

CUAUHTÉMOC AWAKENED

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Este artículo examina las representaciones artísticas de Cuauhtémoc en el siglo XIX y el proceso por el cual la imagen del emperador fue concebida como un símbolo nacional. Identifica la concepción liberal detrás de las imágenes artísticas y su relación con los vitales debates políticos y sociales del periodo. Muestra cómo diferentes líneas dentro del pensamiento liberal fueron conjuntadas en la imagen, creando un símbolo poderoso para una nación unificada e independiente. Asimismo, revela la manera en que las contradicciones internas dentro de esta doctrina fueron reflejadas en el símbolo, limitando su alcance y eficacia, y conduciendo a su eventual descrédito.

Palabras clave: Jesús. F. Contreras, Cuauhtémoc, indigenismo, Leandro Izaguirre, liberalismo, Manuel Noreña, Porfirio Díaz, arte, escultura

This article examines nineteenth-century artistic representations of Cuauhtémoc and the process by which the emperor's image was forged into a national symbol. It identifies the liberal conception behind the artistic imagery and its relationship to vital political and social debates of the period. The paper shows how different strands within liberal thought were brought together in the image, creating a powerful symbol for a unified and independent nation. Yet it also reveals how internal contradictions within this doctrine were reflected in the symbol, limiting its scope and effectiveness, and leading to its eventual discreditation.

Key words: Jesús F. Contreras, Cuauhtémoc, indigenism, Leandro Izaguirre, liberalism, Manuel Noreña, Porfirio Díaz, art, sculpture

The heroism and sacrifice of Cuauhtémoc (c. 1495-1525), last of the Aztec emperors, were recorded in early accounts of the Conquest and held in high regard by chroniclers from Bernal Díaz to Francisco Javier Clavijero;¹ and throughout the Viceregal period, his

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¹ Cuauhtémoc's date of birth is uncertain; the date c. 1495 is advocated by Salvador Toscano, "Datos biográficos", in *Cuauhtémoc*, ed. Jaime Castañeda Iturbide, Mexico City, Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1985, p. 13-43. The name Cuauhtémoc is represented by the hieroglyph of a descending eagle, which often accompanies images of the king. He was the son of the formidable Ahuizotl, eighth emperor of Mexico, and his wife Tlilalcápetl, daughter of the lord of Tlatelolco. He was both cousin and son-in-law of emperor Moctezuma II, having married his daughter Tecuixpo. Named lord of Tlatelolco in 1515, he was elected emperor (*tlatoani*)

memory was kept alive in poetry, story-telling, ritual dances, and songs.² But the emperor became a favorite subject for artistic representation only in the nineteenth century, when stories of his exploits captured the public imagination and his image became widely accepted as a national symbol. This enthusiasm crested in the 1890s, and rather quickly subsided after 1900, when few works of art were devoted to him. Then, just as suddenly, Cuauhtémoc reemerged in the 1940s as a popular artistic subject and resumed his place in the pantheon of civic heroes.

This essay addresses Cuauhtémoc's first stirrings after the war of Independence and his full awakening in the period 1867 to 1900, during the Liberal Era, as Mexico strove to define its political and social ideals, and build a national consensus around them. A later article will continue the inquiry by considering the hero's second revival from the 1940s to the present, when competing interests vied for control over the Cuauhtémoc symbol. As shall be seen, each of these moments responded to a distinct set of historical conditions

by the council of nobles upon the death of Cuitláhuac in late November 1520, and led the defense of Tenochtitlan until its capitulation on August 13, 1521. After his capture, he resisted torture at the hands of the Spanish treasurer Julián de Alderete by refusing to disclose the location of the Aztec treasure. He was baptized Fernando Cortés Alvarado Cuauhtemotzin Huitzilíhuítl, and appointed figurehead over the Indians of Tenochtitlan, but later hanged from a ceibal tree in February 1525, on the dubious charge of having plotted against Cortés, and died, according to one early source, in a Christian manner.

² Sixteenth-century representations of Cuauhtémoc are found in the *Tira de Tepexpan*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and the so-called *Codex Ríos*, ms. Mexicano Vaticano 3738, among other places. Late seventeenth-century representations include an anonymous painting of the *Capture of Cuauhtémoc*, from a series of eight canvases of the Conquest, now in a private collection, and several folding screens (*biombos*), including a painted screen owned by Banco Nacional de México, and others treated with inlaid mother-of-pearl, for which see María Concepción García Sáiz, "La conquista militar y los enconchados", in *Los pinceles de la historia: el origen del reino de la Nueva España, 1680-1750*, Mexico City, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1999, p. 108-141. One of these, today divided between the Museo Franz Meyer, Mexico City, and the Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, contains an early depiction of the legend according to which Cuauhtémoc personally hurled the stone that killed Moctezuma. The *Baptism of Cuauhtémoc*, by the eighteenth-century artist José Vivar y Valderrama, is located in the Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City, and from the same period is an anonymous painting of the *Capture of Cuauhtémoc*, also in the Museo Nacional de Historia. Toward the end of the Viceregal period, the emperor was featured in prints, including an image of his arrest on lake Texcoco, designed by José Ximeno for Antonio de Solís' *Historia de la Conquista de México*, Madrid, Antonio de Sancha, 1784. He was praised in Edward Jerningham's poetic account of *The fall of Mexico*, London, J. Robson, 1775, and in 1790 a play about his torture and death was staged at the New Coliseum in Mexico City, "drawing such large and vociferous houses that it had to be banned"; Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México*, 3rd. ed., Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995, p. 273.

and ideas, yet both were implicated in an ongoing discourse on Mexican cultural and political identity.³

Cauhtémoc's memory was aroused in literature well before he became a subject for visual artists. Among the early literary treatments was José Fernández de Madrid's *Guatimoc ó Guatimocin*, a theatrical work of 1825 by a renowned American patriot from Columbia, then resident in Cuba, who dedicated the piece to the "immortal Bolívar". The drama exposes the venality of Spanish rule in the Americas by depicting a test of wills between the emperor and the vainglorious Cortés and his mischievous treasurer Julián de Alderete.⁴ Another early work, Ignacio Rodríguez Galván's *Profecía de Guatimoc* of 1839, summons up the specter of the ancient king in Romantic verse.⁵ Written by a native Mexican, son of Indian parents and member of the Academia de Letrán (an institution founded in 1836 to promote "national expression" in literature), the piece was formulated in the midst of political crisis, as French expeditionary forces laid siege to the Castillo de San Juan de Ulúa in Veracruz (1838), and is stridently nationalistic in tone and content. The narrative opens with the character of the author encamped at night on the wooded hill of Chapultepec, when he is confronted with a vision of Cauhtémoc, still shackled in chains and feet aflame. The apparition proceeds to deliver a prophesy of disaster for Mexico

³ For literary and visual evocations of Cauhtémoc, see Enrique Krauze, *La presencia del pasado*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004; Josefina García Quintana, *Cauhtémoc en el siglo XIX*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1977, with a compilation of poems and discourses; and, with caution, Matthew Donald Esposito, *From Cauhtémoc to Juárez: monuments, myths, and culture in Porfirian Mexico, 1876-1900*, MA thesis, Arizona State University, 1993.

⁴ José Fernández de Madrid, *Guatimoc ó Guatimozin: tragedia en cinco actos*, Madrid, Arango, 1835. The play was written and first published in 1825, during the author's prolonged stay in Havana. There he befriended the Cuban poet José María Heredia, who featured Cauhtémoc in his *Odas a los habitantes del Anáhuac*, written in 1822, during this author's residence in Mexico. Heredia's poem has the ghosts of Cauhtémoc and Ahuizotl terrorizing the tyrant Agustín de Iturbide, and may have influenced Ignacio Rodríguez Galván and Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (both discussed below). Heredia again recalled Cauhtémoc in his *Las sombras*, of 1825, in which the emperor joins other Aztecs in urging Mexico to end the Spanish occupation of the port of Veracruz; for discussion of these poems, see Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec image in western thought*, New Brunswick (New Jersey), Rutgers University Press, 1971, p. 364-366. Cauhtémoc's popularity in Cuba is further seen in an anonymous Cuban painting of the *Torture of Cauhtémoc*, which served as the model for a print in the Spanish translation of William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (discussed below).

⁵ Ignacio Rodríguez Galván, "Profecía de Guatimoc", in *Poemas mexicanos*, Mexico City, Factoría, 1998. The author died in 1842, at the age of twenty-six years.

and its people under foreign domination, but near the end of the monologue, it holds out the possibility that with divine favor the nation's sufferings may be avenged with the fiery destruction of European capitals. Quite distinct from these two provocative works is the historical novel *Guatimoczin* (figure 1), published in 1846 by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, a Cuban author living in Spain, who seems never to have set foot in Mexico.⁶ Although a prolix and maudlin account of the final throes of the Aztec empire, the book enjoyed a large circulation on both sides of the Atlantic and became an influential example of *costumbrismo* in its vivid descriptions of ancient customs and beliefs, and frequent use of Náhuatl words and terminology. More than any other text it introduced Cuauhtémoc to the larger public and gave him a certain currency within intellectual and literary circles.

None of these literary works presented Cuauhtémoc as a personification of the Mexican nation or its political will. In Fernández de Madrid's dramatic representation the emperor served as a foil for psychological portraits of Cortés and Alderete, and the text's criticism of Spanish rule responded to the current pan-American situation. Rodríguez Galván cast Cuauhtémoc in the role of a ghostly messenger whose experience of the Conquest makes him alert to present dangers of foreign intervention. And Avellaneda's descriptive text appealed primarily to ethnographic and linguistic interests which swept through Mexico and Latin America in the 1830s and 40s. Yet each of these works offered a flattering portrait of the Aztec king, whose estimable character was placed in contrast to the iniquity of the conquistadors, and the strong anti-foreign messages of the two earlier pieces introduced Cuauhtémoc into the political dialogue on Latin America's troubled relationship with the European powers.

From this same period, historical writings about the Conquest routinely described the main events from Cuauhtémoc's life, in compliance with early sources, and frequently pointed to his torture

⁶ Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, *Guatimoczin: último emperador de Méjico, novela histórica*, 4 v., Madrid, D. A. Espinosa, 1846. Of this book, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, *La literatura nacional: revistas, ensayos, biografías y prólogos*, ed. José Luis Martínez, Mexico City, Porrúa, 1949, v. 1, p. 71, wrote: "poco se sabe de Moctezuma y de Guautimotzin; y si no es por la Avellaneda, que ha escrito una preciosa novelita del último imperio azteca, se sabría menos". The novel was translated into English in 1898 by Mrs. Wilson W. Blake.

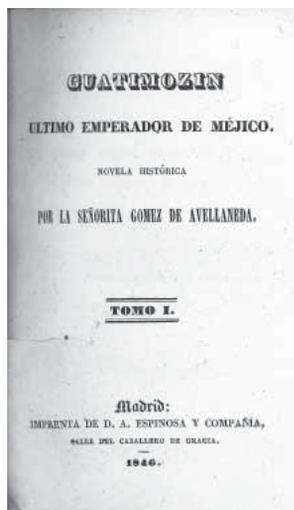


Figure 1

and murder as evidence of Spanish cruelty.⁷ It was, moreover, in history books that the first modern artistic images of the emperor appeared. The Spanish translation of William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest*, published in Mexico City in 1844-1846, contained among its seventy-one lithographic plates two scenes with Cuauhtémoc, though neither design seems to have been invented by a Mexican artist.⁸ A bit later, an anonymous lithographic portrait of

⁷ For example, his valor and torment are recounted in José María Luis Mora, *México y sus revoluciones*, Mexico City, Instituto Cultural Helénico/Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986, v. 2 (originally published in Paris, 1836).

⁸ William H. Prescott, *Historia de la Conquista de México*, 3 v., trans. Joaquín Navarro, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1844-1846. The prints showing Cuauhtémoc are explicated in volume three of the publication by Isidro R. Gondra, *Explicación de las láminas pertenecientes a la historia antigua de México y a la de su conquista que se han agregado a la traducción mexicana de la de W. H. Prescott por Ignacio Cumplido*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1846, p. 142-143. Unsigned, but probably by Joaquín Heredia, is an image of the torture, titled *Sacrifice of Cuauhtémoc*, which was purportedly based on a painting from Havana, Cuba, and kept in the Museo Nacional of Mexico City, while the illustration of the *Capture of Cuauhtémoc*, signed by Heredia, was thought to derive from a Spanish painting, also in the Museo Nacional. The painting for the latter illustration seems in fact to originate from Mexico, and is today located in the Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico City; illustrated in *Los pinceles de la historia: el origen del reino de la Nueva España*, Mexico City, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1999, p. 96. This same design was reproduced by an anonymous lithographer for the *Calendario de Díaz Triunfo para 1851 arreglado al meridiano de México*, Mexico City, 1850, plate 2; see María José Esparza Liberal, "La

Cauhtémoc and image of his torture, both probably drawn by a Mexican, graced the pages of a small booklet of 1852 by Epitacio J. de los Ríos.⁹

Occasionally Cauhtémoc's name was heard in patriotic discourses. At Independence Day celebrations, speakers mounted the rostrum to decry the Spanish domination and praise the exploits of Hidalgo, Morelos and other *primeros héroes* of the insurrection. Cauhtémoc was inserted into these orations as a model of heroism and resistance, and as an example of the sufferings endured under Spanish rule.¹⁰ However, neither these public orations nor factual histories and literary accounts made Cauhtémoc very well known to the general public, and the hero of Tenochtitlan fell into such oblivion that around 1852, José Fernando Ramírez, director of the National Museum, was forced to admit that few Mexicans would be able recognize him at all.¹¹

Indeed, between Independence (1821) and the Mexican-American war (1846-1848) intellectual discussions rarely took serious account of the indigenous population and its historical leaders.¹² Although the memory of Cauhtémoc and the Aztec empire might be

historia de México en el calendario de Ignacio Díaz Triujeque de 1851 y la obra de Prescott", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 80, 2002, p. 163.

⁹ Epitacio J. de los Ríos, *Compendio de la historia de México desde antes de la conquista hasta los tiempos presentes*, Mexico City, Simón Blanquel, 1852.

¹⁰ References to Cauhtémoc arise in several orations reprinted in Ernesto de la Torre Villar (ed.), *La conciencia nacional y la formación: discursos cívicos septembrinos (1825-71)*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1988. His rebellious spirit was said to have been revived by Indians during the independence struggle; "Discurso pronunciado por Luis de la Rosa el 16 de septiembre de 1840", *op. cit.*, p. 171; cf. "Discurso cívico que pronunció, el 15 de septiembre de 1850, el ciudadano Pantaleón Tovar", *op. cit.*, p. 297, and "Discurso pronunciado en el Teatro Nacional, la noche de 15 septiembre de 1867, por Ignacio Ramírez", *op. cit.*, p. 336. As early as 1844, a street in Mexico City was named Guatemuz, located in the area where it was believed the emperor had his house; Lucas Alamán, *Disertaciones sobre la historia de la República Mexicana desde la época de la conquista (1844-1852)*, Mexico City, Jus, 1942, v. 1, p. 185.

¹¹ Cited in Benjamin Keen, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

¹² Within the copious literature on nineteenth-century *indigenismo* and the *cuestión indígena* are Manuel Gamio, *Consideraciones sobre el problema indígena*, Mexico City, Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1966; Agustín F. Basave Benítez, *México mestizo: análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez*, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992; and Luis Villoro, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1950. For *indigenismo* in the fine arts, see Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, "La figura del indio en la pintura del siglo XIX: fondo ideológico", in *La polémica del arte nacional en México, 1850-1910*, ed. Daniel Schávelzon, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988, p. 202-217, and for a broader context.

invoked by patriots during and immediately after the independence struggle, identifications with the Indian past were purely ideal and employed by a creole leadership to justify Mexico's political separation from its colonial overlord.¹³ The *pueblo indígena* remained the passive and inert "other" in ethnological studies and political discussions, and illustrious personalities of ancient times were rarely held in high esteem.¹⁴

This indifference toward native people was somewhat corrected after the debacle of the Mexican-American war, when intellectuals from the liberal camp embarked on a broad reexamination of social and political arrangements.¹⁵ For the first time the contributions of Indians in building the republic were recognized, and praises rang out for native heroes who had sacrificed for their country. José Guadalupe Perdigón Garay, veteran of the American war and liberal advocate, composed a poetic eulogy to a fallen native soldier in the recent conflict, and shortly before 1849, a pyramid carved with the names of heroes of color was erected on the patio of the Colegio de San Gregorio in Mexico City, the first public monument specifically devoted to indigenous persons.¹⁶

¹³ José María Morelos evoked the name of Cuauhtémoc in his opening address to the Congress of Anáhuac at Chilpancingo, September 14, 1813, and the patriot padre Mier, when in Philadelphia between 1816 and 1821, chose to portray himself as a direct descendant of the last emperor; fray Servando Teresa de Mier, *Escritos inéditos*, ed. J. M. Miguel i Vergés and Hugo Díaz-Thomé, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1944, p. 39, 373. Other pre-Hispanic images, including the eagle and the very word Mexico, were incorporated into the national iconography soon after Independence. For the appropriation of the indigenous past by creole patriots, see Jaime del Arenal Fenochio, "Modernidad, mito y religiosidad en el nacimiento de México", in *The Independence of Mexico and the creation of the new nation*, ed. Jaime E. Rodríguez O., Los Angeles, University of California at Los Angeles, Latin American Center Publications, 1989, p. 237-246; David A. Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, trans. Soledad Loaeza Grave, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1973; and Luis Villoro, *El proceso ideológico de la revolución de Independencia*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981.

¹⁴ The writings of Rousseau and his ideal of the "noble savage" enjoyed wide currency in New Spain and exerted a strong influence on the ideology of the independence movement; see Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Rousseau en México: la filosofía de Rousseau y la ideología de la independencia*, Mexico City, Grijalbo, 1970.

¹⁵ For reactions to the defeat of 1847, see Jesús Velasco Márquez, *La guerra del 47 y la opinión pública (1845-1848)*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1975. Many of the young critics of this era, from the cohort known as the "generation of 48", would eventually participate in Cuauhtémoc's rehabilitation. Some were creoles, but most were mestizos, and a few, like Juárez and Altamirano, pure Indians.

¹⁶ Andrés Lira González, "Los indígenas y el nacionalismo mexicano", in *El nacionalismo y el arte mexicano. IX Coloquio de Historia del Arte*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986, p. 26. Perdigón Garay's eulogy was directed to a native hero of the

The reconsideration of Indian people and their role in national affairs did not always lead to positive judgments, however, and the disdain which whites often felt for natives only deepened in response to the war of the Castes, which broke out in Yucatan in 1848, and exposed deep divisions between racial groups. Many authors described the indigenous people as a national burden and hindrance to progress. Francisco Pimentel —the only nineteenth-century thinker to devote a book-length analysis to “the contemporary situation of the Indian race”— believed that if the country were to advance, it was necessary to “desindianizar” the natives by requiring that they adopt the culture of the creoles and forsake their ancestral languages, religions and communal properties.¹⁷

The memory of Cuauhtémoc became embroiled in discussions on the *questión indígena* and post-war debates about the country’s future. Conservatives, like Lucas Alamán and Joaquín García Icazbalceta, who wished to maintain the institutions of the Viceroyal period in modified form and safeguard the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church, upheld the historical reputation of Hernán Cortés while diminishing the legacy of the Aztec kings.¹⁸ They praised the Conquistador for having brought christianity and civilization to a

battle of Chapultepec, coronel Santiago Felipe Xicoténcatl; José Guadalupe Perdígón Garay, “A la memoria del ciudadano Santiago Felipe Xicoténcatl, republicano cristiano, soldado valiente: el invasor sólo después de su muerte logró penetrar en Chapultepec”, *El Monitor Republicano*, October 27, 1847. The monument at San Gregorio, an institution of higher education for native Americans, was installed under the rectorate of the fervent indigenist Juan de Dios Rodríguez Puebla. It consisted of a pyramid inscribed with the names of Tlaxcaltecas, Mexicas and Texcocanos, as described in a biography of Rodríguez Puebla published upon his death in 1849, under the title *El museo mexicano*. These tributes to Indian patriotism were preceded by Carlos María de Bustamante’s encomium to native heroes of the war of Independence, *Martirologio de algunos de los primeros insurgentes por la libertad e independencia de la América Mexicana*, Mexico City, J. M. Lara, 1841.

¹⁷ Francisco Pimentel, *Memoria sobre las causas que han originado la situación actual de la raza indígena de México y medios de remediarla*, Mexico City, Andrade y Escalante 1864, reprinted in *Dos obras de Francisco Pimentel*, Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1995, esp. p. 234-241. Pimentel recommended an increase in European immigration to whiten the Mexican population. In one section of the text, “Tormento y muerte de Guatimozin”, he describes and condemns the brutality of the Conquest.

¹⁸ Andrés Iduarte, “Cortés y Cuauhtémoc: hispanismo, indigenismo”, in *El ensayo mexicano moderno*, ed. José Luis Martínez, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984, v. 2, p. 268-280. Independence Day speeches given in the 1850s by Miguel Miramón, Epitacio de los Ríos, Agustín Sánchez de Tagle, and others revalorized the Spanish domination and justified the cruelties of the Conquest as the just price for the rehabilitation of the native people; Enrique Plasencia de la Parra, *Independencia y nacionalismo a la luz del discurso conmemorativo (1825-1867)*, Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1991, p. 78-79.

barbarous land, and saw Cuauhtémoc as a valiant but misguided defender of primitive heathenism.¹⁹ Conversely, early liberals such as Lorenzo de Zavala, José María Luis Mora and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano were attracted to Cuauhtémoc the unyielding guardian of a free and independent Mexico, whose torture and murder exposed the abuses of the colonial system, the remnants of which they hoped to dissolve.

Arguments about Cuauhtémoc and Cortés were contained within a larger dispute between liberals and conservatives over Mexico's national symbols, which in turn reflected divergent ideas about the country's historical legacy and future direction. The Aztec king was welcomed into the pantheon of heroes constructed by liberals, whereas conservatives envisioned their own Olympus, at the summit of which stood Hernán Cortés and Agustín de Iturbide. So, when Altamirano eulogized Cuauhtémoc and denounced the crimes of Cortés, he simultaneously applauded the insurgents Hidalgo and Morelos and besmirched the memory of Iturbide.²⁰ And, while arch conservatives made plans to erect a statue to Iturbide, the independent-minded Carlos María de Bustamante, though conservative in sympathy, rejoined with a proposal for a public monument to Cuauhtémoc.²¹

The first memorial actually built in Cuauhtémoc's honor was unveiled on August 13, 1869, the anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan, when president Benito Juárez dedicated a sculpted bust and tall granite base, now destroyed, on the Paseo de la Viga (figures 2-3).²² The front of the base was carved in relief with the

¹⁹ This position is represented by Lucas Alamán in his *Disertaciones sobre la historia de México*, 3 v., Mexico City, J. M. Lara, 1844-1849.

²⁰ Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, "Independencia y Reforma", discourse delivered on September 16, 1859, in his *Obras completas, 1: Discursos y brindis*, ed. Catalina Sierra Casasús and Jesús Sotelo Inclán, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1986, p. 40-51.

²¹ The proposal is recorded in an editor's note to W. H. Prescott, *Historia de la Conquista de México*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1844-1846, v. 2, p. 297, note 40. Carlos María de Bustamante, *Cuadro histórico de la revolución mexicana*, Mexico City, L. M. Lara, 1823-1832, likened Moctezuma and Cuauhtémoc to Hidalgo and Morelos, and described the insurgents as heirs of Cuauhtémoc. He further extolled the Aztec king in his *Aparición de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1840. Plans for a monument to Iturbide came to naught, except for a gesso model by Manuel Vilar, which was exhibited at the Academy of San Carlos in 1850, and is now in the Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City.

²² According to Angélica Velázquez Guadarrama, "La historia patria en el Paseo de la Reforma: la propuesta de Francisco Sosa y la consolidación del Estado en el Porfiriato", in *Arte, historia e identidad en América: visiones comparativas*, ed. Gustavo Curiel, Renato González



Figure 2



Figure 3

national emblem of the eagle and serpent on a nopal cactus, with a radiant sun above and a crossed quiver and Aztec war-club below (from this point on the war-club, or *macana*, becomes Cuauhtémoc's standard attribute, adopted no doubt on the authority of Bernal Díaz, who states that Cuauhtémoc was armed with a *macana* at the time of his arrest). The sides of the base carried plaques in Spanish and Náhuatl, which read: "To the last Aztec monarch, Cuauhtémoc,

Mello, and Juana Gutiérrez Haces, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1994, v. 3, p. 334, the monument was made by Manuel Islas, but the author gives no citation to support the claim. The only image of the structure is a lithograph published in Eduardo L. Gallo's *Cuauhtémoc: ensayo biográfico*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1875; the print is signed by the lithographer Hesiquio Iriarte, who may also have done the drawing on which it is based. The monument was funded by the Ayuntamiento of Mexico City and stood across from the bridge at Jamaica. Daniel Schávelzon, "El primer monumento a Cuauhtémoc (1869)", in *La polémica del arte nacional en México, 1850-1910*, *op. cit.*, p. 109-111, states that the bust was translated in 1922 to the atrium of Mexico cathedral, but he is no doubt confusing this sculpture with the bronze bust attributed to Jesús F. Contreras (discussed in a later footnote). The monument was still standing in the mid-1880s, when it was discussed in Manuel Rivera Cambas, *México pintoresco: artístico y monumental*, Mexico City, Editorial del Valle de México, c. 1885/1887, v. 2, p. 185-186. Rivera Cambas was unkind to the monument and its disproportions: "El conjunto resulta ridículo, no por el pedestal que, aunque de ruda cantera, e hermoso, sino por el busto que es pequeño, casi mezquino".

heroic in defense of the nation, sublime in martyrdom” (*Al último monarca azteca, á Guauhtimoczin, heróico en la defensa de la Patria, sublime en el martirio*). The mention of the “defensa de la patria” must have reminded viewers of recent conflicts with Anglo-American and European invaders, and the phrase “sublime en el martirio” paid implicit homage to fallen soldiers in these wars. Delivered in Castilian and Náhuatl, these messages were addressed, at least in principle, to both creole and Indian audiences, and it seems that a desire to reach both communities and represent their common political heritage inspired the commissioners to locate the monument on Paseo de la Viga, which was a major roadway frequented by creoles, running south from city center alongside the Canal de la Viga, an important artery for transport and commerce thronged with indigenous people.

The symbols and inscriptions carved into the monument’s base linked Cuauhtémoc to the restored Republic, and indeed it was just at this time that Cuauhtémoc began to be regarded as a symbol of the national will. Among the first to proclaim the emperor in these terms was Ignacio Ramírez, whose discourse on Independence Day, 1867, lauded the monarch as “el defensor de la patria antigua”—a phrase which uncannily anticipates the inscription on the Viga monument—and paired him with Miguel Hidalgo, instigator of the independence struggle.²³ Other thinkers of the late 1860s, such as Vicente Riva Palacio and Fernando Orozco y Berra, were similarly attracted to Cuauhtémoc, who stood as a reminder of Mexican potency in the wake of foreign interventions and failed military adventures.²⁴ For these and other writers, Cuauhtémoc’s undaunted courage, intelligence and commanding personality were contrasted with Moctezuma’s weakness, superstition and instability, and it was alleged that as the former’s patriotic zeal still ran through the veins of most Mexicans, the latter’s cowardice and irresolution infected the statesmen and military leaders who had recently brought defeat and humiliation to the republic. In another conflation of dis-

²³ Ignacio Ramírez, quoted in Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, *La literatura nacional: revistas, ensayos, biografías y prólogos*, ed. José Luis Martínez, Mexico City, Porrúa, 1949, v. 3, p. 233.

²⁴ Many authors called attention to Cuauhtémoc’s martial prowess. Eduardo L. Gallo, *Cuauhtémoc*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido, 1875, p. 29-30, 49, commended his leadership and compared his strategic brilliance to Napoleon’s. When named emperor (*tlatoani*), Cuauhtémoc was also appointed commander of all military forces (*tlacatécatl*).

tant history and current events, it was asserted that Cuauhtémoc's capitulation had been redeemed by the expulsion of the French, and his murder at the hands of Cortés vindicated by the execution in June 1867 of emperor Maximilian — a descendant of Charles V, in whose name the Conquistador had acted— upon the order of president Benito Juárez — a pure-blood Zapotec Indian.²⁵

In acknowledgment of Cuauhtémoc's elevation to the rank of official symbol, the Paseo de la Viga monument was inaugurated by president Juárez himself, accompanied by his entire cabinet as well as the mayor and council of Mexico City, and the day's festivities included discourses read by leading intellectuals Felipe Sánchez Solís and Antonio Carreón, and a solemn poem recited by Guillermo Prieto which offered Cuauhtémoc as an exemplar of civic virtue.²⁶ Indeed, the Viga monument, which receives little notice from art historians, has particular salience as the first of a series of civic memorials erected by the liberal regime.²⁷

²⁵ For example, the pronouncement of Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, published in *Memorandum acerca de la solemne inauguración del monumento erigido en honor de Cuauhtémoc en la calzada de la Reforma en la ciudad de México*, Mexico City, J. F. Jens, 1887, p. 39, quoted in Josefina García Quintana, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²⁶ Juárez was himself an admirer of Cuauhtémoc and extolled his memory in a public oration of 1840; *Discurso que [...] pronunció el día de septiembre de 1840*, Oaxaca, c. 1840. He elsewhere spoke of his "progenitor, Cuautimocztin"; quoted in Enrique Florescano, *Etnia, Estado y nación: ensayo sobre las identidades colectivas en México*, Mexico City, Aguilar, 1997, p. 436.

²⁷ For a survey of public sculptural commissions and their use in fashioning a national iconography, see Verónica Zárate Toscano, "El papel de la escultura conmemorativa en el proceso de construcción nacional y su reflejo en la ciudad de México en el siglo XIX", *Historia Mexicana*, 53, 2003, p. 417-446. In 1868, Miguel Noreña provided the Ayuntamiento of Mexico City with a gesso statue of the insurgent leader Vicente Guerrero (presumably this was the same model that Noreña exhibited at the Academy in November 1865), which was cast in bronze and installed on Plaza de San Fernando, rechristened Plaza Guerrero, on January 1, 1870, only a few months after the unveiling of the Cuauhtémoc monument. Under emperor Maximilian, in September 1865, a statue of José María Morelos by Antonio Piatti was set on Plaza Guardiola, as illustrated in a lithograph by Casimiro Castro, and in February 1869 removed to the forecourt of the church of San Juan de Dios; today the sculpture languishes on Eje Vial 1 Oriente in colonia Morelos, Mexico City. These public commissions coincided with the development of the Panteón de San Fernando as a memorial site for patriots in the war of Intervention, and in fact the form of the Cuauhtémoc monument on Paseo de la Viga resembles some of these structures, particularly the memorial to general Ignacio Zaragoza (d. 1862), commissioned by the government in 1868, and containing a tall slanted pedestal and stone bust (the original marble portrait attributed to Epitacio Calvo was later replaced by the present bronze copy; the monument itself was perhaps designed by Francisco González y Cosío, who in 1869 exhibited at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes the maquette for a "Monumento en conmemoración del vencedor de los franceses"). Another comparable structure is the memorial to Ignacio Comonfort (d. 1863), commissioned in 1869 from the brothers

With the reorganization of the Academy into the National School of Fine Arts in 1867, and its placement under the direction of the Secretary of Public Instruction, painters and sculptors joined their literary brethren in forging a distinctively Mexican art based on national subjects and themes, and among the topics to which they gravitated was the drama of the Conquest.²⁸ Although Cuauhtémoc was not immediately adopted by painters and sculptors, he was represented in book illustrations, including those executed by Primitivo Miranda and Joaquín Heredia for the *El libro rojo*, a history of Mexico written in 1869-1870 by liberal intellectuals Vicente Riva Palacio, Manuel Payno and others, and those by Petronilo Monroy and Hesiquio Iriarte for Eduardo Gallo's biography of Cuauhtémoc, printed in 1875 by the liberal publisher Ignacio Cumplido.

In the image of the torture (figure 4) from *El libro rojo*, designed by Primitivo Miranda and executed by Hesiquio Iriarte, Cuauhtémoc suffers a fate which can be likened to Mexico's recent travails.²⁹ By depicting the king held prisoner by armed guards and abused by the greedy Alderete and his henchmen, while a mendicant friar stands idly to the side, the print hints at the collusion of the Church, the military and exploitive business interests which had bedeviled Mexico during its first half-century of Independence, and which had become exacerbated under the French occupation.

Cuauhtémoc is featured in two illustrations for Gallo's text.³⁰ Iriarte's image of the *Capture* (figure 5) portrays the king, with *macana* in hand, accosted on lake Texcoco while attempting to flee the fallen

Tangassi for San Fernando, and containing a portrait medallion in relief. These monuments to national heroes were preceded by other civic representations which arose soon after the gaining of independence; for example, the Fuente de la Libertad on Paseo Bucareli, featuring a personification of Mexico in the figure of an Indian woman, executed before 1828.

²⁸ Interest in the Conquest was fueled by the publication in Spanish of Francisco Javier Clavijero's *Historia antigua de Méjico*, trans. Joaquín de Mora, Jalapa, A. Ruiz, 1868, which had been originally issued in Italian in 1780-1781, and includes a sympathetic portrait of the Aztec people and their last king.

²⁹ Vicente Riva Palacio *et al.*, *El libro rojo 1520-1867*, Mexico City, Díaz de León y White, 1869-1870. Payno, an unswerving liberal, wrote the chapter on Cuauhtémoc, which portrays the monarch as an exemplary leader, both physically and morally. An image of Cuauhtémoc also fills a medallion on the book's title page.

³⁰ Eduardo L. Gallo, *Cuauhtémoc: ensayo biográfico*, Mexico City, I. Cumplido 1875. The book belongs to the series *Hombres ilustres mexicanos*, and includes an honorific poem by José Peón Contreras. Also appearing in the book is a lithograph of the *Torment of Cuauhtémoc*, designed by Petronilo Monroy and executed by Hesiquio Iriarte.

capital and organize resistance among other tribes. He is shown in the act of requesting, with a pointing gesture, that his wife and children be left unharmed, as described in Bernal Díaz's account of the event.³¹ The image's close rendering of native dress and artifacts, as well as its attention to accidents of light and shadow, reflect the period's intensified interest in the pre-Hispanic past and the *costumbrista* style then taking hold. Such attention to detail historicizes Cuauhtémoc by recalling the particular circumstances of his life.



Figure 4



Figure 5

The lithographs for *El libro rojo* and Gallo's biography were made in the period of the Restored Republic, which also saw the birth of Mexican historiography and the introduction of the *historia patria* into all secondary school curricula.³² During the presidencies of Benito Juárez (1867-1872) and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada

³¹ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1955, p. 386-387.

³² Instruction in Mexican history was made obligatory by a decree of 1857, and a law of 1861 outlined which lessons in history and civics must be taught. Further reforms were instituted in 1867, which demanded instruction in moral and social ethics through the study of the lives of great men; Josefina Vázquez de Knauth, *Nacionalismo y educación en México*, Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 1970.

(1872-1876), the government and intellectual community reclaimed historical figures who embodied Mexico's struggle for unity and independence, and brought them to the public's attention. Scholars such as Fernando Orozco y Berra, Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, Alfredo Chavero and Francisco Pimentel championed Cuauhtémoc's memory in historical and fictional writings, as did essayists and educators like Justo Sierra and Vicente Riva Palacio. Most of these men belonged to the generation which had reached maturity under the yoke of foreign occupation, and with the regaining of independence, they were eager to vent their patriotic ardor while serving the liberal cause.

Although Cuauhtémoc occasionally appeared in literary accounts and patriotic discourses of the earlier nineteenth century, he became consistently and vociferously acclaimed only after the triumph of the liberal regime over French imperialists and their conservative supporters in 1867. His awakening at this time belonged to a broader program of developing civic cults which lent legitimacy to the new government and its reform agenda.³³ Yet within this program he gained special prominence as arch-defender of the nation, and images of his defiance and sacrifice had particular resonance for a citizenry long beleaguered by foreign interventions.

This fascination with Cuauhtémoc comes to a head when president Porfirio Díaz, during his first year in office, decreed that a grand monument should be raised on Mexico City's principal avenue, the Paseo de la Reforma (figure 6).³⁴ The announcement for the project was made on August 23, 1877, and signed by Díaz's minister of Development, the soldier-historian Vicente Riva Palacio. However, Riva Palacio was mindful always to credit Díaz with the idea, and in fact the notion that Díaz himself may have initiated the scheme is not altogether implausible. Upon assuming office, the new president took up residence in Chapultepec Castle at the western end of Reforma, and almost daily as he made his way into town,

³³ Stacie G. Widdifield, *The embodiment of the national in late nineteenth-century Mexican painting*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1996.

³⁴ The boulevard was begun in 1864 under emperor Maximilian to connect Chapultepec Castle with the downtown, and renamed Paseo de la Reforma in 1872 by president Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, who planned to add plants and statues of mythological figures, along the model of Paris' Champs Elysées. In 1949, the Cuauhtémoc monument was relocated to the intersection of Avenida de los Insurgentes, and in 2004, it was cleaned and restored, and returned to its original site.



Figure 6

he would confront a large monument to Columbus, which had been erected in May 1877 by a private citizen, then resident in Madrid, with statuary by the French sculptor Charles Cordier. One may imagine that the Mixtec blood of Díaz, a staunch liberal and hero in the war of the Intervention, must have boiled at the sight of such public homage to the first European intruder, and that he wished for a rectification of this misplaced honor.³⁵ But no matter who first came up with the idea, the Cuauhtémoc Monument was conceived

³⁵ A monument to Columbus was first proposed by emperor Maximilian on the recommendation of his father-in-law Leopold I, king of the Belgians. The current structure was commissioned by the railroad baron Antonio Escandón, and formally offered to the people of Mexico in September 1875, in conjunction with the inauguration of the Veracruz-Mexico City railroad line. The sculptural program was directed by Escandón's nephew, Alejandro Arango de Escandón, who had been a loyal supporter of emperor Maximilian. Its placement on the Paseo was approved by the government of Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. The bronzes were commissioned from Charles Cordier in 1874, and delivered to Veracruz in December 1875, though they were not mounted on the base designed by Eleuterio Méndez until May 1877. The fervent Catholicism of Escandón and his nephew was no doubt the impetus behind the placement of statues of religious leaders at the monument's four corners. Another reminder of Spanish domination already stood at the eastern end of the avenue. In 1852 the equestrian statue of king Charles IV, created in 1803 by Manuel Tolsá, was installed on the open area where Reforma intersects Paseo de Bucareli.

in response to a conservative initiative of European origin—even if Riva Palacio had himself approved the Columbus Monument—and on this basis its meaning became formulated and understood. It was created as a symbol of Mexico's triumph over foreign intervention and of the national unity achieved by the liberal regime under its new head of state.

The decree of August 1877 actually called for a series of four distinct monuments to national heroes: to Cuauhtémoc and the warriors who fought against the Conquest, to Hidalgo and the *caudillos* of Independence, to Juárez and the protagonists of the Reform, and to Zaragoza and the heroes of the war of the Intervention, “la Segunda Independencia”.³⁶ Under this scheme each monument would glorify a leading figure accompanied by lesser compatriots,

³⁶ The decree calling for a monument to Cuauhtémoc, signed by Vicente Riva Palacio, begins: “El C. presidente de la República, deseando embellecer el Paseo de la Reforma con monumentos dignos de la cultura de esta ciudad, y cuya vista recuerde el heroísmo con que la nación ha luchado contra la conquista en el siglo XVI y por la independencia y por la reforma en el presente, ha dispuesto que en la glorieta situada al oeste de la que ocupa la estatua de Colón, se erija un monumento votivo a Cuauhtimotzin y a los demás caudillos que se distinguieron en la defensa de la patria; en la siguiente, otro a Hidalgo y demás héroes de la Independencia, y en la inmediata, otro a Juárez y demás caudillos de la Reforma, y de la segunda independencia. Para dar principio a la ejecución de este acuerdo, destinado a señalar a la gratitud de las generaciones futuras los nombres de los patriotas que por sus grandes hechos se han distinguido en las épocas de prueba, se convoca para la elección del proyecto del monumento destinado a Cuauhtimotzin y demás caudillos que lucharan heroicamente, contra la conquista”; *Memorias de Fomento, 1876-1877*, cap. V, p. 362-363, quoted in Justino Fernández, *Arte moderno y contemporáneo de México*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1952, p. 238. The decree does not clearly state that separate monuments were to be prepared for the heroes of the Reform and the heroes of the war of Intervention, however Daniel Schávelzon, “El concurso del monumento a Cuauhtémoc (1876-1882)”, in *La polémica del arte nacional en México, 1850-1910, op. cit.*, p. 127, quotes another passage from the same source (*Memorias*, p. 358), according to which the fourth monument is more specifically defined as dedicated to “Zaragoza y demás héroes de la segunda independencia”. These complementary monuments were never carried out as planned, but in 1910 the lofty Column of Independence was raised with statues of fathers of the country, and in the same year the Juárez Hemicycle was inaugurated on Alameda park. In 1891, statues of Aztec emperors Ahuizotl and Izcóatl, which became known as the “Indios Verdes”, were sculpted by Alejandro Casarín and installed at the eastern terminus of Paseo de la Reforma. Although commissioned by the secretary of Development in 1877, when the Cuauhtémoc monument was announced, they are not mentioned in Riva Palacio's written plans for the avenue. Much ridiculed, the two statues were removed in 1901 or 1902 to the Paseo de la Viga, and taken in 1960 to the northern end of the Avenida de los Insurgentes, where they now stand near the Indios Verdes subway station. The commission for the bronze effigy and reliefs on the Cuauhtémoc Monument was awarded to Miguel Noreña on April 10, 1882. For the history of the statues and monuments on Reforma, see Francisco Sosa, *Las estatuas de la Reforma*, Mexico City, Colección Metropolitana, 1974.

corresponding to the Columbus Monument, where the effigy of the Great Admiral was joined by statues of four religious personages. Accordingly the Cuauhtémoc Monument was surmounted with a bronze statue of the Aztec king and its base inscribed with the names of four chieftains who fought and died alongside him: Cuicláhuac, brother of Moctezuma and penultimate emperor, who died of disease; Cacama, next in line to Moctezuma, garroted by order of Cortés; Coanácoch, brother of Cacama and king of Acolhuacán, hanged by Cortés; and Tettlepanquéztal, lord of Tlacopan, hanged with Cuauhtémoc on the Honduras expedition.³⁷

As the primary element within a larger iconographical program, the Cuauhtémoc Monument embodied a conception of Mexican history which had been formulated by the liberal intelligentsia in the 1870s and 1880s, a “myth of unification”, in Charles Hale’s words, according to which Mexico, which had submitted to foreign domination at the Conquest, truly regained its freedom only after the expulsion of the French in 1867, and finally achieved national consolidation under the Díaz regime.³⁸ To reinforce these meanings, Díaz laid the first stone on Cinco de Mayo, 1878 —the anniversary of Puebla, a battle in which he himself had bravely fought. And Díaz again presided over the monument’s unveiling ceremony on August 21, 1887, the anniversary of the likely date of Cuauhtémoc’s torture. On this occasion, the president appeared as a Cuauhtémoc *redivivus*, seated on an elaborate throne recalling those of the ancient Aztec kings, while two notable scholars, Alfredo Chavero and Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, delivered laudatory addresses, and poems were recited in Spanish and Náhuatl by Francisco Sosa, Eduardo del Valle and Amalio José Cabrera, praising Cuauhtémoc and his allies for their resolute defense of “la Patria”, and comparing his final stand to the battles of Cuautla in 1812 and Chapultepec in 1847.³⁹ These invo-

³⁷ The front panel of the base bears the inscription: “A la memoria de Quauhtémoc y de los guerreros que combatieron heroicamente en defensa de su patria, MDXXI”.

³⁸ Charles A. Hale, *The transformation of liberalism in late nineteenth-century Mexico*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989.

³⁹ *Memorandum acerca de la solemne inauguración del monumento erigido en honor de Cuauhtémoc en la calzada de la Reforma en la ciudad de México*, op. cit., p. 28-29; also *Solemnidad en honor de Cuauhtémoc: breves apuntes acerca del imperio azteca. La conquista. El último monarca*, Mexico City, Murguía, 1887. In newspapers of 1887, Alfredo Chavero, Ireneo Paz, Julio Zárate, Fernando Orozco y Berra, Francisco Sosa, and José María Vigil all contributed to the national veneration of Cuauhtémoc; Matthew Donald Esposito, op. cit., p. 75.

cations linked Cuauhtémoc's exploits of 1521 into a chain of martial conflicts leading to independence and national integration.⁴⁰

In his formal address at the ceremony, Paso y Troncoso called attention to Mexico's new sense of unity. "This statue," he declared, "is a reminder of the actions of the great leader Cuauhtémoc, who would not have lost his country if other citizens had not been divided; this is an object lesson that we unite and forget our ancient disputes: in the presence of this great *caballero* [Díaz] who listens to us, we declare: We shall defend the country that is left to us by Cuauhtémoc, with all our heart we shall preserve the Union, the Independence".⁴¹ This appeal had special meaning after the long period of political unrest from which the country had only recently emerged, and by asking for disengagement from "ancient disputes", Paso y Troncoso had in mind the mollification of divisions within the Mexican polity, between liberals and conservatives, and within the liberal party itself, and alluded to steps taken by the Díaz administration to pave over these differences *en route* to national integration and progress.

Shortly before the monument's dedication, on July 28, the government observed the fifteenth anniversary of Benito Juárez's death with a similar program of festivities and speeches. This day-long celebration launched a concerted effort to glorify *el Benemérito* with the aim of drawing together the factions of the liberal party, and it was these same goals which found expression a month later at the inauguration of the Cuauhtémoc monument.⁴² It was, moreover,

⁴⁰ A letter by several members of the organizing committee, including Alfredo Chavero and Francisco Sosa, proposed that the monument should be unveiled on Independence Day, September 16, 1887, in observance of the fact that Cuauhtémoc's defense of Tenochtitlan foreshadowed Hidalgo's call to arms in 1810; *Memorandum acerca de la solemne inauguración del monumento erigido en honor de Cuauhtémoc en la calzada de la Reforma en la ciudad de México*, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29.

⁴¹ Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, quoted in Alfonso Teja Zabre, *Historia de Cuauhtémoc*, Mexico City, Botas, 1934, p. 85-87: "Los buenos mexicanos que aquí están levantaron esta estatua para ser un recuerdo de sus acciones del gran señor Cuauhtémoc no perdiera su patria si los otros ciudadanos no se dividieran; esto una enseñanza encierra, que nos unamos, y que olvidemos nuestras antiguas malquerencias: en presencia de este gran caballero (el presidente) que nos está oyendo, declaramos: 'Defenderemos la patria que nos dejó Cuauhtémoc, como él nos enseñó, con todo nuestro corazón conservaremos la unión, la independencia'".

⁴² Charles Weeks, *The Juárez myth in Mexico*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1987. The two figures were celebrated in tandem on the evening of September 4, 1887, when Teatro Arbeu presented the dramas, *Cuauhtémoc, or Los defensores de la patria*, and *Juárez y Maximiliano, o La independencia de México*.

no accident that the two celebrations of revered historical leaders coincided with the triumph of Díaz's own political authority. The years 1884-1887 witnessed the consolidation of the dictatorship, involving suppression of local bosses and curbing of the free press and dissident voices, and this process culminated in 1887, when Carlos Pacheco, minister of Development, who oversaw the final completion of the Cuauhtémoc monument, submitted to Congress a proposal to amend the 1857 Constitution so as to permit Díaz's reelection for another term in office (the provision was ratified on October 21, and on December 20, 1890, the government again changed the Constitution to allow indefinite reelection). In a sense, then, the Cuauhtémoc Monument not only expressed an ideology of national independence and integration, but stood as a testament to Porfirian rule. The armed emperor commanding his loyal subjects portended Díaz's ascent to power and the entrenchment of his regime, just as the Monarch's demonstration of virtue is reenacted by the forceful and magnanimous president.

The base of the Cuauhtémoc Monument was designed by Francisco María Jiménez and Ramón Agea, who incorporated motifs from several pre-Hispanic sites to produce one of the earliest examples of neo-Aztec architecture on a grand scale.⁴³ The lower socle assumes the form of a sloped Aztec pyramid (*teocalli*) and is capped with Mitla-inspired fretwork. It carries dedicatory inscriptions and bronze reliefs of Cuauhtémoc's capture and torture. The base's mid-section is also decorated with pre-Columbian motifs but arranged in the order of a Greco-Roman structure, with compound columns (based on archeological fragments from Tula) supporting an entablature, which is itself an odd mixture, composed of a frieze with bronze appliqués of Aztec shields, weapons and costumed figures, and by a cornice of bundled laurel leaves in European style. Inscribed on the sloped faces of this mid-section are the names of Cuauhtémoc's fellow warriors, and its niches hold bronze trophies of Aztec arms, costumes, headdresses, musical instruments and oth-

⁴³ Though the monument was not unveiled until 1887, a gesso model of the base was presented at the Annual Exposition of 1879, and the structure erected in 1883. After Jiménez's death in April 1884, the project was brought to final completion by Ramón Agea. For neo-Aztecism in architecture, see Elisa García Barragán, "Mexican neo-indigenous architecture of the nineteenth century", *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 20, 1983, p. 449-458.

er accoutrements. The trophy on the front of the structure includes a round shield with the national emblem (derived from an image in the *Codex Mendoza*, hence shown without the snake), recalling the escutcheon on the Viga monument. Lastly, the upper section comprises a bronze statue of Cuauhtémoc on a short pedestal ornamented with his hieroglyph and intertwined snakes, the latter being an attribute of Coatlicue, mother of the war god Huitzilopochtli, to whom Cuauhtémoc was devoted. The pre-Hispanic shapes and motifs which give the monument its distinctive character contrast sharply with the neoclassical form of the Columbus Monument, and constitute a specifically Mexican architectural style rooted in the ancient past, which was the stated aim of the designing architects.⁴⁴

The bronze sculptures were made by Manuel Noreña, professor of sculpture at the National School of Fine Arts, and several of his talented assistants.⁴⁵ The effigy (figure 7), by Noreña himself, shows the emperor in a feathered shirt and regal mantle (*tilmatli*), his head protected by a flamboyant helmet with eagle-feathered crest. He strides proudly and determinedly forward, in Polykleitan stance, with the resolve to defend his city to the bitter end. His left hand clutches a parchment with Cortés' final offer of peace which he rejects, and in his right hand is a spear which he brandishes in the air while raising a call to arms.⁴⁶

The head of Cuauhtémoc, whose name means descending eagle, is given aquiline features, with a beak-like nose and piercing eyes, and in other respects the body is idealized, with a tall, straight

⁴⁴ Francisco María Jiménez, *Memoria de Fomento*, 1887-1882, v. 3, cap. V, p. 332.

⁴⁵ Jiménez contracted Noreña in 1882 to produce the effigy and reliefs, which were completed in advance of the inauguration. The effigy was cast on August 13, 1883, the anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan, and Gabriel Guerra's relief of the *Torment of Cuauhtémoc*, presumably the gesso model, was exhibited at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in December 1886 (the gesso is now deposited at the Centro Nacional de Conservación de Obras Artísticas, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico City). At the time of the commission, Noreña occupied the chair of sculpture at the Escuela Nacional and was the obvious candidate to lead the sculptural effort, though it is also possible that Vicente Riva Palacio may have insisted upon his selection. Previously, Noreña had executed the statue of Vicente Guerrero upon a government commission headed by Mariano Riva Palacio, who was married to the great patriot's daughter and named his son Vicente.

⁴⁶ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, in his account of the siege, reports that after rejecting the peace offer, Cuauhtémoc launched a devastating surprise attack against the Spaniards. The image may be inspired by *El libro rojo*, which gives Cuauhtémoc's words of refusal: "No, no; todos debemos perecer defendiendo nuestro honor, nuestros dioses y nuestra ciudad" (No, no, all of us must perish defending our honor, our gods and our city); Manuel Payno, "Cuauhtémoc", in Vicente Riva Palacio *et al.*, *El libro rojo, 1530-1867*, Mexico City, A. Pola, 1905, p. 60.



Figure 7

muscular frame. These physical traits hearken back to Greco-Roman models and scarcely reflect the typical form of an aboriginal person. Indeed, one critic praised the figure for its appealing blend of classicism and realism.⁴⁷ The treatment of the body is also consistent with the testimony of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, an eye-witness to the Conquest, who wrote that Cuauhtémoc was a sensitive and handsome individual, grave in demeanor and lighter skinned than most Indians.⁴⁸ This statement was constantly quoted by nineteenth-century writers in their eagerness to commend the emperor's physical

⁴⁷ An exhaustive description of the monument and its sculptures is given in Vicente Reyes, "El monumento a Cuauhtémoc", *Anales de la Asociación de Ingenieros y Arquitectos*, 1, 1886, p. 199-214, reprinted in Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *La crítica de arte en México en el siglo XIX. Documentos III*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1964, p. 199-214.

⁴⁸ Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *op. cit.*, p. 389: "Guatemuz era de muy gentil disposición, así de cuerpo como de faiciones [*sic*], y la cara algo larga y alegre, y los ojos más parecían que cuando miraba que era con gravedad que halagüenos, y no había falta en ellos, y era de edad de veinte y un años, y la color tiraba su matiz algo más blanco que a la color de indios morenos" (Cuauhtémoc had a very refined disposition, in his figure as well as in his features, and his face was somewhat long and cheerful, and his eyes further showed that when he was looking it was with graveness rather than promise, and nothing was missed by them, and he was twenty-one years of age [crossed out in the original manuscript is "twenty-three or twenty-four years of age", which agrees with an earlier passage, p. 379], and his color tended to a shade somewhat whiter than the color of brown Indians) (assistance on this and other translations generously provided by Patricia Guardiola-Bright).

qualities along with his moral attributes, and elevate him above the ordinary Indian, who in their view had fallen into a degraded condition. Noreña, like other artists of his era, was similarly inspired to idealize the physical appearance of the Aztec king and did so with recourse to the classical canon.

Narrative reliefs adorn two sides of the base.⁴⁹ The plaque by Noreña (figure 8) shows Cuauhtémoc brought to Cortés soon after his capture, and depicts the moment when the defeated emperor lays his hand on the Conquistador's dagger and asks to be killed since he is no longer able to defend his homeland.⁵⁰ The encounter is portrayed in a solemn manner recalling ancient Roman reliefs, which the artist had studied during his residence in the Eternal City from 1870-1872, though the composition also contains fine details of period costume and armor, and vivid characterizations of specific historical figures.⁵¹

The second relief was developed by Noreña's pupil Gabriel Guerra (figure 9) and is more dynamic in conception. It shows the torture of Cuauhtémoc and his fellow prisoner (who in the 1870s, and frequently thereafter, was erroneously thought to have been Tetzlepanquetzal, Lord of Tlacopan). The victims are stretched out on stone blocks as their feet roast over open flames. Hunched over Cuauhtémoc is the treasurer Julián de Alderete, with a lust for gold gleaming in his eye, though this figure might be easily mistaken for Cortés, who in the other relief is seen in much the same costume. Again a specific

⁴⁹ According to the architect Jiménez's original plan, bronze reliefs were to show scenes from the lives of the four co-patriots, but this scheme yielded to the two depictions of events from Cuauhtémoc's life.

⁵⁰ The scene is described by both Bernal Díaz and Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl. The latter, in *Obras históricas*, ed. Alfredo Chavero, Mexico City, Editora Nacional, 1965, v. 1, p. 378, gives the more moving version of Cuauhtémoc's words: "García de Holguín lo llevó a Cortés, el cual lo recibió con mucha cortesía, al fin como á rey, y él echó mano al puñal de Cortés, y le dijo: '¡Ah, capitán! ya yo he hecho todo mi poder para defender mi reino, y librarlo de vuestra manos; y pues no ha sido mi fortuna favorable, quitadme la vida, que será muy justo, y con esto acabaréis el reino mexicano, pues á mi ciudad y vasallos tenéis destruidos y muertos'" (García de Holguín brought him to Cortés, who received him with much courtesy, effectively as a king, and he took with his hand the dagger of Cortés and said to him: "Oh, captain! I have already done everything in my power to defend my realm, and to liberate it from your hands; and since fortune has not been favorable to me, take my life, which will be very just, and with this you will end the Mexican empire, for you have destroyed my city and killed my vassals").

⁵¹ Vicente Reyes, "El monumento a Cuauhtémoc", *op. cit.*, p. 199-214, reprinted in Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *La crítica de arte en México en el siglo XIX. Documentos III, op. cit.*, p. 199-214, states that the composition is based on an illustration in the *Codex Durán*.



Figure 8



Figure 9

moment is shown, when the king turns to his faltering co-martyr and says reproachfully, “Do you believe that I am on bed of roses?”⁵² The scene is highly theatrical, and in addition to the accurately rendered costumes and armaments, it conveys psychological tension in the exchange of glances between characters. Directly or indirectly it may

⁵² This and most other representations of the torture are based on the account of Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias*, Barcelona, Obras Maestras, 1965, v. 2, p. 275 (originally published 1552): “Quando lo quemaban miraba mucho a él, para que, habiendo compasión de él, le diese licencia de manifestar lo que sabía o lo dijese él. Guatimozin le miró con ira y le trató vilisimamente como muelle y de poco, diciendo ¿si estaba él en algún deleite o baño?” (“While they burned him, he stared much at Cuauhtémoc, in order that he would have compassion for him and grant him license to reveal what he knew or would say it himself. Cuauhtémoc looked at him with anger and reviled him as weak, saying: ‘Am I in some delight or bath?’”). At a later time, Cuauhtémoc’s words were reformulated into the more familiar phrase, “¿Crees que yo estoy en un lecho de rosas?” (Do you believe that I am on a bed of roses?). It is almost certain that Cuauhtémoc’s co-martyr was not Tetzlepanquétzal. López de Gómara reports that the co-martyr died in the torment, whereas, according to several early sources, Tetzlepanquétzal was killed three and a half years later on the expedition to Honduras. The confusion arises from a statement by Bernal Díaz del Castillo that Cuauhtémoc was tortured along with the lord of Tacuba, an unnamed individual whom the historian Fernando Orozco y Berra misidentified as Tetzlepanquétzal, lord of Tlacopan, thus perpetuating much subsequent error. Of course, there is no way to know whether all of López de Gómara’s assertions are true to fact. Díaz, who is highly critical of Gómara and an eye-witness to the events, makes no mention of Cuauhtémoc’s famous utterance, and adds that under pressure both the emperor and his compatriot were forced to talk.

have been influenced by the staging of this scene in the 1871 production of *Guatimotzín*, an operatic episode by Aniceto Ortega. This musical interpretation was performed only once, on September 13, and was commended for the historically accurate costumes and stage sets, which were contrived with advice from prominent historians and reference to illustrations in the *Codex mendocino*.⁵³

The descriptive quality of the reliefs and their dramatic effects conform to artistic standards of the day, and have affinities in the prose style of the many liberals who chose to express their sense of the past through historical fiction.⁵⁴ Indeed, even the neoclassical forms and compositional schemes of the sculptures have parallels in literary conventions, as nineteenth-century accounts routinely compared Cuauhtémoc and his companions with Greek and Roman heroes, and historical narratives of the Conquest were sometimes written in classical poetical form.⁵⁵

The 1877 scheme for a series of four grand monuments along Reforma was never realized according to plan. Instead, soon after the dedication of the Cuauhtémoc Monument, the Díaz government accepted the proposal of the poet and journalist Francisco Sosa to commission numerous statues of Mexican heroes in the Independence and Reform movements, and place these on separate pedestals along either side of the avenue.⁵⁶ In hope of fostering the spirit of unity,

⁵³ Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, *Historia de la música en México, 3: La música en el periodo independiente*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública/Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1964, p. 221-232. Though the opera featured the *Mexican Nightingale* Ángela Peralta and gifted tenor Enrique Tamberlick, who played Cuauhtémoc, it met with limited critical success, and is today remembered for its claim of having been the first Mexican opera dealing with a national theme.

⁵⁴ Ignacio Ramírez, José María Vigil and José María Lafragua wrote fiction in the classical mode, Prieto penned historical romances, Altamirano composed romantic stories, Payno experimented with *costumbrista* novels, and Riva Palacio published in several genres. The greatest exponent of historical fiction was Juan A. Mateos, who idealized liberal figures such as Hidalgo and Morelos, Juárez and Zaragoza, and exalted their love of country.

⁵⁵ Francisco Galindo Torres' *La Quauhtemoída*. Guadalajara, A. Román e hijos, 1912 (partly published in 1892 in *El Mercurio Occidental*), is an epic poem filled with anecdotal detail but self-consciously based on European poetical models. In the introduction, the author states that his style is inspired by Tasso, Ariosto, Ercilla, and Lope de Vega. The comparison of Aztecs with Greek and Roman nobles extends back to Francisco Javier Clavijero's *Storia antica del Messico*, Cesena, G. Biasini, 1780-1781 (published under the name Francesco Saverio Clavigero). Miguel Noreña was an exponent of neoclassical sculpture. He was introduced to the style by his instructor at the Academy of Fine Arts, Manuel Vilar, who was one of the first Mexican artists to represent indigenous subjects, yet all the while scrupulously observing the classical canon.

⁵⁶ Sosa's proposal was put forward in an article in *El Partido Liberal*, September 2, 1887, and was officially adopted on October 19. For the project, see Sosa's *Las estatuas de la Reforma*, 3 v.,

each state within the Federal Republic was asked to contribute two bronze figures. The first pair was inaugurated on February 5, 1889, and by 1899, thirty-four statues had assumed their posts, creating a visual discourse on recent history and memorial to the protagonists of the liberal cause. Within this program, Cuauhtémoc, perched high upon his architectural base, appeared as precursor of the modern patriots who had labored for freedom and unity.

This image of solidarity was compromised, however, by the refusal of ten of the Republic's then twenty-seven states to fulfill their obligation of providing statues. By doing so they rejected the idea of centralized authority and the notion that the regional governments were mere satellites to the capital, as the statues of local heroes orbited around the Cuauhtémoc Monument. Despite constant efforts since 1867 to promulgate a national iconography, many Mexicans refused to accept the symbolic codes that emanated from the metropolis, or, as this example shows, to participate in the centrally guided application and interpretation of political symbols. At a much later time, in the mid-twentieth century, the unwillingness to bow to the ascendancy of the capital again affected the reception of the Cuauhtémoc image, though in a surprising reversal, as shall be seen in the companion essay to this piece.

Beginning with its ceremonial inauguration, the Cuauhtémoc Monument became a focal point for public festivities, speeches, pronouncements and assemblies (figure 10), most of which were sponsored by the federal and city governments.⁵⁷ Indeed, it seems that the broad platform encircling the monument was built with the express purpose of accommodating public gatherings.⁵⁸ August 21, the date of the monument's dedication, became Cuauhtémoc's civic feast day, when each year activities were planned in his honor.

Mexico City, Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1974, and Angélica Velázquez Guadarrama, "La historia patria en el Paseo de la Reforma: la propuesta de Francisco Sosa y la consolidación del Estado en el Porfiriato", in *Arte, historia e identidad en América: visiones comparativas*, ed. Gustavo Curiel, Renato González Mello, and Juana Gutiérrez Haces, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1994, v. 3, p. 333-344.

⁵⁷ Barbara Tenenbaum, "Streetwise history: the Paseo de la Reforma and the Porfirian State, 1876-1910", in *Rituals of rule, rituals of resistance: public celebrations and popular culture in Mexico*, ed. William H. Beezley, Cheryl E. Martin, and William E. French, Wilmington, Scholarly Resources, 1994, p. 127-150.

⁵⁸ The octagonal platform is ornamented with four pairs of recumbent bronze lions (often mistaken for leopards) by the artist Epitacio Calvo. Each wears a feathered headdress and has a youthful appearance like the effigy of Cuauhtémoc at the top of the structure.



Figure 10

Oratorical addresses given on these occasions found their way into print and added to the expanding literature on the Aztec king.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the monument itself became widely known through prints and photographs, postcards and other means of reproduction, and the effigy inspired numerous imitations, as it still does today.⁶⁰ The government and citizenry latched onto the monument as a symbol of the nation, in much the same way that the Statue of Liberty was promoted in the United States, and, emblemizing Mexico, copies of the effigy or the entire monument were sent to international expositions at Paris (1889), Chicago (1893) and Rio de Janeiro (1922). As a physical connector to the past, the monument constituted what Pierre Nora has termed a *lieu de mémoire*—a

⁵⁹ The popular chaplain José Pilar Sandoval regularly provided public discourses in Náhuatl at the anniversary celebrations. Among the stirring orations that found their way into print was that of José Cuellar, spoken in Spanish and Náhuatl in 1890, and published the same year. Also in 1890, Manuel Puga y Acal pronounced and later published a laudatory poem to Cuauhtémoc, which he dedicated to general Díaz; see Claude Dumas, *Justo Sierra y el México de su tiempo, 1848-1912*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986, v. 1, p. 263.

⁶⁰ Imitations are found, for example, atop the town hall of Cuetzalan, Puebla, in a traffic circle in the town of Cuauhtémoc, Yucatán, and on the cornice of a municipal building in Zacatecas. A fine bronze reduction is owned by the Fred R. Kline Gallery. This piece, unsigned and without foundry stamp, has a provenance to Jesús F. Contreras, who worked as an assistant on the Cuauhtémoc monument, and is possibly related to the reduction of the Cuauhtémoc monument which was sent to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

public sanctuary and place of memory, which defines a people's historical identity and allows this identity to be reenacted in civic performance. But it was a connector which had been conceived by official decree, in a 'top down' process of ideological formation, and it trumpeted the nationalist program of an autocratic regime.⁶¹

Cauhtémoc was twice represented at the Mexican pavilion for the Paris World's Fair of 1889. A scale model of the monument was installed at the foot of the grand internal staircase, and a large bronze relief of the emperor was posted on the exterior façade. These images assumed meaning within the context of the spectacular structure, which was designed in neo-Aztec style by the architect Antonio M. Anza and archeologist Antonio Peñafiel to express "la genuina civilización nacional" (figure 11).⁶² Unlike Jiménez's base for the Cauhtémoc Monument, which borrowed motifs from an assortment of pre-Hispanic cultures, Anza and Peñafiel drew exclusively from sources in Central Mexico —Tenochtitlan, Tula, Teotihuacán and Xochicalco— with the aim of localizing the country's historical roots in the Altiplano Mexicano, and according to their own testimony, to reflect the unity of the modern nation under a centralized authority.

The pavilion's design signaled the triumph of Mexican archeology, which the Díaz administration used for propagandistic purposes and abundantly supported with new museum facilities and institutions of research. Monumental achievements of scholarship, such as Fernando Orozco y Berra's *Historia antigua de México* (1880-1881) and Alfredo Chavero's *Historia antigua y de la conquista* (1884), increased the understanding of ancient cultures.⁶³ But still more consequential was the elaboration of the concept of Mexican

⁶¹ Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, 3 v., Paris, Gallimard, 1997. Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire* is related to the Paseo de la Reforma by Verónica Zárate Toscano, "El lenguaje de la memoria a través de los monumentos históricos en la ciudad de México (siglo XIX)", *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, 1, 2001 (<http://nuevomundo.revues.org/document214.html>).

⁶² Clementina Díaz de Ovando, "México en la Exposición Universal de 1889", *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 61, 1990, p. 109-171; Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996.

⁶³ Soon after coming to power, Díaz supported the expansion and reorganization of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Etnología e Historia; in 1880 the Academia Nacional de Historia Mexicana was formed to collect objects and support research; in 1882 Vicente Riva Palacio founded the Ateneo Mexicano de Ciencias y Artes, a think tank for history, science and archaeology; and 1885 saw the creation of the General Office of Archeological Monuments (Inspección General de Monumentos Arqueológicos de la República) to oversee the excavation and preservation of ancient ruins. In the present context, Orozco y Berra's influential book is notable for the praise it gives to Aztec art and its exaltation of Cauhtémoc.



Figure 11

uniqueness abetted by these activities. This widespread and influential idea was based on the premise that the country's pre-Hispanic inheritance still permeated its culture and ways of life, and that due to this glorious tradition Mexico is fundamentally distinguished from the West and from the other, less richly endowed nations of Latin America. The concept of uniqueness informed Anza and Peñafiel's design for the Mexican pavilion, which advertised the country's historical origins and clearly set Mexico apart from the many nations represented at the fair by pavilions in neoclassical styles, and it was asserted by the two images of Cuauhtémoc, defender of his people's cultural as well as political independence.⁶⁴

The Cuauhtémoc symbol achieved a new depth of meaning in conjunction with the idea of Mexican uniqueness. For many authors, Mexico's distinctiveness and independence from the West was emblemized in Cuauhtémoc's opposition to Cortés, and the two figures were seen as personifications of their respective cultures. As the Conquistador represented an expanding, acquisitive, universal Greco-Latin civilization, the emperor stood for a pure and autonomous Mexican culture, with roots set deeply in ancient his-

⁶⁴ The pavilion also contained paintings of indigenous subjects, including José Obregón's *Discovery of pulque* and Rodrigo Gutiérrez' *Senate of Tlaxcala*. An article by León Cahun in *El Nacional*, August 6, 1889, titled, "Fuera del país: el pabellón mexicano en la Exposición de París", opens with reflections on the structure and its contents, which lead to thoughts about Mexico's racial identity and the allegiance of Mexicans toward their ancient heroes, such as Cuauhtémoc and Cuitláhuac; discussed in Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *op. cit.*, p. 126-130.

tory, in the land and geography, and in a singular racial and ethnic composition. In this way, the Cuauhtémoc symbol became associated with a cluster of beliefs and ideals, and came to represent not only the persistence of ancient traditions but Mexico itself: its land, people, its social institutions and culture. As the image of Benito Juárez was widely used to stand for the Republic, the organ which had unified the country and secured its independence, Cuauhtémoc became associated with the more deeply venerated, transhistorical concept of *la patria mexicana*, and in this particular function the symbol was, and continues to be, more polyvalent than the image of Juárez and more susceptible to different uses and interpretations. One sees this connection between Cuauhtémoc and the *patria* in the proposal of 1892 to build a garden around the Reforma monument and fill it with cactus, bisnaga, maguey and other typical flora of the country.⁶⁵ And the importance of the symbol was recognized at Paris, where a model of the Cuauhtémoc Monument greeted visitors as soon as they stepped foot in the Mexican pavilion.

As previously mentioned, the figure of Cuauhtémoc also graced this building's façade, which was embellished with numerous bronze fixtures inspired by pre-Hispanic art and commissioned from Jesús F. Contreras, an academically trained sculptor then resident in Paris.⁶⁶ Of these sculptural adornments, the largest and most visually striking were six bronze reliefs arranged across the front of the structure: the three placed to the left of the central portico represented the founders of the Triple Alliance, which in 1428 united the cities of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan to form the basis of Aztec power, and the three to the right portrayed the *ilustres vencidos* who expired in the defense of Tenochtitlan —Cacama, Cuitláhuac and Cuauhtémoc, the last described by Peñafiel as “the greatest figure of national heroism”.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *El Monitor Republicano*, 42:125, May 25, 1892, p. 3, cited in Ignacio Ulloa del Río, *El Paseo de la Reforma: crónica de una época*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1997, p. 51. A similar garden with native plants had been constructed around the Mexican Pavilion at the 1889 Paris World's Fair.

⁶⁶ Contreras had been living in Paris since January 1888 on a pension from the Díaz government, and worked unofficially with the architects before receiving his commission, see Humberto Valdívila Rubalcava, *Jesús F. Contreras, 1866-1902*, Aguascalientes, Dirección de Comunicación Social y Relaciones Públicas, 1984-1986, and Patricia Pérez Walters, *Jesús F. Contreras, 1866-1902: escultor finisecular*, Mexico City, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Museo Nacional de Arte, 1990.

⁶⁷ The pavilion is described in a pamphlet by Antonio Peñafiel, *Explicación del edificio mexicano en la Exposición Internacional de París*, Mexico City, 1889; the same author's “Proyectos

Contreras worked closely with the archeologist Peñafiel to depict native costumes and accoutrements in exacting detail, but chose to set the figures in poses derived from Greco-Roman statuary. Cuauhtémoc (figure 12) is dressed in the same costume and evinces the same defiant attitude—with the rejected offer of peace crumpled in his left hand—as shown in the effigy on the Cuauhtémoc Monument, unveiled in Mexico City only two years before, when Contreras apprenticed in Noreña's workshop. Yet the figure's forward movement and extended gesture recall the *Apollo Belvedere*, as Cacamá's athletic movement reflects Myron's *Diskobolos* (which Contreras had studied in a graphite drawing of 1883), and Cuitláhuac's relaxed stance harkens back to Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*. Contreras doubtless wished to ennoble his subjects with these dignified poses and may have desired to associate them with the classical past and its republican ideals, much as Noreña had commended Cuauhtémoc by setting his statue in Polykleitan stance. But in pursuing these aims, Contreras also Westernized his subjects, incorporating them into a universalizing and colonizing language which each of the historical personages had in actuality resisted to the death.⁶⁸

para el edificio mexicano en la exposición de París de 1889", *Monumentos del arte mexicano antiguo*, 2, 1890, p. 289-292; and José Francisco Godoy, *México en la Exposición de París 1888-1890*, Mexico City, Alonso E. López y José F. Godoy, 1890. The Cuauhtémoc relief is signed at lower right, and the hieroglyph of the descending eagle is chiseled into the bronze at upper right. The reliefs for the pavilion were cast by Thiébaud Frères de Paris. They were later installed in the courtyard of the Museo Nacional de Artillería, and four reliefs, including the one with Cuauhtémoc, were incorporated in 1940 into Luis Lelo de Larrea's Monument to the Race, Mexico City. With the restoration of this monument in 2001, the four bronzes were replaced with copies and moved to the Museo del Ejército; the remaining two reliefs of Aztec leaders as well as reliefs of ancient deities had already been taken in 1986 to the Casa de la Cultura in Aguascalientes. Patricia Pérez Walters ascribes to Contreras a bust of Cuauhtémoc, which is probably identical with the piece shown at the XXII Annual Exposition of the National School of Fine Arts, 1891-1892. A later copy of this work has been set on a plinth in the northwest corner of the Zócalo of Mexico City, and a second copy placed in the Museo Nacional de Historia, Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City. The design of the bust has been adopted for at least two Mexican banknotes, one of 1977, and another of 1980, and has served as a source for many other representations. To the same Exposition of 1891-1892, Contreras submitted a high relief in bronze, titled *Cuauhtémoc in the presence of Cortés*, of which the appearance and current whereabouts are unknown. It is described, and harshly criticized, in Manuel G. Revilla, "Exposición XXII de la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes", *El Nacional*, January 13, 1892, reprinted in *La crítica de arte en México en el siglo XIX. Documentos III (1879-1913)*, op. cit., p. 289-290.

⁶⁸ The irony contained in the treatment of the Cuauhtémoc figure extends to the Mexican pavilion as a whole. The building's neo-Aztecism proclaimed uniqueness, yet many of the exhibits were intended to show that the country had joined the community of nations and modern industrial system, and was fertile ground for foreign investment; Fausto Ramírez, "Dioses, héroes y reyes mexicanos en París, 1889", in *Historia, leyendas y mitos de México: su*



Figure 12

Between 1880 and 1900, representations of Cuauhtémoc appeared with some frequency at annual expositions of the National School of Fine Arts, and among the works registered in the catalogues for these shows are Francisco María Jiménez's gesso model for the Cuauhtémoc Monument (1879-1880) and an alternative plan submitted by Antonio Torres Torija for the same project (1879-1880), Luis Coto's painting *Capture of Cuauhtémoc* (1881-1882), Gabriel Guerra's bronze relief *Torment of Cuauhtémoc* (1886-1887), Jesús Contreras' bronze relief *Cuauhtémoc in the Presence of Cortés* and bust of the emperor (1891-1892), Leandro Izaguirre's painting *Torment of Cuauhtémoc* (1892-1893), a cartoon for Joaquín Ramírez's painting *Surrender of Cuauhtémoc to Cortes* (1892-1893), and Francisco de P. Mendoza's painting *Cuauhtémoc, or the Last Aztec emperor* (1898-1899).⁶⁹

expresión en el arte. XI Coloquio Internacional, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1988, p. 201-253.

⁶⁹ Manuel Romero de Terreros (ed.), *Catálogos de las exposiciones de la Antigua Academia de San Carlos de México (1850-1898)*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,

This proliferation of Cuauhtémoc imagery was of course instigated by the patriotic feelings and ideals attached to the ancient monarch. Another impetus, however, seems to have come from the enthusiasm of Freemasons for Aztec culture in general and Cuauhtémoc in particular. Masons created a sectarian iconography around Aztec images and symbols, and toward the end of the century began naming their sons after Cuauhtémoc and incorporated him into their calendar of saints days.⁷⁰ Many leaders of the Reform movement were active in the Order, including Juárez, Ramírez and Altamirano; and Díaz was a devoted mason throughout his adult life (he was named Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Federal District of Mexico in 1883, and of the Grand Symbolic Diet of the Mexican States in 1890, which briefly united all the country's lodges). These politicians and intellectuals helped recall Cuauhtémoc from oblivion by commissioning works of art and writing panegyrics to him, and the attraction of Freemasons to quasi-religious beliefs and practices may also have influenced some of the ritualistic celebrations of the emperor, including the elaborate unveiling ceremony for the Reforma monument.⁷¹

Of the many paintings of Cuauhtémoc from the final decades of the nineteenth century, Leandro Izaguirre's *Torment of Cuauhtémoc* (figure 13) became the most famous and often reproduced. This impressive work in the grand manner premiered at the National School of Fine Arts in 1892, and a year later was sent to the Chicago Exposition (where it was joined by a bronze reduction of the Reforma monument, commissioned by the commercial brewery Cervecería Cuauhtémoc). Critics applauded the painting's consum-

1963. Also shown at the expositions were a painted rendition of the Cuauhtémoc monument by A. L. Herrera (1891-1892), an engraving of the warrior *Cuauhtémoc* made after a drawing by Luis S. Campa (1891-1892), and students' copies of Izaguirre's *Torment* and Ramírez's *Surrender* (1898-1899).

⁷⁰ For this enthusiasm, see José María Mateos, *Historia de la masonería en México desde 1806 hasta 1884*, Mexico City, "La Tolerancia", 1884. In September 1890, the lodge Aztecas número 2 celebrated an evening party in memory of the emperor at which commissioners of other lodges assisted; Josefina García Quintana, *op. cit.*, p. 27, 29-30. Among the masons who named their sons Cuauhtémoc was president Lázaro Cárdenas; this child became of course a prominent political figure in his own right.

⁷¹ Freemasonry's influence on civic rituals is discussed in Angélica Velázquez Guadarrama, "La historia patria en el Paseo de la Reforma: la propuesta de Francisco Sosa y la consolidación del Estado en el Porfiriato", *op. cit.*, v. 3, p. 340.



Figure 13

mate display of realist technique and archeological rigor.⁷² While showing certain affinities with Noreña's relief, the scene is cast in an abandoned Aztec temple rather than outdoors, which had been the pictorial convention, and within this darkened chamber are seen Cuauhtémoc and his kinsman, bound hand and foot to chipped and discarded stone blocks which are carved with images of their defeated gods.⁷³ Spanish soldiers guard the prisoners, and one kneels beside a pot of oil which has been used to drench the victims' feet. An anxious Alderete stands opposite Cuauhtémoc, and in the left

⁷² This opinion was later endorsed by Justino Fernández, *Arte moderno y contemporáneo de México*. Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1952, p. 197, who further identified Izaguirre's *Torment* as the "maximum expression" of late nineteenth-century indigenism. Though exhibited in December 1892, the painting is inscribed with the date 1893.

⁷³ According to tradition, Cuauhtémoc was imprisoned on the very site where now stands the iglesia de la Concepción Tequipeuhcan, Coyoacán, known as La Conchita. Prior to 1829, a column was set up in the church with the inscription: "Pasagero. / Aqui espiró la libertad / mexicana / por los invasores castellanos, / que aprisionaron en este lugar al emperador / Quauhtémoc / en doce de agosto de 1521; / ódio eterno a la memoria execrable de aquellos / bandoleros!" (Passer-by. Here expired the Mexican liberty by the Castilian invaders, who imprisoned in this place the emperor Quauhtémoc, on the twelfth of August 1521; eternal odium to the execrable memory of those bandits!); reported in a note by Carlos María Bustamante, to his edition of Fernando Alva de Ixtlilxóchitl, *Horribles crueldades de los conquistadores de México...*, Mexico City, Alejandro Valdés, 1829, p. 50-53. It is hard to explain why the inscription gives the date of Cuauhtémoc's imprisonment as August 12, when early sources clearly state that it occurred on the thirteenth.

background, among observing soldiers, is a hatted figure who may be Cristóbal de Ojeda, the physician who would later tend to Cuauhtémoc's wounds. The verisimilitude is heightened by the deep shadows and dappled light (reflecting the artist's admiration for the Baroque painter Zurbarán), and by the concentration of rich primary hues in the center of the image.

Reproductive prints of the painting made the subject of the torture broadly familiar to the Mexican public, and the hero's tribulations were further recounted in many literary portrayals, as for example in Guillermo Prieto's *Lecciones de historia patria*, which was for years an almost obligatory text for teaching and learning about Mexican history. According to Prieto and other writers, Cuauhtémoc's stoicism at this moment exemplified Mexico's unconquerable spirit, while the administration of the torture exposed the base cruelty of the Spaniards and other European aggressors.⁷⁴ Izaguirre's *Torment* similarly presents itself as a patriotic image, and casts the emperor as a personification of Mexico, a fact reinforced by the national colors of red, white and green of his feathered headdress and cloth garment shown heaped in the lower left corner. With superhuman resolve the emperor bears the awful ordeal in the interest of preserving his people's riches from the thievery of the conquistadors, just as nineteenth-century Mexico had endured extreme hardship to protect its resources from foreign expropriation.

A strong religious sentiment runs through the painting, and the image of the suffering king before his persecutors recalls the iconography of Christian saints —one is reminded specifically of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. In fact, religious undercurrents flow through many artistic representations of Cuauhtémoc, who is often portrayed as a Christ-like figure, and one observes a striking parallel between the scenes from Cuauhtémoc's life that are most often selected as artistic subjects and episodes from the Passion of Christ; in both cases there is an arrest (on lake Texcoco/in the Garden of Gethsemane), presentation (to Cortés/to Pontius Pilate), torment (burning of feet/scourging with whips), and climactic death (hanging from a ceibal tree/crucifixion on the cross). Of course, the theme of Christian sacrifice pervades the Mexican artistic tradition,

⁷⁴ Guillermo Prieto, *Lecciones de historia patria* (1886), in *Obras completas*, Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1999, v. 28, p. 198-199.

and academic artists like Izaguirre, whose early training stressed religious subjects, were inclined to render historical figures as secular saints.⁷⁵ One may also suppose that the pronounced religious element in representations of Cuauhtémoc's torture contributed to making this the most popular scene from the emperor's life.

Izaguirre's painting shows a striking disparity between Cuauhtémoc's steadfastness and the co-martyr's weakness and vacillation, and it is upon this very relationship that the narrative turns, with the plaintive expression of the co-martyr provoking Cuauhtémoc's verbal rebuke and censorious stare (according to the chronicler Gómara, "Cuauhtémoc looked at him with anger and reviled him as little or nothing"). In a wider sense, this contrast between the two figures reflects a common nineteenth-century view about indigenous people, in which ordinary natives were seen as uninspired, lazy, lacking resolve and unpatriotic, and in which only exceptional members of the race could rise above this feeble condition to perform as forceful leaders. Artistic portrayals of Cuauhtémoc frequently express this dichotomy through the contrasting representations of the Aztec king, who is shown in full possession of his senses and endowed with *gravitas*, if not actually arranged in a pose adapted from Greco-Roman statuary, and Indian characters of lower status, particularly the co-martyr, who are usually shown in less decorous attitudes and poses.

The fallen condition of aboriginal people is a recurrent theme in late nineteenth-century discourse, and both liberals and conservatives made note of the apparent discrepancy between the dignified nature of the ancient Americans and the reduced state of their modern descendants, who seemed unable to contribute positively to Mexico's civic culture.⁷⁶ On occasion, Cuauhtémoc's legendary virtue was contrasted with the retrograde condition of modern natives, as for example in a discourse pronounced on August 21, 1893, by the liberal critic Luis de la Brena, who laid responsibility for the

⁷⁵ Izaguirre studied under Félix Parra and Santiago Rebull. Both were specialists in the religious genre, although each also did historical paintings of the Conquest. Rebull's *Capture of Cuauhtémoc* of 1875, commissioned for Felipe Sánchez Solís' gallery of historical subjects, is the earliest major painting devoted to the Aztec emperor.

⁷⁶ For example, Alonso Caso, "¿El indio mexicano es mexicano?" (1896), in *El ensayo mexicano moderno*, ed. José Luis Martínez, Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958, p. 389-399, who suggests that the native people need a cultural transformation to overcome their isolation.

degradation of native people on the shoulders of the conquistadors and Spanish rulers, and urged a renewed public effort to redeem the indigenous race.⁷⁷

Other thinkers drew quite different conclusions from these same observations, and rather than yearning for a lost golden age, perceived a clear and irreversible division between Mexico's Indian past and Hispanic present. This view was articulated by Francisco G. Cosmes, one of the influential technocrats (*Científicos*) associated with the Díaz administration, who, in an inflammatory article of September 1894, argued that Mexican society is exclusively the product of Spanish civilization and owes nothing to the Aztecs.⁷⁸ He claimed that the country's history has been distorted by those who wish to trace its foundation to pre-Hispanic times, and chided the public's respect for Cuauhtémoc, writing that "the burnt feet in the torment of the last Aztec king more heavily influence our historical appreciation of the Conquest than the colossal figure of Cortés".⁷⁹ Cosmes' article ignited a firestorm in the popular press, with editorials taking sides in favor of the Aztecs or the Spanish, Cuauhtémoc or Cortés.⁸⁰ While hispanophiles lent

⁷⁷ Luis de la Brena, "Discurso pronunciado [...] en honor de Cuauhtémoc", *El Álbum de la Juventud* (1893), reprinted in Josefina García Quintana, *op. cit.*, p. 106-107. Similar sentiments were expressed by Guillermo Prieto, "Guatimoc", *El Álbum de la Juventud*, 1894, reprinted in Josefina García Quintana, *op. cit.*, p. 118-119, evoking "la inteligencia indígena encierra tesoros inexplorados y virtudes desconocidas".

⁷⁸ Francisco G. Cosmes, under the pseudonym *Observador*, "¿A quién debemos tener patria?", *El Partido Liberal*, September 15, 1894.

⁷⁹ The articles were compiled two years later in Francisco G. Cosmes, *La dominación española y la patria mexicana*, Mexico City, El Partido Liberal, 1896. On p. 5 of this book, from an article appearing in *La Libertad*, September 15, 1894, Cosmes states: "A Guatimocin se le erigen estatuas; y nadie piensa en levantar un monumento a la civilización mexicana, implantada por el inmortal conquistador [...]. Los pies quemados en el tormento al último rey azteca influyen más poderosamente en nuestras apreciaciones históricas de la Conquista que esa figura colosal de Cortés".

⁸⁰ For the controversy over the Cosmes publications, see Rebecca Earle, "Padres de la Patria and the ancestral past: commemorations of Independence in nineteenth-century Spanish America", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34, 2002, p. 775-805; and Claude Dumas, *Justo Sierra y el México de su tiempo, 1848-1912*, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986, v. 1, p. 332-343. Among the contributors to the debate was the Catalan intellectual and republican leader Francisco Pi y Margall, who in 1899 penned the dialogue "Guatimozin y Hernán Cortés", which he said was specifically inspired by the erection of the Cuauhtémoc monument on Reforma, and which applauded the Aztec warrior while denigrating the Spanish captain; reprinted and discussed in Salvador Bernabéu Albert, "La Conquista después del desastre: Guatimozin y Hernán Cortés, Diálogo (1899), de Francisco Pi y Margall", *Estudios de Historia Novohispana*, 27, 2000, p. 107-144.

support to Cosmes' ideas, liberals like Ezequiel Chávez and Justo Sierra refuted his claims, and defended Mexico's ancient inheritance and the possibility of redeeming the indigenous population by pointing to Cuauhtémoc's virtue.

Cosmes reopened a debate which had already surfaced fifty years before, when Alamán and Altamirano bumped heads over the relative merits of the two protagonists of the Conquest. But the issue was now being argued by parties which both draped themselves in the flag of liberalism, and which reframed the question according to two rival conceptions of Mexican history and nationhood. Cosmes' arguments were based on the Positivist view of historical progress, according to which society passes through distinct phases of differentiation, such that the Indian past was entirely occluded by the development of Hispanic society and should therefore be relegated to the dustbin of history. Those opposing him believed in the continuity of Mexican civilization from its pre-Hispanic origins to the present, and wished to celebrate the uniqueness which emanates from this unbroken tradition.⁸¹

Cuauhtémoc's rising popularity in the *fin-de-siècle* period reflects a concerted effort of liberals to sustain the concept of Mexico's ancient historical origins against the challenges of pan-Hispanists, and until about 1905, it was this liberal position which tended to prevail. Pride in Mexico's deep history and distinctive character was retained as a central tenet of official ideology and helped stimulate an upswell of patriotic fervor.⁸² As part of this current, literary

⁸¹ These competing visions were outlined by José María Vigil, with characteristic liberal bias, *El Correo Postal*, June 22, 1878, quoted in Josefina Vázquez de Knauth, *op. cit.*, p. 63: "la escuela española, admirador entusiasta de la nación que conquistó y dominó en nuestra país; la otra, la mexicana, que examina los hechos bajo una luz muy distinta, haciendo recaer la condenación y el anatema sobre los hombres que por medio del hierro y del fuego obligaron al Nuevo Mundo a entrar en el regazo de la civilización cristiana", Cosmes' questioning of the liberal view of Mexico's origins anticipated the wider debate over the narrative program of official history which was ignited in 1904 by Francisco Bulnes, for which, see Rogelio Jiménez Marce, *La pasión por la polémica: el debate sobre la historia en la época de Francisco Bulnes*, Mexico City, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2003. Both challenges can be associated with the rising tide of pan-Hispanism, which engulfed Latin America in the 1890s.

⁸² The complete exposition of this view of history is *México a través de los siglos*, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, Barcelona, Espasa-Calpe, 1884-1889. This monumental corpus, commissioned by the government, identified the roots of the nation as equally Indian and Spanish. Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Porfirio Díaz: los intelectuales y la Revolución*, Mexico City, El Caballito, 1981, p. 206-208, suggests that in the 1890s, popular literature became increasingly national-

and visual representations of Cuauhtémoc multiplied. A slew of biographical and epic poems extolled his nobility of character and glorious deeds, among them Eduardo del Valle's song of praise (prefaced by Altamirano and dedicated to Riva Palacio) and Francisco Sosa's biographical essay (portions of which were recited at the inauguration of the Reforma monument).⁸³ In addition to the many paintings and sculptures dedicated to him, Cuauhtémoc was commonly featured in political cartoons as a personification of the Mexican state (figure 14), and appeared in sundry kinds of popular imagery, including loose-leaf prints, book illustrations (figure 15), calendars and postcards.⁸⁴

Educators seized on the exemplary leader for the purpose of moral instruction. Justo Sierra, before and during his term as Secretary of Education, encouraged the adulation of Cuauhtémoc as a means of projecting national ideals,⁸⁵ and Aurelio Oviedo proposed that schoolchildren should receive lessons on a triad of national heroes: Hidalgo, Juárez and Cuauhtémoc, on account of their admirable "heroism, love of country and honor".⁸⁶ A positive account

istic, and that in all fields of culture, foreign influences tended to be seen in a negative light, while indigenous themes became more highly appreciated.

⁸³ Eduardo del Valle, *Cuauhtémoc: poema en nueve cantos*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Fomento, 1886; Francisco Sosa, *Apuntamientos para la historia del monumento de Cuauhtémoc*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Fomento, 1887. The Sociedad Literaria Cuauhtémoc was established in the late nineteenth century, and included among its members Félix Romero, president of the Supreme Court, and Manuel Romero Rubio, minister of Government. The society issued poems and discourses in honor of the last Aztec king. A poetical drama from about 1900 by Tomás Domínguez Illanes (1860-1907), *Cuauhtémoc. Drama en tres actos, en verso*, manuscript in Biblioteca de las Artes del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, presents the last monarch as an implacable foe of Spanish tyranny. At his refusal of Cortés' offer of peace, the stage directions recommend that the actor should assume the pose of Noreña's statue on Paseo de la Reforma. The play portrays Cortés participating with Alderete in the torture, and the Conquistador is repeatedly condemned for his cruelty, injustice and greed. While being led to his execution, Cuauhtémoc pronounces his own verdict on Cortés: "¡Teme tú que a subir vas / al cadalso de la historia! / Tu recuerdo horror dará, / adúltero, uxoricida, / falso, avaro y regicida. / ¿Qué crimen te falta ya?"

⁸⁴ In December 1904, *El Comillo Público* published a cartoon which spoofs the liberal conception of history. It shows Cuauhtémoc at the base of a human pyramid with Hidalgo and Juárez stacked at higher levels, and pokes fun at the *porfirista* Alfredo Chavero, who is seen struggling to set a bust of Díaz on the pinnacle of the structure, while general Bernardo Reyes tries to cap it with a figure of Uncle Sam.

⁸⁵ Justo Sierra, *México social y político*, Mexico City, Dirección General de Prensa, 1960 (Memoria, Bibliotecas y Publicaciones) (originally published 1889), acclaimed Cuauhtémoc as a viable symbol for the *indígena* past and *mestizo* present.

⁸⁶ Aurelio Oviedo, *Epítome de historia antigua, media y moderna de México*, Mexico City, 1887, p. 11, quoted in Josefina Vázquez de Knauth, *op. cit.*, 1970.



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17

of the emperor appeared in *México a través de los siglos* (1884-1889), the canonical text of the country's history,⁸⁷ and stories of his adventures appeared in children's books published by the brothers Maucci in 1899 (figures 16-17).⁸⁸ In November 1890, Cervecería Cuauhtémoc began operations, and through aggressive marketing and advertising spread Cuauhtémoc's name and likeness to beer lovers in Mexico and eventually around the globe (figure 18).⁸⁹

It is perplexing that the image of Cuauhtémoc, the stubborn opponent of foreign intervention, should be promoted by a transnational corporation which had been formed by a consortium of Mexican and North-American entrepreneurs.⁹⁰ However, the Díaz administration, which sponsored the Cuauhtémoc cult, was itself a principal agent for opening Mexico to external investment and allowing foreign interests to dominate the economy. As is well known, the tension between the regime's triumphalist nationalism and open-door economic policy was one of the great strains under which it operated. Yet this ambiguous and ultimately fatal course of action was consistent with liberal doctrine, which called for political integration alongside rapid industrial growth.

⁸⁷ Alfredo Chavero, *México a través de los siglos, 1. Historia antigua*, Barcelona, Espasa-Calpe, 1884, p. 481, posits Cuauhtémoc as an instance of virtue and patriotism instilled in "the hearts of the new population".

⁸⁸ Posada did at least five covers of Cuauhtémoc for the Maucci publications. As indicated by Renato González Mello, in *México en el mundo de las colecciones de arte. México moderna*, Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994, p. 362, the depiction of the torment is loosely based on Izaguirre's painting of the same subject. Josefina Vázquez de Knauth, *op. cit.*, states that even conservative history books and educational manuals of the 1880s began praising Cuauhtémoc, along with Cortés, and that in the final decades of the Porfiriato, the conservative and liberal conceptions of history started to converge, as compromises were made by polemicists on either side in the interest of national concord.

⁸⁹ The image on the Indio beer label was taken from a print, which in 1898 served as the frontispiece for the English edition of Avellaneda's biography of Cuauhtémoc. Though unsigned, this print is probably to be equated with a "grabado en cobre al agua fuerte, tomado de un dibujo original del profesor del ramo", Luis S. Campa, in the 1891-1892 exposition of the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes. Cuauhtémoc is probably the subject of an untitled copper engraving of 1889 by Emilio Valadés; illustrated in *México en el mundo de las colecciones de arte: México moderno, op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁹⁰ The company was established with the assistance from the brewer Joseph M. Schnaider of Saint Louis, Missouri, who sat on the board of directors. The first president was Isaac Garza, a prominent businessman from Monterrey, who married into the influential Sada family; Vicente J. Guijosa and Javier Hinojosa, *Cienta años son un buen principio. Cervecería Cuauhtémoc. Centenario, 1890-1990*, Monterrey, Cervecería Cuauhtémoc, 1990. The brand Cuauhtémoc was released in 1893, and to market the product the company sent a reduction of the Reforma monument to the Chicago World's Fair.



Figure 18

In a large sense, too, Cuauhtémoc's awakening in nineteenth-century art was the product of liberal thought, and bound up with it were the same anomalies and internal contradictions that afflicted the Porfirian state and social order. Despite its appeal to all Mexicans, Cuauhtémoc imagery stressed national integration at the expense of community and shared benefits; it was in conception bourgeois, urban and progressive, and tended to elide the agrarian and small-town interests of *campesinos*, who made up the great majority of the population; and while it promulgated republican ideals, it also commended a style of leadership which validated the autocratic power of Mexico's presidents, and appealed to a bankrupt nationalism which in later years had deserted its liberal platform and remained incapable of articulating a coherent social policy.⁹¹ Contradictions arose on the aesthetic plane as well. Images

⁹¹ Just as the Reforma monument was being realized, luxury homes began to sprout along the avenue, built by the American-owned Mexican City Improvement Company. The Paseo became the principal address for the *haute bourgeoisie*, with residences in eclectic architectural styles, and caddy-corner to the Cuauhtémoc monument arose in 1892 the Polo Club, haven of many North Americans, with its baseball diamond. On another corner of the *glorieta* was established, in 1899, the elite University Club.

of Cuauhtémoc were designed to arouse the spirit of the nation, yet this was pursued through Realist pictorial methods inspired by European Positivism.⁹² Though quintessentially Mexican, the imagery was furthermore infused with classical aesthetic ideals and Christian notions of virtue, which belied a foreign penetration into Mexico's artistic culture.

Artistic portrayals of Cuauhtémoc were embroiled in a political discourse emanating from Mexico City and supported by the liberal intelligentsia. The imagery reflected a vision of history which connected the modern state with the pre-Hispanic empire, and the puissant monarch was eagerly adopted as a symbol of the independent nation ruled by a centralized political authority. It thrived in an era of exacerbated patriotism, in which Mexico established a canon of national heroes, calendar of civic festivals, and unifying *historia patria*. But the symbol faltered before the *cuestión indígena*. Cuauhtémoc was depicted as an exceptional native leader and model for modern-day heads of state (particularly Juárez and Díaz, who were each of Indian parentage), but he did not represent the aspirations of the indigenous people as such, or of the ever-growing *mestizo* population.⁹³ The imagery was controlled and sustained by an elite of bureaucrats, businessmen, national *caudillos* and their literary and intellectual allies, and upon this structure's collapse in 1910, the figure of Cuauhtémoc became largely dormant once again, only to be revived in the post-revolutionary period, when the internal contradictions within the imagery would be confronted head on and proprietorship over the symbol vigorously contested. These later developments are the subject of a second article to appear in a later edition of this journal.

⁹² For positivism in Mexico, see Abelardo Villegas, *Positivismo y porfirismo*, Mexico City, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1972.

⁹³ Luis Villoro, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, *op. cit.*, argues that symbolic appeals to the pre-Hispanic past and native traditions have been used by successive governments to promote economic modernization and social integration, while contravening the local interests of indigenous communities.