

“Corazón de Lumbre, Alma de Nieve”:
Sentimentality and Nationalism through La Leyenda de Los Volcanes

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This Thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, and Mexican-American Community in and around Chicago.

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SUMMARY

This thesis looks specifically to understand why Jesus Helguera's 1940 painting of the *Leyenda de los Volcanes* was so successful in the promotion of nationalistic sentiments. Although Helguera's images have been consistently present in the consciousness of Mexican identity since the mid-20th century, the paintings' confinement as 'kitsch art' have obscured it from an in-depth critical lens. Due to the image's confinement to kitsch, most writings do not adequately address how sentimentality became a powerful tool in creating the nation and its early origins. To understand Helguera's work, I trace the lineage of the tale and the presence of the volcanoes in artistic practices from Pre-Columbian art to the mid-20th century, the height of the Mexican Calendar movement. This is not to imply a progression of aesthetics or to show any sort of 'progress' in aesthetics or art forms, but to display the rooted influences that Helguera was drawing from. Through the lens of sentimentality, nationalism, and meaning of landscape, I explain how the image of the volcanoes has been used in the canon of Mexican history, morphing at pivotal points in history and how the use of the anthropomorphic Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl situate viewers in both their time and space within a rooted Mexican history. In other words, how the sentimental art of Helguera created a 'proper' viewer that identifies themselves as a child of the Mexican nation.

My work draws upon different areas of study, besides art history, as Mexican calendar art cannot be confined solely to the field of the visual arts. It is crucial to understand *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* from a critical lens as it aids the contextualization for how Mexicans and, later, Mexican diaspora relate to the nation even though they may not live in the area surrounding the volcanoes such as in Puebla or in Mexico City. In the view of writers and cultural critics like Carlos Monsivais and Alfonso Morales, these calendars were idyllic artistic expressions that transcended their commercial purpose to aid in connecting everyday people with the nation at large.

CHRONOLOGY*

Ca. 1347	Xalliquehuac changes name to ‘Popocatepetl’ by the Mexicas
ND	Historian Chimalpahin writes that was the first person to climb the volcano was indigenous man named Chalchiuhtzin, no definite date given
1518-1530	Popocatepetl becomes active, emitting both smoke and smoke
1519	Hernan Cortes Comes into the Valley of Mexico, invades Tenochtitlan
1519	Diego de Ordaz becomes the first European to climb the Popocatepetl Volcano
1521	The Viceroy of New Spain is created, including territories in present day U.S.
1523	Hernan Cortes writes letters describing his experiences to Charles V, Including mentions of the grandeur of the Volcanoes. Many chroniclers follow.
1540-90	Bernardino de Sahagún compiles the Florentine Codex, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl are represented in religious functions and have a human face
1780	Francisco Javier Clavijero, historian, mentions the volcanoes in his history
September 1810-1821	Independence is declared from Spain, effectively the end of the viceregal period giving rise to Mexico as an independent country welcoming foreigners
1811	Alexander Von Humboldt Writes <i>Political Essays on the Kingdom of New Spain</i> Mentioning the volcanoes and becomes the voice for foreign travelers
1860-1912	Jose Maria Velasco paints the grandeur of Mexico as a country rich in landscape
1876-1880 1884-1911	Porfirio Diaz rules the country during the era known as the Porfiriato. Diaz worked under the policy of "Order and progress" with his <i>científicos</i>
1900	Heriberto Frias is the first to publish the legend surrounding the volcanoes in <i>La Biblioteca del Niño Mexicano</i> . Meant for Mexican children.
1910-1920	The Mexican Revolution occurs, breaking the country apart into a patchwork of differing ideologies.
1910	Saturnino Herrán depicts the first full anthropomorphic form of the Volcanoes
1920	Lithography machines are imported from the United States into Mexico
1940	Jesus Helguera paints <i>La Leyenda de Los Volcanes</i>

* *Nota Bene* this is not an exhaustive list

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

“Their (Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl’s) unmistakable silhouettes are inwardly reflected in the body and soul of Mexicans. We can draw their outline with our eyes closed, they continue to exist within us even when the pollution shrouds them from sight.”

- *Los Dos Volcanes: Popocatépetl e Iztaccíhuatl* by Margarita de Orellana in "Pintar con Lava," 2005

“Traveler! Come with us! Do not be afraid. You will see sublime and melancholy, gay, and beautiful scenes. Poet! Down there you will find poetic themes worthy of your most inspired verses. Artist! For you there are pictures of admirable freshness, painted by the hand of God. Writer! There you will encounter legends not yet written, legends of love and hate, of gratitude and vengeance of hypocrisy and abnegation, of noble virtues and repugnant crimes; legends of fragrant romanticism and rich in truth. Let us go there, plowing the dark and agitated waves of the restless Atlantic, through the islands of the Antilles, to the shores of Anahuac.”

- Captain Mayne Reid, in *The Rifle Rangers or Adventures in South Mexico*, 1850

“Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl thus became a symbol of what Mexico City would be and, afterwards, a symbol of the whole country: of *Mexicanidad*, of the birth of the race, of the country.”

- Fernando del Paso *El Mito de los Volcanes*, 2005

In 1964 Mexican poet Julio Torri, considered one of the best prose stylists of Latin America, published a collection of his works, *Tres Libros: Ensayos y Poemas, De fusilamientos, Prosas dispersas*. His collection of poems is a masterful piece of literature, but most pertinent here is a short poem, titled "Noche Mexicana" or Mexican Night.¹ While it was not the first time that “Noche Mexicana” was published, its inclusion in the collection is easily overlooked— save for the final line.² Torri strikingly ends a poem about the violence caused by the Revolution by writing, “and Popocatépetl—the first citizen of Mexico—was also infected with divine madness, crowning himself with flames in the burning night.”³ Building upon centuries of stories around the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

² Noche Mexicana first appeared in the magazine *Azulejos*, prominent magazine in Mexico City in 1922. See Homero Aridjis. *Noticias de la Tierra* (Debate: 2012), 299.

³ Original: “y el Popocatépetl - el primer ciudadano de Mexico - se contagi6 también de divina locura, coronándose de llamas en la noche ardorosa.” See Julio Torri, “Noche Mexicana,” in *Obra Completa: Julio Torri*, ed. Serge I. Zaitzeff (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2011), ebook edition np.

volcanoes, Torri's embodiment of Popocatepetl as the first citizen of Mexico reveals how large, both literally and figuratively, the volcanoes loom in the mind of the country.

Moreover, the ascribed language of personification, referring to the volcano as the first "citizen" as well as the gendered term 'himself,' breathe human sentiment into the artistic representations of the volcanoes. In this sense, it is no surprise that artists, such as Jesús Helguera, have depicted the volcanoes in heavily stylized, anthropomorphic form. Long considered Helguera's painted *magnum opus*, *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes*, dated to 1940, (Figure 1) gives form to a sentimentalized artistic imagination of both Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Helguera follows a long and varied tradition that revolves around written literature, oral traditions, and visual representations of the volcanoes. Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl feature prominently in the lore of the entire country of Mexico, not just in the geographic region to where they are confined. The Legend of the Volcanoes represents a tale that stretches back to a time before Spanish contact with the Americas, projecting onto present-day memory and practice. As monoliths of culture, the volcanoes stand as representations of the people that they oversee. Geographically, the volcanoes border three states: Mexico, Morelos, and Puebla, but have come to represent the entirety of the nation and those who identify themselves as belonging to a Mexican identity. That is, the volcanoes themselves have come to envelop, and project a sense of identity, for all of those who see their cultural roots as being in Mexico, not just those living around the volcanoes. Citizens in the northernmost corners of the country to citizens found in southernmost tips have reimagined themselves as part of the narrative built around the volcanoes. Transnational borders have been crossed with the legend as the Mexican diaspora connects to the volcanoes as a source of identity. As a result, each person who identifies with Mexican culture essentially feels that they too own the land as it has become an innate part of what it means to be "Mexican." While other volcanoes

exist in Mexico, such as the Parícutin in the state of Michoacán, the artistic representations and strong sentimental attachment to them and the nation is not as heavily pronounced. Moreover, the ascribed sentimental attachment to the anthropomorphic bodies of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl are recognizable figures of a Mexican landscape that have become more successfully recognized than any other peak in Mexico. Throughout the flux of history, the volcanoes stand as constant sentries, hosts to the valley of Mexico, witnesses to history that has passed, and foretellers of an uncertain future.

In 1940, Jesús Helguera painted *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* (Figure 1). The work represents the romanticized figures of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. The figures are not only represented once but twice, in profile as their geographic forms and in anthropomorphic forms. The immediate scene in the foreground depicts the tragic end of the legend as death separates the lovers. Popoca has taken Izta to the mountains, her body reclines atop the ground, a piece of cloth draped on her body symbolizing the snow that will cover her. Smoke diagonally separates her from the figure of Popoca. Izta appears with her eyes closed, body at rest as if in deep sleep. To the right, Popoca kneels by her side, dressed in the regalia of what could be assumed to be that of an Eagle Knight. Popoca has earned his feathers from war at the cost of the life of his great love. The warm tones of his body contrast the pallid figure of Izta. In effect, the color of both his skin and the feathers he wears focuses the viewer's attention on him and his melancholy as he laments his lost love. Popoca, then, asks the viewer to mourn along with him. The smoke that divides the figures recalls the way that Popoca as a volcano releases smoke, reminding Mexico that he is very much still active. The landscape in the background engulfs both of the figures. The snowy sierra and the volcano in the background are a representation of what their human forms will become. In this way, the past and present become bridged together. The indigenous past, marked by the human

bodies of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, morphs into the volcanic sentries presently found in the Valley of Mexico.

Helguera inscribed his images with heroic and romantic grandeur, a technique he learned during his earlier artistic studies in Spain. It was through widely disseminated chromolithographs of Helguera's paintings, including *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes*, that a distinctive historical stage for national identity began to be built in the contemporary, modern era. The volcanoes are far from the only subject that Helguera painted, but figure among the multitude of legends he drew from. Helguera's recollections of an imagined Mexican history became interpreted through heroic actions and figures. Franciscan Friars, Miguel Hidalgo, Bartolome de las Casas, or even Hernán Cortés served as constant inspiration in the work of Helguera as he sought a deep 'Mexican' history. In his artworks, Helguera incited sentiment in the form of pride, not just in the self, but in the nation that was continuing to build a shared, imagined history. The prolific writer and cultural critic, Carlos Monsiváis, has explained that a nation is "the consensus that promulgates a *heroic mythology* and the agreement that differs ranks and involves, with discretion and complacency, all those economic or social forces willing to institutionalize the arrangement [my emphasis]."⁴ In the construction of the nation through Helguera's art, Mexico began to recall its heroic mythology. Helguera's art then can be understood as an aid to promulgating an idea of a deep rooted history that echoes into the present day.

Traces of the legend itself are hard to track, as variations are abundant. Different narrators tell the tragic tale of the lovers, continuing a complicated game of telephone where the legend itself becomes warped and reshaped with time and culture. The legend surrounding the volcanoes

⁴ Original: "Una nación es, en primera instancia, el consenso que promulga una mitología heroica y el convenio que difiere enconos e involucra, con discreción y complacencia, a todas aquellas fuerzas económicas o sociales dispuestas a institucionalizar el arreglo." In Elia Espinosa, *Jesús Helguera y su pintura, una reflexión* (UNAM, 2004), 56.

has often been explained as having its origins in oral traditions, originating before Spanish imperialism. However, it is important to denote that there exists some contention around the origins. The first known publication of the tale came in 1899 by Heriberto Frias as part of a small pamphlet collection titled *La Biblioteca del Niño Mexicano (The Library of the Mexican Child)*.⁵ As this is so far the first known publication from the tale, it appears strange then that this legend has constantly been described as being of indigenous origin. Due to the tragic lovers, there also seem to be implications that the tale might have been reshaped by the narrative quality of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.⁶ After Heriberto Frias, the story would be published again, with various changes, as an accompaniment to chromolithograph images during the mid-1920s. Frias' publication is important in that thus far it is the first known and dated publication. The story would then not be published again (not as part of a calendar artwork) until 1996, when the magazine *Bulevar* published it, almost a century after Frias first published the tale. Although there are many variations of the tale, they all generally follow a similar sequence of events. The most famous legend about Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl has often been explained as hailing from the ancient *Nahuatl* language, argued as being Aztec or Tlaxcaltecan in origin. However, due to the large number of variations on the tale, the origin of the story cannot be entirely precise. What follows then is one of the primary, contemporary versions of the tragic love story between the legendary figures of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl.

1. The Legend of the Volcanoes

The story itself often begins by a statement that this a "true story" that occurred before the Iberian colonizers set foot on American soil. Details are also obscured, some translations describe Iztaccíhuatl's parents as being a king or queen, or even emperor and empress, which are incorrect

⁵ Barbosa C. Manlio, "Xiuhtépetl, Xalliquéhuac, Popocatepetl," *Arqueología Mexicana*, January-February, 2000, 63

⁶ Angel, Vigil, *The Eagle on the Cactus: Traditional Stories from Mexico* (Libraries Unlimited, 2000), 36.

political terms for Pre-Hispanic figures. What follows then is my own contemporary retelling of the tale.⁷ Many years before Hernán Cortés came to Mexico, the Aztecs lived in Tenochtitlan, today's Mexico City. Their chief (sometimes referred to as a kind) was a famed ruler, loved by his people. Despite having the love of his people, the ruler and his wife were worried as the gods had not blessed them with children. However, through time the king and his wife were blessed with a baby girl, as beautiful as her mother. They called their daughter Iztaccíhuatl, which means "white lady." Similarly, the people loved Izta just as much as they loved her father. When Izta became of age, many suitors vied for her hand in marriage. As misfortune would have it, she fell in love with the captain of a rival tribe. The name of her beloved was Popoca. Their illicit romance flourished until one-day war came to ravage the land, disrupting the peace and Popoca was called to action. But before he left, Popoca went to Izta's father to ask for her hand in marriage. Being a crafty ruler, Izta's father told Popoca he could marry his daughter if Popoca could bring the head of the enemy chief back from the war. After being away at war for several months, a warrior who hated Popoca (and had been one of Izta's suitors) sent a false message to the ruler-Izta's father. The message that the jealous suitor delivered proclaimed that Popoca's army had won the war, but that Popoca had sadly perished during the grand battle. Izta overheard the message, falling into a deep and intense depressive state. Izta refused to go out and did not eat, for her will to live had perished with Popoca. Sadness grew in her heart until she finally succumbed to her great grief, dying of a broken heart. As Izta's father prepared the funeral for his daughter, Popoca and his warriors finally arrived victorious from war, too late. The ruler was astounded, taken aback when he saw the living Popoca, the ruler relayed in front of him, exclaiming to Popoca that a duplicitous messenger had falsely announced Popoca's death and that Izta had died from her grief after hearing

⁷ This retelling is a variation that incorporates my own personal experiences of being told the tale and in collaboration with the children in my own extended family in the state of Michoacán and in Mexico City.

the news.

At the moment that Popoca heard of Izta's passing, his heart, too, grew heavy with an immense and incurable sadness. Acting on grief, he took Izta's body and, with his warriors, left the town. Popoca walked for many leagues until finally arriving at some mountains. It was in the mountains where Popoca ordered his warriors to build a funeral table with flowers, and where Popoca would place Izta's corpse, gently laying her on top. It was then, when he kneeled to watch over Izta as she was laid to rest, that his heart gave out as well. Touched by Popoca's sacrifice, the gods turned Popoca and Izta's bodies into the magnificent volcanoes, which now frame the valley of Mexico. In some variations of the tale, the contemporary and continuous activity of Popocatépetl has been explained as him waking momentarily to expel smoke as a sign that he is still watching over his beloved Iztaccíhuatl, who sleeps by his side. The tale has variations, too many to go into detail here. Some notable details include that sometimes Izta's father is very much against the lovers' union. Other times, it is Izta's father who has betrothed Izta to Popoca. There is also a variation wherein Izta is not referred to by her known name, but is instead called Mixtli, while Popoca retains his name.⁸ Whatever the story may be, at its core, the legend is categorized as a myth that attempts to make sense of the world, giving reason to why the topographic features exist, tying them to a romantic tale that claims to be rooted in a Pre-Columbian, indigenous past.

B. Conceptual Framework

Despite the flux in government and society, the tale remains pervasive, figuring in a multitude of stories around the country and featuring as a continuous part of visual culture. Helguera's *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* was originally painted to serve as inspiration for a chromolithograph. Chromolithographs are colored images created by printing a series of

⁸ Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatépetl: Mitos, Ciencia y Cultura (un cráter en el tiempo)*. México D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 1997, 183-184

applications of lithographic stones, each stone using different color ink; these were most commonly created as commissioned artworks for calendars. Calendar artwork was, and still is, mainly used during the December-January festive holidays when businesses give their customers the gift of a calendar to show their appreciation. Moreover, attached to the calendar artwork is usually the address of the business that had commissioned the art. Calendar artwork had its zenith in the mid-20th century, from the 1920's-1970's.⁹ The images produced by artists like Helguera, have from the mid-20th century, been reprinted over and over again, providing a backdrop from which Mexicans and Mexican diaspora connect to the nation. Due to their continuous printing, calendars have proved to not only be gifts of appreciation but also fruitful methods of advertisement from businesses. Simultaneously, calendar artwork has transformed the way Mexicans identified with the country, bringing forth a new method of interpretation from which to understand the growing Mexican country and the shift in the identity of its people. As the museum curator Alfonso Morales Carrill explains in the catalogue of Museo Soumaya's permanent exhibit for chromolithograph paintings: "[What] seemed to be a simple annual advertising strategy developed into one of Mexico's most powerful forms of cultural promotion and a graphic art tradition."¹⁰ Jesús Helguera's oeuvre has recently become a fascination for scholars, emerging from its original characterization as "kitsch" due to the excessive sentimentality and mass-produced quality of the pieces. Due to the image's confinement to kitsch, most writings do not adequately address how sentimentality became a powerful tool in creating the nation and its early origins.

The underlying goal of this thesis is to discover how the narrative of The Legend of the

⁹ Hector Palhares Meza, Minerva, Alfonso Morales Carrill, Mogollán García, Gabriela Huerta Tamayo, and Angela Villaba, *Calendarios Mexicanos* (Fundacion de Carlos Slim: Museo Soumaya, 2014), 272.

¹⁰ Alfonso Morales Carrill, *La Leyenda De Los Cromos: El Arte de los Calendarios Mexicanos Del Siglo XX* (Museo Soumaya: Galas De Mexico, 2000), 12-20.

Volcanoes became sentimentalized in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Why did Jesús Helguera's image become so popular? Why is Helguera's *Leyenda de los Volcanes* such a monumental artwork to understand the construction of Mexican nationalism? To answer these questions, I build a trajectory through the history and usage of the image and the society in which it was created. Often, the sentimentality of chromolithographs, as a genre, is attributed as being a necessary way to build the nation after the Revolution. However, by following the lineage of The Legend of the Volcanoes, I posit that the origins of sentimentality had their roots from the early days of Spanish contact, following the rise of *Criollismo*, and search for a deep-rooted, Pre-Columbian, authentic past. In conjunction with this goal, I hope to establish the historical, iconographical background of *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* and trace the shifting usage of the volcanoes. Through the sentimentalization of the legend of the volcanos, Mexico and Mexicans came to see themselves as a community, joined together by the mother and father figure of the volcanoes. In the present undertaking, I present the beginnings of a study of the development of sentimentalism in The Legend of the Volcanoes in the development of the nationalist image, from the moment of Spanish Imperialism to the years following the independence movement. This study is by no means all-encompassing and will continue into the foreseeable future. In undertaking this work, I aim to establish a working foundation from which to draw as a more nuanced research continues to be undertaken.

1. Defining Nationalism

In approaching Mexican art, it is impossible to separate the idea of *nation* in the creation of chromolithographic images. Calendar artwork was made specifically with a Mexican audience in mind in order to produce a successful advertisement. In order to understand Helguera's successful art, in terms of popularity and recognition, it then is important to understand the

construction of the nation that was building in Mexico from the early days of the Spanish colonialism project. In explaining the construction of nationalism, I turn expressly to Benedict Anderson's monumental work *Imagined Communities*, along with Claudio Lomnitz's critique. As a doctrine, nationalism is a political creed that constitutes the primary support for the cohesion of modern societies and legitimizes their claim to authority. In understanding the creation of the Nation, I follow the lineage of the transformation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain to present day Mexico.¹¹

An important aspect of nationalism related to the forming of this cohesion is the feeling of *belonging*: the *identification* with or loyalty to a group of people with specific characteristics originated in the past (the imagined community). According to Anderson, nationalism then does not search, identify, and promote that cultural essence, but invents and creates a nation where it does not exist.¹² However, in using Anderson's work, I also refer to Claudio Lomnitz, who added necessary addendums in configuring the rise of national sentiment in what would become Mexico. First, Lomnitz makes a differentiation between the terms patriotism and nationalism, which are often used in conflating two different ideologies. Nicola Miller importantly examines the relationship between *patria* and *nación* explaining that:

Anderson's conception of the nation as a political community 'imagined' as inherently limited and sovereign did not reflect the shifting historical usage of the term '*nación*' (nation) in the period preceding the independence movements in Spanish America. A creole might have invoked '*nación*' in at least three different ways: to identify himself with

¹¹ In this paper, early colonial Mexico will be referred to as Novohispanic society or the Viceroyalty of New Spain. The present geographic range that is known as Mexico is the creation of contemporary socio-political geographical markers. The country and its borders shifted, after independence, post-revolution, and contemporarily. The modern terrestrial politics cannot fully comprehend the empire that Spain was attempting to build in the early years of contact.

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Verso books, 2006), 7.

Spain, to differentiate himself from Spain, or to distinguish his territorial space in New Spain from that of the indigenous communities, which were designated a separate 'Nación,' with distinctive legal privileges. '*Patria*,' or patriotism, implies allegiance to a territory but not necessarily to all the people within it so that several 'naciones' or nations could coexist within one '*patria*.'¹³

The usage of the terms in Spanish rather than the English translation then, is owed to the fact that the two terms are not easily conflated. That is, the construction of a national identity in New Spain, which would become Mexico, was predicated upon the identity of the Creole elite. In turn, the Creole elite arose from a system of miscegenation: the *casta* system which was not formally adapted in what would become the United States. The difference in terms is visible by how the elite preferred the term *patria* versus the term *nación*. The usage of the term 'patria' instead of nation enabled the elite to evade the issue of how to incorporate all of the population into a united nation. It was only when a stable central state was needed that the term nation become much more prevalent than *patria*. A patriot is proud of his country for what it does, while the differentiation lies in the fact that the nationalist is proud of his country no matter what it does. The construction of nationalism is a complex process, much more so than can be imagined in the context of the Mexican nation. *Patria* and *nación* are vital in understanding that Mexican art was not meant just to incite patriotism, but to instill the work of the nation no matter what the government did throughout its history, nor what it would continue to do.

In looking to see the construction of nationalism though *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes*, art becomes the site upon which social perceptions of a united, collective nation is built from the combination of myth and sentimentality. The nation is not a static environment, but rather one that

¹³ Nicola Miller, "The historiography of nationalism and national identity in Latin America," *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 2 (2006): 207.

encapsulates varied ethnic-political-cultural relations. The nation gravitates around a shared past, territory, religion, language, customs traditions, but its borders are not absolute. In the formation of its “imagined community,” nationalism demanded the creation of new political entities based on ethnic, linguistic or cultural units, rather than groups whose binder was loyalty to a sovereign or nobility. Nationalism, as it is best understood, seeks to provide cohesion to the social conglomerate, identify or invent, and promote a shared set of cultural characteristics that develop a feeling of belonging to the group. Collective identity can be considered as the aforementioned national identity, which must be part of the project of every modern state. Such construction is of paramount importance when looking for control of large groups that may not be homogeneous or harmonious.¹⁴

As Claudio Lomnitz proposes in his critique to Benedict Anderson, the imagined nation is not a horizontal camaraderie or brotherhood but a pact made between the brokering of full citizens and part citizens, or groups that are often excluded from the dialogue, such as women, children, and those in perceived lower races such as indigenous groups.¹⁵ Imaginary identities are unwritten covenants of great use for the articulation of projects. They are creations full of archetypes, myths, or representations. Identity is not static or permanent, just as the relationship between the individual and the community varies, so the idea of belonging can change. The state must regularly update or redefine these ideas as society and politics change throughout the years. The need for redefinition is likely a reason as to why *The Legend of the Volcanoes*, has changed throughout the history of Mexican art and literature. To define imagined borders of the nation and distinguish

¹⁴ Elsa Muñiz García, “Identidad y cultura en México, hacia la conformación de un marco teórico Conceptual” in Lilia Granillo (coord.), *Identidades y nacionalismo, una perspectiva interdisciplinaria*, México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1993 (Ensayos ,39), p. 32.

¹⁵ Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (University of Minnesota, 2001), 10-13.

between citizens, the nation as a project has sought to redefine the meaning of the volcanoes.¹⁶ Some objects, people, legends, or events may vary or diminish in their strength in appeal after periods of crisis, a prime example of which was the Mexican Revolution. Due to the chaos wrought by the Revolution, Mexico, as a country, needed to boost nationalism to patch a broken country. Nationalism is not the creation of the last century, nor an exclusive product of the era of the ubiquitous media, although the media can favor its development and projection. The origins of Mexican nationalism have been established during the colonial period in the eighteenth century because, although these feelings of identification probably existed in pre-Hispanic times, they would be particular to each group or culture, merely regional. In the last decades of the viceroyalty, the first ideas on the difference or identity of New Spain, for the Spanish empire, and the rest of the world have been identified.¹⁷ In the writings of some expelled Novo-Hispanic and Jesuit scholars, there is plenty of argumentation to distinguish America from Europe in its geography, inhabitants, and customs, a defense against the American denigration made by Europeans and the desire for identification by distinctive characteristics becomes more readily present. As Lomnitz argues, for the rise of nationalism and patriotic sensibilities, the Creoles, resentful of their situation as second-class subjects compared with the peninsular Spanish, introduced more complex ideas in their search for patriotism and nation, including the denigration of the ‘conquest,’ the rejection of the ‘gachupines,’ the exaltation of the pre-Hispanic past, and the devotion to the *La Virgen de Guadalupe*.¹⁸ Legends, such as the one around the volcanoes, are not the only aspects considered

¹⁶ Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, 10.

¹⁷ David A. Brading, *Los Orígenes del Nacionalismo Mexicano* (Ediciones Era, 1988), 142.

¹⁸ Gachupines was a term used to describe Spanish settlers in America who immigrated from Spain, often used in a disparaging manner. Made lesser than their Peninsular counterparts who resided in Spain. See Erika Pani, “Saving the Nation through Exclusion: Alien Laws in the Early Republic in the United States and Mexico,” *The Americas* 65, no. 2 (2008): 217-46.; The legend of the indigenous Juan Diego and the apparition of the Virgen the Guadalupe is also monumental in how Mexico creates mother figures, especially as relating to religion in the guise of a virgin. See Jeanette Favrot Peterson, “Creating the Virgin of Guadalupe: The cloth, the artist, and sources in sixteenth-century New Spain,” *The Americas* 61, no. 4 (2005): 585-586.

foundational in creating the nation. However, they are one of the few that connect the landscape itself with mother and father figures, dating back before the usage of the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* to the period in which Hernán Cortés entered the valley of Mexico. These legends have been reconfigured in the artwork of artists like Jesús Helguera and continue to perpetuate a connection of self to the nation at large.

A constant in both Anderson and Lomnitz is the conception of empty time, originally devised by Walter Benjamin. Empty time is precisely how nationalism and nationalist ideas are able to function. Specifically, empty time is defined as that in which two separate events occur simultaneously though in separate places. This empty time can link the multitude of people involved in said events by this precise idea of ‘simultaneity’ in that there is a consciousness of the shared temporal dimension in which they exist. The concept of empty time was present in the Spanish world before print capitalism, which Anderson argues was the start of ‘empty time.’ Where Anderson argues that empty time was created due to print in the form of newspapers, Lomnitz argues that empty time was present in the Spanish world, beginning with the “decline of empire and Spain’s failure to attain a universal monarchy.”¹⁹ Further, Lomnitz argues that time was not secular as Anderson believed. To Anderson, empty time was a “shift from the transcendental modality of thinking to a secular one.”²⁰ For Anderson, the imagined community of the nation is made possible through the secularity of thoughts, in which the imagining of time as homogeneous and empty was made possible. It is “homogeneous” because it is not affected by a set of particular events, and ‘empty’ because any number of events can be placed inside it. The result then is that “homogeneous empty time” corresponds to (secular) history, where disparate events involving disparate persons are understood as occurring simultaneously in time. For example, a calendar as

¹⁹ Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, 33.

²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

we know it runs on empty time. In many, if not all countries, daily life is ruled by the same Gregorian calendar for all citizens. However, the dates in those calendars are filled individually by members of the imagined community; they can fill it with any number of events that may hold no significance for the rest of the community.

The linking of nationalism and landscape in the form of the volcanoes and the legend that was associated with them functioned in a manner similar to that of empty time, anchoring disparate experiences in a shared chronotope. What gave citizens a sense of their shared experience was not only the common practice of seeing the volcanoes being depicted but in the recognition that all over Mexico strangers were conducting similar observances and connections with the volcanoes. Not only were strangers connected to the time in which they lived, but they also became connected to future generations who might see the images of the volcanoes and share in the same imagined past as a result of empty time. Specifically, Helguera's image of the volcanoes, distributed as a chromolithograph attached to calendars, participated in this process. The success of calendars as a medium to transmit messages came at a time before the majority of Mexicans had access to radio, movies, or education. Not only did calendar artwork reach hundreds of thousands of homes due to its portable nature, but the images were duplicated year after year. Just as the calendars instigated a shared experience of the passage of time, the chromolithographs that accompanied them in Mexico became a testimony to the permanence of *Mexican* time, of *Mexican* life, and *Mexican* traditions.

2. Defining Sentimentalism

Sentimentalism is what has made the ingestion of nationhood a palatable method for full and part citizens to see themselves as pieces within the whole of an emerging country. Sentimentality is a term that escapes definition, covering a wide breadth of meanings. However,

there is one constant that remains when defining sentimentality, and that is found in the emotion that is elicited. In art history, sentimentality has often been overlooked as a concept for study. The usual advice is to steer away from sentimentality in general due to the ‘false’ connections and emotions that it fabricates. That is to say that emotions are often interpreted as being shallow or excessive and not worth pursuing at a deeper level. In art history, the excessiveness of sentiment in works have usually caused paintings, or other forms of media, to become relegated to the background as kitsch. Calendar art was no exception, and the overflowing sentimentality caused art historians to shun the work as being kitsch and thus of no value. Sentimentality is perceived as an opposition to the rational aesthetic principles in art history. Seen as a taciturn and unstable, emotions are overlooked against the stability that reason provides.

For the majority of art history, Jesús Helguera’s oeuvre has not been paid close attention due to being labeled as belonging to a kitsch category of art. Kitsch art is often seen as the opposition to the avant-garde and of low and no true value. In Clement Greenberg’s instrumental essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," Greenberg defines art as belonging to a binary.²¹ The binary is one that represents an authentic genuine culture (high art, avant-garde) against popular art (low art, kitsch). Avant-garde is defined in how the viewer ‘activates’ a work. That is, to Greenberg, the avant-garde demands a “second-order” of reflection, which causes an aesthetic distance. Aesthetic distancing requires another order of seeing that is reflected by the knowledge and thoughts of the viewer. In contrast to the avant-garde, kitsch art does not require the same distancing, and everything is given and thus obvious. However, therein lies an inherent problem of Greenberg’s essay: the perceived necessity of education and leisure necessary for appreciating "high art" means that there is an underwritten theory of differentiation by class distinction and

²¹ Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical essays* (Beacon Press, 1971), 4-8.

power. To Greenberg, kitsch art, due to lack of background necessary to observe it, is easily employed by the powerful for their purposes. As a result, according to Greenberg, kitsch art then becomes a tool of fascism, conceding to the masses, and serving solely for propagandistic means. The opposite is true, according to Greenberg, for avant-garde art. The usage of avant-garde art for similar purposes is not possible due to its "difficulty" and critical nature, and due to the distancing, it requires from the viewer. Whereas avant-garde is the imitation of the imitating, kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas (i.e., what is already known). If avant-garde illustrates the unconscious, unthinking masses kitsch illustrates the conscious, enlightened elite.

Kitsch is often linked with vicarious experience and faked sensations. To some, kitsch art is the epitome of all that is spurious in modern times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money—it does not even seem to demand their time, but appearances can be deceiving.²² Dismissing an artwork solely because it is “bad” art and labelled as “kitsch” is “not just to condemn the glibness of its technique; it is also to question the motives of the artist and the emotional maturity of the audience.”²³ In such cases, sentimentality is the culprit in the ethical presentation of obstructing the truth to the viewer. That is, the true representation of reality. Sentiment becomes manipulated in art by the artist and is indulged in by the viewer through their connection to the image. So then the sentimentality imbued in kitsch art is not an aesthetic problem, but one that is ethical as it becomes a species of dishonesty.²⁴ When Clement Greenberg claimed that mass-produced art, defined as the kitsch, did not require the viewer to relate further than what was displayed on the surface, he downplayed the role of sentimentality. Sentimentality plays a significant role in bridging the gaps between both time and space and a shared, national history.

²² Robert C. Solomon, *In defense of Sentimentality* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 240.

²³ Solomon, *In defense of Sentimentality*, 235-254.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

As Shirley Samuels postulates, “the sentimental complex also situates the reader or viewer; that is, the act of emotional response the work evokes also produces the sentimental subject who consumes the work.”²⁵ In other words, when it comes to art, the artwork is creating the viewer at the same time that the viewer is conceptualizing the artwork, informing the viewer where they might belong within a sphere of the imagined nation. It is crucial then to reconcile the fact that although sentimentality is overlooked, formal and political powers form the boundaries of sentimentality. Sentimentality itself becomes a mechanism for constructing a 'proper' sort of viewer, trained to 'feel right' and to 'act right.'²⁶ So then the sentimental can be seen as a national site of negotiation between relationships of sympathy and relations of power. As images harbor immense feelings, they become both affective and effective emotional tools of nation-building.

Despite the scorn of art historians, both in the United States and in Mexico, against kitsch, *The Legend of the Volcanoes* became quite popular with Mexicans, precisely because of its sentimentalized nature. It is when sentimentalism is applied as a lens to nationalism that the project of building the imagined community becomes palatable and safe to consume. Still, sentimentality needs a foundation from which to continue the work of the nation. In *La Leyenda de Los Volcanoes*, I posit that the success of Helguera's artwork arises from the sentimentalized connection of the viewer to the bodies of the indigenous Popocatepetl and 'white' Iztaccíhuatl which constitute a perceived Mestizo identity of *Mexicanidad*. June Howard quotes Steven Gordon in that “Sentiment [is] a socially constructed pattern of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around a relationship to a social object, usually another person...Most of a culture's vocabulary of named affective states are sentiments rather than emotions.”²⁷ When

²⁵ Shirley Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-century America* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 6.

²⁶ Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4.

²⁷ June Howard, “What is Sentimentality?” *American Literary History* 11, no. 1 (1999): 66.

emotions are tied to the nation, cultural meaning is coupled with personal affect creating a deeper connection to the perceived connectivity of the community at large. As it relates to Mexican nationalism, the landscape became imbued with sentimentality during the colonial period and found its zenith in the 19th and 20th centuries within the rise of romanticized literature. Written works were tools of sentimentality as much as a visual culture. Such examples include José Santos Chocano's poem "El Idilio de los Volcanes" and early sentimentalized foreign traveler accounts which influenced the way the country advertised itself to foreigners. Although intended for foreigners, the art produced also forced artists in Mexico to adopt aesthetics that might be evocative for travelers. Poets influenced artists, who in turn began to romanticize the nation in their artworks. The rise of poets and the multi-layered effects of the Revolution and the rule of Porfirio Díaz forced Mexico to come together and attempt to find a shared past in which everybody in the nation could partake. In order to come together, a mother and father figure had to be cast in the creation of identity. In finding these paternal and maternal figures, I refer to Shirley Samuels who asserts that the "masculine national body [which is] the 'sinews of the nation,' is opposed to the feminine."²⁸ The masculine figure while it is the sinews, finds its balanced counterpart in the female. Thus, the coming together of both the female and male body in one romanticized image then conflates the two genders; they belong in a space together. Iztaccíhuatl becomes the feminine body that comes to be understood as a mother figure to the nation, while Popocatepetl then becomes her guardian, the paternal figure to the country. Further, Samuels quotes the historian George Mose in that "Woman as a national symbol was the guardian of the continuity and immutability of the nation, the embodiment of respectability."²⁹ Popocatepetl then can also be interpreted, in the myth, as being a protector over the virginal quality of Iztaccíhuatl, she is clean,

²⁸ Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4

²⁹ Ibid.

as fresh as the snow that covers her hidden female body.

Of course, Helguera's painting on its own would not have been successful without the sentimentalized legend working behind it. Myths and legends work in conjunction with the project of the nation. In studying the sentimentalization of chromolithographs, I turn to the work of Natividad Gutierrez Chong in her view on the construction of nationalist myths. The compelling nature of the anthropomorphic depictions of the volcanoes in Helguera's painting in the guise of an indigenous man and a white woman is essential, as it is their bodies that create a romantic, sentimental relationship to the viewer. Again, as Shirley Samuels points out, "Sentimentality acts in conjunction with the problem of the body and what it embodies, how social-political, racial, and gendered meanings are determined through their differential embodiments."³⁰ Myths and legends are essential in configuring the bodies of the volcanoes. They give identity and form to the anthropomorphized figures that are visible in Helguera's artwork. Without the body, the level of sentimental attachment would be minimal. It is through understanding the role of myths in relation to sentimentality that we understand the project of the nation. Lomnitz adds that nationalism involves an appeal to origins, that "myths appeal to the historical 'depth' of nations, a depth that finds material expression in the land itself."³¹ Therein, it is vital to consider the intersectionality of myths in ethnic identity and the role of myth-making when it comes to constructing a Mexican national identity.

3. The Implications of Landscape

At its very core, *La Leyenda de los Volcanoes* is a work of art that depicts a landscape, not once but twice. The volcanoes feature prominently in the foreground as anthropomorphized figures but are echoed again in the background by their carefully ordered topographic nature in real life.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, XIII.

That is to say that the artwork can be classified as belonging to an old pictorial tradition that dates back to the tradition of landscape painting in Asia, but reformulated through European aesthetics, and refined by painters like Jesus Helguera. To understand landscape paintings, one must conclude that all manner of landscapes are inherently human-made phenomena. The land has been physically manipulated and shaped into an object. This ‘object’ then has been used continuously and, in turn, affects the psychology and working thoughts and environment of all humans. The volcanoes have affected the way that Mexicans configure themselves within the landscape, physically, psychologically, and emotionally through works like Helguera’s. Land is shaped continuously so thus becomes particular, contextual, cultural, and a multiplicity of other ideas as it is molded by the different hands of artists and narrators. In his monumental work *Landscape and Power*, W.J.T. Mitchell makes a strong case for the reconsideration of landscape artworks and their place within the canon of art history. Although at first glance, many landscape paintings appear as neutral, realistic depictions of space, the truth is startlingly different. Below the pastoral scenes of nature lie the political infrastructures and beliefs of the time in which it was produced. Conventions of landscape art transferred from Europe through prints aided in Spanish imperialism. Artistic conventions such as the bird’s eye view carry implications of the imperial gaze. For example, kings who wished to know the domain in which they ruled ordered cartographic depictions that attempted to classify the land and delineate the spaces of civility from those of the untamed state. In his nine theses in *Landscape and Power*, Mitchell establishes the idea that landscape is not a noun, but rather a *verb*.³² To Mitchell, landscape *does*, landscape is active rather than passive: “landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. Landscape is represented and

³² W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (University of Chicago, 2002), 5-7.

presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.”³³ As a *verb*, landscape works in conjunction with other messages unwritten in art. Outside texts and legends aid the sentimentalism project of nation, but landscape depicts what the Mexican nation is and could be – the signified and the signifier. Furthermore, Mitchell’s theories surrounding landscape continuously urge readers, viewers, and art historians alike to take a harder look at the frameworks in which landscape functions. Rather than passively viewing landscape, Mitchell suggests looking beyond the naturalizing veil of aesthetic beauty. It is only by tearing away that veil that landscape becomes a visible medium through which political agendas, such as imperialism, are naturalized.

Landscape often is presented as a passive art form—it appears to hold no message or intentions. However, as W.J.T. Mitchell argues, the truth is that landscapes are active participants in shaping history. Mitchell explains that “Landscape does not merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power...an agent of power that is (or frequently represents itself as) independent of human intentions.”³⁴ In understanding the usage of the landscape in *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes*, it is essential then to realize that the landscape being presented is being used to create a sense of nation. In constructing the Nation, Helguera’s paintings use the landscape to create a visionary ideal of the topographic region of Mexico. Helguera imbues his work with sentimentality, armed with the language of landscape, giving an embodied form to the volcanoes and embodying notions of sentimentality such as pathetic fallacy.³⁵ Pathetic Fallacy, as John Ruskin proposed in his work *Modern Painters*, was an assignment of human feelings to inanimate objects. Although pathetic fallacy is akin to topics such as anthropomorphism, the relationship

³³ Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 5.

³⁴ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Introduction,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (University of Chicago, 2002), 5.

³⁵ Pathetic Fallacy as an idea might be removed in a future edition of this work, meriting further consideration as it emerged from German ideologies and does not encapsulate the way Mexican art has been understood.

between the viewer and the object experienced is different. To Ruskin, pathetic fallacy was determined by the relationship between the poet (in turn, the viewer's) emotional state and what they see in the object (artwork).³⁶ In turn, the landscape works with sentiment in that it creates a site of negotiation between relations of sympathy wherein the viewer experiences an emotion and relationships of power. As a result, the viewer conceptualizes themselves as part of the history of the Nation.

In sum, there is no real permanence to the landscape. Landscape shifts and is continuously molded by the society that springs around it. It follows then, that artworks that feature landscapes, such as *La Leyenda de los Volcanoes*, do not passively display the landscape. Sentimental notions of the landscape work hand in hand with different theories, such as John Ruskin's idea of pathetic fallacy. The *Leyenda de los Volcanes* is then a physical location that delimits the city's borders, but also the simulacrum of a glorified past into the present.

³⁶ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 3 (G. Routledge, 1857). 152-167.

II. TAMING THE LAND: EARLY SPANISH CHRONICLES

In framing the narrative of the legend of the volcanoes, it is essential to recall the earliest mentions of them to establish the trajectory of Jesus Helguera's themes. Records on the volcanoes have a long history, the earliest dating from the pre-Columbian era. However, despite known indigenous knowledge, the extant written records that are easier to access are those that were written by Spanish chroniclers upon and after their arrival. This does not imply that all previous epistemologies had been eradicated. Instead, Spanish narratives shaped how the volcanoes would come to be seen, eventually merging with indigenous knowledge and beliefs. Although most images of the volcanoes hailing from the pre-contact period have primarily been exterminated, written and visual culture concerning the volcanoes does survive. Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl feature in codices, sometimes explicitly labeled while other instances it is only the assumption that they are the volcanoes being depicted. In recognizing the history of the volcanoes, it is vital to note that it was indigenous peoples who named the volcanoes, shifting the name of Popocatepetl from Xiutepetl to Xalliquéhuac, and finally to its current name.³⁷ Religious traditions around the volcanoes began to turn when the Spanish came into the valley of Mexico. Where there previously had been a massive religious, ritualistic life around them, Spanish colonization and evangelization efforts shifted the narrative. Activities around the volcanoes no longer were highly concerned with indigenous religion, but Spanish rationale began to use the volcanoes as a point of departure for their colonizing efforts. Spanish narratives explain the perceived grandeur of the volcanoes as they came into the valley, cataloging everything and anything that they deemed a possible resource. The Spanish would change the landscape, seeking to dominate it, to evangelize it, and effectively turn it into a Christian nation. In the years following the Spanish invasion, there was not an

³⁷ Manlio, "Xiuhtépetl, Xalliquéhuac, Popocatepetl," 64.

immediate need to create a country separate from the Spanish monarchy. Instead, Spanish preoccupation lay with the idea of dominating the unknown frontier that lay before them. As the imposing and reigning guardians of the valley, the volcanoes became a site where metaphorical wars would first be fought for the soul of a new country.

A. Early Pre-Columbian History

In many indigenous beliefs of Mesoamerica, the world is conceived of as a sacred space. Humans, animals, plants, earth, water, and sky were more than physical manifestations of the work of deities. Every being on earth, organic and inorganic had a spirit, a soul entity with which it was possible to communicate through dreams or visions induced through activities such as prayer and rituals. In central Mexico, the Postclassic cult of Tláloc, lord of rain, lightning, and storms, closely linked to the worship of Chalchiuhtlicue, mistress of rivers, springs, and lagoons, has early connections with Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, the volcanoes, respectively.³⁸ Additionally, it is common knowledge that many indigenous groups in the Americas considered mountains sacred places. As artificial mountains, the pyramids of Tenochtitlan, Teotihuacan, Palenque, and other sites through Mesoamerican history serve as reminders to the connections that the mountains had to indigenous cultures in their daily and religious lives. Caves found on mountain ranges were considered sacred and liminal places where both the mortal world and the deified world could coexist. It comes as no surprise then that before Spanish contact, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, along with the other mountains surrounding the basin of Mexico, were sites of veneration. Popocatepetl is a name that hails from the Nahuatl language, *popoca*- meaning to smoke and *tepetl*

³⁸ Carlos Villa Roiz examines the connection of deities like Chalchiuhtlicue and *Matlalcueye*. *Matlalcueye* being more commonly connected to the peak of *La Malinche*, another peak in the valley of Mexico. The distinguishing features of these different deities and their connection with Iztaccíhuatl merits further investigation. See, Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl: Mitos, ciencia y cultura: Un cráter en el Tiempo* (Plaza y Valdés, 1997), 41-52.

meaning mountain or hill. Indigenous records indicate that the name for Popocatépetl fluctuated with the activity of the volcano. The colonial era, indigenous historian, San Anton de Chimalpahin, writes, “in the year nine cane, 1347, for the first time the smoking the mountain that today they call Popocatépetl and that previously was only known by Xalliquéhuac was seen to smoke.”³⁹ Xalliquéhuac in Nahuatl means rising or shifting sand. The change in name occurred when Xalliquéhuac’s activity decreased until finally, it ceased altogether in the year 1347. The cessation of activity was recorded by early indigenous sources, for it later to be picked up by the later colonial, indigenous historian Chimalpahin. When the volcano began its new phase, it was an era of smoke and ash emission; the volcano was thus renamed. No longer was the mountain volcano identified as Xalliquéhuac; instead, it was renamed Popocatépetl. Although also deriving from the Nahua language, Popocatépetl’s companion, Iztaccíhuatl, does not appear to have gone through a name change. Instead, what is curious, is that early recollections of the volcanoes refer to the dormant volcano either as Iztaccíhuatl or as Iztactepetl.⁴⁰ Iztaccíhuatl is a gendered referral to the mountain, *iztac* meaning white and *cihuatl* meaning woman. Iztactepetl, on the other hand, is more gender-neutral, *iztac* again meaning white and *tepetl* meaning mountain. Effectively, Iztaccíhuatl appears to be referred to by both names. The language and changing of the names of the volcanoes suggests that indigenous communities were continuously keeping a record of the activity around the volcanoes. Specifically, the activity of Popocatépetl seems to be essential for local, indigenous communities. It is no surprise then that traces of depictions of the volcanoes can be seen in images that predate the Spanish arrival. Two of the surviving pre-Hispanic codices that date from the 14th century depict the volcanoes: The Vindobonensis (Figure 2) and Zouche Nuttall Codex. For

³⁹ Original: “Por primera vez se vio humear el monte que hoy llaman Popocatépetl y que anteriormente solo era conocido por Xalliquehuac.” In Barbosa C. Manlio, “Xiuhtépetl, Xalliquéhuac, Popocatépetl,” *Arqueología Mexicana*, January-February, 2000, 64.

⁴⁰ Manlio, “Xiuhtépetl, Xalliquéhuac, Popocatépetl,” 64.

instance, on page XX of the Nuttall Codex, the images of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl are accompanied by the illustrated representation of their resident deities, one of whom has been identified as Tlaloc.⁴¹ The survival of the codices is marked by the fact that they were both presented as gifts to Charles V of Spain shortly after the Conquest. On sheet 39 of the Vindobonensis codex (Figure 2), Iztaccíhuatl is identified as a snow-capped mountain. The uncertainty of the name could be a reference to the nomenclature of the mountain as Iztactepetl and not Iztaccíhuatl as there is no feminine form ascribed to her in the early codices. Both the Nuttall and Vindobonensis codex are of Mixtec origin, thus intended for those who did not read or speak Nahuatl. Carlos Villa Roiz explains that although Popocatépetl is known and has a stable representation, he is depicted with two different goddesses and it is uncertain as to who, if any, is Iztaccíhuatl.⁴² Although there are no representations of the volcanoes in the guise of the human body, this does not exclude the idea that there is no sentimentality attached to the figures. As representations of the deities Tlaloc for Popocatépetl, and some female deities for Iztaccíhuatl, which remain unclear, the volcanoes were tied with human form through the deities with which they were associated in the codices, rather than being anthropomorphized themselves. In Mexican belief, there is a continued association of volcanoes with creator deities and ancestors, male-female pairings, the duality of water and fire, and creation and destruction.⁴³

In the pairing of Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatépetl, an essential facet of indigenous religious life becomes apparent. Mesoamerican societies often have a dual nature to their practices. As male and female counterparts, Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatépetl constitute one of the perceived binaries –

⁴¹ Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatépetl: Mitos, ciencia y cultura: Un cráter en el Tiempo* (Plaza y Valdés, 1997), 86.

⁴² There is reference to the goddess depicted with Popocatépetl as being Matlacueye or La Malinche, which is another volcanic hill located in the vicinity of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. See Villa Roiz, *Popocatépetl*, 30-50.

⁴³ The connection to specific deities merits further investigation, there have been connections to Tlaloc- however, Tlaloc was a deity that has been connected to a multiplicity of places due to his connection with mountains. This does not mean that Tlaloc was exclusively connected with Popocatépetl.

gender. They also constitute another duality in that Iztaccíhuatl is described as a “white woman”, referring to the snowcapped tops not necessarily to racial connotations. Meanwhile Popocatepetl is also described as a smoky mount. Popocatepetl was, as Chimalpahin notes, newly renamed under the Mexican (Aztec) domination who also “gave him a character of darkness.”⁴⁴ Popocatepetl is equivalent to smoke and night, while Iztaccíhuatl to the white - day and sun. The Mexica are known to have gathered deities from conquered realms and effectively excavated the past. Being the primary rulers of the valley of Mexico, the Mexica were “always and intentionally reaching out in geographical and temporal senses to more fully inhabit and activate their cosmological frameworks.”⁴⁵ In understanding the ancient Mesoamerican worldview, the duality of religious figures reminds us of the duality of the volcanoes themselves. Volcanoes provide fertile soil that has the power to give life in the form of crops. However, although the land can provide life, it can just as easily bring destruction to everything around it. In the Mesoamerican world, landscapes that surrounded various indigenous groups could diverge in meaning from each other. So that “each regional landscape had its personality and thereby demanded adjustments in the application of shared universals of Mesoamerican belief... providing localized, physical anchors for a widespread suite of complex beliefs related to the world’s beginnings, the afterlife, and cosmic world structures.”⁴⁶

Long before the Spanish came into the valley, indigenous communities appeared to have kept a close watch on the volcanoes. Despite no extant, written record, geological surveys suggest that many eruptions occurred prior to the year 1519. One early tale that displaying the continuous records, concern, and tales around the volcanoes concerns the Legend of the Five Suns. The legend

⁴⁴ Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 142.

⁴⁵ Lucia R. Henderson “Touched by Fire: Volcanoes in Ancient Mesoamerican Belief.” Presentation, UT Mesoamerica Meetings, Austin, Texas, 2018.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

is part of a series of sacred poems that were sung in schools known as *calmecac* and is revealing of the most important cosmological myth of the Nahua people. The original text was collected by unknown indigenous informants around 1558, but its origin and antiquity go far back to remote times. Nahua voices tell the story of four creations (or suns) that were destroyed by different natural forces. There it is narrated that the third sun was extinguished by a rain of fire (likely a volcano): “His sign was 4-Rain. It was called *Sol de Lluvia* [of fire]. It happened that during it rained fire, those who lived in it burned. During the event it also rained sand. They also said that the pebbles we see rained on it, that the Tezontle stone boiled and that the rocks were reddened.”⁴⁷ The description leaves no doubt that the myth refers to a volcanic eruption of monumental proportions, unmatched by any that have occurred in historical times in the highlands. In their unpredictable nature, the volcanoes then seem a ripe point in the geography of Mexico for deification. The volcanoes are powerful forces, and it is not difficult to understand why legends were created to attempt and explain how they came to be. Landscape in Pre-Columbian societies was inherently tied with religion. Veneration at sites such as the volcanoes may have implicated that this was a place where deities inhabited.

In this early period, the idea of ‘nation’ as it is later defined is practically nonexistent, but imagined communities as a system still functioned. The argument for early examples of imagined communities have been presented in works by scholars like Takeshi Inomata.⁴⁸ Inomata suggests that the performances of rulers as seen depicted on stone monuments involved large audiences, which in turn gave semblance to a Maya community. In order to create pre-Hispanic communities, they needed to be anchored in the tangible images and acts that each individual could directly

⁴⁷ Miguel León Portilla, *Los Antiguos Mexicanos a Través de sus Crónicas y Cantares* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 19-27.

⁴⁸ Takeshi Inomata, “Plazas, Performers, and Spectators: Political Theaters of the Classic Maya” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (October 2006), 805-842.

sense. Inomata suggests that strong ritual activities that involved large members of the community were crucial to the development of a cohesive unit. Although Inomata focuses on Maya rituals, it is possible to imagine that the Mexica may have used ritualistic activity at the volcanoes for similar purposes.⁴⁹ Grand ritualistic gestures and offerings at sacred locations, like the volcanoes, where many individuals sense and witness the bodily existence and participation of other members allowed for the notion of similar identity to be created. One example of ritualistic activity the Mexica performed in within a specified landscape can be found in the New Fire Ceremony. The ceremony was not a yearly ritual but rather special in that it was only performed once every fifty-two years and involved the community at a state and local level.⁵⁰ Fifty-two years that represented full cycle of the Aztec Calendar. The priests would climb a hill called Huixachtlan, also referred to as *el cerro de la Estrella*, for this ritual. The ceremony involved the use of a fire drill, which the priests used to start a new fire on the chest of a sacrificial victim. The sacrificial victim's heart was thrown into the fire.⁵¹ Anthropologists Christina Elson and Michael Smith explain that "Once the priests had started the new fire on Mount Huixachtlan, signaling the renewal of the world, this flame was used to light torches that were carried by runners to all the neighborhoods and towns to relight the domestic and public fires...In ritualistic activity, the cultural and moral values of the community are objectified and embodied."⁵² Such stories suggest that veneration and ritualistic activity around the volcanoes likely existed long before the Mexica came into the valley of Mexico. However, to what extent and what is pertinence was is difficult to ascertain due to lost codices.

⁴⁹ Admittedly, continuous research is needed in the exploration of rituals at the volcanoes and how they configured within Aztec religious ceremonies. For the extent of this paper, it is sufficient to say that undoubtedly religious ceremonies *may* have been conducted but requires further evidence and thorough support.

⁵⁰ The New Fire Ceremony was a celebration of the renewal of cosmic time, and was observed on the local and state levels which aided in the uniting of communities. The remnants of which can still be found at Aztec sites. See, Christina M. Elson and Michael E. Smith, "Archaeological deposits from the Aztec new fire ceremony," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 12, no. 2 (2001): 157-174.

⁵¹ Elson and Smith, "Archaeological deposits from the Aztec new fire ceremony," 158.

⁵² Inomata, "Plazas, Performers, and Spectators," 805.

Again, the volcano was only renamed Popocatepetl by the incoming Mexica who are often thought of as coming into the valley in the 1300's. As they came into the valley, the Mexica continued veneration of the site. The relationship between the land and Mexica appears tenuous at best, as it had a relationship that involves a reinterpretation of the role of the personified volcanoes. The Mexica symbolically appropriated the local worship of volcanoes in the 15th and 16th centuries and, by conquering new territories, imprinted their presence by making their claim to places of worship, such as the volcanoes, as a manifestation of political dominance.⁵³ Following Inomata's argument, the need for continuous ritualistic activity allowed Mexica to appear as the natural successors to the land.

B. Early Spanish Chroniclers

In the early period of contact between Spanish and indigenous communities, Early Spanish chroniclers attempted to make sense of the unfamiliar land by dominating the landscape. The Spanish began to use the religious activity found around the volcanoes for their evangelization projects.⁵⁴ Further, Spanish chroniclers and *conquistadors* like Hernan Cortes began to categorize the land for the resources that it had to offer; the volcanoes were no exception to this. Not only were bodies subjugated and tamed, but so too were the volcanoes when Hernán Cortés sent men, to ascend the volcanoes to lay claim to the region effectively.⁵⁵ The project of dominating the landscape began its first steps towards a 'civil state' when Spanish missionaries began building religious structures on the immediate town surrounding the volcanoes. The strict control of the volcanoes begins during the 'conquest' period and continues during the early colonial period. It

⁵³ Johnna Broda, "Symbolism of volcanoes. Volcanoes in the Mesoamerican worldview," *Arqueología Mexicana* núm. 95, 40-47.

⁵⁴ There is in fact, a route to tour the architecture built in the 16th century by the Spanish the 'ruta de los monasterios' around Popocatepetl. See Carlos Marín Martínez, "Tetela del Volcán, su historia y su convento." *Revista de Historia de América* (1968): 65-66.

⁵⁵ Villa Roiz, Popocatepetl, 115.

was in the early colonial period that the area of the volcanoes was framed as belonging in the province of Chalco Amecamecan, which heavily depended on the spiritual activities of the Archbishop of Mexico. Franciscan and Dominican friars aided the project further, figures like Martin de Valencia, who led the first twelve Franciscans who arrived in New Spain into the valley. The arrival of Spanish text changed the way that history itself would be written and rewritten. After Spanish arrival, the introduction of the Latin alphabet followed, text itself began to morph until Nahuatl also became a literary language. Whereas in previous pre-Columbian ideograms and phonemes it was impossible to express long sentences in pictorial text, the new alphabet changed the methods in which indigenous knowledge was recorded. Poems, history, and legends that were once preserved through oral tradition, drawings, and sculptures began to be written on paper. In a sense, some of the earliest chronicles aided in rescuing memory. The caveat, however, is that although some authors were eyewitnesses to events, others merely wrote what they heard or repeated what they read. Whatever the case may be, Spanish chronicles reinterpreted and reimagined the land as a newfound paradise, a new larder and resource that would come to fill both their coffers and those of Spain.

Initially astounded by the grandeur of the volcanoes and Popocatepetl's literally explosive nature, many early writers appear both awed and struck with terror. The earliest chronicles mentioning the volcanoes come from Spanish 'conquistadors' who recorded their observations and reactions to what they were seeing. These early interpretations of the volcanoes seem to be full of curiosity at the perceived new land. It was the Spanish that first began to explicitly endow the mountains with human characteristics. For example, in the case of Iztaccíhuatl, she is represented in the form of a woman even though it appears that 'white woman' was her given Nahuatl name. Iztaccíhuatl's figure is more closely regarded as being linked with the geography rather than with

an anthropomorphic form or with sentimentalities attributed to human beings. In pre-Columbian depictions, in addition to the lack of an anthropomorphic form, Iztaccíhuatl was also rarely drawn as a binomial with the Popocatepetl volcano. After 1521 one or both volcanoes appear as a territorial reference, and Iztaccíhuatl does not possess the now-familiar form of a woman.⁵⁶ We know that Iztaccíhuatl was called a “white woman” in the early period following Spanish contact because Chimalpahin, at the end of the 16th century, wrote “white woman” as a descriptor of Iztaccíhuatl twice. The gendered form of the volcano as Iztaccíhuatl was further used once by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún and then again by Friar Diego Duran and Torquemada. Diego Duran later says that Iztaccíhuatl was represented in the Templo Mayor of Mexico, but its characterization was more sophisticated, as in not abstract, than it was drawn in the early Vindobonensis Codex.⁵⁷ Sentimentality is inherently tied with Enlightenment sensitivities. There is a degree of imbued sentimentality in the landscape, but it is important to acknowledge the epistemological roots of sentimentalist beliefs. To make this clear, the anthropomorphic qualities of the volcanoes are religious before the arrival of the Spanish, not sentimental. One could say that a degree of ‘pathetic fallacy’ existed long before Ruskin coined the term, as people were already attributing gendered spaces to the volcanoes. That is, Iztaccíhuatl was already known as the white *woman*, and Popocatepetl was already tied with the male coded figure of the deity Tlaloc. However, it is important to reconcile this with the fact that by imbuing Ruskin’s idea of “pathetic fallacy,” early indigenous epistemologies become morphed from their original form.

The earliest accounts were written by now famed figures such as Bernal Diaz del Castillo and Antonio de Solis, who had accompanied Hernán Cortés. Later chroniclers included mestizo writers like Diego Munoz Camargo, who continued in the early Spanish chronicler tradition. Early

⁵⁶ Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 96.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15-19.

chroniclers speak about the grandeur of the mountains, relating to their sublime nature and overtaking of the landscape of the valley of Mexico. In his second letter to Charles V, Hernán Cortés marvels at the sight of the volcanoes, writing that "At eight leagues from the city of Churultecatl there are two very high and very marvelous mountain ranges [...] and from the one that is the highest it (smoke) leaves many times, both day and night, as big a bundle of smoke as a great house, and that climbs up the mountain and towards the clouds."⁵⁸ Cortes effectively marvels at the way the smoke flies out of the volcano, but his letter seems to imply a realization of the danger that the volcano also presents. The ascension of the first European to reach the peak of Popocatepetl occurred when Cortes came into the valley. According to many Spanish chronicles, Diego de Ordaz was the first to climb the Popocatepetl.⁵⁹ There exists disagreement about whether Ordaz climbed the mountain under the command of Cortes or if he took the initiative on his account. Whatever the matter may have been, it is recorded that the feat impressed Spanish audiences so much so that when Ordaz returned to Spain, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) decreed in 1523 that for his grand achievement Ordaz was permitted to adorn his family arms with a sigil representing a volcano erupting (Figure 3a & 3b).⁶⁰ Ordaz's ascent was one of the first that attempted to tame the land. The fact that emperor Charles V rewarded Ordaz is telling in how monumental the single act was for Spanish imperialism. Following in

⁵⁸ Original: "A ocho leguas de esta ciudad de Churultecatl se encuentran dos sierras muy altas y muy maravillosas [...] y de la una que es la más alta sale muchas veces, así de día como de noche, tan grande bulto de humo como una gran casa, y sube encima de la sierra hasta las nubes." In Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 111.

⁵⁸ Original from Hernan Cortes in *Cartas de Relación*: "A ocho leguas de esta ciudad de Churultecatl se encuentran dos sierras muy altas y muy maravillosas [...] y de la una que es la más alta sale muchas veces, así de día como de noche, tan grande bulto de humo como una gran casa, y sube encima de la sierra hasta las nubes." See, Homero Aridjis, "El Popocatepetl, Historia y Leyenda," *Artes De México*, no. 73 (2005): 170.

⁵⁹ Chimalpahin, indigenous historian assures us that that the merit corresponds to Chalchiuhtzin. Years later other chronicler, such as Alexander Von Humboldt, question the ascent of Diego de Ordaz; Humboldt explains that experienced alpinists consider it almost impossible to get down to the crater without proper equipment. In Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 96.

⁶⁰ Yuri Leveratto, *En busca de El Dorado* (2009), 109.

Ordaz's footsteps, many early chronicles explain how the Spanish climbed the mountain to obtain sulfur in order to make gunpowder.⁶¹ Later in the viceregal period, writings would explain how ice would be carried down the mountain and was a commodity wherein many people made their fortune.⁶² Not only were the Spanish climbing the volcano as a symbol of dominance, the sulfur they collected was essential in making gunpowder. In one sense, the volcano allowed the Spanish to further their colonization efforts by providing the materials needed to make gunpowder—a technological advance that allowed the Spanish conquistadors to capture Tenochtitlan effectively.

One of the earliest voices of the events of the 'conquest' and its effect came from the conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo. Castillo traveled to what is now Mexico in 1517 with Hernandez de Cordoba, in 1518 with Juan de Grijalva, and finally in 1519 with Hernán Cortés. During his travels, Díaz del Castillo witnessed some of the most violent events of the forced colonization of indigenous bodies. He eventually recorded an account of his travels in *The History of the Conquest of New Spain*. Diaz del Castillo notably writes some of the earliest notes on the volcanoes, specifically Popocatepetl, explaining that:

I feel bound to dwell on one other thing which they discussed with us, and that is the volcano near Huexotzingo which at the time we were in Tlaxcala was throwing out much fire, much more than usual. Our Captain Cortes and all of us were greatly astonished as we had never seen such a thing before. One of our Captains named Diego de Ordas was very anxious to go and see what sort of thing it was, and asked leave of the general to ascent the mountain, and leave was given, and he even expressly ordered him to do it. He took with him two of our soldiers and certain Indian chiefs from Huexotzingo, and the chiefs that he

⁶¹ Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 118.

⁶² Julio Glockner, *Los Volcanes Sagrados, Mitos Y Rituales en Popocatepetl y la Iztaccíhuatl*, (Mexico: Grijalbo 1996), 98-105.

took with him frightened him by saying that when one was halfway up Popocatépetl, for so the volcano is called, one could not endure the shaking of the ground and the flames and stone and ashes which were thrown out of the mountain, and that they would not dare to ascent further than where stood the cues of the Idols which are called the Teules of Popocatépetl, Nevertheless, Diego de Ordaz and his two companions went up until they reached the summit.⁶³

Díaz's account is notable for several reasons. Chief among them is perhaps again the mentioning of Ordaz's ascent. In his chronicle, Díaz labels Ordaz as greedy (which is omitted entirely from the English translation by David Carrasco), almost unable to restrain himself from climbing the volcanoes. Díaz makes it appear that Ordaz only ever really climbed it after he was granted permission by Cortes. Ordaz was also not the only person to ascend, as Díaz explains that he took other Spanish men with him along with some indigenous groups as guides. Another notable aspect is how Díaz frames Popocatépetl itself. For example, the volcano elicits fear from the Spanish; that much is apparent when Díaz says in his account that "...plunge of the earth and flames and stones and ash that comes from it." In other words, the volcanoes are both striking but, at the same time, elicit a terror in those who dare climb them—eliciting a sublime experience.

One of the most important historians after the fall of Tenochtitlan was Diego Muñoz Camargo. Muñoz Camargo created one of his most important works, the illustrated codex *History*

⁶³ Original: El volcán, echaba en aquella sazón que estábamos en Tlaxcala mucho fuego, más que otras veces solia echar, de lo cual nestro capitán Cortés y todos nosotros, como no habíamos visto tal, nos admiramos de ello; y un capitán de los nuesyros que decia Diego de Ordaz Tomóle codicia de ir a ver qué cosa era, y demandó licencia a nestro general par subir en el, la cual licencia le dio y aun de hecho se lo mandó. Y llevó consigo dos de nuestros soldados y ciertos indios principales de Guaxocingo; y los principales que consigo llevaba ponianle temor con decirle que luego que estoviese e medio camino de Popocatepeque, que asi llaman aquel volcán, no podré a sufrir el temblor de la tierra y llamas y piedras y ceniza que de el sale, y que ellos no se atreverian a subir más de donde tienen unos cúes (templos) de idolos que llaman los teules (dioses) de Popocatepeque. For original Spanish, see Villa Roiz, Popocatépetl, 107; For the translation of the work in English, See, Bernal Diaz Del Castillo and David Carrasco, *The History of the Conquest of New Spain* (UNM Press, 2008), 124-125.

of *Tlaxcala* between around 1581 and 1584.⁶⁴ Camargo's written history is one of the first, if not the first, to give the volcanoes some deeper semblance connecting them to humanlike qualities and properties. In his work, Muñoz Camargo states that "They (the Tlaxcalans) called the volcano Popocatepetl, and the snowy sierra Iztaccíhuatl, meaning the volcano that smokes and the white woman.... The snowy sierra and the volcano were venerated as gods, and the volcano and snowy sierra were *husband and wife* [emphasis mine]."⁶⁵ Muñoz Camargo's account then becomes the first to imbue the volcanoes with human-like qualities, understanding the snowcapped sierra as a woman and the smoking volcano as a man. Not only are the topographical features associated with a specific gender, but they are also given specific societal constraints of being husband and wife. In this vein, it can be argued that Muñoz Camargo was the first chronicler to imbue the volcanoes with a semblance of "pathetic fallacy."⁶⁶ Pathetic fallacy is not exactly the correct term to use, but it is the closest known term that is in dialogue with what the Spanish were attempting to do. Again, it is important to recall that there is a distinction between the terms sentimentality, enlightenment, and pathetic fallacy, as well as between native epistemologies. Muñoz Camargo derives his notes from the Tlaxcaltecan groups, providing support that early aspects of what would become a legend around the volcanoes were passed down orally. The suggestion of the volcanoes' social connection as husband and wife imbues them with a sentimental attachment, a recognizable relationship forged by human connection. Admittedly, the early connection of Muñoz Camargo and the volcanoes as anthropomorphic, sentimental forms is feeble. However, Muñoz Camargo's account provides the earliest stage of where human social qualities, marriage, is used to describe the

⁶⁴ "Historia de Tlaxcala," Glasgow University Library Special Collections Department, accessed December 2018, <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/jan2003.htmls>.

⁶⁵ Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala* (Oficina tip. de la Secretaría de fomento, 1892), 377.

⁶⁶ Pathetic fallacy may not be the correct term to use, it is a term that came from John Ruskin much later on but the term can serve as a lens to understand what was occurring during this period.

connection between features in the landscape. As Camargo was Spanish and using these terms, one can also infer that Spanish thought was similarly attempting to make sense of the landscape, through Spanish accounts the volcanoes began to shift away from strictly having a religious connection. It is also noteworthy that as Camargo was a Spanish writer, he too could have misinterpreted native ideologies in his written works. The rise of attributing human characteristics with the volcanoes did not seem to continue beyond the late 16th and early to mid-17th century. In the 18th century, there is no representation of Iztaccíhuatl as the sleeping woman, or even in the guise of a woman that has been found. In the 19th century, Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl again were depicted in the guise of humans, having an anthropomorphic form. The point is that the depiction of Iztaccíhuatl fluctuates, but the form of a woman disappears and is not seen until the early 20th century in artistic depictions.

Although the chronicles of the early ‘conquistadors’ prove useful in configuring the volcanoes, what is perhaps more intriguing is the way that writers attempt to tame the land in their religious pursuits. Later religious Spanish-missionary historians write about indigenous beliefs and practices to provide priests information useful in their evangelization efforts. Therefore, even when these later historians are describing Mexica history and religion, they are presenting an outsider’s view and interpretation. Consequently, this means that there is always a high possibility of misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the native point of view. The fear of the first friars and Spaniards to the destructive effects of the volcano may have been, in the face of indigenous epistemologies, a limitation in evangelization since the power of the important Christian God on this land was limited due to the vast distance between the ‘new’ land and Spain. Early consolidation of the landscape and syncretism of indigenous beliefs with Christian ones were needed to tame the land. The construction of Christian architecture over indigenous sites of ritual

became methods of control. By giving the volcanoes human form in their narratives, the Spanish chroniclers effectively controlled the narrative around two important sites of ritualistic activity—Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. More specifically, there is a shift from the abstracted forms found in the early codices like the Vindobonensis and Nuttall codices in favor of the structured, realistically anthropomorphic, rendered bodies of the volcanoes.

Further, the construction of temples aided in the shift from religious function, creating a sense of community with Spanish colonizers in the Americas. By divorcing the indigenous ritualistic concept of the volcanoes, the Spanish transferred control of the geographic range over to themselves. Early chronicles display an attempt to make sense of the world, not just geographically speaking but religiously, by trying to comprehend indigenous beliefs. What is intriguing is the usage of human personification of the volcanoes where there previously had been none. Nahuatl naming of the volcanoes can be counted as early personification of the volcanoes. However, I suggest that there was no clear personification in the form of anthropomorphic figures with the name of the volcanoes. In effect, I interpret the shift and the construction of architecture on the skirts of Popocatepetl as early attempts to naturalize the geographical region, to take away from the ritual aspects of the volcanoes so as to impose a different meaning upon them. A famous example of the importance of architecture to claim control in the Americas is visible in the reconfiguration of the hill of Tepeyac. Catholic evangelization efforts imbued the land with Christian imagery in the form of the Virgen de Guadalupe, giving rise to the legend of how the original Basilica of Guadalupe was built after the efforts of the indigenous figure of Juan Diego. Fourteen 16th-century monasteries were built on the skirts of Popocatepetl by the Augustinians, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans in the project of evangelization. Early monasteries were important models for early Christian architectural constructions. Architecture became a form of

control over the landscape as missionaries Christianized the Americas.

During the early centuries following the Conquest, there is close to no connection between the volcanoes and the indigenous body. Although the volcanoes were constantly depicted, they were rarely depicted in an anthropomorphic form. One of the exceptions to this was Bernardino de Sahagún's work. Bernardino de Sahagún, a Franciscan friar, worked on the 16th-century Florentine Codex in collaboration with numerous indigenous informants. Sahagún's work is important in the way that it combines both indigenous and Spanish knowledge into one work. Therefore, it is critical to remember that Sahagún was compiling indigenous knowledge through indigenous labor. In his writings, Sahagún is brief in mentioning the volcanoes. Like others before him, Sahagún also explains that he climbed the mountains with others and that indigenous veneration was still ongoing at the site. Sahagún's combined work on the Florentine Codex is notably important, as it is the first work that depicts the volcanoes within the context of Spanish history. In one notable illustration, the Codex depicts Hernán Cortés' entrance into the valley (Figure 4). Cortes' entrance is framed by the volcanoes at either side of him as he is flanked by the soldiers that follow him. Also important is an image in which Sahagún and his employed *tlacuilos* give Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl a religious face (Figure 5). In depicting the ongoing religious customs of indigenous groups, the illustration displays Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl as gods, shaped out of amaranth with human faces. Although they are not displayed next to each other, the volcanoes coexist on the same page with other important features. Certain attributes that distinguish the volcanoes from other figures appear to be depicted, but without much to compare to, it is unclear if Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl have specific iconographic markers that distinguish them and that were established during this period. That is not to say that the volcanoes did not figure largely in Pre-Columbian beliefs. Rather this implies that anthropomorphic depictions, with

a human face, predating Spanish influence may have long since been lost. As the story and religious significance of the volcanoes was likely orally passed down through possible generations, there is no written record of the narratives surrounding the history of the story of the volcanoes.

Fray Diego Durán was another figure in the early history of Mexico. Fray Diego Durán is astounded by the volcanoes in the same manner as others before him, writing in his *History of the Indies of New Spain* (ca. 1581): “The hill Popocateztin, which in our language [Spanish] means smoking hill...whom we see smoke visibly two and three times a day and many times together at first night.” Durán’s work is important in configuring the role of the volcanoes not only in religion but in its indigenous worldview. Durán worked closely with indigenous communities to draw information for his work, and employed indigenous artists to illustrate his writings. Thus, his work is a combined effort that mixes both Indigenous and Spanish epistemologies. Popocatépetl then is depicted in Durán’s history as a large mound that is surrounded by five smaller mounds, smoking and in the middle of what appears to be an eruption. The five mounds around Popocatépetl are unrecognizable, closer to glyphs than actual realistic representations. Thus, it is unknown if one of the mounds is meant to represent Iztaccíhuatl. Iztaccíhuatl was, however, later drawn in a seated position, here she carries the guise of a woman (Figure 6). Popocatépetl in human guise is not next to her as her counterpart. As mentioned, he is only depicted as a giant mound surrounded by five smaller hills. The early illustration is tame when compared to Helguera’s later work. The covering of her body with clothes may be a configuration of the snow that covers Iztaccíhuatl in real life. The image that the artists in Durán’s employ produce is devoid of any sensuality and, as previously mentioned, her partner is not there to watch over her as he would later be. In Durán’s later work, Iztaccíhuatl kneels, she wears indigenous garb, and her face is streaked with a line on her cheek. It is interesting that although Durán was active in evangelizing conversions, he paradoxically

laments the destruction of so many indigenous codices. However, from his writings, it appears that he does not lament indigenous knowledge lost, rather he laments the fact that the destroyed codices cannot be used by the priests to help in the conversion of the Indians.

C. Indigenous Knowledge and Interstices

Although the Spanish were prolific in their writings, they were not the only ones to produce a narrative on the volcanoes. Already, in the early years, there is some intersectionality in terms of knowledge. As different epistemologies met, ideas were concurrently shared to form an early hybrid culture. The production of knowledge shared by two different cultures is visible in the Codex Mendoza as well as in the Florentine Codex. Evangelization projects marked the beginning of an era in which the Church was established as the rector of artistic productions. Thus began a history of importing models from Europe that opened a chasm between the productions of the indigenous people and those of the artists introduced by the Europeans. The Florentine Codex is perhaps the best example of indigenous and Spanish authors and artists working in conjunction with each other to categorize New Spain. Perspectives on the changing status of society are rare from an indigenous viewpoint. Some few found are written by Domingo San Anton Chimalpahin and Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc. Chimalpahin and Tezozomoc are some of the earliest notable chroniclers of indigenous background. Intersectionality exists in the depiction of volcanoes, as Spanish and Indigenous epistemologies became one in some select codices.

Some codices that depict the volcanoes are the Huamantla Codex, the Telleriano-Remensis Codex, and the Codex Mendoza. The Codex Huamantla depicts an abstracted form of the volcanoes (figure 7). The codex, of Otomi origin, is believed to have been completed in 1592, and contains the work of two differentiated artists. The first artist depicts the story of the migration of the Otomi people, while the second artist depicts the Otomi's participation in the 'conquest' of

Mexico and life under Spanish domination. The volcanoes do not appear frequently but appear to be depicted in reference to the shift of life under the control of Spanish rule. In the Telleriano-Remensis Codex (figure 8), there is a section of information devoted to seismic activity. On page 42, there is the image of a volcano erupting whose text reads that they saw a “great clarity... which was very resplendent ... at night that lasted more than forty days ... in the eastern part, which left the earth and then reached heavens.”⁶⁷ The exact year of the eruption of Popocatépetl is rendered with the year 1509 (figure 8) shown in a clear roman numeral. The volcano is depicted abstractly, still having remnants of indigenous iconography, but as it shoots off smoke into the heavens, the iconography of the stars is reminiscent of pictorial conventions introduced into the Americas by the Spanish. The depiction of a mound appears to correspond to an active volcano with volutes that reach a celestial sphere designated by seven painted stars. To the left of the erupting volcano is another hill with what appears to be the head of a bird, both mountains are linked by a thick black line. Despite the connection, it is unclear if the representation is one that features both of the volcanoes. The Codex Mendoza, created in 1541, years after the fall of Tenochtitlan, is explicit in referencing the volcanoes. Page 17 represents Popocatépetl as a hill whom they call ‘Poctepec,’ hill that smokes; four volutes emerge, which was similar to other glyphs that depict the smoking mountain.⁶⁸ The survival of the Codex Mendoza and the knowledge it displays is important. Not only were the works such as the Codex Mendoza created as records, but also as a way for Charles V to understand the new empire that he ruled across the sea. The Codex Mendoza was likely commissioned by Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza, where it obtained its name, and shows a continuation for the need to control the narrative about both indigenous bodies and land. That is,

⁶⁷ Original: “Vieron una claridad... muy resplandeciente... de noche que duro mas de quarenta dias...y que estaba en la parte oriente, y que salia de la tierra y llegava al cielo.” In Carlos Villa Roiz, *Popocatépetl*, 91.

⁶⁸ Villa Roiz, *Popocatépetl*, 37.

that the codex was meant to catalogue the economic, political, and social panorama of the newly conquered land. It is also important to note that the Codex Mendoza is often said to be a copy of a pre-Hispanic book and thus pre-Hispanic knowledge which would become appropriated by the Spanish for their own purposes.⁶⁹ The Codex Mendoza was compiled at the behest of those in power (the viceroy) and was constructed under the supervision of Spanish friars. The knowledge written in the codex came from native scribes and interpreters who were solicited from a generation that could still claim firsthand knowledge of 'pre-conquest' Aztec life.⁷⁰ By categorizing everything, including the movements of the volcanoes, the writers produce an ordered view for the emperor to understand and in effect control. Spanish writers appear to have influenced the narratives, even in the case of Chimalpahin, an indigenous writer. Chimalpahin, for example, uses language that often infantilizes nomadic, indigenous groups in the valley.⁷¹ This is not to criticize Chimalpahin or to legitimize his work, but rather to show the effect of Spanish chroniclers. As the Spanish settled, so too did their methodologies in describing the landscape. Written text became focused by a lens that was influenced through Spanish epistemologies. Language was heavily controlled by and for Spanish audiences. Most of the written work was meant to be shipped back for the Monarchy so they could see the progress of categorizing the land and success of Imperialism.

D. Spanish Monarchy and Landscape

Land and its domination by Spanish Imperialists was already an established goal of the project of the empire. In the heraldry of many Spanish kings before the discovery of the Americas, the Pillars of Hercules are a clear example to how the Spanish monarchy adapted symbols of the

⁶⁹ Frances Berdan and Patricia Rieff Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza* (University of California Press, 1992), xii.

⁷⁰ Berdan and Anawalt, *The Essential Codex Mendoza*, xii.

⁷¹ Glockner, *Los Volcanes Sagrados*, 47.

land to depict and hold control. Long before Spanish contact with the Americas, the Spanish Monarchy established two upright pillars on their heraldry. What is notable about the pillars is that they are constantly depicted with the motto *plus ultra*, which in Latin means ‘further beyond.’ Symbolically, the pillars on the heraldry stand-in for the geographic area of the Strait of Gibraltar, a narrow strait that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea. Most commonly however, the strait is referred to as the Pillars of Hercules because of its connection to the mythology of Hercules' twelve labors. In this sense then, the pillars stood as a gate to the rest of the world, what Spain could see and claim – especially out to Morocco and the rest of the African continent. Prior to the fateful voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492, the motto that accompanied the pillars was changed to *non plus ultra*, or ‘nothing further beyond,’ warning sailors leaving the Mediterranean Sea that they had reached the end of the known world. The elimination of “*non*” when the motto was adopted by Charles V relates to the Spanish crown’s new expansionist ambitions following the discovery of the Americas.

In connection with the land, the motto implies that the pillars were a gateway, defining the edge of the known world at the time. The disappearance of the *non* after the discovery of the Americas could be seen as Spain laying to rest the idea that the strait of Gibraltar was the westernmost extremity of the known and habitable world. Once the Americas were ‘discovered’, Charles V appears to have restored the old motto, *plus ultra*, as once again Spain began to see a land they could lay claim.⁷² The connection here to the volcanoes is that the early usage of the land as an entrance or gateway could be interpreted as being on par with the method in which the strait of Gibraltar was understood. As the biggest geographic markers of the landscape, the

⁷² For further reading, on the *Plus Ultra* motto and columns of Hercules as triumphal emblem of the Hapsburg Holy Roman Empire of Charles V in Atlantic New Worlds, see Earl Rosenthal, “Plus ultra, non plus ultra, and the Columnar Device of Emperor Charles V,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), 204-228.

volcanoes functioned in the same manner as the strait of Gibraltar, as the gateway into the Basin of Mexico. That is, the volcanoes similarly functioned to display the power of the Spanish crown and their expansionist efforts.

As a gateway then, the volcanoes would open the Americas as a land replete with new resources. The crown held many interests in the resources New Spain offered and the volcanoes, specifically Popocatepetl, figured in these newly acquired resources. For example, the later 18th century Jesuit scholar Francisco Clavijero is clear in the usage of the volcano as a resource for ice to make desserts.⁷³ Clavijero notes that the usage of ice was at the very least semi-regulated by the crown, “[the ice] is consumed throughout the year. The rights that the king received in the middle of this century (XVIII), of the snow that was consumed in the capital, amounted to 15,520 *fuertes*; Today they pass as, I have heard, of 20,000 *fuertes*.”⁷⁴ It appears then that the crown was attempting to use anything and everything that the volcanoes offered, making a great deal of income in the process. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish crown exercised a monopoly in New Spain on mercury, gunpowder created from sulfur from the volcanoes, pepper, the silman (a corrosive sublimate), and the snow of the mountains that was used to make sorbets. In the monopolizing of land as a resource, the historian, Fernandez de Oviedo, would further write that “...there has been much sulfur of very good quality that has been taken out (of the volcanoes) to make gunpowder, there is a boundless supply so as to remove as much as one would like.”⁷⁵

It stands to reason then that the Spanish crown might have interpreted the volcanoes as the

⁷³ Original: “El Iztaccihuatl, que tambien ha eructado alguna vez humo y cenizas, tiene figura de caballete y es conocido con el nombre vulgar de Sierra Nevada. Uno y otro [Popocatepetl] tienen siempre su emiencia coronada de nieve, y en tan gran abundancia que de la que se precipita a las quebraduras se abastecen las ciudades de Mexico, Puebla, Cholollan, y demas poblaciones situadas en una circunferencia por mas de 15 leguas, en donde se consume todo el ano infinita cantidad en helados.” In Francisco Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, 9.

⁷⁴ Original: los derechos que percibia el rey a mediados de este siglo (XVIII), de la nieve que se consumia en la capital, ascendian a 15,520 fuertes; hoy pasan segun he oido decir de 20,000 (Fuertes).in Francisco Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, 9.

⁷⁵ Villa Roiz, *Popocatepetl*, 107.

American equivalent to the Strait of Gibraltar. That is, the volcanoes came to symbolize a gateway, the marker of a new journey through the straits of Gibraltar. The journey of Hernan Cortes ended through his entrance into the Basin of Mexico, crossing through the valley between the volcanoes, a new gateway to unforeseen resources. The connotation of the volcanoes as sentries to the valley of Mexico conflates the ideas of landscape and domination. In this sense, Helguera's later painting on the volcanoes also welcomes the viewer in – not only to see the image, but as a gate into the country itself.

III. FRAMING "MEXICO" THE EARLY 18th CENTURY

The question then becomes, how does the image of the volcanoes transform from one that focuses on geography and its resources to one that becomes imbued with sentimental attributes? Jesus Helguera's 20th-century artwork follows artistic styles that began to be used in early Creole imagery. More specifically, the profile positions of the volcanoes echo depictions of the volcanoes during the early Viceroyalty period. Additionally, I argue that the work of sentimentalization effectively has its origins in the early Novohispanic culture of Mexico City. The volcanoes began to be used as anchors of the city, identification markers of the 'new' land. The viceregal period of Spanish colonization would overlap with the Enlightenment period of Europe, which would propel Iberians to use coeval beliefs and methods in the processes of colonization. The volcanoes became a fundamental geographic marker between civilization and the savage wilderness. It defined the difference of the rationalized and ordered city and the unknown area outside the city, which was perceived as *barbarous*. Historian Richard Kagan, in his study of the production of urbanization, explains that "the fundamental difference between the *urbs* (the city as an architectural entity) and the *civitas* (the city as a community) dates back to Thucydides and the Aristotelian vision of the polis as a community where citizens live happily and in accord with the law and justice."⁷⁶ This is to say that the urbanized empire began to see its contrast in the non-urbanized people, those beyond the city limits that, at least on one side, were marked by the volcanoes. Largely, the groups that existed outside of the city were the Chichimecas. Chichimecas were the unincorporated groups of indigenous people that mainly inhabited the northern part of Mexico, but this term could also be used for groups outside of the city. The incorporation of these groups caused anxiety and fear among the population of the city and was thus became a constant source of preoccupation for those

⁷⁶ Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World* (Yale university, 2000), 19-20.

in the *urbs*.⁷⁷ The volcanoes then would come to represent one of the liminal boundaries of the city against the uncivil properties of nature and groups like the Chichimecas.

As markers to the boundaries of the civil *urbs*, the volcanoes stood as guards against the perceived threat of savage indigenous groups, a barrier from the civilized society protecting the order that had been carefully created. Images produced during the early viceroyalty seem to imply that the volcanoes are markers of what it means to belong to the city. Ideas of categorization and the demarcating of boundaries were transferred from Spain, as it is noted that the separation of these markers of civilization dominated the Spanish Middle Ages and the vision of the 'ideal' city during the Renaissance.⁷⁸ Further, the demarking of space and placing bodies where their perceived places in society were to be is in close connection with the way in which the Catholic monarchy overtook the Al-Andalus empire and demarcated people according to religion. Order was the preoccupation of Spanish colonizers, especially a growing Creole elite, in establishing a stable position from which they could enact governing rules and thus begin to establish or define an identity—not only for the indigenous bodies but also for themselves. In the viceroyalty of New Spain, the Enlightenment would find an early reference in the categorization of *castas* and the perceived dichotomy of *La República de Los Españoles* (Republic of the Spanish) and *La República de Los Indios* (Republic of the Indians). This appears to mirror the enlightened being capable of reason versus the unenlightened one lost to the wilderness. In Enlightenment thinking, for example, one finds Immanuel Kant's second and third critiques. Kant's base for reason often is defined by how nature is traded for reason. The enlightened Kantian subject, as defined by reason versus animality, becomes defined by his relation to nature. Mechanisms must be put into place in

⁷⁷ Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in the Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Yale university, 2004), 136-137.

⁷⁸ Eduardo Baez, *Cruelty and Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 32-33.

order to keep society from succumbing to savage bodies, read as a return to nature. In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler describes mechanisms whereby “[w]hat is refused or repudiated in the formation of the subject continues to determine that subject. What remains outside the subject, set outside by the act of foreclosure which founds the subject persists as a kind of defining negativity.”⁷⁹ In describing the opposing side of the enlightened Kantian subject, nature forms the underside of the idealized, enlightened world. As a result, in order to keep the Kantian subject, read the civil and reasoned subject, in a position that is enlightened, nature itself must be warded off. This means that a continuous process of warding off the savage, natural state represented by the untamed wilderness outside of the city, must be put into place. The volcanoes then aided in the process of warding off nature. Their natural location that bounded the city, along with the other hills that surround the valley, demarcated the boundaries of reason—the city.

In effect, the regulation and depictions of the volcanoes would aid in demarcating space, as they became markers of a landscape that on one side could be civil and, on the other, could be barbarous. During the early colonization project, images of the volcanoes—that is to say, any formal artistic reproductions by artists that were not chroniclers—are scant. Depictions of nature were relegated to the background since the diffusion of the Catholic religion, and the creation of the image of the new viceroyalty, occupied the priorities of those in power. Artistic sensibilities were ruled by European Renaissance and Baroque painting aesthetics. Art produced during this period showed a strong need to display the harmony of an emerging kingdom. In effect, some aspects of the landscape, such as the volcanoes, were not commonly depicted as they had nothing to show the Spanish in terms of success. Despite their constant attempts, the Spanish colonizers could not dominate the volcanoes; their best efforts were in neutralizing the threat. The volcanoes

⁷⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), 190.

were only mere subjects to urban views, always in the background as a geographical reference to the city. In the early years, it is new waters that the Spanish tread, tension and anxiety are visible, and there is a great need on the part of the groups in the power of self-assertion, of forming an image for themselves and Spain. Through the cities, cathedrals, and palaces, architecture is imposed as a symbol of possession as the new city is built atop the ruins of the conquered.

Thus, early attempts to make sense of the volcano made an effort towards taming the land, making it safe for Spanish to consume and thus partake in the building of what would become the nation. The early efforts of Spanish chroniclers sought to try in making sense of the land around them, to tame the volcanoes through the process of evangelization by building religious structures near the site of large religious activity. It was also the Spaniards who would initially imbue Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl with human qualities, ascribing to an early idea of pathetic fallacy. Further, writers influenced by Spanish writers would describe them as ‘man and wife’ as Muñoz Camargo did. Furthermore, the intersectionality of Spanish and Indigenous resources and knowledge were some of the first sources to give human characteristics to the volcanoes in their depictions, as is visible in the in the Florentine Codex and the Atlas Duran. Early inscriptions of the volcanoes sought to put them under the control of the Spanish and later would figure into Creole identity by framing the land of México, creating both civilized and uncivilized spaces.

A. *Casta* Images and Creole Anxiety

In understanding the origins of the sentimentalization of the volcanoes, it is crucial to understand the social make-up of society during the viceroyalty. The gendered associations of Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl, as female and male respectively, as well as their racial symbolism and connotations, has early roots during this period. Artistic modes of depicting the volcanoes arose during these early years. Particularly, early methods of depicting the landscape become

visible in art alongside methods of depicting the bodies that occupied the different tiers of political power. In Novohispanic painting tradition then, the *casta*, or caste, system is key in understanding attitudes towards both the people and the land. *Casta* images were often sent back to Europe to depict the people that inhabited the viceroyalty of New Spain. Art historian, Ilona Katzew, defines *casta* paintings as a “series of consecutive images [that] depict the complex process of race mixing among the three main groups that inhabited the Spanish colony: Indian, Spanish, and African.”⁸⁰ Multiple functions for *casta* images have been posited. Art historian María Concepción García Saiz examines the role of *casta* images in *Las Castas Mexicanas: Un Género Pictórico Americano*. According to the findings of García Saiz, the paintings were often souvenirs for European audiences. However, García Saiz also acknowledges the fact that not all *casta* images travelled to Spain.⁸¹ This indicates that *casta* images might have also had a local market in the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

First and foremost, the *casta* system was a transplant from Spain. *Castas* originated from the Spanish idea of *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood. During the *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula, the Catholic kingdoms sought to convert Jewish and Muslim communities to Catholicism. To enforce the process, blood purity laws were passed that were designed to segregate between those that had recently converted. *Limpieza de sangre* made it so that those lacking Jewish or Muslim blood were held above those whose ancestors had converted.⁸² *Limpieza de sangre* became important to understand how families had been 'tainted' by their non-Christian ancestry. For example, Jewish converts could never remove the tainted nature of their blood, even if many generations had passed, simply because they were Jewish. In New Spain, the *casta* system

⁸⁰ Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 5.

⁸¹ María Concepción García Saiz, *Las Castas Mexicanas: Un Género Pictórico Americano* (Olivetti, 1989), 47-49.

⁸² Maria Elena Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2008), 1-21.

morphed to represent the purity of blood among the perceived 'original' races. The first perceived original race was of the Europeans. Europeans were classified within two subcategories: *Peninsulares*, who were Spanish born, and *criollos* or Creoles who were Spaniards born in the Americas. This first 'original' race enjoyed the benefits of society and stood on the upper ranks. The second race was the *indios*, the indigenous members from the Americas. Like the Spanish, *indios* had different subcategories that categorized them according to their perceived level of barbarism. *Indios gentiles* were for example 'gentile Indians' while *indios Chichimecas* stood as the epitome of the barbarous in the Americas. The final category was that the '*Negros*' who were those that hailed from the African continent. The final 'original race' stood at the bottom of the ranking system, enjoying no social mobility.

In New Spain, the era saw the rise of the proliferation of sacred art, which responded to the need to spread the Catholic religion, as well as artistic productions that referred to civil issues focused on the affirmation of the Spanish triumph and on the racial superiority that the new rulers championed. During the categorization of the urban *civitas* and the savage state of nature, the politics of New Spain were mirrored within the categorization of the population. Performativity of identity, specifically to a perceived *casta*, came as a result of emerging social risks within New Spain. As an emerging leader in a cosmopolitan world, society had yet to be defined, and identity quickly became a concern to those in power. To keep power, a clear delineation of those who could and could not emerge to high status had to be established. In defining identity as relating to *casta*, risk came into play through how the New Spanish government became established. Initially, residents of New Spain were divided into two perceived racial categories: *La República de Españoles* (Republic of the Spanish) and *la República de Indios* (Republic of the Indians).⁸³ Of

⁸³ Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*, 200–226.

course, the inherent problem that the established binary represents is that not all the citizens of New Spain fit neatly into these two racial spheres. In order to satisfy the need for categorization of identities and establish a functioning society, the *casta* system was implemented. As a result, the early colonial era of New Spain was risky to navigate for those that sought to establish themselves within an elite class seeking both power and prestige. The *casta* system was not just categorization limited to the pictorial aspects of painting and artistic practice. Rather, *castas* were an actual means of categorizing the population of New Spain. Magali Carrera offers insight into how the *casta* categorization applied to life. Carrera explains that “*casta* paintings do not illustrate race, but instead *locate* it in the intersection of certain physical, economic, and social spaces of late-colonial Mexico.”⁸⁴ Further, *casta* images conflate social order and spatial order in one image, juxtaposing the imagined people in the paintings with the real and specific boundaries of social life.⁸⁵ Creoles and *Peninsulares* whose families hailed directly from Spain had held the upper rank of society since the mid-16th century. It was then in the early period of Spanish settlement that the elite Spanish were the only ones able to take and be appointed to higher roles within the government.

Furthermore, I argue that images such as those found in the aforementioned *casta* paintings and on the *biombos* instantiate Homi K. Bhaba's definition of race as a stereotype. Race, as in the case of *castas*, was something that needed to be fixed in order to be efficiently reproduced, and whose readings, “simultaneously, need to remain fluid for their adaptability.”⁸⁶ Only once hierarchies were a fixed structure could a stable identity and hierarchy be established. That is to say that once a stable point of departure was created, nationalism as a project could finally begin.

⁸⁴ Magali Carrera, “Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico,” *Art Journal*, 37, no.3 (1998), 38.

⁸⁵ Carrera, “Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico,” 43,

⁸⁶ Homi K. Bhaba, “The Other question” in *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2012), 94-5.

To satiate anxiety of identity and class, art became a powerful tool for the higher *castas* to set themselves apart from those that were located on the fringes of society. If New Spain was to become a nation of its own and to sever ties from Spain, it first needed a strict social definition of who were the elite and who were not. *Castas* then formed part of the labor in constructing Novohispanic society. *Castas*, as an established set of iconography, soon became an allegory "because ultimately, they do not name individuals or things, but rather personified abstractions, whose meanings are produced from the relations among the scenes."⁸⁷ Inherently, the elite who established the *casta* system was attempting to control ranks in society and send a message of their power. In other words, while the Peninsulares (who derived from Spain) and American-born Creoles were vying for power, there was a simultaneous need for *castas* to be defined. In other words, the structures of power needed to be set in order to create a stable foundation- especially for those who found themselves in positions of power, particularly the Peninsulares and Creole elite. In configuring power, images that were produced during the early colonial period tend to use icons in images for their performativity of identity and to cement their status within an increasingly intermixed, cosmopolitan society.

As years passed and Spanish transplants began to intermix with the indigenous population, the aforementioned *República de Españoles* and *República de Indios* were formed to reduce anxiety created as a result of miscegenation. However, trade began to bring in more people from all over the globe and concerns arose over what to make of the new residents of New Spain. *Castas* then categorized the different hierarchies of society based on racial background and appearance, assigning each subgroup composed of various mixtures of the original races a name and rank. Again, those that were born in Spain were placed at the top, and Black and Indigenous bodies were

⁸⁷ Oscar E. Vázquez, "Allegories of Race: Casta Paintings and Models for Theorizing Race," in *Early Modern Visual Allegory* (Routledge, 2017), 70.

at the bottom, and example is found in Luis de Mena's *Virgin con las Castas* painting (Figure 9).

What is especially striking in this *casta* image is the fact that the first couple depicted, in the right-most, top position, is that of a white, Spanish woman and a naked, indigenous man. The indigenous man's nakedness is only merely covered by a loincloth. The elegance in the dress of the Spanish woman is contrasted by his lack of dress, save for his head crowned with a multicolor feather headdress. The man is also shockingly depicted with a bow and arrows in hand, signaling that the man is an '*indio Chichimeca*,' a 'savage.' The child that this pairing would produce would be identified as a 'Mestizo.' *Mestizo*, as an identity, began to gain traction in the early colonial period. By classification, a mestizo was one who had genealogical traces from both Spanish and indigenous nobility. Noticeably, in the later artwork by Jesus Helguera, Popocatepetl is depicted as having a darker toned skin, which contrasts against his white-skinned, female companion Iztaccíhuatl. The conventions of racial categorization arose during the early viceregal period so that the stability of identity could effectively be produced. The later configuration of Popocatepetl as a dark toned indigenous man and Iztaccíhuatl as a pale skinned indigenous woman reflects the pictorial tradition of the early depictions of a *mestizo* identity in *casta* paintings. As an emerging nation, Mexico sought to show the glory indigenous history offered, but only dared to include some indigenous bodies.

Although most *castas* may seem to be of a secular nature, they also served to reinforce Christian ideology through the promotion of marriage in the depiction of a couple and child, promoting the idea of the legitimacy of offspring produced.⁸⁸ In effect, *casta* paintings aided in the legitimization of the child of the union between the perceived racial identities in Novohispanic

⁸⁸ The familial structure of castas might have been modeled on depictions of the Holy Family which depict the Virgin Mary, saint Joseph, and Christ as a child. See Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-century Mexico* (Yale University Press, 2005), 39.

society. Through the *casta* system, the two notions, biological (as in physical characteristics like skin color, hair texture, facial characteristics and beyond) and social (as in based solely on social perceptions, associations, and definitions believed to delimit one as of a particular race), became connected as one.⁸⁹ The inherent hazard for the already established elite then became concerned with being identified as the wrong *casta* and thus placed in a lower social category. There was also constant fear of the lower *castas* invading the elite circles. Although works like *casta* paintings pictorially represented and defined specific racial categories that were assigned to at birth, *casta* paintings ultimately were not reliable. An established category might be helpful, but *casta* paintings could not embody the full complexity resulting from variations of genealogical intermixing. Biology itself could make certain physical aspects become visible while making other aspects invisible, meaning *casta* systems were not foolproof methods in how to tell what racial category people should be placed within. Moreover, there were certainly residents who could "pass" as members of established higher racial castes, and thus 'invade' circles that they were not meant to inhabit. However, the obverse was true, someone could be born from an *Español* (Spanish born in Europe) and *Castiza* (of Mestizo and Spanish parentage), but be 'unfortunate' to have inherited the indigenous physical traits (as a *Mestizo* was created from Spanish and Indigenous parents). Although, by all means, a child of *Español* and *Castiza* parentage would be considered an *Español* since their blood was supposedly cleansed, their physical attributes could mark them as being of a lower social class. Additional anxiety over identity came into play when lower *castas* could buy their way out of the roles that had been preordained since birth. Purchases of "certificates of legitimization" allowed those who prospered through trade, or other means, to also buy their way into the elite. The cost of being in a lower *casta* included being rejected from elite circles,

⁸⁹ Patricia Seed, "The Social Dimensions of Race: Mexico City, 1753," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 62, no. 4 (November 1982): 574.

government positions, and could also exclude individuals from academic institutions such as the Academy of San Carlos, the established art school of New Spain.⁹⁰ Everything in life was categorized, from the art school to religious practice; nothing seemed to have escaped the eyes of the governing elite. Thus, the inherent possibility of being categorized as belonging to a lower *casta* and the invasion of those already in the lower categorized racial groups dictated Novohispanic society.

Dominance within the sphere of knowledge and categorization of the society of New Spain was inherently a method by which Novohispanic elite asserted their superiority within the society they had conquered, and within the hierarchy of categorization, they established. Artworks played a large role in the way narratives were constructed and communicated in New Spain, allowing those in the lower *castas* who were illiterate to understand their place within this new society. Literature was also an essential tool in this aspect, although most obviously aimed towards the literate elite. The *Gazeta de Mexico*, the prominent newspaper of Novohispanic society, is clear in how race was to be visible. Perceived lower *castas* were categorized into certain sections within the newspaper, which served as a fountain of wealth and events to the literate elite. Those of lower social classes, like non-elite natives or blacks, were only present as scientific specimens or to display their misfortune and misery.⁹¹ The treatment of the lower *castas* as scientific specimens is echoed in the imagery of the *castas*, using a Linnaean-like system to place people in a hierarchy of belonging. In dominating the social sphere and the narratives of the lower *castas*, the Creoles

⁹⁰ Susan Deans-Smith, "Dishonor in the Hands of Indians, Spaniards, and Blacks: The (Racial) Politics of Painting in Early Modern Mexico," in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, ed. Iona Katzew (Stanford University Press, 2009), 43-73.

⁹¹ "They were only mentioned when they reached a remarkable age, ran away from their slave owners, or gave birth to a baby born with profound deformities."⁹¹ In Kelly Donahue-Wallace, "A Taste for Art in Late Colonial New Spain," in *Buen Gusto and Classicism in the Visual Cultures of Latin America, 1780-1910*, ed. Paul B. Niell, Stacie G. Widdifield (University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 104-106.

and *Peninsulares* who formed the elite maintained identity through the conquering of knowledge, setting themselves apart from the rest of the masses. Art, here in the form of *casta* paintings, as explained by Magali Carrera “promoted a regulated and controlled image of the colony, which countered the anxiety fostered by the perceived threat of the other.”⁹² Here, the regulation of society is promoted to establish a boundary to prevent the lower classes from invading the upper ranks. As strategies of self-representation, *casta* paintings emphasized the overall stratification of society through the metaphor of race, while highlighting the wealth and abundance of Mexico, and involved the “deliberate mediation of reality through scenes selected for representation.”⁹³ *Casta* paintings constructed racial identity through visual representation through series of images recording the progress of miscegenation. Most often, *casta* paintings consisted of sixteen images, but the *casta* system could portray the miscegenation of many perceived races to other numerous categories.⁹⁴ Not only did most *casta* paintings depict the miscegenation between the different mixes, but they also were a form of categorization. People, as much as the land and its resources, came to be categorized and exhibited in *casta* images.⁹⁵ Emphasis on the difference between the elites and lower *castas* was necessary in order to convince Europeans that the 'other' played no part in the self. Thus, the Creole elite established a hierarchy within which they were markedly different, and superior, to the subjects that they were ‘colonizing.’ By containing the 'other'—the perceived lower, racial *castas*—the superiority of the upper *castas* could be established. As such, the taxonomic impulses of the era were a means to convince the Novohispanic elite that there

⁹² Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 42.

⁹³ Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 42.

⁹⁴ The different miscegenation presented in *castas* depicted the outcome of mixing between Spanish Whites, Indigenous people, Black Africans, and those from Asia and thus could become very convoluted. See Ilona Katzew, *Casta painting: Images of race in eighteenth-century Mexico* (Yale University Press, 2005), 5.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

existed visual signs of difference with regard to racialized identities.⁹⁶ Of course, the *casta* paintings were not the only means of proliferating images that displayed the superiority of the Spanish elite; other such examples of control include methods of portraiture as well as images on luxury items such as *biombos*.

Luis de Mena's painting, *Virgen de Guadalupe and Castas*, painted in 1750, is a vivid example of the implemented categorization (Figure 9). The castas in Mena's painting are framed at top by the central image of the Virgin who is flanked by two views of the emerging city. At the bottom of the *castas* is the bountiful harvest of the new flora and fauna that the Viceroyalty of New Spain has to offer. This painting only depicts eight different *castas* but still manages to display the categorization and rank of classes that was an inherent part of the society of New Spain. The *castas* are segregated into two horizontal registers, each divided into four different columns. Each *casta* is clearly labelled at the bottom of its respective box, and, although they are not numbered, there is a definite order. Taken together, the varied subjects in Luis de Mena's *casta* painting make it a celebration of something that is uniquely 'Mexican,' specifically, the abundance of New Spain and a display of the diverse population that has flourished in the 'new land.'

B. Biombos and Performativity of identity and space

While *casta* images regulated the bodies of the emerging social order in New Spain, other art formats regulated the spaces and places that these bodies could inhabit. Initially inspired by Japanese folding screens known as *byōbus*, brought in through the *Manila Galleon*, Novohispanic *biombos* came to be perfect reflections of the cosmopolitan society in which they were born. *Biombos* drew from global art practices in the elaboration of their painted surfaces. The Japanese

⁹⁶ Susan Deans-Smith, "Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain." *Colonial Latin American Review* 14, no. 2 (2005), 184.

term *byōbu* is composed of two individual words, *byō* meaning protection while *bu* meaning wind. The set of words, put together, therefore literally mean "protection from the wind." Physically then, *biombos* in New Spain were used in the same manner as *byōbus* in Japan—guarding their owners from the wind. Importantly then, on a metaphorically level, the term "protection from the wind" takes on new meaning in New Spain. Just as the smallest breeze can herald an oncoming storm, the protection from wind can be thus reinterpreted as an aversion to risk itself.

Markedly different in iconography and level of elaboration, *biombos* become attuned to the tastes of a new clientele in the Americas. As markers of social superiority, *biombos* displayed the acculturation of the Creole elite and the spaces that they ruled. Influenced by the Enlightenment and its ideals, *biombos* in New Spain began to depict narrative scenes, categorically situating everything in its place and defining what culture and taste mean—effectively putting the world in order. The idea is further supported by the iconography that was being employed in the decoration and elaboration of *biombos*. New and established citizens of the upper-classes of New Spain began to use established iconography from Europe, as well as explicit symbolism and references to class and social hierarchy, to shield themselves from the social perils of the Americas in which they were living. *Biombos*, through their imagery, began to define the roles of citizens, categorizing the population and defining spaces—both public and private—by race, gender, wealth, power, prestige, and beyond. Artwork depicted on *biombos* then can be interpreted to be a method of calming anxiety over New Spain's role within the cosmopolitan world Novohispanic residents were now living in. To this extent, *biombos* served as an aid in defining the place of the elite as well as creating and defining the colonial subject, the 'other' as part of the categorization process, and to quell anxieties of the Spanish and Creole elite and create the idea of a nascent civilized, and eventually independent, nation.

Although *biombos* were high-status luxury items, the images depicted on their surfaces were not meant to be merely decorative but to aid in the domestication process of the country and establish identity. In her essay "Manifest Domesticity," Amy Kaplan posits that the domestic space is congruently tied with the sense of the nation and nation-building itself. The domestic is placed in a binary system in opposition to the foreign.⁹⁷ It then becomes essential to recall that *biombos* were used for the demarcation of private and public spaces within the home. As screens, *biombos* also served to gender space, artistically one side was depicted as one side was usually deemed masculine while the other was depicted as being feminine. Another favored location of *biombos* in the domestic sphere was the master bedroom. Art historian Gustavo Curiel describes the spaces demarcated by *biombos* as "feminine space par excellence."⁹⁸ Curiel explains that these folding screens would be the backdrop to where "the lady of the house would receive important guests."⁹⁹ *Biombos* demarcated what was seen, what was public, against the private domestic sphere of the home.

Once more, a created binary exists, being mirrored in public against the private. In referring to Kaplan's theory, the domestic boundaries established by *biombos* marked the boundaries that established the nation inside the home. Cityscapes heavily featured as the core subject of *biombos*, their role serving to, in the words of Amy Kaplan, "neutralize the land," domesticate and effectively "nationalize the foreign."¹⁰⁰ Significantly, in the usage of *biombos*, when contrasting the domestic with the foreign, the perceived binary of masculine and feminine spheres would be joined as one against the foreign.¹⁰¹ In approaching the imagery on *biombos* and the structure of

⁹⁷ Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (Sep 1998): 581-82.

⁹⁸ Gustavo Curiel, "Los biombos novohispanos: Escenografías de poder y transculturación en el ámbito doméstico," in *Viento detenido: Mitologías e historias en el arte del biombo* (1999): 19.

⁹⁹ Curiel, "Los biombos Novohispanos," 19.

¹⁰⁰ Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," 585.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 582.

New Spain's emerging social hierarchy, I turn towards Enrique Dussel, the historian and philosopher, in part to make sense of imagery found decorating the surfaces of *biombos*, and to also place the social hierarchy of the time period in dialogue with why artists might have felt the need to use said imagery on *biombo* artworks—especially in creating the nation and a sense of national identity. Although *biombos* were commissioned, a theme was laid out and the artist had stylistic choices in how a scene would be portrayed. Dussel argues that Hernán Cortés gave expression to an ideal of subjectivity that could be defined as the *ego conquiro* (I conquer. Therefore, I am), predating Rene Descartes's articulation of the *ego cogito* (I think. Therefore I am).¹⁰² The significance of the Cartesian *cogito* for modern European identity, and by extension European transplants in New Spain, has to be understood against the artistic works of self-expression and identity through the idea of *ego conquiro*—here embodied by *biombo* and *casta* images. *Biombos*, for example, delineated the public against the private. They quite literally dominated space, marking a boundary. In a similar fashion, I read the volcanoes as markers of the city, the *civitas* against a backdrop of the known.

One of the earliest painted images of the volcanoes is seen in Pedro Villagas' painting of *La Viga's Walk (Paseo de la Viga con la Iglesia de Iztacalco)* (Figure 10). The usage of the volcanoes in this method of framing then shows and early establishment of using the volcanoes to define space (like *biombos*) in the early 18th century, as seen in Pedro Villagas' painting of *La Viga's Walk* (Figure 10). This painting is important in understanding the use of volcanoes in art as it appears to establish a firm iconographic way of depicting the volcanoes. Specifically, as geographic markers that demarcate the boundaries of the city of Mexico and oversee what transpires in the

¹⁰² Enrique Dussel, "Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Trans-Modernity: In dialogue with Charles Taylor," in *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities* (1996) 133.

city. The "Canal de la Viga" was eventually established as the primary medium of merchandise transport to the center of Mexico City. One can no longer find it, as once its usefulness in transporting cargo passed, the canal was covered over and a street was built.¹⁰³ The canal depicted in *Paseo de la Viga* was the first navigable canal in America. During Spanish rule in the early 17th century, the canal was further improved and extended to connect Xochimilco with the heart of the capital.¹⁰⁴ The canal orders not only the cities, but also how different classes came together on its waters and banks. The usage and depiction of the canal in art and in real life can aid in understanding the importance of the networks of communication. That is, that the canal served to move both people and items connecting the inner city with the area around it. Pertinent to the study of the volcanoes, Villegas appears to demarcate and ground the canal with the image of the volcanoes in the top left corner. Villegas' painting is important in that it represents the oldest, and perhaps most elaborate, panoramic view of the Canal de la Viga and the *chinampas* in the area. The commissioner of the artwork is unclear, but the figures at the center are primarily thought to be Viceroy Francisco Fernandez de la Cueva, Duke of Albuquerque, and his wife, Juana de la Cerda.¹⁰⁵ De la Cueva was viceroy from 1702 to 1711. In order to anchor his painting, Villegas chooses to paint the volcanoes in the upper left corner. As it becomes common during this period, the volcanoes begin to be depicted in a particular profile. Taking a modern map of Mexico, one can see that the view of the volcanoes in Villegas painting corresponds with him being situated in a North-West position centered around what is now the Zócalo or main square in Mexico City. From the main square, Villegas looks to the south-east to paint his work. In the depiction of

¹⁰³ María del Carmen Bernárdez de la Granja, "El canal de la Viga: Movilidad y actividades urbanas," in *Anuario de Espacios Urbanos* (2012), 148.

¹⁰⁴ Pedro Luengo-Gutiérrez, *From Colonies to Countries in the North Caribbean: Military Engineers in the Development of Cities and Territories* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 43.

¹⁰⁵ Andrés Reséndiz Rodea, *Paseo de la Viga: Frontera Idilica y Social* (Conaculta INBA, 2013), 5-6.

Iztaccíhuatl, her profile is not stylized—there is no single body implied nor sinuous curves attributed to the volcano. The only aspect that makes the volcanoes recognizable as Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl is their snow-covered tops and the two peaks that Iztaccíhuatl possesses. Thus, Villegas, in his depiction of the canal and the landscape deploys in the first instance an alternative scope to urban monotony and progress of the elite. Villegas depicts one of the earliest views of the volcanoes, as it anchors the busy canal and thus the people who inhabit and work in and around the city.

In examining the depiction of volcanoes in early paintings, such as in Villegas' work, it is easy to see that in the early colonial project, the shape of the female body was not used in the depiction of Iztaccíhuatl. This method of depicting the volcanoes was separated from a sentimental attribute. That is to say that for there to be a deep, sentimental attachment to the image being depicted the shape or suggestion of a body is required. The lack of the body in the depiction of early works as in Villegas, and those found on biombos, is perhaps why earlier images were not as successfully prolific as in later centuries. As in, the volcanoes feature in some biombos but are not nearly as prolific and widespread throughout New Spain as they would be in later Mexico. The lack of the body meant that the geographic features were only used as topographic markers and barriers, a symbol of the city and the boundaries of the civil and barbarous states. The use of the volcanoes as markers of the city become heightened by their use in the imagery of biombos, which physically could mark space. The integration of landscape into the categorization system is seen in the *Biombo con vistas de la Ciudad de Mexico* (Figures 11). Early on, the depictions of the volcanoes are not sentimentalized to the degree that it would later become. However, this does not downplay the volcanoes and the relationship to defining space. In both the *Biombo con vistas de la Ciudad de Mexico* and in *La Viga's Walk*, space is clearly defined by the level of civility of bodies depicted.

In the left-most portion of the *biombo* panels (figure 11), the volcanoes frame the city of Mexico, showing the civilized state of the elite. As the eye travels to the right, the tattered clothing and sparse buildings in the landscape speak to figures that were commonly excluded from the activities of the city, those that do not belong. For example, those in perceived indigenous casta were excluded from the main city's *traza*, the area that was reserved for Spaniards around the main plaza. Those that were then perceived as being indigenous would live in the area surrounding the *traza* in large indigenous neighborhoods.¹⁰⁶ At this time then, there is no romanticization of the volcanoes; instead, they serve as geographic markers that define the limits of civilization and identity of the elite creoles who control the city. Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl are depicted in profile and are given positions, right and left, respectively. In the *Biombo con vistas de la Ciudad de Mexico* (Figure 11), the viewer can see that the volcanoes directly frame the back of the urban city at the left-most side of the *biombo*. The landscape is positioned from a side view rather than from a bird's eye view, and the viewer can see that as the landscape shifts towards the right, the traces of civilization become lost. In effect, the city transitions from the urban elite who are enlightened to the savage lands. Even though the city is not wholly depicted, it is essential to note that the city view has important military and administrative functions, but it is also an artistic invention, which involves imagination and memory.¹⁰⁷ Once again, we come back to defining the limits of the city as an "architectural entity" (*urbs*) and as a "community" (*civitas*).¹⁰⁸ The city as a community can be seen as a personified individual that is unique to its history, memories, and traditions. It is thus a crucial site of forging the identity of the empire and the nation. The cityscape

¹⁰⁶ Barbara E. Mundy, "Moteuczoma reborn: Biombo paintings and collective memory in colonial Mexico City." *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, no. 2/3 (2011): 165-69.

¹⁰⁷ Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Kagan, *Urban Images*, 9.

as the core subject of *biombo* further heightens the intention of domesticating and nationalizing the foreign. With the volcanoes placed as the fortresses to the city, protecting the *civitas*, the viewer can effectively neutralize the danger of the unknown. For Spanish rulers, especially the Creole elite, in New Spain, this effort was necessary to legitimize continuous colonization and eventual independence. For Creoles, domesticating Mexico City was a means to enhance the Creole pride.

Although the depictions of the cityscape might not be seen as sentimental without a body for the viewer to relate to, the opposite is true. The whole of the human condition and the viewer's place within it is emotionally connected to the depicted scene because they, the Creole elite, were responsible for making the city. That is that the Creoles came to define the city in contrast to an uncivilized wilderness; they set the limits of who was and who was not an enlightened being. While the Peninsulares may have laid original claim to Mexico, the creoles would give semblance to a national identity. The notions of nationalism then could be tied to the Creole reclaiming of the land by building new architectural forms and giving rise to new enterprises. No longer was the land just land for Creoles, but rather it was *their* land, an inheritance that they had come to rule and now was their domain.

Another example of the defining characteristics of space through *biombos* and the rise of sentimentalization towards the subjects of the volcanoes is found in the *Biombo de la Conquista De México y Vista De La Ciudad De México* (Figure 12 & 13). The fall of Tenochtitlan as a subject was a frequently depicted subject for the Creole elite. As sentiments of a nation began to spring forward, Creoles depicted the theme of 'conquest' as a symbol of the roots of their created identities. *Peninsulares* were ranked high in the themes of conquest, and Creoles began to reclaim the event through works like *biombos*. On one side (Figure 12), the chaos and destruction of war is depicted while important facets of the brutal encounter are numbered in a box on the bottom

left-hand side. Most of the numbered places are architectural monuments, symbols of the emergence of an ordered Novohispanic civilization. The legend in the bottom left side identifies important figures and moments in the battle to conquer Tenochtitlan. Moctezuma, for example, appears multiple times, showing the collapsing of distinct historical moments in this single depiction of the conquest. Moctezuma is depicted in a palanquin meeting Hernán Cortés for the first time, as well as in his final moments when his people supposedly rose against him, stoning the ruler to death. The death of Moctezuma itself is debated, as the stoning of Moctezuma might have been invented by Spanish narratives.¹⁰⁹ Other prominent indigenous figures are also shown, such as Cuauhtémoc, and Doña Marina (La Malinche) are also depicted. The reconfiguration of Cuauhtémoc and Doña Maria into the narrative limits their roles and heightens tensions between indigenous bodies that aided Spanish efforts and those that did not. Contrasting the indigenous bodies are the Spanish, who are shown on horseback wielding firearms. It is notable that on the ‘conquest’ side, not only is the fall of Tenochtitlan depicted but so too is the attack by Pedro de Alvarado during the *Noche Triste*.

On the opposite side (Figure 13) is the city of Mexico, which is configured neatly, in stark contrast to the chaos of the conquest on the front. The view is a bird’s eye view of the city, which following in the views of W.J.T. Mitchell’s theses on landscape, would suggest complete control for the viewer—in this case, somebody of the Creole elite.¹¹⁰ The cityscape presented on this side of the *biombo* is an expansive view that was likely based on a 1628 map of the city by Juan Gomes Trasmonte.¹¹¹ In the ordered city, we see the difference of the city in contrast to a savage state, as seen on the frontal side. Dignity and nobility are present not just in the ordered city, but also in the

¹⁰⁹ Kevin Terraciano, "Competing memories of the Conquest of Mexico," in *Contested Visions in the Spanish Colonial World* ed. Ilona Katzew (LACMA, 2011): 55-78.

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 3.

¹¹¹ . Mundy, "Moteuczoma reborn: Biombo paintings and collective memory in colonial Mexico City," 165.

numbered places of interest—the architecture and monuments scattered through the image. Just as on the frontal side, the reverse has a legend that lists essential monuments, including the *Parian*, the *Alameda*, and the viceroy palace. On the left-hand side, near the borders of the city in the foothills, the Basilica of Guadalupe is visible; religion has come to tame the land. The scenes taken together are an important foundation for the identity of Mexico and the rise of the Creole elite. The first scene illustrates the beginning of the country as a national entity that was forged through war and conquest. The contrasting opposite side is ordered, recognized as the modern city. In both scenes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl serve to anchor the narratives that unfold below. On the ‘Conquest’ side, the volcanoes feature as anchors, witnesses to the events. The inclusion of ‘Popocatepetl’ in the legend under the number eight on the left side of the screen mark it as a geographical point of interest that anchors the events that are occurring. To viewers of the *biombo* as a collective piece, the scenes would have unified Creole audiences with a sentimental notion of the initiation of a nation. That is, a nation built on a sense of belonging with a specific group of people who have a rooted past. As a depiction of the landscape, the images on the *biombo* show the progress of Creoles and the violence that *had* to occur to achieve it. Through the *biombo*, the domestic is armed against the foreign to create an ideal notion of a Mexican landscape that is becoming a separate entity from the Spanish crown. The effect of violence is explained as being fundamental in ordering the city.

The great intermixing of classes, in a racialized sense, is highly visible in the *View of the Plaza Mayor* by the artist Cristobal de Villalpando (Figure 14). The painting is a bird’s eye view of the city’s main plaza. In the back, the disastrous effect on the viceroy’s palace after revolt is visible after the riot of 1692. In the center stands the great *Parian* or central marketplace. Villalpando creates the ordered city. A mere glimpse at the work displays the full range of citizens from varying

castas intermixing in *el Parian*. What is especially striking is that the volcanoes feature as anchors in the landscape in Villalpando's painting. The anchoring through the usage of the volcanoes would be echoed in Villegas' later painting of the *Paseo de la Viga*. Villalpando's painting is an imagined space in the sense that the volcanoes as they are painted, in reality, exist in a position that is not able to be viewed so directly from the plaza. In real life, the volcanoes are located further south-east of the plaza. The inclusion of the volcanoes then contrasts the authentic, depicted space of the *Parian* and the viceroy's palace. The volcanoes appear as an afterthought, not at the center, but they appear as an anchor to what is occurring in the city that they oversee. It is also strange to see the volcanoes on the right-hand side of the painting. Although, as mentioned previously, the volcanoes do exist on the right side, they are consistently depicted in the upper left and right registers of cityscapes. Again, Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl are only recognizable because they are the two principle mountaintops that reign over the city. Their snow-covered tops and side by side depictions inform the viewer that it is the Viceroyalty of New Spain that they are seeing. Despite the large amount of people that crowd the *Parian* and intermix, there is still an order to the chaos. Although the viceroy's palace is in shambles in the top register of the painting, Villalpando seems to suggest that everything is on its way to order.

C. Foreign Traveler Accounts

In his controversial book *The Conquest of America*, Tzvetan Todorov asks, "Is not a travel narrative itself the point of departure, and not only the point of arrival, a new voyage? Did not Columbus himself set sail because he had read Marco Polo's narrative?"¹¹² In the same manner, then, foreigners became enamored with the idea of the Americas after reading the literature that others wrote. Once New Spain became Mexico after severing ties to the Spanish Crown, European

¹¹² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 13.

curiosity about the new nation opened a new avenue of interpretation. Enlightenment intermingled with ideas of the Romantic era to give new form to the chronicles of foreigners in America. The traveling accounts of foreigners became a monumental force in the framing of the country. Chief among the new accounts was that of Alexander von Humboldt, who would go on to write *A Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* (1811).

After the declaration of Independence of Mexico in 1810, the country experienced profound changes in the manner of daily life. Therein, a cultural opening began that would lead to the evolution of new paths in the artistic representation of the volcanoes. During the early colonial period, only Spain had control of access to New Spain, but when Mexico as a new entity separated from the Crown, the country began to receive foreigners. Most of the new visitors hailed from England, Germany, and France. These new visitors, armed with their curiosity and adventurous spirit, viewed the new continent as a picturesque place, surrounded by myths, and legends. Alexander von Humboldt was the one who aroused interest in knowing the Americas, not just Mexico. Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, as markers of the city, loomed large in the mind of foreigners. The volcanos, most often Popocatepetl, would be the center of some of the frontispiece images to foreign travelers' chronicles.

As these travelers' writings and illustrations of the 'New World' spread throughout Europe, a great curiosity arose for Mexico, and numerous visitors who toured the country documented their visions through engravings, lithographs, and oil paintings. It was, again, foreign eyes that reinterpreted and introduced a new way of seeing the region. Europeans who arrived in Mexico were influenced by the romantic spirit, that is romanticism, that had as its object to represent an overwhelming nature incapable of being dispossessed or controlled – a return to the grand, sublime nature of the landscape. In the romantic notions of the land, man became overwhelmed by the

immensity he encountered with the landscape, and he was extremely attracted to wild or high-rise mountains that evidenced his limitation and generated in the viewer the feeling of the sublime. For the first time, the landscape becomes the expression of subjective states. In this context, it is understandable that volcanoes suddenly became a subject in themselves, and an essential stop within the routes of foreigners. Expeditions to the crater of the Popocatepetl were very popular among the travelers, who found in its immense mouth a romantic abyss. So too did the foreign travelers come to find what some would call the “mouth of the inferno,” stemming from man’s great terror in the unknown and, at the same time, an unavoidable attraction at a perceived pristine landscape.¹¹³

Whether intentional or not, foreign visitors to Mexico perhaps had a significant impact in the creation of nationalism: their formulated, romanticized narratives of the land gave rise to the locally made texts and images that would later follow. Tourist guidebooks and accounts were influential in the way the land was seen not only abroad but also at home in Mexico. It is through the tourist guidebook that one can understand the relationship between the tourist and the perceived toured ‘other’, and sets the parameters of their encounter. The need to travel and see with one’s own eyes was at its core a product of the vogue for the picturesque that arose with Romanticism. Writers and artists alike filtered images of the Americas, and consequently of the volcanoes, for new audiences. Artists constructed the city again, this time undoing the work of Creole elite and evoking a country that had barely constructed itself from the ruins of the past. The new landscapes being created evoked a nostalgic tremor for an imagined past and the unknown future. The need and continuous demand for the picturesque exemplified modern obsession with objectification and need the categorize—to domesticate the ‘savage’ unknown. The documents of travelers subjected

¹¹³ Mercedes Iturbide and Fernando del Paso. 2005. *El mitoMito de los volcanes: Popocatepetl, Iztaccíhuatl* (México, D.F.: Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes), 71.

nature to an ordering achieved through rationalized visual practices. In "Adventures in the Picturesque: Voyage and Voyeurism," Persephone Braham explains that "There is a serendipitous consonance between the earnest asceticism of voyage and the vicarious voluptuousness of voyeurism. Like the voyager, the voyeur seeks and achieves sensual gratification through the sometimes illicit contemplation of other lives."¹¹⁴ New narratives sought gratification from the land. They, the foreign travelers, were witnesses, part of an authentic experience that also distanced itself from the true reality of the city. Braham adds that "To know the city, to comprehend it as a text, while remaining physically separate from its messy reality, produces a voyeuristic pleasure. The semantic dissonance between pilgrim and pervert, voyager and voyeur, traveler and tourist, is resolved in the tourist guidebook, where culture is transfigured as text."¹¹⁵ Tourist guidebooks would incite further travel so that words and images captivated the minds of foreigners to see for themselves what the new Mexican country had to offer. The images of the grand volcanoes then made by traveling artists show man, in a broad sense, who is dwarfed when he discovers something fascinating and terrifying, that escapes his control and shows him his limitation. Nature is perceived as overwhelming, excessive, and profusely beautiful.

Foreign accounts about New Spain and the land and its inhabitants were not new subjects for European audiences. Writers from all over Europe voiced their thoughts and opinions on the "discovered" land. One such example is the 17th-century work *De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld* (The New and Unknown World) written by Arnoldus Montanus. Montanus was Dutch, a Protestant minister, and although he would never travel to the Americas, his accounts would prove to be a popular way for those audiences filled with curiosity about the 'new world.' As is to be expected,

¹¹⁴ Persephone Braham, "Adventures in the Picturesque: Voyage and Voyeurism in the Tourist Guidebook to Mexico," *Revista Canadiense De Estudios Hispánicos* 26, no. 3 (2002): 384.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Montanus's work is replete with errors and misconceptions about both the indigenous bodies that inhabit the Americas as well as the nature that is found within it. Still, the book became a standard information book in Europe, eventually being translated and published in England. It would be John Ogilby who would publish Montanus's work under the title, *America, Being an Accurate Description of the New World* in 1671. One striking image from Montanus's book is an illustration of Hernán Cortés meeting the Tlaxcaltecs in the valley of the volcanoes (Figure 15). Montanus is useful in comparison, as the image exemplifies how early images of the volcanoes do not attempt a sense of realism in their illustrations. Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl are both shown as two mounds that explode. Of course, at the time of Spanish contact, when Cortés traveled through the valley, Popocatepetl was the only active volcano. What is also striking about Montanus's engraving is that it follows the antecedent of Bernardino de Sahagún's illustrated image in the Florentine Codex (Figure 4). Spanish chronicles not only incited Spanish bodies to travel but would inspire foreign writers to write their narrative. Montanus's engravings worked in conjunction with stories so that when Mexico gained independence, travelers were ready to see what the new country had to offer, so they too might witness themselves what the Spanish had so carefully guarded.

It would not be until Alexander von Humboldt's account that foreigners would be moved to see the 'new world' with their own eyes. Humboldt and his works became reliable and safe methods for European audiences to digest the new land. Simultaneously as new European audiences came to the country, they brought their ideas and romanticized view of the land that was greatly influenced by Romanticism movement. Humboldt went on many expeditions, notably

going to Mexico in 1803 and recording his travels there.¹¹⁶ His interest in the volcanoes has been noted even though he never ascended the slopes of either volcanic range. Historian Andrea Wulf explains that Humboldt appears to have been interested in volcanoes for two particular reasons. The first reason was to ascertain if they were 'local' occurrences or if they were linked subterranean to each other. If they were not just local phenomena but instead consisted of groups or clusters that stretched across vast distances, they might have been connected through the core of the earth. Humboldt's second reason was that he hoped that by studying the volcanoes, he might formulate an answer to how the earth itself had been created.¹¹⁷ Still, concerning Popocatepetl, there seems to be another purpose. Although he did not climb the volcano, Humboldt left his mark on the volcano by being the first to measure it.

Humboldt's way of classifying the landscape is visible when he writes: "It is enough to name four of these colossi, *whose height was not known before my expedition*: the Popocatepetl (5400 meters or 17729 feet), the Iztaccíhuatl (or the White Woman, 4786 meters), the Citlaltepetl (or the Pico de Orizaba, 5295 meters), and the Nauhcampatepetl (or the Chest of Perote, from 4089)."¹¹⁸ Although Von Humboldt was inaccurate about the precise height of the volcanoes (Popocatepetl, for example, measures about 17,802 feet), the language he uses is intriguing. First, Von Humboldt positions himself as the possessor of 'true knowledge' by stating that the height of volcanoes "was not known before my expedition."¹¹⁹ Von Humboldt also measures the longitude and latitude of the volcano, evoking through text the images of early cartographic records attempting to categorize the land. Contemporary science has shown that Humboldt was off in his

¹¹⁶ For more information on Alexander von Humboldt's time in Mexico see, Frank Holl, "El Viaje Mexicano de Alejandro de Humboldt," in *Viajeros Europeos del Siglo XIX en México* (Mexico: Fomento Cultural Banamex, 1996): 51-62; Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (Knopf, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (Knopf, 2015), 81.

¹¹⁸ Alexander Von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain, Volume I: A Critical Edition*. (University of Chicago Press, 2019), 180.

¹¹⁹ Von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, 180.

approach to ascertain the height of the volcano – he claimed the volcano was the highest peak in Mexico when in reality, it is the Pico de Orizaba that is the tallest in Mexico. Additionally, the need to conquer and following in Enlightenment thinking, he too appears to try and dominate the landscape. Such was the case with Chimborazo, where Humboldt writes that he was the first person to ascend to such heights. There always seems to be the sense that man in his enlightened form has the right to dominate a savage nature, to conquer the unknown through classification.¹²⁰ By writing the heights of the volcanoes, Humboldt appears to advertise them as locations where others can too ascend and marvel at both the beauty they incite and the terror of violence they can release.

Traveler scientists and artists were commodifying the land while circulating images of a nation. Internally the images became something to be proud of, an anchoring point into a rich indigenous past. Externally, the biodiversity and perceived emptiness of the land became an advertisement for Europeans who wanted to voyage to an unknown land. Tellingly, two Mexicos were created simultaneously: the paintings and depictions of the landscape created an imaginary Mexico and real Mexico, which became reimagined through the lens of sentimentalized literature.

¹²⁰ Wulf, *The Invention of Nature*, 2.

IV. RECONFIGURING THE LANDSCAPE FOR A NATION

A. Nationhood

A cataclysmic battle for the use of the indigenous body began in an effort to stabilize identity in the period leading up to Independence. The Creole elite began to solidify their status as the creators of identity, status, and taste. In the formation of a national identity, the indigenous body became a site of contention for early formations of nationhood. To this day, the indigenous body has been a site of provocation and has wrought many battles when it comes to identifying with the Mexican nation. Many indigenous figures have formed part of the history that Mexico has imagined, prime among them figures such as La Malinche, Moctezuma, Cuauhtémoc, and later on in figures like President Benito Juarez. In one prominent example, Jaime Cuadriello has traced the lineage of the indigenous usage of figure in the creation of an official history of Mexico. As Cuadriello notes, "The ruler (Moctezuma) embodies the many tensions implicit in the fabrication of an official version of history. Moctezuma's indigenous background and his political status made him the ideal symbol for legitimizing the aspiration and demands of indigenous peoples during the colonial period."¹²¹ Creole intellectuals valued the traces of historical legitimization practices. Cuadriello writes that "The depiction of Moctezuma was necessary to guarantee the survival of the indigenous nobility and of all those who considered themselves familial and political descendants of the royal house of Mexico."

Moreover, Cuadriello explains that the primary function of depictions of Moctezuma came to be used as "devices of negotiation," attempting to negotiate a creole identity but again one that was in line with the past rulers of the land the Creoles now inhabited. For example, Creole freemasons

¹²¹ Cuadriello uses the image of Moctezuma to trace the flux of the indigenous body in the creation of a national identity. See, Jaime Cuadriello, "Moctezuma through the centuries," in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, ed. Iona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford University, 2009), 120.

used the figure of Moctezuma in 1824 as part of their efforts to legitimize themselves in places of power. Indigenous figures often were used as a bridge between centuries, not just for creoles in the early colonial period but up into the contemporary 21st century. In essence, the Creole elite were beginning to set themselves apart from the Crown, beginning to reconcile an indigenous past. The early findings of a national past predicated upon an indigenous body became necessary, but at the same time, conflict about how to define indigenous bodies was a concern for governing elite.

Gaining independence from Spain not an easy battle. Mexican art would not easily escape from the aesthetics and modalities of taste that had been borne of Spanish influence. The year 1810 marked the beginning of one of the most influential periods in Mexican identity. The era following post-independence saw the rise of artists that were attempting to portray the land as an independent country. As a sovereign country, Mexico sought to establish its history away from Spanish history and influence. To establish a firm foundation from which to build upon the history of Mexico, historians, and likewise artists, began to display history as being rooted in indigenous identity. The mid-19th century saw the rise of the indigenous body. However, a discrepancy was created in the process of establishing Mexican identity as being rooted in indigeneity. The process of co-opting the indigenous became a complicated process. If indigenous bodies were meant to be the beginning of Mexican civilization and history, how could this new history incorporate the still present bodies of indigenous groups and cultures throughout the country? It was this newfound Indian-ness that would make the sovereign nation of Mexico culturally unique and provide historical continuity. In the process, a binary would be created, establishing the well-known division between the “dead Indian people” and the “living Indian people.”¹²² The “dead Indian people” would be the source of authenticity and originality embedded in an exceptional historical past. An abundance of

¹²² Fernando Benítez, *Los Indios de México: Antología* Vol. 187 (1989), 47.

archeological remains and mythology, such as the legend of the volcanoes, revealed Mesoamerica. It was a Mesoamerica in the sense of a cultural area, including Central America and part of Mexico, as a center of indigenous civilizations and antiquity for more than twenty-five hundred years.

Following the years after independence, an idea of the nation had to reconcile the contradicting nationalist agenda of modernity. Modernity, in its broadest sense, is that of Westernization and industrialization, to the introduction of technological innovations and the acceleration of sociopolitical change. Lomnitz posits that cultural modernity is vital in the expansive project of the nation. More specifically Lomnitz explains that “Cultural modernity, too, is an expansive project that has challenged specific state institutions by shaping and upholding a series of rights around the category of the citizen, by insisting on a degree of autonomy for artistic and scientific production, and by fostering a ‘public sphere’ from which state policies and institutions can be evaluated and criticized.”¹²³ The genealogy of Mexico’s past became a concern to citizens of the country. If Mexico, as an independent entity, was to compete on a global stage, it needed to be a country that had a rooted past.

The art of this period became both effective and affective sites where nationalist ideas were built. Nationalism began to be built atop a foundation of sentimentality, hailing from the early ideas of Creoles who wanted to break from Spain. Eric Van Young refers to the use of the nascent symbols of nationalism as “the commodification of historical meaning.”¹²⁴ Cultural signs were effectively commodified and manipulated and diffused in order to naturalize the authority of those in power. A significant ‘cultural sign’ then could be seen in the example of the ‘mestizo’. Again, the idea of a Mestizo identity emerged from the viceroyalty period as members of a modern nation

¹²³ Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, 82.

¹²⁴ Eric Van Young, “Conclusion: The State as Vampire-Hegemonic Projects, Public Ritual, and Popular Culture in Mexico, 1600-1990,” in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, ed. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, William E. French Rowman (1994): 343-74.

built atop an ancient past. More importantly, it was in this new light that the volcanoes were conceived of as a cultural sign that could aid in the production of the nation. It was also in the post-independence years that we see the importance of rooting the idea of *Mexicanidad*. The nineteenth century usage of the indigenous body is prevalent, as the “Mexican” becomes defined as being primarily mestizo. The idea of Mexicanidad and *mestizo* identity would not be fleshed out until the post-revolutionary era but would begin in the work of figures like Porfirio Diaz. Magali Carrera explains that the idea that the country is made solely of the miscegenation between Spanish and Indigenous roots is “the conciliatory result of an everlasting encounter produced in the colonial times between the female indigenous settlers and male European conquerors.”¹²⁵ This crucial to understanding Helguera as he effectively uses the racialized, indigenous body and white female body to depict the volcanoes as mother and father figures. In Mexico, there is a long-standing project of assimilating indigenous people. The project of the nation is guided by the government and perpetuated by images. Such images include those like Helguera’s *Legend of the Volcanoes*. In the later 20th century of Mexico, Natividad Gutierrez Chong explains that through history the government has essentially been:

aiming to promote their acculturation in order to transcend their indigenusness and enable Indians to become mestizos. In this period, Indigenusness has also been perceived as an obstacle to nationhood, as it presumably continues reproducing cultures and loyalties towards a community, territory, or a region that is not identified as a being solely “Mexican.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Magali M. Carrera, *Traveling from New Spain to Mexico: Mapping Practices of Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Duke University Press, 2011), 185.

¹²⁶ Natividad Gutiérrez Chong, “Symbolic Violence and Sexualities in the Myth Making of Mexican National Identity,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 3 (2008): 525.

Mestizaje, during the 20th century, in Gutierrez Chong's view was a "massive socialization...with the standardization of public education and the three collections of uniform textbooks containing precise images and narratives of this fundamental theme of Mexican national identity."¹²⁷ Mexico, as a country, aided by the support of government and art, begins to embrace *mestizaje* as a way of life.¹²⁸ Sentimental attitudes would bring about ideas concerning the identity of the people of Mexico, imbuing the indigenous body with an authentic sense of what it meant to be 'Mexican.' The mid to late 19th century also saw the Mexican academy of art flourish. As it attempted to break away from European aesthetics, the Academy of San Carlos began to search for Mexican conventions of painting. In their attempts to depict a national subject, the Academy formally began to follow popular, select indigenous, and mestizo manifestations of Mexican identity. Jesus Helguera would draw from the cultural signs that were established in the mid and late 19th century. Helguera and the chromolithograph companies would have known the importance of the volcanoes and used them to successfully advertise their products for a 'Mexican' way of life.

B. Mexican Artists and the Grandeur of the Mexican Terrain

In the nineteenth century, the Valley of Mexico provided a geographic sense of pride and inspiration. The visually striking geographic area with its active volcano and valleys proved to have a robust nationalistic pull for citizens of the newly-formed independent country of Mexico. Mexican artists who identified themselves as belonging to the Mexican nation began to represent from what they saw, piecing together the country in their images. The depictions of the landscape by artists such as the famed landscape painter José María Velasco brought an air of pride in the 'new Mexican land.' From the landscapes that late 19th century artists depicted, Jesus Helguera

¹²⁷ Gutiérrez Chong, "Symbolic Violence and Sexualities in the Myth Making of Mexican National Identity," 537-534.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

would draw inspiration for his calendar artwork. It would be artists like Velasco who would aid in the codification of the nationalism that Helguera echoes.

One of the first enterprises that Mexico would undertake would be in charting, or mapping out, the newly defined nation. In charting the landscape for new viewers, Antonio García Cubas', late 19th-century enterprise of mapping Mexico in all its perceived glory attempted to capture what was at the heart of a nation, what made Mexico, Mexico. García Cubas was a well-known historian and cartographer, and his images would come to depict a unified Mexican nation. The images García Cubas produced were created for a Mexican audience but also external audiences so that they too might see the splendor of a new country. There is a deep reliance on images to show a connected Mexico, especially in the late 19th-century Porfiriato. That is, during the three decades (1848 to 1876) in which Porfirio Díaz took control of the country, as a political leader, he wanted to display a land that was connected. Not only was his idea of a cohesive Mexico displayed in images, but it was also during the Porfiriato in which the National Railroad system began to connect the country through trade.

Antonio García Cubas's images then fall into the years of the Porfiriato period. García Cubas' *Atlas pintoresco é histórico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (Picturesque and Historical Atlas of the United Mexican States) (1885) speaks to a united country. The *Atlas* was created using 13 images, all with a cartographic representation of Mexico, outlined by its modern political border as the central subject. The maps were published by Debray Sucesores in 1885, each image notably measuring 63 x 80 cm (25 x 31 in) in size. Each sheet has a specific subject surrounding the central map of Mexico depicting subjects such as ethnographic, communications, public education, ecclesiastical, and orographic maps, to name a few. Of importance here is the orographic map, which displays the prominent and most significant mountains in Mexico (Figure 16). Popocatepetl

and Iztaccíhuatl feature in the map twice, as two separate images above the map and within the map of the country itself.

In the side profile images of the volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl are placed next to each other. Iztaccíhuatl's image to the left and Popocatepetl to the right, a convention that was established earlier in the viceroyalty period. García Cubas could have chosen to depict the volcanoes on opposing sides from each other, or Iztaccíhuatl to the right of Popocatepetl, but the adherence to convention speaks to how the volcanoes were meant to be seen. The positioning of the volcanoes within their own framing devices intriguingly following the established positioning of the early viceregal period in that Iztaccíhuatl is on the left and hardly ever presented as being on the right. For Iztaccíhuatl, her feminine form seems to be exaggerated. Although she is not in a human form, the curves of the mountain appear to adhere to feminine attributes to the mountain. Popocatepetl, on the other hand, is strangely not depicted as a smoking mountain, as his namesake suggests. Instead, the mountain appears tame and devoid of any other features in the landscape. The volcanoes are depicted again in the left-hand side of the interior central map, numbered from one to 42 in order of height. Although we know that Popocatepetl is not the tallest peak, it is the Pico de Orizaba in Veracruz, the number "1" is found in parenthesis next to its name. Iztaccíhuatl is numbered as the third highest peak, and the rest follow it. The ordering of the mountains speaks to previous explorers in their quest to dominate the land. In García Cubas's prints, the volcanoes become categorized to a scientific degree. Science and enlightenment values see the volcanoes as joined on the map by appearance and measured heights, objects of a Mexican landscape that become effectively ordered. However, it is essential to recall the apparent discrepancy for what is being depicted in the works of García Cubas and how fragmented the country is before the Revolution of 1910. There is a focus on Mexico City, while rural communities suffered. The

majority of people in the country at the time were illiterate and did not have access to higher education. Indigenous communities were being forced off the land for textile production and railroad construction.¹²⁹ The art produced during the 19th century speaks to the joining of a nation slowly beginning to come together, at least those in power attempted to make it look like so on the surface. Figures like Porfirio Díaz used a variety of symbols as propaganda and to signify a unified nation, but the reality of society was much bleaker. There was progress in terms of industry, but the question that remains is- progress for whom? People in Díaz 's group of elite *científicos* (advisors to Porfirio Díaz) openly decried that Mexico was not ready for a democracy. As the *científico* Francisco Bulnes put it, Mexico was not ready for democracy because “of the large population of indigenous groups who were lazy and stupid and thus would not allow the nation to progress.”¹³⁰ The question then becomes, where do indigenous roots fit within the new Mexican nation?

Indigenous figures become practical tools for building the nation in the sweeping panoramic landscapes of José María Velasco. José María Velasco was one of the first who ‘faithfully’ depicted the valley’s terrain in his sweeping panoramas. Velasco was hardly the first artist to sentimentalize the Mexican landscape in the construction of the nation. As a student, he followed in the footsteps of predecessors like Eugenio Landesio. Eugenio Landesio was an Italian-born painter who revitalized landscape painting at the Academy of San Carlos. Landesio’s art would exercise considerable influence over the artists who were attempting to piece together the Mexican landscape, chief among them, José María Velasco. Landesio was an artist who followed the Romantic ideals of landscape painting. The influence of Landesio on artists like Velasco is

¹²⁹ John Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat: Artists and Labor in Revolutionary Mexico, 1908–1940* (University of Texas Press, 2017), 18-29.

¹³⁰ William D. Raat, “Los intelectuales, el positivismo y la cuestión indígena,” *Historia Mexicana* 20, no. 3 (1971): 420-23.

visible in the usage of iconographic signs in his painting entitled *El Valle de Mexico desde el cerro del Tenayo* (*The Valley of Mexico from El Tenayo*) (1870). In this piece, Landesio displays a family enjoying the sunset. Landesio attempts to portray every detail of nature as he saw it, for he encourages his students to do *plein-air* studies of objects, taking an itinerary everything in a landscape. Everything is carefully balanced out, from the lilacs to the oranges merge with the mountain range where Landesio displays the volcanoes. A light gently bathes the sky and descends to light the earth ad scene depicted. The characters in Landesio's work are elaborately detailed down to their dresses and hats, displaying a wide variety of 'Mexican' characters and characteristics. In his artworks, Landesio managed to give the landscape greater relevance as a genre. He was an artist who emphasized the importance of returning to direct observation of nature and let it be the guide in the artist's hand. However, Landesio also stressed the idea that no artist could ever fully call themselves a master of the landscape as that title belonged to the creator himself.¹³¹ José María Velasco was the successor of Eugenio Landesio's method of interpreting and reinterpreting the landscape. Velasco became so well-known and revered that it can be argued that in fame and nationalistic tendencies, he surpassed his teacher.¹³² Further, the importance of Velasco is contemporarily visible by the grand, permanent exhibition of his oeuvre that is on display at the National Museum of Mexico City. It was primarily through the lens of Velasco's sweeping panoramas of the landscape that a new and grand Mexico would be reevaluated and restructured, visible for the internal citizens of Mexico but also to foreign audiences.

In portraying the landscape of Mexico City, it is hardly a surprise then that the volcanoes consistently appear as part of the Valley of Mexico. The valley as a subject for interpretation

¹³¹ For Eugenio Landesio's methods as it relates to José María Velasco's teaching, see Fausto Ramírez, "Metodo de Landesio," in *Homenaje Nacional: José María Velasco 1840–1912 Vol. 1* (Museo Nacional de Arte, 1993) 65-100.

¹³² Ramírez, *Homenaje Nacional*, 102.

appears to have struck Velasco on a deep level, as year after year, Velasco produced painting after painting depicting the volcanoes as sole subject or as geographic markers of the valley. Although Velasco's paintings are not as sentimentalized as they would later be (such in Helguera's works), their significant contributions to the formations of a Mexican identity are noteworthy. One of the most striking depictions of the volcanoes is Velasco's 1875 *Valle de Mexico desde el cerro de Santa Isabel* (The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range) (Figure 17). Velasco's predecessor, Landesio, uses the volcanoes as an anchoring point, as they oversee the sprawl of the city but also connect to an indigenous past. In this same manner, then, Velasco begins to employ the volcanoes as markers to a rich past as it watched the city's advances and sprawl. The volcanoes are monumentally depicted to the left, counterbalancing the large city of Mexico in the valley.

Velasco's attention to detail is so intricate that the viewer can make out the towers of the Metropolitan Cathedral. Still, one of the most critical facets of the painting is found immediately in the foreground: a scene of indigenous figures, a mother with a baby on her back, and a young child as they retreat from the city. The people have no faces and are not identifiable. The viewer is allowed to interject people that they have seen in everyday life. The light that floods the figures allows the gaze to travel to the middle ground where the famed hill of Tepeyac and the early basilica of Guadalupe are visible. It is interesting that as a Catholic institution, the first symbols of the entrances into the city is one full of profound historical connotation. The entrance into the city by way of the Basilica of Guadalupe is then a celebration of the spiritual continuation of the city. As the viewer is drawn from the Basilica, the effects of the introduction of industry become visible. Increasing development appears to push or to ward off nature. However, the city is still dwarfed by nature, which could be an indication by Velasco of the indomitable force of the Mexican landscape. In the background, we see clouds and hills that balance the peaks of the volcanoes. The

volcanoes ground the painting, rooting Mexico City in a historic landscape, but at the same time, the signs of industry imply that Mexico is a land that is shifting, growing.

Velasco's landscapes are far from neutral. Velasco's landscapes were not only informed by his teacher Eugenio Landesio but followed in the Romantic artists of Europe like, John Constable, who evoked historical power while rooting their artworks in a scientific query and categorizing of items in the landscape.¹³³ The landscapes that Velasco painted were making clear statements of the bucolic and pastoral, the untouched in relation to the urban sprawl that was beginning to take control of the land. José María Velasco consolidated his observations in the landscape with scientific rigor. When he is not painting, Velasco studied the plants and figures around him, categorizing them in his sketchbooks. Effectively, Velasco imbued his work with learned scientific principles. The connection with science and landscape is visible in the memberships that Velasco held, such as being a member of the Mexican society of natural history. When he did not paint sweeping panoramas, Velasco also submitted artwork to *La Naturaleza*, a nature magazine dedicated to understanding the natural world. For a couple of years, he was even the official artist at Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology. It is easy to see then that Velasco was well aware of the meaning of the images that he used. He knew, for example, that if he painted an eagle flying off a cactus in one of his paintings, his viewers would connect what they saw to the founding myth of Tenochtitlan by the Aztecs. Even the people, such as the indigenous figures that can often be found in his work, serve to activate the authenticity of the landscape by rooting it in the past. In his works, Velasco not only traced the roots of the valley but also displayed the transformation of range by contrasting the metropolis with the natural valley that framed it.

¹³³ In the usage of figures as 'items' in the landscape, rendering them barely unreadable, José María Velasco follows artists like John Constable who are the main creators of modern landscaping. See John Barrell, "John Constable," in *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 131-164.

The usage of indigenous people is subtle in Velasco's artwork in comparison to Helguera's later artwork. The body as a site of negotiation. The early nineteenth century also brought along the question of identity and the rise of a mestizo identity. The tensions wrought by the mestizo identity became heightened. How was the government to compound indigenous bodies into one entity? How would present indigenous communities fit into the equation? These became some of the questions the government sought to resolve. The primary question was how do resolve the fact that indigenous bodies still existed and persisted into contemporary history, but at the same time, those same indigenous bodies were the locus of *Mexicaness* itself or something that had been rooted in the past. Essays written during the period, such as "*La Raza Indigena*" by Julio Zarate, reveal the ambiguous position that persists in society concerning indigenous bodies.¹³⁴ Writers distance themselves from the past by claiming that indigenous bodies have been conquered. Thus, leading readers to at first believe that indigenous bodies have become 'extinct'. However, what Zarate also does in creating his modern identity is that he reaffirms his connection, and this ownership, over the land by claiming familial bonds to those same 'conquered' indigenous bodies. The question arises, how could Zarate claim indigenous roots without actually being indigenous, as said indigenous people were supposed to be extinct? Paintings during the period were perhaps more straightforward than literature in their transformative power. "They remade Indians into Europeans and reaffirmed the genealogical attachment of Mexico's contemporary indigenist intelligentsia to the pre-Hispanic elite."¹³⁵ As art historian Stacy Widdifield explains,

The *India* could thus be refracted and resurrected in multiple representations: noble ruler, martyr, warrior, exotic princess, pathetic victim, or picturesque national detail. What all

¹³⁴ Stacie G. Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in Late Nineteenth-century Mexican Painting* (University of Arizona Press, 1996), 93.

¹³⁵ Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National*, 105.

these images share is the inscription of a process of assimilation into modern Mexican culture. Not a single image can be argued to be a finished, true, or real picture of an Indian; rather, they are pictures of what Indians should be. They are *simulacra* of the authentic in the picture of the nation itself, which was slowly recognizing its indigenous heritage at the same time that it was asserting its presence in, and kinship to, a universal European order.¹³⁶

The sentimentalization of the theme of the volcanoes would become heightened in the middle of the 20th century as part of the results of the Mexican Revolution. Most have argued that the image of the volcanoes that would come to be produced by Jesus Helguera as being the result of the conflict that the Revolution incited.¹³⁷ However, I argue that the iconography and usage of the image as a symbol of the nation began in the early years of Spanish colonization. Early notions of sentimentality and nation-building were present in the landscapes of José María Velasco; however, it was artists at the turn of the 20th century that would heighten the romantic notions of earlier years. It is one of the panoramas in which Mexico also represented itself in many expositions around the world. Velasco even traveled to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and to faraway countries like France to display his artwork. In his work, we also see the sprawl of civilization. The large size of the images that Velasco painted has the effect of sucking the viewer directly into the landscape, physically making them a part of the landscape that they purvey. The display of this landscape from this bird's eye view is reminiscent of the early cartographic representation of the city as it slowly becomes a civil state. Where *biombos* attempted to define the city against an untamed nature, Velasco appears to do the opposite, showing past, present, and

¹³⁶ Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in Late Nineteenth-century Mexican Painting*, 121.

¹³⁷ Tere Romo, "The Chicanization of Mexican Calendar Art," In *A presentation delivered during the Interpretation and Representation of Latino Cultures: Research and Museums, a national conference at the Smithsonian Museum, Washington, DC* (2002); Shimon De Valencia, "Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar: Art, theater, and the transformation of identity amongst Mexican-Americans of the American Southwest (1968-1992)" (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2016), 206-208.

future.

Chief among the artists to give poetic form to the volcanoes is Saturnino Herrán. Herrán would be one of the first to notably and successfully blend the idea of the body and landscape through the legend of the volcanoes. As an artist, Herrán was pictured as somebody whose work could capture the very essence of the poor, those that had been disenfranchised from the larger part of society by the government or otherwise. In an article by Federico Mariscal, after Herrán's untimely death, the configuration of what it means to be a 'Mexican' artist becomes visible. Mariscal places Herrán's work under a weighty title reading "Saturnino Herrán: The Most Mexican of Painters and the Greatest Painter of Mexico."¹³⁸ The importance of Herrán then is that his own identity became imbued with how his work was presented, his triptych *The Legend of the Volcanoes* included. Indigenous identity appears to be important in recognizing what it means to be Mexican. Manuel Toussaint, Mexico's foremost art historian, wrote Herrán's biography two years after the painter's death. It was in 1920 when Toussaint published *Historia del Arte en Mexico: Saturnino Herrán y su Obra* (The History of Art in Mexico: Saturnino Herrán and his work). Sentimental notions of art and artist are highly visible in how he refers to Herrán. Toussaint goes on to say that "One of the most interesting modalities of Herrán's art is the love of Mexico, the popular and typical Mexico, and the legendary, colonial and pre-Hispanic Mexico."¹³⁹ Romantic notions of how Herrán depicted the laborer, the peasant, and indigenous working class are also figurative in this romantic period. Toussaint lets the sentimental notion of art and artist be

¹³⁸ Federico E. Mariscal, "Saturnino Herrán: El más mexicano de los pintores y el más pintor de los mexicanos," *El Pueblo*, December 29, 1918.

¹³⁹ Original: "Una de las más interesantes modalidades del arte de Herrán es el amor a México, al México popular y típico, y al México legendario, colonial y prehispánico." See Manuel Toussaint, *Saturnino Herrán y Su Obra* (México: Ediciones México Moderno, 1920), 12-13.

tainted by the idea of Herrán's reconfigured indigenous rooted, Mestizo identity.¹⁴⁰ In truth, Herrán's father was of mixed Mexican indigenous heritage and his mother was of French-Swiss descent. Overlooking Herrán's parentage, Toussaint explains, for example, that Herrán's own indigenous identity weighed on his mind, poetically explaining that "[But] Indian sadness weighed on him with the force of doom, like an infallible poison diluted in the lymph of his veins."¹⁴¹ Part of the continuous emergence of Herrán's identity, it appears, was to emphasize the "Mexicaness" of Herrán. Jesús B. González, another writer writing in the same period as Toussaint, also wrote about Herrán in an article for the magazine *Azulejos*. *Azulejos* was a cultural magazine that was first printed in the 1920's, and primarily seems to have been focused on art. In the magazine, González echoes the previous writing on Herrán by monumentally stating that Herrán is the "most Mexican of all painters."¹⁴² Although González does not fully explain the reasons for which he considered Herrán the "más Mexicano" [most Mexican] of painters, it is an important, if not a weighty, statement that echoes the sentiment of the time. González repeats his opinion about "lo Mexicano" [that which is Mexican] in Herrán, indicating that his friend possesses a Mexican aesthetic, highlighting the "*tristeza india*" (indigenous sadness) that prevails in his work. Again, identity, as it became intertwined with this 'indigenous sadness,' depicts Herrán as a man so profoundly entrenched in understanding indigenous melancholy and sentimentality.

It is in the sphere of Herrán's indigenous identity and sentimentality in which narratives around his triptych were shaped by and for audiences. *The Legend of the Volcanoes* (Figure 18) as a triptych was the last work that Saturnino did while he was still at the academy. The connection

¹⁴⁰ Further, nationalism is notably recharacterized by Manuel Gambio in *Forjando Patria* but for the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to say that the period in which Manuel Toussaint was writing was a period of turmoil in the sentimental attachment to the idea of 'Mexicanidad' and *mestizaje*.

¹⁴¹ Original: "Pero la tristeza India pesaba sobre él con la fuerza de la fatalidad, como un veneno infalible diluido en la linfa de sus venas." In Toussaint, *Saturnino Herrán y Su Obra*, 12-13.

¹⁴² Jesús B. González, "Saturnino Herrán." *Azulejos* 1, no.4 (November 1921): 23.

between the volcanoes and the landscape is made blatantly clear as the anthropomorphic, nude forms of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl narrate the story. Parts of the story are written on the red frame around the images, but it is the painted images themselves that carry the weight of sentimentality of the story on them. In his famous triptych depicting the volcanoes, Herrán produces three, sequential, and pivotal events in the legend of the volcanoes. The first panel of Herrán's work is subtitled 'El Beso' (the kiss) and represents the illicit love and passion between the young Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. The central panel depicts the father of the young Izta. The father appears to castigate her with cruelty, disapproving of the love Popo and Izta share. Finally, in the third panel, the body Popocatepetl, alone, after his return knowing of Izta's death, laments his deep desolation. Herrán is the first to notably depict the volcanoes twice – in anthropomorphic form and in profile. He is also the first to flip Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl from the normal conventions with which they have been depicted for years. In the background, the volcanoes simply covered in snow perpetuate the story of love and loss. Despite the success of Herrán's images, he never reached the same level of success as Helguera's depiction of the legend. This is primarily because Herrán's artwork was static in the sense that it did not have the same sense of mobility that Helguera's image would. The consumer culture in which Helguera worked in was vastly different to the era in which Herrán was producing the images of the sensual, anthropomorphic volcanoes. In Helguera's time, due to the high production numbers and widespread use of the image as part of 'popular culture,' Helguera's artwork could reach all levels of society- not only the upper elite who could visit locations where paintings were held.

Although Herrán's depiction of the volcanos in human form is a return to depicting the volcanoes in anthropomorphic form, he was not the first to do so. In 1899, Heriberto Frias, Mexican journalist, and novelist published the first known written version of *The Legend of the*

volcanoes for his facsimile collection *La Biblioteca del niño Mexicano*. The facsimiles were printed by the Maucci Brothers, a Spanish publisher. Frias does not seem to have been commissioned by anybody, but seems to have written the facsimiles out of financial necessity.¹⁴³ From the title it is easy to establish what Frias was attempting to do since the title, *La Biblioteca del niño Mexicano* translates as the Library of the Mexican Child. Initially, the booklets were created between 1899 y 1901. It is crucial then to denote that Frias's publication came years before the country was thrown into the abyss with the chaos the Revolution would cause.¹⁴⁴ The booklets were small, comfortable enough to fit in the palm of an adult, but primarily printed for the hands of children. Frias was the author of the booklets while the now famed artist, José Guadalupe Posada, was the contracted artist for the covers and sparse images found within the booklets. The involvement of José Guadalupe Posada is important, for Posada's work would greatly influence the muralist moments in post-revolutionary Mexico. The numerous, small pamphlets attempted to cover over four centuries of histories and myths from the founding of Tenochtitlan up until the government of Porfirio Díaz. Frias' work was hardly the first to be published geared towards children. *Episodios Mexicanos* (Mexican Episodes) came before *La Biblioteca del Nino Mexicano*, published from August 1981 to December 1982. The work predates Frias, and especially noteworthy as it was created by the SEP (Ministry of Public Education). The operation of *Episodios Mexicanos* was working on a larger level than Frias, as it involved more than 50 people, including screenwriters, cartoonists, coordinators and advisers. The varied coordinators on the

¹⁴³ The exact reason to why Heriberto Frias wrote the facsimiles is not unclear but in his look at Frias, Eduardo Ayala Tafoya explains that "although [the facsimiles were] hastily written, [they] provided him (Frias) with means to subsist." See, Eduardo Ayala Tafoya, "Heriberto Frías y la versión pedagógico-literaria de la conspiración del marqués del Valle." *Literatura Mexicana* 27, no. 1 (2016): 55-74.

¹⁴⁴ Valentina Cantón, "La Biblioteca del Niño Mexicano. Lecturas infantiles para la formación del patrimonio cultural cívico," *Correo del Maestro*, no. 233 (October 2015): 45-54.

project that hailed from various disciplines that related to the social sciences.¹⁴⁵

Despite, *Episodios Mexicanos* predating *La Biblioteca del Nino Mexicano* there is no mention of the legend of the volcanoes. In Frias's work one of the prime legends is that of the volcanoes- *Historia de Los Dos Volcanes: Corazón de Lumbre y Alma de Nieve* (History of the two Volcanoes: Heart of Fire, Soul of Snow) (Figure 19). It is from this booklet that I have taken the title for this thesis, as the work was a callback to earlier traditions of depicting the volcanoes in anthropomorphic form. Instead of solely painting the volcanoes as part of a broader landscape, Posada has chosen to define the volcanic mountaintops with human faces and forms. In Posada's artwork, Popocatepetl spews out smoke, while Iztaccíhuatl seems to be reclining back, presumably gone from the living world. The image on the cover to the story is one of the earliest found in the early twentieth century, at one of the epochs of Mexican nationalistic tendencies. Posada's engraving is also one that can also be read as sentimental to a degree. Popocatepetl appears to erupt, blowing out a large amount of fire and smoke. The covers were printed in full color, again through the method of chromolithography. On the inside, some of the pages are adorned with sparse black and white engravings. In Frias's own words: "I left, for the children of my country, pale images, because in truth I think they will also be something like fables...historical, fables where the country is seen behind a wonderful prism, the illumination of a whole splendid past worthy of being preserved in the minds of all children who love their glorious Mexican homeland!"¹⁴⁶ The objective of Frias' work is thus straightforward – he knew and wanted the booklets to inspire pride in a glorious Mexican past. The success of Frias' work is visible in an article printed in 1901, after the publication of the first set of stories. John Hubert Cornyn, writing

¹⁴⁵ Marie Lecouvey and Helia Bonilla, "Biblioteca del Niño Mexicano (1899-1901) y Episodios Mexicanos (1981-1982): ficciones históricas ilustradas, ¿sólo para niños?." *Amnis. Revue de civilisation contemporaine Europes/Amériques* 16 (2017) 1.

¹⁴⁶ Heriberto Frias, *Biblioteca del Nino Mexicano: El Sol de la Paz*, num. 80 (Mexico: Hermanos Maucci, 1901), 6.

for *The Mexican Herald* explains: “The reason why Frias’ one novel *Tomochic*, and his legends from Mexico mythology [Biblioteca del Nino Mexicano], for children, have had such a large sale is that they are out of the ordinary. His little stories for children, with all their faults, and they have many, are something out of the ordinary, something new in Mexican history.”¹⁴⁷ Mechanical processes allowed the story to traverse throughout the country, a luxury that was not allowed of the rather stable images of the earlier Velasco and the later Herrán, who could only really be seen in one location.

What Saturnino Herrán and Jose Guadalupe Posada’s works contribute to the reading of the volcanoes is the sentimental attributes that begin to arrive with the theme. We can see in later chromolithographs the dilemma that already appears from the early to late 19th-century literature, regarding the question of - who was the father of the country? Posada and Herrán both show two sensualized forms that have their roots before the Spanish invasion and thus in male and female form, the first pairing to exist in the valley. Where 19th-century literature questioned the origins of figures like Cuauhtémoc, Moctezuma, or Cortes – in my interpretation, this was the era in which the volcanoes came to symbolize a deeply rooted mother and father figure that could not be questioned. In Herrán and Posadas's work as well as Jesús Helguera’s calendars, the emblems of the new identity, product of the conquest become crystallized. That is to say that the feminine, for example, appears as white, or light skinned, asleep, and fully identified with nature with hints of sensuality. In understanding the construction of myths, the sociologist Natividad Gutierrez Chong explains that Mexican couples became socialized by popular mass consumption and that calendars are clear examples that came to symbolize the figures of a national male and female. Thus, while in many images, the presence of the female represents a mestiza identity dressed in rural costume,

¹⁴⁷ John Hubert Cornyn, “MILITARY EPISODES. The work of a Brilliant Young Mexican Author,” *The Mexican Herald*, May 12, 1901, 7.

male figures contribute to the construction of diffusion of certain cultural ideal types about the characteristics of truly national men: physical strength, virility, and heroism matching ideals of protectors or patriarchs.¹⁴⁸ In this sense, then we see that Iztaccíhuatl can then be read as an inactive woman, body outstretched while her partner, the virile heroic warrior Popocatepetl laments her death. The volcanoes, infused with imagery, effectively become role models for the nascent nation; in essence, they are figures that Mexicans should aspire to be. As the volcanoes have a rooted indigenous past, they are symbols of a primordial nation. There is no connection to Spanish antecedents. As female and male symbols of national identity, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl relate to people's self-images and their socially constructed roles of gender.¹⁴⁹ In this terrain, the sexualization of nature and landscape is effective in sentimentalizing the roles of active male and dormant female volcanoes demonstrate.¹⁵⁰ Mexican men can see themselves as constructors of the state, active and engaged. Like the Popocatepetl volcano, men are the eternal guardians looming over their 'lesser' sex. The active state of men contrasted by women who are the selected guardians of traditional values and domestic spaces. Again, the domestic is contrasted against the foreign in construction of the nation in the creation of rooted identity.

C. Costumbrismo

In the faceless figures presented in the landscape, viewers can find the continuation of *costumbrismo* images that in Mexico likely had their origin in *casta* images of the early viceregal period. Mexican costumbrista images also follow an established European tradition of various types such as the European works *Heads of the People* (1838) serialized in London or *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (*The French painted by themselves*, 1840). Usually these works depicted

¹⁴⁸ Natividad Gutierrez Chong, "Symbolic Violence and Sexualities in the Myth-Making of Mexican National Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no.3, 2008, 536-538.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

pictures of individuals emblematic of different "types". In a sense, it was almost akin to the *casta* images what were produced in the 18th century Viceroyalty of New Spain. However, unlike the *casta* system, the early depiction of "types" was not predicated on racial types. Indigenous figures are largely represented as Mexico, and Mexican artists sought to authenticate the landscape with a perceived authentic past and culture. Arising from the earlier influence of foreign traveler accounts and gaining popularity after the independence movement, *costumbrismo* images found new life breathed into them. In another sense, costumbrismo also had early origins and popularity in *casta* paintings. As *casta* images were not only a record of the racial system created by the creole elites but also a form of recollection of quotidian life in the late colonial period.¹⁵¹ Costumbrismo expanded upon the early works of *casta* images and attempted to depict people and places that were altogether different from European ones. It was a new genre of art that claimed to depict the multiplicity of the identities that arose. Although not thoroughly examined here, *costumbrista* artists paved the way for the type of images that would eventually be found within calendars. Costumbrista images attempted to categorize people into separate groups, part of the nation, but also stereotyping them into separate groups. There is a disconnect here, as art historian Mey-Yen Moriuchi explains, "*costumbrista* artistic production is a dialectic between norm and difference...[they] construct an image based on assumptions and stereotyping of what 'all' Mexicans look like." It was after the installation of the first lithographic workshop in Mexico, in 1826, by the Italian painter Claudio Linatti, that a technological revolution would begin. Despite the political and social difficulties that affected the evolution of the emerging nation throughout the century, Mexico witnessed the multiplication of printing presses, workshops, publishing houses, and print media in the main capitals of the republic. Costumbrista images were effectively

¹⁵¹ Sarah Cline, "Guadalupe and the Castas: The Power of a Singular Colonial Mexican Painting," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 31, no. 2 (2015): 221.

printed, along with other literature that promoted the growth of the nation.

Mexican icons were already at the forefront of the national project. The first icon that was used was the image of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, the symbol not just for the catch-all religion that all Mexicans were supposedly united with, but also a symbol of independence and the new nation. Important was also the symbol of the eagle and the serpent, now proudly stamped on the Mexican flag, recalling back the legendary founding of Mexico City. These images were conscious symbols in creating *La Patria* or modes of patriotism within the country but also creating a sense of *Mexicanidad*. Images of the *charro*, the *charra*, *La India/China poblana*, fashion in the form of the *rebozo*, or the sarape were displayed in *Costumbrista* images and echoed into the icons used for chromolithographs on calendar artwork.

Unlike interpretations of landscape artists like José María Velasco, whose landscapes reveal an embedded nationalism and a reflection of national identity, there is no further disguised symbolism within costumbrista images. Instead, costumbrista images are a direct desire to construct a Mexican identity and capture the corporeal presence of the Mexican people going about their daily life. However, that is not to say that *costumbrista* images were either objective or rationalized. On the contrary, many images were highly personal, romanticized, and politicized. Unlike the traveler-artists who saw and represented Mexican types through foreign eyes, Mexican artists had no such filter- it was something that they experience daily. Costumbrista images then can be read as products of desire, engendered by the imagination of the artist. These representations are also deeply tied to political, social, and historical events, and must be considered within such contexts. During the nineteenth century, Mexico was struggling to define itself as a nation on the world stage - there was no central nation as it is structured today. The country was not one whole as local *caudillos* ruled different regions, making it difficult to unite the nation under one dominant

party. Some historians, such as Brian Hamnett, “emphasize regional over national dimensions during the independence movement and question any historical reconstruction of events that attempts anachronistically to create a sense of nationhood.”¹⁵² In essence, to understand the use of *costumbrista* images, one must consider the political lens that shaped these images in Mexico. Eventually, these *costumbrista* images would be widely popular and highly disseminated *Los Mexicanos Pintados por si Mismos* or *Mexicans Painted by Themselves* (1854-55). Moriuchi explains that:

Los Mexicanos Pintados por sí Mismos not only reflected local trends and visual traditions but also played a part in national identity formation, helping to construct a view of how Mexico’s literary elite wished to present their new nation. The Mexican album revealed at once a desire to assert originality and authenticity and a longing for equality with Eurocentric norms.¹⁵³

Later, artists working in the mid to late 19th century, such as Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, wanted the world to see Mexico’s customs. Gutiérrez attempted to promote that Mexico was both traditional in the sense of its indigenous people, yet modern through the refined depictions of *costumbrista* images. Mey-Yen Moriuchi explains that Gutiérrez likely believed that through seeing these works “Europe’s perception of Mexico as a barbarous, uncivilized nation” may be altered.¹⁵⁴ In his 1895 artistic treatise *Tratado del dibujo y la pintura* (Treatise on Drawing and Painting), Gutiérrez praised the artist of the *costumbrista* genre paintings, writing,

The genre painter’s scenes are temples, public plazas, the streets, and the countryside. His paintings of a fruit vendor, a florist, a group of proud boys ridiculing a drunkard, or a blind

¹⁵² Mey-Yen Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art* (Penn State Press, 2018), 83.

¹⁵³ Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo*, 79.

¹⁵⁴ Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo*, 104.

man who goes door to door, covered in rags, asking for sustenance, are lively and poetic. When translated to canvas with the magic of his brush, they cause admiration among his contemporaries, and he is glorified for posterity.¹⁵⁵

Further, Mey-Yen Moriuchi points out: “Despite prevailing notions to the contrary, Gutiérrez had faith that such works would find numerous buyers in the United States and Europe, which would prove the talent of Mexican artists to a foreign public.”¹⁵⁶ The importance of these images is found in the way in which these icons of culture became used in Helguera’s art. As symbols of the perceived ‘real’ citizens of a now independent Mexico, *costumbrismo* would become influential to how figures were depicted in art. It was from the daily lives of people in the *costumbrista* images that Helguera would draw for inspiration in his calendar artworks. Although in *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* Helguera draws from myth, the majority of his canvases depict a sense of daily ‘Mexican’ life. However, Helguera strays from the so-called ‘realism’ of daily life that artists like Felipe Santiago Gutierrez championed, choosing to instead idealize Mexican bodies through his European, academic, artistic training. The smiling and proud figures represent a romanticized Mexico, a Mexico where everybody is happy no matter of status- a contrast to the perceived realism of *costumbrismo*.

¹⁵⁵ Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, *Impresiones de viaje*, 362–64.

¹⁵⁶ Moriuchi, *Costumbrismo*, 104.

V. THE CHROMOLITHOGRAPH ERA & CONCLUSION

By the period in which Helguera was painting images for chromolithographs, the conventions of landscape painting and the usage of a mestizo body and identity were already established. Calendar art began to expand in the 1920s when Mexican businesses imported lithography machines to print their calendars. Modern offset presses capable of producing the four-color separation to produce chromolithographs were imported from Chicago, sparking the chromolithograph industry.¹⁵⁷ Previously the images for the calendars had been taken from European traditions of art, but Mexican vendors took advantage of the rising nationalism to promote their commercial goals, promoting a sense of *Mexicanidad* as a shared identity within the broader community. The first publishing company was opened in 1922 by Salvador García Guerrero and Francisco González de la Vega. *Enseñanza Objetiva* would set a precedent by 1935 in that it became the first printing house to produce calendars in Mexico. Printing competitors, such as the later Galas de México, which Jesus Helguera would be employed under, quickly followed suit. Two major companies took charge of chromolithographs: Casa Editorial Litolesa and Galas de Mexico.¹⁵⁸ The art produced by artists such as Jesus Helguera was displayed on advertisements for cigarette boxes and alcoholic beverages, among many other assorted products. Enhanced by their portable nature, calendars often were taken to faraway places, allowing audiences to experience the calendar artwork no matter where they went. Even in later years, as citizens migrated out of Mexico into the United States, so too did calendar artworks. It is in the context of advertisement that the image of *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* was created and used. The rise of print culture and the continuous, renewed use of calendar artwork allows for the image to

¹⁵⁷ Angela Villaba and Carlos Monsivais, *Mexican Calendar Girls: Chicas de calendarios Mexicanos* (2006) 32.

¹⁵⁸ Soumaya Slim Domit, "La Patria Portatil: 100 Years of Mexican Chromo Art Calendars" Exhibition Catalogue (1999), 19.

transcend the time in which it was created and continually perpetuate a notion of identity. The representations of the volcanoes became an ideal subject for which to understand the trajectory of the Nation. Chromolithographs work through a sentimental lens, speaking towards a desire to anchor a Mexican national identity in the past. Said past becomes a rooted history that appears unmovable, something that is also physical, powerful, threatening, and fundamentally timeless.

It is vital to recall that the Revolution was also a tremendous inspiration for Helguera. However, that tumultuous period of time and its effects on Mexico merits its own more in-depth study. So too does the art that began to piece the country together after the chaos. The Muralist movement, for example, produced many artists who also configured the volcanoes as icons towards a united Mexican country.¹⁵⁹ Education reforms after the Revolution further heightened and changed how children, the future citizens of Mexico, viewed their country through the volcanoes. Furthermore, Helguera likely drew inspiration from the literature that was being printed, especially with the rise of poets like José Santos Chocano or Gabriela Mistral, who wrote poems that romanticized the volcanoes. Gabriela Mistral, for example, dedicates the poem "La Ixtlazihuatl" to the figure of Iztaccíhuatl. Mistral writes in this poetic language that "with her human-like profile/ [She] sweetens the sky, refines the countryside."¹⁶⁰ At the height of the calendar production in Mexico, there were countless artists associated with their imagery, such as Luis Amendolla, Jose Bribiesca Ruvalcaba, Armando Dreschsler.¹⁶¹ Helguera is the most well-known and has been continuously considered one of the "masters" of chromo work due to the significant influence his work held, not only on other artists but on the citizen of the Mexican

¹⁵⁹ The Muralist movement, called the Mexican School, merits further investigation, as their influence cannot be overlooked in the work of Jesús Helguera.

¹⁶⁰ Original: "El Ixtlazihuatl con su curva humana/ [ella] endulza el cielo, el paisaje afina." In Gabriela Mistral, "El Ixtlazihuatl" in *Desolacion* (1923), 228.

¹⁶¹ Chromolithograph production was male dominated. Only four notable women painters worked for the company Galas de Mexico during the 1960s, the prominent of them was Aurora Gil who at first had been rejected from the company due to her gender. See Villaba and Monsivais, *Mexican Calendar Girls*, 130.

nation.

A. Jesus Helguera, Mexican Artist

Jesus Helguera was considered one of the masters of chromolithographic art. Helguera himself was an artist who seemed to be dueling with his own dual identity. Helguera was born to Alvaro de la Helguera Garcia, a Spanish economist, and Maria Espinosa Escarzaga, a Mexican woman.¹⁶² Born in the state of Chihuahua, Helguera and his family would only remain there for a couple of days after his birth before moving to the state of Veracruz. The family moved again when Helguera was about seven to Castilla la Nueva in Spain.¹⁶³ Eventually, Helguera would move to Madrid, where he lived with his grandparents. In Madrid, Helguera would become a student to artists Cecilio Pla, José Moreno Carbonero, Manuel Benedito, and Marcelino Santamaria. In terms of style, Pla and Moreno Carbonero appear to have been one of the last official artists of history painting, Benedito is described as a *bodegón*, or still life, artist, while Santamaria appears to have painted everything from depictions of daily life to historical paintings.¹⁶⁴ Not only did Helguera have access to academically trained artists, he also had access to places like the Museo del Prado, where established and recognized works of arts are housed. It appears that, during his time in Madrid, Helguera acquired prestige as an artist, first becoming an illustrator and eventually becoming a professor of visual arts in the Bilbao Art Institute.¹⁶⁵ Civil war made Helguera's family leave Spain and go back to Mexico. However, it is vital to consider Helguera's background due to the way the political and social environment may have affected his artistic style and goals. Helguera lived through this historically and socially conflictive time in Spain. As a result of the Spanish civil war, Helguera faced deep economic problems. He suffered through hardships,

¹⁶² Elia Espinosa, *Jesús Helguera y su pintura, una reflexión* (UNAM, 2004.), 24.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 25. Espinosa, *Jesús Helguera y su pintura*, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 26.

setbacks, the death of two brothers of by way of tuberculosis. Having enough of Spain and its problems, Helguera finally decided to return to Mexico with his family, facing the reality of being a foreigner within the country of his birth.

On his return, Helguera found Lázaro Cárdenas in office. During Cardenas' presidency, he was engaged with promoting social politics, while the country was experiencing some economic uplift. In his first month in Mexico, after becoming employed by Galas de Mexico, Helguera traveled through the Mexican provinces as part of his work for the printing house. The printing house would pay for Helguera to see firsthand the landscape and interpret what he saw in the works that he created. During his travels, Helguera took in the folklore, the land, and the people and their customs. Essentially, Helguera was taking note, writing his account like the foreign travelers that came before him. While Helguera was Mexican born, he did not know the country and the people until he traveled. Like Spanish chroniclers, he too marveled in awe of the land, finding a sublime nature like his predecessors. It was through these early traveling experiences in Mexico that Helguera painted *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* (Figure 1).

The process in creating these popular chromolithographs was multilayered. Cultural critic Carlos Monsivais refers to the art critic Teresa del Conde who established the first steps in the process of the creation of an original painting. Teresa del Conde explains that in the process of the through explaining how the process worked in the cigar company La Moderna. Mr. Alvaro Mondragon, working for La Moderna, was in charge of project and spearheaded all the efforts in the production of advertising. Mondragon would be the one to propose the subject to the painter which consisted of a *guion literario* or a "literary script" with suggestions to the repertoire of characters, the site, and any other secondary elements. A committee would the discuss the original *guion* or "script", modified it if necessary, and then approved it. Immediately afterwards, a team –

consisting of the *gionista* or “screenwriter,” two cameramen, and painter (Helguera) - traveled to the site agreed for the first phase of the company. At the site, abundant photographs of landscapes, flora and fauna, handicrafts, architecture were taken. For many of these projects travel seems to have occurred throughout almost all of Mexico, as the traveling company chose “paradisiacal sites” to capture. That is, paradisiacal in the sense of town that were least affected by progress, homes that evoked harmony and “ancient customs.” Finally, already in his workshop, Helguera made sketches in pencil or with pen, examining the photographs that had been taken and assimilated the raw materials to finally produce a painting.¹⁶⁶ In a sense then, Helguera was working like the landscape artists before him such as Velasco. Velasco, who was taught to categorize the land and then assemble items onto his paintings by Landesio. Further, Helguera also appears to have done many of his paintings on Many of these done on large scale, almost following the grandeur of landscape by Velasco, so that details would not be lost in the copying process.

The next steps in the process have been detailed in the permanent exhibit that is part of the Soumaya Museum. Once the painting was done, the image would be copied in order to obtain positives and negatives in color. Next a photolith was produced, where a light sensitive support (like glass, later acetate) was used. With the photolith, the image was transferred to zinc or aluminum sheets with a grease emulsion to fix it. Before the image was inked onto a page, designers would go in to lay out the text block, logotype, and other information that was requested by the client. After the design team finished laying out the location of everything, the sheets would finally be inked on the rollers – the lithograph process, with basic printing colors (red or magenta, blue or cyan, yellow, and black). The ink would then be transferred to the rubber roller that prints on the paper in a process known as offset or indirect printing. Then the image would be effaced

¹⁶⁶ Carlos Monsiváis, *Los Rituales del Caos* (Ediciones Era, 2001), 66-67.

from the metallic sheets with sand so that they could be reused around ten times. This would be the end of the printing process for the images. The calendars would then be put together, metal rods, for example, would be bent, cut and placed at either end of the calendars to give it support. If the calendar was not already printed, then it would be attached with glue and later stapling. The calendars would then be packaged in the ordered quantity. Once separated, the calendars would be sent to a warehouse to store then until distribution.

. There were two types of calendars the “exclusive” calendar and the “line” calendar. The difference between the two types of calendars was that the exclusive calendars were commissioned by large, prosperous companies and nobody else could use the image as a result of the exclusivity.¹⁶⁷ Exclusive calendars would have the figures in the image holding their specific brand or something along those lines. Line calendars were much more common. In the production of line calendars, it was the Mexican calendar companies like Galas de Mexico that would employ salesmen, paid on commission, who would roam the countryside making calls to local small businesses. The salesmen would bring small sample cases full of line calendar images for customers to choose from. Unlike the exclusive calendars, the line calendar images were obviously not brand specific and often consisted of idyllic images of the nation. However, problems arose with the line calendars as the images were distributed. There is a case noted in which a calendar image had been chosen to promote one company’s dried pasta while another had chosen the same image to sell rat bait.¹⁶⁸ The calendar consists of different parts, all which have a technical name ascribed to them. The picture on the calendar is called the *chromo*; the round hole atop is the *colgante* (hanger). In the blank space below the picture (chromo), where the company’s advertising would be printed, is called the *faldilla* (skirt). The date pad, called the *santoral*, is stapled onto the

¹⁶⁷ Angela Villalba and Carlos Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls* (Chronicle Books, 2006), 18.

¹⁶⁸ Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls*, 10-15.

bottom of the *faldilla*. Additionally, some calendars have a lightweight metal bar crimped across the top of the calendar, called a *varilla*. The relative easiness of putting together the calendar aided in the fast manufacturing of the painted images produced by artists like Helguera.

Although most images on calendars were commissioned, it appears that *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* was not commissioned. Rather, it was one of the earliest images painted after Helguera connected back to his Mexican roots upon moving back to Mexico. Helguera's knowledge with the actual legend surrounding the volcanoes is unknown, but clearly Helguera was drawing upon his early experiences in reconnecting with Mexican culture after his period in Spain. Furthermore, Helguera's depiction of the volcanoes might have been influenced by the previous works of artists like Saturnino Herrán, who appears to have been one of the first to depict Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl in anthropomorphic form. Whatever the case may have been, the printing house Enseñanza Objetiva bought the work from Helguera and thus became the first to disseminate the image of *La Leyenda de los Volcanes*.¹⁶⁹ It was then through the printed chromolithographs that the image would primarily reach the middle class and proletarian members of society.

Through the course of his career as a calendar artist, Helguera worked for three companies. The first was La Enseñanza Objetiva, between 1941-1953, where he produced paintings recalling the ancient Aztec past. Then, for a brief period, Helguera worked for Litografía Latina. Finally, in the mid-1950s, Helguera was employed by Galas de Mexico, where he was an exclusive artist for La Modern cigarettes. However, despite the early success of *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* in particular, and his continued success in general, Helguera was not considered an established fine artist and began to be distinguished as a commercial artist, causing his images to be considered *kitsch* through the progression of time and history. Helguera's oeuvre has been compared to

¹⁶⁹ Elia Espinosa, *Jesús Helguera y su pintura, una reflexión*, 35.

Norman Rockwell's work with the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹⁷⁰ As Carlos Monsiváis and Angela Villaba explain in the forward to *Mexican Calendar girls*:

By creating calendar art, the artists knew that although their work would not be valued, it would be seen daily (and never without admiration) by the tens or hundreds of persons who passed by the businesses, the mechanic's shops, cantinas, or bakeries. The calendar is the most ubiquitous form of advertising in the life of village shopkeepers and the professional service providers. As a mass phenomenon, it is undoubtedly the most noticed and the least recognized of the visual gifts.¹⁷¹

Many people recognize Helguera's work, but few are those that recognize the name of the artist. Perhaps this is why Helguera has been described as being frustrated by Carlos Monsiváis and Angela Villaba. Many people recognize Helguera's work, but few are those that actually recognize the name of the artist. Perhaps this is why Helguera has been described as being frustrated with chromolithographic art form. Helguera sought the same amount of recognition he had received in Spain by being given teaching positions and lauded as an artist. Still, the academic training Helguera received is visible in his paintings. To enter academic art, Helguera even applied for a position as a teacher in a school of fine arts in Mexico but ultimately never appears to have found a position at the academy.¹⁷² It seems that Helguera was not

¹⁷⁰ Original: Su caso es muy similar al de Norman Rockwell, durante cuarenta años portadista del *Saturday Evening Post*. Especialista en la autosatisfacción nacional Rockwell elaboro una vez a la semana un paisaje idílico de la Norteamérica de clases medias, con sus porches de la felicidad conyugal, sus cenas Thanksgiving bendecidas por la paz el señor, sus traviesos niños en días de asueto, sus Huck Finn convertidos en severos funcionarios de las ciudades medias. A cambio de este retrato paradigmático (el espejo adulador de la mayoría silenciosa), Rockwell obtuvo mucho dinero, la lealtad sentimental de los más y el reconocimiento satírico de los menos. No tan afortunado en lo económico, Helguera impulso un gusto visual y apuntalo a su manera el sueño del tradicionalismo, la reverencia por un pasado móvil, la imaginaria del México igual y fiel, devoto y cariñoso, sonriente como el agradecimiento al patrón, buen aventurero como la gran fiesta de rancho sin alcohol el México hoy confinado, a falta de otro castigo en el territorio del kitsch." In Carlos Monsiváis, *Los Rituales del Caos* (1995) 67.

¹⁷¹ Villalba and Monsiváis, *Mexican Calendar Girls*, 8-9.

¹⁷² *Jesús Helguera*, México, Galas de México, 1989, 64.

completely fulfilled as a commercial illustrator; that is, he never thoroughly enjoyed his role as a maker of chromo artwork.

Despite the popular success of Helguera's artwork, art historians repudiated the quality of his work. The Mexican art historian Francisco de la Maza, a specialist in Novohispanic art, considered Helguera's work to be lowbrow, something 'corny,' relegated to the background as kitsch. In his essay "*Notas sobre lo cursi*" (Notes on the corny/cheesy), Maza put calendar art at the very front and center of what should not be considered high art. In Maza's words, "the exquisite failing, the I want, and the I cannot...that flaw of the 'exquisite' is in the lack of sincerity."¹⁷³ At the center of Maza's critique of artists like Helguera was the fact that the images showed an insincere past, instead being replete with sentimentalism. Nevertheless, this so-called lack of sincerity is precisely one of the leading and most essential characteristics of calendar painting. Calendar painting was necessarily lacking in sincerity since its objective was clearly to please, to sell first, and also to propose a series of flattering elements that would help define an image in which the Mexican wanted to recognize himself. Other critics like Antonio Rodríguez relate the acceptance of the calendar with economic level saying, "The calendar tries to please those who cannot understand avant-garde art or is economically incapacitated, to acquire a work of art by highly-valued artists."¹⁷⁴ To a certain extent, they may be right. The images were not necessarily made to be presented in fine art places. The disdain of sentimental images like those Helguera produced for calendar work is understandable in that critics are not too keen on how emotions can manipulate the viewer. Feelings and emotions are all tangible within Helguera's work. Through *La Leyenda de los Volcanes*, sentimentalism becomes a mechanism for once again constructing

¹⁷³ Luis Ángel Edgardo López Mañón, "La Pintura de Calendario en el Proceso de Formación del Nacionalismo Posrevolucionario" (MA Thesis, UNAM, 2004), 53-55.

¹⁷⁴ Antonio Rodríguez, "Calendarios de Helguera en Bellas Artes?" *Excelsior* (30 de noviembre de 1985) 4.

the “proper” way of viewing the Indian body. No longer is the figure of the “Indio” meant to wander in the background, a slave to the landscape, a savage as seen in the works of *casta or biombo* images. Instead, the indigenous figures of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl become a symbol of triumph for Mexico. The figures become transformed to represent the rootedness of Mexican people to history. But what type of history? The answer is one that is not connected to European precedents. The Mexican nation has created symbols for itself.

Helguera depicted his figures in such a highly sentimentalized way because he himself romanticized the legends. As a Mexican-born but Spanish trained painter, Helguera had to become accustomed to a land he did not know. The land was as foreign to him as it was for the early Spanish chroniclers and foreign traveler accounts. His family fled the revolution in Mexico and then the revolution in Spain. His paintings do not depict the great turmoil that he witnessed but profess a deep love for an imagined history. Helguera drew from his travels across the country of Mexico, categorizing the landscape like José María Velasco, learning of the legends that were printed by Heriberto Frias in his successful *Biblioteca del niño Mexicano*. Helguera, too, appears to have wanted to believe in the legends, romanticizing the figures and making the viewer mourn along with the grieving Popocatepetl.

B. Sentimentality, the Nation, and the Viewer

Jesus Helguera is the culmination of the centuries of art depicting Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Helguera’s mastery over sentimentality as a tool would prime him to lead a new form of nationalist expression of art. During his travels throughout Mexico, Helguera photographed and categorized everything. As José María Velasco had done, Helguera took his studies of the landscape and pieced his painted artworks together, an expertly curated image of what Mexico was supposed to look and *feel* like for viewers. In his artwork, Helguera also imbued *valores del*

Mexicano or virtues of the Mexican, how a Mexican was supposed to be. Although Helguera relied on many images of the landscape and legends such as the one of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, he also depicted couples in a heavily romanticized style, such as La Malinche and Hernán Cortés. To aid the creation of the nation, highly sentimentalized images like *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* became important to promulgate the message of a united people rooted in a deep past. Whereas images like those produced in the art of the *casta* system were sentimental in that they were created to understand this other, images that came after the revolution sought to look back and build upon the idea of a united nation. The legend of the volcanoes can then be interpreted almost as mythical as the biblical Adam and Eve. The legend of the volcanoes likely had an established background before Spanish imperialists took over. Not only were Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl legends, they were topographical markings that defined the land. As such, the volcanoes stood as two watchful parents bringing forth the new nation.

Sentimentality in Helguera's work, then, prepares the 'proper' sort of viewer. The romanticized and sentimental images train them to 'feel right' and to 'act right' in service of the nation. If one recalls that the volcanoes are understood as the parents to the nation, sentimentality becomes imbued in the figures in a different way than previously seen. In fact, due to this sentimentality, the original version Helguera painted in 1940 became so famous that he revisited the legend in *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* in 1965 with *Grandeza Azteca* (Aztec Greatness) also known as *La Leyenda de los Volcanes II* (Figure 20). Akin to the *biombos* created during the period of the viceroyalty, Helguera's paintings situate the viewer in the space they were supposed to occupy. Sentimentalism works through the body, and Helguera returns to form by depicting Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl in human form. The indigenous father and white skin toned mother embody the earlier usage of *casta* images. The mountains in the background evoke a grounding in the past, but

with the figures in the forefront, the viewer completes a loop in which they configure themselves as being the offspring of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Popocatépetl has a connection with Iztaccíhuatl through the legend they are lovers. Even if the viewer is unfamiliar with the tale the grieving Popocatépetl tells the viewer of the deep connection to his lost love. When the viewer looks at the image, a sentimental connection is created. More specifically, the connection to the bodies of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl creates a familial connection. The space that separated Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl becomes the place where the viewers situate themselves within the narrative. That is, the viewers recognize themselves as *mestizo*, the crowning identity of the Mexican, born of Spanish and indigenous blood. Yet simultaneously rooted in an ancient past that existed before Spanish contact. The viewer activates the painting through their sentimental connection to the bodies of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl, just as the image of the chromolithograph situates the viewer within a 'Mexican' history. Again, Shirley Samuels asserts that sentimentality is the prime mechanism for constructing a 'proper' viewer who, through images like the *Legend of the Volcanoes*, becomes trained to 'feel right' and to 'act right'.¹⁷⁵

Sentimentality in the creation of the nation comes to represent shared and reciprocated emotions among characters incited by images of the volcanoes. Printed on calendars, the images define the 'empty time. that the nation is built upon. This is perhaps why calendar images became powerful tools in creating a unified nation. Since calendar art had the additional added effect of being easily accessible to members of the country everybody could lay claim to the image. Although there may be one original painting, the printed image on calendars allowed everybody to own it, not being barred by their status in society. Where previous artists like Saturnino Herrán has also integrated sentimental sensualist depiction of the anthropomorphized volcanoes, the static

¹⁷⁵ Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment*, 4.

location of the museum gallery barred everybody from seeing and thus claiming the image. The sense of public ownership allowed the images to have an added layer of depth to the sentimental feeling of connection to Helguera's work. In other words, the images of the volcanoes orchestrated a communion of *feeling* that conjoined each individual member to the larger imagined community – the nation. Running on empty time the calendar was a reminder that everybody else in the nation was running on the same time.

In *La Leyenda de los Volcanes II* (Figure 20), Helguera did not depict a mourning Popocatépetl, and so the emotion of loss and grief is not present. Instead, the image of Popocatépetl seems prideful, his gaze veering off into the distance. Although this was also a successful image, the loss of heightened sentimentality did not make it as effective as his 1940 depiction of the volcanoes. What is implied by 'loss of sentimentality' is that the viewer does not have the same connection to the figures as in the 1940 version of the *Leyenda de los Volcanes*. The viewer is obstructed in a sense, they cannot situate themselves in a stable position. In the second depiction of *La Leyenda de los Volcanes*, Popocatépetl looks out as she carried Iztaccíhuatl. He looks up and the viewer is not bounded by their presence. Additionally, Helguera also created a portrait of Iztaccíhuatl alone in his work *Mujer Dormida* (Figure 21). The problem with this depiction of Iztaccíhuatl and why it is not nearly as successful as Helguera's first attempt is that the viewer's position in history is similarly not stable. Without Popocatépetl to ground the viewer as the child of the Mexican nation, no closed loop is created in which the viewer can visualize themselves existing. The same is true of other attempts of creating nationalist images. In *Oh, Patria, Mia!* (figure 22), Helguera depicts a personified Mexico in the form of a woman. She carries the flag of Mexico in one hand while leading a child forward, the background depicting the now recognizable profiles of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. Again, the viewer is left without a role; the role of "child

of the nation” has already been depicted and thus does not allow the viewer to configure themselves within the work.

However, it is also important to recognize that Helguera’s artwork, like that of other chromo artists during the period up to today, practices a subtle racism that promoted a European aesthetic at the expense of the actual indigenous reality. It has already been established that Helguera’s artwork heavily relied on his Spanish academic training. Figures in his work tend to be lighter-skinned and possess features that are more European than indigenous. In this way, Helguera’s art had detrimental effects, as indigenous people were, and still are, suffering as a result of government initiatives. Helguera, in a sense, created the idea of what the ideal indigenous person was supposed to look like and how viewers were, in turn, supposed to consume the image.¹⁷⁶ The printing companies seem all too aware of the purpose of the popular calendar art in selling advertised products. Helguera then begins to perpetuate an idealistic paragon of ‘Mexicanidad’ for communal purposes—continually preprocessed through the nostalgia and yearning for the homeland by Mexicans in the country and eventually Mexicans in places like the United States.

C. Conclusion

Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl, the two great volcanoes that frame central Mexico have become influential in creating a rooted identity with the nation. As icons of culture, the volcanoes have exerted an influence not only to those who inhabit the region surrounding it but to the nation as a whole. Indigenous artists captured them in codices to show their role in sacred geography and history. Spanish chroniclers simultaneously marveled and feared of the active

¹⁷⁶ In terms of ideas on *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, I plan to further look into the ideas (and critiques) of Manuel Gamio given the moment in which Jesus Helguera was working in. The discussions around *mestizaje* and racial acculturation are crucial given Helguera’s historical moment. Gamio’s cultural programs, for example, were co-emergent with cultural productions that stage each region of Mexico as microcosms of the larger whole. See Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria: Pro-Nacionalismo* (University Press of Colorado, 2010).

Popocatepetl. The volcanoes have become a type of benchmark for artists, poets and novelists. In indigenous context, the volcanoes figured in the mythology and cosmos of the world, having a religious connotation. When the Spanish came in, they catalogued the land, writing down their astonishment at the volcanoes in chronicles and shifting the use of the volcanoes from a religious one being more aligned with science. In the colonial era, the volcanoes became markers of the boundary of the civilized city, like biombos working to separate and define space. Following Independence, artists like José María Velasco began to depict the grandeur of the Mexican terrain, imbuing their work with pride over the now free nation. Helguera then, was following a long lineage of artists that depicted the volcanoes in their art. However, Helguera's image reached a level of popularity that had not been seen before. I posit that the success of Helguera's *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* arose from a sentimental connection the viewer has with the bodies of Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl.

In looking towards the future of this project, I hope to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the topics that have been covered thus far. In order to get to the period of time in which Helguera was working in, the mid-20th century, the effects of the Revolution are hardly touched upon here. Moreover, the influential works by figures like Manuel Gambio and Jose Vasconcelos, to name a few, merit further discussion, as the 20th century and contemporary methods of constructing nationalism have basis in their works. The topics here are but a basis of the work I intend to carry out in the future. I also hope to look deeper into the depiction of the volcanoes by foreigners and their interpretation of the legend, the depiction and portrayal of the volcanoes in film and photograph, and finally the effect of the volcanoes in transnational third spaces. In other words, I hope to further add to the rich history of the usage of volcanoes as icons of Mexican culture by understanding their usage in the art of Mexican diaspora.

Thus, Mexican calendar images became important, overlooked sites in the creation of the nation. The ability for calendar images to resonate with people from different classes, generations, and eventually, transnational spaces accounts for the long lasting appeal of Mexican calendars. Understanding works such as Jesus Helguera's *La Leyenda de los Volcanes* aids in the understanding of the creation of identity through a sentimental lens with the nation in a critical framework of historical relevance and societal assessment. Since the beginning then, the volcanoes have continuously persisted through Mexico's long pictorial tradition. Never absent from the art historical canon of Mexico. The presence of the volcanoes has at times appears to simply have been an attempt to capture the natural beauty of the region. The idealized image of *Mexicanidad*, which the calendars spread, is continually reprocessed through nostalgia and longing for many Mexicans, becoming a standard of authenticity. Through the cultural icons produced on calendars, Mexicans and Mexican diaspora, have maintained their identity and their ties to the Mexico of their ancestors, in addition to reaffirming their place geographically, politically, and culturally. As the first citizen of Mexico, Popocatepetl, along with the figure of Iztaccíhuatl, set the stage for who follows, who can be defined as a *citizen* of Mexico. Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl as depicted in the 1940 painting of Jesus Helguera cements the positions of the viewer, in both time and space, cementing the viewers place in history as they continue to extend a perceived deep-rooted lineage.

FIGURES



Figure 1. *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* by Jesús Helguera ca. 1940 (50 x 63 cm)

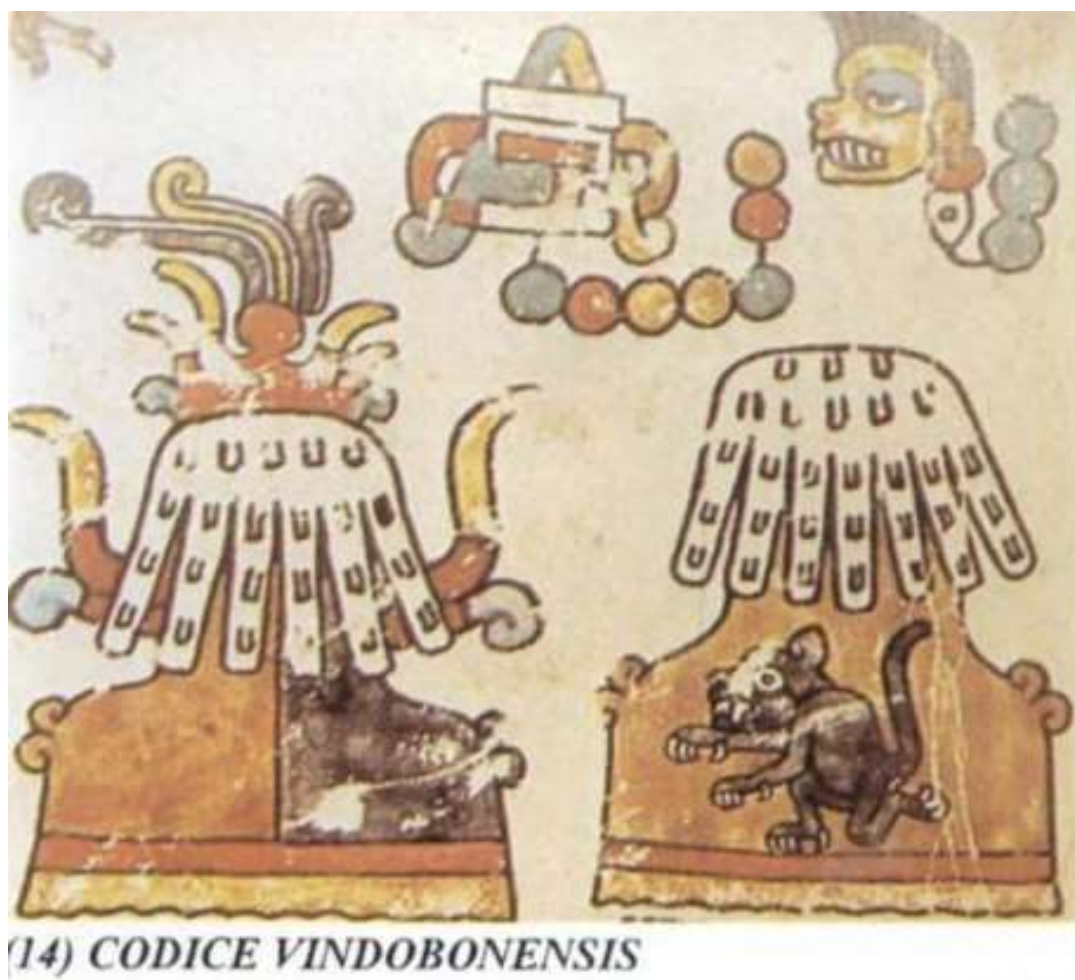


Figure 2. Vindobonensis Codex page depicting the volcanoes in 'abstracted' form



Figure 3A (Above): Diego de Ordaz (bottom right of page), written as the first person to ascend Popocatépetl, labeled as ‘el volcan de Tlaxcala’

Figure 3B (Below): Diego de Ordaz’s Family Crest with the Popocatépetl volcano



Escudo de armas de Diego de Ordaz.



Figure 4. Florentine Codex, Bernarado de Sahagun, Hernán Cortés in entering Valley of Mexico



Figure 5. Popocatépetl (top right) and Iztaccíhuatl (labeled Iztactepetl, La sierra Nevada) made of amaranth, Florentine Codex

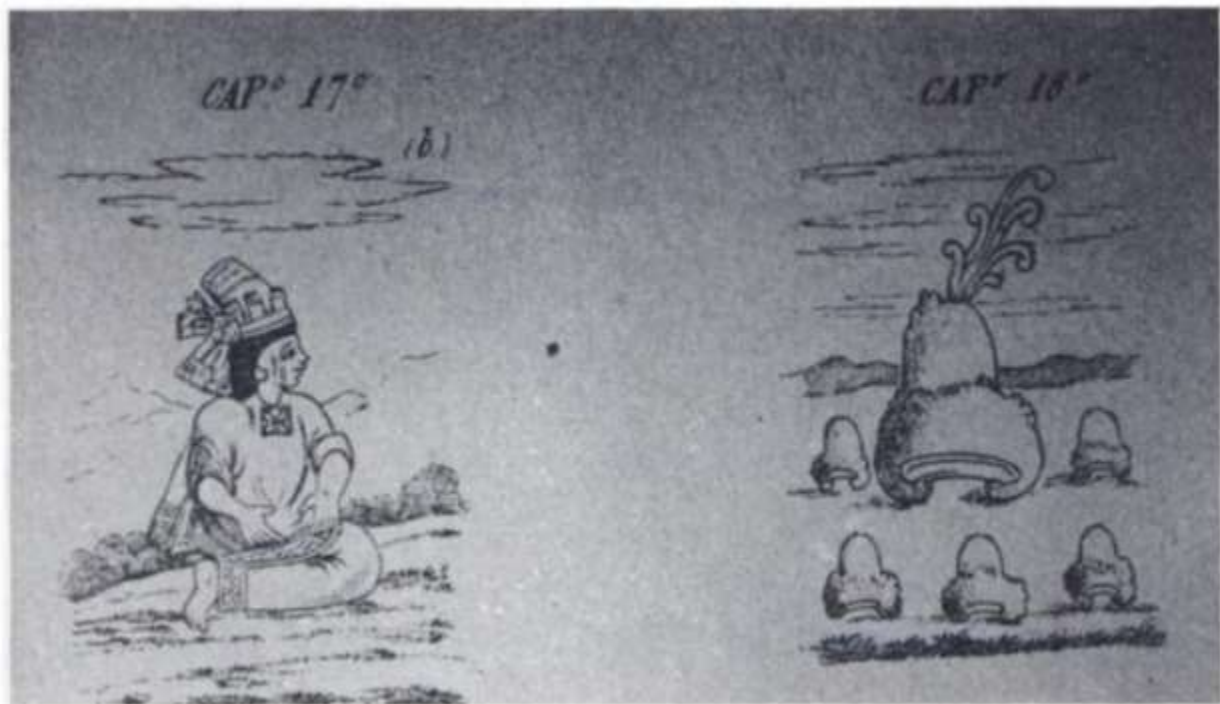


Figure 6. Diego Duran and company's depiction of Iztaccíhuatl, Duran Codex ca. 1587

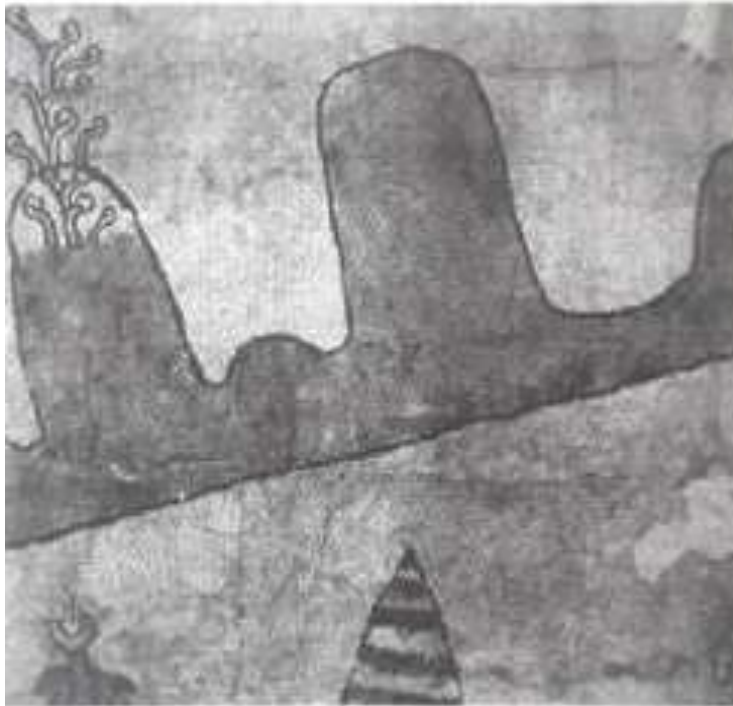


Foto 1. Codice de Huamantla, Volcán Popocatepetl en erupción junto al Cerro Gordo e Iztaccíhuatl.

Figure 7. Codex Huamantla, Popocatepetl is depicted erupting on the left next to what could be Iztaccíhuatl



Figure 8. Codex Telleriano- Remensis depicting the erupting volcano with dates ca. late 17th century



Figure 9. *Virgen de Guadalupe and Castas* by Luis de Mena ca. 1706



Figure 10. *Paseo de la Viga (con iglesia de Iztacalco)* by Pedro Villegas, ca. 1706



Figure 11. Biombo with Views of the City of Mexico, Anonymous 1750



Figure 12. *Biombo de la Conquista De Mexico y Vista De La Ciudad De Mexico* anonymous, 17th century (Front)



Figure 13. *Biombo de la Conquista De Mexico y Vista De La Ciudad De Mexico* anonymous, 17th century (Obverse) cityscape



Figure 14. *View of the Plaza Mayor* by Cristobal de Villalpando ca. 1695



Figure 15. Engraving of Hernán Cortés by Arnoldus Montanus from *De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld* ca. 1671



Figure 16. Antonio Garcia Cubas *Atlas pintoresco é histórico de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, Orographic Map of Mexico



Figure 17. *View of the Valley of Mexico* by José María Velasco ca. 1875



Figure 18. *La Leyenda de Los Volcanes* by Saturnino Herrán ca. 1910



Figure 19. *Corazón de Lumbre, Alma de Nieve* cover to pamphlet in *La Biblioteca del Nino*



Figure 20. *Grandeza Azteca (La Leyenda de Los Volcanes II)* by Jesús Helguera

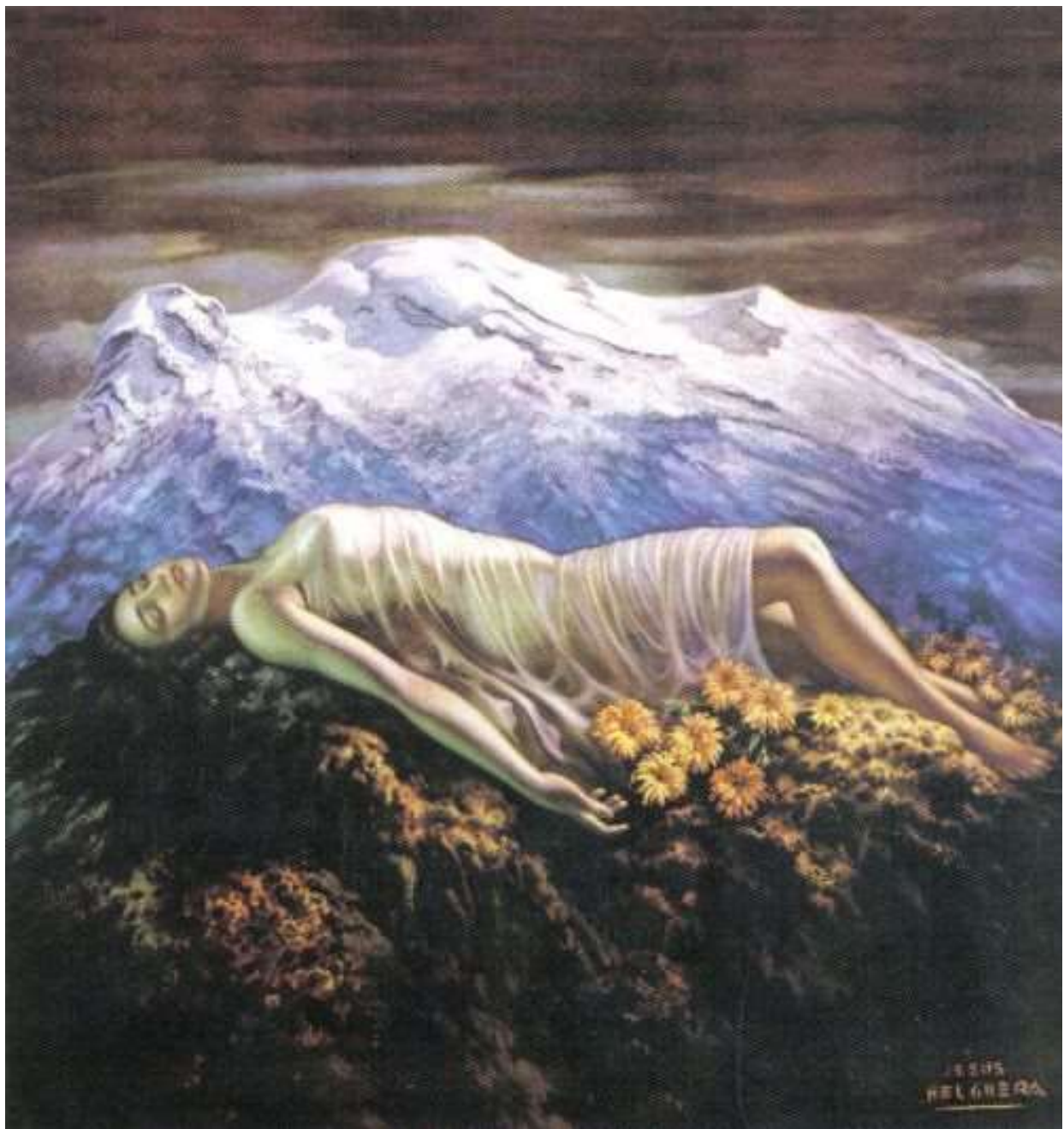


Figure 21. *Mujer Dormida* by Jesús Helguera N.D.



Figure 22. *Oh, Patria, Mia!* By Jesús Helguera ca. 1963

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