

©2019

ZACHARY DAVID CAMPBELL

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

BENDITA SEA LA DISCORDIA: MONTAGE TECHNIQUE IN THE WRITING OF  
PRÁXEDIS GUERRERO AND RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN

By

ZACHARY DAVID CAMPBELL

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Spanish

Written under the direction of

Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui

And approved by

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May, 2019

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### BENDITA SEA LA DISCORDIA: MONTAGE TECHNIQUE IN THE WRITING OF PRÁXEDIS GUERRERO AND RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN

by

ZACHARY DAVID CAMPBELL

Dissertation Director:

Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui

This dissertation combines the rigor of formal analysis with the insights of Walter Benjamin and other theorists to examine the prose of Mexican anarchists Ricardo Flores Magón and Práxedes Guerrero, which appeared in the newspaper *Regeneración* in the first decades of the twentieth century. In their efforts to craft a pedagogical and politically agitational writing that contributed to laying the groundwork for the Mexican Revolution, they carried out a series of formal experimentations that internalized the montage logic of periodical forms and prefigured various techniques of the historical avant-garde. My approach to this Mexican anarchist journalism challenges conventional accounts of Latin American history. Although these authors have been thoroughly studied regarding the role they played in events leading up to the Mexican Revolution, the affinities their work and lives shared with both Latin American *modernismo* and the historical avant-garde has been a blind spot for the narratives that dominate the study of the period in various disciplines. This work is an attempt to restore their importance to intellectual and literary

history, and more broadly to work at the intersection of the revolutionary tradition and the historical avant-garde.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I warmly thank my committee members Ben, Karen, and Jorge for their persistent belief in me and thoughtful, caring guidance, and Jason for so kindly accepting to be a reader on such short notice. I lovingly thank Ben Alsdurf, Claudia Arteaga, Jacinto Barrera Bassols, Andy Battle, Timothy Cahill, Clark Fitzgerald, Maria García, Michelle Hong, Elizabeth Moe, Isidora Ortiz, Erin Schell, Jarrod Shanahan, Carolyn Ureña, and Dulce Wechsler, for their friendship, love, encouragement, and support. I couldn't have done this without you. I graciously thank my Mom and Dad, Brenda and Bill, for their endless and unwavering love, and my siblings, Ryan, Brett, and Rose. I joyfully thank my comrades and friends in Ridgewood, Queens, and my comrades and friends across the country and around the world, many of whose names discretion prevents me from bringing together here. You have taught me the value of living intensely and pursuing my desires. I look forward to our adventures to come.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
I    Life and Death of the Image in Flores Magón	25
II   The Chemical Poetics of “Puntos Rojos”	66
III  Synecdoche Coahuila	101
IV   The Use Fables of Flores Magón	136
CONCLUSION	173
BIBLIOGRAPHY	183

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Photograph of the staff of *El Hijo del Ahuizote*. *Fototeca Nacional* of the *Instituto Nacional de Historia y Antropología*, Mexico City, Mexico. Reproduction from the *Galería* of the *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. February 5, 1903. 56
2. “Puntos Rojos” section of the newspaper *Regeneración*. Reproduction from the *Periódicos* section of the *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. September 10, 1910. 96
3. Postcard of members of the Mexican Liberal Party’s Organizing Committee. Reproduction from the *Galería* of the *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. 126
4. Photograph of Alberto R. Tellez, Ricardo Flores Magón, Enrique Flores Magón, María Brousse, and Trinidad Villareal in Edendale, Los Angeles. *Fototeca Nacional* of the *Instituto Nacional de Historia y Antropología*. Mexico City, Mexico. Reproduction from the *Galería* of the *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. 140

## Introduction

The pages of human history are drenched in the blood of revolutionaries who died in vain. Though it may one day bear witness to a time when these deaths are infused with a redemptive truth, today the contrary seems more likely. In such a circumstance, one form writing revolutionary history takes is that of reparation. It offers the possibility to repair our relationship to the past, in hopes that this latter might enter into a more dynamic relationship with the present. It offers the chance to re-member affinities that have been lost from view and to rescue them from the threat of appropriation or oblivion. In the pages that follow, through rigorous formal analysis and theoretical reflection, I explore the experimental journalism of the Mexican anarchists Ricardo Flores Magón (1874-1922) and Práxedes Guerrero (1882-1910). I show how their writing demonstrates their importance not only to the legacy of the revolutionary tradition, but also to that of the historical avant-garde. This is my contribution to repairing the relationship between the revolutionary tradition and the avant-gardes, in a time in which the former's need to assess and make use of what still lives in the latter presents itself as an urgent task of the present.

As one aspect of their broader dedication to assembling a force that could bring an end to the *Porfiriato*,<sup>1</sup> the short writings of these two authors appeared in a series of newspapers throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. The most prominent among these, *Regeneración* (1900-1918), was founded by Ricardo and his brother Jesús in the first year of the new century (Abad de Santillán 5). When the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the name given to the dictatorial rule of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico. It lasted from 1876 to 1911, finally culminating in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917).

newspaper first appeared in August of that year, its creators intended it to serve as a mouthpiece of juridical activism. As Claudio Lomnitz notes in “The Return of Comrade Flores Magón,” it was “a forum for the denunciation of breaches in the operation of the system of justice” (83). Shortly thereafter, however, it became the epicenter of the newly formed *Partido Liberal Mexicano*, or Mexican Liberal Party, which came into being in 1901 after a congress that brought together a series of political clubs from across the country (Lomnitz xxx). This “party” was “initially no more than a loose social movement founded on autonomous local organizations that had a set of ephemeral newspapers as their focal point” (ibid). Formed at the dawn of Mexico’s incorporation into global capital, the Mexican Liberal Party’s struggles against personalist politics, nationalism and the state represent a foundational moment for the modern Mexican left, and their work developed a critique that is still relevant today (Córdova 33, 52-6).

While these authors and their political network have been the object of extensive historical study, few efforts have been made to interrogate the nature of the rhetorical forms they produced and circulated in *Regeneración*. When it comes to the creation and circulation of these forms, Ángel Rama’s characterization of the prominent use of the Latin American newspaper as a literary laboratory or space of discursive experimentation is fitting; in the case of *Regeneración*, this was carried out in a register of antagonistic intensity perhaps until then unmatched in the history of Latin American print production: for both authors, the newspaper was a political and politicizing “gimnasio de estilo” (Rama, *Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico* 50). *Regeneración* eventually became a vehicle through which an agitational writing related information about the political situation in Mexico from an anti-authoritarian perspective and aimed to inspire

action among a heterogeneous readership united by a desire to bring the miseries of the *Porfiriato* to an end.

What becomes evident through a close exploration of their work is the ways in which journalism, as an element of and in conjunction with the broader collective life formed around *Regeneración*, shared many characteristics with the concurrent series of political and aesthetic experiments that have come to be known as the historical avant-garde. In his exhaustive work, “Five Faces of Modernity,” Matei Călinescu defines

two conditions... basic to the existence and meaningful activity of any properly named avant-garde... : (1) the possibility that its representatives be conceived of, or conceive of themselves, as being in advance of their time... and (2) the idea that there is a bitter struggle to be fought against an enemy symbolizing the forces of stagnation, the tyranny of the past, the old forms and ways of thinking, which tradition imposes on us like fetters to keep us from moving forward. (122)

Through its intense antagonism to the *Porfiriato* and orientation toward a post-revolutionary world freed of capital and domination, the anarchist circle around *Regeneración* met these conditions and shared many characteristics with other experiments throughout the world. Such efforts consisted of initiatives carried out by relatively small groups of artists, revolutionaries, intellectuals, and other antagonists who organized themselves for the purposes of sharing a life in social agitation; a sincere cultural and political hatred of the bourgeoisie; the use of the newspaper and other forms of small-scale print production to spread ideas and experiment with new aesthetic, literary, and social forms; and the collective pursuit of a desire to radically transform their present conditions of life.

While a large body of historical research has explored the Mexican Liberal Party as the heirs of the revolutionary tradition, the present work marks the first attempt to emphasize the affinity between the Mexican anarchists and the historical avant-garde. Although the modern period of the revolutionary tradition emerged in the wake of the French Revolution, the radical Jacobinism-cum-anarchism of the circle around *Regeneración* and the broader Mexican Liberal Party, as well as the practice of political newspaper publishing, had a more recent and local referent in the radical liberal and Jacobin<sup>2</sup> currents of the mid-century Mexican political conflict that culminated in the *Reforma*. Across the Atlantic, as Călinescu's study shows, the relationship between the avant-gardes and the revolutionary tradition remained intimate throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. The term "avant-garde," after notably appearing in the title of the Jacobin publication *L'Avant-garde de l'armée des Pyrénées orientales* (1794) during the French Revolution, made its way in to the writing of the French utopian socialists in the decades to follow (Călinescu 97, 101). It was first used in a "literary-artistic context" in 1825, when Olinde Rodrigues, a disciple of Henri de Saint-Simon, employed it to describe the visionary role of the artist in a dialogue entitled "L'Artiste, le savant et l'industriel" (1825). According to Călinescu, the term then re-emerges in 1845, this time in a pamphlet written by Gabriel Désiré Laverdant, a disciple of Charles

---

<sup>2</sup> Mexican Jacobinism was a variant of radical liberalism that adapted many of the themes of the Jacobins of the French Revolution. The French Jacobins, infamous for their role in the Reign of Terror, grew out of the clubs of literary and secret societies prominent in the decades leading up to 1789 (Brinton 183). They were generally in favor of republicanism, universal suffrage for men, the separation of the church from the state, civil rights, and the elimination of social privileges (Schneiderman xvii-xviii). In Mexico, Jacobins were the main leaders of the *Reforma*, and ironically an eventual target of the regime this latter brought to power (Zea 53).

Fourier. In his pamphlet, Laverdant envisioned the advanced role of the arts in much the same way Rodrigues had twenty years before (Călinescu 106-7).

Although Călinescu highlights this continuous affinity between the political and aesthetic avant-gardes, Renato Poggioli, in his “The Theory of the Avant-Garde,” recognizes a distinct period dominated by the “sociopolitical avant-garde” which, in the wake of the Paris Commune of 1871, gives way to a “cultural-artistic avant-garde” (10). In response to this, an adamant Călinescu declares that “Poggioli’s idea of an abrupt and complete divorce of the two avant-gardes” is “unacceptable,” and suggests that the relationship was much less distinguishable:<sup>3</sup> “it would be inaccurate to say that the two avant-gardes were separated by an unbridgeable gap” (113). In any case, both authors seem to agree that the events of the Paris Commune were monumental for the encounter of the two manifestations of avant-garde. After these events, in addition to its more expansive political meaning, “avant-garde”

came to designate the small group of advanced writers and artists who transferred the spirit of radical critique of social forms to the domain of artistic forms... to overthrow all the binding formal traditions of art and to enjoy the exhilarating freedom of exploring completely new, previously forbidden, horizons of creativity. For they believed that to revolutionize art was the same as to revolutionize life. (Călinescu 112)

---

<sup>3</sup> Symptomatic of the intimacy between the two avant-gardes is the trajectory of the Parisian Anatole Baju. Initially the founder of the scandalous and manifesto-filled publication *Le Decadent* (1886) (Călinescu 175), Baju’s increasing politicization led him to stop publishing the magazine three years later to carry out what was eventually a “disastrous campaign as a socialist candidate for the National Assembly” (Călinescu 177).



Among the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, it is noteworthy that groups like the Constructivists, the Stridentists, and the Surrealists all engaged with communist politics in a very real sense, through participation both in parties and the workers' movement. Before I move on from the legacy of the Paris Commune, however, I would like to point out that some of the most insightful reflections on the avant-garde to emerge from this experience appeared in two letters written by the French poet Arthur Rimbaud. These letters, collectively known as the *Lettres du Voyant*, or "Letters of the Visionary," were respectively written on May 13 and 15, 1871 – shortly before the start of the Bloody Week that marked the French government's brutal assault on the Commune. While they raise the question of Rimbaud's direct involvement with the Commune's events, as Kristen Ross notes in "The Emergence of Social Space," Rimbaud's relationship to the uprising has mostly been characterized by "frenzied interrogations by literary historians and biographers anxious to ascertain his precise physical whereabouts during the months" of the Paris insurrection (32). Against this, Ross insists what he shares with the Commune is "not to be established by measuring geographic distance," but by perceiving in his writing "one creative response to the same objective situation to which the insurrection in Paris was another" (32-3). Insofar as Rimbaud's reflections relate to the work of Guerrero and Flores Magón, what is most intriguing about the "creative response" formed in the letters is the way in which Rimbaud articulated the role of the new writing that characterized the avant-garde. In both letters, Rimbaud's formulations rely on a use of the figure of the *voyant*. *Voyant*, from the French verb *voir* (to see), refers to a *seer* – a visionary or a prophet. A prophet is someone that, *in advance*, sees what is to come.

In light of the relatively scientific connotations the term avant-garde invokes today – whether as an object of high aesthetic theory and formalist study on the one hand, or, under the pejorative term “vanguardism,” as a relic of certain “scientific” ambitions of revolutionary theory on the other – it is surprising to note the connection that developed between avant-garde activity and the vocation of the prophet throughout the nineteenth-century. While the figure “of the poet as a prophet had been revived and developed since the early days of romanticism” and Saint-Simon also wrote of the poet as a prophetic figure in reference to the concept of an aesthetic avant-garde (Călinescu 105), with Rimbaud a more fully developed image of the poet’s prophetic vocation emerges. Indeed, certain fragments of Rimbaud’s letters can themselves be read as a modern form of historico-aesthetic prophecy. This is most notably the case for his famous maxim, included in the second letter written to fellow poet Paul Demeny, in which Rimbaud proclaims that “(l)a Poésie ne rythmera plus l’action, elle *sera en avant*”<sup>4</sup> (308). This aesthetic secularization of the figure of the prophet finds resonance in the writings of Flores Magón. In these, anti-capitalist doctrine, in the face of a declining Catholic Church largely regarded as another of several state institutions rotting under Porfirian corruption, insists on its spiritual role in the lives of its adherents, and the revolutionary is now considered a kind of spiritual or even mystical figure.<sup>5</sup>

Other sections of Rimbaud’s letters provide clues for the interpretation of his enigmatic maxim, which in a handful of passages conceive of the new poetry of the

---

<sup>4</sup> “Poetry will no longer lend its rhythm to action, it *will be in advance*” (Rimbaud 309).

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most notable in this regard are Flores Magón’s eulogistic characterizations of Guerrero as a martyr dedicated to spreading the good news of revolution among the oppressed, detailed in the second chapter below.

avant-garde in contradistinction to the old regime of verse inherited from Greek poetry. In Greece, as Rimbaud notes, “verses and lyres give rhythm to Action. After that, music and rhymes are games and pastimes... the game gets moldy. It has lasted two thousand years!” (305, 307). The regime of verse, which “gave rhythm” to Action, has grown old and, in the face of the new writing and its sensibility, is to be overcome. Unlike the simultaneity that characterized the old relationship between poetry and action, the new poetry, which comes *in advance*, is characterized by a sequential and ostensibly causal relationship with action. This is because, as Rimbaud details elsewhere in his letters, the complete and total transformation of the poet, as a process of self-knowledge, precedes the action that poetry has the potential to bring in to being. For the poet, “one must be a *seer*, make oneself a *seer*.” (Rimbaud 307).

There are at least three ways in which one can understand the writing of Flores Magón and Guerrero, along with the larger phenomena of the Mexican Liberal Party, as a fulfillment of Rimbaud’s prophecy. Given that, much like the avant-gardes of the nineteenth-century, the work of Guerrero and Flores Magón is marked by a productive tension between the political and the aesthetic, I suggest one fulfillment of this prophecy takes shape in politics, while the other two relate to the works’ aesthetic dimensions. Having formed a decade before the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, through *Regeneración*, the Mexican Liberal Party poetically labored *in advance of* and prepared the groundwork for it. As James D. Cockcroft notes, the movement organized by the Mexican Liberal Party against the *Porfiriato* has been regarded as a precursor to the Revolution (9): its members were involved in many events that were, in hindsight, signs of the storm to come. In 1906, members of the Mexican Liberal Party conspired with

industrial workers to organize a mining strike in Cananea, Sonora, and were also influential in textile strikes in Río Blanco, Veracruz (1907) and the city of Veracruz (1908), as well as a railroad strike in San Luis Potosí (Cockroft 132). The poetic propaganda of *Regeneración* and the incessant organizing activity of the Mexican Liberal Party came in advance and prepared a fertile political terrain on which the seeds of revolt would soon germinate and bloom into flowers of insurrection.

Regarding the aesthetic dimensions of the work of Guerrero and Flores Magón, the claim that poetry precedes action is fulfilled in at least two ways. The first of these is related to the transformational work of the poet, whereas the second is related to a more formal question of the works' cultivation of image space through the constructive principle of montage.

In the summer and fall of 1899, Flores Magón wrote two letters of his own that marked an effort to think through the vocation of the writer. He wrote from Oaxaca, where he was temporarily staying with family, to his younger brother Enrique in Mexico City. In the first letter, written on August 16, Ricardo recommends that Enrique cultivate and pursue his thoughts, expand his knowledge of the conventions of rhetoric, and read history, geography, and philosophy, but most importantly that he strive to develop a singular style that would allow his work to distinguish itself (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). The full motivation for this appears in the next letter, written a month later, on September 17, in which Ricardo advises Enrique to privilege emotional effect over rhetorical convention (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). Speaking of a composition penned by Enrique, Flores Magón suggests that “(e)l asunto que escogiste es simpático para que deje de ser bello. Hace sentir” (Archivo Electrónico

Ricardo Flores Magón). While the content of Enrique's composition is unclear, this short phrase provides a glimpse into Flores Magón's vision of writing and the task of the writer. "Ser bello," which in this context refers to conforming to rhetorical conventions – much like those that dictated the regime of verse about which Rimbaud complained in the letters mentioned above – is superseded by Enrique's text's sympathetic appeal and capacity to move the reader through eliciting an emotional response. According to this formulation, by way of the author's own cultivation and capacity to write in a way that at once realizes but also goes beyond, and, in and through this, ostensibly negates aesthetic norms, the poetry of the work precedes and incites an *active* affective response on the reader's behalf. This surpassing of rhetorical rules through what one might identify as a text's ecstatic potential is articulated again in a letter written by Flores Magón exactly twenty-two years after the initial letter mentioned above. Now in a federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, where he would die just over a year later, Flores Magón wrote a letter in response to a young comrade who went by the name of Ellen White. White had previously sent a letter to him in which she seemed to have shared a composition she had written entitled "Isle of Dreams" (Flores Magón, Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922) 242-4). Writing in English on August 16, 1921, in response to White's apparent request for his feedback on the composition, Flores Magón confesses he is no longer able to recall the rhetorical rules that would allow him to judge the quality of her work:

You want me to be a critic, my good comrade, and I think it sensible to decline such a function. I cannot judge your productions for one simple reason to wit; that I have forgotten all about rhetorical rules... if you want to have a learned opinion of it, I am afraid you have chosen the wrong party, my dear Ellen. For me, the

merit of the composition does not lie in its more or less skillful arrangements of words and phrases, but in the intensity and quality of the aesthetic emotions it stirs in me... I thank you again for having procured me so exquisite aesthetic emotions with the reading of the *Isle of Dreams* (Flores Magón, Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922) 242-3)

Flores Magón's preference for eliciting emotion – an inclination that, as this passage shows, lasted his entire life – over respect for formal conventions stems from his commitment to action. In this way, in Flores Magón's conception, poetic labor occurs prior to and motivates subsequent action, bringing it into being through the text's capacity to move its reader through the circulation of affects. At the same time, Flores Magón's rejection of rhetorical rules and convention does not imply his writing disregarded questions of form. On the contrary, as I show through rigorous analysis in the present work, both Flores Magón and Guerrero were attentive to form – not for the sake of form itself as much as for its political uses. Flores Magón's affirmation of the importance of eliciting an affective response are the *raison d'être* of the formal methods he developed. What Flores Magón refers to as "style" in the letter to Enrique above relates to the development of technique, and for both Guerrero and Flores Magón, technique is a means of achieving an emotional effect.

The affective sensibility that both Guerrero and Flores Magón valued in writing must also be understood in terms of the social context of their time. They came of age in an intellectual world formed by the vulgar materialism of Mexican positivism; drawing from Mexico's Jacobin tradition, their aesthetic sensibilities emerged in antagonistic response to that Porfirian world. In "El Positivismo en México," the Mexican philosopher

Leopoldo Zea details how the philosophy of positivism appeared and was adapted to the political context of the mid-century *Reforma*. As Zea notes, the philosophy was originally developed by Auguste Comte as a means of “coordinar sin contradecirse” the opposed concepts of order and liberty (45). When positivism crossed the Atlantic and took root in Mexico, it became the “ideological instrument” of the Mexican bourgeoisie (Zea 35). As an ideology of progress that combined strong elements of Social Darwinism through the influence of Herbert Spencer, Mexican positivism maintained that the logic of progress produced “una clase afortunada que, por poseer mejores dotes, representa la selección de las especies y tiene, por lo mismo, el derecho casi sagrado de explotar y sostener a su domino a los ineptos.” (Zea 35). In Mexico, the positivist ideology eventually found its most ardent adherents in a group known as the *científicos*, the ideological clique of the ruling class influential in educational institutions and national politics throughout the period of the *Porfiriato* (Cockroft 56); the re-emergence of mid-century Jacobinism and the spiritual sensibility often cultivated in the writings of *Regeneración* must be understood as a response to their decades-long intellectual reign. Against the gradualism of their ideology, which envisioned an ostensibly *endless* progress, the writing of Flores Magón and Guerrero cultivated a poetic and spiritual sensibility that immediately championed the lives of the oppressed – the same lives that for Mexican positivism composed the fatalistically expiatory classes of history’s long, progressive march. In this way, the writing of Guerrero and Flores Magón intensified and strategically politicized *modernismo*’s protest of the “technological, materialistic, and ideological impact of positivism that swept” across Latin America in the latter half of the nineteenth-century (Jrade 4), participating in what Graciela Montaldo, in “La sensibilidad amenazada,” has

referred to as the new aesthetic “syntax” that emerged with capitalist modernity (and *modernismo*) in the last decades of the nineteenth century (19-21).

While the nature of their writing found antecedents in the Mexican Jacobin journalism of the mid-nineteenth century, their work is more accurately understood as an encounter between the prose of that tradition and a series of new rhetorical tendencies and possibilities. Positioned between an agrarian economy and the rise of industrial capital; the decline of a dictatorial regime and the class compromise that would characterize the post-revolutionary period; the decline of artisanal print production in the face of industrial print production; and *modernismo* and the historical avant-garde, their writing is a *prose of transition*. To more fully shed light on the discursive horizon in which they wrote and lived, below I offer some historical details regarding changes then underway in the field of print production.

In “La metamorfosis del periodismo,” Xosé López García divides the history of journalism into three periods (32-5). In each of these, a culturally dominant form – respectively opinion, information, and explanation – prevails (López García 32-5). As modern journalism emerges through the invention of print technologies and processes of secularization, the prevalence of commentary and opinion came to dominate journalism in the nineteenth-century (López García 32-5). For López García, “(t)odo giraba alrededor de las propuestas proselitistas de los responsables que controlaban los principales diarios, siempre al servicio de su clase” (33). With the fin de siècle development and expansion of the networks of Western European and North American news agencies and the new capacity of information to rapidly proliferate across the face of the globe, rhetorical tendencies that privileged facts and information as ostensibly



objective material began to displace the prior journalism of opinion (López García 34-5). “News,” the privileged genre of industrial print production, now strove to convince the world of its superiority to the old genres of commentary.

In this context, the rhetorical gesture of Flores Magón and Guerrero, along with other writers of the revived Jacobin tendency, formed a paradox. While their politics and the writing that accompanied it *appeared* anachronistic, their prose at once produced some of the most experimental writing of its time. In this sense, akin to the novel’s heteroglot tendencies that Mikhail Bakhtin identifies so acutely in “The Dialogic Imagination,” the prose of Guerrero and Flores Magón exhibits important forms of heteroglossia. Against Porfirian processes of “ideological centralization and unification,” their writing often stages a rhetorical encounter between the present and past, participating in what Bakhtin has referred to as heteroglot “processes of decentralization and disunification” (270-2).

The form their assault on narrative took consisted of a combinatorial logic accurately described by way of the montage principle, which manifests itself in their writings in a variety of forms. As Peter Bürger notes in his “Theory of the Avant-Garde,” montage, which was “the fundamental principle of avant-gardiste art” (72), “describes the phase of the constitution of the work” through a process that implies “the fragmentation of reality” and the consequent individual or sequential incorporation of these fragmented parts taken from some previously formed whole into a new work (73). Montage refers to a process through which the parts of a work are able to take on meaning individually, now no longer subsumed to the work as a whole, and originates in descriptions of the Cubist experimentation carried out by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque “during the

years before the First World War” (Bürger 73). In this period, the works of Picasso and Braque were characterized by the addition of “*papiers collés*” to the canvas to form what were called “‘fitted’ (*montierte*) work(s)” (72-3). In these paintings, fragments from the reality of daily life, such as “a piece of a woven basket or wallpaper” were “glued on the canvas” (Bürger 73). While these fragments form part of the work and can be considered in relation to and in juxtaposition with its other elements – individually or as a whole – they also maintain a singularity in the eyes of the observer and are not perceptively subsumed into the rest of the work.

While there is no single, determinant factor that would account for the prominence of montage as a constructive principle in the writing of Guerrero and Flores Magón, it can be conceptualized in terms of a constellation. Such a constellation would take into account the motivations that drove them to write, the particular historical horizon that determined their orientation to life and writing, as well as the materials that were available to them. In this regard, it would minimally entail the propagandistic circulation of agitational affects, a philosophical conception of life and history, and the insistence of the past evinced in the heteroglot nature of their texts.

Flores Magón’s writing advice mentioned in the letters above demonstrates the life-long importance he gave to the rhetorical capacity to move the reader, over and above the pursuit of aesthetic value – whether this latter be defined as conforming to a set of aesthetic conventions or as surpassing them. In this sense, his attention to technique did not exist for the sake of technique itself, but for the politico-aesthetic ends this latter might help achieve. A central way in which both writers circulated affects of political agitation and appealed to a certain type of reader relied on the fact that theirs was a

*partisan writing*. In both form and content, it demanded an active reader – through the texts’ uncompromising opposition to the Porfirian present, but also through their capacity to open up a field of conceptual tension and conflict through juxtaposition and antithesis. As I show in chapters one and four of the present work, the predominant strategy for doing so for Flores Magón was through the use of antithetical technique. This technique seems most apt for the horizon of newspaper writing because it can be employed with brevity, allowing the author to put several concepts into play over a relatively short amount of textual time, but nonetheless demanding from the reader an active response to the rhetorical tensions that emerge.

At the same time, the form of this technique demonstrates another aspect of Flores Magón’s prose: the conceptualization, for history or for life itself, of the becoming of being. In this sense, the formal figures of disruption and conflict demonstrated in each author’s writing find an analogue in the movement of German Expressionism, which would reach its apogee in the 1920s. As Ernst Bloch notes in “Discussing Expressionism,” a text formulated as a defense of the movement against György Lukács’s charges that it lent itself to fascist appropriation (17), Expressionism’s “experiments with disruptive... techniques” as well as “montage and other devices of discontinuity,” might in fact express a more authentic view of the nature of reality against Lukács’s idealist notions of totality (22). While the work of Guerrero and Flores Magón did not explicitly develop such a theory of reality, the most concise expression of this logic of discontinuity as a kind of philosophy of the text is to be found in “Discordia,” a short text Flores Magón published in December of 1910. The montage principle at work in this text demonstrates a more profound reflection about historical and natural life. As my focus on

Flores Magón's antithetical technique shows in the present work, what the author expresses in terms of content in the passage below is elsewhere and often realized on the level of form throughout his work:

La vida es desorden, es lucha, es crítica, es desacuerdo, es hervidero de pasiones. De ese caos sale la belleza; de esa confusión sale la ciencia; de la crítica, del choque, del desorden, del hervidero de pasiones surgen radiantes como ascuas, pero grandes como soles, la verdad y la libertad. La Discordia, he ahí el gran agente creador que obra en la naturaleza. Las acciones y las reacciones en la materia inorgánica, generadoras de movimiento, de calor, de luz, de belleza, ¿qué son si no obra de la Discordia?... Todo lo transforma la Discordia: disuelve y crea, destruye y esculpe. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 67)

In distinction to Mexican positivism's idealistic telos of a world ever and always tending toward progress and indebted to a social elite acting as its motor of history, this passage asserts that disorder, struggle, the negativity of critique, disagreement, and even anger and confusion are the motor of life, productive of dynamism and action, but also of freedom and truth. If Mexican positivism generally championed the *fixity* of narrative in the form of an inexorable movement of progress led by the ruling classes, the prose of Guerrero and Flores Magón entailed a formal assault on and rupture with such a concept of continuity in favor of discontinuity through the use of the poetic function. In contrast to the Porfirian newspapers of their time – most notably *El Imparcial* – both Flores Magón and Guerrero infused their writing with a kind of extreme poetic sensibility. In a technical sense, as Roman Jakobson has noted, the realization of the poetic function is essentially the projection of a principle of equivalence across a given syntactic sequence

(358), inevitably disrupting some element of its narrative stability by emphasizing another logic of analogous connection that appears discontinuously throughout the sequence. Against Mexican positivism, and through a kind of staging of poetic contamination and experimentation with short journalistic forms, both authors cultivated an *aesthetics of rupture*. In this sense, in staging the poetic interruption of conventional narrative time, their writings are figures of what they desired and worked toward realizing in life, in the form of communist insurrection. To do this, they made use of the montage principle to carry out a formal attack on the *Porfirian* ideology of continuity and closure in the same way their calls for revolt and insurrection took aim at the gradualist notion of endless progress. In their texts, the fragmentation wrought by the poetic function sabotages the homogenous flow of narrative time, imitating on the page, per Walter Benjamin, that explosion of the “continuum of history... (that) is peculiar to the revolutionary classes in the moment of their action” (On the Concept of History 395). The view of life “Discordia” crafts is in some sense a precursor to later modes of twentieth-century thought that attempted to surpass the idealist conception of reality that separates positivity and negativity into two separate moments, instead affirming at once that the transformation brought about by Discord “dissolves and creates, destroys and sculpts” (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 67). In this sense, the montage principle manifest in the works of Guerrero and Flores Magón might also be interpreted as a discursive form of mimesis, an effort to harness the power and glory of life’s dynamism through attentive imitation. The fact that the montage principle is also theoretically productive is a testament to a kind of writing against the emergent discipline of discursive labor that marked their time.

Finally, the montage principle gives form to an insistence of the past, implicitly bringing into view the concept of redemption that appears time and again as a leitmotif in the present work. The heteroglossia of generic tendencies in these texts consists of an encounter between the rhetorical sensibilities of the nineteenth-century's Mexican Jacobin tradition with the new forms and conventions that were prevalent at the turn of the century. The figures and forms of this tradition are more characteristic of the age of opinion that López García identified in his periodization of the history of print production. In contrast to the new modes of writing that emerged with the industrial press, these modes all share, to a greater or lesser degree, a concern with the transmission of experience in an age in which the rationalization of language makes the communication of experience increasingly difficult. In an age of large-scale dispossession and proletarianization of traditional forms of life, this persistence of discursive forms of experience was co-existent with the persistence of the desire for freedom ultimately denied by the *Reforma*. This *redemptive insistence of the past* is evident in many of the figures mentioned in the chapters below, notably the “desfile dantesco” of prisoners and ghosts that pass before the eyes of the *Buitre Viejo* in “El derecho de rebelión” (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 32-6), the “pétalos marchitos,” “plumajes deslustrados,” and other figures of decaying beauty enumerated at the beginning of “5 de febrero de 1857” (Flores Magón, *Artículos políticos seudónimos* 91), and the various protagonists of Flores Magón's “use fables.” The deployal of these generic tendencies communicate the *regeneration* of the Jacobin spirit through its emergence in the writings of Guerrero and Flores Magón, now in the form of anarchism

at the dawn of the twentieth-century, unafraid of and of necessity engaging with the new rhetorical conventions and prominent discursive modes of the time.

One of the most eloquent articulations of the past's redemptive insistence is expressed in the second thesis of Benjamin's "On the Concept of History," translated into Spanish from the original German as "Sobre el concepto de la historia" by Bolívar Echeverría. I reproduce a fragment of Echeverría's translation of the thesis below for the clarity with which he has rendered it:

El pasado lleva un índice oculto que no deja de remitirlo a la redención. ¿Acaso no nos roza, a nosotros también, una ráfaga del aire que envolvía a los de antes? ¿Acaso en las voces a las que prestamos oído no resuena el eco de otras voces que dejaron de sonar? Acaso las mujeres a las que hoy cortejamos no tienen hermanas que ellas ya no llegaron a conocer? Si es así, un secreto compromiso de encuentro está entonces vigente entre las generaciones del pasado y la nuestra. Es decir: éramos esperados sobre la tierra. También a nosotros, entonces, como a toda otra generación, nos ha sido conferida una *débil* fuerza mesiánica, a la cual el pasado tiene derecho de dirigir sus reclamos. (36-7)

The writing of Guerrero and Flores Magón is imbued with such an "índice oculto," which re-members and re-presents the desires of the past. The use fable protagonist of the printing type mentioned in the fourth chapter even asserts being the "índice que señala a la humanidad el camino de su redención" (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*). In and through these figures, the Jacobin-cum-anarchist tradition demanded an encounter with the present. Within a decade of *Regeneración*'s appearance, against the Porfirian pursuit of progress, this would finally come in the form of the Revolution,

initiated appropriately enough by Emiliano Zapata's insurrection in Morelos, a movement which embodied a distinct but analogous claim on the present by that which has been.

In what concerns the texts analyzed in the chapters below, in each case the evidence of montage as a constructive principle also demonstrates a heteroglot admixture of genres. In the first chapter, I explore the use of images in Flores Magón's writing in the manifesto mode. Flores Magón's use of the image can be genealogically traced to what Joyce Waddell Bailey, in her article "The Penny Press," has termed the Mexican "graphic narrative tradition," which emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth-century (85-6). In these image texts, Flores Magón extracts images from the world of that tradition and subsequently deploys them in a prose heavily influenced by what Mary Ann Caws, in "Manifesto: A Century of Isms," has termed the "high age of the manifesto" (xxii). In so doing, Flores Magón makes both an allegorical and prismatic use of the image. In the former, the images are divorced from the world that gave them meaning and invested with new meanings, according to their combinations and the new content to which they refer; in the latter, images and series of images realize a kind of illustrative, textual reflection of a term or an idea. In the second chapter, I turn to the writing of Práxedes Guerrero to explore how, in his column "Puntos Rojos," the author combines aphorisms and maxims – two historically privileged forms of transmitting experience – with a newer form of news reportage characteristic of industrial print production. Positioned between the artisanal press of the nineteenth-century and the industrial press of the twentieth-century, Guerrero crafts a "news aphorism" that incorporates the transmission of experience with the new regime of information. In doing so, Guerrero opens up an "image space" which allows the reader to conceive of the international



dimensions of anti-capitalist struggle. In the third chapter, I explore how Guerrero's series of "Episodios Revolucionarios" combine the ancient genre of eulogy with the modern form of the *crónica* to commemorate a series of failed uprisings that occurred in Northern Mexico in 1908. While Guerrero's "Episodios" are in part a work of remembrance in honor of dead comrades and friends, they also reveal the strategic intention of making the experiences of 1908 visible to a readership poised to enter the whirlwind of the Revolution. In this chapter, Guerrero deploys various forms of the rhetorical figure of synecdoche in an attempt to link social and personal history, respectively communicated through the rhetorical tendencies of the *crónica* and eulogy. In the fourth chapter, I return to the work of Flores Magón to explore what I term the author's "use fables." In these fables, which replace the genre's traditionally animal protagonists with anthropomorphized objects, Flores Magón appropriates the stream of consciousness technique from the literary world of the bourgeois novel and, through an act of refunctioning, combines it with antithesis to give inner and often conflicted voice to the fables' characters. As a result, these characters often express their insecurities, but also reflect on the multiple horizons of their potential either at the service of forces of oppression or liberation.

Most specifically in the case of the "Puntos Rojos," but also in other works explored in these chapters, the constructive technique of montage contributes to the emergence of what Joseph Frank has defined as "spatial form." One of the central claims of Frank's book, "The Idea of Spatial Form," is that "aesthetic form in modern poetry... is based on a space logic that demands a complete reorientation in the reader's attitude toward language," provoking a reflexive space of *active* cognition that perceives the

relations between the objects simultaneously rather than sequentially in a posterior moment of time (15). As Katherine Wall notes in a gloss on Frank's work, "Frank describes spatial form as the narrative or poetic structure derived from the juxtaposition of disparate images that occur throughout a literary work. When "the time-flow of the narrative is halted" the reader must interpret related images, events, or "word-groups" as simultaneous rather than sequential elements." (22). Through the poetic juxtaposition of elements, a new conceptual space is opened for the active reader. As I mention above, and in addition to the encounters between and among genres these works realize, this is the way in which the texts undermine the figure of Porfirian continuity and break open the notion of historical time, staging a different and immediate form of time in which present and past are intermingled. Frank suggests that "by this juxtaposition of past and present... history becomes ahistorical. Time is no longer felt as an objective, causal progression with clearly marked out differences between periods; now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out" (63).

This cultivation of spatial form is the final way in which the texts of Guerrero and Flores Magón fulfill Rimbaud's prophecy that poetry will precede action. Yet what is it in the image space that opens things up for or provokes action? It is, first of all, the insistence – emerging from the texts themselves – that their reader be an *active reader*. To fully come to terms with their texts, one engages with the material to make sense of it – not only as it appears sequentially on the page, but in terms of the relations of simultaneity into which a given text's constituent parts might enter. This is an action necessarily posterior to the text's poetry and the act of reading itself. This process of cognition at once requires and provokes a critical consciousness, which, in combination

with the ever-present attempt to circulate agitational affects that spur activity, often makes of these texts calls to revolutionary action.

By demonstrating the affinities and consistencies their writing shared with the historical avant-garde, this Introduction has shown how the texts and lives of Guerrero and Flores Magón embody a fulfillment of Rimbaud's prophecy. Beyond certain sociological considerations, however, in the following pages I closely analyze their writing's multiple engagements with the principle of montage. From the *papiers collés* of the Cubists, to the Surrealist novels of Louis Aragon ("Paris Peasant") and André Breton ("Nadja"), to the cinema of Sergei Eisenstein and the *détournement* of the Lettrists and Situationists (Martos 23-6), passing over innumerable experiments in between, montage was the most prominent technique of the historical avant-garde. Given that these Mexican anarchists weren't pursuing the same aesthetic aims as many of their contemporaries, demonstrating how Flores Magón and Guerrero are also part of this history re-opens the question of montage's relationship to the historical avant-garde, and even puts into question the meaning and consistency of the historical avant-garde itself. While I hope to have made a first step in rescuing an important aspect of their legacy, the present work also raises many more questions that offer fruitful paths of investigation – opportunities to grasp some vital aspect of the past before it loses any chance of being redeemed.

# I

## Life and Death of the Image in Flores Magón

In more than one sense, Flores Magón's experimental journalism can be conceived of as a point of conjunction. It marks a convergence between the US and Mexican workers' movements, between political and aesthetic activity, and also, insofar as this activity is concerned, between *modernismo* and the historical avant-garde, well before the latter is said to have emerged in Mexico. The author's most innovative texts were published before the emergence of Mexican *estridentismo*, or Stridentism, in 1918, conventionally considered to be the movement that initiated the Mexican avant-garde (Flores 21).

As the Mexican Liberal Party went through a process of anti-capitalist radicalization, it played a central role in a series of strikes and revolts leading up to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Exiled in the US and under constant persecution, however, the Party's political influence withered as the Revolution unfolded, culminating in Flores Magón's death in prison in 1922. Situated at the intersection of political historiography and the histories of perception, this chapter looks at the use of the image in a handful of Flores Magón's texts written in what I've termed the "manifesto mode."

Given its association with political discourse, it is unsurprising that the manifesto form often emerges historically in association with social movements. As a form cast from the political discourses of religious prophecy, Janet Lyon, in "Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern," argues the manifesto first appeared in the writings of the English Leveller and proto-communist Digger insurgents during the "pamphlet wars" of

1646 to 1649 (Puchner 16; Lyon 2, 19). In “Poetry of the Revolution,” Martin Puchner, however, traces the form’s origins back even further, to the Protestant Reformation and the German Peasants’ War (13-14). In 1524, Thomas Müntzer, a theologian, preacher and author of several political pamphlets, including the 1521 “Prague Manifesto” (13), led his followers to battle with the rallying cry *omnia sunt communia*, or “all things shall be held in common” (The Early Reformation in Germany, Scott 191-3). While the manifesto secularized and became widespread during subsequent peaks of class struggle, its frequent references to impending apocalyptic events still bear the marks of its theological past (Lyon 2, 31). As a form of antagonistic, programmatic writing, the manifesto’s appeal to the historical avant-garde isn’t surprising (Caws xxii-xxiii; Lyon 9, 15). As I made note of above, the form proliferated to such an extent that Caws designates the period from 1905 to 1920 as the “high age of the manifesto” (xxii). In her analysis of the manifesto, especially with regard to its use by the avant-gardes, Caws notes the form “often uses a strong central image as an organizing principle” (xxiii); the nineteenth century invention of lithography, photography, and the cinema all provided a framework for its ascent in the production of the historical avant-garde in the first decades of the twentieth century (ibid).

While Flores Magón does not make a self-consciously avant-garde use of the image, its transposition into writing was a figure of the *Zeitgeist* of his time. Poggioli traces the importance of the image back to the work of the French symbolists Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, both of whom he considers important predecessors of the avant-garde (197), and highlights the image’s prominence in such movements as Dadaism, Futurism, Imaginism, Unamism, Populism, Cosmism, and Surrealism (182-3). With

regard to this latter, the French Surrealist Louis Aragon, in his novel “Paris Peasant,” even defines “the vice named surrealism” as “the immoderate and impassioned use of the stupeficient image” (66), and Tatiana Flores emphasizes its important role in the production of both Spanish Ultraism and Mexican Stridentism (21, 35, 135-40). The image is also taken up in the theoretical writings of Benjamin, who theorizes the political use of the image through such concepts as the “dialectical image” and “image space” (Arcades Project 462-475). The most important historical reference for the use of the image in Flores Magón’s writing, however, is found in what Bailey terms the Mexican “graphic narrative tradition” (85). According to Bailey, the graphic narrative tradition emerged in the 1820s, made possible in part by the expansion of press freedom after Mexican Independence and the arrival of lithography to the country in 1826 (85).

The texts and graphics of these visual publications employed satire, caricature, allegory, and parody (Bailey 85-6). As the century continued, graphic narrative became increasingly associated with political journalism, especially the journalistic forms of the radical liberal, or Jacobin tradition (Bailey 85-6). As Florence Toussaint Alcaraz notes in “Escenario de la prensa en el Porfiriato,” in the absence of formally organized political parties, the press served as a “good substitute” for other forms of political organization (34). Just as much a part of this tradition, however, was the constant threat of retaliation, as journal editors frequently faced persecution and imprisonment (Bailey 90-97). As María del Carmen Ruíz Castañeda notes in “El periodismo en México,” while Díaz had inherited the two tactics of suppressing the political press and discrediting it through state-sponsored newspapers from the regimes of Benito Juárez and Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, these tactics grew and intensified to such an extent during the *Porfiriato* that at

one point several journalists even considered constructing a special section with a prison library solely for incarcerated members of the press (229-30).

The images Flores Magón conjures in the manifesto mode consist of an adaptation and transposition of the narrative graphic tradition into writing. Similar to the images of that tradition, Flores Magón's images are didactic, allegorical, and occasionally satirical. Through this transposition, the visual is subsumed to the temporal and rhetorical dimensions of written narrative, and a series of rhetorical devices organizes images, combining them with and expressing them through the heterogeneous elements of the manifesto mode – exhortation, urgency, and critical political argumentation. In doing so, Flores Magón's texts frequently imitate and anticipate a series of cinematic and photographic techniques, as I discuss further below.

There are two categories by way of which one can understand the use of the image in Flores Magón's texts in the manifesto mode. On the one hand, there is an *allegorical* use of the image, and, on the other, a *prismatic* use of the image. This is not to say that these uses aren't intermingled, and in fact their combination might even be said to determine certain uses Flores Magón makes of the image. The images used allegorically are deflated or dead in some way, divorced from the world in which they originated, thus allowing them to take on a new life in a different context. The prismatic image, on the other hand, refers to an image or series of images which compose a kind of *textual reflection* of an idea or term. In other words, they enter in to analogical relations of association and are often used to present different manifestations or instantiations of a concept or an idea, reflecting it as a prism laid out in successive fragments on the page.

In Flores Magón's manifesto mode, the allegorical intention often provides "a strong central image as an organizing principle" (Caws xxiii). Several of Flores Magón's manifesto texts open with an image that, like an anchor, grounds and centers them within the text; these central images are a product of the transposition of the narrative graphic tradition into the forms of written narrative. Often fulfilling a didactic or satirical function, the images of the narrative graphic tradition were typically accompanied by some sort of descriptive epigram which would explain or elaborate on their content. In this sense, Flores Magón's technique transposes this structure into narrative, wherein an image is presented to provide a metaphorical representation or interpretation of a given entity, phenomena, or situation, and is often elaborated on elsewhere in the text by means of didactic explanation or political argumentation.

The allegorical germinates most vibrantly in cultural forms where written and visual languages meet. While Bailey recognizes its importance to the Mexican visual traditions of the nineteenth-century (85), Benjamin traces its modern form to the "literary and visual emblem-books of the baroque" (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama* 162). These latter emerged from the efforts of humanist scholars to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphs, which they erroneously considered an expression of "the ultimate stage in a mystical philosophy of nature" (Benjamin, *The Origin of Tragic Drama* 168). For Benjamin, this "misunderstanding... became the basis of" a "rich and infinitely widespread form of expression" that constituted a "new kind of writing" (*The Origin of Tragic Drama* 168-9). In his work on the avant-garde, Bürger asserts that montage, one of the most important avant-gardiste techniques, essentially pertains to this allegorical



method of construction (73). In his gloss of “The Origin of Tragic Drama,” Bürger summarizes Benjamin’s explanation of how allegory works:

The allegorist pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it of its function. Allegory is therefore essentially fragment... The allegorist joins the isolated reality fragments and thereby creates meaning. This is posited meaning; it does not derive from the original context of the fragments.

(69)

It is in this way that Flores Magón often furnishes allegorical images for his texts. Taken from the natural or mythic world, they are deprived of their original function and often imbued with a new, political and didactic function. For example, the central image of the abyss analyzed below represents human history as a sort of fundamental lack, and the final central image of the Old Vulture and the Giant imagines rebellion as the historical motor of human progress.

Before looking at the images of these texts more closely, however, it will be helpful to offer some information about the historical context that defined the conditions of their production. In Mexico, the year 1910 saw the ripening of antagonisms that would soon break out in civil war. As John Womack details in “Zapata and the Mexican Revolution,” rural strikes were rampant throughout Morelos, and, by the end of the year, Zapata was the effective authority of his region and undertook the redistribution of land among the peasantry (61, 65). In the United States, many socialists and anarchists organized around the oppression of Flores Magón and other Mexican political refugees, and in June a committee composed of various revolutionaries testified on the subject to the House Rules Committee of the US Congress (Lomnitz 189). Flores Magón was

released from a three-year prison term at the beginning of August of 1910, and *Regeneración* re-appeared in its fourth incarnation a month later (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 117; Barrera Bassols, *Cronología* 16). At this time, the first non-clandestine clubs since 1903 were organized around *Regeneración*, numbering 1,000 by the next year (Barrera Bassols, *Cronología* 17).

In the October 8, 1910 edition of *Regeneración*, Flores Magón published an uncharacteristically lengthy piece that ran on the front page, entitled “Libertad, Igualdad, Fraternidad” (*Regeneración* (1910) 49). This reference to the motto of the French Revolution sets the framework for a line of political thought which suggests that liberty and fraternity are impossible without equality. According to the article, the latter provides the basis for the other two and no revolution has yet taken it seriously (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49-54). In Flores Magón’s typically emotive fashion, the first sentence of the article bemoans this failure: “¡Qué lejos está el ideal, qué lejos!” (*Regeneración* (1910) 49). Flores Magón’s reference to the *ideal*, of course, recalls a major theme of the spiritual sensibility that emerged with *modernismo* near the turn of the century, and that was especially prominent in the writing of the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. In “El ideal,” the title of a fragment of “Álbum Santiagués,” a prose work included in Darío’s larger work, “Azul...” (1888), the author communicates something of his vision of the ideal:

...pasó arrebatadora, triunfante, como una visión que deslumbra. Y yo, el pobre pintor de la naturaleza y de Psyquis, hacedor de ritmos y de castillos aéreos, vi el vestido luminoso del hada, la estrella de su diadema, y pensé en la promesa ansiada del amor hermoso. Más de aquel rayo supremo y fatal, sólo quedó en el

fondo de mi cerebro un rostro de mujer, un sueño azul... (88-9)

For Darío, the ideal is a kind of ethereal presence that can appear in many forms, but is finally ephemeral and holds the promise of something to come. As I have claimed above, the writing of Flores Magón in many ways embodies a kind of appropriative intensification and politicization of *modernista* themes and sensibilities. In “Libertad, Igualdad, Fraternidad,” Flores Magón brings the ideal from the heavens down to earth and relates it to a notion of revolutionary fulfillment. With this text’s first sentence, a gap opens that marks the distance between the desire for an unrealized ideal and the latter’s fulfillment. As the article continues, this distance is formulated in terms of an “abismo insondable.” This is an abyss that separates revolutionary desire from its realization, and already with the epanaleptic<sup>6</sup> repetition of the phrase “qué lejos” at the beginning and end of the first sentence, a formal configuration of distance anticipates this metaphorical figure (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49-54). Before descending in to the depths of this visual imagery, however, a handful of observations will clarify the text’s argument for bridging the chasm between the revolutionary “Promised Land” and the pre-revolutionary moment that defines the text’s present (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49).

The article puts forward a series of strategic and political solutions, chief among them a step toward social equality through the abolition of landed property (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49-54). After developing a brief critique of revolutionary

---

<sup>6</sup> As Bernard Dupriez details in his “A Dictionary of Literary Devices,” epanalepsis refers to a rhetorical device according to which there is a “repetition of a word or words after an intervening word or words, whether for emphasis or clarity, as to resume a construction after a lengthy parenthesis” (163).

leaders, in which Flores Magón notes that the “impulso revolucionario tropieza siempre con el moderantismo de los llamados directores” (Regeneración (1910) 50), the text offers a critique of the concepts of liberty and fraternity based on the fact that society is divided into social classes antagonistic to one another (Regeneración (1910) 49-54). Even if an ostensibly democratic regime were able to seize power and reinstitute the Constitution of 1857, this would at best lead to the re-institution of merely formal but not economic freedom (Flores Magón, Regeneración (1910) 49-54). Social division into classes provides educational, legal, and other advantages to the upper classes, who consequently possess more power when it comes to participating in the political process (Flores Magón, Regeneración (1910) 49-54). Within class society, as the text asserts, fraternity is also a chimera. As Flores Magón suggests, “¿(q)ué fraternidad puede existir entre el lobo y el cordero?” (Regeneración (1910) 53). Antagonism, not only between classes but also among members of the same class, is at the root of social inequality (Flores Magón, Regeneración (1910) 49-54). If not an unassailable solution, the expropriation of landed property would represent a great step toward social equality, which is why it is a central component of the Mexican Liberal Party’s program (Flores Magón, Regeneración (1910) 54).

Such a process would signal a major development toward the ideal which Flores Magón later defines as “el advenimiento de ese día de amor y de justicia con que sueñan los hombres generosos del mundo” (Regeneración (1910) 54). In spite of the concrete actions the author offers toward the revolutionary ideal’s fulfillment, the paradox the text expresses from its first utterances is clear: an ideal can never be realized. Yet the author’s cunning should not be underestimated; the paradox is intentional. The next sentence

offers a series of metaphors for the ideal that emphasize its ostensibly illusory character: “Espejismos del desierto, ilusión de la estepa, imagen de una estrella titilando en el fondo del lago” (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49). Each of these images either associate the ideal with mirages or reflections, which result from the play of optical phenomena on the forms of the natural environment. Each of the landscapes evoked (desert, steppe, lake) emphasizes the horizontal instead of vertical plane, a stage on which the drama of illusion plays out. While these optical phenomena are *illusory*, they’re not *hallucinatory*: they result from the distortions of light, not the mind, and this association of illusion and ideal extends the semantic range of the latter. It is important to note the difference between illusion and *ilusión*; this latter, according to the *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*, may refer to an appearance without reality, but also to an experience of hope (802-3). Through metaphoric amplification, here the ideal expands its semantic reach. It is the distorted appearance of a reality whose witness bemoans its distance – “¡qué lejos!” – but attests nevertheless to its existence; it also refers to the lived desire and hope that anticipates its revelation in human existence. In the same way, as the text suggests, equality ostensibly appears as mere chimera; no revolution has been able to realize it. Like the reflection of a star whose illusory appearance distorts its image but indicates its real existence, the text departs from a mere notion of equality to offer steps toward its achievement in material reality (through the abolition of landed property).

The above fragment of three successive images is an example of a rhetorical figure called *schesis onomaton*, or “state of nouns,” a figure formed when a sentence or sentence fragment is deprived of a verb (Dupriez 408). Absent verbs, movement and progression is expressed through a kind of montaged arrangement, providing a different

figure of time through a narrative discussed in more detail with regard to prismatic technique further below. In the fragment above, the movement usually expressed by the verb phrase is displaced onto the movement signaled by images offered in succession. In this sense, movement is expressed through the images' arrangement and organization. The movement from desert to steppe to sky reveals a narrative of humanity's efforts to close the distance between itself and the lofty heights of the ideal.

In contrast, the next sentence divulges an image of endless depth: "Primero era un abismo insondable el que separaba a la humanidad de la Tierra Prometida" (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49). In this passage, the abyss appears as a sort of political primal phantasy that articulates human history as an experience of lack. The "*(p)rimero era*" of the first sentence indicates some originary existence in which the abyss is a primal void that separates humanity from its happiness; this fantasy of origins exploits allegorical technique through a sort of narrative pastiche that combines and inverts elements of various biblical narratives.

This fantasy of origins continues through the somewhat strange figure of the thirsty Arab, who might represent a geographic proxy for more biblical accounts of human origins: "El árabe sediento ve de repente agitarse a lo lejos la melena de las palmas y hacia allá fustiga su camello. Vana empresa: avanza hacia el oasis y el oasis parece que retrocede. Siempre la misma distancia entre él y la ilusión, siempre la misma." (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49). The image of the oasis appears suddenly, in a flash, but always recedes upon pursuit. While the narrator is conscious of this "vana empresa," the desirous wanderer isn't, and this explains his vain pursuit. Lost in the desert, he synecdochically stands in for the human experience. Against the positivist

narratives of progress that permeated the ideological products of the *científicos*, this scene stages history as aimless repetition. In constant pursuit of illusion, the narrator notes, the distance is always the same: “(s)iempre la misma distancia entre él y la ilusión, siempre la misma” (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49).

The next passage elaborates the abyss metaphor and complicates it by relating it to the concrete realities of the political and cultural practices of the present:

Defendiendo el abismo están las preocupaciones, las tradiciones, el fanatismo religioso, la ley; para poder pasar es preciso vencer a sus defensores hasta llenar de sangre ese abismo y en seguida embarcarse, nuevo Mar Rojo.

Y a llenar ese abismo se han dedicado los hombres generosos a través de los tiempos con sangre de los malvados ¡ay! y con su sangre también; pero el abismo no se llena; podría vaciarse en él la sangre de toda la humanidad sin que por eso se llenase el abismo: es que hay que ahogar en esa sangre las preocupaciones, las tradiciones, el fanatismo religioso y la ley de los que oprimen. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49)

In this passage, the enemy who defends the abyss is identified as both state and clergy (“el fanatismo religioso, la ley”) as well as fear and attachments to tradition. In this way, the enemy is both without and within: in addition to the dominant classes, the enemy is also identified as the barriers and setbacks that face the oppressed classes themselves. Akin to the Arab’s wandering, the abyss is without end; both the wanderer and the abyss offer images of ostensibly endless, unfulfilled political desire. With both figures, the text constructs an example of synonymy, a rhetorical device in which two or more terms “designate the same thing” (Dupriez 447-8). Despite how much of their own or their

enemies' blood history's "hombres generosos" shed throughout time, the abyss could never be filled, not even with the blood of all of humanity. The defenders of the abyss, attitudes and individuals alike, must be drowned in the abyss to fill it and allow humanity passage to the other side.

The allegorical images isolated and joined together to create meaning in "Libertad, Igualdad, Fraternidad" often originate in the religious contents of biblical narrative. This seems somewhat paradoxical, given the fact that Flores Magón and the Mexican Liberal Party were some of the most vehement opponents of religious fanaticism. It is important to note, however, that the Mexican Liberal Party focused its critique of religion at the Catholic Church, which exercised an ideological as well as economic power over the poor. As Jean-Pierre Bastian notes, there was a strain of dissident Protestantism whose roots, like those of the Mexican Liberal Party, stretched back to the radical liberalism that emerged in the period after the *Reforma* (163). These networks of radical liberal protestant dissidents were co-extensive with those of the Mexican Liberal Party and participated along with the latter in the movement that emerged in 1901 (Bastian 153-6, 163). Bastian suggests that these religious dissidents may have played an important role in "la conformación de vanguardias revolucionarias en contextos rurales" and that even "(u)na mayoría acompañó al magonismo" (132, 163). Given their involvement in the movement, the incorporation of religious discourse in Flores Magón's texts might also be understood as a way of addressing and symbolically resolving differences among its adherents.

While numerous examples given above illustrate their debt to religious discourse, perhaps most interesting is the figure of the abyss that appears in "Libertad, Igualdad,



Fraternidad.” In this article, the figure of the abyss that is constructed transforms the exodus narrative. Instead of the Red Sea as an obstacle to the Promised Land, there is a large abyss that needs to be filled to create a Red Sea (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49). The narrative’s emplotment figures the abyss as a sort of primal, originary obstacle facing humanity, thus putting it in the register of a creation narrative (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49). Finally, the blood that “generous men” have shed in vain to fill the abyss and lead humanity to the Promised Land recalls the passion narrative that recounts Jesus Christ’s suffering and death (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 49).

While it seems contradictory that one of the central figures of a vehemently anti-clerical project would recur to religious imagery, a consideration of his historical context and the history of rhetoric might illuminate this ostensible tension. As Lyon notes, the manifesto form itself draws heavily from the chiliastic discourses of religious prophecy (13). It’s also obvious that the urgency and conviction of the theological register that survives in the manifesto, as opposed to the detachment and protracted development of more typically bourgeois rhetorical forms, like the novel or the essay, don’t lend themselves in the same way to the politics of insurrection. Perhaps more importantly, in opposition to the scientific pretensions of a positivism that provided “the ruling classes with a new vocabulary to legitimate injustice,” the critical discourses that emerged cultivated a spiritual, idealistic language (Jrade 15, 17; Rama, *La Ciudad Letrada* 128). In contrast to the language of reasoned argumentation, the allegorical in Flores Magón usually possesses a didactic function, demonstrating by way of the image and its explanation the type of political actions and behaviors that would lead the oppressed down the path of political liberation. In this sense, Flores Magón finds his place among a

host of Latin American intellectuals at the turn of the century. As Rama notes, “(a)l declinar las creencias religiosas bajo los embates científicos, los ideólogos rescatan, laicizándolo, su mensaje, componen una doctrina adaptada a la circunstancia y asumen, en reemplazo de los sacerdotes, la conducción espiritual” (La Ciudad Letrada 111).

In the September 10, 1910 edition of *Regeneración*, Flores Magón published a piece entitled “El Derecho de Rebelión” that puts forward a defense of rebellion as a central component of human progress. Beyond being cast in a language of political rights, the act of revolt is articulated as a principle and a force of reality observable in a diverse set of phenomena. In this way, Flores Magón’s text could be considered a prismatic text. The text conceives of rebellion as sacred because it constitutes a vital process that overcomes obstacles opposed to life (“el derecho de vivir”) (Regeneración (1910) 37). The protagonists of rebellion compose the vanguard of human progress in a general sense; if they exist in a town, Flores Magón wagers, life, art, science and industry are also ensured (Regeneración (1910) 32-7). For the author, without rebellion, humanity would be lost – either to its past or amidst the predilections of religious and political dogmata (Regeneración (1910) 37). Despite their dramatic grandeur, Flores Magón’s theses on rebellion occupy a short part of the text, which principally consists of consecutive series of images. The theses are important, nevertheless, as a series of assertions that logically underpin the juxtaposed images of rebellion, which, in turn, serve as their prismatic illustration.

Like several of the other texts this chapter explores, this article begins with a central, allegorical image that frames its theme and upon which the rest of the text elaborates. In the same way that remnants of a dream appear in waking consciousness,

fragments of this central image often re-enter the text in its more logical and didactic moments, whether by way of a central refrain or figure. Such is the case with the “Buitre Viejo,” or the “Old Vulture,” which appears in the first lines of the article in question. The term *buitre* is a clever selection on the part of the author because of its polysemantic character: as an animal that feasts on the dead and a figurative reference to one who takes advantage of the misfortunes of others, it circumlocutes the extent of state persecution and death carried out under the *Porfiriato*. The first sentences of “El Derecho de Rebelión” evoke a tableau in which this Old Vulture confronts an encroaching figure in the surroundings of a sparse, natural landscape: “Desde lo alto de su roca el Buitre Viejo acecha. Una claridad inquietante comienza a disipar las sombras que en el horizonte amontonó el crimen, y en la lividez del paisaje parece adivinarse la silueta de un gigante que avanza: es la Insurrección.” (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 32). In a melodramatic register that foreshadows years of Mexican cultural production to come, the scene abbreviates class struggle, expressing it in the terms of an epic confrontation between otherworldly figures. The Old Vulture lies in wait from the heights of a strategic vantage point, a contrast that evokes an uneven balance of power. While the Old Vulture watches and the Giant of Insurrection approaches, here the light of dawn functions as the central form of movement. It dissipates the shadows and reveals the approaching silhouette under the Old Vulture’s gaze. The Old Vulture only now seems to make out the approaching shadow; the Giant is not yet present. Its presence is imminent, however, charging the moment with anticipation.

Like the shadow of insurrection and in contrast to the linear time of historical development, this image eschews a clear line between past and present, instead

subordinating time to its visual, allegorical logic that interweaves both the time of the present and the time of the past. The shadows indicate Díaz's past crimes, and are dissipated yet not extinguished by the dawn's light; ephemerally, they linger on. The light also reveals the advance of Insurrection, which is only deduced by the Old Vulture because he sees the silhouette made by its shadow. The Old Vulture, in life, has had experience and has thought strategically. At the same time, the Old Vulture is filled with dread by this time of anticipation and attempts to make sense of the approaching Insurrection. He plunges into the depths of his own consciousness, a murky space that condenses myriad crimes of the past and an underworld of dead souls. While the following passage is somewhat lengthy, it merits being reproduced in its entirety because of how it reconstructs the wreckages of the past:

El Buitre Viejo se sumerge en el abismo de su conciencia, hurga los lodos del bajo fondo; pero nada haya en aquellas negruras que le explique el por qué de la rebelión. Acude entonces a los recuerdos; hombres y cosas y fechas y circunstancias pasan por su mente como un desfile dantesco; pasan los mártires de Veracruz, pálidos, mostrando las heridas de sus cuerpos, recibidas una noche a la luz de un farolillo, en el patio de un cuartel, por soldados borrachos mandados por un jefe borracho también de vino y de miedo; pasan los obreros de El Republicano, lívidos, las ropas humildes y las carnes desgarradas por los sables y las bayonetas de los esbirros; pasan las familias de Papantla, ancianos, mujeres, niños, acribillados a balazos; pasan los obreros de Cananea, sublimes en su sacrificio chorreando sangre; pasan los trabajadores de Río Blanco, magníficos, mostrando las heridas denunciadoras del crimen oficial; pasan los mártires de

Juchitán, de Velardeña, de Monterrey, de Acayucan, de Tomochic; pasan Ordoñez, Olmos y Contreras, Rivero Echegaray, Martínez, Valadez, Martínez Carreón; pasan Ramírez Terrón, García de la Cadena, Ramón Corona; pasan Ramírez Bonilla, Albertos, Kankum, Leyva. Luego pasan legiones de espectros, legiones de viudas, legiones de huérfanos, legiones de prisioneros y el pueblo entero pasa, desnudo, mascilento, débil por la ignorancia y el hambre. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 32-6)

With this passage, the text transitions from an image that stages the confrontation between the Old Vulture and the Giant to one that depicts the interior of the Old Vulture's consciousness. For the extant illustrative techniques of the static image employed in the graphics of the popular press, the challenge of articulating a transition from the former scene to one positioned within the depths of a consciousness would have proven difficult; here, however, to the author's credit, it's as if the continuity of the written narrative anticipates the extreme close-up or "zoom-in" effect fully developed later in film. At the same time, the camera's limitations render the cinematic metaphor only partially complete. This recalls Benjamin's reflection that "every art form has critical periods in which the particular form strains after effects which can be easily achieved only with a changed technical standard – that is to say, a new art form" (*The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version* 266). Given the social and economic changes that marked Mexico's integration into global capital and the concurrent transformations in regimes of writing, most dramatically carried out in the laboratory of Mexican journalism, this moment constituted such a "critical period" for the written form. While Flores Magón lived in Los Angeles for an extended period of time,

his familiarity with film is unclear. In any case, the stream of consciousness technique developed in the passage above has a few precedents in Flores Magón's earlier work (Artículos políticos seudónimos 21-4, 26-7), and is discussed in relation to what I term Flores Magón's use fables in the fourth chapter of the present work. This passage also brings to mind Rama's observation that the newspaper functioned as a sort of "gimnasio de estilo" – a factory of techniques and tendencies whose full flowering would only be realized in the years to come (Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico 50).

In vain, in the text, the Old Vulture searches for the cause of rebellion. He then turns to his memories, which appear in the form of a Dantesque procession of the dead. Here the events of the past are *revived* in the tyrannical consciousness of the present. The procession's importance is underscored by the fact that such a short text lingers over a list of over twenty political deaths, which consists of victims of the *Porfiriato* over a period of more than forty years (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 33-6). Among the dead are the liberal martyrs of the 1870s, liberal journalists of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, several indigenous insurrectionaries who fought land expropriation, Mexican Liberal Party insurrectionaries that failed in their attempts to seize the city of Vera Cruz (1906) and Viesca, Coahuila (1908), as well as the industrial workers of the Cananea Strike (1906) and the Río Blanco Rebellion (1907), two events that heralded the impending Revolution and in which the Mexican Liberal Party played an important role (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 33-6; Cockcroft 132). Through the selection of an amalgamation of political events protagonized by a motley aggregation of class forces – many of whom would no doubt in other circumstances be opposed – the text emphasizes the rebellion these forces shared in common and refashions the recent past as a trail of death leading

toward insurrection. Beyond the invocation of particular struggles, the arrangement of these deaths implies their commonality as collective synecdoche of the conditions of death and repression brought about by Mexico's golden age of development, in turn concentrated in the figure of the Old Vulture. As the list ends, these numbers accumulate to finally encompass an entire population of nameless, suffering ghosts: "pasan legiones de espectros... viudas... huérfanos... (y) prisioneros y el pueblo entero pasa..." (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 36). In the underworld of the Old Vulture's consciousness, this past, a haunting whirlwind of memories, coexists with the present moment, characterized by the urgent, redemptive advance of Insurrection under the piercing glare of the morning light (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 36). The Giant of Insurrection arrives to redeem the deaths of these manifold, lingering ghosts. This image crafts a form of historical perception that recalls Benjamin's depiction of messianic time, replete with the redemptive urgency of the now ("now-time" or *Jetztzeit*) (On the Concept of History 395). Benjamin notes that "(h)istory is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [*Jetztzeit*]. For Robespierre, Roman antiquity was a past charged with the here-and-now, which he exploded out of the continuum of history." (Selected Writings 395). In the same way, through the work of a montage principle, as historical events these deaths are torn from their place in a linear sequence and pieced together in an image that conceives the time of revolution as a bursting forth of the now. This latter is unclassifiable in linear terms, but is composed of fragments of the past and the present which are filled with the urgency of redemptive anticipation.

To specify the notion of prismatic technique that I began to develop above, I turn to Flores Magón's text "Discordia," published as a short article in *Regeneración* at the end of October of 1910. While the use of images is a prominent constructive technique throughout the article, the first paragraph contains its most poetic prose:

Imaginaos la Tierra sin montañas, el mar sin olas, el cielo sin estrellas, la flor sin colores. Imaginaos a todas las aves vistiendo el mismo plumaje, a todos los insectos ostentando la misma forma y color. Imaginaos las llanadas sin un repliegue, sin un accidente; arenas y guijarros aquí, guijarros y arenas allá, arenas y guijarros por todas partes; ni un árbol, ni un yerbajo; nada que trunque la monotonía del paisaje, nada que interrumpa la uniformidad del cuadro; ni un arroyo que murmure, ni un pájaro que cante, ni una brisa que recuerde que hay movimiento, que hay acción. Imaginaos, por último, a la humanidad, sin pasiones, teniendo todos los mismos gustos, pensando todos del mismo modo, y decid si no sería preferible morir de una vez a sufrir la prolongada agonía, que no otra cosa sería el vivir en tales condiciones. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 67)

The successive images the passage presents as figures of an imagined world are grouped together thematically in sentences with multiple object noun phrases, and two types of similar or identical modifiers are repeated in each phrase, imbuing each of the image groups with a sense of monotony or lack (*sin, mismo, sin, nada, ni, ni, sin, mismo, mismo*). This at once unites the images in sonorous combination and repetition and subsumes them under a concept. The order in which the image groups appear has a precedent elsewhere in Flores Magón's prose, which suggests the author developed a kind of syntactic boilerplate, or *image-template*, used to organize the combination of



images. This also appeared in the text “5 de febrero de 1857,” published in the February 8, 1903 edition of the newspaper *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, which is a text explored in more depth below. In the image-template above, the first images depict landforms, followed by the sea, animals, and humans. Relationships amongst these images come into focus once the narrator, emphasizing the images’ monotonous character, notes that “nada... interrumpa el cuadro.” In this reflective moment, the figure of the *cuadro* – a scene, but also a canvas, picture, or painting – is offered as a kind of image-concept which frames the other images simultaneously as the constitutive parts of a composite image or scene. In this scene, the barren landscape of pebbles and sand is foregrounded with plains, an ocean, creatures grotesque in their similarity, and finally humans without passion, each of which the text elaborates successively as if adding images to a tableau. Developed through observations of modernist and avant-garde technique, Frank’s notion of “spatial form” elucidates the perceptual logic of “Discordia” (10). As Wall suggests, Frank’s spatial form may be defined as a “narrative or poetic structure” that results from the juxtaposition of “disparate images,” and their consequent synchronic perception (22). Frank argues this spatial logic marks a “reorientation” of perception that disrupts the temporal logic of succession with the spatial logic of image multiplication (10, 14-15), and according to which a given work is meant to be understood “reflexively in a moment of time” (15, 27).

Yet while the paragraph’s combination of images is meant to work reflexively, the *successive* nature of prose plays a fundamental role in Discordia’s technique, and demands a more dialectical approach than Frank’s spatial logic can provide, but which can be found in the theory and practice of prismatic technique. Through its programmatic

articulation in the work of Spanish Ultraists and Mexican Stridentists,<sup>7</sup> but previously and especially in Mallarmé's preface to his poem "Un coup de dés" ("A Throw of the Dice"), the notion of prismatic technique accounts for both successive and simultaneous relations amongst textual fragments and reflects upon the effects of their manipulation. For Mallarmé, who employs the concept to describe a dynamic at work in his poem, the prismatic image emerges through an alternation of text and blank page (Collected Poems 121-2). While he had already emphasized the profound affinity between music and writing in an 1894 lecture in England, in which he noted that "Music and Letters are two sides of the same coin" (Divagations 189), his 1897 preface to "A Throw of the Dice" develops this idea through the notion of a prismatic technique:

The paper intervenes each time an image, of its own accord, ceases or withdraws, accepting the succession of others;... it is... a question... of prismatic subdivisions of the Idea, at the instant they appear and for the duration of their concurrence in some exact mental setting, the text imposes itself, variably, near or far from the latent guiding thread, for the sake of verisimilitude. This copied distance, which mentally separates words or groups of words from one another, has the literary advantage, if I may say so, of seeming to speed up and slow down the movement, of scanning it, and even of intimating it through a simultaneous vision of the Page... Add that from this stripped-down mode of thought, with its

---

<sup>7</sup> Though it is beyond my scope here to elaborate on the history of prismatic technique, Manuel Maples Arce's poem "Prisma," which appears in his 1922 volume of poetry "Andamios Interiores," offers a useful starting point for the notion of the prismatic developed by the Stridentists (17-22). The young Argentine Ultraist and future librarian Jorge Luis Borges also championed "la estética activa de los prismas" (83).

retreats, prolongations, flights, or from its very design, there results, for whoever would read it aloud, a musical score.” (Mallarmé, Collected Poems 121-2)

In Mallarmé’s account, the blank page functions as a sort of throttle mechanism that controls and manipulates textual movement and induces the simultaneous perception of sections of text through its forms of textual fragmentation. These are Mallarmé’s “prismatic subdivisions of the Idea” (Collected Poems 121). In the same way prisms refract, distort, and disperse light into its constituent elements, Mallarmé’s use of the blank page distorts and disperses semantic material in to smaller and variably combinable components. Whether Flores Magón was aware of the experimental use of the blank page, *Regeneración*’s near constant economic precarity surely wasn’t amenable to such a use of blank space; these economic conditions instead left their mark through a kind of baroque necessity. Nonetheless, the image combination realized through repetition techniques in “Discordia” calibrates the text’s speed and musicality, and sets of image groups distinguish themselves from others by way of their lyrical idiosyncrasies. Consider the first portion of the text’s second paragraph, which intends to establish a philosophically and didactically useful notion of discord in contradistinction to the dreary world depicted above:

El orden, la uniformidad, la simetría parecen más bien cosas de la muerte. La vida es desorden, es lucha, es crítica, es desacuerdo, es hervidero de pasiones. De ese caos sale la belleza; de esa confusión sale la ciencia; de la crítica, del choque, del desorden, del hervidero de pasiones surgen radiantes como ascuas, pero grandes como soles, la verdad y la libertad. La discordia, he ahí el grande agente creador que obra en la naturaleza. Las acciones y las reacciones en la materia inorgánica y

en la orgánica, generadoras de movimiento, de calor, de luz, de belleza, ¿qué son sino obra de la Discordia? Rompiendo la monotonía de las sustancias simples, la Discordia acerca unas a las otras, las mezcla, las combina, las desmenuza y las lleva de un lugar a otro... Todo lo transforma la Discordia: disuelve y crea, destruye y esculpe. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 67)

The principle of discord the article develops in this section presents a kind of abbreviated spirit of historical or even ontological causality. In this sense, Flores Magón's textual technique isolates and disperses distinct, concrete components of this idea – images, concepts, processes, events, etc. – which unfold through textual succession. It is as if by way of political, didactic intention, the principle of Discord were passed through a prism, resulting in myriad and incomplete, fragmented instances of itself that accumulate throughout the text's duration. The second sentence of this paragraph enumerates a series of nouns with similar meanings to define life as a process of conflict and provides an example that illustrates the calibration of textual time. While composed of repeated noun phrases like those of the first paragraph, in this instance the noun phrases consist of single words preceded by a copula or linking verb. For the duration of the series, the effect is an acceleration of textual movement which contrasts with the preceding paragraph.

Considered in its totality, the text is a series of such sonorous differentiations between image groups. The remainder of the paragraph crafts more abstract, didactic sets of conceptual images to articulate life as a discordant process. The second sentence of this paragraph enumerates a series of nouns with similar meanings to define life as a process of conflict and presents an example that illustrates the prismatic calibration of textual time. What ensues from this series, composed of copulas followed by single

nouns in contrast to the object noun phrases of the immediately preceding passage, is an acceleration of textual movement. As a whole, the text is composed of several such image groups, as if the discordant idea were passed through a poetic prism and dispersed into its constitutive parts, reorganizing the spatial logic of the page as a prism disperses light in to the colors of the rainbow.

The remainder of the paragraph crafts more abstract, didactic, sets of conceptual images to articulate life as a discordant process, and the article goes on to assert that Discord destroys, dissolves, and breaks substances apart, then recombining them together again with other substances. Given the article's structure, such a description can be read as a reflection on the text's own method, and there are several textual features that model or attempt to conjure this discordant spirit. The juxtaposition of the first two paragraphs offers one such example. In contrast to the dull, motionless world of another flourishing with discordant energies, the text presents two image-concepts that find their meaning through opposition. Such antithetical juxtaposition – a mimesis of class war that *takes shape* in rhetorical form – dominates Flores Magón's later prose: differences among social classes or members of the same class, moments of past and present, and concepts are largely defined and given meaning through contrast and opposition. As Ivan Schulman notes, "(l)a construcción antitética es una constante de la estilística modernista" (155), and Flores Magón's prose is a site of this technique's intensification.

Discord is depicted as a historical agent which, through various forms of conflictive struggle, enacts a dialectical process resulting in the production of such noble ideas as beauty, truth, and freedom. It is this presentation of the concept which opens the article up to interpretation as both a political and aesthetic manifesto. Discord destroys,

dissolves, and breaks substances apart, subsequently transporting, mixing and recombining them together again with other substances. In the same way, Flores Magón's writing engages in such a combinatorial logic of montage through its sonorous assemblages and confrontations of juxtaposed and recombined fragments. In some sense, prismatic technique configures a mimetic gesture that attempts to mobilize or channel the spirit of history's discordant energies through writing. Considered simultaneously, the first two paragraphs of the article present an image of such a confrontational technique: the juxtaposition of the dull motionless world and that of a world of discordant energies give each other meaning through opposition. Such antithetical juxtaposition dominates Flores Magón's later prose. In this latter, differences among social classes or members of the same class, objects of human labor, moments of past and present, and abstract concepts and categories are largely defined and given meaning through contrast and opposition. In the remainder of the article, Discord is depicted as a force of progress, responsible for new paths in art as well as the "fermented disgust" that leads to proletarian revolt.

To recapitulate, the first paragraph of "Discordia" engages in a more intensively poetic language, the second and third in a didactic elaboration of Discord as a concept, and the final paragraph acts as a kind of hinge that connects the historical principle to the uprisings of the present. While prone to modifications and substitutions, this combination of heterogeneous textual functions recurrently appears as a pattern in Flores Magón's manifesto prose.

Jakobson's inquiry in to the functions of language offers a framework that elucidates the nature of the image manifesto's rhetorical mold. Jakobson notes that six

functions characterize verbal communication (353), but those most relevant to the image manifesto are the referential, poetic, and conative. While the referential function often communicates information (ibid), the conative function makes use of exhortation and command and is oriented toward the message's addressee (355). For Jakobson, the poetic function occurs when "the principle of equivalence" is projected "from the axis of selection into" that of combination (358). In other words, this occurs when the principle of selection between alternative language units, for instance the option one has of speaking of either a *successful* or a *victorious* revolution, is projected onto the combination of linguistic units, resulting in relations of similarity and equivalence among the units of a given sequence. Emphasizing the importance of the poetic function, Jakobson notes that "poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment, but a *total re-evaluation* of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever" (377). Seen in this light, the deployment of the poetic in "Discordia" is a refunctioning of the journalistic short form, now put to an intensively political use in which tensions between the referential and poetic functions are at play. In the case of "Discordia," one might interpret this poetic "re-evaluation" (ibid), as Jakobson terms it, as the operation of a poetic technique whose aim is to carry out a Benjaminian refunctioning of the institution of journalism and its forms in the interests of a revolutionary means of communication.

Before moving on, I would like to offer a few thoughts on the question of discord and transition. As a political concept, Discord can be interpreted as a refutation of many of the key tenets of Porfirian positivism. As noted in the Introduction, through their adaptation of positivist doctrine, the triumphant sectors of the Mexican bourgeoisie

redefined freedom as subordination to historical laws and progress as a gradual process of “mental revolutions” (Zea 118, 101). In contrast, “Discordia” suggests the transition to freedom and progress unfolds, not through order and gradual change, but through a chaotic, conflictive, and abrupt process. To the extent it draws from and intensifies the tensions of the manifesto form itself, which is positioned, as Caws notes (xxi), “in a moment between what has been and what will be done” (xxi) – in other words, in a temporal orientation structured by juxtaposed terms – “Discordia” offers a model of transitional temporality. In a more literary sense, “Discordia” presents an uneven form of aesthetic transition that incorporates elements of *modernismo* as well as those of the historical avant-garde. To return to the questions of musicality mentioned above, the image manifesto’s cultivation of a lyrical prose establishes a continuity with the *modernista* and romantic traditions, while its excessive use of antithetical juxtapositions and generic heterogeneity distorts and intensifies elements of these traditions in a manner that connects it with the production of the historical avant-garde. While there is a type of loosening amongst textual segments cultivated through a spatial logic, the image manifesto ultimately maintains a sense of unity amongst its parts. In more literary terms, it is this combination of a lyrical sensibility with a commitment to programmatic experimentation that situates “Discordia” as transitional form.

Finally, I’d like to suggest that this co-existence of a lyrical sensibility with poetic experimentation unites Flores Magón’s writing with the work of a series of other transitional figures – from Mallarmé, to the *ultraísta* poets, to the French composer Erik Satie and the German composer Alban Berg. It is my suspicion these authors and their work compose a relatively obscure transitional constellation, located at the threshold of



emergent aesthetic and political experiments that would soon find their most intense expression and exhaustion in the movements of the historical avant-garde.

In “El Derecho de Rebelión,” analyzed in terms of its allegorical image above, one also finds this prismatic technique, which in this case develops a prismatic notion of the idea of rebellion instead of discord:

Rebeldía, grita la mariposa, al romper el capullo que la aprisiona; rebeldía, grita la yema al desgarrar la recia corteza que cierra el paso; rebeldía, grita el grano en el surco al agrietar la tierra para recibir los rayos del sol; rebeldía, grita el tierno ser humano al desgarrar las entrañas maternas; rebeldía, grita el pueblo cuando se pone de pie para aplastar a tiranos y explotadores. (Flores Magón, *Regeneración* (1910) 37)

Synonymy, according to which a series of images serve as analogical expressions of a shared reference, is a rhetorical figure that articulates part of what is at play in prismatic technique (Dupriez 447-8). In this case, the images are indicative of rebellion. In each of the images above, “rebeldía” is the rallying cry of each moment’s protagonist who passes through some process of transformation. As the analogical referent they share, they are all instances of the act of a principle of rebellion. This cry is expressed in concurrence with an action verb that denotes rebellion, articulated in each of the images with the construction *al* followed by the infinitive form. The repetition of both the cry and verbal construction (*al* + infinitive) carries out on the syntactic level what is implied through juxtaposition on the semantic level: that each of these acts – plant efflorescence, animal metamorphosis, human birth, and mass insurrection – constitute analogical moments framed within a larger totality in which rebellion is a force that drives natural and social

change. By juxtaposing insurrection with growth, birth, and maturation, this figure combines a heterogeneous set of processes and articulates them in rebellion's name.

Now I would like to discuss a text I mentioned above in more depth. It is one which appears in the early years of *Regeneración*, but which nevertheless reveals a style continuous with that of the texts of 1910. The turn of the century in Mexico saw a flourishing of activity under the radical liberal banner, and a national network was formed with the newspaper and the club as its two main components (Lomnitz 87). The Mexican Liberal Party was formed out of the first *Congreso Liberal*, a national convention held in February of 1901 in San Luis Potosí (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 12-13; Cockroft 90). Around 300 liberal clubs had formed by the end of that year (Lomnitz xxv). A few years later, at the end of January of 1903, however, *Regeneración* had ceased publication due to government pressure, and Ricardo and his brother Enrique had assumed control of the content of the newspaper *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, for whom Ricardo wrote under the *nom de plume* "Escorpión" (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 17-18). It was a time of transition for the movement, as a new Mexican Liberal Party manifesto would appear at the end of the month with a focus on social rather than political problems. Ward Albro summarizes this transition: "The Liberal Party... was now concerned with the Mexican proletariat, the plight of the rural workers, the pervasive influence of monopolies, the concentration of land in the hands of a few, the poor education of the people, and the lack of any real freedom of thought and expression." (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 19). Flores Magón's release from jail at the end of January didn't prevent him from jumping back into political and journalistic activity (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 18), and he published a series of articles in the February 8, 1903 edition of *El Hijo del Ahuizote*. In a calculated fashion,

the publication of these articles coincided with an act the horizon of the present would discern as a form of political performance. On February 5, 1903, the newspaper's staff hung "a banner draped in black proclaiming that "La Constitución Ha Muerto," which was adorned above with a portrait of Benito Juárez" (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 19, 156). A reproduction of a photograph of the performance, which can be found in the *Fototeca Nacional* of the *Instituto Nacional de Historia y Antropología* in Mexico City, and an image of which can be found in the *Galería* section of the website *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*, is included below (see fig. 1) (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). In it, Flores Magón is the next to last member of the newspaper's staff located on the balcony on the right (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). In one of the articles published three days later, writing under his real name, he provided an explanation: "La Constitución ha muerto, y al enlutar hoy el frontis de nuestras oficinas con esa frase fatídica, protestamos solemnemente contra los asesinos de ella, que como escarnio sangriento al pueblo que han vejado, celebren este día con muestras de regocijo y satisfacción." (Flores Magón, *La Constitución ha muerto*).



Figure 1

These closing words identify the banner display as an act of protest, in solemn contrast to the constitutional assassins that celebrate the anniversary of the Constitution. Writing as *Escorpión* in the same issue, Flores Magón published an article entitled “5 de febrero de 1857,” in reference to the date when the Constitution of 1857 was ratified nearly five decades before. The article and act of protest both consist of a sort of melancholic commemoration of the Constitution, and, by extension, the struggles of the mid-century *Reforma*, depicting the years that followed in its wake under Porfirio Díaz as a period of decline. In the same way the banner and the saintly image of the liberal father Benito Juárez that rests above it juxtapose an idealized past with a present in decline, the article provides contrasting images of the heroic liberal fathers and the misery of the lower classes. This antithetical juxtaposition of opposites characterizes Flores Magón’s later writings, which is true for the more poetic as well as more descriptive passages: differences among social classes or members of the same class, objects of human labor, and abstract concepts and categories are largely defined and given meaning through contrast and opposition. This sort of juxtaposition functions as an organizing principle in the text, which intersperses observations about the past with observations about the present to produce meaning.

The text proffers an idealized image of the liberal leaders of the *Reforma*, which served as the inspiration for the radicalized, Jacobin liberalism of the turn of the century movement:

Ayer, en 1857, todo era luz. Titanes a quienes deshonramos con nuestra pusilanimidad abatieron la insolencia del machete, estrangularon la arrogancia de la sotana, llevaron la luz a las ensombrecidas conciencias y azotaron el rostro de

los tiranos con las cadenas que martirizaban al pueblo... Los Juárez, los Lerdo, los Gómez Farías, los Zarco, los Ocampo, los Ramírez, los Altamirano. De esos gigantes sólo conservamos la memoria y ellos nos han abandonado... (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos seudónimos 92-3)

The simplicity of the first sentence simultaneously establishes an intimacy with the past and identifies its political import in exaggeratedly aesthetic terms (“todo era luz”). In mythic fashion, the long list of “giants” are depicted as brave warriors of the people who fought against the clergy and tyrants of conservative reaction, leaders who led Mexico out of darkness but appear to have abandoned the *pueblo* in the present age of decline. Now the experience of the *pueblo* is characterized by misery: “Suda el pueblo mexicano la barreta y el martillo y el cincel en el fondo tenebroso de las minas, arrancando a fuerza de brazo los preciosos metales... como manantial bienhechor que hará la felicidad ¿de él?... No: del militarismo que se adorna de entorchados” (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos seudónimos 93). In some sense, the historical narrative the text puts forth prioritizes affective purchase over historical accuracy. Indeed, as all significant political movements have done, it makes *something else* of the past, reconfiguring it in the image of a political desire that seeks to rejuvenate the present.

As an instantiation of the image-template mentioned above, the article begins with images of decaying beauty. These precede a series of images that stage encounters between anthropomorphized geographical features and animals. Finally, objects of human labor and substances of the human body are juxtaposed in antithetical relation. The first of these sections presents figures of beauty in decline: “Pétalos marchitos ya, plumajes deslustrados; nieves ofendidas por el fango” (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos

seudónimos 91). Both the “pétalos marchitos” and “plumajes deslustrados” are images that exemplify the effect of time on objects of conventional beauty. Beauty fades; the passing of time entails the decomposition of organic matter. The last image of muddied snow shifts the focus from these objects in decay to the natural landscape.

This image of snow blemished by mud is the first in a series of antithetical oppositions that follow. It juxtaposes the serene, tranquil beauty of snow to the ugliness of mud, which “offends” the snow. It serves as a transitional image between the first and second group of images: like the withered petals and dull feathers, it suggests degraded beauty, but is also composed with images from nature in which each term is given anthropomorphic characteristics. In this second group, we find the following series of juxtapositions: “Mangos enderezados frente a los encinos; las colinas escupiendo a las montañas; el charco haciendo mofa del mar” (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos pseudónimos 91). Each of these three images consist of two geographical features in which the features (trees, rising landforms, bodies of water) are differentiated by their size. The fact that this relationship of magnitude is established between each pair erects a sort of natural hierarchy based on degrees of magnitude. The relationship between the figures imbues them with human behaviors, wherein the smaller objects insult the larger ones through scornful behavior. Hills spit on mountains and the pond makes fun of the sea. The arrogant behavior of the lesser figures of nature seems to upset the natural order. They are acting out of place, against the roles assigned to them by the natural world, which undergoes a perversion of the way things are ostensibly meant to be.

The next passage continues with this theme, staging it within the animal kingdom. Instead of a hierarchy of magnitude, however, the text returns to the theme of beauty. The

next triad of images sets up an encounter between animals, in which one animal makes fun of another considered the former's inferior in terms of elegance or beauty: "El dromedario haciendo burla de la cebra; el murciélago, de la mariposa; el sapo de la elegante esbeltez de la garza" (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos seudónimos 91). In the same way the geographical features are paired in terms of classificatory affinity (trees, rising landforms, bodies of water) but contrast in terms of size, here in each juxtaposition the animals either share common characteristics or a common environment. Zebras and dromedaries are both quadrupeds that can be found in desert habitats. Likewise, butterflies and bats fly, while frogs and herons live near water. While the comparisons made in the second group of images are based on size, here the text returns to conventional notions of beauty. In each image, the "uglier" animal makes fun of the one considered more beautiful.

The final group of images positions the passage in the human social world. While most of these images are the products of human labor, there are also products of the human body: "El veneno sobre el cordial; la hiel sobre el almíbar; la atarjea sobre el río; el estiércol sobre el incienso" (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos seudónimos 91). While the second and third group of images establish oppositional relationships between different beings in defiance of some order (of size, beauty), here the passage returns to ambiguity centered in the individual object, this time a result of the combination of different substances. As time works on the flower, withering it, and causes feathers to lose their brilliance, here an object that is pleasing to the senses in some way is contaminated with some substance that embodies its opposite. The preposition *sobre* unites each term in the absence of a verb, representing a sort of contamination of the

unpleasant substance with the more pleasant one. Poison contaminates the medicinal cordial, bile contaminates syrup, a sewage drain contaminates the river, and the horrible stench of shit overwhelms incense.

The following passage identifies the referent to which each of the images developed above refer: “Miseria igual, idéntica desgracia presencia el sufrido pueblo mexicano. Tuvo una gloria: la Constitución política de 1857, ¿y qué ha quedado al pueblo de ese libro?... Pétalos marchitos ya; plumajes deslustrados; nieves ofendidas por el fango” (Flores Magón, Artículos políticos seudónimos 92). In their circumlocutory gesture, these four groups of images express the present state of the Constitution of 1857 as well as a collective sentiment of misery and disgrace. As a discrete passage, they also present a figure of narrative montage: in opposition to the norms of linear narration, here narrative unfolds by way of the thematic organization of gathered images. Similar to the historical narrative of decline that results through the juxtaposition of the liberal leaders of the past and the misery of the present, these images also present a narrative of disorder and decline. While the first and fourth groups offer images of decay and contamination, the second and third groups, which stage confrontations between animals and natural objects, offer a series of images that represent disorder.

Through their combination, a more obscure narrative emerges. Setting aside for a moment the opening fragment, which itself functions principally as a refrain mentioned again in the following paragraph and at the end the article, the passage presents a thematic progression from the natural environment to the animal kingdom to the human world. In its thematic affinity with both biblical and evolutionary narratives, it offers an abbreviated narrative of historical progression that resists interpretation. While it may



imply an intensification of decline, on some other level it seems to be a figure of the text's unconscious, of historical progression that asserts itself in spite of the text's intentions.

I will end my analysis with a text that contrasts with Flores Magón's early style, one co-authored with another member of the Mexican Liberal Party, Librado Rivera. The text is simply entitled "Manifiesto." It was first given as a speech on March 6, 1918, in Los Angeles, and subsequently published in the March 16 edition of *Regeneración* (Flores Magón and Rivera). The historical context in which it is published is markedly distinct from the pre-revolutionary texts mentioned above. By 1918, the opportunities for the triumph of a revolution that would truly threaten the domination of the capitalist classes were rapidly coming to an end. The already tenuous alliance between *villistas* and *zapatistas* – supporters of Pancho Villa and Zapata – had begun to unravel, and each of these peasant armies would effectively be defeated in a few years (Womack 252-83). At the same time, the global left saw the October Revolution of 1917 as a great symbol of hope for the triumph of communism, despite Europe's descent into war. Flores Magón was still exiled in Los Angeles when the United States entered the war in April of 1917. In this context, the "Manifiesto" positions itself against imperialist war and in favor of mass insurrection against "existing conditions" (Flores Magón and Rivera). On March 21, five days after the text was published, Flores Magón and fellow author and Organizing Committee member Rivera were arrested "for violating the Espionage Act of 1917, as well as the Postal Laws and Regulations of 1913" (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 145). They were both found guilty in July of the following year, and the "Manifiesto" text

would serve as a central piece of evidence against them in that conviction (Albro, *Always a Rebel* 145-7).

The “Manifiesto” is a tour-de-force of images and exhortation to action. Rather than being positioned at the center of a moment of change, however, its images often follow a logic of the threshold, blurring the line between present and future and fecund with the anticipation of imminent arrival. The text often replaces this “mental line” of the periodizing break of linear historical thought with an image, such as the one presented in its first lines: “El reloj de la historia está próximo a señalar, con su aguja inexorable, el instante en que ha de producir la muerte de esta sociedad que agoniza” (Flores Magón and Rivera). Here history is not a linear process that can be broken up by “lines” of periodization but a time of fulfillment that signals the death of bourgeois society, upon which it seems to pass judgement with its “aguja inexorable.” The clock is paralleled by another figure of time, that of terminal illness. According to the latter’s fated teleology, the “agonizing” bourgeois society faces its inevitable conclusion. The grammatical construction [*estar próximo a* + infinitive] emphasizes the closeness of the future, as if it were itself so near that its contents gushed in to the present.

While it is composed in a register also present elsewhere in Flores Magón’s writing, the somber tone of the “Manifiesto” provides a contrast to the liberating joy his texts often identify with rebellion. It takes a more nuanced and ambiguous tone to the prospect of mass insurrection, cognizant that revolution can simultaneously mean immense catastrophe as well as *sui generis* opportunity. In a later passage, the text alludes to the present as a “solemn moment” that is “el momento precursor de la más grandiosa catástrofe política y social que la historia registra” (Flores Magón and Rivera).

In any case, Flores Magón sincerely believed, or at least hoped, that the insurrection to come signaled the death throes of bourgeois society:

Todo indica, con fuerza de evidencia, que la muerte de la sociedad burguesa no tarda en sobrevenir. El ciudadano ve con torva mirada al polizonte, a quien todavía ayer consideraba su protector y su apoyo; el lector asiduo de la prensa burguesa encoge los hombros y deja caer con desprecio la hoja prostituida en que aparecen las declaraciones de los jefes de Estado; el trabajador se pone en huelga sin importarle que con su actitud se perjudiquen los patrios intereses, conscientes ya de que la patria no es su propiedad, sino la propiedad del rico; en la calle se ven rostros que a las claras delatan la tormenta interior del descontento, y hay brazos que parece que se agitan para construir la barricada. (Flores Magón and Rivera)

According to the first sentence, the series of images the passage aggregates all indicate and are evidence of the imminent death of bourgeois society. Like a prophet, the text's narrator interprets these images of urban life as signs of the catastrophe to come. Taken from the quotidian experiences of urban life in its unfolding, however, they also seem like the collected images of a kind of insurrectionary *flâneur*. The images recall the photographic snapshot or the freeze-frame shot of the camera, and in contrast to the conventional development of narrative time, the aggregation of these images represents a sort of spatial expansion that extends throughout the city to present the discontent of a working class that anticipates the coming death of bourgeois society. Through their juxtaposition, these images attempt to visualize the collective and simultaneous

conditions of discontent that proceed revolution, and foster a spatial logic akin to that mentioned by Frank above.

What I have tried to do by way of close readings in this chapter is explore a series of image techniques in Flores Magón's prose. I think this in turn provides a point of departure for pursuing larger questions into the nature of Flores Magón's writing, and specifically its serial nature, which represents a kind of stylistic mechanization, transposing the image and its animation in various ways through the brief forms of the journalistic flash. While Flores Magón allegorically (re)configures the graphic narrative tradition through religious and mythical images that fulfill a didactic function for imagining the political situation, he also sets that tradition *in motion* by way of analogical images. These analogical images often open a prismatic image space, staging a kind of life and death of the image that may be further considered in relation to the transitional regime of the newspaper prose of his time.

## II

### The Chemical Poetics of “Puntos Rojos”

Likewise, the age is also a chemical one.

Revolutions are universal, chemical not organic  
movements.

– Friedrich Schlegel, Fragment 426 (234)

Using a handful of montage techniques, the short aphoristic texts that compose Guerrero’s “Puntos Rojos” column in the newspaper *Regeneración* deploy the didactic power of the poetic intention. It is in this sense, as Noé Jitrik suggests in the final pages of “Las contradicciones del modernismo,” that Mexican, and, perhaps more broadly, Latin American and Spanish fin de siècle anarchist writing, “sería algo así como la traducción a lo político del radicalismo poético” of *modernismo* (128). More accurately, the anarchist writing of this period, at least for the circle around *Regeneración*, was in some sense the result of the radicalization and intensification of the formal as well as political elements of the later phase of the *modernista* project itself.

The “Puntos Rojos” column, a montage of journalistic prose that combined “news aphorisms” of class struggle often accompanied by ironic political commentary with ethical maxims that thematized the principle of revolutionary action, appeared at a moment of transition in the regime of newspaper writing from the informal, poetic register of the nineteenth-century artisanal newspaper to the rationalized, industrial prose of the new regime of information. Bearing testimony to this transition, the column brings into relation a writing of political commitment and opinion with the informational register of news events. The singular character of Guerrero’s writing – its revolutionary

spirit – is manifest in this combination as a means of forging a journalistic genre for the purposes of revolutionary education and agitation.

Guerrero grew up as the child of a wealthy *hacendado* in Guanajuato, Mexico (Albro, *To Die on Your Feet* 7). In 1901, he ran a photo shop, began writing as a rural correspondent for the newspaper *Diario del Hogar*, and joined Mexico's National Army as a reservist, a post he abandoned a few years later in disgust after the army's attack on a liberal demonstration (Albro, *To Die on Your Feet* 10-1). He travelled north to the United States in 1904, where he worked in mines and wrote in and published anarchist newspapers in Denver, San Francisco, El Paso and Arizona (Albro, *To Die on Your Feet* 13-14, 30-3). In 1906 he joined the Organizing Committee of the Mexican Liberal Party in Los Angeles, then died four years later in a failed insurrectionary siege on Janos, Chihuahua, in the final days of 1910 (Albro, *To Die on Your Feet* 30-4, 66).

His death, the object of disputed accounts and obscure circumstances, finds remembrance in a eulogy written by Flores Magón, which gives an account of Guerrero's time in the workers' movement of the southwest: "Cada uno tenía un recuerdo del mártir...Y las familias, congregadas en la noche, oían la amable y sabia plática de este hombre singular que nunca andaba solo; en su modesta mochila cargaba libros, folletos y periódicos revolucionarios, que leía a los humildes." (Flores Magón, Práxedes G. Guerrero). The Guerrero of Flores Magón is a paradoxically sociable and solitary wanderer. The documented practice of communal listening suggests the rather immeasurable reach of the words of a "semanal revolucionario" like *Regeneración*, and it is in large part Guerrero's poetic sensibility that made *Regeneración* so readable. Through Guerrero's speech, its amplified reverberations circulated through the social

relations of the workers' movement. Flores Magón speaks of the “recuerdo del mártir” and the “vida del mártir,” and elsewhere describes Guerrero as an “apostle of modern ideas” (Práxedes G. Guerrero). As I noted above, the Mexican Liberal Party's anti-clericalism didn't preclude the importance of a language and images that found their inspiration in a religious sensibility as primary elements of its discourse. In Flores Magón's account of Guerrero's death, for example, one glimpses, through a series of displacements, the passion narrative of the synoptic gospels:

A los primeros disparos del enemigo, Práxedes cayó mortalmente herido para no levantarse jamás. Una bala había penetrado por el ojo derecho del mártir, destrozando la masa cerebral, aquella masa que había despedido luz, luz intensa que había hecho visible a los humildes el camino de su emancipación. ¡Y debe haber sido la mano de un desheredado, de uno de aquellos a quienes él quería redimir, la que le dirigió el proyectil que arrancó la vida al libertador! (Práxedes G. Guerrero)

The messianic Guerrero is murdered by “uno de aquellos a quienes él quería redimir,” the passage's Judas-like “federal desheredado” responsible for the death of a revolutionary devoted to his redemption and the redemption of his class (Flores Magón, Práxedes G. Guerrero). As the betrayed bearer of the revolutionary word, Guerrero is portrayed as a solitary figure, a writer who affirmed in words their latent power. Akin to his biography, the “Puntos Rojos” are constructed of disparate fragments, but ones which bear the marks of his time and form of life in a way toward which the exteriority of biography can only ever aspire.

The following was one of the last aphorisms to appear in the September 17, 1910 edition of “Puntos Rojos”: “La palabra, como medio para unificar las tendencias. La acción, como medio para establecer los principios en la vida práctica.” (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). To give a full account of the indexical wealth of this aphorism is beyond the scope of my purpose here, but I will try to give a brief account of the multiple determinations that make it significant for both Guerrero’s project and consequently my own. While Guerrero doesn’t mention the reasons for uniting tendencies and realizing principles in practical life, the context of the aphorism’s publication in *Regeneración*, especially at a moment of national political crisis, makes it clear that Guerrero refers to the tasks involved in establishing a viable revolutionary force. Various grammatical features link the two sentences in a parallel construction which imbues them with and poetically emphasizes their equal importance. In the act of reading, the feminine nouns that begin each clause are accompanied on either side by a silence that underscores their significance, occasioned either by being the first word of a new fragment, preceding a comma or proceeding a period that ends a previous sentence. They are each followed by the preposition *como medio para* that indicates their use as a means, and a final parallelism resounds in the appearance of a tetrasyllabic word whose accent falls on the antepenultimate syllable (*tendencia, principios*). *Tendencia*, or tendency, implies the concept of a consistent movement or inclination in a certain direction. Interestingly, the aphorism does not suggest unifying any singular tendency, but uniting what could well be a set of heterogeneous tendencies. In this way, it implies a degree of revolutionary pragmatism at work in Guerrero’s thought, also reflected in the initiatives and the composition of the Mexican Liberal Party. The latter’s members consisted at various



points of liberals, Jacobins, anarchists, Protestants, petit-bourgeois radicals, and members of indigenous communities. Though the Mexican Liberal Party's influence would never again reach the heights it had attained during the historical strikes of 1906 and 1907, when Guerrero penned these words in 1910 its Organizing Committee continued a vigorous level of political organization, a central element of which was the newspaper's circulation among the peasantry, urban wage laborers and radical petit bourgeoisie concentrated unevenly throughout Mexico and the US Southwest.

The effort to unite disparate factions in this way, a method that could be said to inform Guerrero's writing, could be said to evince, following Friedrich Schlegel, what one could term a kind of *chemical principle*. While it is never explicitly defined, a concept of the "chemical" appears and reappears in the collectively produced "Fragmente" (1798), a series of fragments largely the product of Friedrich Schlegel's pen and that appeared in the *Athenaeum*, a short-lived German Romantic literary journal published by brothers August and Friedrich Schlegel at the turn of the nineteenth-century. In these fragments, a notion of the chemical emerges to describe the art of divisions and combinations. In Fragment 404, for example, Schlegel describes the combinatory and comparative art of philology as "enthusiasm for chemical knowledge; for grammar is surely only the philosophical part of the universal art of dividing and joining" (228). Similarly, a few pages later in Fragment 412, in a formulation that could be characterized as a kind of nascent materialist idealism, Schlegel suggests that "Ideals that seem unattainable to themselves are for that reason not ideals but mathematical phantoms of a merely mechanical mind. Whoever has a sense for the infinite and knows what he wants to do with it sees here the result of eternally separating and uniting powers, conceives of

his ideals at least as being chemical” (229). That which is described as “chemical” for Schlegel would seem to mean that which is susceptible to the art of separations and combinations in to new unifications. If, to refer to Schlegel’s quote reproduced in the epigraph above, revolutions are “chemical... movements” (234), the organization of their forces – which ultimately ended in failure for the Mexican Liberal Party – could be characterized as a *chemical task*.

To return to Guerrero’s aphorism cited above, paired with the strategic, chemical task of uniting tendencies is the equally important (and equally pragmatic) spiritual task of realizing principles in daily life, carried out by way of action. Guerrero’s thematization of action evoked a fundamental feature of anarchist doctrine as it had developed in the nineteenth and in to the early twentieth centuries. Like its intellectual forbearers, implicit in Guerrero’s notion of action is a kind of immediacy, an application of principles that need not nor would not wait for the revolution to transpire before initiating the task of transforming life. In this sense, the construction of Guerrero’s aphorism juxtaposes two distinct temporalities: a time of organizing and aggregating disparate tendencies into a cohesive material force toward an uncertain future horizon of struggles to come, as well as a time of more individual, personal effort, whose results might bear fruit today in the present.

While one can read this aphorism as a presentation *in minima* of a revolutionary program or project, considered in relation to the content of the “Puntos Rojos,” one can also understand it as a concise articulation of the column as a rhetorical project, one which combines maxims about action with news aphorisms that relate the various struggles of national and international political tendencies. Before going on to examine

the column as a sort of transitional form between two regimes of newspaper writing, it is important to point out that the aphorism reproduced above can be understood as a key to reading the “Puntos Rojos.” On the one hand, at a more immediate structural level, each fragment stands alone: one need look no further than the short text itself for the information it wants to communicate or the *red point* it intends to make. At the same time, the act of naming all these disparate fragments “Puntos Rojos” in some sense also unites and delimits a set of tendencies, transforming “singularities into members of a class, whose meaning is defined by a common property” (Agamben, *The Coming Community* 16). This is also a poetic operation, in the sense that it projects relations of similarity onto a set of heterogeneous fragments. The fact that this common property is unclear compels the reader’s action – demands an *active reader* – to consider this chain of fragments in terms of their mutual relations in order to decipher what it is they have in common. This kind of reading is encouraged by the fact that the column’s chain of fragments develops at varying distances from a notion of narrative totality: while a sense of narrative cohesion and progression often emerges when a central theme appears consecutively in a limited series of fragments, other sections of the chain or even entire editions of the column seem nothing more than an assemblage of somewhat disparate themes and fragmented parts. In this way, Guerrero’s writing cultivates an experience of “spatial form” (Frank 10), which results from the juxtaposition and consequent synchronic perception of “disparate images” (Wall 22). While each fragment is comprehensible in its immediacy, it may also participate as a term in a larger mediation – a “medio para unir las tendencias,” as Guerrero’s aphorism put it – a simultaneity that comes in to being only after reading’s succession and by way of a process of *chemical*

*unification*, which happens “reflexively in a moment of time” (Frank 15, 27).

Before initiating a more prolonged discussion of the logic of spatial form evident in the “Puntos Rojos,” I’d like to consider the rhetoric that characterizes the individual fragments themselves. To do so, it is important to first clarify the historical horizon of Guerrero’s discourse. While one may justifiably classify the short forms of “Puntos Rojos” as aphorisms in the broad sense, as both Albro and Lomnitz have done in their treatment of Guerrero, these short forms present two distinct modes of writing as the combination of various rhetorical tendencies. This distinction may go by several names, but ultimately revolves around the orientation writing establishes to objectivity and the historical horizon of newspaper prose at the turn of the twentieth century. Ángel Rama mentions an important mid-century debate on the subject that opposed a writing of *doctrina* to one of *información* (La Ciudad Letrada 40-1), a debate to which history responded with the fin de siècle transition from a *prensa de opinión* to a *prensa de negocio*, according to Julio Ramos’ account, which marks the fin de siècle emergence of more rationalized forms of discourse that replace the authority of eloquence with that of “objectivity” as a commercial strategy (Ramos 55, 98). In the first stage of López García’s similar but more extended historiography mentioned above, a stage which proceeded the important revolutionary use of political journalism in the last decades of the eighteenth-century, commentary and opinion were dominant periodical forms whose emergence López García locates around 1850; during this time, the press was often an instrument of political, religious or philosophical tendency according to the persuasions of the publisher, who more often than not was a member of the ascendant bourgeoisie (32-6). Like Ramos, López García locates the emergence of information as a culturally

dominant form in the last decades of the nineteenth-century (34-5). In accordance with Ramos' observations regarding the commercial determinations of objective news mentioned above, López García notes the creation, first appearing in 1859 and consolidated by 1889, of a "red de circulación informativa que cubría el mundo entero" that permitted, for the first time, the stable flow of information around the world (34). This network was the result of a collaboration between three firms – the European firms Havas and Reuter & Wolff as well as the North American Associated Press – a union which became known as the "cartel de agencias" (López García 34). In a context in which information was more accessible than ever before, objectivity became an ideal that legitimated the new regime of writing (López García 35). To the extent the "Puntos Rojos" result from the combination of these new, emergent forms of textual organization determined by the prevalence of global information with the residual forms of the writing of opinion and commentary, so characteristic of the polemics of the liberal journalism of the nineteenth-century, one can identify a tension that works against cohesive unity within and among its fragments. While – beyond *Regeneración* – the liberal journalism of the period was characterized by small-scale forms of artisanal production, the spectacular appearance of world information on the journalistic page coincided with the rise of the industrial press. The most prominent example of this in the context of Mexico was the leading daily *El Imparcial*. As Toussaint Alcaraz notes, the newspaper was established by Rafael Reyes Spíndola in 1896 and – a rather humorous fact given its title – was eventually funded by the regime, effectively serving the *Porfiriato* as an instrument of propaganda (32). With the newspaper's modern production techniques (large print runs exceeding 100,000 by 1907, introduction of linotype which allowed print to be typed

instead of clumsily composed by hand, etc.), the foundation of *El Imparcial* inaugurated the transition from the artisanal to the industrial mode of print production in Mexico (Toussaint Alcaraz 32). The column “Noticias en el Mundo,” which appeared in *El Imparcial*, took advantage of the new, international network of information circulation and often included various news items from around the world. Though these items were assembled in a rather disorganized fashion, a handful of variations in the size of item titles established a minimal hierarchy (*El Imparcial*). While the global network of news evidently offered a breadth of world information, the majority of the items included in “Noticias en el Mundo” focused on European affairs, consistent with the concerns and anxieties of the Mexican bourgeoisie (*El Imparcial*). Beyond Mexico and the United States, the column’s news principally came from Europe, and especially Spain, often to the exclusion or underestimation of events from elsewhere in Latin America, or even Mexico itself. Consider, for example, the following titles from the August 3, 1910 edition of *El Imparcial*: “Los Reyes de España fueron obsequiados por el Sr. Fallieres,” “La Caída del Conde Pablo de Lesseps,” “Roosevelt habla con los mineros,” and, in the bottom right corner, finally, news from Chihuahua: “Descompuesto fue descubierto el cadáver.”

As an assemblage of news items, “Puntos Rojos” shared similarities with “Noticias en el Mundo” in content and form. In contrast, Guerrero’s “Puntos Rojos” carried out an openly partisan and nominal refunctioning of the global content it incorporated in its form. The news events Guerrero selected and arranged for “Puntos Rojos” – which appeared a mere nine times over a period of two months – also differed from those included in “Noticias en el Mundo.” “Puntos Rojos” communicated current events from fifteen different countries: in addition to reports from various regions of

Mexico and the southwestern United States, Guerrero chronicled events from across Latin America (Argentina, Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua), Europe (Denmark, England, Portugal, Russia, Spain), India, and the Middle East (Egypt, Persia, Turkey). Often there are solely news items, much like the fragments of “Noticias en el Mundo.” Perhaps more often, however, Guerrero incorporated political commentary and opinion in to the reportage itself. In this sense, one might speak of a kind of *news aphorism*, the rhetorical offspring of this moment of transformation in the regime of newspaper writing. If the content of the news aphorism often intended to bring a political principle or truth to bear on the news of the present, the etymological origins of “aphorism” shed light on the form through which this bringing to bear was realized. As Jill Marsden notes in “Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism,” “aphorism” is derived from the Greek word *aphorismos*: “from *aphorizein* to define, from *horos*, boundary” (22). The boundary that is defined in the news aphorism is a new horizon for political discourse made possible by the encounter of the figurative, poetic intention of doctrine and opinion with the new register of global information.

One of the most intriguing instances of this encounter appears in the first edition of “Puntos Rojos,” published in *Regeneración* on September 10 of 1910. Here Guerrero addresses the upcoming *Centenario*, or Centennial, of Mexican Independence in a series of fragments. As would be expected of an authoritarian regime, the *Centenario*, whose festivities were initiated a few days after Guerrero’s text was published, served as a means of propaganda for the regime to promote its achievements and appropriate a memory of the past (Gonzales 521). One form this took was unprecedented spectacle. As Michael J. Gonzales notes in his article “Imagining Mexico in 1910: Visions of the Patria

in the Centennial Celebration in Mexico City,” crowds gathered in the city center, where the Cathedral was draped in red, white, and green electric lights as military bands wandered the streets (502). In the second of Guerrero’s aphorisms in this edition of the column, the author acknowledges the attention to decoration and appearance undertaken by the regime. The anticipation of this spectacle was widely reported in *El Imparcial*, a newspaper that was frequently an object of Guerrero’s attacks: “El cadáver del médico Adolfo Beltrán Lagos, acribillado por 18 balas de máuser y ultrajado brutalmente por la policía y el Jefe Político de Tonalá, Chiapas, es una bella decoración para el monumento del Centenario. ¿Verdad, gentes pacíficas?” (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). In this fragment, Guerrero brings together the dead body of a doctor from Chiapas with the monument erected on the *Paseo de la Reforma* in 1910, *El Ángel de la Independencia*.

Unsurprisingly, a search in the prominent newspapers of the period reveal no mention of the doctor Beltrán Lagos or the ill favor he fell under with the local strongman in Tonalá, Chiapas. The only other mention is found in the English section of the same edition of *Regeneración*, in the “Notes and Comments<sup>8</sup>” column, which often incorporated information that had been included in “Puntos Rojos.” It notes that a “(p)ublic indignation is at fever heat because up to this date these official murderers have neither been arrested nor duly tried. The family of Dr. Lagos and many of his friends have taken

---

<sup>8</sup> Examining the relation of “Notes and Comments” to “Puntos Rojos” merits a separate investigation which might address questions of authorship and translation. “Notes and Comments,” which would appear in the newspaper’s English section, would often loosely incorporate material from “Puntos Rojos,” in addition to featuring its own material. If it included any signs of authorship – and it often did not – “Notes and Comments” was attributed to “El Cronista.” Absent a more in-depth stylistic study, it is ostensibly impossible to determine whether this incorporative practice – which we might term a type of “free translation” – was solely the product of Guerrero’s pen (if at all) or if the column was written in collaboration with English speakers of the *Regeneración* circle.



steps to get Governor Rabizer to proceed, but the Pizano of Tonalá seems to be immune for all his savage acts.” (El Cronista). Such a murder was perhaps an uncommon but characteristic occurrence under the rule of the *Porfiriato*. While this latter spoke the language and wore the mask of liberal democracy, the development achieved by the regime was the product of a strong federal state whose stability was facilitated by a national network of elites that supported the ruling clique and exercised a kind of gangsterism allowing for the reproduction of Porfirian power.

In the “Puntos Rojos” fragment reproduced above, the *caudillo*’s murder of Beltrán Lagos is expressed by way of a depiction of the body of the deceased. The past participles of the two verbs *acribillar* and *ultrajar* are employed as adjectives (*acribillado*, *ultrajado*). The first, which means to produce several holes or wounds in someone or something, according to the *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*, evokes an image of gunfire (24). The second, per the same source, means to insult or mistreat someone (1488). While the image of a body riddled with bullets was surely imaginable to Guerrero’s readership – many of whom had, in varying degrees, experienced the regime’s violence – the *ultrajación*, or mistreatment and dishonor of Beltrán Lagos’s corpse (“(e)l cadáver... ultrajado brutalmente por la policía y el Jefe Político”), offers an invisible, even spiritual image of the regime’s violence. Not only was the body filled with eighteen bullets. Adding insult to injury, the local police, under the rule of the petty *caudillo*, committed an offense against his memory. It is not only Beltrán Lagos in life, but his cadaver itself in death that is mistreated. More than an affront to Beltrán Lagos’ personal or public honor, it is a question of his remembrance in death being denied dignity.

While in the first clause Guerrero pairs a material and spiritual image of the deceased Beltrán Lagos as a symptom of the regime's violence, in the last clause of his sentence, Guerrero suggests that this dishonored corpse would make a nice addition to the monument of the *Centenario*. This monument, otherwise known as the *Ángel de la Independencia*, had been commissioned by Díaz several years prior and was unveiled during the festivities of the *Centenario* (Legorreta). The monument consisted of a victory column (Legorreta). As an architectural figure that has gone through various iterations since Antiquity, the victory column has historically served as a monument to the triumph of one "people," nation or empire over another – the victory column is the practice and material manifestation of victors. In its fin de siècle context, Mexico's *Ángel de la Independencia* joins a handful of nineteenth-century European columns erected in the wake of national or civil wars which were crowned with an angelic figure (Legorreta).<sup>9</sup> It was a sign of the regime's attempt to fashion itself as a contemporary of the age's modern European powers. At the base of the statue, there is a sculptural group entitled "*Apoteosis del Padre de la Patria*," among whose five political figures the priest Miguel Hidalgo stands prominently raised. Up in the air, directly above where the priest stands, the *Ángel* holds a laurel crown above Hidalgo's head. Unlike the European columns that feature angelic figures, erected within a decade of the events they monumentalize, the monument appeared around a century after the events it is purportedly raised to remember. In the same way the regime appropriated the forms of liberal democratic discourse in efforts to

---

<sup>9</sup> By the time it was erected in 1873, Berlin's *Siegestsäule* represented the Prussian state's recent unification; the French *Colonne de Juillet* in honor of those who died in the Revolution of 1830, was also erected within a decade of the events it commemorated (Legorreta).

mask its gangsterism,<sup>10</sup> the neo-classical form of the *Ángel* attempts to appropriate the now century-old anti-colonial victory of the Mexican War of Independence, positioning itself as the rightful heir of the echo of Hidalgo's *Grito*. In its juxtaposition of the neo-classical work of urban adornment and rural state murder, Guerrero's aphorism suggests the former would serve as a "bella decoración" for the latter. In this suggestion, the age's bourgeois penchant for adornment, so evident in works of *modernismo*, is rendered grotesque. More significantly perhaps, implicit in Guerrero's phrase is the fact that both the angel and the corpse are a product of the regime, and that in fact the former could not be possible without the latter. As Penelope J.E. Davies has suggested, the origins of the column form itself appear funerary in nature<sup>11</sup> (45-7), and Guerrero's pairing of the column and the corpse also reveals a truth at the heart of the practice of raising victory columns: the intimate relationship between victory and death. At a moment of modern spectacle and celebration, Guerrero reminds his readers of this fact as a means of indicating the regime's true nature. Among the procession of the spectacular images of progress, Beltrán Lago's corpse also appears, an equally valid tribute to the regime's legacy. The news aphorism's closing sentence intensifies the text's provocative nature

---

<sup>10</sup> As Guerrero above, Flores Magón's early journalism, as it is collected in the volume "Artículos Políticos Seudónimos," makes a prominent use of images of deceptive appearances in its portrayal of the ruling clique (masks, *oropeles*, etc.) (33, 46, 49-54, 56, 59, 71, 75-8, 84-5, 107, 134-8, 165, 192, 231, 322-3).

<sup>11</sup> Trajan's Column was ostensibly erected to commemorate the Roman emperor Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars at the beginning of the second-century (Davies 41-4). In an article on this column, however, Penelope J.E. Davies, to "reconcile the outstanding quality of workmanship with such a seemingly poor design" (45), cites research that shows that columns in fact "had been used to mark burials in Greek lands since Archaic times... as well as in Italy" (46-7); she does so to develop an argument that the column was also and perhaps principally built to function as the emperor's "imperial tomb" (45).

when it seeks confirmation from whom the narrator identifies as “gentes pacíficas,” an antagonistic reference to the regime’s propagandistic concept of *pax porfiriana*, or the notion that the *Porfiriato* had established a time of political peace (Garner 69).

This juxtaposed linking of the regime’s two faces in a composite image is a means of exposing the regime’s hypocrisy by way of an ironizing technique that often sutures two terms together through a split in the meaning of one or more figures or terms. This technique is used again in the following news aphorism, published in the twelfth edition of *Regeneración* on November 19, 1910. Here Guerrero again brings together two images in a rhetorical operation that is meant to function as an exposure of the hypocrisy of the Porfirian clique and ruling classes:

Según El Imparcial, las fuentes de la miseria son la embriaguez, la intemperancia, la ausencia del ahorro, el mitin subversivo, los paros y el matrimonio prematuro.

Nuestros aristócratas son borrachos, intemperantes, dilapidadores, amigos de juergas colosales, huelguistas eternos y muy jóvenes tienen tres o cuatro mujeres en vez de una; beben abundantemente en las fuentes imparcialescas y sin embargo no viven en la miseria. (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos)

Guerrero’s news aphorism attacks an alleged report which appeared in *El Imparcial* regarding the purported sources of the lack of virtues among the lower classes. In his accusations, also meant to function as an exposure of ruling class hypocrisy, he inverts the list of vices *El Imparcial* attributes to the lower classes to use them to describe Mexico’s “aristocrats.” At a superficial level, as a rhetorical operation, this inversion seems somewhat mundane and commonplace; the cunning of Guerrero’s writing is nevertheless apparent once one considers the current national context. The newspaper *El*

*Imparcial*, as Guerrero writes, purports to identify “las fuentes de la miseria,” or the sources at the root of the misery caused by poverty. Here the newspaper’s inquiry masked its scorn of the lower classes in the language of a scientific inquiry that seeks to uncover the objective conditions of poverty. This pseudo-scientific framework was typical of the discourse of the *científicos*, the intellectual clique who imported and modified Auguste Comte’s doctrine of positivism as a means of justifying the social order maintained by the *Porfiriato*’s authoritarian mode of governance. As Zea notes, positivism was brought to Mexico “para resolver una serie de problemas sociales y políticos” in the wake of the *Reforma*, after which it became “el instrumento ideológico del cual se servía una determinada clase social para justificar sus prerrogativas sociales y políticas” (35). According to this doctrine – an assertion which the Revolution would soon explode into a million pieces – “el progreso produce fatalmente una clase afortunada que... representa la selección de las especies” (Zea 35). In this light, the scientific register of *El Imparcial*’s “study,” which finally blamed the lower classes for their misery, was an implicit justification of the current social order. Guerrero’s inversion of these vices and attribution of them to the upper classes formally consisted of converting a series of “objective” abstract nouns into concrete ones – ideas are converted in to people. Guerrero’s description of the ruling class envisions this latter as a motley band of drunk, gambling adulterers, a comical image by way of exaggeration that borders on caricature. Through a simple movement from the abstract to the concrete and object to subject, this aphorism turns the positivist discourse against itself to remove the mask from the vicious face of this naturally selected “clase afortunada” (Zea 35).

In this last example, this ironic suturing technique is used in a news aphorism that

appears in the fifth issue of *Regeneración*, published on October 1, 1910, which enacts a similar split in one of its two central figures:

Para desplumar a los huastecos y emplumar a los mexicanos, se gastó una bonita suma, y otra más hermosa todavía se gastó en iluminaciones.

La compensación vendrá. Cuando los descamisados hagan su fiesta ya pondrán luminarias en los palacios de sus opresores. (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos)

While the first of the two parts of this news aphorism communicates information about an injustice, the second consists of a prophetic conjecture delivered by way of an image of revolutionary revenge. The two images central to this news aphorism are the figures of feathers and light, which appear under the veils of different grammatical forms. The verbs *desplumar* and *emplumar* are formed from *pluma*, the Spanish noun for feather, while the plural noun *iluminaciones* and plural adjective *luminarias* find a common root in the Latin *lūmen*, a noun meaning “light.” Much in the same way the above news aphorism is structured by way of an assemblage of two images of differing semantic charges (the column of the *Ángel* and the dead body of Beltrán Lagos) into a kind of frankenstein-like composite image, this news aphorism is also structured around an oscillating polarity between antagonistically charged image-concepts. While attributing a name to each term of this polarity at first appears to be a rather arbitrary task, this latter finds its limits in each image’s limited set of verbal connotations: in each news aphorism, there is a figure of glorification (of state) and de-glorification, a kind of giving and taking away. While the *Ángel* victory column is an adornment of the city and consequently the regime, imagining the adornment “adorned” with the “bella decoración” of a dead body profanes the neo-classical column that was constructed to exalt the regime’s achievement.

In this sense, in both of these news aphorisms, one might refer to the presentation of an *oscillatory movement between images of adornment and desecration*. The Huastecs are dishonored by their defeathering, while the “Mexicans,” those to whom the nation and its celebration belongs, are adorned with feathers. Their city is adorned with lights for the *Centenario*, while in the last image the figure of light illustrates an imagined desecration of the “palaces” (symbol of governance and the reigning regime). Through the pairing of these two figures, then, an oscillatory series unfolds in a brief chain of images in readerly time:

defeathering	/ feathering	/ illumination	/ illuminated destruction
(-) desecration	/ (+) adornment	/ (+) adornment	/ (-) desecration

The chain of images produced by what one might term an “oscillatory antagonism” can be read as the manifestation, on a more local level, *within the fragment*, as the same kind of experimentation in narrative sequencing *among fragments* to which the “Puntos Rojos” avail themselves at a more global discursive level, lending themselves to the possibilities of spatial form. The development of a chain of polarly charged images is also a feature of the writing of Flores Magón, although it is less subtly refined in the latter and more the result of a poetic intention that realizes itself in the manifesto mode. Here Guerrero’s feat, in contrast, is to infuse and contaminate the news with poetry. As Hopkins notes, equivalence or similarity is not only a matter of likeness, as “semantic equivalence” projected into a given sequence may involve both “comparison for likeness’ sake” and “comparison for unlikeness’ sake” (Jakobson 368-9; qtd. in Jakobson 368-9). The result, then, is that this first part of the news aphorism conjugates a series of recent

news items in a form that transmits a poetic rather than literal truth. While there is no record of its occurrence, it is possible but obviously implausible the Huastecs were defeathered in order to provide feathers for Mexicans participating in the celebrations of the *Centenario*. As Gonzales notes, however, “(a)s the Centennial approached, city officials required indigenous men to exchange cotton wraps for trousers, sombreros for felt hats, and sandals for shoes” (510). The regime carried out an urban policy that effectively attempted to cleanse or at least mask the city’s traces of indigeneity, much like the defeathering mentioned in Guerrero’s text. At the same time, the *Centenario*’s *Desfile Histórico*, or “historical parade” as Gonzales terms it (498), consisted of a series of *carros alegóricos*, or “allegorical carriages” (508), each of which featured characters and scenes depicting prominent moments or events in Mexican history (512). In the first act, “809 elaborately costumed individuals representing conquistadors and Aztecs” – the feathered Mexicans of Guerrero’s news aphorism – “began their march at the Plaza de la Reforma and continued down the Avenidas Juárez and San Francisco until they reached the Zócalo, where they re-enacted the historic encounter” (Gonzales 512). While Guerrero’s simplification might not be true on a literal level, it strikes a truth on a spiritual one. The desecration and dishonor of indigenous Mexicans – forced to mask their identity while the participants of the spectacle paraded around in the caricatured garments of indigeneity – is a state of affairs toward which Guerrero’s final and finally prophetic image exacts a revenge of revolutionary illumination. Guerrero’s reworking of the news in poetic form “is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total re-evaluation,” a kind of desecration of the new values of the informational register for the sake of the cause of the oppressed (Jakobson 377).



Guerrero's infusion of the new forms of information with poetry is the locus of a series of determinations. In relation to the positivist discourse of the *científicos*, "Puntos Rojos" can be understood as the writing of what Frederic Jameson has called a "class discourse" (76). In "The Political Unconscious," Jameson's programmatic proposition for literary analysis suggests three ever-widening levels of interpretation, which the author terms "concentric frameworks," or "semantic horizons" (74-5). For Jameson, class discourses come in to view once "the semantic horizon within which we grasp a cultural object has widened to include the social order" (76), and are, following Bakhtin, "essentially *dialogical* in structure" (84). Jameson goes on to note that

the normal form of the dialogical is essentially an antagonistic one, and... the dialogue of class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code... a ruling class ideology will explore various strategies of the *legitimation* of its own proper position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will... seek to contest and to undermine the dominant value system. (84)

Jameson's characterization of "the dialogue of class struggle" presents an appropriate framework through which to understand the situation of Mexican journalism at the turn of the century leading up to the Revolution (84). While Guerrero, Flores Magón, and other writers of *Regeneración* took part in the spiritual renovation of writing that characterized *modernismo* (Jrade 4), Guerrero makes a particular use of this spiritual sensibility. This use undermines the ideology and practices of the ruling clique and the coalition of classes that supported it. In this sense, in a kind of outpouring of chemical spirit, it recasts the inwardness of the *modernista* project outward, in order to inform,

critique, and instruct within the framework of a literary horizon that combines politics and pedagogy.

To understand how Guerrero transforms both the received anarchist doctrine of action and the rhetorical forms in which he casts it, it is important to first consider this doctrine's content as a product of classical anarchist<sup>12</sup> thought. To this end, I will briefly look at the texts of two authors which offer precise formulations of this doctrine: "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis" (1870) by Mikhail Bakunin, and "Direct Action" (1912) by Voltairine de Cleyre. While Guerrero was familiar with Bakunin's work, it is less clear the extent to which he was with de Cleyre's, even though she was his contemporary and her essay provides a more recent formulation of the doctrine Guerrero recasts in maxim form. While each of the essays mentioned above was produced amidst a distinct set of circumstances, each was intended to be a strategic intervention in response to concrete events of class struggle. In Bakunin's "Letters" of September 1870, he intended to communicate his thoughts about potential revolutionary opportunities afforded by the first stages of the Franco-Prussian War, which later gave way to the Paris Commune in the fall of 1871. De Cleyre's piece, in contrast, is meant to extend beyond revolutionary circles to a more general audience to clarify the meaning of direct action in light of the term's circulation in the wake of a recent Los Angeles Times bombing, which

---

<sup>12</sup> I use the term "classical anarchism" to refer to the period in which anarchism was a vibrant and emergent assemblage of concepts and practices that resonated with intellectuals and masses of working people at an international scale. Such a period could be said to extend from the *Enragés* of the French Revolution to the Spanish Civil War. While the distinction between communism and anarchism has at many historical junctures been more rhetorical than substantial in nature, after this period, it is more often in the name of communism that forms of innovative thinking emerge within anti-authoritarian circles, often to address questions of revolutionary failure.

“had the effect of making a good many people curious” in regards to the meaning of direct action (de Cleyre). Each text presents action in the forms of integral rational political discourse, in which – akin to the fabric of any such discourse – the term derives its meaning through the relations of similarity and opposition it establishes with other terms. At the core of classical anarchism, of course, is a doctrine of anti-authoritarianism. It is in light of this principle that the concepts of autonomy and spontaneity developed by classical anarchist thought become understandable as the aims of a given revolutionary movement, aims from which the strategic priority of direct action derives. As a rhetorical operation, de Cleyre’s text defends direct action as a common, popular practice and refers to a series of social conflicts to decipher it as an identifiable phenomenon amidst the events of US history, from the Quakers and the Underground Railroad to the more recent Populist agricultural associations of the 1890s and the Industrial Workers of the World. De Cleyre writes:

Every person who ever thought he had a right to assert, and went boldly and asserted it, himself, or jointly with others that shared his convictions, was a direct actionist... Every person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist. All co-operative experiments are essentially direct action. (de Cleyre)

For de Cleyre, direct action is action taken by a collective or individual body without recourse or appeal to an other – an authority on the matter – to achieve its ends. It is autonomous in its reliance on its own powers and spontaneous in its immediacy (foregoing the mediation of an other). Bakunin often employs the phrase direct action to

refer to a more abstract revolutionary potential, according to which direct action would describe the practices of a mass worker and peasant uprising characterized by spontaneity and autonomy: “The best and only thing that Paris can do, in order to save itself,” the author asserts, “is to proclaim and encourage the absolute autonomy and spontaneity of all the provincial movements” (Bakunin). Spontaneity, for Bakunin, will safeguard against the hierarchical imposition or reification of the more formal modes of organization he attributed to the Jacobin tradition, or to figures like Marx. One of these hierarchical impositions took the form of what Bakunin termed “revolution by decree,” and he maintained that the successful revolutionary movement must preserve its autonomy not only against “the parasitic, artificial institution of State” but against the “revolution by decree” of “authoritarian” revolutionaries as well. The result, then, is that Bakunin imbues meaning to direct action apophatically, by way of a relation of opposition to revolution by decree affirmed vaguely as “revolutionary deeds and action.” As the “Letters” develop, this opposition of words and deeds is voiced more concretely when the author asserts, “Let us *talk less* about revolution and *do* a great deal *more*” (Bakunin). In a similar fashion, de Cleyre opposes “direct actionists” to “indirect or political actionists.”

While my treatment of these two texts doesn’t begin to exhaust their potential, I have included them to set up a relation of rhetorico-stylistic difference or opposition in my own discourse. In contradistinction to the rationalized forms of classical anarchist political discourse, Guerrero’s treatment of the doctrine of action in “Puntos Rojos” is – like everything else in the column – a fragmentary operation. While these short texts on action might also be described as aphorisms, epigrams, or proverbs, the term “maxim” is

what best describes them. Maxim, which Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines as "a principle or rule of conduct" (1188), is derived from the Latin *maxima*, in turn derived from *maxima propositio*, or "greatest among propositions." While the aphorism, maxim, or proverb all might be said to transmit a truth derived from experience, the maxim operates on an ethical register, in the sense that ethics is fundamentally concerned with the question of conduct, the question of the *form* action takes in life itself. It is in this sense that the maxim form can't be dismissed as a form of petty moralism. As Jacques Truchet notes in an introduction to François de la Rochefoucauld's "Maximes" – one of the most prominent works of the seventeenth century French moralists, who were themselves perhaps the most historically prominent group of authors dedicated to writing and assembling maxims – "(s)i une maxime avait été un précepte de morale, qui ouvrirait encore les Maximes?... Mais il s'agissait de tout autre chose : de constatations, ou, si l'on préfère, de propositions."<sup>13</sup>" (14). For Truchet, the maxim can be understood as an observation, or, to go further, as a proposition or proposal. In this sense, Guerrero's maxims are like condensed, fragmentary revolutionary programs, immediately viable in their application to life. Truchet goes on to point out the "collective dimension" of the moralists' maxims (14): they were often produced collectively, and meant to engage an audience of active readers as works offered to the public so that the public could make use of them (14). In his treatment of La Rochefoucauld, Truchet develops a critique against past efforts to interpret the "Maximes" as a systematic work, pointing out their

---

<sup>13</sup> "If a maxim had been a moral precept, who would still read the "Maxims?"... But it consisted of something entirely different: of observations, or, if one prefers, of propositions" (Truchet 14). (Author's translation)

fundamentally paradoxical and contradictory nature (18-20). For Truchet, La Rochefoucauld's "Maximes" is not the manifestation of a system, but of a belief and practice in style (22, 24). As Truchet notes in closing, "Le style, il faut l'avouer, c'est enfin, pour La Rochefoucauld, l'aristocratique croyance en l'existence d'une certaine race d'hommes<sup>14</sup>" (24). It would be naïve, as Truchet points out, to expect anything else from a seventeenth century nobleman who bore at once the title of duke, baron, and prince (24). Yet for Truchet, it is not the content of the maxims that is most important, but their form, whose ability to capture wit or paradox with an elegant brevity functioned as a means of aristocratic distinction of "une certaine race d'hommes" (24). While Guerrero's maxims continue in the tradition of polished brevity and paradox, they refunction the genre by putting it at the service of the tradition of the oppressed. The "science des mœurs," or "moral science" of the maxim in Guerrero becomes a method of class action (Truchet 14), each maxim a kind of minimal revolutionary program or proposal concentrated into a few lines. In contrast to the doctrine of action as set forth in classical anarchism, its casting in to the maxim form, consistent with Truchet's argument, is not at all a systematic but a much more pragmatic affair. In fact, most of the maxims center around the question of action, or its opposite in passivity, and the fear that may be at the root of this latter. It is the case that one can read a great many of the maxims as a kind of advice or argumentation which advocated the cultivation of a series of revolutionary virtues. In a memorable language, reminiscent of the popular proverb, the maxims affirmed working for the common good over laziness: "La pereza se contenta

---

<sup>14</sup> "One must admit that style, for La Rochefoucauld, is finally an aristocratic belief in the existence of a certain race of men" (Truchet 24). (Author's translation)

con ser agradecida; si cada quien pusiera su parte en la conquista de la libertad general, nadie tendría la vergüenza de agradecer” (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). They also emphasized the equal importance of the good condition of the body as well as the mind: “Instruir al cerebro es hacer efectivo el golpe del brazo; armar el brazo, es dar fuerza a las concepciones del cerebro” (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). In this sense, they fostered a kind of revolutionary preparedness, and one is unsurprised to find among them quite a few maxims that advocate courage in the face of fear. Consider the following three maxims, the first two of which were published on September 24 and the third of which on October 1 of 1910 in *Regeneración*:

¿Que tenéis miedo? Y bien, ¿acaso hay hombre que no lo tenga? Lo que se necesita es hacerse superior a él y no ponerlo sobre nosotros como el primer déspota.

¿Teméis a la Revolución? Renunciad a la injusticia y el miedo se acabará en vosotros.

¿Qué no podéis ser leones? Bueno. Sed simplemente hombres. (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos)

What is first most notable about each of these is their presentation in the form of a question and an answer, which might be said to be a monologic configuration of the dialogic mode. This latter has been a form at the heart of the pedagogical intention to teach by way of the figure and demonstration. Plato, for example, wrote around thirty dialogues (vii-ix); in the synoptic gospels, Jesus Christ was constantly responding to questions, often with poetic and enigmatic answers, in the form of images. In this sense, in contradistinction to de Cleyre and Bakunin, Guerrero’s writing here takes on the more

immediate forms of a teaching about a form of life as opposed to an abstract rational discourse, and in doing so his writing unites with “the living chain of innumerable lessons that flow down from eternity” (Benjamin, *On Proverbs* 582). The autonomy and spontaneity of Guerrero’s doctrine of action are already implicit within this gesture, in a move that takes seriously appearing relevant to the lives of those it wishes to encourage to action. The “revolutionary deed” of which Bakunin constantly and perhaps ironically wrote - giving his common eschewing of writing –is here in Guerrero a linguistic deed, a form of pedagogy. Guerrero’s maxims take up the forms of colloquial language common to the classes with which they wish to stage an encounter and organize. In some way, these maxims highlight the irony of the system of oppositions set up in Bakunin’s discourse, or even, for that matter, Marx: to be able to rail against the oppression of abstract forms, one must already be guilty of the sin of abstraction. In contrast, the maxim of action takes a step closer to life, and in this step, like life, is contradictory. Not only is the maxim-form unsystematic, but it might even be said to be inconsistent in the responses it gives to the questions it poses. In the first maxim above, fear, like the tyrant, must not be allowed to govern, but must be overcome. In the second, however, it is not a question of addressing one’s fear, but instead of renouncing injustice, which will disappear through this action. The question of whether Guerrero’s interlocutors could “ser leones” or not would seem to indicate the amount of their courage, and the reassurance in this case is that one does not have to be unafraid, one just has to be human.

Much like the news aphorisms above, but with more brevity, Guerrero’s maxims often stage the encounter of two figures in a composite image memorable for its vividness: “La pequeñez aparente del astro se debe a la debilidad de nuestra vista;”



“Cread un ídolo y os pondréis un yugo;” “Si no podéis ser espada, sed relámpago.”

(Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). Published in October and November of 1910 respectively in issues 6, 10, and 12 of *Regeneración*, the above maxims clothe the advice of political stratagem and spiritual truth in the garments of images that would have been accessible to *Regeneración*’s readership. Many of these readers only ever encountered the newspaper in aural form through the communal reading and listening in which Guerrero himself took part (Flores Magón, Práxedes G. Guerrero). In this way, Guerrero addresses complex topics, such as the limited and relative character of individual and collective perception, the principle of authority, and the revolutionary division of labor, all in an accessible way. In its concise use of vivid imagery, the maxims recall the symbolist tendency of the fin de siècle poetic movements as well as the folkloric language of the popular proverb, such that there is a sense in which these maxims are a form that transcends the dichotomy of high and low art much like, in another domain, the work of José Guadalupe Posada.

Both maxims and news aphorisms, then, as my attempts at typology have tried to classify them, are short forms that chemically stage a combining or a bringing together. The news aphorism unites the informational and poetic register, while the maxim of action intermingles the content of classical anarchism’s doctrine together with what might be considered at once a symbolist and folkloric imagery. In both forms, there is the discordant combination of images, which has a kind of *corrosive effect*: corrosive to both the rationality of the news register as well as to that of abstract, systematic political thought. Beyond mere “rhetorical adornment,” it is the occasion of a type of discursive invasion of the poetic that, as Jakobson notes, calls for a “total re-evaluation” of the

components of the discourse (377), a task towards which I hope to have made a few efforts here.

Guerrero's chemical propensity for combining fragments and images, at once didactic, poetic, ironic, humorous, and pedagogic, realizes a certain method of montage, which in its simplest sense refers to an aesthetic procedure whereby distinct elements or fragments are combined in a single composition, which may variably effect and often interrupt the extent to which the work is perceived as a unified whole. In this sense, montage might be said to be an *affirmative* mode or moment of what Schlegel identifies as "chemicality," a stage of combinations and unifications that proceeds or perhaps incorporates one of divisions and separations. Though in Bürger's account, as I have noted above, the technique of montage "presupposes the fragmentation of reality" – of the work's material – and explains "the phase of the constitution of the work" (73), the question of the montage principle in the newspaper is not merely one of the producer's volition, and takes on at once a subjective and objective character. It is objective in so far as the conditions and limits of print production in a given historical period are concerned, and subjective in so far as the horizon of that which a creative intention makes of such limits and conditions. While Bürger suggests montage is the "fundamental principle" of avant-garde production as well as a starting point toward its understanding (72), and while it is heavily associated with the modernist period, in some ways it is difficult to conceive of montage as something categorically new that emerged at the turn of the century. Instead, montage might be considered a *particular methodological dimension of aesthetic production* that comes more fully in to view once certain European producers set about sabotaging the autonomy of the work in vain attempts to merge art and life (72,

77). This fact was not lost on Benjamin, who posits montage as a constructive principle that comes into being by way of the technological developments of the nineteenth-century (Buck-Morss 74). As Benjamin famously notes in his “Arcades Project,” “Literature submits to montage in the feuilleton” (13). This quote identifies a specific instance of montage’s appearance as a constructive technique that emerges from the need to arrange and juxtapose the various discourses and texts that compose the newspaper, at the intersection of objectively determined conditions and creation. Chemical creativity is at the heart of “Puntos Rojos,” whose very structure interiorizes the logic of disparate juxtaposition that emerged in the newspaper form. This fact would have been even more stark in the pages of *Regeneración* as compared to a more commercial or even artisanal enterprise. In the unsurprising economy of a newspaper that was produced by a precarious circle of mostly unemployed anarchists constantly pursued by two federal governments, *Regeneración* made the most of its broadsheet, which appeared as a wall of unadulterated text usually free of both images and unused white space.



Figure 2

In the image above (see fig. 2), a reproduction of the “Puntos Rojos” column of the September 10, 1910 edition of *Regeneración*, which can be found in its entirety in the *Periódicos* section of the website *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*, one sees the chunks of white lines, varying in size in the spaces between one fragment to another (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). To the regular reader of *Regeneración*, “Puntos Rojos” must have appeared as a novel addition to a paper that maximized all of the little space it had in the first place. What is unique are not only the small fragments unified in a single form, but the typography used to unify them. In lieu of the continuous lines of the broadsheet that separate distinct articles into long rectangles and squares in every other section of the newspaper, the short lines that separate the fragments of the “Puntos Rojos” don’t span the length of the whole column. These are instead suspended in the white space that each time appears between the fragments, forming a kind of incomplete fragmentation and offering an image of the tensions at play in the work’s conception of totality. In the language of typography, these lines are known as signature lines, characterized by a “horizontal line with adjacent text” (Butterick). This was the typographical style that appeared in every edition of “Puntos Rojos,” save that of October 29, 1910. In this latter, the succession of three stars (\* \* \*) replaced the signature line between each fragment. It would be inconclusive to make anything of this juxtaposition of the continuity of the signature line as opposed to the successive appearance of dots gathered in a cluster. If this communicates anything, however, it is that there seems to be more aesthetic reflection and intention that went in to typographical choices made in the newspaper than most researchers have given it credit for. The dots formally evoke the

structure and the name of the “Puntos Rojos,” but whether the typographer had this in mind is, like most of human history, lost to oblivion.

What is nonetheless intriguing about the signature line is the role it plays and what it represents in relation to the column’s larger structure. The signature line is undecidedly ambiguous in terms of discontinuity and continuity, hovering in space as an incomplete border and unable to fully fulfill any function. This is even more so the case when, as mentioned above, a given succession of fragments seems to gesture toward a sense of narrative continuity. An example of this appears in the first edition of “Puntos Rojos.” The first three fragments of the first edition all thematize the *Centenario* from different perspectives and by way of different information, but nonetheless develop the same theme. Some sense of narrative structure is also loosely suggested by the fact that, almost as a rule, the maxims almost always appear near the end of the text, often in succession, although at times interspersed as well with news aphorisms. What is at stake here is not so much a question of authorial intention as it is of the possibilities of readerly reception. The fact that narrative patterns seem to emerge and dissipate, coupled with the implied shared properties of the disparate fragments as a collection of “red points” whose mutual relationships are unclear – yet nevertheless exist – make these fragments and agglomerations of fragments susceptible to creative and unexpected patterns of juxtaposition and combination, rendering simultaneous what was successive, in a moment that proceeds reading.

In closing, I would like to suggest that what the “Puntos Rojos” present, finally, modelled on the one hand by the immediacy of the maxim and by the chemical, combinatory spirit of montage on the other, are two modes of reading that can also be

understood as models of two temporalities of revolutionary time. To make sense of what this means, I return to the aphorism whose reading opened our series of analyses: “La palabra, como medio para unificar las tendencias. La acción, como medio para establecer los principios en la vida práctica.” (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos). On the one hand, exemplified especially in the content of Guerrero’s maxims, action is a means of *immediately* confronting life, and especially the fear that keeps one from engaging in the communal political life of revolutionary horizons. On the other hand, the word – whose usage is always that of a syntactic, combinatory gesture – serves as a means of unification, which is a figure of a more prolonged time of organizing, of the art of conversation and deliberation amongst tendencies.

If Guerrero’s “Puntos Rojos” has anything to offer the wretched horizon of the present, it is a chemical lesson, formed in the composite image of two temporalities. The anti-capitalist politics of the present are characterized by a schism which may be formulated as the opposition between two extremes. On the one hand, there are those for whom it is always too imprudent to act until a higher level of organization has been achieved, a level of organization that in fact never seems to materialize. For this party, it is always *too soon*. At the other extreme, there are those who continually and constantly advocate confrontation of and with the status quo, to the point of engaging in a non-strategic activism whose path is equally as impotent. For this party, it is always *too late*. What Guerrero’s aphorism offers this schism is precisely this lesson of two temporalities: on the one hand, the priority to begin to chart a path in the present; on the other, the knowledge that any real transformation will only come about by way of a more

exhaustive unification of tendencies. In this age, the only possible way forward is chemical.

### III

#### Synecdoche Coahuila

In September of 1910, Guerrero published a short series of articles in *Regeneración* entitled “Episodios Revolucionarios.” This series consisted of four articles: “La muerte de los héroes,” “Las Vacas,” “Viesca,” and “Palomas.” As the place references of their titles suggest, each text treats some aspect of the Mexican Liberal Party’s attempts to organize rural uprisings in various towns of the border states of Chihuahua and Coahuila, Mexico, in June of 1908. This activity comes at the end of a two-year period which James Cockroft identifies as a peak in the Mexican Liberal Party’s efforts to build and expand various forms of political organization across Mexico and in the southwestern United States (132). As I mentioned above, in addition to the presence of several newspapers and the organization of hundreds of clubs, the Mexican Liberal Party collaborated with industrial workers in a mining strike in Cananea, Sonora (1906), textile strikes in Río Blanco (1907) and Vera Cruz (1908), and a railroad strike in San Luis Potosí (Cockroft 132). Similarly, the insurrectionary uprisings which occurred in Coahuila were part of a series of larger efforts involving groups in Baja California, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz (Cockroft 143).

In the days before the northern rebellions, however, the plot underwent a brutal setback. A letter from Flores Magón to fellow conspirator Prisciliano G. Silva detailing the rebels’ plans fell in to the hands of authorities in El Paso, Texas (Cockroft 142). The insurrections, already suffering internally from poor strategic coordination, quickly withered under the subsequent conditions of rapid repression. Members were unable to communicate with one another and an atmosphere ensued in which “reinó la confusión



general” (Cockroft 142). Though these plans lacked strategic potency, they were one among various organizing efforts that attempted to overcome divisions amongst impoverished classes and other potential revolutionary forces, to turn all these fragmentary parts, articulated in the process of insurrection, in to some type of whole.

Two years later, in the fall of 1910, Guerrero and other members of the Mexican Liberal Party’s Organizing Committee clearly saw the signs of the insurgent storm of Revolution to come. Efforts against *hacendados* were already underway in the state of Morelos, protagonized by forces led by Zapata (Womack 61, 65); the *Plan de San Luis Potosí*, the failed presidential candidate Francisco Madero’s open “call to arms,” set in motion a motley aggregation of forces “who would carry the fight from the countryside to the national capital” (Gonzales 499). Within this context, Guerrero’s “Episodios” carried out a specific discursive operation whose partition or “distribution of the sensible” (12), to borrow a term from Jacques Rancière, presented an unconventional understanding of *revolution* and the *revolutionary*. According to Rancière, the distribution of the sensible refers to “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously disclose the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions with it” (12), revealing an

‘aesthetics’ at the core of politics... as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and

the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.

(13)

For Rancière, at the core of the political is the presentation to sense experience of forms (of space, time) that reveal something held in common and at once delimit it, a play of the perceived and the unperceived.

First among the ways in which Guerrero's "Episodios Revolucionarios" present a new means of perceiving the country's political situation – a new partition of what was sensible in it – is through the title Guerrero gives the series itself. By identifying the recent past events of failed insurrections as revolutionary episodes, Guerrero makes a specific use of the past in relation to the present. This is a use through which the terms "revolution" and "revolutionary" take on new meaning. While it was quite clear by the fall of 1910 that Mexico was on the brink of civil war, the currents that dominated the national imaginary did not believe, or did not admit to believing, that the nation was involved in a revolution. Yet, implied in his title "Episodios Revolucionarios," in contrast, in reference to events two years in the past, Guerrero proposed a different delimitation of what was understood to be the age's revolutionary time. According to this conception, being revolutionary – or revolutionary being – is not something conferred *a posteriori* on events by a national discourse, but rather something that was already well afoot in the country, a series of acts in which the masses could already participate.

In contrast to revolution qua object of the historian's discourse, as a series of events delimited in time and space, that which is revolutionary in the "Episodios" is instead marked by figures of discontinuity. This is already evident in the etymological formation of the term *episodio* or episode, a term derived from the Greek *epeisodios*,

itself a morphemic combination of repetition and movement derived from *epi-*, “in addition,” and *-eisodos*, an “entrance or a “coming in” (Online Etymological Dictionary). In the “Episodios,” the revolutionary process is one of incessant beginnings.

Like the texts I analyze elsewhere in this work, the “Episodios” are marked by heteroglot rhetorical tendencies and exhibit an indeterminacy with regard to their classification in terms of genre. In addition to being *crónicas* as concise accounts of recent events, they are also eulogies, honoring the dead and incarcerated in the wake of events in Chihuahua and Coahuila; in this way, they offer *examples* for the political context of their present. The eulogy, in its modern form, is a speech or writing of praise for the deceased (Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary 668). Eulogy, in relation to the modern form of the *crónica*, of course, is a form originating in an uncertain past.

While one could consider the rhetorical combinations presented in the “Episodios” as an evidence of their situated position within a broader history of print production – which was then undergoing a transition from a regime of opinion to one of information, as I detailed in the second chapter – it is impossible to fully consider their horizon of production without thinking them in relation to Guerrero’s own personal history. The characters that people the “Episodios” are people Guerrero knew personally, friends and comrades that died in battle or were imprisoned in the wake of failed attempts at insurrection. In this way, the plots and their characters are somehow suspended between biography and history; between their particularity as individuals and a shared, generic belonging as heroes imbricated in historical events; between a kind of singular character and a being-rendered generic by way of their heroization. In this sense, on a more personal level for Guerrero, and especially in relation to Francisco Manrique, a

comrade who was also Guerrero's best friend, the "Episodios" testify to the work of mourning. As Freud notes in "Mourning and Melancholia," "Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on." (243). In this sense, one could say that what is being mourned is the loss of a friend, but also the loss of an ideal in the form of an insurrection that was a complete failure. In the "Episodios," which attests to the work of mourning that "proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object" (Freud 244), the bodies of dead friends are replaced with bodies of writing.

The combinatory technique that gives these articles form does so through a writing that oscillates between the developments of plot and the latter's interruption by way of a series of heroic portraits of these revolutionary protagonists, producing a narrative form constructed through the principle of montage and a novel way of thinking history against the disciplines of genre. Perhaps the most glaring example of this sort of oscillatory suspension between personal and social history can be found in the last "Episodio" of the series, "Palomas," in which Guerrero addresses his own best friend's death in a language that poetically expresses the intermediary nature of these characters:

Este capítulo de historia libertaria debería llamarse Francisco Manrique, debería llevar el nombre de aquel joven casi niño, muerto por las balas de la tiranía el primero de julio de 1908 en el poblado fronterizo de Palomas. Los hechos trazan su silueta sobre el fondo borroso de esa jornada semidesconocida, que se esfuma en el gris panorama del desierto. (Guerrero, Puntos Rojos)

Guerrero, who here makes use of the trope of *prosopopeia*, or personification, by

suggesting that a chapter of libertarian<sup>15</sup> history take on a proper name, substantiates Paul de Man's assertion in "Autobiography as Defacement," a chapter of his book "Rhetoric of Romanticism," that "(p)rosopopeia is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name... is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" (76). For Guerrero, history should take the name of his friend, so as to make him intelligible through his (re)figuring. Guerrero's assertion also expresses *in nuce* the tension the "Episodios" cultivate with regard to the threshold of personal history and social history. By giving a "history" a proper name, the name of one of the many actors who lived and died in its unfolding, Guerrero, stages a synecdochal turn and replaces a whole by one of its parts. The first clause of the passage above stages a confusion of categories, in which the particular intrudes on the general, making both, as such, indistinguishable. In this way, as de Man notes, "the restoration of mortality by autobiography... deprives and disfigures to the precise extent that it restores" (81).

Synecdoche, or *Intellectio* in Latin, is the rhetorical figure that is formed, as the sixteenth century renaissance rhetorician Henry Peacham notes in "The Garden of Eloquence," "by putting the whole for the part or the part for the whole" (Peacham). While Peacham's definition offers a concise understanding of the rhetorical figure, it only evokes the idea of an uncountable substance and doesn't account for the full range of the figure's potential. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian, however, in the ninth volume of his "Institutes of Oratory," in which the term first appears, notes that synecdoche allows one "to vary one's speech, so that we understand a plurality of things from one, the whole

---

<sup>15</sup> Here "libertarian" is used in its older sense to indicate anti-authoritarian and anti-state tendencies of the anarchist and communist movements.

from the part, the genus from the species, the results from the preceding events, or all these in reverse.” (qtd. in Calhoun 76-7). Quintilian’s commentary on the figure brings in to view a fuller image of its mobility. The whole-part movement may be both horizontal or vertical, possibly involving a passage from singular to plural, a passage among hierarchical categories, or even a passage through time.

In this light, there is something about synecdoche that allows for a kind of short-circuit, a link or connection between two things that are not connected. It is through the use of synecdoche that the “Episodios” attempt to integrate the personal and individual with the collective and social experience of revolutionary episodes. Synecdoche, as Hayden White notes, is a figure of integration (34). While on one level the combination of different styles of prose comes across as disjointed and discontinuous in the “Episodios,” the work of synecdoche is an attempt to integrate in a presentation of reality two different forms of writing brought together in montage. In this sense, one might say, it is the work of experience.

The last sentence of the passage quoted from “Las Vacas” above suggests that, in addition to these texts’ obviously agitational functions, the practice of writing entailed in the accounts, and the work of synecdoche, might also serve a much more personal function for Guerrero. This could be conceived as a practice of *re-membrance* – of his friends and comrades in the struggle, that they not die in vain – against the weight of forgetfulness. The facts of the event, which unfolded in a day that now ostensibly threatens to slip into oblivion – a *jornada semidesconocida que se esfuma en el gris panorama del desierto* – are here a *means* of nearing or approximating what can nevertheless never be attained, or only be attained in ghostly form: the final hours and

experiences of Francisco Manrique, Guerrero's friend. The figure of Manrique is inextricably bound up with the process of historical events, and it is only by way of a knowledge of the events at Palomas that Manrique's silhouette might, ever so ephemerally for Guerrero, appear.

At the same time, this passage reveals a truth that could be said to have played a minoritarian role in the revolutionary tradition. What is evident by the intrusion of Guerrero's own personal attachment into a general history is the fact that true revolutionary changes are never the result of access to some abstract universal truth, but proceed from singular realities, worlds situated in particular places with particular stakes, by way of a collective intensity that leads to their transformation. In this sense, the only difference between the potential availed in the spiritual truth of friendship and the collective resolve that brings government to its knees is a question of scale. Both find at their source a common truth emanating from the potential of shared bonds.

Guerrero's choice of expressing this truth in the episodic form is significant. In some sense, Guerrero's texts are a series of such revolutionary arrivals *as* episodic temporality. As one of a larger ensemble of real or fictional events, the episode derives its modern meaning from origins in Greek tragedy. In his "Poetics," Aristotle identifies the *epeisodion*, or episode, as one of the constituent parts of the dramatic form of tragedy which comes "between whole choral songs" (15). In a commentary on the role and nature of the episode in ancient tragedy, Michael Halleran notes that Aristotle's brief phrase communicates the two fundamental elements of tragedy, characterized by a dynamic that resides "in the alternation of the song of the chorus and the in-between speech of the actors" (167). The episode is that element of tragedy that distinguishes itself by way of its

liminal character. In contrast to many of the grandiose conceptions or categories of revolutionary thought – the fantasy of a “clean slate” of pure revolutionary beginning or the secularized eschatology of the ultimate revolution – the episode does not present any originary or final resting point, rather a movement without apparent beginning or end. The episode neither founds nor finishes, but appears in-between. According to the conventions of tragic stagecraft, the episode’s dynamic of alternation was characterized by the entrance and exit of the actors from the acting space (Halleran 168). This is evident in the etymological formation of the term itself, a morphemic combination of repetition and movement. The episode is an additional entrance, another arrival, and it never exists in isolation. It is always *an other*, as its name indicates, and belongs to an uncertain ensemble of episodes whose punctuated totality unfolds as arrivals in an indeterminate sequence. It is discontinuous, and also implies a notion of regeneration.

The content of the “Episodios” exhibits this primary condition of nomadic repetition. Almost each episode relates another arrival in a small town in Coahuila, and taken together they present a figure of revolutionary wandering. Bound within the dramatic structure of ancient tragedy, the Episode is a constituent part of a closed time: the Prologue and the Exode between which Episodes occur distinguish themselves from the latter by way of their unrepeatability (Aristotle 15). Loosened from such a structure, however, the episode takes on an indeterminate, expansive quality, and may enter in to unexpected relations of mutual intelligibility with other episodes. An observation by the narrator in the first “Episodio,” “La muerte de los héroes,” for instance, demonstrates this potential: “Tras de Valladolid se repiten los hechos que sacudieron a Viesca. Henchimiento de cárceles, persecuciones absurdas, asesinatos inútiles, cobardes



ensañamientos represivos.” (Guerrero). Among the things the episodic form allows both Guerrero and his interlocutor to do is to consider the revolutionary arrival in a comparative frame. In this passage, Guerrero refers to the recently failed revolt in Valladolid, Yucatán, a few months earlier in June of 1910, to compare it with the failures of the Viesca uprising and the state’s similar response nearly two years before.

The *episodicity* of Guerrero’s texts also takes place not just as the serial act of writing episodes, but within the text by way of the aforementioned dynamic of oscillation between the rhetorical tendencies of both *crónica* and eulogy. These texts’ production could be said to occur through a departure from two different (eulogical, chronological) poles, and the result that this composes is an interweaving of two different forms of time. While the latter pole is brought in to being by the narrated movement through space and the novelty of events in the encounter of battle, the former accumulates through embellishments of character descriptions. In this and other “Episodios,” what noticeably takes place, and what structures the textual movement, is the eulogical interruption of the *crónica* by descriptions of the individuals who participate in it.

It is implicit throughout the “Episodios” that their protagonists can be considered as examples or as exemplary, and they are put forward by their author as models of revolutionary comportment. Like the form of Rimbaud’s maxim discussed in the Introduction above, the example, as the narrator suggests in “Viesca,” precedes the successful revolution (Guerrero). Like the avant-garde, it is oriented toward that which comes before. While example figures in the writings of Aristotle as a figure of persuasion more suited to a general audience (as opposed to the refined maneuvers of dialectics) (Lyons 6), the examples of the “Episodios” are akin to the role example played in the

appropriative revival of Antiquity called the Renaissance (Lyons 12-3). Due to the prevalence of the theory and practice of example in the latter, John D. Lyons has given “the fifteenth through the early seventeenth centuries” the name of “the age of exemplarity” (12). As this author notes, most “poetic theorists who speak about example in the sixteenth century either attribute to it the function of providing specific models of conduct for imitation by the readers or shift the discussion of example from worldly reference to models for writing” (13).

If Guerrero’s episodes offer a novel model of writing the brief news account or *crónica*, interrupted by eulogy, in a way that also presents models of revolutionary conduct, one might say these Renaissance functions of the example are collapsed or united in the writing of the “Episodios.” The characters do not set forth a rule or an obligation to follow as much as they put in to play a bearing witness to the tasks of revolutionary struggle. The death of the insurgents, Guerrero’s friends and comrades, makes possible their new life as heroic examples. Guerrero’s treatment of these characters is also cognizant of their situation’s tragic, *epic* dimension. Their death is the condition of and the catalyst for their exemplarity. In this regard, Lyons makes an interesting observation about the history of the example, derived from the Latin *exemplum*, which is “etymologically akin to the verb *eximere*, “to take out, to remove, to take away, to free, to make an exception of.” Therefore, the example is something cut out and removed from some whole.” (9). If the example is what is fragmented or torn away from some whole, as Lyons puts it, then to exemplify means to remove, to make an exception of or to take away; exemplification is a form of montage.

In “La muerte de los héroes,” Guerrero illustrates this process of exemplification. After the individuals Ramírez Bonilla, Kankum, and Albertos were captured in the wake of the failed uprising in Viesca and judged by a war council, as mentioned in the passage above, the three rebels are subsequently executed by a firing squad: “Ramírez Bonilla, Kankum y Albertos rodaron por el suelo frente al cuadro fatídico, para levantarse como enseñanzas de fortaleza y rebeldía” (Guerrero, Viesca). The epic character of these protagonists is also evoked in the first lines of “Las Vacas,” the second “Episodio,” which relates a scene at dawn of the rebels’ arrival just outside the town of Las Vacas. The small group of rebels, who has braved a storm throughout the night, gather their forces at daybreak:

Había llovido tenazmente durante la noche; las ropas empapadas de agua y la insistencia del barro que se pegaba a los zapatos, dificultaban la marcha.

Amanecía; el sol del 26 de junio de 1908 se anunciaba tiñendo el horizonte con gasas color de sangre. La Revolución velaba con el puño levantado. El Despotismo velaba también con el arma liberticida empuñada nerviosamente y el ojo azorado escrutando la maleza, donde flotaban aún las sombras indecisas de la noche. (Guerrero)

In this rather melodramatically romantic passage, the personified ideals of Revolution and Despotism confront one another. Nature, in the form of the storm and its rain, which has left the brave revolutionaries soaked and made the terrain hard to navigate, is both a force against which the rebels are inclined to struggle but also a reflection of the rhythms and concerns of their collective determination and inner life. While Guerrero’s use of romantic motifs might not be incredibly original, it should be considered, within the

context of the *Porfiriato*, as a means of forging a common sensibility against Porfirian positivism's end-of-history as the tyranny of unending progress. When it comes to the epic quality of these characters, it is significant to indicate that Dean Miller, in his research on the epic hero, notes the ancient idea of the epic hero seems to emerge from the image of a being who is, on the one hand, powerful and supernatural, while on the other maintains a special, often mysterious relationship with death (4-5). The hero's possible triumph and gamble with death make of him both an exemplary and paradoxical figure. As the battle cry in "Las Vacas" puts it, "¡Vamos a morir o a conquistar la libertad!" (Guerrero). There is something singular, enduring and mythic in these epic figures. While I have hesitated to identify as a *mythic* time what I have referred to as "episodic time," the "Episodios" at times exhibit mythical qualities. Bronislaw Malinowski described this power of myth as a "cultural force," noting that it contained "germs of the future epic, romance, and tragedy; and it has been used in them by the creative genius of peoples and by the conscious art of civilization" (93, 119). Myths, as Malinowski notes, are most important for their "social function," which is that of establishing something in common – the foundation of community (119) – and it is in this way that Guerrero's writing is both inventive and romantic: Guerrero searches, in the figure of the hero-example, for a kind of mythical material or *means* to fashion symbols and meanings of community against the modern disaster of the *Porfiriato*, to find a poetic means of holding together and strengthening a collective and revolutionary form of life.

In the text "Las Vacas," one notes the presence of the epic not only implicitly, but it emerges explicitly in the text itself: "En aquel momento un pintor épico habría podido copiar un cuadro admirable. ¡Qué de rostros interesantes! ¡Qué de actitudes expresivas y

resueltas!” (Guerrero). The epic, which is a quality identified with this scene, is later identified with a part of this whole, synecdochically. A few paragraphs later, Guerrero suggests that “(c)ada hombre era un héroe; cada héroe un cuadro épico animado por el soplo de la epopeya.” Guerrero’s movement from the whole to the part, from the collective “cuadro épico,” or epic scene as such to the declaration that the individuals involved as well are all epic scenes, calls to mind the earlier movement from whole to part involved in Guerrero’s suggestion that a chapter of “libertarian history” take the proper name of Francisco Manrique, the name of a friend. Here in this passage, the individuals also contain this epic quality of the whole, *in part*. Hayden White points out that, in contradistinction to other figures, and especially to the part-part, extrinsic and often mechanical relationships entailed in the trope of metonymy (35), synecdoche “is integrative” and organic (34), based on “an *intrinsic* relationship of shared qualities... in the manner of an *integration* within a whole that is *qualitatively* different from the sum of the parts and of which the parts are but *microcosmic* replications.” (35). In Guerrero’s integrative view of the events, the larger epic force or spirit of the event itself is also found, microcosmically, in the individuals who are a central part of the events and partake in them. The emergence of the epic, heroic dimension of these episodes, therefore, takes place at both the individual and collective level, allowing Guerrero to situate the partiality of personalities within the larger whole of the account.

This synecdochal movement, erecting the part for the whole, is the *how* of example in the force of its singularity. In the space of the example, the conflict between the individual and the more broadly social disappears in the form of the event that is the

potential for the example. The concept of the example, as Giorgio Agamben notes, “escapes the antinomy of the universal and the particular”:

In any context where it exerts its force, the example is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all. On one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity. Neither particular nor universal, the example is a singular object that presents itself as such, that *shows* its singularity. (The Coming Community 8)

The example is a *particular* among others, but it exceeds and stands for them, it interrupts and sets itself apart. It is the force of singularity that interrupts by way of character description the temporal movement of the *crónica* in the “Episodios,” what sets it apart and is set apart.

In order to explore this tension in more detail, I would like to look more closely at the text “Las Vacas,” which was published as an “Episodio” on September 24 of 1910. “Las Vacas” may be divided in to three sections, according to its shifts in narrative focus: the first section details the initial siege on the town of Las Vacas; the second section consists of a series of descriptions of the different individuals in the battle at Las Vacas; and the third finally resumes and concludes the episode. In what follows, I will produce a large section from the first part, in order to more fully capture the text’s movement and the operation of interruption that emerges in the text:

El grupo de rebeldes hizo alto, a un kilómetro escaso del pueblo de Las Vacas. Se pasó lista. No llegaban a cuarenta los combatientes. Se tomaron las disposiciones iniciales para el ataque, organizando tres guerrillas: la del centro dirigida por Benjamín Canales, la de la derecha por Encarnación Díaz Guerra y José M. Rangel, y la de la izquierda por Basilio Ramírez; se indicó el cuartel como punto de reunión, barriendo con el enemigo que se encontraba en el trayecto.

El insomnio y la brega de largas horas con la tempestad y el fango del camino, no habían quebrantado los ánimos de los voluntarios de la libertad; en cada pupila brillaba un rayo de heroísmo, en cada frente resplandecía la conciencia del hombre emancipado. En el ligero viento del amanecer se aspiraba un ambiente de gloria. El sol nacía y la epopeya iba a escribirse con caracteres más rojos que el tinte fugaz de las gasas que se desvanecían en el espacio.

¡Compañeros!, dijo una voz, la hora tan largamente ansiada ha llegado por fin. ¡Vamos a morir o a conquistar la libertad!

¡Vamos a combatir por la Justicia de nuestra causa!

En aquel momento un pintor épico habría podido copiar un cuadro admirable. ¡Qué de rostros interesantes! ¡Qué de actitudes expresivas y resueltas!

En marcha las tres diminutas columnas, con dirección al pueblo, llegaron al borde de un arroyo. De repente alguien, que iba a la cabeza, gritó: ¡Aquí están estos mochos! Y el arroyo fue atravesado rápidamente, con el agua a la cintura. Los soldados que estaban tendidos pecho a tierra entre los matorrales, se levantaron en desorden ante la acometida de los rebeldes, buscando, unos, abrigo

en las casas, mientras otros desertaban pasando el río a nado para internarse a los Estados Unidos. (Guerrero)

This passage, reproduced here in full, immediately proceeds the two paragraphs that were included further above, which discuss the camp at daybreak and the difficulties that Nature wrought on the revolutionaries. The first and last paragraphs of this passage offer a comparatively economic use of prose to narrate in quick succession a series of events that lead the rebels toward battle. The rebels stop outside the town, roll is called, and they form in to three “guerrillas,” or groups, planning to finally meet at a designated spot on the other side of town. In contradistinction to the first paragraph’s use of the form of the preterite to narrate a succession of movements, the second paragraph contemplatively deploys the imperfect form. The time crafted by the prose is not a movement through space but a lingering being in space, an exploration of the mood involved in the seemingly eternal pause of the revolutionaries before battle. The first sentence of the second paragraph again reiterates how the weary revolutionaries, heroically, withstand their difficult conditions. The second sentence marks a more striking departure from the battle chronicle of the last paragraph, whose perceptual frame was positioned at a more total level of larger events in succession. In the second sentence, effectuating a kind of surrealist close-up, Guerrero presents eyes and foreheads as if it were not only *wholly* embodied lives of the individuals that stand in for the events, but even just *parts* of this embodiment, from which exemplary attributes emanate. In these images, multiple eyes shine rays of heroism and foreheads glow with a liberated consciousness. Their attributes compose or provide a means for a kind of epic materiality, a force or energy that traverses them and which they collectively share. It is in this way, through the figure of



synecdoche, that Guerrero can connect the particularities of their personalities to larger events. According to this perspective, their singular energies are integrated as microcosmic elements of the events of the *crónica* as a whole. For Guerrero, synecdoche provides a way of connecting these energies of the individual hero to the whole of larger events of which each hero is only part.

If one takes in to account, finally, the last two sentences of the second paragraph above, which I reproduce below, one can observe shifts in the narrative scene that effectuates a movement from whole to part; the text then returns, in these last two sentences and in the paragraph that follows, to a more global, integrative frame. As mentioned above, the more totalizing frame of the first paragraph offers something of a bird's eye view of the revolutionaries' movements, followed by a kind of introspective close-up of their spiritual, epic materiality. These last two sentences shift from the revolutionaries themselves back to elements of the surrounding scene, also haunted by a kind of epic spirit: "En el ligero viento del amanecer se aspiraba un ambiente de gloria. El sol nacía y la epopeya iba a escribirse con caracteres más rojos que el tinte fugaz de las gasas que se desvanecían en el espacio." (Guerrero, *Las Vacas*). Beyond the illumination of the revolutionaries' bodies, the gentle wind of the dawn itself is pervaded with glory, as if it were a substance the revolutionaries breathed. The red with which the *epopeya* inscribes itself recalls the sharp colors of the rising sun just evoked in the first part of the sentence, and the suggestion that the shade of the epic inscription is redder than the gases that dissolve in space imbues the revolutionary encounter at once with a heroic but also ephemeral and tragic character. Although the color black has traditionally been associated with anarchism, red, prior to the Bolshevik's October Revolution, was also a color that

symbolized association with the anarchist movement. As is the case with the “Puntos Rojos” as well, however, Guerrero’s use of the color red is either overdetermined and/or indeterminate; there as well as here red evokes the libertarian movement but also, tragically, the violence of the revolutionary encounter. Here Guerrero’s metaphor of the ‘self-writing epic’ as a metaphor for the battle at Las Vacas could also be understood as an augur of the tragic, violent failure narrated in the following paragraphs.

What is most interesting about these two final images, however, is that Guerrero seemingly tries to accomplish by way of the figure of synesthesia what he elsewhere tries to accomplish through synecdoche. As a rhetorical device, synesthesia attempts to evoke one sense in the terms of another sense. What is synesthetic in Guerrero’s sentences is their attempt to evoke an effect of the revolutionary events in terms of tangible sense experience, to (re)present something of the sensible experience they entailed. From this, it is evident that merely transmitting facts and *chronicling* the events, given both the emotional and visual distance such an account would entail, is not sufficient. As the use of synecdoche attempts to integrate individuals within larger events, so here the sense experience of respiration and sight are integrated with an epical or heroic affect. At the same time, the individuals that Guerrero sketches in the “Episodios,” through their connection with events, seem curtailed in being insofar as they are limited to the scope of that which connects them to the heroic event. In this sense, they distinguish themselves from one another with difficulty, and only in the intensity of their fervor.

In the paragraph that follows – the third paragraph of the larger fragment reproduced above – an anonymous voice cries out, as if to draw the reader’s attention

from this contemplative reverie back to the matter at hand: “¡Compañeros!, dijo una voz, la hora tan largamente ansiada ha llegado por fin” (Guerrero, Las Vacas). This call serves as a transition to a descriptive paragraph that returns to the perspectival position of the chronicle and the work of emplotment in terse prose as it narrates the spatial movement of the “tres diminutas columnas” mentioned above in their advance on the town of Las Vacas.

I have identified the inclusion of the more poetic passages of exemplary character description as an operation of interruption or discontinuity. It would be inaccurate to say, however, that these passages are only interruptive or discontinuous merely because they proceed the passages and shift the subject matter on the page itself. It is more precisely a question of the movement of the narrative’s time, the advancement of the account’s plot versus its arrest by way of descriptions of character. This alternation between characterization and plot, like the “blanks” of bare page mentioned in the chapter on Flores Magón’s images above, or like any kind of binary textual calibration, provides a sort of lever on textual time. Like Mallarmé’s “blank space,” a “copied distance, which mentally separates words or groups of words from one another, has the literary advantage... of seeming to speed up and slow down the movement” (Collected Poems 121-2). What creates the sense of “copied distance” and the calibration of textual speed, in this case, is not the use of blank space but what could be considered a kind of binary textual operation meant to carry out a certain effect on the reader through the friction created by way of the intensive energy of (the textual or aural experience of) two alternating forms in close co-existence or succession. “Las Vacas,” as I have shown, begins with a passage that offers a more contemplative, romantic depiction of nature and

the natural conditions braved by the rebels, and in this case it might be more accurate to say that emplotment interrupts a more contemplative mode. In addition to their interruption on the page, however, these passages are more discontinuous in the sense that they depart or suspend the advance of events, which is what imbues the text with its primary sense of modern movement. Instead of the battle's action and movement through space, these passages craft a pause or suspension of linearity, in a rhetorical move that allows the characters to be considered in terms of their exemplary qualities.

What is at stake in Guerrero's rhetorical operation could be considered something of a paradox. While synecdoche is deployed as a means of integrating the characters in the narrative to imbue them in the event and vice versa, as *examples*, they are removed. *Eximere*, as noted above, means "to take out, to remove, to take away, to free, to make an exception of" (Lyons 9). These characters stand out in the narration as that which interrupts linear time, as if they are removed from the advance of the text's emplotment or *predicativity*. Outside the advance of emplotment, through its interruption, and in the moments most devoted to their description, a sense of space opens up, prefiguring the focus on character description that would fragment the novel as new, experimental forms of writing developed throughout the first half of the twentieth-century. These characters' exemplification enacts a kind of "clearing" in the text. Through an act of montage they are divorced from yet at once ostensibly synecdochically linked to the narrative flow and seem to co-exist in a more expansive space. Lyons notes that the example, when it appears in discourse, always effectuates some kind of clearing, positing an inside and an outside:

Exemplum, in medieval Latin, meant “a clearing in the woods.”... Only the clearing gives form or boundary to the woods. Likewise, example depends on the larger mass of history and experience, yet without the "clearings" provided by example that mass would be formless... Most of all, the clearing, the exemplum, posits an inside and an outside - in fact, the clearing creates an outside by its existence. (3)

In a similar way, the examples of revolutionary heroism that take form in Guerrero's text clear away a revolutionary interior, a vantage point from which to observe the events and from which the events finally obtain their true meaning for the revolutionary movement, a meaning in the lives of its adherents. Here it is as if Guerrero tried to grasp what was eternal in a series of fleeting events. In making these figures heroic, Guerrero attempts to make a space for, or even capture, what the factual account cannot. This is the spiritual element, the force that runs through the facts yet exceeds them. It is that which remains as a trace ostensibly incapable of being integrated into the whole, even though it is finally part of its determinant cause.

The following textual fragments of “Las Vacas” are taken from the middle section of the text that proceeds the long section reproduced above:

En ese primer periodo, en el cual muchas veces se dispararon las armas  
chamuscando la ropa del contrario, fue en el que cayó el mayor número de los  
nuestros...

Néstor López, el activo y sincero propagandista, admirable para encontrar recursos para la causa, quedó con una pierna rota a una cuadra del cuartel...

El valiente Modesto G. Ramírez, autor de una carta llena de consciente heroísmo, escrita la víspera del combate y publicada más tarde por la prensa norteamericana, cayó junto a una cerca de ramas, al lado de dos bravos, muertos minutos antes en aquel sitio fatal...

Pedro Arreola, revolucionario y perseguido desde los tiempos de Garza, y por largos años uno de los hombres más temidos por los esbirros de la frontera de Coahuila y Tamaulipas, murió con la frase burlesca en los labios y el gesto del indomable en el semblante...

Por largas cinco horas se prolongó el combate. (Guerrero)

In this second section, the text shifts from a description of the deeds of battle to mention eleven different individual rebels by name in successive paragraphs. The handful of exemplary men included above demonstrate a combinatory technique also used elsewhere in the passage. This technique is characterized by the multiplication of noun phrases in a given sentence, in order to illuminate the subject's past while describing an action on the battlefield. In these combinations, the characters are suspended in still-life poses in battle while the narrator synthesizes their heroic, selfless qualities. The sentences stage an alternation between eulogy and plot and form tragic images of vibrancy and death.

In a stylistic development of the condensational tendencies of journalistic prose, in each sentence a series of rather disparate clauses are grouped together. While

dependent, embedded clauses usually offer background and summary information about a given character, the independent and final clauses again return to the character in the scene of conflict with the Porfirian *rurales*. The fact that Néstor López was an honest propagandist and good fundraiser, but also that he fell with a broken leg near the administrative building where he died, are facts communicated in tandem with no further explanation. The brief passage on Modesto G. Ramírez also relates a series of disparate facts that briefly trace his life and death: he wrote an elegant letter for the press before falling on a tree fence and dying minutes later. This is an intensification of the alternation between characterization and emplotment that takes place – now between fragments of language in the sentence itself instead of occurring between fragments of larger sections of text. The combination of personal details and events is incompletely mediated, and the descriptions of the characters have the appearance of strange materials that fit uncomfortably in to the historical narrative. In their interruption of the plot's action and the terser language of emplotment, the fragments of character description stand out against other passages that detail the plot, highlighting a logic of discursive alternation that is also that of episodic arrival.

All of Guerrero's depictions frame the characters as kind, selfless, devoted, brave, humble, and courageous. Yet even though the narrator communicates their personal details, merits or qualities, the rebels don't seem to fully differentiate themselves from each other, conforming in some way or another to some social type of the "rebel hero." Interestingly enough, this ambivalence between the general and the particular was also a feature of a cultural product centered around the social type, the commissioned

nineteenth century *cartes de visite*, or *tarjetas de visita*, as the work of John Mraz indicates and about which I will discuss more in the passages that follow:

The *tarjetas de visita* embodied a curious irony in relation to the individual. At a time in which the idea of individual identity was slowly expanding – and the photographic process itself offered an ideal mode for incarnating particularity – the standardization of pose, setting, and clothing created what has been described as the “tyranny of the *carte de visite*.” Patricia Masse argued, “Tarjetas de visita cancelled the possibility of representing a particular subject, and individual identity was covered by a mask of a generalized social type. (23-4)

In a similar fashion, the “Episodios” standardize their protagonists through a process of exalted heroization and typology. Yet what these characters lose in individuality and particularity, they gain by way of their identity with the event, and thus in exemplarity. In this sense, the “Episodios” make use of the figure of the social type, which came in to being in a particular way through new means of technological reproduction in the nineteenth-century. To the panorama of social types in play, Guerrero adds that of the heroic revolutionary.

To understand what it is that Guerrero puts to use, it is helpful to consider the history of the reproducible portrait in the nineteenth-century. The mode in which the example is presented in these texts makes a certain use of the practice of portraiture and its arrival in mass media. Portraiture, in a modern sense, entails the representation of a likeness – whether by way of drawing, painting, speaking, writing, photography, dance, film, etc. Painting was the portrait’s original medium, but the most proximate resonance for these texts is to be found in the newly invented production of photographic images



that took place in the nineteenth-century. In contrast to historical portrait painting, for the most part the domain of the aristocracy and, later, the bourgeoisie, portraiture, by way of the newspaper and the photograph – both of which share an existence as technologically reproducible objects, as the work of Benjamin reminds us – took shape according to a different circulatory articulation (The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version 252-3). In “Looking for Mexico,” Mraz offers an account of Mexican visual culture following the arrival of the daguerreotype in 1839 (7). Particularly relevant to the development of portraiture in the sphere of technological reproduction are the forms of the picture postcard and the *carte de visite* (visiting card), or *tarjeta de visita*, as it was known in Mexico. The first Mexican postcard appeared in 1882 and featured the image of Benito Juárez, while subsequent cards featured images of nature, monuments, and a series of social types according to the *costumbrista* style (Mraz 32).



Figure 3

As the above image indicates (see fig. 3), the circle around *Regeneración* also participated in the production and circulation of portrait-based images. While not much is known about this postcard, a reproduction of which can be found in the *Galería* section

of the website *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*, it features members of the Mexican Liberal Party's Organizing Committee, was printed and distributed in Latvian, and was most likely a means of fundraising in solidarity with the Mexican anarchists (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón; Wikimedia Commons). The four montaged figures are layered one over another, each of their postures isolating them from one another and emphasizing their individual presence. The directions in which Juan Sarabia, Flores Magón and Antonio Villareal all gaze compose a triangle, a form that is interrupted by the uncanny, penetrating stare of Librado Rivera, the only one who looks at the camera. Much like the characters of the "Episodios," the figures of this image are suspended between their individuality and the existence of a social type: the somber dandyism and grave, melancholic demeanor of the bohemian intellectual.

In 1854, as Michelle Facos notes in "An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Art," the French photographer André-Adolphe Disdéri invented the *carte de visite* by modifying his camera to take 8 exposures simultaneously (204-5). This resulted in a popular, inexpensive, and small mass-produced "trading card image" that usually featured celebrities and politicians (Facos 204-5). As Mraz points out, in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the Mexican firm Cruces y Campa decided "to create a visual history of Mexican rulers from 1821 to 1874... which was composed of fifty-two portraits with brief biographies on their backs" (22).

In the same way poetry submitted to montage in the press, the photographic image submitted to seriality in the *carte de visite*, and the latter's serial production process also effected the consumer's relationship with images as reproducible objects. Mexicans were encouraged to collect the images (Mraz 48), and their serial nature allowed firms like

Cruces y Campa to market ensembles of images that all shared an identity as a class of objects. In addition to portraits of national heroes, there were *tarjetas de visita* of singers, clerics, actresses, authors, and scientists (Mraz 22). Most interestingly, perhaps, is the firm's contribution to the *costumbrista* tradition in a series described as "Mexican types" (Mraz 22-4). These included "a wide variety of street trades, carried out by individuals identified only by their occupation" (Mraz 24). As Mraz points out, these images implied a social hierarchy and class distinction that carried echoes of the *casta* paintings of the colonial period (27). In some ways, the social types of Cruces y Campa compose *ur-figures* of what Roger Bartra has termed the national myths of *lo mexicano*, a project which Bartra dates to the work of liberal and positivist writers at the end of the nineteenth century (19). As Bartra's research shows, the trajectory of social typology in the writing of Mexican intellectuals is an enduring motif, later more famously taken up in the work of Samuel Ramos and José Vasconcelos (19).

Like the *tarjetas de visita*, the "Episodios" present a collection of human likenesses, albeit one within which there is a polarization of social types. Guerrero's texts often interweave accounts of events with a series of narrative portraits. "La muerte de los héroes," for example, presents a handful of social types likely excluded from Cruces y Campa's collection. These are the social types of punishment and judgment:

Después del estremecimiento de Viesca, las prisiones recibieron abundante suplemento de huéspedes. Al lado del anciano y del hombre llegaba el adolescente a hundirse en la penumbra de los calabozos. Rebeldes y sospechosos se amontonaban confundidos en el infecto recinto de los presidios. Tras del espía y del soldado, se presentó el juez, con la consigna en el bolsillo. Los culpables

comparecieron a responder de sus delitos ante la barra del despotismo.

Desenvolvióse el proceso; un proceso como todos los que la ceguedad, el miedo y la pasión constituyen. Se pronunció sentencia.

Lorenzo Robledo: veinte años de reclusión.

Lucio Chaires: quince años.

Juan B. Hernández: quince años.

Patricio Plendo: quince años.

Félix Hernández: quince años.

Gregorio Bedolla: quince años.

Leandro Rosales: quince años.

José Hernández: quince años.

Andrés Vallejo: quince años.

Juan Montelongo: tres años.

Julián Cardona: quince años. (Guerrero)

From the cells of the prison to the court room, like the *cartes de visite*, every section of the passage presents a sequential list of individuals. The first paragraph gives a brief typology of the social types of the Porfirian legal system: the corrupt judge follows in the wake of the spy and the soldier, implying their collective collusion, while the confused darkness of the prison holds young and old, guilty and suspicious alike. The trial is described as a process constituted by passions, fear, and blindness. In a passage further below, Guerrero draws a contrast between the bureaucratic affair of the trial of these eleven rebels with the fate of another group of rebels. Ramírez Bonilla, Kankum, and Albertos were three rebels judged by a war council of the armed forces. The narrator

contrasts the two social types of justice: “la *justicia* no fue allí el leguleyo artero y solapado, sino la bestia uniformada. Rápidamente, con la rapidez denunciadora del pánico oficial, se instruyó un sumario, y los tres rebeldes recibieron su sentencia de muerte.” (Guerrero, *La muerte de los héroes*). Considered together, these two passages present the social types who populate the legal institutions and apparatuses of judgement and punishment. While the lawyer of the public trial is crafty and underhanded, the war council of uniformed beasts are barely more than animals and have no need to indulge such appearances. The eleven proper names of the convicted stand out against the first paragraph’s enumeration of generic social types. The imitation of the sparse language of judgement and its contrasts with Guerrero’s ornate passages highlights the dry nature of the performative prose of state bureaucracy, whose operative repetitions unfold unevenly, interspersed amidst the individual names of the convicted. Wrenched of spirit, the only contribution this language of judgment makes to poetry is likely incidental or the product of its own decomposition and recombination. Perhaps what is most interesting, finally, about the development of portraiture and what its echoes evince in Guerrero’s texts is the extension of commensurability, capital’s law of value, into an understanding of social relations. While Guerrero’s “Episodios” attempt to portray heroes in their singularity, their emphasis on them as heroes renders them somewhat generic and exchangeable.

While Guerrero’s texts integrate these figures, by way of synecdoche, in to the account of battle, they also attest to the failure of this integration. There is a gap that emerges, in the writing itself or in the experience of reading or hearing it; it is the gap formed between part and whole that is staged in the text itself. Interestingly, as if to compensate for this gap, a close reading of some of the texts reveal a productive element.

In Guerrero's formulation from "Las Vacas," it seems that being exemplary also means being able to generate examples. Consider, from this text, the character of Pedro Miranda, Práxedes Guerrero's dear friend:

El primero de todos, Pedro Miranda, el revolucionario por idiosincrasia a la vez que por convicción, el Pedro Miranda cuyos dichos mordaces se repiten todavía por los compañeros que lo trataron; el que era la acción y la firmeza encarnadas en un cuerpo hecho a las luchas con la naturaleza y con los hombres de la injusticia; el mismo que pasaba los años trabajando sin descanso y dedicando a la Revolución cada centavo que salvaba de la rapiña burguesa. Sus carabinas, un arsenal siempre con perspectiva de aumento, se hallaban a toda hora listas para entrar en acción por la libertad. Entre los compañeros ha venido a ser proverbial esta condición invariable de las armas de Pedro; cuando se quiere significar que una persona o una cosa está en muy buenas condiciones, se dice: *Está como las carabinas de Pedro Miranda*. (Guerrero, Las Vacas)

As the narrator immediately notes, Miranda is the first to lead the charge of others in to battle. He was also an exemplary soldier and dedicated member of the Mexican Liberal Party, and even his sayings are exemplary. His habit of keeping his rifles in a clean state so that they were ready "a toda hora... para entrar en acción" were the conditions for their own exemplarity (Guerrero, Las Vacas). As examples, his rifles exceed their particular, "good conditions" as guns and become a good condition as such in the language of Miranda's comrades and friends.

More often, however, this productive element that links whole to part happens by way of a process in which some form of death makes possible or opens on to a vibrant

potential. In one sense, while death is clearly a tragic element in these tales, Guerrero also admits that it allows for the operations of exemplification. The composition of the texts, in the first place, are a choice Guerrero has made to give these comrades and friends a new timely life in language by way of the example. As Agamben notes, “(e)xemplary being is purely linguistic being” (*The Coming Community* 9).

Such a new life through death, of course, is a figure of sacrifice. In “La muerte de los héroes,” Guerrero recounts the repression that followed the “estremecimiento” at Viesca in a testimonial account of imprisonment, trial, and execution. Guerrero’s account of the death of the three rebels that protagonized “La muerte de los héroes” recalls the sacrifice of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. As the author notes, these rebels “rodaron por el suelo... para levantarse como enseñanzas” (Guerrero, *La muerte de los héroes*). Like the fragments of montage, they have been removed and set apart from human life to take on a generic life as examples, and their new freedom in the word comes by way of a failure in life. Death and life are finally linked together through the figure of a process that regenerates precisely through its death and defeat. This movement of death and life, descent and resurrection, emerges most clearly in the first and third “Episodios,” “La muerte de los héroes” and “Las Vacas.” Near the beginning of “La muerte de los héroes,” Guerrero details another figure of descent in the depths of prison after the repression at Viesca: “Después del estremecimiento de Viesca, las prisiones recibieron abundante suplemento de huéspedes. Al lado del anciano y del hombre llegaba el adolescente a hundirse en la penumbra de los calabozos.” (Guerrero). Like the three rebels who emerged as examples by way of death, however, those who fill the jails will multiply by way of a rhizomatic logic: “La ardiente Siberia yucateca tuvo un hermoso sacudimiento

de energías rebeldes; sus vibraciones llenan todavía la trágica aridez de sus estepas. La Hidra, cortada en pedazos, se reproduce en cada uno de ellos.” (Guerrero, *La muerte de los héroes*). Here again, with the use of the Hydra, the snake-like beast of Greek and Roman mythology, Guerrero attempts to make use of myth to establish foundations for a spiritually revolutionary discourse. Guerrero specifically makes reference to the creature’s regenerative capacity. This regenerative capacity, as Daniel Ogden notes in “*Drākon: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*,” apparently first appeared in Euripides’ “*Hercules*” (29-30). In this work, Euripides describes the monster as a “double-headed growing-back dog,” a phrase which Ogden insists “should surely be construed... to mean that the Hydra grows back two heads for each one lost” (qtd in Ogden 30-1; Ogden 30-1). If it is in reference to the mythological figure, the image that Guerrero gives of the Hydra’s regeneration seems somewhat anachronistic, or of course based out of a modern scientific rather than mythological knowledge. At the same time, *hidra* is also the Spanish spelling of the hydra, a freshwater organism that reproduces by way of fragmentation. This micro-organism asexually generates an offspring that, as soon as “it develops tentacles and its own foot... breaks off to grow as a new hydra clone” and carry on its own aquatic life (Olympus America). From a whole, a part is produced that breaks off as a whole, capable now of regenerating new whole-destined parts. This capacity for fragmentation and regeneration occurs in certain bacteria, plants, and other small forms of life. In “*Viesca*,” this regenerative motif re-emerges with more explanatory context, and with a reference that more explicitly deploys such a metaphor to speak of the processes of revolutionary death and new life:



Hacia la serranía, hacia las montañas amigas, se encaminaron sus pasos. Allí el núcleo se quebró obedeciendo a un nuevo plan; la cantidad se descompuso en unidades proyectadas en todas direcciones, a donde irían a crear nuevas organizaciones rebeldes, repitiendo el fenómeno biológico de ciertas especies zoológicas que se reproducen en sus fragmentos.

Guerrero's account of Viesca stands out for the simple reason that it is an account of a non-event. In the opening paragraphs Guerrero details the preparations made for the insurrection. As the reader learns, however, these efforts were foiled when the authorities caught wind of the plans and deployed troops to put an end to the machinations of the insurrectionary conspirators. As Guerrero frames it, with much sarcastic fervor "(l)a denuncia paralizó el movimiento de muchos grupos" because "los *amigos del pueblo* manifestaron lo que son y lo que valen" (Viesca). The passage quoted above appears in the last lines of "Viesca," and offers the brief image of the logic of a "nuevo plan" put in to process by failure. The verb Guerrero uses to describe the action of the revolutionary cell, *descomponerse*, can mean to separate or to split, but also to decompose (*Diccionario esencial de la lengua española* 485). Decomposition, in Guerrero's account, contains a productive element. Its de-composed parts are freed to develop in a different way, in and toward a new becoming-whole, toward, continually through discontinuity, becoming a revolutionary force. In this image, the revolutionary nucleus undertakes the task of its own reproduction or regeneration by way of fragmentation.

In closing, I remind the reader of Quintilian's observation that synecdoche may also entail the passage between the singular and plural forms (qtd. in Calhoun 76-7). In the case of the passage reproduced above, *cantidad* – an amount or quantity, becomes a multiplicity of *unidades* – units or unities – “proyectadas en todas direcciones” (Guerrero, Viesca). It is as if there were a breaking or fragmenting of human-revolutionary material, allowing for new organizational forms to be created and to develop. Unlike the Hydra, then, here the whole that becomes whole-destined parts is totally destroyed, but nevertheless remains a regenerative potential. This figure of regeneration is one of synecdochal oscillation, and a figure that has much to offer to the conception of revolution today.

## IV

## The Use Fables of Flores Magón

Le *Tiqqun* est la seule conception admissible de la révolution. Non pas celle qu'il *faut* attendre, encore moins celle que l'on *peut* préparer : mais celle qui *s'accomplit* selon sa pulsation invisible dans une temporalité intérieure à l'histoire. – (Théorie du Bloom, *Tiqqun* 102)<sup>16</sup>

If today the revolutionary tradition still has anything to offer the struggles of the oppressed, it is not in the form of some Icarian truth, but rather in the form of an experience. This experience is the experience of a *resonance*, or reverberation. Though his formulations were sometimes admittedly vague, this is what Benjamin tried to grasp through his idea of the “dialectical image.” Benjamin defines the dialectical image as a “suddenly emergent” image “wherein what has been comes together with the now to form a constellation” (Arcades Project 462, 473). Surpassing the conceptual schema that envisions history as a succession of discontinuous events, such an experience could be said to occur when some aspect of this tradition – be it an idea, a situation, a feeling, or a truth – resounds across time and space, in a relation of prolongation or continuity. In this way, like the program of critique which Marx outlined in his oft-cited letter to Arnold Ruge in the fall of 1843, the form of the dialectical image does not “draw a sharp mental

---

<sup>16</sup> The *tiqqun* is the only adequate conception of revolution. Not the revolution that *must* be waited for, and even less the one that *can be* prepared for, but the one that *develops* to its own imperceptible beat within a temporality that's internal to history. (*Tiqqun*, Theory of Bloom 100-2)

line between past and future,” but rather intends to “*complete* the thought of the past” (Early Writings 209). If interpreting the dialectical image is a “modern form of emblematics,” as Susan Buck-Morss suggests (170), then it entails making sense of the relation or correspondence amongst the fragments that have come together to form the image, reading the now in to what has been and what has been in to now.

In the context of Mexican history, a recently published passage forms the present fragment of a kind of dialectical image, calling forth what is still alive in the life of Flores Magón and offering a language that might permit a more conceptual or theoretical clarification of certain aspects of his thought. In “Un habitar más fuerte que la metrópoli,” a book recently published by the Mexican collective *Consejo Nocturno*, the authors end the first section with a pointed reflection on the three dimensions important to the construction of a victorious revolutionary movement today:

Nuestra guerra podrá ser victoriosa a condición de que incrementemos nuestra potencia en sus tres dimensiones: hemos de fortalecernos en sentido guerrero cara al estado de excepción, abastecemos de medios materiales que contribuyan a nuestra autonomía y elaborar una inteligencia compartida que nos permita romper el *impasse* de la situación (23)

While any one of these three observations might, if directed toward the work of Flores Magón, function as a kind of incantation, calling forth what still lives in this author’s life, I would like to specifically consider the second of them in light of a series of experimental texts mostly published over the end of 1915 and the beginning of 1916. These texts were experimental not only to the extent that they mark an attempt to use a form of fantastic fiction to reflect upon and intervene in the revolutionary movement.

Given that many of these texts often impart a lesson, akin to the historical fable, yet feature protagonists who aren't animals but useful things, one might classify them as a sort of modernist fable, in which the long-recognizable world of animals that characterized the historical fable has now been replaced by the increasingly “immense collection of commodities” that has come to dominate and define life under capital (Marx, *Capital* 125). While calling them fables reduces in part what is truly at work in them, I choose to term them “use fables” for reasons I clarify further below. Formed through a combination of rhetorical antithesis and stream of consciousness technique, Flores Magón's use fables reflect on the question of the provision of material means that could possibly contribute to the autonomy of a revolutionary movement, as was articulated in the passage quoted above.

In order to first understand what is meant by “autonomy,” it will be helpful to consider the term in both an etymological and historical sense. The word autonomy is derived from the Greek term *autonomia*, or “independence,” which is in turn derived from the combination of *autos*, meaning “self,” “same,” or “of or by oneself,” and *nomos*, or “law.” In this sense, autonomy describes an existence that follows or pursues its own law, not dependent on or subject to an external authority. That which contributes to an existence's autonomy allows it a means of power and freedom. It does not imply the absence of laws, but the pursuit of a law unto itself, which is to say the pursuit of an inclination. While a tendency toward autonomy might be said to be a recurrent feature of revolts and revolutionary movements throughout history, it is only since the late twentieth century that the term has allowed for a clearer analysis of this dimension as such within the tradition of the oppressed. In this context, the most notable usage of the

term refers to the Italian movement that emerged in the late 1970s and that came to be known as *Autonomia Operaia* (“Worker Autonomy”), or simply *Autonomia*. This movement constituted, at its peak, a near insurrectionary upheaval that not only included the workers’ movement, but also resounded in and mobilized broad segments of Italian society. As the movement’s theoretical precedent, a reference to “autonomy” can already be found in the work of several Italian Marxists of the late 1950s, most notably in that of Raniero Panzieri. Panzieri, against Stalinism’s “absurd identity between working class and party,” asserted “the principle of class action as the autonomy of the exploited and oppressed classes in the struggle for their liberation” (qtd. in Wright 61-2). As is well-known, the notion of autonomy has also been an integral element of the new Zapatismo’s thought and practice ever since its inception. When he was interviewed during the initial uprising in January of 1994, in fact, Subcomandante Marcos defined the primary demands of the *campesinos* of Chiapas as “pan salud, educación, autonomía, y paz.”

The principle of autonomy is also present in the work and life of Flores Magón. Roughly coincident with the appearance of the above-mentioned prose experiment was also that of a communal one, as if the former were a means of allowing the writer to think through the questions and concerns that appeared with the latter. After his release from federal prison and return to Los Angeles in 1914, Flores Magón moved, with many other members of the *Regeneración* circle, to a small farm on the outskirts of Los Angeles (439-44). The brief collective life of the *Regeneración* circle there would eventually become known as the Edendale commune (Lomnitz 440-2). In this attempt to put their lives together, work and earnings were collectivized, and the commune’s members raised chickens and produce (Lomnitz 441-3). While the commune always depended at least in

part on members' waged labor (Lomnitz 441), their work contributed materially to the autonomy of their struggle against capitalist social relations and the separations that these imposed upon their existence.



Figure 4

The above image (see fig. 4), the reproduction of a photo which belongs to the *Fototeca Nacional* of the *Instituto Nacional de Historia y Antropología* in Mexico City and which can be found in the *Galería* section of the website *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*, depicts a group photo from around 1916 taken at the Edendale commune (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón). Here Flores Magón, identified by his initials “RFM”, is pictured in overalls next to his partner María Brousse. While everyone else looks at the camera, RFM’s austere gaze seems fixed in thought, or perhaps just glances elsewhere. Though notoriously obstinate about his role as a writer and the newspaper as his “weapon of choice”, insisting on ideological over actual combat (Lomnitz 260), this picture of Flores Magón in overalls suggests the extent to which the commune may have been a truly collective experience in which he and all members worked together and took part. At the same time, the titles scrawled next to the members’

faces by an unknown author seem to want to pin down or crystallize in an image what was the actually quite ephemeral experience of the commune. In reality, the various roles and share of labor was continually in flux within *Regeneración*'s ever-precarious circle. Villarreal and Flores Magón's brother, Enrique, pictured here as "The acrobat," would soon leave *Regeneración* and the Edendale commune by February of 1918 over what remains an obscure disagreement regarding the future of the class struggle (Lomnitz 461-3).

Though the Edendale commune died a rather rapid death, in any case a common fate for political experiments both present and past, something of it lives on in the texts Flores Magón wrote in this period. Whether any given commune is idealistically utopian or more pragmatic about its efforts, it has the potential to be an experiment in collective use and to access the power that can emerge from sharing a life in common. In this sense, the useful objects that protagonize several of these experimental texts bear the marks of communal intention, and they can each be read as the theoretical counterpart of this concrete experimental praxis.

The rhetoric of antithesis, always, as I noted in the first chapter, at the core of Flores Magón's mature prose, plays a central role in structuring the use fables. Through juxtaposition and antagonistic confrontation, the polar logic of antithesis constructs meaning, and does so very often as a means of formally representing class struggle. In seven of these stories, this technique animates a world of things. Flores Magón's treatment of everyday life through the form of antithesis had by 1915 already become a major structural feature of his mature prose. What is nonetheless original in these texts is the inanimate protagonists' capacity for speech and contemplation, a characteristic that



imbues these texts with a fantastic nature. The protagonists, often ideologically and antithetically in ostensible competition with each other and representing to each other the values and interests of their social class (proletariat vs. bourgeoisie), not only engage in dialogue, but, increasingly over the period during which the series appears in the pages of *Regeneración*, carry on interior monologues as well.

While the use of interior monologue in Flores Magón's prose had already appeared at the turn of the century, this is the first time it is used more systematically. Although, in general terms, there are a handful of historical precedents for interior monologue, or what is more commonly known as the stream of consciousness technique, in the novel, the technique has become strongly associated with the historical period in which Flores Magón wrote and lived. Erwin Steinberg, one of the stream of consciousness technique's literary historians, notes that it flowered "at the high point of what we have come to call the Age of Modernism" (3); for his part, Poggioli identifies it as a central form of avant-garde experimentation carried out by the many artists who were Flores Magón's contemporaries (131-2). As a technique, stream of consciousness refers to the literary portrayal of the myriad thoughts and affects that traverse the self by giving narrative form to "the flow of inner experiences" (Cuddon 682). In an observation that implies the inalienable link between language and the experience of self, the expression was in fact first coined as a psychological term by William James in his "Principles of Psychology" (1890). James held that the experience of consciousness is best described as "(a) 'river' or a 'stream'" (233). The term was first used to describe writing nearly thirty years later, when it appeared in a review of Dorothy Richardson's novels by the fellow British novelist May Sinclair that was published in the modernist

journal “The Egoist” (1914-1919). Extending James’ metaphor, Sinclair asserts that Richardson, with James Joyce and a small handful of others, has pursued “a growing tendency to plunge” in to characters’ consciousness through the use of the technique (57). In the modern novel’s obsessive pursuit to represent the real, the innovation that stream of consciousness attempts to realize is the portrayal of the linguistic dimension of consciousness’s own unfolding. For Sinclair, Richardson’s identification with her protagonists’ stream of consciousness has the effect of the author’s getting “closer to reality than any of our novelists who are trying so desperately to get close” (58). Through the flow of language, according to Sinclair, the technique attempts to represent the reality of being a human subject<sup>17</sup> amidst a world of objects. Yet when it remains strictly a tale of *human* development, distinctly conceiving of object and subject, it forms an imaginative impasse to a fuller understanding of the human relationship with other animals and the world of natural and manufactured things.

In contrast to the modernist novel, in Flores Magón’s use of the technique, an effort which endeavored not to showcase human becoming but to give voice to inanimate things, it is as if *subject* and *object* were each unworked by way of being collapsed in to each other. In light of the separation and re-localization of the stream of consciousness technique on a more fantastic terrain –akin to the isolation and subsequently novel use of images in the manifesto texts discussed in the first chapter – these stories can be considered a product of montage. In Flores Magón’s use fables, it is by way of the isolation and subsequent deployal of the stream of consciousness technique in these

---

<sup>17</sup> “It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*,” writes Emile Benveniste, “because language alone establishes the concept of “ego” in reality, in *its* reality which is that of the being” (224).

stories that Flores Magón as allegorist becomes the master of its new meaning, now used to shed light on the often invisible powers at work in a world of things. What is in part allegorized through the consciousness of these use fable protagonists is the use made of industrial production, a matter I address below.

The protagonists of Flores Magón's use fables include a suit jacket, a rifle, a blouse, a piece of bread, a trench and a barricade, a printing press, pens, stones, and the minerals iron and gold (La levita y la blusa; El fusil; La torta de pan; La barricada y la trinchera; La prensa y el carácter de imprenta; Las dos plumas; Las tres piedras; El hierro y el oro; Las inquietudes del hierro). Considering all of them in detail clarifies the fact that what interests the author in each is related to the *particular dimension of their use*, regardless of their potential exchangeability on the market: the food and clothing that appear in the stories serve the workers' needs in reproducing themselves; the pen, the printing press and the metal letters of print all consist of a means of revolutionary propaganda and communication, advancing the interests of the workers' movement; the barricades, projectiles, guns, and bombs all serve as instruments of the movement, used to produce and sustain a material force against the enemies of state and capital. In this way, each object is considered in terms of its *revolutionary use*, which is to say a capacity to enable the movement of the oppressed to reproduce and defend itself in creating and advancing a revolutionary force. As speaking beings, then, the fables' protagonists attest to the fact that building a force is a question of building a world. This, in opposition to an understanding of the world as a simple matter of subjects and objects, implies a continuous fabric of connections amongst humans and living and non-living things.

To the extent these use fables often juxtapose proletarian and bourgeois objects, as is the case in “La levita y la blusa,” “Las dos banderas,” “El hierro y el oro,” “La barricada y la trinchera,” “Las dos plumas,” and others, they are often the vehicle of what I term a *proletarian moral*. This moral affirms the value of the working class as producers of wealth and manufacturers of useful things. In such stories, two objects usually argue over their respective usefulness and service to either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In this sense, they affirm their identity and subjective reality as something that is ostensibly static. The appearance of both moral and story in these texts recalls the form of the historical fable, and concurs with both scholarly and conventional definitions that recognize the fable as a short, didactic text which intends to communicate a moral lesson, often through the use of animals or other “natural” figures (Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary 689; Lafon 5-10). The historical fable’s story is tasked with communicating its moral, but these are distinct components. In the preface to his original 1668 edition of fables, Jean de La Fontaine, whose work is at the heart of the historical fable’s eighteenth century revival, offered an organic, ostensibly harmonious depiction of the genre, according to which “the body is the fable” and “the soul is the moral” (10).

Yet in spite of the proletarian moral that dominates some of the texts, like many of Flores Magón’s experimental journalistic writings, as a whole these texts are characterized by a generic heteroglossia that resists categorization. Though they present certain elements of the historical fable and I have decided to call them “fables” for lack of a more precise characterization, classifying them strictly as fables would ultimately reduce what is at play in them and obfuscate their most important element: the combination of antithesis and stream of consciousness techniques. With only a few

exceptions, in fact, one can observe in the publication of these texts a trajectory wherein the presentation of characters who clearly affirm a static (proletarian or bourgeois) identity gives way to characters who attest to selves that are anxiously divided by a kind of ontological contingency, worrying or at least aware of the opposed potentials contained in what their future condition might be. In a technical sense, this is brought about by the movement of antithetical rhetoric from the plane of dialogue, in which the characters confront each other in terms of their class allegiance, to that of monologue, now evoking and representing a tension at work within consciousness itself.

This combination of techniques that gives voice to a divided consciousness is illuminated by an article by Ivan Almeida entitled “La Morale des Fables.” In the article, Almeida indicates the fable’s potential for tension and ambiguity caused by its use of figures. For Almeida, the *figurative* nature of narrative discourse, filled with characters and other figures from daily life, works against the fable’s use as a moral instrument. Contrasting the properties of theoretical and figurative language, Almeida notes that

Le discours narratif travaille avec des figures et non pas avec des concepts... Il nous faut, donc, préciser la différence entre un concept et une figure... Les discours théoriques en général n’admettent le lexique de la vie courante que dépouillée de tout ce qui le renvoie à cette vie... On peut dire qu’ils prennent des mots mais en leur coupant la mémoire, et en n’en gardant que les aspects qui servent à la théorie... Chaque figure est la condensation de toutes les histoires que l’on peut construire avec elle. Cela a comme effet qu’un discours figuratif n’a jamais contrôle total des figures qu’il manipule. Celles-ci gardent un certain degré

d'autonomie, et peuvent à tout moment s'émanciper du contexte et reprendre leur vie propre. (13-4)<sup>18</sup>

As figures from daily life, the protagonists of Flores Magón's texts are not isolated individuals, but attest to being part of a dynamic world. Through speech, they do not only transmit a moral sentiment but also put themselves in question as to their manifold potential, in demonstration of Almeida's assertion that every "figure is the condensation of all the stories that one can construct with it" (13-4). In this way, Flores Magón's use of fables exemplify a continuity between theory and praxis, a unique form of figurative theory able to reflect on life in proximity to itself, yet without cutting itself off from it. In this sense, then, through the freedom their figures take up in self-aware reflection, these texts attest to a kind of undoing or *hollowing out* of the fable form, at once invoking but also going beyond it.

Yet before looking at the undoing that results from the combination of the techniques of antithesis and interior monologue, I would like to briefly explore the more traditionally fabulistic protagonists of these texts who attempt to transmit what I have termed a proletarian moral. An exemplary case is found in "La levita y la blusa," published in November of 1915. At the beginning of "La levita y la blusa," two pieces of

---

<sup>18</sup> Narrative discourse works with figures and not with concepts... We must therefore specify the difference between a concept and a figure... In general, theoretical discourses only admit the lexicon of daily life stripped of all that refers to the latter... One can say that they (theoretical discourses) cut the memory of the words they take, only keeping the aspects that serve theory... Each figure is the condensation of all the stories that one can construct with it. The result is that figurative discourse never has total control over the figures it manipulates. These figures maintain a certain degree of autonomy, and can free themselves from the context and start up their life again at any moment. (13-4) (Author's translation)

clothing find themselves thrown together in a garbage dump (Flores Magón). The “aristocratic jacket” expresses her disgust and humiliation at being thrown together with a “plebeian blouse,” which intensifies when a gust of wind causes one of the blouse’s sleeves to fall on the jacket, “as if her intention had been to reconcile, in that place of equality, through a fraternal embrace” (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). In this sense, the distance that the two pieces of clothing maintain in human social life refers more symbolically to the distance between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Though such an embrace recalls the fraternalistic nature of the early workers’ movement, given the class difference at hand, this is to no avail. The contact between the two pieces of clothing elicits an indignant monologue from the jacket, who emphasizes the blouse’s inferiority and details the distinction she offers to the “decent people” she serves: bankers, legislators, judges, industrial capitalists, and businessmen (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). Through a rhetorical operation seen in many of the use fables, and perhaps indicative of their tendency to speak in types, by way of an abbreviated series of images, the jacket articulates its status as a sort of synecdochal placeholder, a *part* that stands in for the whole ruling class itself, although she is just their useful object (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). After this speech, another gust of wind separates the blouse’s sleeve from the jacket, as if she regretted her “sentimental feelings” for the latter (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). Suddenly, attempting to maintain her rage, the blouse verbally attacks the jacket for the pride she takes in clothing “white-gloved ruffians” (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). In contrast, she emphasizes the pride she takes in clothing the worker, whose “generous heart” beats under her as the worker carries out the various tasks that created the jacket: “Debajo de mi late el corazón generoso del obrero; del

trasquilador que quita a la oveja la materia prima de que estás compuesta; del tejedor que la convirtió en tela; del sastre que la hizo levita” (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). In this phrase, the blouse turns the jacket’s existential arrogance on its head, asserting the intimacy she maintains with the shearers, weavers, and tailors that brought the jacket in to being in the first place. In this sense, the blouse doesn’t stand for an individual but the worker as a social type – the clothing of the worker in general. At the end of the story, after the disparaging speech of the aristocratic suit jacket, the plebeian blouse re-affirms its value as a source of proletarian use:

Soy la prenda del pobre. Debajo de mí late el corazón generoso del obrero; del trasquilador que quita a la oveja la materia prima de que estás compuesta; del tejedor que la convirtió en tela; del sastre que la hizo levita. Soy el abrigo de seres útiles, laboriosos y buenos. No visito palacios, pero vivo en la fábrica, frecuento la mina, asisto al taller; voy al campo; me encuentro siempre en los lugares donde se produce la riqueza... se me halla en el mitin libertario, donde la palabra profética del orador del pueblo anuncia el advenimiento de la sociedad nueva; se me ve en el seno del grupo anarquista, dentro del cual preparan los buenos la transformación social. (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*)

As the blouse continues her speech, she expands from a discussion of clothes to talk about the spaces she inhabits, a sort of abbreviated geography of industrial labor: factories, mines, and workshops, but also the libertarian political meeting, where social transformation is planned and discussed (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*). At the end of her harangue, in a metonymic *glissement* through which she identifies with the



proletariat itself, she yells, “Yo muevo la máquina, perforo el túnel, abro el surco! ¡Hago la Revolución! ¡Impulso al mundo!” (Flores Magón, *La levita y la blusa*).

Although, in a series of actions that seems to increase with intensity, her speech casts the proletariat as the hero of industrial capital, the affirmation of the static identity of the working class in fact is implicitly in contradiction with the conception of revolution as a radical transformation of the working class (and, along with this, the abolition of the state and capital). This, in effect, is the essence of an important critique that, while sometimes developed too rigidly and simplistically, has often been posthumously leveled at the workers’ movement, especially from the tradition of the communist left: the development of a revolutionary workers’ movement which insistently and unequivocally affirms the status and identity of the worker *qua* worker must ultimately come into conflict with its own goals of abolishing capitalism, given that capitalism consists primarily of a set of social relations that divides humanity into opposed classes and that determines the conditions of waged exploitation and domination that make it possible to speak of a working class in the first place. In short, the conflict consists of the fact that the workers’ movement often affirmed, supported, or even heroized the worker’s role in a set of capitalist social relations this same movement allegedly sought to abolish.

As I mentioned above, however, consequent with the progressive use of antithesis not as external but internal to their protagonists’ consciousness, the characters of these use fables pass over time from the affirmation of a proletarian moral to reflections of divided consciousness regarding their own contingent status. While the stories in question otherwise date from 1915 and 1916, they find a clear early precedent in “El fusil,” a short

story published four years earlier in *Regeneración* on November 18, 1911. “El fusil” consists of eight short paragraphs, and proceeds by way of a kind of antithetical oscillation between considerations of the use of the *fusil*, or firearm, in either the service of oppression or in the service of liberation. The narrative rhythm created by this oscillation creates an engaging sense of expectancy for the reader, which, through the repetitive succession of antitheses, develops within an experience of time as the *time of conflict*.

While, at first glance, the text seems to be written in a free form of prose without regard for structure beyond that provided by the figure of antithesis, a closer analysis reveals a substantially organized presentation of content. In this sense, “El fusil” can be divided up into three different sections: the first two paragraphs establish the theme of the firearm’s fundamentally dual nature; the next four paragraphs describe the firearm in terms of its relation to, respectively, the voice and the body; finally, the last two paragraphs consider the *fusil* in terms of its possible obsolescence (Flores Magón). It is in the first two paragraphs of the story where examples of parallelism *sensu stricto* appear:

Sirvo a los dos bandos: al bando que oprime y al bando que liberta. No tengo preferencias; con la misma rabia, con el mismo estrépito lanzo la bala que ha de arrebatar la vida al soldado de la libertad o al esbirro de la tiranía.

Obreros me hicieron, para matar obreros. Soy el fusil, el arma liberticida cuando sirvo a los de arriba; el arma emancipadora cuando sirvo a los de abajo.

(Flores Magón, El fusil)

What is perhaps most fundamental in these two paragraphs, and a central principle at work in the texts that Flores Magón would publish four years later, is the gun’s admission

that it has no “preferences.” It is contingent, ostensibly neutral, and subject to the trajectories of an appropriative use by opposed parties. Here, as elsewhere in the author’s prose, Flores Magón’s antithetical parallelism takes as its object the prepositional phrase, which it subjects to repetitions and variations. As if to formally emphasize the fact that the gun itself “has no preferences,” nouns and verbs provide a common ground between opposed groups, while the descriptions evoked by the adverbial and adjectival prepositional phrases that modify them respectively imbue each side and their actions with singular qualities. On one hand, a given *bando* or “side” occupies itself with oppression or liberation, and each side uses the *fusil* as an instrument of death, one which – without preference – “snatches” (*arrebatar*) the life of the soldier of freedom or the henchman of tyranny; on the other hand, as the final adjectival prepositional phrases that modify the verb’s object (*fusil*) in the last sentence demonstrate, the weapon is an arm “of liberticide” when it serves those above and “emancipatory” when serving those below. In this sense, between the two sides there is a kind of parity of being-in-conflict. This is expressed in nouns and verbs shared by both sides in common and only modulated in terms of qualities through the application of modifiers in the form of prepositional phrases. This insistently formal deployal of parallelism at the beginning of the text serves to more firmly establish the opposition (of classes, forces) that animates the text’s content, inaugurating it as a textual presentation of conflict *in* and *as* time.

The text’s following four paragraphs provide examples of the aforementioned assertion that these stories undo or at least trouble the classical opposition between object and subject, according to which the human is an active being in a world of passive things. What is implied in this approach to the autonomous use of the things of the world, in

other words, is that humans are not understood as abstract, isolated individuals facing an equally abstract “society,” but are always enmeshed in a world of other beings and things:

Sin mí no habría hombres que dijeran: “yo soy más que tú”, y, sin mí, no habría esclavos que gritasen: “¡abajo la tiranía!”

El tirano me llama: “apoyo de las instituciones”. El hombre libre me acaricia con ternura y me dice: “instrumento de redención”. Soy la misma cosa y, sin embargo, sirvo tanto para oprimir como para libertar. Soy, al mismo tiempo, asesino y justiciero, según las manos que me manejan. (Flores Magón, El fusil)

In both the third and fourth paragraphs of “El fusil,” the *fusil* is considered in relation to human language and its use. “(Y)o soy más que tú” and “¡abajo la tiranía!,” the two phrases quoted in this third paragraph, could each be read as a type of ideologeme, or minimal unit of ideology, for both political authoritarianism and anti-authoritarianism. Here this takes, respectively, the precise linguistic formula of a slogan. It is implied that the *fusil*, as the power of armed force, supports and at least in part makes each declaration possible. In relation to the text as a whole, these declarations are significant because they represent a shift in the text’s use of verbs which – with the exception of the clause “Obreros me hicieron” that opens the preceding paragraph – has so far only consisted in a use of the present tense (Flores Magón, El fusil). The use of two unreal conditionals, “Sin mí no habría hombres que dijeran... y, sin mí, no habría esclavos que gritasen,” marks a departure from what has so far been a depiction of the present as a conflict between the oppressed and their oppressors, on each side of which the *fusil* plays a role (Flores Magón, El fusil). However, beyond merely being aware of this role, as a being who

speaks and is thus self-aware, the *fusil* is able to take into account the trajectory of its own potential and call its self into question. With the appearance of these unreal conditionals, the *fusil* posits his own existence at the root of the conflict, reflecting on the possibility that his existence enables a more perfect domination of humans by humans, and thus through this a greater potential for revolt (Flores Magón, *El fusil*). He then imagines that with his disappearance such a conflict might also consequently disappear (Flores Magón, *El fusil*). This assertion foreshadows the *fusil*'s more extended reflection on his own obsolescence that concludes the text. Along with the mention in the fourth paragraph of the *fusil* as the “instrumento de redención” of the oppressed (Flores Magón, *El fusil*), this expresses in part the messianic dimension at work in Flores Magón's thought, a matter discussed in-depth below.

In the fourth paragraph of “*El fusil*,” the *fusil* considers this conflictual doubling of his reality in terms of the names he is given – a doubling which unfolds on an onomastic plane: in addition to being an instrument of redemption for the oppressed, for the state he is an “apoyo de las instituciones” (Flores Magón). Implied in this simple reflection is the fact that the institutions of the state exist, finally, through their reproduction by way of armed force.

In the fifth, sixth, and seventh paragraphs, the *fusil*'s monologue transitions from the theme of the gun's relationship to the voice and its declarations about the world to a series of observations that explore the relationship between the *fusil* and the human body:

Yo mismo me doy cuenta de las manos en que estoy. ¿Tiemblan esas manos? No hay que dudarlo: son manos de esbirros. ¿Es un pulso firme? Digo sin vacilar: *son las manos de un libertario*.

No necesito oír los gritos para saber a qué bando pertenezco. Me basta con oír el castañear de los dientes para saber que estoy en manos de opresores. El Mal es cobarde; el Bien es valeroso.

Cuando el esbirro apoya mi caja en su pecho para hacerme vomitar la muerte acurrucada en el cartucho, siento que su corazón salta con violencia. Es que tiene la conciencia de su crimen. No sabe a quién va a matar. Se le ha ordenado: *¡fuego!* y allá va el tiro que tal vez atravesará el corazón de su padre, de su hermano o de su hijo, a quienes el llamado honor había gritado: *¡rebelaos!*

(Flores Magón, El fusil)

In these passages, Flores Magón uses the centrality of the *fusil* in conflict to reflect on the relationship of oppression and liberation to the body. Although this should on one level be read as a form of propaganda which aims to undermine the oppressor as a cowardly enemy and not primarily as a veridical account of the experience of war, it highlights the ontological differences at stake between the experience of fighting for the interests of the rich through the state and fighting a war of liberation. The dramas of class war and revolution are felt in the body, and there is something undeniably singular about the energies at play in the construction and reproduction of a revolutionary force against a modern state, even beyond its elements of armed conflict. The names through which this drama takes shape are expressed in terms of the individuals fighting on each side: the *esbirro* – a henchman or thug – and the *libertario* (Flores Magón, El fusil). In Flores Magón's depiction, the hands of the oppressor tremble, his teeth rattles, and his heart jumps with violence, a physical effect in each case resulting from a guilty conscience (El fusil). As the text states, "Es que tiene la conciencia de su crimen" (Flores Magón, El

fusil). This is because the *esbirro* “(n)o sabe a quién va a matar” – his bullet, commanded by an authority, might strike “el corazón de su padre, de su hermano o de su hijo” (Flores Magón, *El fusil*). In contrast, the steady beat of the libertarian’s heart through his veins is what identifies him as such (Flores Magón, *El fusil*). In the revolutionary’s activity, there is no tension, only a resolve of inclination and conviction, a fact reflected in the body.

To resume, what Flores Magón achieves through the use of first-person interior monologue to give life to the experience of an inanimate object is the existence of something that is, according to who uses it, *divided in being*. In a rather simplistic way, this is framed as a moral question (“El Mal es cobarde; el Bien es valeroso”), yet it also contains profound implications. The use fable demonstrates that, contrary to how it might appear, the use of things is not ultimately a neutral, but partisan question. The use of any thing is not per se determined by the reality of the thing itself, but by the relationship that it can play in a form of practice or activity as part of a larger world.

Thus regarding the *fusil*’s relation to the lives of the oppressed, its use is one that would ostensibly lead to its own obsolescence. In the final two paragraphs of the fable, the *fusil* again takes up the question of its own existence in a more sustained reflection on the possibilities of this latter’s end:

Yo existiré mientras haya sobre esta Tierra una humanidad estúpida que insista en estar dividida en dos clases: la de los ricos y la de los pobres, la de los que gozan y la de los que sufren.

Desaparecido el último burgués y disipada ya la sombra de la Autoridad, desapareceré a mi vez, destinándose mis materiales a la construcción de arados y

de instrumentos mil, que con entusiasmo manejarán los hombres transformados en hermanos. (Flores Magón, El fusil)

In these final lines, the prospect of a transformed world emerges, offering a fleeting image of a different sort of time than that modeled by the text's conflictual time. With the disappearance of the bourgeoisie, which itself would be brought about by a libertarian use of the *fusil*, the painful duality of division and conflict that marks the life of human beings would be said to draw to an end, giving way to a fuller human fraternity. In this final passage, the question of use expands beyond the dual nature it has maintained until now in the text in a more specific way as well, when the *fusil* suggests an alternative use of the materials that have gone in to its own composition: “desapareceré a mi vez, destinándose mis materiales a la construcción de arados y de instrumentos mil, que con entusiasmo manejarán los hombres transformados en hermanos.” (Flores Magón, El fusil). According to the *fusil*'s final reflections, after the utopian finale of the conflict amongst human beings, the iron of which he is composed would be better destined for tools that can be used in advancing a meaningful relationship with the earth. With the elimination of the violent domination of the human by the human, the iron that composes the gun will be *repaired* to a beneficent use among human beings. It is also in this sense that the *fusil* can be considered an “instrument” of the oppressed's “redemption”: a means of leading to a situation in which the violence it propagates will be overcome, thus converting it from an instrument of redemption to a means of constructing “instrumentos mil” to be used in this new relationship between humans and the earth they inhabit (Flores Magón, El fusil).



In light of these reflections, the messianic dimension at work in Flores Magón's thought comes more clearly into view. For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to briefly establish a few parallelisms with Flores Magón's thought and Messianism as it appeared and unfolded in the context of Jewish history. As the work of Gershem Scholem notes, Messianism, in Judaism, refers to the coming of *Moshiach*, the Messiah or anointed one – a king whose prophesied coming from the Davidic lineage would herald the liberation of the Jewish people (The Messianic Idea in Judaism 5). Scholem, a twentieth-century scholar of Jewish philosophy and history, emphasizes the fundamental difference between Judaic and Christian conceptions of Messianism in his "The Messianic Idea in Judaism":

A totally different concept of redemption determines the attitude to Messianism in Judaism and in Christianity... Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance. In contrast, Christianity conceives of redemption as an even in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside. (1-2)

According to this idea, in theorizing the eminently public, collective events that might lead humanity down a revolutionary path, modern theories of revolution bear a much stronger resemblance with Jewish than Christian traditions of Messianism. Furthermore,

according to Scholem, the Jewish tradition of Messianism is always characterized by a dual nature, at once utopian and apocalyptic:

When the Messianic idea appears as a living force in the world of Judaism – especially in that of medieval Judaism... it always occurs in the closest connection with apocalypticism... apocalypticism produced the doctrine of the two aeons which follow one another and stand in antithetical relationship: this world and the world to come, the reign of darkness and the reign of light. The national antithesis between Israel and the heathens is broadened into a cosmic antithesis in which the realms of the holy and of sin, of purity and impurity, of life and death, of light and darkness, God and the anti-divine powers, stand opposed.

(The Messianic Idea in Judaism, 4-6)

In the same way, modern theories of revolution – which, whether by way of crisis or protracted war, often posit a kind of apocalyptic upheaval on a world scale, eventually giving way to an age that, if not utopian, would not at all be marked in the same way as are modern times by human exploitation and domination – are clearly indebted to messianic notions of time and of the transformation of history and its end. Flores Magón shared with Jewish thought this penchant for antithesis that is, according to Scholem, was so prevalent in Jewish Messianism. As Scholem points out, this results from the fact that the Messianic idea concerns both “the catastrophic and destructive nature of the redemption on the one hand and the utopianism of the content of realized Messianism on the other” (The Messianic Idea in Judaism 7-8). While many of the texts analyzed in this chapter do not directly evoke or treat the question of catastrophe, its image is abundant elsewhere in Flores Magón’s fictional prose.

Beyond the themes of utopianism, catastrophism, apocalypticism, and redemption, however – themes which are more or less decipherable in a variety of secular political doctrines – Flores Magón’s use fables express a more specific and intimate resonance with a chapter in Messianic history. This relates specifically to a use of things that would in some way *repair*, *restore*, or *redeem* a relation with the world. As I have noted above, while the *fusil* understands that it is now used as a necessary means of violence as the “instrumento de redención” of the oppressed, with the elimination of the latter’s domination, it could finally ponder a *different use* of its “materiales,” for “la construcción de arados y de instrumentos mil” (Flores Magón, *El fusil*). There is a precedent in the history of the Kabbalah, the esoteric method of biblical hermeneutics in Judaism, with which this notion of a redemptive use of the things of the world toward their revolutionary transformation finds a resonance. One can find its emergence in the transformation of the Kabbalistic tradition that followed the upheaval caused by the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (*The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 41-3). As one of the most traumatic events in Jewish history, the effects of the *Inquisición* on the communities of Spain were sure to find a reflection in the literature of Jewish thought. As Scholem notes,

on the heels of the expulsion from Spain, the Kabbalah underwent a pronounced shift which was of momentous consequences for Jewish history... the sixteenth-century Kabbalah found in the expulsion itself a way of answering the most urgent question confronting the Jews of that period: the nature of Galut and the nature of redemption... This answer was formulated during the span of a single generation, from 1540 to 1580, by a small, albeit very intense, congregation of

saints, devotees, priests, and reformers in the little Palestinian town of Safed... Of the many systems formulated in Safed, the one which was most highly respected and which achieved authoritative status... was the Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534-72) (The Messianic Idea in Judaism 41-3)

According to the school of Lurianic Kabbalah, the cosmic drama of the creation and continuity of the world is threefold. It unfolds through the processes of concentration, emanation, and reparation (*Tikkun*). According to the school of thought established by Luria and developed by his followers – an effort which utilized certain concepts of traditional Jewish thought while at once creatively re-articulating them – God

did not reveal Himself... in creation, but confined and concealed himself and by so doing enabled the world to be revealed... Only afterward does He emit beams of light into the vacuum of limitation and build our world. .... He formed "vessels" destined to serve the manifestation of His own being... The divine light entered these vessels in order to take forms appropriate to their function in creation, but the vessels could not contain the light and thus were broken. This is the phase which the Kabbalists call the "breaking of the vessels." And what was the consequence of the shattering of the vessels?... Into the deep abyss of the forces of evil, the forces of darkness and impurity... there fell, as a result of the breaking of the vessels, forces of holiness, sparks of divine light. . In this system, redemption is synonymous with emendation or restoration. (The Messianic Idea in Judaism 44-5)

For Luria, God had to conceal, or *exile*, himself to make room for creation. In Luria's doctrine, creation involved the emanation of divine light, a process through which some

sparks of divine light got mixed in with forces of darkness. The unfolding of redemption, the third element of this cosmic drama, involves “the appearance of the Messiah” himself and “is nothing but the consummation of the continuous process of Restoration, or *Tikkun*” (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 275). According to Scholem, this understanding of the category of *Tikkun* is characterized by a “utopian impulse” that signified “the re-establishment of the harmonious condition of the world” (*The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 13). What is fascinating about the Lurianic conception of redemption – a “redemption of all things” – was that it did not rely on awaiting some distant event or action dependent on an external, divine power, but referred to a practice to be taken up in the here-and-now. Implicit in the Lurianic notion of *Tikkun* is an ethical posture toward and among all living things that involves an effort to extirpate evil from the world by restoring the fallen sparks of divine light. As Scholem describes it,

Everything that man does, reacts somewhere and somehow on this complicated process of *Tikkun*. Every event and every domain of existence faces at once inwardly and outwardly, which is why Luria declares that worlds it all their externals are dependent on... the fulfilment of the commandments and meritorious deeds. (*Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 274)

To return to Flores Magón’s text discussed above, when the *fusil* reflects upon its use in the struggles of the oppressed as an instrument of redemption, but also its possible obsolescence and the new use that could be made of it once “los hombres (sean) transformados en hermanos” (Flores Magón, *El fusil*), it considers its situation through a sort of Lurianic reflection on the process of *Tikkun*: a meditation on the reparative and restorative use of its materials and their role in the relationships at play in the human

world. “El fusil,” then, transmits a conception of revolution as the reparation of the relationships of humans to each other and the world, a movement of vital affirmation of existence and its power in the face of oppression.

Though it was perhaps not done clearly or explicitly on behalf of Flores Magón himself, the theme of nature’s utility, and especially the use made of metals extracted from the earth, emerges in multiple texts of the use fables. The extraction of minerals from the earth by mining was by no means a new phenomenon in Mexico in the first decades of the twentieth century. On the contrary, according to “La estructura económica y social de México en la época de la Reforma,” Francisco López Cámara’s detailed study of Mexican society at the time of the *Reforma*, it was one of the oldest forms of industry and “la mayor fuente de riqueza del país” (66). At the same time, however, and in a broader sense, as Adolfo Gilly observed in his study of the Mexican Revolution, both the *Reforma* and the subsequent reign of the *Porfiriato* represent the introduction of a modern industrial capitalism that pierced the very heart of the country (30). In this sense, to return to the figure of allegory evoked above, the divided and conflicted consciousness of the useful protagonist stands in as a kind of allegory for what Flores Magón evokes as the contingency at play in Mexico’s nascent industrial production. If the international revolutionary movement would not succeed in altering the uses made of the productive forces then mobilized on an increasingly massive scale, this missed opportunity is interpreted as an apocalypse for the earth and the humans who live in relation with it; capitalist modernity is a form of catastrophe. While such an observation was never explicitly made by the author himself, it is expressed in his texts and already implied in the lives of the Mexican Liberal Party. This is evident through the sensitivity toward and

the relationship established by Flores Magón and the rest of the organization with peasants and indigenous Mexicans who lived and worked in intimate relation with the land, and whose existence could not be considered in abstraction from a relationship with territory.

While the divided consciousness of the gun is expressed in a straightforward, seemingly affectless tone, in the later fables the expression of divided consciousness is often accompanied by a feeling of concern and anxiety. This marks a development in Flores Magón's combination of antithesis and stream of consciousness techniques in the sense that the effects of this divided consciousness are taken into account and worked into the descriptions of the characters themselves. Interestingly, the plight of metals, and particularly iron itself, sustains a prolonged attention in the use fables. In addition to "El fusil," Flores Magón writes about iron in "El hierro y el oro," "La prensa y el carácter de imprenta," and "Las inquietudes del hierro." The characters of both these last two use fables distress over being used for the contemptible desires of the bourgeoisie, but also muse over the contingent quality of what they perceive as their dual nature.

"La prensa y el carácter de imprenta," published on October 30 of 1915, is a use fable that begins with a conversation between a printing press and a piece of metal printing type: "En un rato de descanso, la prensa y el carácter de imprenta se contaron sus cuitas" (Flores Magón). The first clause indicates that the beginning of the narrative coincides with the characters' break from work. The noun *cuitta* suggests a degree of familiarity between the co-workers and emphasizes the suffering they share, which results from little rest. The printing press initiates the conversation between the two by

bemoaning the collective suffering of all presses everywhere, and then goes on to detail the specific tribulations of her own condition as an “iron slave”:

¡Ah hermano tipo, cuánto he sufrido en mí ya larga vida!... entre los esclavos de hierro que nos llamamos máquinas, pocos hay tan desgraciados como mis hermanas las prensas... Yo me he visto obligada a imprimir las mayores indignidades. Escritores sin conciencia me han hecho estampar adulaciones al tirano. Entonces, con toda la fuerza de mis músculos de hierro me he resistido a correr para no tener que imprimir tales vilezas; pero el motor me impele furioso y mis articulaciones de acero tienen que ceder al impulso, chirriando, que es la única forma de protesta de una máquina ultrajada en su dignidad.” (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*)

In some sense, the description the printing press gives of its condition combines depictions of suffering that echo Mexican workers and peasants described elsewhere in the author’s prose. This is realized specifically by way of an image of the frantic operations of industrial machinery, evoking the powers of industrial production that overwhelm human life, a process the press helplessly tries to stop to no avail: “el motor me impele furioso y mis articulaciones de acero tienen que ceder al impulso” (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*). In this way, the exploitation of the printing press and the metal type synecdochically stands in for that of waged workers, obliged to reproduce themselves through the slavery of waged labor. While the *fusil*, to some extent, places itself outside of its condition by way of abstract reflections, the useful objects of this story are depicted as exhausted workers that labor under conditions of exploitation and domination. Composed of iron, the frenetic machine also evokes the new accelerated



and quantified experience of time characteristic of industrial capitalism, a kind of time under whose measure waged workers are compelled to labor, surviving and reproducing life through the process of valorization.

Among the connotations the material of iron would evoke at the time, specifically in the local circles of the worker's movement in Los Angeles where Flores Magón lived, was that of the Los Angeles Times bombing of October, 1910, which was mentioned in the second chapter of this work. Práxedes Guerrero published a note about the bombing, which was allegedly perpetrated by militant union ironworkers (Debs 1-7), in his "Puntos Rojos" column on November 5 of 1910:

Explosión de gas, debido quizá a un intencional descuido del dueño de Los Ángeles Times, se ha probado que fue la causa de la destrucción de la planta de ese indecente libelo. La maliciosa teoría dinamitera de Harrison Gray Otis, para perseguir a los trabajadores unionistas y envolver en la trama a los enemigos de su amigo el tirano Díaz, se ha desvanecido en el ridículo, a pesar de los recursos inquisitoriales que se han empleado con pobres mujeres para forjar *pruebas legales*.

Bien deseará Otis que se repita la experiencia, porque como quiera, el negocio le ha dejado buenas ganancias, y al fin las víctimas son trabajadores.

(Guerrero)

From Guerrero's words, it is evident the bombing was on the minds of the *Regeneración* circle, and Guerrero's account indicates the newspaper's owner apparently suggested the community of Mexican exiles had been involved.

In any case, to return to "La prensa y el carácter de imprenta," after the iron printing

press's short speech, the printing type offers a brief response that reflects his agreement with the machine, and both characters pass into a moment of silent contemplation regarding their situation (Flores Magón). Once their conversation starts up again, it is as if each had reached the same conclusion about their shared existential condition, and their final exchange takes in to account what each has conceived of as their lives' strange dual nature:

Somos veneno que produce la muerte y al mismo tiempo elixir de vida, según las manos en que nos encontramos; educamos y embrutecemos... Si – dijo el tipo con exaltación –, ¡misión singular es la nuestra! Somos luz y somos tinieblas; vehículo de progreso y arma de retroceso... Somos el índice que señala la humanidad el camino de la redención, como también somos abismo abierto en las tinieblas al paso de los pueblos. La entrada de los operarios al taller, puso fin a tan interesante conversación. (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*)

As in the monologue of the *fusil*, the dialogue of the printing press and type proceeds by way of a succession of contrasting, Manichean images, another instantiation of the messianic dimension of Flores Magón's thought. Like the Messianic idea's "cosmic antithesis... which (consists of) the realms of the holy and of sin, of purity and impurity, of life and death, of light and darkness" (Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* 4-6), the printing press and printing type are *at once* light and darkness, life and death, abyss and salvation. Furthermore, the affirmation of this antithetical tension within consciousness itself is all the more striking once one considers the transmogrified echoes it contains of the contrasting motifs of "luz" and "tinieblas" which abound in the synoptic gospels. While this Manichean opposition could apply to the stories that communicated a proletarian moral as was mentioned above, the printing type's affirmation, "(s)omos luz y somos tinieblas,"

emphasizes to an even greater degree the antithetical tension at play in consciousness itself, brought about by the combination of stream of consciousness and antithesis techniques. While they suffer under the obligation of having to unwillingly support the production of propaganda for the bourgeoisie, the printing press and the printing type seem – perhaps fatalistically – resigned to this role, as if they had found within this dual nature a reason for their own self-worth, or at least a sober recognition of their reality. In a return to the theme of the oppressed's redemption, which observably forms a leitmotif in Flores Magón's prose, the printing type asserts they are both the “índice que señala a la humanidad el camino de su redención” (*La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*). Just as quickly as in the other use fables, their melodramatic discussion comes to an abrupt end (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*). In this fable, the end of the work break brings the workers back in to the room and positions the two machines in a larger process of industrial production (Flores Magón, *La prensa y el carácter de imprenta*). Unlike the heroic use values of the other use fables that only serve the proletariat, however, this use fable can be read as a reflection on the commodity as a contradictory social object with a Manichean potential.

It is in “*Las inquietudes del hierro*,” the final use fable I examine, that the relevance of Flores Magón's thought regarding autonomous use, modernity, and the revolutionary movement for the present becomes most clear. Given that this use fable was published on December 18, 1915 – one of the last use fables of the series – and that it goes further than any other to explore iron in its unexploited, natural state, it is almost as if, in a gesture that might be explored in more depth and classified as a kind of literary materialism, one could trace a line of development at play in the use fables, proceeding

from processed and produced materials back to their source, which is in this case deep inside the earth itself.

The main character of “Las inquietudes del hierro” is iron located in the heart of a mountain and that hears the footsteps of a man on the mountain’s summit (Flores Magón). The iron realizes that the man is there to extract the iron – *himself* – from the mountain (Flores Magón, Las inquietudes del hierro). After this point, the use fable essentially consists of an alternation between evocations of the iron’s anxious imaginings of his fate and the blows of the axe (Flores Magón, Las inquietudes del hierro). The rhythm of this latter is onomatopoeically evoked by way of the refrain “(e)l pico hería, hería, hería,” repeated twice in the last sections of the text (Flores Magón, Las inquietudes del hierro). Like the *fusil* and the printing press and type, the iron affirms the Janus nature of his plight in a flourish of Manichean rhetoric, especially at the end of the text (Flores Magón, Las inquietudes del hierro). What represents a further development in Flores Magón’s technique here, evinced already by the “inquietudes” of the title, is the combination of affect in addition to this divided tension in consciousness:

El hierro se estremeció en el seno de la montaña al sentir pisadas en la cumbre....  
Es el hombre que anda en busca de mí – dijo –. Y sus moléculas vibraron  
intensamente en una sensación mezclada de angustia y placer... ¿Para qué me  
querrá? – se preguntó con inquietud el benemérito metal. Y la montaña entera,  
cuya armazón componía él, tuvo un sacudimiento.... Es el hombre que se afana  
por encontrarme para convertirme en reja de calabozo o en cerrojo de presidio. Y  
sus moléculas vibraron de indignación y de cólera... (Flores Magón, Las  
inquietudes del hierro)

Both due to the presence of the human and its own imagination regarding its fate, at multiple moments the iron experiences a kind of *frisson*, a shivering or shuddering that passes through its body. Each time this is described in a slightly different way. The iron first shivers upon hearing human footsteps at the prospect of a human presence, and here the division in consciousness extends to an affective, material dimension through the figure of vibrating molecules, which appears twice in the narrative. The uncertainty of its destiny produces in the metal a “sensation mixed with anguish and pleasure,” and the thought of being used to keep people in prisons causes a vibration of anger and indignation (Flores Magón, *Las inquietudes del hierro*).

Akin to the protagonists of the other use fables, the metal also imagines the possibilities of the forms he could take:

Ah, cuánto sufro! ¡oh, qué cruel incertidumbre! Yo no quiero ser cadena, ni cerrojo, ni reja. Quiero ser metralla, pero en manos del pueblo, para barrer a los tiranos. Quiero ser guillotina, pero en manos del rebelde, para arrancar la cabeza del opresor. ¿Qué iré a ser? Puedo ser acicate; pero también puedo verme convertido en freno. (Flores Magón, *Las inquietudes del hierro*)

In some sense, here it is almost an inverse movement of that which concludes “El fusil.” While the *fusil* looks back through the process of production and considers other uses for the material out of which he was cast, the metal thinks of a possible future in the service of the cage of oppression, as a chain, a lock, or iron bars, or in the service of liberation, in the form of the classically revolutionary image of the guillotine.

This above final phrase of the iron’s discourse offers, *in minima*, the observation that animates all the use fables, and represents what might be read as Flores Magón’s

own anxiety about the forces of production and the role that useful things can play in an autonomous, revolutionary movement. For the liberation of the oppressed, the iron realizes that it can be an *acicate* or a *freno*: a stimulus, a catalyst toward such redemption, or a “brake” on the revolutionary movement (Flores Magón, *Las inquietudes del hierro*). As the metal admits, in an explicit reflection on this question of use, “Impulso y contengo, según el uso que se me quiera dar” (Flores Magón, *Las inquietudes del hierro*).

Through the insertion of antithesis into stream of consciousness, Flores Magón’s writing joins other contemporary, modernist forms of experimentation that reflected upon the divisions, alienations and separations at play in consciousness. Unlike many of them, however, he does not use this innovation to wallow in suffering and despair at the level of individual consciousness, but instead to consider questions of the autonomous uses of production on behalf of the workers’ movement. In this way, the use fables decenter a humanistic perspective on the world, and questions of revolutionary use and mass production are rendered accessible in a sensible and playful way to the readership of *Regeneración*.

It was clear for Flores Magón that humanity hung in a balance. If the massive potential at work in large-scale production could not be stopped or altered in such a way as to benefit the masses and be of service to their liberation, even by way of a kind of partisan refunctioning, then capitalist modernity merely meant certain catastrophe. Today, this catastrophe is in full bloom. Perhaps what the use fables offer in this context is a way to reconsider the redeeming, messianic use that is made of the things of the world, as well as a more substantial reflection about what it might mean to consider revolutionary activity as a reparative gesture. In this way, the use fables modestly offer

tools for the desperation of our time, in hopes the eclipse of so many forms of life might not yet be a totally foregone conclusion.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to return to the theme of the historical avant-garde. While I have demonstrated the ways in which the writing of Flores Magón and Guerrero shares many affinities with the historical avant-garde, the question remains as to why their work need be considered in these terms at all. The act of categorizing and naming, after all, is always an arbitrary and inevitably deceitful act. To my knowledge, Guerrero and Flores Magón never understood their lives in the terms of avant-garde, nor has anyone associated their writing with the phenomena of the historical avant-garde. While, as a historical category invented for the purposes of understanding the past, “historical avant-garde” appears straightforward enough, the present study also poses a problem to this category’s formation and stability. At the root of the necessity of naming any historical category poses is the paradoxical quality of the common noun. Unlike a proper noun, a common noun denotes a set or class of objects rather than just a particular one (Agamben, *The Coming Community* 8). As Agamben notes in “The Coming Community,” by transforming “singularities into members of a class” based on a shared property, the common noun comes to stand, in fact, for nothing but merely this act of inclusion (8). In this sense, the invention of a historical category as such belongs to an ethics of writing history, but more broadly points to the impossibility of history’s representation, to the impossible submission of human action to thought in language.

What is at stake, finally, in relating the work of Flores Magón and Guerrero to the historical avant-garde? Is an avant-garde still an avant-garde, *avant la lettre*? Must an avant-garde know itself as such, living and working under this name, to be considered an avant-garde? Is it worthwhile to perform yet another empty gesture in the tired and



inconsequential drama of recognition, or perhaps “decolonize” the concept of avant-garde, another “decolonization” that, like countless alleged others, would have nothing to do with transforming the material conditions of colonized life? None of these fashionable aims seem worthwhile or important.

On the contrary, why I find it meaningful to understand these authors in terms of what the avant-garde was and what they shared with its series of political and aesthetic projects is because their experiences might offer, to those who still find it in them to struggle, some lost memory of the past whose conjuring is vital for the seemingly impossible demands posed by the present. In other words, what I hope the present work has begun, in some small part, is the urgent task of repairing the relationship between the revolutionary tradition and the avant-gardes. Perhaps never before has the legacy of the avant-garde seemed at once so mulled over by small, elite academic circles of *modernists* and so distant from the revolutionary tradition that brought it in to being and for whose regeneration and continuation a thorough revision of its legacy remains at hand.

In a very fundamental sense, beyond the enumeration of the qualities that characterized it, what the avant-garde sought to resist and repair was the alienated character of modern life. Its insight emerges from the observation that, whether or not this would coincide with some political program, the secret to a happy life resides in the cultivation of a vibrant power that refuses or in some way unworks the fragmentation and separation so glaringly characteristic of modern life, ever more a mere appendix to the process of capital valorization that has now led to an increasingly massive loss of life on earth.

In hindsight, of course, it became clear the attempt to incorporate “art” in to life was never possible. As Bürger observed, the relatively autonomous sphere of art in bourgeois society was only made possible through the detachment of the cultural sphere of art from economic and political systems, a separation which marks the necessary “detachment of art from the praxis of life” (24). This fragmentation of the sphere of art is the separation the avant-garde tried in vain to overcome – futile because such a separation was impossible to overcome while still preserving an object that would recognizably retain its identity as “art.” What is unique about the Mexican anarchists in this regard, in contrast to Europe and the United States, is the fact that such an autonomous sphere had not or at best had only begun to develop at the beginning of the twentieth-century (Ramos 55-71). While the texts of Flores Magón and Guerrero present an undeniably aesthetic dimension, they were principally a kind of politico-rhetorical weapon. As Flores Magón noted lucidly in a letter to Enrique of July 1899, “creo que no en un lejano tiempo, sea mi arma muy grande: el periódico” (Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón).

So far I have only spoken of the alienation and separation of modern life in a general sense. In closing, I would like to look at two theoretical concepts that elucidate the ways in which the writing and lives of Guerrero and Flores Magón fought against these forms of separation: the first of these is the concept of refunctioning; the second is the concept of form-of-life.

By evoking the term “refunctioning,” I return to a theme only mentioned in passing in the chapters above. By looking at the concept in more detail, it becomes clear how the notion of refunctioning broadly elucidates aspects of Guerrero’s and Flores Magón’s life and work. While “Umfunktionierung,” or refunctioning, emerged in the

work of Bertolt Brecht to describe his approach to theater (Benjamin, *The Author as Producer* 774), the way in which Benjamin appropriates and articulates it to speak of authors and writing is better-suited for a discussion of Guerrero and Flores Magón. In the spring of 1934, Benjamin wrote a text entitled “The Author as Producer.” While the text was to be delivered as a talk at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, a front group for the Communist party (Jennings, Eiland and Smith 781), Scholem maintained that this text was never delivered (qtd. in Jennings, Eiland and Smith 781). In it, Benjamin offers an extended reflection on Brecht’s concept of refunctioning as a possible means of superseding then current literary debates that opposed questions of literary quality to ones of expressing the “correct” political tendency (*The Author as Producer* 768-71). While the English word “refunctioning” also signifies changing the purpose of something, the English prefix *re-* does not fully capture the insistence of the German prefix *um-*, which is used in this case to expressly communicate a movement of alteration or transformation. Brecht’s neologism refers to an activity that not only redirects the uses of an aesthetic practice, but totally transforms them in the process. In “The Author as Producer,” Benjamin emphasizes certain objective conditions of literary production that faced the authors of his time in order to give a fuller notion of what such a refunctioning of writing would entail. For Benjamin, the relatively new horizon of the newspaper demands writers “rethink (their)... conceptions of literary forms or genres” in order “to identify the forms of expression that channel the literary energies of the present” (771). As the text continues, Benjamin notes that

we are in the midst of a mighty recasting of literary forms, a melting down in which many of the opposites in which we have been used to think may lose their

force... For through the press... one realizes that the mighty process of recasting... not only affects the conventional distinction between genres, between writer and poet, between scholar and popularizer, but also revises even the distinction between author and reader. Of this process the press is the decisive example, and therefore any consideration of the author as producer must include it... you can see how photography and music, and whatever else occurs to you, are entering the growing, molten mass from which the new forms are cast. (771-6)

The industrial metaphor he employs, which describes the “melting down” of material into a “molten mass” which is then subject to a subsequent “recasting” (ibid), likely emerges from his sense of solidarity with the workers’ movement and an attempt to articulate the role of the writer in terms of “production” and in relation to the revolutionary cause of the proletariat. What is in any case central for Benjamin is that the newspaper marks the site of the intermingling and confusion of conventional forms of writing. The industrial imagery in which he clothes the newspaper envisions it as a sort of chaotic, discursive machine that destroys and at once gives new form to all manner of visual material, from writing to images to music. Given the importance of the newspaper across various social strata and its discursive prominence in comparison to more residual rhetorical forms, this process entails “the literarization of all the conditions of life” (776). For Benjamin, what follows from this recasting is a consequent revaluation of short rhetorical forms. To point out the fleeting nature of the forms of writing and the historical precedent for short rhetorical forms, Benjamin notes that

There were not always novels in the past, and there will not always have to be; there have not always been tragedies or great epics. Not always were the forms of

commentary, translation, indeed even so-called plagiarism playthings in the margins of literature; they had a place not only in the philosophical but also in the literary writings of Arabia and China. Rhetoric has not always been a minor form: in Antiquity, it put its stamp on large provinces of literature. (771)

Given the likelihood that this text would have been addressed to a room full of writers, Benjamin valorizes the short forms of the newspaper precisely because he thought the terrain of the newspaper was vitally important for the class struggle. Benjamin lays the groundwork for a preliminary understanding of the conditions of rhetorical production so that he can more clearly articulate the tasks of what he calls, after Sergei Tretiakov, the “operating writer” (770). In contrast to the “informing writer,” the operating writer is an *active writer* (ibid). The operating writer “is not to report but to struggle; not to play the spectator but to intervene actively” (ibid). Such an active intervention begins through a process of refunctioning (773-4). This latter entails the transformation of “certain institutes and institutions” involved with a given apparatus of discursive production in a way that serves the class struggle (ibid). Making such production “politically useful” (775), in other words imbuing it with what Benjamin terms “an organizing function” (777), is realized “only by transcending the specialization in the process of intellectual production” (775). For Benjamin, through such an activity, “the barriers imposed by specialization must be breached jointly by the productive forces that they were set up to divide” (ibid). Benjamin again insists that this is done by blurring the lines between author and reader (777).

At this point, several points of connection between Benjamin’s reflections and the writing of Guerrero and Flores Magón emerge: the image space their texts open up insists

the reader be an active, collaborative reader; Benjamin's characterization of the newspaper recalls the heteroglot nature of *Regeneración*, specifically with regard to the texts that have been analyzed in the chapters above. In *Regeneración*, however, heteroglossia not only emerges from the necessity of the newspaper to conform to the needs of the market as a commercial commodity, but also signals the regeneration of a tradition and the forms and modes familiar to it.

In any case, what was fundamental for Benjamin was that refunctioning the discursive apparatus would necessarily involve some challenge to the division of labor that alienates producers from one another, an alienation that is signaled in Benjamin's text by the word "specialization" (775). Such a challenge to this division entails going beyond "the specialization in the process of intellectual production – a specialization that, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order" (ibid). In the context of Guerrero and Flores Magón, "specialization" and "refunctioning" provide two terms which each allow for a mediation<sup>19</sup> between their texts and their lives. To speak of "genre" means to speak of certain textual characteristics that emerge in view of what a text is trying to accomplish, in terms of its intention or the kind of textual labor it performs. To overcome the *specialization* of a genre – to fragment its intentions and tendencies, and to combine them with other forms – is to change its purpose through refunctioning. In the same way, the lives of Guerrero and Flores Magón resisted the ever-diversified division of "specialist" labor that was then taking place in Mexican society. They were writers, but also political

---

<sup>19</sup> "If a more modern characterization of mediation is wanted, we will say that this operation is understood as a process of *transcoding*: as the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or "texts," or two very different structural levels of reality" (Jameson 40).

militants, organizers and members of the Mexican Liberal Party's Organizing Committee; Flores Magón was also the member of a commune, and Guerrero a worker and a soldier. In this sense, their lives, along with their writing, realized a kind of refunctioning of the institution of journalism through a combinatory logic that resisted the separation and alienation of modern life under capital. For them this was a process that resulted from their unending pursuit of revolution.

At the same time, by way of this overcoming of the bourgeois discipline of specialization, what emerges through the memory of their lives is something Agamben has identified as a *form-of-life*. For those who live in a time marked by myriad crises, in which an authoritarian capitalism emerges on a world scale and seems to pose to many the only way out or forward, this spark is something that – to the present – is truly valuable in the life and work of Guerrero and Flores Magón. To more fully grasp what is meant by “form-of-life,” it is important to comprehend it as one in a larger constellation of concepts developed by Agamben's work.

A central claim that informs much of Agamben's work is that there is a separation enacted through the labor of governance that divides a particular form or type of qualified life from the general notion of living itself. As the author claims in “Means without End,” this separation was already at play within the conception of life developed by the Greeks, who used two different terms to speak of life: “*zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, humans, or gods), and *bios*, which signified the form or manner of living peculiar to a single individual or group” (Agamben 3). For Agamben, this distinction endured over time, finally characterizing the way in which sovereign political power establishes itself – by way of the power to separate something

like *bios*, “a sphere of naked life” characterized by a “naked presupposed common element that it is always possible to isolate in each of the numerous forms of life” (Means without End 3-4). In opposition to this, Agamben elaborates the concept of what he terms a “form-of-life,” which is “a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life” (Means without End 3-4). Such life “is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself...a... human life... in which the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply *facts* but always and above all *possibilities* of life, always and above all power” (Agamben, Means without End 4). While this notion must necessarily be concretized in examples to be made clear, and while this is only indirectly evident in the author’s work, Agamben’s notion of form-of-life must primarily and finally be understood in terms of a revolutionary political strategy. In the same passage, Agamben goes on to suggest that a happy life is only thinkable “starting from the emancipation from such a division, with the irrevocable exodus from any sovereignty. The question about the possibility of a nonstatist politics necessarily takes this form: Is today something like a form-of-life, a life for which living itself would be at stake in its own living, possible?” (8). A form-of-life would thus be a way of living that always puts life at stake, that is focused on the means of living itself, in their immediacy, without alienating some aspect of life from itself in order to work toward some end. It is only in this sense, as the above quote shows, that Agamben maintains that a kind of *exit* from the logic of sovereign state power would be thinkable and possible. As others have suggested, and while they may pose more questions about the possible nature of revolution today than answers, the revolutionary experiments currently underway in places like Chiapas and Rojava – but also the



struggles against extractivist projects often led by indigenous peoples across North and South America – are all phenomena that depart not from the instrumental and tired game of representational politics, but from putting the living of life itself at stake. When it comes to the tumultuous lives of Práxedes Guerrero and Ricardo Flores Magón, their way of undertaking the activity of living – from writing, to organizing, to loving, to fighting – was animated by an analogous sensibility. In an exemplary way, there is something in the stories of their lives and the figures of their writing that gestures toward the kind of strategic vitality needed to render inoperative the logic of sovereign power and destitute the rotten game of state politics, which always and everywhere finally leads to misery, ruin, and death.

## Bibliography

- Abad De Santillán, Diego. *Ricardo Flores Magón, el apóstol de la revolución social mexicana*. Mexico City: Grupo Cultural Ricardo Flores Magón, 1925.
- "Acribillar." *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2006. 24.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- . *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Albro, Ward S. *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992.
- . *To Die on Your Feet: The Life, Times, and Writings of Práxedes G. Guerrero*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996.
- Alcaraz, Florence Toussaint. *Escenario de la prensa en el porfiriato*. Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía, 1989.
- Almeida, Ivan. "La morale des fables." *Tigre* (1999): 13-20.
- Aragon, Louis. *Paris Peasant*. London: Exact Change, 2004.
- Arce, Manuel Maples. *Andamios Interiores*. Mexico City: Editorial Cultura, 1922.
- "Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón." 2018. *Galería*. 17 January 2018. <<http://archivoMagón.net/sin-categoria/galeria-mag-21/>>.
- "Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón." 2019. *Galería*. 12 March 2019. <<http://archivomagon.net/sin-categoria/galeria-mag-02/>>.
- "Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón." 2019. *Galería*. 27 February 2019. <<http://archivomagon.net/galerias/galeria-ricardo-flores-magon/>>.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Richard Janko. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory Of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Bailey, Joyce Waddell. "The Penny Press." Tyler, Ron. *Posada's Mexico*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979. 85-122.

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Bakunin, Mikhail. "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis." 2017. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Ed. Sam Dolgoff. electronic. 1 November 2017. <<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/letter-frenchman.htm>>.
- Bartra, Roger. *La jaula de la melancolía*. Mexico City: Debolsillo, 2005.
- Bassols, Jacinto Barrera. "Cronología." Flores Magón, Ricardo. *Regeneración (1900-1901) Primera Parte*. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2004.
- Bastian, Jean-Pierre. "Las sociedades protestantes y la oposición a Porfirio Díaz en México, 1877-1911." Bastian, Jean-Pierre. *Protestantes, liberales y francmasones: Sociedades de ideas y modernidad en América Latina, siglo XIX*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993. 132-64.
- Benjamin, Walter. "On Proverbs." Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999. 4 vols. 582.
- Benjamin, Walter. "On the Concept of History." Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 4. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003. 4 vols. 389-400.
- . *Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos*. Trans. Bolívar Echeverría. Mexico City: Editorial Itaca, 2008.
- . *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999. 4 vols. 768-782.
- . *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2009.
- . *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2009.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version." Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 4. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003. 4 vols. 251-283.
- Benveniste, Émile. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971.

- Bloch, Ernst. "Discussing Expressionism." Lukács, Georg, et al. *Aesthetics and Politics*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. New York: Verso, 1980. 16-27.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "Anatomía de mí ultra." Osorio T., Nelson. *Manifestos, proclamas y polémicas de la vanguardia literaria hispanoamericana*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1988. 83.
- Brinton, Crane. *The Jacobins: An Essay in the New History*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2012.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989.
- Butterick, Matthew. "Butterick's Practical Typography." 2019. *Signature Lines*. 3 March 2019. <<https://practicaltypography.com/signature-lines.html>>.
- Călinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.
- Cámara, Francisco López. *La estructura económica y social de México en la época de la reforma*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1967.
- Calhoun, Robert Matthew. *Paul's Definitions of the Gospel in Romans I*. Nehren: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Caws, Mary Ann. "The Poetics of the Manifesto: Nowness and Newness. Introduction." Caws, Mary Ann. *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. xix-xxxi.
- Cockroft, James D. *Precursores intelectuales de la revolución mexicana*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 1971.
- Consejo Nocturno. *Un habitar más fuerte que la metrópoli*. La Rioja: Pepitas de calabaza, 2018.
- Cuddon, J.A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Córdova, Arnaldo. *La formación del poder político en México*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1972.
- Darío, Rubén. *Azul...* Santiago: Pequeño Dios Editores, 2013.
- Davies, Penelope J.E. "The Politics of Perpetuation: Trajan's Column and the Art of Commemoration." *American Journal of Archaeology* 101.1 (1997): 41-65.
- de Cleyre, Voltairine. "Direct Action." 2017. *The Anarchist Library*. 1 November 2017. <[https://archive.org/details/al\\_Voltairine\\_de\\_Cleyre\\_Direct\\_Action\\_a4](https://archive.org/details/al_Voltairine_de_Cleyre_Direct_Action_a4)>.

- de Man, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Debs, Eugene V. "The McNamara Case and the Labor Movement." *International Socialist Review* 12.7 (1912): 397-401.
- "Descomponerse." *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2006. 485.
- Dupriez, Bernard. *A Dictionary of Literary Devices*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- El Cronista. "Notes and Comments." *Regeneración* (1910): 4.
- Episode*. 2019. 17 February 2019. <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/episode>>.
- "Eulogy." *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. New York: Random House, 2001. 668.
- "Fable." *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. New York: Random House, 2001. 689.
- Facos, Michelle. *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Art*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Flores Magón, Ricardo and Librado Rivera. "Manifiesto del 23 de septiembre de 1911." 23 September 1911: 1.
- Flores Magón, Ricardo. *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. 2018. 13 02 2018. <<http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1899/cor02/>>.
- . "Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón." 2018. *Correspondencia*. 20 March 2018. <<http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1899/cor01/>>.
- . *Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón*. 2018. 23 02 2018. <<http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1899/cor03/>>.
- . *Artículos Políticos Seudónimos*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2005.
- . *Correspondencia 1*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2000.
- . *Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922)*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2000.
- . "El fusil." *Regeneración* 1911 18 November: 1.

- . "El hierro y el oro." *Regeneración* 23 October 1915: 2.
- . "La barricada y la trinchera." *Regeneración* 20 November 1915: 2.
- Flores Magón, Ricardo. "La Constitución Ha Muerto." Bartra, Armando. *Regeneración: 1910-1918*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1991.
- . "La levita y la blusa." *Regeneración* 6 November 1915: 2.
- . "La prensa y el carácter de imprenta." *Regeneración* 30 October 1915: 1.
- . "Las dos banderas." *Regeneración* 16 October 1915: 1-2.
- . "Las dos plumas." *Regeneración* 13 November 1915: 2.
- . "Las inquietudes del hierro." *Regeneración* 18 December 1915: 2.
- . *Obra Literaria: Cuentos. Relatos. Teatro*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2009.
- . "Práxedes G. Guerrero." *Regeneración* 30 December 1911: 1.
- . *Regeneración (1900-1901) primera parte*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2003.
- . *Regeneración (1900-1901) segunda parte*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2003.
- . *Regeneración (1910)*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2011.
- . *Revolución, Libertad, y Trabajo*. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2014.
- Flores, Tatiana. *Mexico's Revolutionary Avant-Gardes: From Estridentismo to ¡30-30!*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013.
- Frank, Joseph. *The Idea of Spatial Form*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. XIV. London: The Hogarth Press, 1964. 243-58.
- García, Xosé López. *La metamorfosis del periodismo: Historia de lo que permanece y de lo que cambia en el ciberperiodismo del tercer milenio*. Zamora: Comunicación Social, 2010.
- Garner, Paul. *Porfirio Díaz*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Gilly, Adolfo. *La revolución interrumpida*. Mexico City: Ediciones El Caballito, 1971.

González, Aníbal. *A companion to Spanish American Modernismo*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2007.

—. *Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Gonzales, Michael J. "Imagining Mexico in 1910: Visions of the Patria in the Centennial Celebration in Mexico City." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39.3 (2007): 495-533.

Guerrero, Práxedes. "La muerte de los héroes." *Regeneración* 3 September 1910.

—. "Las Vacas." *Regeneración* 10 September 1910: 1.

—. "Palomas." *Regeneración* 24 September 1910: 1.

—. *Práxedes Guerrero*. Mexico City: Grupo Cultural Ricardo F. Magón, 1986.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 17 septiembre 1910: 3.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 12 octubre 1910: 2.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 8 octubre 1910.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 10 September 1910: 3.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 24 September 1910: 3.

—. "Puntos Rojos." *Regeneración* 5 November 1910: 3.

—. "Viesca." *Regeneración* 17 September 1910: 1.

Halleran, Michael. "Episodes." Gregory, Justina. *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 167-82.

Hernández, Salvador. "Tiempos libertarios. El magonismo en México: Cananea, Río Blanco, y Baja California." Hernández, Salvador, Ciro F.S. Cardoso and Francisco G. Hermosillo. *La Clase Obrera en la Historia de México: de la dictadura porfirista a los tiempos libertarios*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1980. 101-232.

"Ilusión." *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2006. 802-3.

Imparcial, El. "Google News Newspaper Archive." 2019. 10 1 2017.  
<<https://news.google.com/newspapers>>.

- Jakobson, Roman. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." Sebeok, Thomas A. *Style in Language*. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1960. 350-449.
- James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. I. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1981.
- Jennings, Michael W., Howard Eiland and Gary Smith. "Notes." Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999. 4 vols. 781-2.
- Jitrik, Noé. *Las contradicciones del modernismo*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1978.
- Jrade, Cathy L. *Modernismo, Modernity, & the Development of Spanish American Literature*. Austin: University of Texas, 1998.
- La Fontaine, Jean de. *The Fables of La Fontaine*. Trans. R. Thomson. London: J.C. Nimmo and Bain, 1884.
- Lafon, Michel. "Les pouvoirs de la fable." *Tigre* 10 (1999): 3-13.
- Legorreta, Jorge. "Tres figuras aladas erigidas a la libertad." 18 September 2002. *La Jornada*. 2 March 2019.  
<<https://www.jornada.com.mx/2002/09/18/02an1cul.php?origen=cultura.html>>.
- Lomnitz, Claudio. *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2014.
- Lyon, Janet. "Manifestoes and Public Spheres." Lyon, Janet. *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. 9-46.
- Lyons, John D. *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Müntzer, Thomas. "Sermon to the Princes (or An Exposition of the Second Chapter of Daniel)." Müntzer, Thomas, et al. *The Radical Reformation*. Trans. Michael G. Baylor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 11-32.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. "Myth in Primitive Psychology." Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Malinowski and the Work of Myth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. 77-116.



- Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Collected Poems*. Trans. Henry Weinfield. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- . *Divagations*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Boston: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2007.
- Marcos, Subcomandante. *Nos hemos estado preparando en la montaña desde hace diez años* L'Unitá. 4 January 1994.
- Marsden, Jill. "Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism." Pearson, Keith Ansell. *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007. 22-37.
- Martos, Jean-François. *Histoire de L'Internationale Situationniste*. Paris: Éditions Ivrea, 1995.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Vol. I. New York: Penguin Group, 1990.
- . *Early Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1992.
- "Maxim." *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. New York: Random House, 2001. 1188.
- Miller, Dean. *The Epic Hero*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Montaldo, Graciela. *La sensibilidad amenazada: Fin de siglo y Modernismo*. Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 1994.
- Mraz, John. *Looking for Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Murray, Christopher John. *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era: 1760-1850*. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004.
- Ogden, Daniel. *Drakōn: Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Olympus America. "Microscopy Research Center." 2012. *Hydra (Coelenterata)*. 2 April 2019.  
<<http://olympus.magnet.fsu.edu/micd/galleries/moviegallery/pondscum/coelenterata/hydra/index.html>>.
- Pacheco, José Emilio. *Antología del modernismo, 1884-1921: tomos I y II*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1999.
- Peacham, Henry. "The Garden of Eloquence." 2016. *Silva Rhetoricae*. 19 February 2017.  
<<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Primary%20Texts/Peacham.htm>>.

- Perloff, Marjorie. "The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture." Perloff, Marjorie. *Violence and Precision: The Manifesto as Art Form*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 80-115.
- Plato. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Puchner, Martin. *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Rama, Ángel. *La Ciudad Letrada*. Hanover: Ediciones del Norte, 1999.
- . *Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico*. Montevideo: Universidad de la República, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, 1967.
- Ramos, Julio. *Desencuentros de la Modernidad en América Latina*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004.
- Rimbaud, Arthur. *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Rocheffoucauld, François de La. *Maximes et Réflexions Diverses*. Paris: Flammarion, 1999.
- Ross, Kristin. *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Rotker, Susana. "Prólogo." Martí, José. *Crónicas*. Mexico City: Alianza Editorial, 1993. 7-29.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. "Athenaeum Fragments." Schlegel, Friedrich. *Lucinde and the Fragments*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. 161-240.
- Schneiderman, Howard G. "Introduction." Brinton, Crane. *The Jacobins: An Essay in the New History*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2012. ix-xxvi.
- Schulman, Iván A. *Génesis del Modernismo*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1966.
- Scott, Tom. *The Early Reformation in Germany: Between Secular Impact and Radical Vision*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

- Sinclair, May. "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson: Book Review of 'Pointed Roofs,' 'Backwater,' and 'Honeycomb'." *The Egoist* 5.4 (1918): 57-9.
- Steinberg, Erwin R. *The Stream-of-consciousness technique in the modern novel*. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1979.
- Tiqqun. *Théorie du Bloom*. Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2000.
- . *Theory of Bloom*. Berkeley: LBC Books, 2012.
- Truchet, Jacques. "Introduction." Rochefoucauld, François de La. *Maximes et Réflexions diverses*. Paris: Flammarion, 1999. 11-25.
- "Ultrajar." *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2006. 1488.
- Wall, Catharine E. *The Poetics of Word and Image in the Hispanic Avant-garde*. Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 2011.
- White, Hayden. *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- "Wikimedia Commons." 14 November 2018. *Postcard in Latvian of Mexican revolutionaries Juan Sarabia, Ricardo Flores Magón, Librado Rivera y Antonio I. Villareal*. 26 March 2019.  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MagonEtAl.png>>.
- Womack, John. *Zapata y la Revolución Mexicana*. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985.
- Wright, Steve. *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002.
- Zea, Leopoldo. *El positivismo en México: nacimiento, apogeo, y decadencia*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1968.