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts: Two Ways of Exalting Indianness" in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, ed. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23-41. 40.
¹⁸⁴ Joanne Hershfield, "Screening the Nation" in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution*

in Mexico, 1920-1940, ed. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 259-278. 266.

¹⁸⁵Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City 74, 101



Image 19. Photograph of Mercedes Navarro captured in 1920 by María Santibáñez.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ José Antonio Rodríguez, Fotógrafas en México 1872-1960 (Madrid: Turner, 2012). 47.

In this photograph, the subject is posed with her left hand extended behind her and her right hand flexed towards her face holding what appears to be a large feather fan. The pose this woman is making, like Image 17, is a flirtatious action. Mercedes Navarro has her shoulders bare and is sporting a contemporary and very short haircut with a decorative headband across her forehead. The contrast between the subject and the background of the image pushes the woman to the front of the frame, highlighting her bare shoulders. Images such as these illustrate that Mexico City found the Deco body alluring. Most images of flappers in the 1920s are photographs of women facing the camera in Image 19, however, the individual is facing away from the camera and only showing the viewer the left side of her face. In other types of portraiture, this stance may signify a degree of unfamiliarity or uncomfortableness with the photographer. While this may be true for some portraiture, based on the facial expressions of this woman, that assumption would not apply to this particular image. Santibáñez may have suggested that the woman stand a particular way or wear certain clothing, however, the emotion on this woman's face gives the viewer the perception that this woman was very comfortable in this scenario. The fact that this woman is comfortable posing in this fashion was likely influenced by the increase in female mobility and self-expression that women were exposed to both during the Revolution and in the proceeding decade.

The arrival of the French production *Voilá Paris: La Ba-ta-clá*n in 1925 brought the Deco body to Mexico City. Renditions of the play quickly began to spring up throughout the city and became a national phenonium.¹⁸⁷ The Deco Body, that of a tall,

¹⁸⁷ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 61.

lanky woman with a "boyish" haircut, brought with it new ideas concerning proper gender roles and bridged the gap between the various racial ideals.¹⁸⁸ The Deco body "offered a solution to neutralize the tension between *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*" by illustrating that identity was no longer about race or ethnicity but about form and how someone presented themselves. This allowed any woman, regardless of their ethnicity, to be considered a modern beauty.¹⁸⁹ The corpus of Santibáñez's images depict individuals who have a lighter complexion, light skin that does not necessarily appear to have been a result of lighting, which would have presented a very specific image of what *chica modernas* looked like during this period. This may have been intentional or an unexpected result of photographing Mexico's upper class. However, images like hers were what Mexican women were exposed to and they would have created an elitist and light-skinned interpretation of what these women should look like as a result. The press's interpretation and representation of the Deco body, and bataclanesco, created a single discourse that proliferated the city as part of the modernization movement.¹⁹⁰ La chica moderna through the way she dressed and her provocative actions established herself as a liberated woman who represented Western modernity.¹⁹¹ The arrival, and quick adoption, of the deco body and the development of la chica moderna at first glance, may appear to be in direct conflict with *indigenismo*, however, both identities were symptoms of a society that continued to value its' European heritage and culture.

¹⁸⁸ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 3, 62.

¹⁸⁹ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 17, 84.

¹⁹⁰ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 68.

¹⁹¹ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 87.



Figure 20. Image of Miss María Teresa Viesca, Photograph by María Santibáñez, 1921. Published in EL Universal, January 20, 1921 in the section "Aristocratic Silhouettes".¹⁹²

¹⁹² Juan Guzmán and Cachú Hermanos. "María Santibáñez." Fotográfica. July 07, 2015. https://fotografica.mx/fotografos/maria-santibanez/. (Image) Alperstein, "El género y la mascarada en la fotografía de María Santibáñez,", 134. (Text info and publication year).

Image 20 exudes characteristics of high-class French society with the classical 18th-century silhouette presented with a contemporary flair. The dress, which would have traditionally been form-fitting, is loose and there is a clear absence of a corset and is unpinned creating awkward folding around the woman's mid-section. Additionally, the dress itself appears to be too short. If the woman were to stand upright, it is likely the hem of the skirt would rest mid-calf making it too short to have been worn during the 18th century. These elements make it probable that the dress was a theater prop that María, or the subject, borrowed for the photograph which was designed to evoke the 19th-century French salon style. The photographer, therebefore, wanted to create the ascetic of 18thcentury high French society with what was available and does not necessarily represent an attempt to recreate a historical image. This is further exemplified when examining the hairpiece and footwear. The wig is well kept, however, it is not properly curled or set. The footwear also appears to be a simple adaptation of what was available and resembles ballet flats as opposed to court shoes.¹⁹³ The woodland studio backdrop in conjunction with the subject's "costume" and hand gestures is meant to convey refinement and sophistication. While the backdrop could potentially be representative of Mexico, the props are all displaying various aspects of European identity from the wig the woman is wearing to the shape of the basket she is holding. As noted in the image caption, Image 20 was published in *El Universal* in a section intitles "Aristocratic Silhouettes" demonstrating that the upper class was still largely influenced by European styles. The

¹⁹³ Shoe comparison based on French court shoes at the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

image itself is also certainly a theatrical version or interpretation of how people thought women in 18th French society dressed.



Image 21. Photograph of Rita Josefina Viesca created by María Santibáñez.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ La Belleza Que Redimió a María Santibáñez." El Universal. June 27, 2016.

The *El Universal* article "Aristocratic Silhouettes" also included Image 21 and highlights a different aspect of European society and culture. In contrast to Image 20, the above image is a photograph of a woman dressed as a gypsy, a traditionally discriminated segment of European society. The woman is wearing a billowy sleeved blouse and an ornately patterned vest and skirt. The skirt also has playing cards sewn to the bottom hem that were likely added by the costume designer to further highlight the gypsy character. Additionally, the woman is photographed wearing a headscarf and is posing next to a tambourine, two additional stereotypical gypsy elements. Interestingly the woman is wearing high heels in a style that would have been more appropriate for the previous image. Like Image 20, Image 21 utilized the same Greco-Roman architecture and a very similar studio backdrop. Many of Santibáñez's subjects were local actresses or performers and she may have recognized the development between Mexico's gypsy population in cinematography's proliferation throughout the country. Cinematography, like theater, was considered a potentially lucrative enterprise and Mexico's gypsy population recognized this and began to show films throughout the countryside for a small fee.¹⁹⁵ This connection, between cinematography and the developing movie scene in Mexico to this social demographic, may explain why Santibáñez chose to create Image 21.

¹⁹⁵ David W Pickett, "The Gypsies of Mexico. Extracts from a Thesis for the Degree of M.A. in the Syracuse University of New York." *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 44, (1965): 81-99. 87.

Both of these images appeared in *EL Universal*'s Aristocratic Silhouettes" publication and presented Mexican women dressed like Europeans. This was a very deliberate choice by the magazine and by the photographer that exhibits very specific social preferences. Both parties could have chosen to showcase women dressed in traditional clothing, to support the *indigenismo* propaganda of the post-revolutionary government, or represented them as *chica modernas*. By presenting these individuals in a contrasting European narrative, they are associating Mexico's upper class with Europe and illustrating that while Mexico has its own national identity, either through *indigenismo* or *la chica moderna*, society still valued European heritage and identity. Despite the pervasiveness of *indigenismo* and the attractiveness of the Deco body, anything European has a clear social prestige. In reality, this identity formation was more complex. These images represent a European archetype as a romanticized narrative much like Le Plongeon's images of rural women were viewed and turn tradition on its head.

While *indigenismo* created a pleasant narrative that the government could easily promote in the rural countryside, a high percentage of Mexicans identified as mestizo. *Mestizaje*, or the blending of different indigenous ethnic and cultural groups, began to represent Mexican identity, and any failure to embrace contemporary indigenous populations was presented as unpatriotic.¹⁹⁶ Indigenous people in post-revolutionary Mexico were encouraged to adopt mestizo ways of thinking and just as easy as it was for a mestiza woman to perform indigenismo, indigenous women could adopt, and perform, la chica moderna.¹⁹⁷ Essentially, they were encouraged to become "modern" just as much

¹⁹⁶ López, "The Noche Mexicana and the Exhibition of Popular Arts", 36.

¹⁹⁷ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 98.

as they were encouraged to embrace their indigenous heritage. Due to this encouragement, la chica moderna and the deco body were quickly and easily adopted by women in Mexico City. This created a new identity for women that embraced their heritage, their sexuality, self-expression and celebrated the independence they had become accustomed to during the Revolution. This new identity was presented to woman primarily through the media and popular arts.

The consumer culture was largely influenced by what individuals witnessed in the entertainment industry and in the new urban spaces that were created in the aftermath of the war. Advertising agencies after the Revolution began to market products to all women rather than to a specific social demographic and contributed to the blurring of class lines.¹⁹⁸ Women in the city pursued employment in sectors of the economy that had previously been male-dominated and continued to break down traditional gender roles. Actresses, in particular, taught women to become assertive and envision a larger public role for themselves.¹⁹⁹ The photographs that Santibáñez created catered to this new Mexican identity that advertised form over ethnicity and promoted modernity; and she played an integral role in this narrative by submitting her photographs to local magazines.

¹⁹⁸ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 75.

¹⁹⁹ Sluis, Deco Body, Deco City, 32.



*Image 22. Excerpt about María Santibáñez in an Jueves De Excelsior article July 8th, 1926 accompanied by three photographs.*²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ José Antonio Rodríguez, Fotógrafas en México 1872-1960, (Turner, 2012), 49.

The article published on Santibáñex in *Jueves de Excelsior* in 1926, Image 22, illustrates how women in Mexico City were exposed to these new forms of selfexpression. This selection of three photographs focuses on the theater community in the capital with the accompanying text highlighting her ability to create artistic photographs. The text also mentions how Santibáñez primarily photographs aristocrats. Advertising the photographer's work in this manner likely cut down on potential clients by dissuading lower class members from getting their photographs made at her studio. The two photographs of women show each women's shoulders, a common theme throughout many of Santibáñez's photographs. Despite the changing gender roles within the city and the increased social mobility women had during the 1920s showing this amount of skin would have likely still been seen as a seductive act. The woman in the top image also has a smile on her face which is an interesting, and unusual addition to Santibáñez's photographs. Her image oftentimes focusing on the intense emotion of her subject; however, this is the only individual who is smiling.

Perhaps the most visually striking and emotional image that Santibáñez created is Image 23. The image, seen below, is of a young woman sitting on a stool wearing a simple black shift dress. The room itself appears to be in a state of disarray. There are clear paint chips on the wall behind the woman which have fallen to the floor. Both her arms and legs are crossed suggesting some degree of defensiveness. However, the woman is leaning against her left shoulder creating a pose that looks extremely uncomfortable. When examining those attributes, the image looks very awkward in nature. When the viewer looks at the woman's face, the entire mood of the photograph changes.



Image 23. Photograph of a woman in a chair created by María Santibáñez in 1923.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Rebecca Monroy Nasr, "Preciosismo fotográfico: María Santibañez" *Alquimia*, Num. 53 Año 18 (2015) enero-abril. 38-48. 44.

The woman is wearing intense dark lipstick and eyeshadow that creates a powerful statement. Her face is uplifted, directed towards the ceiling with her mouth slightly open. Unlike Santibáñez's other images, this photograph is full of intense emotion that reminds the viewer of the harsh realities of life. The dark eye makeup also had sexual connotations and can be seen as a photographic expression of desire. This emphasis on intense emotion can also be seen in one of Santibáñez's other images commenting on the internal religious conflict many Mexicans were faced with during the 1920s.

Allegiances: The Church Vs. the Revolutionary State

The conflict posed by attempting to create a single national narrative and identity was central to the post-revolutionary government activity during the 1920s. The Revolution had brought forth strong opposition to the Church and its role in temporal affairs, creating a deep division between the government and individual religious practices and beliefs. Discontent began during the Revolution with fractional leaders such as Francisco Villa and General Manuel Diéguez limiting church worship and forcing clerical members to pay bribes. ²⁰² Such actions drove a divide between Church and state and led to the addition of anticlerical articles in the 1917 constitution. These articles prohibited public worship banned the appointment of priests who were not born in Mexico and limited the religious influence that the Church could have over Mexican children, angering clergy members.²⁰³ The Church began to be seen as anti-revolutionary and conflicts, sometimes violent ones, began to occur after the Revolution. The violence

²⁰² Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 51, 59.

²⁰³ Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 97.

occurred on both sides with a civil war breaking out in western Mexico between 1926-29 in response to President Plutarco Elias Calles attempting to institute specific aspects of the 1917 constitution that limited Church influence.²⁰⁴ On the anticlerical side, antireligious violence increased, and religious writers spoke of systematic government persecution however, the government viewed these are largely isolated local incidents and were not considered part of official government policy.²⁰⁵ This continued conflict between Church and state meant that while the Revolution had ended, the country was still at war.

In 1922, Santibáñez created the photograph of Gilda Chavarry and like the previous image, this one depicts tremendous emotion of some kind. Image 24 is of a woman shrouded in dark fabric staring intently at the wooden cross that she holds while a solitary tear drips down her cheek. This has clear social implications as Santibáñez has created a scene in which her subject perhaps is saying goodbye to the role religion has played in her life. This image was created before the Cristero Rebellion, therefore Santibáñez is commenting on the developing unrest rather than the actual armed response. Underneath the layers of black fabric, the woman is wearing a contemporary hat and appears to have her hair chopped off right along her chin line in the typical Deco

²⁰⁴ Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis. *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940,* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006), 12.

²⁰⁵ Quirk, The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church, 130-131.

fashion and helps to illustrate that this woman is saying goodbye to the Church and embracing "modernity."



Image 24. Photograph of Gilda Chavarry holding a cross created by María Santibáñez in 1922.206

²⁰⁶ Rodríguez, Fotógrafas en México 1872-1960, 37.

A Contemporary Photographer Photographing Contemporary Trends

There is much information about Santibáñez missing from the archives including her birth certificate and baptism date. Records do indicate that Santibáñez married a painter from Barcelona, Alberto Roca Cuxart, in 1926 and her life seemed to be surrounded by death after that. She lost a daughter in 1927, her mother in 1928, a son in 1929, and her brother in 1931. After 1930, she continued to photograph, however, publications in periodicals dissipated.²⁰⁷ The turmoil in her personal life may have influenced her decision to step back from photography. Throughout her photographic career, Santibáñez photographed the changing gender roles that took place in Mexico City after the Revolution, including symbols of modernity such as the adoption of the Deco body, the continuing preference for a cosmopolitan international culture within Mexico's upper class, and the internal conflict between state and religious identity. Her photographs not only document a period of intense change in Mexico, but they are also unique pieces of art that sought to be emotionally impactful.

²⁰⁷ Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, "El género y la mascarada en la fotografía de María Santibáñez," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n. 71 (2018): 132-157. 139-141.

Conclusion

Tracing the trajectory of Mexican history, there are several core themes: the preference and influence of foreign culture, conflicts and juxtapositions over creating a national identity, and the increased societal roles of women. The influence of foreign culture, particularly French and then later the United States, played a substantial role in forming upper and middle-class identity in the late 19th and early 20th century. European culture represented refinement, sophistication, and prestige to Mexican citizens that believed their country was struggling to be recognized on the international stage. The decades of warfare the nation had experienced after independence in 1821 had provided the rest of the world with a perception that Mexico was a hostile and unruly country where military dictatorship was prevalent and its people unsophisticated. To improve the international image of Mexico, one of those dictators, Porfirio Díaz dedicated his administration to highlighting aspects of Mexican culture and history that could compete with European counterparts. This involved unveiling large expanses of ruins to establish that Mexico had a rich history that was just as unique and prestigious as its Greek and Roman examples.

With ruins that could rival those of Europe, Díaz set about establishing that Mexico's contemporary population was modern. To accomplish this, he had to establish that Mexico had a high percentage of European heritage and that was not simply made up of "Indians." Out of this elite desire to be considered important on the international stage, the *mestizo* identity was born. This identity focused on individual's indigenous roots while preferencing their European heritage and focusing on progress, science, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Mexico's past was orchestrated to engage with Europe and this illustrates that while Mexico wanted to highlight certain aspects of its indigenous heritage, it was done with the sole purpose of appearing modern and cosmopolitan. This narrative held importance during the Revolution with military leaders judged for their presidential capabilities based on their ethnicity and ability to operate within elite European social circles. The *mestizo* identity became an even more important component of social and cultural identity during the post-revolutionary period when Mexico needed a single national narrative to unite a fractured nation.

Alice Le Plongeon contributed to this narrative through her dedication to photographing Mayan ruins in the Yucatán Peninsula. Her archeological photographs cast an elitist, and European, gaze on Mexico's history. Additionally, her written publications and speeches brought Mexico to the doorsteps of her readers and exposed a softer and more romantic interpretation of Mexico that perfectly matched the narrative Díaz was attempting to create. Images such as the ones Le Plongeon created, played an integral role in forming an acceptable national narrative that was largely informed by Europeans, or by Mexicans who wanted to be accepted by European aristocrats. The influence of European or global cultural traditions in Mexican society was also present in the early 20th century and is referenced in the images by María Santibáñez, and to a lesser extent the work of Sara Castrejón.

The works of both of the latter women utilized studio curtains which were meant to convey European scenery. The backdrop is often a woodland scene with Greco-Roman pillar, or other architecture, that establishes that society viewed this type of scenery as refined, desirable, and superior to what they were accustomed to locally. The fact that Castrejón had her curtains specifically made for her studio could illustrates a social preference for that type of scenery that brought some degree of refinement and sophistication to the war-torn city. However, several of her backdrops have sunflowers dispersed throughout the scene. Sunflowers have a strong connection to Mesoamerica with illustrations of the plant in Mexico dating back to the 16th century.²⁰⁸ This suggests that these backdrops may have been a fusion between European and Mesoamerican society rather than an outright celebration of European society. Within Santibáñez's images, the addition of theatrical costuming established that American or Europeanized fashion was commonplace among the Mexico City bourgeoisie. Additionally, her documentation and experimentation with capturing the evolving Deco body suggest that European trends were still closely watched by anyone who wanted to be considered modern.

Throughout this historical narrative, Mexico wished to capitalize on its indigenous heritage to unite Mexican citizens by providing them with a shared history and origin. This desire became increasingly apparent after the Revolution when *indigenismo* was utilized as a means of uniting a deeply fractured nation. While this was extremely successful, it also encouraged individuals to become "modern". The nation wanted the indigenous population to transform and adapt themselves to a very specific societal mold that encouraged them to become more "modern" in the process. By encouraging individuals to become something other than what they were, it allowed people to embrace movements and identities such as the Deco body that focused on form

²⁰⁸ Jules Janick, "Iconography of Domesticated Sunflower." *Notulae Botanicae Horti Agrobotanici Cluj-Napoca* 48, no. 3 (2020). 3-6.

rather than ethnicity and allowed individuals to be considered modern regardless of their heritage. The images created by Santibáñez highlight the popularity of the Deco body and contemporary forms of expression that occasionally contradicted the nationalistic narrative of *indigenismo*. Santibáñez's images also illustrate the development of modernism and the strength of emotion that began to be represented in photography.

On an individual level, each one of these women stretched the bounds of what was socially acceptable. Le Plongeon traveled from her comfortable middle-class English home to Mexico and traveled throughout the Yucatán peninsula. During her travels she often found herself leading archaeological excavations, wearing men's clothing, coming into contact with dangerous wild animals, and arming herself against possible rebel confrontations. Le Plongeon was aware of the social expectations of women during this period and conducted herself appropriately when necessary, however, when provided the opportunity she certainly stretched the boundaries of those social norms.

The Revolution provided women a greater degree of freedom than Le Plongeon would have experienced during the Porfiriato. During the Revolution, Castrejón appears to have operated with very few social limitations. While she may not have lived alone, she never married and created a career out of photography. During the Revolution, she photographed armed revolutionaries traveling through Teleloapan and invited officers into her studio home. Living in a city with a large number of revolutionaries passing through could have placed Castrejón in uncomfortable and unsafe situations. Castrejón also photographed executions, events that would certainly not have been considered appropriate for women to witness let alone photograph before the revolutionary conflict. The relative ease in which Castrejón photographed the Revolution illustrates that gender roles and social limitations were in flux during this period and that the freedom women had experienced during the Revolution would shape post-revolutionary policies.

Like Castrejón, Santibáñez created a career in photography. She was able to own and operate her own studio in the heart of Mexico City and documented changing gender roles. Santibáñez's images gained her a degree of notoriety after she won *El Universal's* photography competition and allowed her to continue photographing Mexico City's elite population. Her later images illustrate the role of modernism and self-expression through photography and the role that female photographers played in this development. Santibáñez was able to exercise a greater degree of freedom and self-expression than Le Plongeon and Castrejón. This development shows that while suffrage campaigns during this period were unsuccessful, the new post-revolutionary Mexican identity was in large part shaped and defined by its female participants. Santibáñez was, in her own way, a *chica moderna*.

The images of Alice Le Plongeon, Sara Castrejón, and María Santibáñez comment heavily upon these three major historical trends and were shaped by the prevalence of the concept of European superiority, modernity, and developing ideas about national Mexican identity. Their ability to engage in photography highlights the determination of these women to document the world around them even if it put them under large monetary strain, stretched the acceptable gender roles of the period, or put them in direct physical danger. Each of these women made a conscious choice in their desire to become photographers during periods when increased female involvement was only just becoming socially acceptable. These women seized the opportunity to contribute to, and comment on what they undoubtedly recognized as important changes. The images they created provide a unique representation of Mexican history that comments on how society dealt with identity formation and modernization during periods of conflicting and evolving government policy and internal conflict.

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