2. THE MEXICAN MURAL RENAISSANCE:

PATRONAGE, ARTISTS, AUDIENCE, AND MESSAGE

Renaissances are rare because they require enlightened patrons, great artists, a suitable social situation, and a general purpose, all rare themselves. History is full of failed attempts. The sponsors of the Panthéon in Paris wanted to "créer le musée de la peinture murale de son temps" 'create the museum of mural painting of its time,' but chose its artists badly with the exception of Puvis de Chavannes (Macé de Lépinay: 5, 14). As an art critic, Baudelaire sought a great painter of Paris, but had to settle for Jean-Louis Forain (1852–1931). More often, artists lack patrons. At the height of his powers, Mozart suffered through years without opera commissions. The French Cubists never found patrons for their mural ambitions. The social situation can interrupt artistic movements. The Italian Renaissance was wounded by the sack of Rome, and artists of great achievement or potential were killed in the First World War.

Renaissances usually present themselves as new movements, disruptive leaps forward, and the Mexican artists were literally involved in a revolution against the culture of the Porfiriato with its educational center, the Academy of San Carlos.[1] Nonetheless, lines of continuity can be found. At Independence, a positive image of the Indian past was added to the national. The Porfiriato itself promoted a kind of Indianism through art, including public, monumental works (e.g., Coronel Rivera 2912: 20 f.). More modernist energies were also awake, many of which anticipated the movement of the early 1920s (Ramírez 1991). The nineteenth-century hierarchy of subjects was being pushed aside by an interest in landscape and realism. Divested of the fancy costumes preferred at the Academy of San Carlos, models were being dressed in ordinary or traditional clothes. At the same time, historical painting was yielding to allegorical, symbolical, classical, and neoromantic preoccupations. Prehispanic and Colonial art were studied in order to create national symbols of identity. Modernism was being connected to social concerns (Coleby 1999: 21). Mexicans looked back on these pre-Revolution years as a failed opportunity. Artists were already anticipating many aspects of the 1920s movement, even speaking in 1907 of a "renacimiento artístico" 'artistic renaissance.'[2]

Naturally, these Mexican artists protested when they were ignored in favor of Spaniards for the centennial celebrations of 1910. A protest led by Dr. Atl resulted in an exhibition of local artists and subjects at San Carlos with a modest subvention by the government. A committee of artists and students invited "asuntos de carácter nacional" 'subjects of a national character' (García de Germenos 1991: 67). Most important, the exhibition of Mexican artists at the 1910 centennial celebration of independence inspired young artists, assembled by Dr. Atl and others, to dream of murals, and Justo Sierra Méndez, the great Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, promised them support.[3] Indeed, Dr. Atl and Roberto Montenegro created murals before the Renaissance.[4]

Although this event seemed more revolutionary in hindsight than it really was, the artists had stood up for themselves and organized a collective and innovative project.[5] The young art students were emboldened the next year to strike against their academic teachers, and they succeeded in pushing the

establishment of the first modern art school by Alfredo Ramos Martínez in Santa Anita, nicknamed "Barbizon" (e.g., Díaz de León 1965: [7 f.]). The strike of 1911 left many strong memories among the artists.[6] Siqueiros argued that it was an important beginning point of the whole movement (Siqueiros 1977: 94 f.; 1978: 15, 33, 80; 1996: 453 f.). Artists and students were getting to know each other and learning to act as a group to better their situation. Later, they continued to militate for their positions, ultimately resulting in the foundation of the Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre (EPAL) after the Revolution. In a "tiny revolution," the students forced on the government the establishment of the reform administration of Ramos Martínez at San Carlos.[7] Indeed, Siqueiros' militancy characterizes the whole group of young artists.

The Revolution interrupted the late-Porfiriato plans, but even during the Revolutionary turmoil, governmental attempts were made to promote the arts. Nemesio García Naranjo, the Minister of Public Instruction in the 1913–1914 government of Victoriano Huerta, provided support and promised patronage.[8] In 1915, the government of Venustiano Carranza had some limited success in promoting the arts, but largely failed for lack of money and a larger plan (Fell 1989: 393 f.). Nonetheless, the dreams of the artists were maintained through the Revolution to be realized in the postwar reconstruction: "Come 1920, the revolution was top-dog, mural painting was in the air, but not yet on the walls" (*AA* II: 338).

The Mexican Revolution was sanguinary and destructive and left a destabilized society in which many of the conventional ideas, plans, and goals had lost their organizing power. The enormous task of physical and social reconstruction demanded new ideas and attitudes, which would be contested both by the pre-Revolution elements in Mexico as well as among the reformers themselves. Fortunately, General and now President Álvaro Obregón provided the necessary leadership. It was "truly a period of reconstruction" (*AA* II: 20). In the government of Adolfo de la Huerta, Obregón's placeholder, and the early Obregón administration, most sectors of society, including the Catholic church, enjoyed "grandes esperanzas de paz y de tolerancia" 'great hopes of peace and tolerance.'[9] Even José Vasconcelos described the early regime positively, as seen below. The Mexican muralists began to paint "as a new social order began to take shape out of the turmoil and anarchy of the military stage of the revolution" (Charlot February 3, 1943).

Charlot and his colleagues in the Gilde Notre-Dame had prepared for such a period of reconstruction in France and had even hoped for some social reforms. The World War I veterans felt betrayed by the politicians as the world reverted to its old plutocracy, and the Catholic artists were disabused as the church hierarchy turned again to the bad liturgical art of the safe, commercial firms it had favored so long.

In Mexico, however, the government proclaimed its intention of reconstructing society according to the principles for which the Revolution had been fought. Indeed, the leading politicians—like some of the artists—were the very veterans of the Revolution and were determined to use the destabilized post-Revolution conditions as an opportunity: "the hot revolutionary breath of 1910 that tumbled ivory towers" (*MMR* 315). Vasconcelos would initiate his high, global reformation of education and culture,

putting his thought into vigorous action (Fell 1989: 660 f., 668). Poets felt the impetus— Arqueles Vela wrote, "we need literary men of action" (Flores 2013: 148)—and experienced a new freedom:

> Al fin surge el poeta en la hora en que negamos todos los caminos anteriores y avizoramos un aurora nueva; y una alegría enorme llena nuestro espíritu. (List Arzubide 1927: 11)
>
> 'At last the poet arrives in the hour in which we reject all the previous paths and proclaim a new dawn; and an enormous joy fills our spirit.'

Manuel Maples Arce wrote:

> Terminaba una larga revolución que sirvió parar descubrirnos a nosotros mismos. Un grupo de poetas buscaba nuevos horizontes para la poesía. Los pintores exponían a los ojos del pueblo en los muros…la dialéctica de su obra pictórica asociada a la revolución y a los anhelos estéticos y morales que de ella surgían. (Maples Arce 1982: iii)
>
> 'A long revolution—which helped reveal us to ourselves—was coming to its end. A group of poets was seeking new horizons for poetry. On the walls, the painters were exposing to the eyes of the public…the dialectic of their visual work associated with the revolution and the esthetic and moral yearnings that arose from it.'

The artists felt themselves part of this movement, as Charlot stated:

> Estábamos todos, pintores y escritores, siguiendo los mismos caminos…
> La revolución en las artes y en la literatura nació de la revolución social mexicana, en medio de la cual estábamos viviendo, y de la cual, algunos participaban directamente. (Baciu 1968: 70)
>
> 'We were all—painters and writers—following the same paths…
> The revolution in the arts and in literature was born of the Mexican social Revolution, in the middle of which we were living and in which several were participating directly.'

As Rita Eder writes: "el muralismo mexicano es un estallido de vitalidad" 'Mexican muralism is an explosion of energy' (1991: 30). Such an unusual occurrence revealed the formative influence of recent experience:

> In 1920, the successful revolution raised to power men bold enough to commission untried artists to decorate the walls of public buildings. (Charlot 1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting").
>
> The Revolution proved useful mostly as a cog, the piece of machinery needed to join together ancient walls and young muralists. To make frescoes possible, it was imperative that there be men in power unafraid of public opinion…Bohemians in their

> twenties, or at most their thirties, were given public walls to paint as other men had been given palaces to sack… (*AA* II: 7)

Leopoldo Méndez connected the revolutionary spirit explicitly to muralism:

> Pero guardar en cuadros pequeños tragedias tan grandes, pareció imposible a los pintores que ya respiraban el aire de la batalla y se buscó un campo más de acuerdo con ese afán y se encontró el muro que ya otros pintores a quienes no bastaba la tela par diseñar la dura tormenta del hombre habían ocupado y Diego Rivera, Jean Charlot, José Clemente Orozco, Ramón Alva de la Canal y Fermín Revueltas, entre otros, conquistaron como soldados revolucionarios los palacios de a burguesía y los marcaron con la imagen del pueblo descubierto en sus costumbres y en su protesta. (1926: 47 f.)
>
> 'But to confine inside small pictures such great tragedies appeared impossible to those painters who had already breathed the air of battle and sought for themselves a field more in accord with this fervor. They found the *wall*, which already other painters had occupied for whom easel painting was not enough to design the hard storm of humankind. Diego Rivera, Jean Charlot, José Clemente Orozco, Ramón Alva de la Canal, and Fermín Revueltas, among others, conquered like revolutionary soldiers the palaces of the bourgeoisie and branded them with the image of the people discovered in its customs and its protest.'

More particularly for the artists, the government provided a patron worthy of them: "Such an arrangement makes for public works only as good as the taste of the man in power" (Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut). Perhaps Obregón's most successful appointment was that of José Vasconcelos in 1921 to the post of Secretary of Public Education (e.g., Torres Bodet 1961: 267). Like his great predecessor Justo Sierra, Vasconcelos used his position to change society as a whole, initiating a national educational and cultural movement that is historically unique in its breadth and effectiveness (Fell 1989). None of his successors would show the same energy, cultural emphasis, or greatness of mind. One of his assistants, Jaime Torres Bodet, wrote:

> todos obedecían a esa voluntad de expansión artística que le dio pronto—y tan justamente—fama de constructor e influencia patriótica de Mecenas. (Torres Bodet 1961: 261)
>
> 'all obeyed this will of artistic expansion that soon gave him—and so justly—the fame of constructor and the patriotic influence of a Maecenas.'
>
> En nuestra Universidad, su presencia había obrado como un fermento. Todo hervía al contacto de aquel hombre.
>
> 'In our university, his presence worked like a ferment. Everything seethed on contact with that man.'

To accomplish his broad program, Vasconcelos enlisted luminaries from all fields, as Haya de la Torre recalled:

> Recordó, entonces, a José Vasconcelos y los años fecundos del ministro de Educación cuando la Revolución Mexicana alzó aquella lumbre de cultura y espíritu. Entonces trabajaban junto a Vasconcelos talentos como los de Gabriela Mistral, Diego Rivera, y lo más brillante de la más brillante generación mexicana en artes y letras en este siglo. (Baeza Flores 1962: 198; also 65)
>
> 'I remember Vasconcelos at that time and the fruitful years of the Ministry of Education when the Mexican Revolution raised up that light of culture and spirit. At that time worked next to Vasconcelos talents like those of Gabriela Mistral, Diego Rivera, and the most brilliant of the most brilliant Mexican generation in the arts and letters in this century.'

Inspired by a Pythagorean philosophy that accorded an educational and civilizing power to the arts, Vasconcelos sought to enlist visual artists in his campaign.[10] Their works would be accompanied by a program of art education in the schools, in which the artists participated.[11] Fortunately, he found a remarkable group of artists eager to accept his invitation. Vasconcelos first approached the established artists living in Mexico, notably Dr. Atl, Jorge Enciso, and his favorite, Roberto Montenegro (1887–1968; *MMR* 95 f.). He then enticed the recognized artists Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros to return from Europe (*MMR* 127 ff., 198–201) and asked Fernando Leal to enlist the younger artists (*MMR* 163–167). However, compared to many artists active in Mexico, the number who agreed to work in Vasconcelos's program was small.

Those artists who did accept the challenge of muralism felt themselves part of a larger movement in which they had a distinct contribution to make and a duty to make it: "an inner urge synchronized with the social unrest" (*AA* II: 20). As a result, "The Mexican artist worked in the midst of a social turmoil quite unlike the secluded quiet of Parisian studios" (1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting"). They felt the same exhilaration and inspiration experienced by Russian artists in the first few years after their own revolution, an intensely creative period tragically cut short.[12] Even Vasconcelos, later a bitter enemy of Obregón, remembered the positive atmosphere at the beginning of the regime, when many felt they could make history and a new society.[13] The Mexican muralists' consciousness of their historical and social situation was a decisive factor in their thematic and stylistic choices.

Charlot's own commitment to the social movement is indicated by his uncharacteristic adherence to a political party. Although normally anti-authority and skeptical of those in power, Charlot told me that in the early 1920s he was "on the side" of the Constitucionalistas, the government party. Accordingly, he could nearly be enlisted as an artillery instructor by the government in 1923 during the rebellion of Adolfo de la Huerta (*MMR* 205 f.). Similarly, as a socially progressive Roman Catholic, he could work even with communists because, as he told me, they all "wanted the same thing." President Obregón stated to a meeting of archbishops and bishops in 1923:

> The present social programme of the Government is essentially Christian, and it is complementary to the fundamental programme of the Catholic Church.[14]

Had he been a politician, I believe, Charlot would have belonged to the Obregón faction of the Constitucionalistas.

In sum, the Mexican Mural Renaissance had its patron, its artists, and a common movement that was responding to the social situation. The way these different factors interacted created the character of the movement.

2.1. THE PATRON AND HIS ARTISTS

The Mexican mural movement is perhaps unique in the fact that the artists largely determined their subjects and styles, not the patron[15] Vasconcelos and the muralists shared ideas, such as that art should be public, address a popular audience, and have social as well as aesthetic goals. Vasconcelos' letters are an early and eloquent formulation of the program of creating a national art on a Mexican foundation. But Vasconcelos and the young muralists differed in their taste and largely in the themes they thought best to achieve those goals. Despite several of his statements, Vasconcelos tended personally to precious and exquisite styles, anodyne subjects, universal symbolism, and contemplative results. Vasconcelos' weak taste in the visual arts contrasts with his more robust appreciation of literature, music, dance, and spectacle, about which he writes at greater length and with more enthusiasm in his memoirs.[16] His favorite painter was Montenegro along with the Nacionalistas in accord with him.[17] These painters created the exquisite, symbolist works that Vasconcelos appreciated. They were also happy to accept his vague suggestions and recommendations of subjects. Rivera's *Creation* fits into this context.

The young muralists, on the contrary, painted social and historical subjects with bold monumentality as incitements to action. All the more praiseworthy, therefore, is Vasconcelos' granting them artistic freedom.[18] On this point, key artists are categorical. Leal wrote:

> [Vasconcelos] left me free as to theme and technique. (*MMR* 166 f.)
>
> El movimiento moderno de la pintura mexicana fue posible, en sus comienzos, porque José Vasconcelos nos dio amplia libertad de expresión a todos los pintores… (Leal 1990: 195; also 174 f.)
>
> 'The modern movement of Mexican painting was possible, in its beginnings, because José Vasconcelos gave ample liberty of expression to all of us painters…'

Leal quotes the terms of Vasconcelos' invitation:

> "Quiero que usted también se encargue de decorar la Preparatoria. Pinte usted lo que guste y con los procedimientos que mejor le parezcan. Lo dejo en entera libertad de criterio, pues no deseo que, el día de mañana, ustedes los pintores se disculpen de sus propios errores, alegando que se les impuso tal o cual asunto, tal o cual procedimiento." (1990: 90)

> 'I want you also to take charge of decorating the Preparatoria. Paint what you want with the methods that seem best to you. I leave it to you in complete liberty of judgment, because I don't want you artists later to excuse your own errors by alleging that this or that subject or this or that method was imposed on you.'

Vasconcelos himself several times disclaimed personal responsibility for the artists' work:

> Me limito a procurar ofrecer a todos elementos para que trabajen, sin preocuparme mucho del trabajo mismo.[19]
>
> 'I limited myself to trying to offer to everyone the means to do their work without preoccupying myself much with the work itself.'
>
> toda me estética pictórica se reduce a dos términos: que pinten pronto y que llenen muchos muros: velocidad y superficie.
>
> 'all my visual aesthetics were reduced to two terms: that they paint quickly and that they fill many walls: speed and area.'

As Olivier Debroise put it: "Asombrado, Vasconcelos descubre que sin premeditarlo engendró un 'movimiento' y que éste se le escapa" 'Astonished, Vasconcelos discovers that without planning it he begat a "movement" and that this escaped from his grasp' (Debroise 1984: 50). Charlot wrote:

> Problems are raised by the success of Vasconcelos in handling painters, a success at variance with most governmental inroads into art patronage. Well posted as the Secretary was in regard to music and literature, his personal interest in the plastic arts is not enough to explain this success. For the private taste of the Secretary was that of the average dilettante. He approved wholeheartedly of Bakst's kaleidoscopic Ballets Russes décor and found Michelangelo guilty of gigantomania.
>
> Even after its waning, one can surmise that Vasconcelos remained at heart partial to the nationalist style. Because it was both national (and in that sense revolutionary) and well bred, the Secretary would have welcomed a renaissance on such dainty terms. It is much to his credit that, unprepared for the avalanche of "uglyism" that descended later on his beloved buildings, he did not stifle it, but furthered it instead, in spite of grave inner misgivings.[20]

However much Vasconcelos distanced himself from the muralists' productions, he still recognized them as artists. As a professional philosopher, Vasconcelos had defined views on art and creativity. That is, his attitude towards the artists emerged from his theory of art. Charlot stated:

> Now as philosophy goes, Vasconcelos has his place in Mexican philosophy. I had to read his books (I say I had to read his books because they are not too easy for a painter to read) to understand why that man suddenly offered walls in the most hallowed buildings in Mexico City, which is still known as the city of palaces, to young men who perhaps had not already made their proofs, and let those young men

> express themselves freely, absolutely freely, on the very large scale with which you are now familiar.[21]

The murals were unpopular and thus harmful to Vasconcelos' reputation and career. Why then did he promote them? Charlot writes: "The answer lies deep within his subconscious, a puzzle that an analysis of his political and official activities fails to solve" (*MMR* 90). Throughout his tempestuous career, Vasconcelos had remained a follower of Pythagoras and his theories of the social benefits of the arts (*MMR* 90–94). However, to be beneficial, arts had to be authentic, that is, free from external constraints: "To remain Pythagorean, art must be acted in full liberty…Under penalty of nullifying his aims, the Secretary could impose neither subject matter nor style" (*MMR* 94). Charlot's appeal to the subconscious is unusual in his writings, and Vasconcelos emphasized the point in his letter to Charlot after reading a draft of the passage: "Su penetración psicologico es realmente profundo" 'Your psychological penetration is really profound' (July 12, 1945). Vasconcelos was, therefore, deliberately avoiding the kind of direction that would have resulted in propaganda art, which, according to his philosophical views, would have been no art at all.[22] He was conscious, however, of the danger that muralism would become propagandistic once he was out of office.[23]

Vasconcelos did not interfere even when the muralists' subjects displeased him; he "was distraught when 'his' muralists chose to work in a didactic mode…" (Charlot 1979 Posada and successors: 47). Indeed, even Rivera, returning from the Paris avant-garde, was initially disturbed by "the resurrection of didactic painting that surged as an aftermath of the Revolution" (1952 Review of Ramos: 140). As early as the 1920s, Charlot found Vasconcelos "A knight of hispanism" (1946 Pre-Hispanic Quota: 13); indeed, Vasconcelos accorded a privileged position to European culture, Roman Catholicism, and even the white race (Fell 1989: 646 f.). He was, therefore, unsympathetic to the muralists' emphasis on Mexican Indian art (also Fell 1989: 383, 641). Siqueiros remembered how Vasconcelos found "detestable" the increasing indigenist interests of the artists: "asombrosa paradoja, el hombre que hizo posible la aparición material de nuestra obra pictórica, sintió desprecio por ella" 'amazing paradox, the man who made possible the material appearance of our pictorial work felt scorn for it' (Siqueiros 1977: 183 f.). Tamayo echoed this puzzlement in more drastic terms: "Aun cuando no le gustaba la pintura mexicana, creó las circunstancias adecuadas para que floreciera" 'Even when Mexican painting was not to his taste, he created the adequate circumstances for it to flourish' (Mijangos 2000: 198).

Some evidence can be found of Vasconcelos' occasional influence on the choice of themes, but not of style. He gave Montenegro a quotation from Goethe as the subject of his first mural (*El Desastre* 1982: 26), and Rivera was influenced by Vasconcelos' ideas in *Creation*, especially, I would argue, in the abstract symbolism at its apex. Also for the first work at the Secretariat of Education, Vasconcelos gave "la escalera a Rivera, dándole como tema el ascenso de la costa, al altiplanicie" 'the stairway to Rivera, giving him as theme the ascent from the coast to the high plateau' (October 17, 1945). The only report I know of Vasconcelos' actually interfering in the subject of an on-going project is by Emilio Amero, who hints that Rivera put him up to it.[24] Vasconcelos also urged Montenegro to clothe in armor and render more masculine the original androgynous nude (Ortiz Gaitán 1994: 93).

The most important example for the historiography of the movement is the established fact that Vasconcelos set the themes for the second court of the Secretariat of Education. He himself wrote: "Como tema para los patios le di a Diego los trabajos y las fiestas" 'As theme for the patios I gave Diego labor and festivals.'[25] This has been viewed as the imposition of the government's propagandistic purpose on the artists. [26] However, a closer examination of the event leads to a different conclusion. Vasconcelos' earliest recorded plan for the artworks in the Secretariat does not mention "los trabajos y las fiestas" and describes more folkloric and decorative subjects, like those of Rivera's stairway or stairwell (*MMR* 254 ff.). Indeed, *trabajos* and *fiestas* correspond neither to Vasconcelos' taste in art nor to his earlier recommendations for subjects, as seen above. *Trabajos* and *fiestas* do, however, correspond to the subjects of the younger artists in the Escuela Preparatoria, subjects they had indisputably chosen themselves. Leal's *Pilgrimage of Chalma* and Fermín Revueltas' *Virgin of Guadalupe* had pioneered in muralism the folk subjects that would later provide the major content for the movement. Vasconcelos was never reconciled to this direction of the movement he had initiated and continued patronizing. In all likelihood then, the subjects *trabajos* and *fiestas* did not come from the patron but from the artists. Vasconcelos was not imposing his ideas on the artists; they were bringing him around, however unwillingly, to their own. Having won their subjects, they then realized them without interference.

Often, critics, especially those uncomfortable with the muralists' subject matter, have simply assumed that the government directed the artists to support their programs. However, "the government" in this case comes down to one man and cannot be discussed merely in abstract terms.[27] Vasconcelos intended the artists' work to contribute more generally to education and cultural refinement and was anxious to avoid propaganda art. It was the artists themselves who were impressed by the government's programs of reconstruction and reform—such as bringing education to the villages—and elected to depict those efforts and thus to publicize and support them. Working against the taste of the public and officialdom, they realized long before the politicians the power of art to communicate the new ideas to the people and to construct a reformed image of the nation. The coincidence of the early muralists' images with the nationalist, revolutionary ideology of the government is not a necessary argument for government direction (as apparently assumed by Pérez Montfort 1999 and others). The artists were receiving support from the government, but they were not joining the establishment because the government of the moment was itself revolutionary—anti-rich, anti-bourgeois, and on the side of the workers and peasants. The artists were helping to construct a new society and were thus attracting the hostility of the bourgeoisie.[28] This special moment lasted only a few years, but it provided the context for the early Mural Renaissance. The later loss of idealism must not be read back into the beginning years of the movement.

Indeed, a definitive argument against the view that the murals were commissioned as propaganda is that they were largely ignored, disliked, and even threatened with destruction by government officials during the 1920s (*MMR* 90). The cause of this hostility in the general public was less the muralists' themes than their style: "expresiones pictóricas fuertes e innovadoras, diferentes a las del pasado inmediato" 'strong and innovative pictorial expressions, different from those of the immediate past.'[29] Charlot was definite on the point:

> Mais soyez sûr que si le public la hait, ce n'est *jamais* pour telle ou telle idée qu'elle représente, mais *parce qu'elle est de la bonne peinture*. (July 1924)
>
> 'But be sure that if the public hates [this art], it is *never* because of this or that idea that it represents, but *because it is good painting*.'
>
> Elle existe en soi et sa force individuelle (non comparable) attire quelques-uns, repousse les autres. Et parce qu'elle est un mode nouveau de beauté, elle sera haïe de tous ceux qui, par routine ou par paresse, s'attachent aux modes anciens auxquels elle s'oppose.
>
> 'It exists in itself, and its individual (incomparable) power attracts some and repels others. And because it is a new type of beauty, it will be hated by all those who by routine or laziness attach themselves to the old types that it opposes.'
>
> Enfin et surtout, elle fera bouillir d'indignation, parce qu'elle est une *création*, ceux qui sont incapables de créer pour la simple raison que les châtrés détestent la fécondité des puissants.
>
> 'In the end and above all, because it is a *creation*, it makes those people boil with indignation who are incapable of creating for the simple reason that the castrated detest the fecundity of the potent.'
>
> ce grand mouvement d'art moderne qui bouleverse et annule, quoiqu'il en coûte à certains de l'avouer, les vieilles formules académiques. (1924–1925)
>
> 'this great movement of modern art that overthrows and annuls, as much as it may cost certain to admit it, the old academic formulas.'

This hostility was aroused also by the art emanating from EPAL, art with much less social content: "Los enemigos fueron implacables" 'The enemies were implacable' (Díaz de León 1965: [19]).

When Vasconcelos resigned and the muralists lost their patron, the whole movement declined (Mijangos 2000: 175). The murals began to be used in official programs only after 1930 (Coffey 2002: 15–25, 28). Post-1930 problems with patronage have, however, largely defined the discussion of the subject and have been projected anachronistically back into the earliest period of muralism (Coffey 2002: 16 f.). As the government grew autocratic and corrupt, its commissions were increasingly tainted, and favored artists like Rivera were accused of letting themselves be appropriated by an unworthy regime. From Rivera's late career until today, his alleged collaboration hinders for many a full appreciation of his art, and more oppositional figures, like Siqueiros and Orozco, are preferred. However, even such anti-establishment artists were granted government commissions and accepted them.

Charlot always thought criticisms of accepting government patronage were anachronistic. The government controlled the public buildings that contained the walls appropriate to the murals the artists wanted to paint.[30] Orozco's privately commissioned 1925 mural *Omniscience* in the House of Tiles was a rare exception (e.g., Tibol 1996: 88). As an art historian, Charlot was also conscious of the fact that from

earliest antiquity, the great majority of public and monumental art had been commissioned by political and religious institutions (e.g., August 3, 1966). Most important, Charlot himself experienced the idealistic age of early muralism from 1921 until the resignation of Vasconcelos in 1924, the period during which the aims of the artists and the government programs—especially those of Vasconcelos—coincided.[31] Charlot left Mexico before the deterioration of the 1930s and never had to face the later problems of accommodation and compromise.

Despite all the genuine problems of government patronage, Mexico must be recognized as a country that expends an unusual amount of its limited resources on its cultural riches. In the 1920s, Edward Weston wrote that the rich Yankees admired but did not buy his photographs; but "The Mexicans, impoverished from the revolution, complained of the prices, yet they bought" (1961: 66). José Guadalupe Zuno, governor of Jalisco and patron of the artists, bought Weston's prints for the state museum: "But hail to Sr. Zuno for being such an appreciative patron!" (1961: 127; also 67). Even the archbishop of Mexico, Luis Maria Martínez, could commission his 1944 official portrait from Orozco:

> Either these clerical patrons—as did Father Couturier in France—prized genius over faith, or else and more probably, being themselves Mexican, they allowed for tantrums between a child and his mother, be it his Mother the Church.[32]

The archbishop recognized as Charlot did that Orozco's work blazed with religious indignation.

A positive parallel can be found in the support provided by Vasconcelos and others in the government to Mexican novelists (Rutherford 1971: 51–68). Novelists of the Revolution like Mariano Azuela were largely ignored by the Mexican public and even compelled to publish abroad. Starting with Puig, government officials interested in supporting authentic Mexican novels provided patronage which brought the novelists recognition and fame. This patronage was offered without censorship or attempts to influence the writers, although they were presenting negative views of the Revolution. Indeed complaints were made that the government was supporting its critics. The government had the courage and strong, good taste to continue its support, and the novelists have endowed the world with a moving narrative of Mexican history. Similarly, an avant-garde poet like Manuel Maples Arce could be supported by being made an ambassador, even though he presented no threat that required his being coopted, a regular Latin American practice.

The end result of Mexican government patronage is an art treasury of world quality. The history of Mexican muralism differs essentially from the Soviet program of Socialist Realism:

> In 1932 the Soviet Communist Party decreed that "Socialist Realism" would now be the only acceptable aesthetic. Soviet theater became literalistic and pedantic, and the Communist modernists in Berlin found themselves in disgrace. Avant-garde dramatists such as Brecht had come to Communism as a form of rebellion, only to be met by Soviet philistines demanding their own brand of orthodoxy. This paradox would continue to dog Communist artists through the twentieth century. (Nelson 2009: 342)

The responsible Mexican officials have been people of taste and genuine appreciation of the arts, both publicly and privately. With the major exception of Orozco's murals in the Palace of Justice, violent oppositional images have been accepted into public buildings. Obstreperous artists like Siqueiros have been accorded an unusual latitude for criticism, both visual and verbal. Parallels can be found in the enlightened support of cinema by the governments of China and Vietnam (e.g., Charlot 1991). Indeed, Vietnamese directors find Americans more subservient to financiers than they themselves are to censors. I repeat, Mexican patronage has enriched world culture with major artworks that would never otherwise have been created.

The artists chose, therefore, their own style, media, and, with few exceptions, their subjects. The artists' decisions reveal their engagement in the social reconstruction resulting from the Mexican Revolution, "a sincere reflection of the highly dynamic moment and milieu" (Charlot 1966 Foreword: x). That is, their work was not government propaganda, but their own propaganda for the government programs in which they themselves were participating. The distinction may seem small to some, but it is important. The subjects came from the artists themselves and were not imposed from without. Siqueiros writes:

> La pintura mexicana moderna es así fruto de la Revolución Mexicana…El deseo de una total transformación de la plástica…es el reflejo natural de la agitación del pueblo entero en favor de reivindicaciones sociales y políticas.[33]
>
> 'Modern Mexican painting is thus the fruit of the Mexican Revolution…The desire for a total transformation of the plastic arts…is a natural reflection of the agitation of the whole people in favor of social and political vindications.'

Leopoldo Méndez articulated this point in detail (1926).

The muralists thus saw themselves as co-workers in a nation-wide effort to apply the lessons and to realize the ideals of the Revolution. Charlot had hoped for such beneficial consequences from the war through which he himself had suffered, but was disappointed by both the French politicians and the Paris art world, which, as I described, seemed deliberately to ignore the recent tragedy. In Mexico, he found at last an opportunity to make the contribution he had envisioned, to put his art at the service of ideals worthy of the terrible sacrifices of the wars.

2.2. THE SOCIAL SITUATION: THE IMPACT OF THE REVOLUTION ON THE ARTISTS

The Mexican Revolution was brutal and bitter and affected profoundly the artists who lived through it, as they attested in their conversation and in their writings.[34] Just as it had shaken the old political order and opened it to progressive social movements, so it had shaken the art establishment and the conventional esthetic and opened the way for advanced experiments: "De los tiros de la Revolución Mexicana surgieron los muralistas" 'From the shots of the Mexican Revolution surged the

muralists' (Baeza Flores 1962: 34). A defining characteristic of the Revolution was its expression through art: "La Revolución Mexicana pudo crear un mensaje no sólo agrarista sino pictórico" 'The Mexican Revolution was able to create a message that was not only agrarian but also pictorial' (Baeza Flores 1962: 25). That inspiration spread to fields like literature, music, and dance. Intellectuals felt the impact of the Revolution as "la verdadera maestra" 'the true teacher' of a new idea of Mexico (Krauze 1999: 245; also 108, 243, 340 f.). The poet and esthete Torres Bodet reports Vasconcelos declaiming:

> Yo soy en estos instantes, más que un nuevo Rector que sucede a los anteriores, un delegado de la Revolución, que no viene a buscar refugio para meditar en el ambiente tranquilo de las aulas, sino a invitaros a que salgáis con él a la lucha, a que compartáis con nosotros las responsabilidades y los esfuerzos. Yo no vengo a trabajar por la Universidad, sino a pedir a la Universidad que trabaje por el pueblo. (Torres Bodet 1961: 260)
>
> 'I am in this moment—rather than a new rector who succeeds his predecessors—a delegate of the Revolution, who is not coming to seek a refuge for meditation in the tranquil surroundings of the lecture halls, but to invite you to sally with him into the struggle, to share with us responsibilities and efforts. I don't come to work for the university, but to ask the university to work for the people.'

Torres Bodet responded to Vasconcelos' call:

> Quien no lo haya tratado en esos inolvidables dias de 1921 no tendrá una idea absolutamente cabal de su magnetismo como "delegado de la Revolución" en el Ministerio. La juventud vibró desde luego ante su mensaje, de misionero y de iluminado. (Torres Bodet 1961: 262)
>
> 'Someone who did not work with him in those unforgettable days of 1921 will not have an absolutely correct idea of his magnetism as "delegate of the Revolution" in the ministry. The youth of the time naturally vibrated to his missionary and visionary message.'

The artists felt the broad significance of the historical rupture: "un puñado de artistas que propusieron una nueva definición de arte, como consecuencia cultural de la violenta Revolución Mexicana" 'a fistful of artists who proposed a new definition of art as a cultural consequence of the violent Mexican Revolution.'[35] Faced with the great subject of the Revolution, artists could not revert to traditional subjects like salon nudes. They had to leave the salons "a respirar el aire de pasión que traían los rebeldes" 'to breathe the air of passion that the rebels brought.' Easel pictures were too small for the subject; they needed walls, as claimed by Leopoldo Méndez, above (1926). The painters gave expression to the revolutionary people. Their sense of this mission made them abandon the concept of art for art for a new type of work, which:

> a la postre ha creado una nueva estética, la de la protesta, llena de los anhelos populares y que, como todo lo que vive de la multitud plena de rebeldía, es fuerte y es grande y nos apresa en la emoción de la batalla, que eso es la vida.
>
> ‘in the end, has created a new aesthetic, that of protest, full of the yearnings of the people, and which, like all that lives from the masses full of rebellion, is strong and great and seizes us in the emotion of battle: that this is life itself. (Méndez 1926: 48)

The new painting was not merely an esthetic choice but arose from the exigencies of the historical situation:

> None of the successive standards of XXth C European painting—as it sprang alive out of Cézanne—are fit to assay the mural achievement of Mexico; but certainly some other standard should be tried before wholesale condemnation is given. To paint in Mexico is not the same as to paint in Paris. The non-Greek nature of the Indian cultural subsoil, the planting of the Cross in the New World a thousand years after its recovery by Saint Helena, the bivalency of the race, the hot revolutionary breath of 1910 that tumbled ivory towers as easily as the wolf blew away the house of straw—these are bound to qualify the Mexican work. If a European expert fails to find here this apple he calls art, art may yet perchance be there in some other kind of fruit, one that has a name only in Indian idioms, and with a taste to upset the stomach of all apple-fanciers.
>
> Mexico is not geared to produce the same art phenomena that Paris produces, and that impregnates vaguely the spirit of many artists. (Charlot Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut)

The later art-for-art reaction against the muralists came from a younger vanguard that had not experienced the Revolution (Krauze 1999: 173 f.).

The experience of the Revolution also influenced the muralists' self-image. The muralists thought of themselves as revolutionary artists, naming in late 1922 their union the Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores Revolucionarios ‘the Syndicate of Revolutionary Painters and Sculptors.’ Even before the end of the Revolution, an artists' discussion group was active in Guadalajara, which Siqueiros called the Congreso de Artistas Soldados ‘Congress of Soldier Artists.’ Just like the governmental leaders, many of the artists were veterans and thought of themselves and their work in martial terms:

> Bolaños dice…Ramos Martínez, nuestro general en el arte; nosotros somos los soldados… La victoria la ganamos juntos, agrega Fernández.[36]
> ‘Bolaños says… “Ramos Martínez, our general in art; we ourselves are the soldiers”… “We gain the victory together,” adds Fernández.

In his article “D. Alfaro Siqueiros” of February 1924, Charlot described his friend:

> Aimant son pays et sa race, il met sa main d'artiste au service des reconstructeurs de l'ordre nouveau avec la même franchise que, pour la destruction de l'ordre ancien, il leur offrit son poing de soldat.
>
> 'Loving his country and his race, he puts his artist's hand at the service of the reconstructors of the new order with the same frankness with which, for the destruction of the old order, he offered them his soldier's fist.'

Siqueiros developed the ideal of "un nuevo artista combatiente de todas las causas del pueblo de su país y del mundo" 'a new combatant artist of all the causes of the people of his country and of the world,' an artist with a martial spirit.[37] War service instilled in the artists discipline, group spirit, problem-solving, and an interest in science, all important for their artistic work (Siqueiros 1977: 130). Charlot found Siqueiros and his "'Congress of artists-soldiers,' already converted to social endeavors by military selflessness and collective discipline" (*MMR* 241). Charlot drew many of the same lessons from his World War I service in his address to La Gilde, "Des Leçons de la Guerre": being imbued in combat with a martial spirit ("l'esprit de lutte") and realizing the need for group effort, hierarchy, and discipline to accomplish their goals (April 1919). Charlot made an explicit connection between aspects of his army experience and his life in Mexico: becoming comrades with people of different classes and races and experiencing the life of the poor. When I asked him about his friends during the War, he replied:

> we were, of course, thrown together, and for me the discovery was, of course, of people I would not have contacted otherwise. I mentioned already that peasant coachman. I had the greatest respect for people who knew things I didn't know, and it was mostly those people, because the few people who had similar education to mine had no mystery for me. And well, perhaps later on, for example, when I was in Mexico and felt more, I wouldn't say at ease, but felt more the mystery and the interest of the Mexican Indian than my cultured and cultivated Mexican cousins; probably the same thing was at hand. I was interested in things that I had not experienced. I enriched my life with the experience of people who had started life in very different ways, and I think that the thing is the common man or the masses or whatever you want to call it, is really the type of man that interests me, that I feel closer to. (Interview October 13, 1970)

World War I and the Mexican Revolution had a major psychological impact on those who survived it, an impact that can be studied in survivors of any catastrophe. As seen in Volume 1, Charlot and his fellow soldiers had faced death and survived. The future appeared as an unexpected gift to be used with care. Their lives needed to be worthy of the suffering and sacrifice of others. Their survival should be justified. As a result, the young veterans felt the need to commit themselves wholeheartedly to preventing the horrors of future wars, to healing the recent wounds, and to reconstructing society in a better form. Their art had to be dedicated without compromise to this serious task. This psychological stance explains how the young Mexican artists recognized in Charlot the sufferings of World War I and in his *Chemin de Croix* their worthy expression. Later parallels can also be found. For instance, in Italian

Neorealism after World War II there is little depiction of warfare. Rather, just as in Mexican murals, directors focused on the current needs of the people and reconstruction. A similar focus can be found in Vietnamese cinema.

In fact, the muralists felt they were risking their lives for their work, in the same spirit of self-sacrifice they had had as soldiers. This was not posturing. The Mexico of the 1920s was violent—"un ambiente de apasionamiento y de violencia" 'an atmosphere of passion and violence' (Leal 1990: 92)—as Charlot found:

> When I landed in Mexico the military revolution had somewhat abated, but it still was smoldering. Many still died violent deaths. One of my dearest friends was shot while he made ready to shoot the other guy. Such happenings clinched, I would say, my love of Mexico, tying, as they did, the Mexico of today with what I knew of ancient Mexico. (1974 *Artists of Hawaii*: 45)

> I really think that I did live at least the first part of my life in extremely tense conditions, starting with the war and going on with the Revolution. I went to Mexico when the Revolution was very much going on. I had friends that were shot down and murdered and whatnot, and those things are tragic. Maybe they would be better expressed in a sort of a Greek drama sort of things. Maybe words should be the medium. But as long as I was a painter, those things had to imbue themselves, embed themselves in my pictures. (Interview October 31, 1970)

> So they were in absolute good faith, and they enjoyed, of course, what they were doing, and it wasn't exactly a mystification because there was danger. That is, they certainly were considered as revolutionary poets, shall we say, and revolution in Mexico was still a thing that could be of life and death. It wasn't a question of style; it was a question of importance, and by destroying, if you want, or thinking that they were destroying a certain social order, there was danger. It wasn't just the pleasure of annoying the bourgeois. So even though what we were doing was very different, because the things we were doing were so close to architecture and so on that we didn't feel, we didn't want, in fact, to do fantastic things—we wanted to do things that would stand on their four feet, so to speak, and we wanted things that were clearly *lisible* to the people—nevertheless, we both, the poets and the painters, were doing things that were new and things that were a definite danger for us in the Mexico of the time, the social order or social disorder of the time. (Interview June 12, 1971)

Charlot is not confusing his dates when he writes: "The Revolution, even before the end of the shooting affray, had found its image" (1977 Foreword: xvi). Whatever dates historians were assigning to the end of the Revolution, the artists at their walls had the impression that it was still going on and they were not invulnerable. They felt and recorded the continuing violence in the wake of the Revolution, including the killing of rivals. Senator Field Jurado—widely admired for his honesty—was assassinated on January 23, 1924.[38] In December 1923, at the beginning of the rebellion of Adolfo de la Huerta

against Obregón, Charlot was asked "to give an artillery course to new federal recruits," a task he was ultimately spared.[39] Felipe Carillo Puerto—governor of Yucatán and friend of the artists, "a tender green-eyed giant" (*MMR* 134)—was executed in the aftermath of that revolt on January 3, 1924. In 1926, the Cristero Rebellion began. On October 3, 1927, Charlot noted in his diary: "on annonce la revolution de Gomez. faire provisions' "the revolution of [Arnulfo R.] Gómez is announced. take in provisions.' A month later, Charlot would hear the shots that executed Padre Pro.[40] In 1928, he followed news of the assassination of Obregón and watched the police deploy for Calles' opening of the Chamber of Deputies.[41] Violence came close to the muralists. A personal friend and supporter of many in the muralist *familia*, Hernández Galván, was murdered on July 30, 1926 (Diary). At least one person, a policeman, was killed during student demonstrations at the Preparatoria (Fell 1989: 346). Riding a bus, Charlot and a United States visitor experienced "un long tiroteado sur la route" 'a long gun fight on route' (Diary December 27, 1927). As Charlot later stated, "The Revolution was still all around us then" (Interview May 14, 1971). Brenner wrote that Tina Modotti was "quite excited about it…meeting a man and then reading in the paper next day that he has been killed. She ought to be used to that by now" (Glusker 2010: 502). Charlot felt that such violence, like the killing of Carillo Puerto, "had an indirect repercussion on the Mexican mural movement, whose first cycle was hurried to a close that same year" (*MMR* 280).

People carried guns and knew how to use them.[42] Manuel Maples Arce wrote in *URBE*:

> Hay un florecimiento de pistolas
> después del trampolín de los discursos (1924)
>
> 'There is a flowering of pistols
> since the springboard of the speeches.'

Edward Weston noted the picturesque atmosphere:

> The revolution was on, the hall table heaped with "pistols" and cartridge belts unbuckled for better dancing, presented a war-like aspect. (Weston 1931)
>
> I remember our genial host placing a revolver at Eric's head, a subtle suggestion to cease embracing his wife. Eric murmured "Don't kill me yet," and waved away the menace. (Weston 1961: 151)

When Weston asked about the frequent rumors of violence and Revolution, a Mexican promised him some thrills at election time: "we miss the excitement—it was great fun" (Weston 1961: 22; also e.g., 81).

Some of the artists carried guns, "my wild, pistol-toting colleagues" (Charlot April 6, 1966); "keeping, just in case, cocked pistols within reach while at work on their muralists' scaffolds" (Charlot January 28, 1971). Rivera wielded a very large pistol:

> In those insecure days, Rivera's holster and cartridge belt were menacingly displayed on his muralist's scaffold. Nothing silenced a conservative critic as quickly as when

> the bulky muralist, astonishingly agile for his girth, would confront the objector with the muzzle of a loaded gun."[43]

They did this at times with youthful bravado:

> Celui qui, minutieusement, calcule les proportions de son œuvre future en repérant les points d'intérêt du mur à coups de revolver, ennuiera quelques voisins, mais recevra l'attention professionnelle de ses compagnons artisans. (Brenner-Charlot 1928)
>
> 'He who meticulously calculates the proportions of his future artwork by marking the reference marks of the wall with pistol shots will annoy some neighbors but receive the professional attention of his artisan companions.'

The artists' union, the Sindicato, kept a store of weapons, but Charlot found them in poor condition (*MMR* 244).

Loyalties and enmities survived from the years of combat, and Siqueiros had important friends in the government from his army days.[44] Siqueiros maintained his martial spirit throughout his life. When I asked my father why Rivera never harassed Siqueiros in the 1920s as he did other artists, my father said, "Because he was afraid he would revert to his army ways."[45]

In their first Araujo article, Charlot and Siqueiros ask: "¿Puede llamarse revolución al último movimiento pictórico de México?" 'Can the latest pictorial movement of Mexico be called a revolution?'[46] Their last Araujo article bore the subtitle "La Influencia Benéfica de la Revolución Sobre las Artes Plásticas" 'The Beneficial Influence of the Revolution on the Plastic Arts" (August 2, 1923). Along with other factors, the Revolution had destroyed the ascendancy of academic art. Most important, the Revolution had turned the young artists into "hombres de acciones viriles" 'men of virile actions' who took an active part in the fighting: "Así, la preparación moral de su carácter fue el principio precursor natural del actual renacimiento" 'Thus, the moral preparation of their character was the principal natural precursor of the current renaissance.'

2.3. THE GROUP OF YOUNG ARTISTS: *LA FAMILIA*

Before the Revolution, the artists had already learned to organize themselves in protest. Many had now been toughened by military or other service, including José Escobedo, Siqueiros, Mateo Bolaños, José de Jésus Ibarra, Raziel Cabildo, and Jose Clemente Orozco (Díaz de León 1965: [7]). Starting in 1917, they began to return to Mexico City in numbers. Francisco Díaz de León (1897–1975) lists beside himself: Enrique A. Ugarte, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, Agustín Lazo, Antonio M. Ruiz, Rufino Tamayo, Julio Castellanos, Ángel Bracho, Salvador Martínez Báez, Leopoldo Méndez, and Erasto Cortés Juárez. They were all still unhappy with the official art organization. Leal states, "When Obregón rose to power we knew that the moment had come for us to start a revolution of our own."[47] Leal lists the students "who shared our inquietude, and carried on a truly subversive labor in the dim halls of the venerable academy":

> The roll of those who brought about this change is as follows: Mateo Bolaños, Ramón Alva de la Canal, Francisco Díaz de León, Enrique A. Ugarte, Emilio García Cahero, Gabriel Fernández (not meaning Gabriel Fernandez Ledesma but the one we referred to as "the Bolshevik"), and myself.

Due to their efforts, Alfredo Ramos Martínez was named director of San Carlos and started the first Escuela de Pintura al Aire Libre (EPAL) at Chimalistac in 1920, in which the young artists enrolled.[48] The school provided them less with instruction than with a supportive, collegial atmosphere, and supplies and facilities to pursue their own artistic interests. The success of their first exhibition in 1920 enabled Ramos Martínez to replace the San Carlos faculty with the young artists from Chimalistac. In 1921, the EPAL moved to the much grander site at Coyoacán:

> The small colony of seven artists was swelled with new members: Fermín Revueltas, who had returned from the United States, Ramón Cano come from Vera Cruz, Leopoldo Méndez, and a few more. The last arrival was Jean Charlot, who came with his mother.

Among the other artists at Coyoacán was Federico Cantú, who became a good friend of Charlot's. Starting then from before the Revolution, these young artists, roughly alike in age, had begun to form a genuine group characterized by its collective spirit.[49] Indeed, they even formulated a group declaration:

> They went so far as to declare their mutual solidarity in a written document dated November 8, 1921, wherein a group of them formed a secret society committed to supporting and promoting each other to achieve artistic supremacy as a group…They agreed to function as a collective and to exploit any personal contacts for the "common good." (Flores 2013: 56 f.)

Describing these young artists as EPAL "students" is clearly misleading. When the group was interviewed by Juan Raphael Vera de Córdova, Mateo Bolaños cried (*grita*):

> "Ante todo, Vera Córdova, no digas que somos alumnos, ya somos artístas, no geniales, pero, ya formados." (Vera de Córdova 1920a)
> 'Above all, Vera Córdova, don't say we're students. "We're already artists, not geniuses, but already formed.'

Charlot remembered: "the people around me were simply the students or perhaps I could say the advanced students, who were functioning as instructors also, informal professors at the school" (Interview May 18, 1971).

In sharp contrast to the Porfiriato gerontocracy, a characteristic of the post-Revolution period was that young people rose to positions of power (Krauze 1999: e.g., 120, 145 f., 212, 214, 312). Vasconcelos needed many workers and was happy to hire people who were younger than normal for their positions. At nineteen years old, Torres Bodet became a sort of executive secretary with major duties to the minister.[50] Charlot is not exaggerating when he writes: "We were so young that those of us who had reached their thirties received the homage due to age and wisdom" (1977 Foreword: xvi).

Since other artists and muralists were older, Charlot is clearly describing his group of closest colleagues. As seen above, Charlot already belonged to a group of young artists attached to the EPAL before mural activity started. Several members of that group became muralists and thus maintained their group consciousness. Moreover, in the focus of his memory on this young group, Charlot is revealing age perception as a factor in his understanding of the mural movement. For young people, a few years can make a great difference in the way a person is perceived and treated. Charlot explicitly described himself as belonging to the young generation in his 1917–1918 article "Nous les Jeunes !" and in "La Jeune Peinture Mexicaine."[51]

A comparison of available birth dates is helpful. Except for two in their very early thirties, the young muralists were all in their twenties, from early to late, with half in their mid-twenties:

Amado de la Cueva, 1891

Ramón Alva de la Canal, 1892

Xavier Guerrero, 1896

Fernando Leal, 1896

Carlos Orozco Romero, 1896

David Alfaro Siqueiros, 1896

Jean Charlot, 1898

Fermín Revueltas, 1901

A number of non-muralist colleagues were roughly in the same age group:

Nacho Asúnsolo, 1890

Carmen Foncerrada (spelled Fonserrada by Charlot), 1890

Germán Cueto, 1893

Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, 1896

Lola Cueto, 1897

Francisco Díaz de León, 1897

Emilio García Cahero, 1897–?

Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, 1900

Emilio Amero, 1901

The muralists treated a number of artists as the older generation or generations:

Joaquín Clausell, 1866

Alfredo Ramos Martínez, 1871

Manuel Martínez Pintao, 1875

Dr. Atl, Gerardo Murillo, 1875

Jorge Enciso, 1879

Francisco Goitia, 1882

Ángel Zárraga, 1886

Diego Rivera, 1886

Saturnino Herrán, 1887

Roberto Montenegro, 1887

Adolfo Best Maugard, 1891

Again, age perception is subjective, especially for the young. Zohmah Charlot recalled the muralists talking about Dr. Atl as if he were ancient, when in fact he was in his mid-forties. Best Maugard was born the same year as Amado de la Cueva, but was considered old because he was member of an older group of artists. Rivera was born the year before Herrán, who seemed very much part of past history for the young muralists. The difference in Rivera's age is important for the history of the mural movement.

Finally, a distinctly younger generation was separated by only a few years from Charlot's own group:

Leopoldo Méndez, 1902

Miguel Covarrubias, 1904

Pablo O'Higgins 1904

Abraham Ángel Card Valdés 1905

Máximo Pacheco Miranda 1905

Federico Cantú, 1908

Alfredo Zalce, 1908

In this younger generation was included Rufino Tamayo, who was born in 1899, only a year after Charlot. Much later, Charlot mistakenly remembered Tamayo as being "maybe sixteen or so" when assisting Montenegro with *El Árbol de la Vida* in 1921–1922 (Interview May 18, 1971)! The reason was, perhaps, that Tamayo was less advanced in his work in the early 1920s than the muralists already working on their walls. Tamayo brought his paintings to Charlot to critique and showed him his studio work, which suggests that he himself considered Charlot senior at that time.

Three artists, I believe, escaped this categorization by age. Carlos Mérida was born in 1891, the same year as Amado de la Cueva and Adolfo Best Maugard. Since he was such a loner, he seems to have escaped being grouped by age as well. Charlot certainly knew he was older and mentioned it when Mérida visited us in Hawai'i in 1971, but age plays no role that I can see in Charlot's discussions of his

art or role in the history of the movement (e.g., *MMR* 70 ff.). José Clemente Orozco was born in 1883, but also seems to have escaped an age tag. When I mentioned this to his son Clemente, he said, "My father was ageless." Born in 1886, Edward Weston was never, as far as I know, put in an age group.

Age and the generation gap were, however, important in Charlot's understanding of Rivera. In his 1924 article, "D. Alfaro Siqueiros," Charlot would refer to "les peintres de ma génération" 'the painters of my generation' as opposed to "nos aînés (génération Diego Rivera)" 'our elders (the generation of Diego Rivera).'[52] As I have discussed in Volume 1, Chapter 8, Charlot felt his generation was grateful for the battles won by Rivera's but had different experiences, problems, and needs. Rivera, therefore, could never provide a complete model for the young artists. They would have to find their own way in Mexico as in Europe.

The group of young artists gradually expanded to include older and younger artists and their most sympathetic friends.[53] But the original group and its earliest accretions maintained an independent identity and activism. The fully developed group began to speak of itself as "la familia" 'the family.' Brenner reported Charlot's description:

> In connection with gathering, Charlot remarks that we "the *familia*" [family] had become so accustomed to certain things and certain attitudes—simplicity and naiveté, a certain infantile directness, that we can hardly conceive of how strange we must look to outsiders. We even have our own language and certainly an etiquette that is original and unmatched. One does what one wants but who wants to promenade in fashion? Etc. etc. Scorn for sentimentals, humanitarians, reformers, moralists, and authorities, or not exactly scorn but surprise at their stupidity. It is indeed comfortable in spite of the undeniable family atmosphere. (Glusker 2010: 13)

Charlot was not the only one using the term. Orozco called *Mexican Folkways* "The '*familia* Folkways" (Glusker 2010: 22).[54]

2.3.1. GROUP SPIRIT

The formation of the young, activist group is fundamental in understanding the early stage of the mural movement.[55] In political México, groups are often more important than elsewhere (Krauze 1999: 250). Being a group facilitated their exchange of ideas and collaboration on each others' projects (e.g., Zuñiga 2008: 18–21). The group experience was emotional as well: "Those who shared this moment cannot forget its mood."[56] Moreover, Mexican intellectual and artistic groups were often composed of younger members under an older mentor or mentors, like Dr. Atl before the Revolution. This practice provided a template that was influential both during and after the Mural Renaissance. In the early 1920s, the younger artists naturally looked to Rivera to fill the role of mentor and were shocked when he acted more like a threatened rival. Writers and the public expected the artists to follow the habitual group practice, as seen in contemporary newspaper reports, and found evidence that they were doing so. Although Rivera spoke against schools of artists gathered around a leader (Fell 1989: 398 f.), he and Siqueiros fell into the usual pattern by competing for the leadership of the movement, each gathering his

own set of followers. Rivera also used the template to arrogate authority and leadership to himself and relegate the younger artists to the roles of students, followers, and assistants: *Dieguitos* 'Little Diegos.' The Peruvian muralist José Sabogal (18881956) even included Orozco and Siqueiros among the *jefe* Rivera's followers (Chioino 1923). Despite its misleading inadequacies, this template has remained influential in later scholarship on the Mexican Mural Renaissance.

The young artists' group spirit carried over into their new work as muralists. In contrast to the Parisian idea of individual genius and originality, the young muralists worked together like the members of a Medieval guild.[57] Assisting Rivera on *Creation*, they formed "a workshop…identical in its activities and purpose with those the old masters knew…where a communal type of art was produced."[58] As frequent assistants to each other, they collaborated "casi como un colectivo" 'almost like a collective.'[59] Led by Siqueiros, the artists eventually formalized their group as a workers union, the Sindicato de Pintores y Escultores Revolucionarios, with a manifesto "in favor of collective work. It desires to destroy all egocentrism, replacing it by disciplined group work, the great collective workshops of ancient times to serve as models."[60]

This group ideal was realized in its calling: "This group work found its best expression in mural painting":[61]

> Mural painting breeds egocentric pride less than any other form of the fine arts. Only the bad muralist may remain immune to the objective pull of an architecture, to the social responsibilities involved in speaking with paint on public walls. (*MMR* 242)

Leal stated that the unity of the movement was based in the use of fresco and "un cierto aire de familia" 'a certain family air' (1990: 159). Charlot wrote "how these noble seasoned buildings dictated a task vaster than a display of personality":

> a mouthpiece for collective feelings that, at the time, ran their gamut from the passionate mayhem of active revolution to the stilled depths of meditation that precede and follow action wherever Indian blood is concerned (*AA* I: 9).

Most important, the artists' task and their moment in history pushed them towards group effort:

> Individuals existed within an element of social consciousness as real as pea-soup fog. It held individuals together better than clean air, and directed each and all towards common ideas and actions, artists no less than laymen.
>
> This milieu was preconditioned to breed group action and communal mural work as a natural outlet for collective emotions. (*MMR* 67)

In France, Charlot had been inspired by the ideal of the cathedral builders, by his experience of the Gilde Notre-Dame, and by his participation in the war.[62] Teamwork was and remained all his life his preferred art procedure, working with assistants on his frescoes and with technicians in printmaking and sculpture. He enjoyed the teamwork in the production of his plays and was able to reassure the Disney animators that their collaboration could produce art as well as individualism could. In his French

masterwork *L'Amitié* and his 1955 mural *Fresco Class in Action*, he included versions of the inscription: "Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum" 'See how good and joyous it is for brothers to live as one' (Psalm 132 [Vulgate]/133, line 1). Teamwork was an expression of the artist as collegial craftsman and also of a religious attitude. In 1958, I attended a meeting in which a group of artists, architects, and clerics were consulting my father on the building of a church. When asked by a priest how they could all collaborate, Charlot told him, "It's one of the special graces of a cleric to help people work together." Unhappily, the project later collapsed because, Charlot told me, "Each one pulled his own way." Teamwork required a moral selflessness, the opposite of Parisian individualism: "in art as elsewhere man may lose himself to find himself" (April 1949: 142). For all these reasons, the early years of the Mexican Mural Renaissance were a peak experience for Charlot:

> The peak of originality reached by the Mexican movement was the shedding of personal idiosyncracies [*sic*] in the face of then-current Parisian taboos. For a while at least, we hoped to build an art as public, as complex, and as anonymous as that of the Middle Ages. Temperamental pride and the set habits of critics, however, splintered the group within a few years and let us fall apart, back to the lesser ways.[63]

He once told me that some of them had been good artists, some "less good," but they were all bound together by the extraordinary time they had lived together. I mention the bonds of friendship often in this book, but they were a major factor in the movement. Mérida called Charlot "hermano Jean" 'brother Jean" (Baciu 1982: 7). Orozco was called Charlot's "*cuate*" 'twin, pal, buddy' (Baciu 1982: 3).

2.3.2. GROUP PHENOMENA

The intense closeness of the *familia* also generated group phenomena that are known in other artistic areas as well (Chapter 1; *Idols* 8 f.). For instance, an orchestra will sound different from the first downbeat of a different conductor. The *familia* created a group spirit that brought the artists and their work together in intangible ways, resulting in similarities of subject and style that permeated their work despite their individual differences. The young muralists were especially cohesive through age, experience including war, social sympathies, and position in social and art history. They had been given the same task in the same place for the same audience. Maples Arce described the young artists: "Este grupo sólido, homogéneo en principios estéticos y vinculado por enormes afinidades espirituales" 'This solid group, homogeneous in esthetic principles and linked by enormous spiritual affinities' (1981: 38); "un grupo tan recio y tan prodigo en intenciones nuevas" 'a group so vigorous and so prodigious in new plans' (981: 39). The older generation—including Rivera, Zárraga, and Herrán—had worked as individuals; "no fueron el producto de un energía colectiva, perfectamente unificada en ideales y procedimientos técnicos y en conceptos de renovación y de verdad" 'they were not the product of a collective energy, perfectly unified in ideals and technical procedures and in concepts of renovation and of truth.'

Like the artists of the Parthenon, the Medieval cathedrals, and the Italian Renaissance, their group spirit shines through their individual variations:

> En las Artes Plásticas las influencias de individuo a individuo tienen un desarrollo semejante al de los cambios de jerarquías estéticas de un Continente o de un País a otro, que son superiores a la voluntad de los hombres que las ilustran. (Araujo July 19, 1923)
> 'In the plastic arts, the influences of individual to individual undergo a development similar to that of the changes in esthetic hierarchies of a continent or of one country or other, which are superior to the will of those people who illustrate them.'

> But the impulse that gave birth to the temples and major sculptures of the Mayas was the collective urge that seizes whole crowds and makes them build as one, be they Athenian Greeks or Gothic Frenchmen.
> Despite the diversity of mediums, periods and subjects he will thus familiarize himself with an undercurrent, the spirit of the Maya, that vies in power and in depth with the best of Greece and of China.[64]

This mysterious power could work even against the artists' consciousness:

> Perhaps the best proof that the painters acted not unlike mediums is the fact that, regardless of their leftist mouthings, they produced such masterpieces of religious art as Orozco's series on the life of Saint Francis, or Revueltas' *Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe*, fit expressions of their people.[65]

> Orozco's positive affirmation of faith is nonetheless impressive for being unconsciously uttered and consciously denied…. faith is for him a means of enlarging to God's size man's distresses. (*AA* II: 255)

> Orozco's religious subjects "equal those of the Catholic Rouault in spiritual content." (1967 "José Clemente Orozco")

The muralists could be influenced by such a group spirit because as artists they were open to the inchoate, unconscious forces underneath their mental and physical effort. Moreover, group phenomena seem stronger in the arts and in the presence of genius: "Genius picks, at times, eccentric corners of the world to take root" (Charlot January 28, 1971). Although he wrote more about group and craft—perhaps a defense against feelings of pride—Charlot firmly believed in genius and its needs and rights.[66] My mother told me that when she consulted Charlot, then her boyfriend, on her worries about posing nude for Weston, he said, "I'd do anything a genius asked me to." Charlot appreciated the geniuses he knew and helped to promote them with his writings and recommendations. I will discuss dimensions of these group phenomena in later chapters.

2.3.3. THE YOUNG MURALISTS

The young muralists formed a group within the group of young artists. Although the muralists have created the dominant image of Mexican art in the early 1920s, they were very few out of a larger world of artists and intellectuals. Charlot wrote that "Only a handful of painters shared with a handful of

friends the load of these lean years"; working against "jeers and catcalls," "the painter himself hardly knew where, if ever, he would gain support and understanding" (1966 Foreword: ix). Indeed, many at the time would have considered them exceptions to the accepted norm of real artists: "the muralists were fully aware of the savage reaction of the bourgeois mind to their very first murals" (Charlot 1979 "Posada and his successors": 50; *Artists of Hawaii* 1974: 45). Small wonder that few accepted Vasconcelos' invitation:

> And there was a rare phenomenon in Mexico that there were painters there, but they were very much afraid of giving in to Vasconcelos' ideas, and very much afraid of tackling the very large walls that were offered to them, and they declined. Said they were busy. It's a little bit like in the gospel where somebody just got married and somebody else has to till the fields. They all had something else to do, usually easel pictures of roses and ladies. (Charlot 1960 Mexican Renaissance)

Fernando Leal recorded the recruitment of the young artists.[67] Vasconcelos wanted a mural in the amphitheater of the Preparatoria. He offered it first to the San Carlos professor Germán Gedovius, who said he was incapable of such a large painting. Vasconcelos then offered it to Ramos Martínez, who felt physically incapable of the work. Of the other artists, some were daunted, some unhappy to work with others, some offended by the small pay offered, and some unwilling to devote their art to public purposes:

> To climb ladders, perch on planks, and paint by the square yard for a house painter's wage proved unattractive to men whose vested interests now outweighed a lust for adventure…their withdrawal assured a predominance of moderns among the muralists.[68]

Charlot implies that some invited artists refused because of the low pay offered: "Posada se libró de las pretensiones de quienes lamentan no poder hacer arte por tener la necesidad de ganarse el pan" 'Posada liberated himself from the pretensions of those who lament that they cannot make art because of the need to earn their bread' (Charlot 1928 Posada Grabador). In his education campaign, Vasconcelos did depend on volunteers and workers willing to accept low wages, and the muralists would live poorly.[69]

After Ramos Martínez refused his invitation, Vasconcelos asked him to offer the opportunity to his students, the young artists who were "the hope of Mexican art today." Ramos Martínez did this with the purist warning that government commissions were incompatible with real art. Only Leal and Alva de la Canal expressed interest and began making competing preparatory sketches for the one commission on offer, the wall of the Preparatoria amphitheater! At this moment, Rivera returned from Europe at Vasconcelos' invitation and was offered the wall, on which he eventually painted *Creation*. Leal and Alva thought their chance had passed, but Vasconcelos asked Rivera to find young artists interested in painting murals. However, Rivera did not.[70] Ramos Martínez recommended Leal to Vasconcelos (John Charlot 2009: 34), so after visiting his studio and admiring his work, Vasconcelos asked Leal to invite his interested colleagues. Charlot confirmed to me Leal's account of this point: Leal was indeed the one who recruited the young artists. Of Leal's colleagues, only four accepted: Revueltas, Alva de la Canal, Emilio

García Cahero, and Charlot, and Cahero soon dropped out. The young muralists constituted, therefore, a small group distilled from an older and slightly larger one that had been forming since at least 1910 and had lately been working together in the EPAL of Coyoacán.[71] Later others would join this smaller group, which would continue to have its own identity and self-consciousness and to operate with its own independence.

Charlot remembered vividly the youth of the beginning muralists, which he felt was important for understanding their art: their "juvenile enthusiasm" was launched at "the startled walls" (*AA* II: 167; *MMR* 150–153). Charlot described the mood of the "fistfull" of young muralists (January 28, 1971):

> La juventud es muy extremista, lo que de hecho, es la misma historia de siempre…
>
> Lo importante era *épater le bourgeois*, pues eran los seguidores del estilo de Porfirio Díaz, esto sí, haciéndose de manera muy mexicana.[72]
>
> 'Youth is very extremist, which in fact is the same history as always…
>
> 'The important thing was *épater le bourgeois*—since those were the followers of the style of Porfirio Díaz—doing this indeed and in a very Mexican way.'

These young artists were "a rowdy bunch," a "group of agitated extroverts."[73] Brenner and Charlot described them:

> Mais un enthousiasme les anime qui les apparente vraiment aux artistes de la Renaissance Italienne. Comme Leonardo, ils dévorent leur tâche avec un appétit monstrueux et, comme lui, jouent au repos des farces de collégiens. Raconter leurs dits, faits et œuvres serait presque recommencer Vasari. Ils possèdent l'ampleur d'esprit et les particularités d'action d'un Cellini, la même arrogance dans la création et la même humilité créative d'un Greco qui se jouaient de l'Inquisition. Comme l'artiste de la Renaissance, ils sont illogiques au-dessus de la logique, irrationnels plus haut que la raison. A l'observateur, ils apparaissent fantasmagoriques, fantastiques, fous, mais eux-mêmes se jugent absolument normaux et ne sauraient s'émerveiller de leurs propres activités pour incompatibles et multiples qu'elles soient. (Brenner-Charlot 1928)
>
> 'An enthusiasm animates them that makes them really resemble the artists of the Italian Renaissance. Like Leonardo, they devour their task with a monstruous appetite and, after work, like him, play student jokes. To recount their sayings, deeds, and works would be almost restarting Vasari. They possess the fulness of spirit and the particularities of action of a Cellini, the same arrogance in creation and the same creative humility of an El Greco who made fun of the Inquisition. Like the artist of the Renaissance, they are illogical beyond logic, irrational above reason. To the observer, they seem fatasmagoric, fantastic, crazy, but they judge themselves normal and couldn't be astonished by their activities no matter how many and incompatible they be.'

Exploits like those described in the article can be found elsewhere (e.g., Appendini 1972). Despite wanting to leave out picturesque anecdotes, Charlot could not resist including in his *Mexican Mural Renaissance* an account of the artists' trip to Guadalajara.[74] Beyond the high-jinks, Charlot would always admire the courage of the young muralists:

> There was a heroic scope to the gesture of those men who turning their backs on both art dealers and patrons, and their minds away from the Parisian novelty shop, planted their works indelibly on the walls of Mexico's buildings, with no incentive to do so but that of an inner urge synchronized with the social unrest, with no assurance that they would ever be noticed by the "cultured," but with the positive belief that they had ceased being artistic and were now artisans, companions to the carpenters and plasterers who were collaborating in the work. (1940 Twenty Centuries: 404)

2.4. IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAM

The general outlines of the ideology and program of the Mexican Mural Renaissance are discussed throughout: the creation of an authentically national art based on Mexican sources and used in public and monumental artworks to edify and educate the people. The subject was discussed in Mexico and Europe and occasionally appeared in print, most importantly in Siqueiros' *Tres Llamamientos*, a result of Siqueiros' earlier conversations with Rivera in Paris.[75] Many subsidiary subjects were debated, and disagreements arose both in theory and in practice (Acevedo 1986: 206). The fact that *Tres Llamamientos* does not mention murals reveals the large distance between the theoretical discussion of the time and the practical problems of realization (Fauchereau 2013: 97 f.). I discuss now only certain aspects of this large project of self-discovery and self-expression.

2.4.1. NATIONALISM AND RACE

Nationalism and *Mexicanidad* 'Mexicanness' were often articulated at this time with the words *race* and *racial*. Mexico is a land of many races and continuous mixing over hundreds of years. Thus no single race can be considered standard, and, among others, Vasconcelos attempted in his *La Raza Cósmica* (2003) to establish race mixture, *el mestizaje*, itself as a basis for racial unity.[76] Agustín F. Basave Benítez argues that "el mito del indio-mestizo" 'the myth of the mestizo-Indian' was important in the early-1920s discussion of the nation (1992: 112 ff.). Because the racial antagonism was connected to "un antagonismo estético" 'an esthetic antagonism,' unity could be sought in "un movimiento cultural sincrético" 'a syncretic cultural movement' seeking "el mestizaje cultural" 'a cultural mixture,' rather than a racial (1992: 118 f., 123, 127, 130-136). Such efforts by writers and artists failed against the strength of prejudice and "la ausencia de una verdadera síntesis de culturas" 'the absence of a true synthesis of cultures' (1992: 142). Nonetheless, I argue, those efforts have inspired great works by artists such as Rivera and raised the national- and self-image of the Indian. The reality of racial multiplicity is inescapable, and as later in multi-racial Hawai'i, Charlot celebrated the differences rather than promoting assimilation.[77] This attitude has been accepted in Mexico (Coffey 2002: 29 f.).

In the writings of the muralists and their colleagues, *race* and *racial* refer most often to the Mexican people and nation. For instance, in his famous 1921 manifesto "Tres Llamamientos," Siqueiros writes:

> Desechemos las teorías basadas en la relatividad del "*arte nacional*"; *¡universalicémonos!*, que nuestra natural fisonomía *racial y local* aparecerá en nuestra obra, inevitablemente.[78]
>
> 'Let us reject the theories based in the relativity of "*national art*"; *let us universalize ourselves!* Our natural *racial and local* physiognomy will appear in our work inevitably.'

Just as *local* refers to Mexico as a nation, so *racial* refers to the Mexican people as a whole.[79]

Similarly, Araujo writes: "liberarlas del fetichismo extranjerista, por largo tiempo predominante, orientándolas hacia intenciones nobles de producción racial" 'to liberate them from the foreignizing fetishism, long predominant, orienting them towards noble intentions of racial production' (August 2, 1923). *Racial* is opposed to *foreign* in this phrase. Araujo uses *race* and *racial* often, but always, I find, in the sense of the Mexican people and nation.[80]

Race and *racial* can also be used in the restricted sense, that is, to refer to a particular race. Brenner writes: "Racially, few of the revolutionary Mexican artists are pure Indian" (*Idols* 232; perhaps also 4). Siqueiros describes Rivera championing "la raza india, potencialmente superior a las otras en fuerza mental, en concepción de la belleza, etcétera…" 'the Indian race, potentially superior to the others in mental power, idea of the beautiful, etc.'[81] A 1925 poster for *Mexican Folkways* advertises itself as "Devoted to the Interpretation of the Indian race soul" (M67). Artists could be proud of their Indian background, like Tamayo: "Mi familia es de puros zapotecas" 'My family is from pure Zapotecs' (Mijangos 2000: 120; also 119–121). Charlot was certainly proud of his Aztec blood. Even this more restricted use of *race* can be schematic, as in "the bivalency of the race," referring to Indian and non-Indian (Charlot Writings Related to *MMR*: Passages Cut). References can also be ambiguous (e.g., *Idols* 264, 266). The word *race* was common coin at the time to make many points, most often at the expense of precision.[82]

Awareness can lead to a positive racialism: the recognition of the distinctiveness of different races and their cultures along with an appreciation of their special characteristics. This recognition was extremely important in the early period of the mural movement and had a major impact on the choice of subjects and styles, as I will discuss below. Racialism expressed itself also in well-intentioned but disputable views (e.g., Rutherford 1971: 222–235). Ramos Martínez wrote about Indian children art students: "mientras más pura es la raza, mayor fuerza tiene su producción" "when the race is purer, the production has more power.'[83]

When racialism is applied to white people, it begins to look like racism, as in the case of Vasconcelos, who writes:

> Jalisco es, en realidad, la más bien lograda provincia de México. La raza es allá más pura que, por ejemplo, en Puebla.[84]
> ‘Jalisco is, in reality the most successful province of Mexico. The race is purer there than, for example, in Puebla.’

Racialism could and did degenerate into racism, with its superficial stereotypes (Siqueiros 1977: 210), especially against Indians and Jews. Prejudice against Indians was and still is prevalent among whites and mestizos.[85] Dr. Atl was a violent fascist and anti-Semite.[86] Vasconcelos’ writings contain frequent anti-Semitic statements.[87] Orozco derided the Jewish family background of Rivera, Siqueiros, and Charlot.[88] He expressed his anger at Anita by drawing for her caricatures, “transferring my mistakes…into deformities of Jews.”[89] Brenner and her family felt isolated as Jews in Mexico (and New York City), and she identified with her persecuted forebears (Glusker 1998: 27, 122–127, 572). As far as I know, Charlot never wrote or spoke about anti-Semitism in Mexico.

Charlot’s own use of *race* falls into the above categories. As in the Araujo articles, he can use it for *people*: e.g., “Ses exemples et ses conclusions sont nés de la race et pour la race” ‘His examples and conclusions are born of the race/people and for the race/people.’[90] A “racial aesthetic tradition” is equated with “common spiritual and aesthetic denominator” (*AA* II: 3). The word can be used in the strict sense, most often for Indians.[91] In the same passage, Charlot can use *race* both in a restricted sense and more generally as *people*:

> “Art, which is not always produced by the best conditions, was produced in Mexico by clashes of race,” Mr. Charlot explained. “The emotional climaxes are the same in all modern Mexican painters, however, because of the strong influence of the racial link.” (1945 Appreciation of Mexican Art Is Discussed by Jean Charlot)

Indeed, racial identity is historically relevant: for instance, Diego Valdez was “the first graphic artist of authentically mixed parentage.”[92] Charlot was definitely racialist, celebrating, often polemically, positive cultural characteristics:

> Nous qui savons si peu en matière d’art et qui sommes si inférieurs en cela à d’autres races…notre orgueil nous aveugle au point que nous nous croyons le centre d’attention du monde et que nous nous refusons à traiter, fût-ce au moins sur un pied d’égalité, ceux qui savent plus que nous. (April 1925)
> ‘We who know so little in matters of art and who are so inferior in that to other races…our pride blinds us to the point that we believe ourselves the center of world attention and that we resist dealing, even at least on an equal footing, with those who know more than us.’

Charlot’s racialism and French sense of atavisms can be used in appreciating artists, including himself: “The Aztec is a little more complicated because I always come back to Gauguin and his Peruvian blood. I mean, I had the Aztec in me besides having it around me” (May 18, 1971). He mentions the complete Indian racial identity of Ramón Cano, Mérida, and Guerrero. For Mérida, “Indianism remains

his inner truth" (January 28, 1971). Guerrero was "the one undiluted Indian of the original group of Mexican muralists who recreated Amerindia on modern terms" (*AA* II: 334); "We learn from Guerrero how an Indian visualizes Indians," not just at tourist events or fiestas, "the one day of the year when it [the village] does not look or act like itself" (*AA* II: 345 f.). Guerrero appreciates the "silence and repose, eminent characteristics of his race"; "To open a vast store of Amerindian knowledge, he needs but to close his eyes…and let an ancestral voice speak."[93] In such passages, Charlot did not set up a standard, criterion, or typology of a culture by which to judge the authenticity of individuals. Rather he identified individuals genealogically and accepted their creations as evidence to use in understanding their culture. Charlot's is the attitude of an artist who sees culture maintained by being perpetually renewed.

Charlot's positive racialism is expressed in sometimes curious passages. For instance, he describes the tension in Julio de Diego's art between elongated Spanish and squat Indian proportions and their ultimate blending as "a true plastic equivalent of this mestizo race" (May 1940). On Mexican Indian paper cutouts, he writes:

> Quizá haya sido la pequeña medida de sangre asiática mezclada a la sangre del indio la que tuvo la culpa de que el artista nativo hubiese querido probar la destreza de sus manos en el papel…[94]
>
> 'Perhaps it was the small part of Asiatic blood mixed with the blood of the Indian to which is due the fact that the native artist wanted to try the dexterity of his hand on paper…'

However, Charlot did not use race uncritically as an explanation; he writes Brenner: "because you call race sorrow what is most probably a phisiological uneasiness common to both Jewish and Catholic girls of your age" ("que direccion tienes?"). Most important, he never used race as a criterion of quality or adequate principle of interpretation.

Finally, Charlot was focused on the native body. In his view, just as the Greeks had defined themselves visually through their physical type—applying their corporal proportions to other fields like architecture—so an authentic Mexican art needed to be based in an appreciation and canonization of the distinctive body type of the people—Aztec, Maya, and so on. Also, Charlot's palette became based on the skin colors of the people, which attracted him from his first arrival in Vera Cruz. He describes the Indian artist Xavier Guerrero "pasando sobre los encalados rojizos y pulidos su mano del mismo color" 'passing over the ruddy and polished wall washing his hand of the same color' (1972 La Época de Xavier Guerrero).

2.4.2. ANTI-EUROPE AND ANTI-FRANCE

Pro-Mexicanism was accompanied by anti-Europeanism. Charlot summarized the "tema central" 'central theme' of his book on the Mexican Mural Renaissance while he was doing the research for it :

> Simplemente que el continente de América está empezando a tener conciencia de que posee y tiene derecho de poseer una tradición altamente original, dependiente en sus comienzos tal vez, pero totalmente diferente de la tradición europea. Este descubrimiento de su auténtica personalidad no pertenece a México sólo, sino que existe en otros países de la América, tanto del Sur como del Norte. Aunque las tradiciones artísticas de la América del Norte son diferentes de las de México; por ejemplo, han nacido las dos precisamente de este nuevo concepto del americanismo estético. (Charlot September 14, 1945)
>
> 'Simply that the American continent is starting to become conscious that it possesses and has the right to possess a tradition that is highly original, dependent in its beginnings perhaps, but totally different from the European tradition. This discovery of its authentic personality does not belong to Mexico alone, but it exists also in other countries of America, in the south as well as the north. Although the artistic traditions of North America are different from those of Mexico, for example, the two were born precisely from this new concept of esthetic Americanism.'

Siqueiros often argued the same point: "un México en violenta acción de rebeldía contra la influencia cultural de Europa" 'a Mexico in violent action of rebellion against the cultural influence of Europe.'[95] Leal identifies this "colonialismo de las ideas" 'colonialism of ideas' as the factor that kept Mexican artists dependent on Europe (Leal 1990: 31). The Estridentista poet Germán List Arzubide articulated the view in 1926: "Antes de la Revolución, la Patria mexicana, como entidad espiritual, no existía, puesto que en todas estas actividades se reducía a ser un lejano barrio de Europa" 'Before the Revolution, the Mexican fatherland, as a spiritual entity, did not exist since in all these activities it was reduced to being a distant suburb of Europe.'[96] The same criticisms were made of Mexican literature (Rutherford 1971: 47 f.).

The European country on which Mexico had long been most dependent was France, especially during the Porfiriato.[97] Tamayo called Mexico "una colonia artística, podríamos decir, específicamente de Paris" 'an artistic colony, we could say, specifically of Paris' (Mijangos 2000: 169). The young artists of EPAL were enthusiasts of Impressionism (Vera de Córdova 1920b). Auguste Génin, discussed in Volume 1, witnesses to the fact that Mexico was the most Francophile nation in the world at that time. For instance, French taste is imposing itself on Mexico in clothing (1908–1910: 3); Frenchmen create decorations in buildings (5); Mexicans think of France as their intellectual mother (12); and education is influenced by French literature, science, and culture.[98] Mexico City was called "un pequeño París" 'a little Paris' (Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 1: 225). Mexican Revolutionaries were even inspired by the French (Rolland 1990: 303 f.). Pancho Villa threatened that he "to set up a guillotine worse than that of the French Revolution" (Katz 1998: 482). Much French influence continued into the 1920s, for instance, in Mexican commercial art (Ortiz Gaitán 2003: 307 ff.).

This provincialism invited ridicule. Génin approves of the Mexican upper classes following "les modes de Paris, de Londres, et de New-York, avec plus ou moins de retard" 'the fashions of Paris, London, and New York, with more or less delay' (1912: 316). Charlot taunts:

> *ici* où toutes les idées et les modes de là-bas arrivent avariées ou défraîchies par le séjour sur mer, avec de tels retards que nos pauvres "intellectuels" se voient forcés de baver impressionisme quand ils en sont au cubisme, et cubisme quand ils en sont au "naturalisme constructif" et que nos pauvres mondaines doivent porter la jupe courte quand on en est à la jupe longue…[99]
>
> '*here* where all ideas and fashions from over there arrive after having lost their freshness and been spoiled by their sea voyage; where they arrive with such delays that our poor "intellectuals" see themselves forced to drivel about Impressionism when the Europeans are on Cubism and about Cubism when the Europeans are on "constructive naturalism"; and our poor fashionable women have to wear short skirts when the Europeans are in long ones…

This attitude resulted in a long depreciation of Mexican artists, described by Charlot in his *San Carlos*:

> [The head of the San Carlos Academy] Fabres failed totally to understand that respect was due to teachers of native birth who certainly were his betters as artists, and besides meant an irreplaceable link in the national tradition" (144)

While fine Mexican artists remained unemployed, the Academy was staffed by Europeans whose only claim was to have been trained outside of Mexico (*San Carlos* 30, 32 f., 88, 103, 116, 118 f.). These expatriates had no commitment to Mexico (126 f.) and no appreciation of *Mexicanidad*: "It became [a predecessor of Fabres] Clavé's self-appointed mission to scrub off Mexican painting what he considered its coarseness" (*San Carlos* 106). The parallels to the twentieth-century muralists were clear:

> el pintor marchó a Italia, que era lo que más anhelaban hacer los pintores jóvenes de esa época, como en nuestra generación, en que los jóvenes anhelan irse a París. (Charlot 1945 Juan Cordero Muralista)
>
> 'The painter traveled to Italy, which was what the young painters of that epoch yearned most to do, as in our generation, in which the young yearn to go to Paris.'
>
> Roma era en estos tiempos el centro del arte internacional, como en nuestros tiempos lo es París.
>
> 'Rome was in those times the center of international art as Paris is in our times.'

In the nineteenth century, good Mexican painters like Juan Cordero faced the same problems the muralists were experiencing (*San Carlos* 92, 99 ff.). Indeed, the preference for European painters was still strong in the Mexican bourgeoisie of the 1920s. Edward Weston describes the home of a rich person he photographed: "There were half a dozen of Zuloaga's hanging around. Yet they overlook the far greater painters of their own country" (1961: 160). Even among the good artists when Charlot arrived, Ramos Martínez was following the convention with his emulation of French Impressionism, and the early opponents of the muralists called on the authority of Paris. F. Forguisen Nielsen defended artists criticized in the Araujo articles thus:

> Varios de los jóvenes que ocupan un justo lugar en dicho estudio, son muy bien acogidos en los buenos centros artísticos de Paris, y yo estaba verdaderamente sorprendido de que aquí ocuparan un puesto secundario de principiantes en movimiento de tanta trascendencia para la pintura del país. (1923)
>
> 'Various of the young [artists] who occupy a just place in said study, are very well received in the good artistic circles of Paris, and I was truly surprised that they occupy here a secondary post of beginners in a movement of such transcendence for the painting of the country.'

France was thus targeted by Vasconcelos and the muralists (Fell 1989: 412). Siqueiros describes their movement as the first Latin-American one that was "*no colonial*, no dependiente, que no es un reflejo *mecánico* profesional del arte francés en boga" '*not colonial*, not dependent, not a *mechanical* professional reflection of the French art in vogue.'[100] The new admiration for popular art was in opposition to "la oligárquica intelectualidad 'francesista' de la pre-revolución" 'the "francofying" intellectual oligarchy of the pre-Revolution' (23) and to "El concepto porfiriano 'francesista' de la belleza" 'The Porfirian "francofying" concept of beauty.'[101] Leal writes that "El filo de la Revolución cortó, en 1910, aquel afrancesamiento excesivo" 'In 1910, the cutting edge of the Revolution cut this excessive frenchification' (1990: 118). Vasconcelos considered the beginnings of the movement with Montenegro and Enciso a morale-builder specifically against the French (1982 *Memorias* 2: 81). He stated of the artists in the program: "creo que se han desafrancesado y ahora pintan como se pintaba en la Colonia, bien o mal, pero en grande" 'I believe they have defrenchified themselves and now paint as was done in Colonial times, well or badly, but big.'[102] This attitude induced Vasconcelos to refuse Rivera's request to hire Charlot as an assistant on *Creation*, and he only relented after Rivera deployed his considerable powers of persuasion.[103]

For Charlot, this deliberate separation from European art and specifically the current School of Paris was crucial for Mexican muralism (e.g., *AA* II: 353; 1977 Foreword: xvi). The muralists' decision was not, however, from ignorance:

> Despite their manly content, Mexican frescos and paintings were of worth because their makers, far from surging out of the bush, palette in hand, were indeed well informed as to what transpired in the international art world."[104]

Into the 1920s, Mexican artists were isolated from contemporary trends in Europe.[105] But many of the artists had visited or lived in Europe, like Atl, Montenegro, Best Maugard, Siqueiros, Amado de la Cueva, Carlos Orozco Romero, Nahui Olin, and even Goitia.[106] Revueltas had studied in Chicago and been influenced by the modern art he encountered there (Zurián 2002: 19 ff.). Rivera was recognized as an important Cubist in French art history. Mérida had roomed with Modigliani and written a series of articles on Futurism when he returned to Mexico in 1919.[107] In the early series of articles under the pseudonym Araujo, Charlot and Siqueiros found "las manifestaciones pictóricas de México el reflejo natural de las de Europa" 'the pictorial manifestations of Mexico the natural reflection of the European ones' (Araujo July

11, 1923). Thus the amusement of the Mexican artists to be taken for bumpkins: "Their provincialism was not one of ignorance but of choice."[108] Charlot often told a story about Walter Pach:

> This is a portrait of her in that particular style that I worked hard to do as if I had never known Paris. Of course, the people who would come and see my pictures would all tell me—some of them very famous critics, American critics—"Well, your things are very nice, but you should be more aware of what is being done in Paris.[109]

Charlot felt that ultimately the muralists' close but critical knowledge of European art helped them become themselves:

> Pero todavía encontramos un no sé qué de heroico en la idea de un arte estrictamente nacional. Tal idea es fecunda en el plano ideal pero no en práctica. La verdad es que se robustece más la obra al quedar expuesta a influencias más diversas. El Greco se le enraizó lo bizantino (que llamamos español) al estudiar con Tiziano, su sensual opuesto. Y nuestro Diego no nos hubiera salido tan mexicano de no haberse forjado al crisol parisiense. ("Stefa Brillouin" August 1945)
>
> 'But we still find a je-ne-sais-quoi of the heroic in the idea of a strictly national art. Such an idea is fruitful on the ideal plane but not on the practical. The truth is that the work strengthens itself more by remaining exposed to more diverse influences. El Greco rooted the Byzantine (which we call Spanish) in himself by studying with Titian, his sensual opposite. And our Diego would not have come out so Mexican to us if he had not forged himself in the Parisian crucible.'
>
> Rivera could hardly have become as convincingly the local realist that he is were it not for his earlier valid attachment to analytical cubism, which later on checked all backward glances towards Paris. (*AA* II: 155)

Indeed, the specific character of muralism constitutes its place in world art history:

> In his murals, Rivera was first to break sharply with the artists of the School of Paris, who remained involved in experimental styles. Therein lies in Art History his unique position. (1965 "Articles for *EJB*": "Diego Rivera")

Rivera himself told Edward Weston: "Europe does not interest me now. I dislike Paris. I am a typical American" (Weston 1961: 147).

Among other things, in realizing the mural aspirations of the early Cubists, "Mexican artists contributed their share to rounding out the international school" (*AA* II: 155). The muralists were not derivative but had created an art from the ground up:

> Though far removed from other art centers, Mexico plays a role in contemporary art that cannot be dismissed as merely provincial. Mexicans have their own classical tradition, that of Indian cultures. (1965 "Articles for *EJB*": "Mexican Painting")

That Mexican heritage included using public, monumental art as "an answer to the need of the people," articulating complex ideas in accessible form (*AA* II: 44 f.). Indeed, "Europe could have spoiled for those artists a native taste for mural painting" (Charlot 1966 Foreword: ix).

2.4.2.1.INFERIORITY COMPLEX

Mexicans themselves ascribed much of this nationalism or even chauvinism to a national inferiority complex: in Vasconcelos' words, "el complejo de inferioridad que sufrimos en secreto, aunque exteriormente simulemos arrogancias" 'the inferiority complex from which we suffer in secret although on the exterior we simulate arrogance.'[110] One of his goals was to instill confidence. For instance, Montenegro's stained glass window was arguably better than the French ones in the upscale department store El Palacio de Hierro:

> Estas palabras en un pueblo vigoroso suelen ser arrogancia y "chauvinismo". En un pueblo como el nuestro, enfermo de un justificado complejo de inferioridad, eran parte de la tarea del educador, utilizaban los triunfos de aquel incipiente renacimiento, para despertar los ánimos e infundirles confianza en las propias capacidades. (Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 81)
>
> 'These words in a vigorous people would be arrogance and "Chauvinism." In a people like ours, debilitated by a justified inferiority complex, they are part of the task of the educator: they use the triumphs of that incipient renaissance to waken minds and to instill in them confidence in their own capacities.'

With Montenegro, Herrán, and Revueltas among others working in stained glass, that medium was considered important at the time. Vasconcelos was proud that the Secretariat of Education was built exclusively by Mexicans without the aid of foreign workers.[111]

Leal argued that the "colonialismo de las ideas" 'colonialism of ideas' "entorpecía el ejercicio de nuestras facultades artísticas y nos creaba un angustioso complejo de inferioridad" 'deadened the exercise of our artistic faculties and created in us an anxious inferiority complex' (1990: 31; also 58). Mexicans needed to find "la seguridad en nosotros mismos" 'security within ourselves' (1990: 32), otherwise the same inferiority complex they had towards the School of Paris would now subject them to New York (1990: 121; also 32 f.). The accusation continued to be used. In 1948, Siqueiros accused Tamayo and his ilk of following Paris because of their inferiority complex (1996: 300 f.). Tamayo tossed the same accusation back at Siqueiros' bluster.[112] Charlot wrote about the problem only in guarded tones, for instance, on Siqueiros' European experience:

> An all-round itinerary of that sort was needed before this strong temperament could feel humble enough, and provincial enough, to fresco the archaic-looking brown giants of 1924. (*AA* II: 367)

Charlot did, however, speak about the problem and considered it important in the history of the movement. Unmentioned by him was his own role as a cultured Frenchman in instilling confidence in his Mexican

colleagues. In Maples Arce's *URBE*, the illustrations are credited to "el pintor francés Jean Charlot" 'the French painter, Jean Charlot.'[113]

One other characteristic of Charlot's was important for this aspect of his role in Mexico. In Catholic teaching, a just estimation of oneself is not prideful even if positive. As seen in his writings, Charlot resisted feelings of pride and vanity, but he did not see any sinfulness in the virtue of self-confidence. He did not talk about his self-confidence, but it could be perceived by those around him. A United States colleague said later: "He felt that he was an important figure, and indeed he was" (Burnett 1979: 2-E). When I asked him in the early 1950s whether he was a major or a minor artist, he replied major. Questioned further, he told me that he knew quality in art history and could recognize it in his own work. Also, one distinguishing characteristic of a major artist was productivity, and he surprised even himself at times with all he did. As seen in Charlot's relations with Mexican artists, such self-confidence can be reassuring for some and threatening for others.

2.4.2.2. JEAN CHARLOT, NATIONALISM, AND RACE

Mexican nationalism and racialism had an impact on Charlot's position in the movement from the beginning until today. Proud of the fact that the Secretariat of Education was built by Mexicans without foreign help, Vasconcelos resisted Rivera's desire to hire Charlot as an assistant. But Charlot was already an active artist on the scene and accepted by his colleagues. Mérida stated:

> Nunca hubo ciertos sentimientos contra Juan como francés, como tampoco los hubo contra mí como guatemalteco. El trabajo que se hacía era muy cordial; no creo yo que se haya tenido ninguna mala voluntad. Al revés, se le aceptaba, se le oía. Nunca que yo sepa, hubo nada en contra de él…Nunca en ningún momento, que yo sepa, se ejerció influencia contra Juan.[114]
> 'There were never certain sentiments against Jean as French, no more than there were against me as Guatemalan. The work done was very cordial. I myself do not believe that there was any bad will. On the contrary, he was accepted, he was listened to. Never as far as I know was there anything against him...Never in any moment, that I know, was influence used against Jean.'

In a letter to Charlot of January 10, 1949, Emilio Amero complained that he had been excluded from an exhibition because he was Mexican: "Not even in Mexico, during the time that you and I were struggling together, did I ever hear of anyone holding the fact that you were a Frenchman against you."

However, as discussed below, Charlot's position as a Mexican artist quickly became and has remained contested. As early as 1925, Charlot wrote to Walter Pach:

> P. S. : J'ai eu les pires ennuis pour l'exposition de Los Angeles, mes bons amis mexicains ne voulant pas me laisser exposer, comme étranger. Je crois tout cela arrangé maintenant, mais non sans difficulté.[115]
> 'P. S.: I had the worst troubles about the Los Angeles exhibition, my good Mexican

> friends not wanting to let me exhibit, as a foreigner. I believe all that is arranged now, but not without difficulty.'

Such difficulties continued. On December 27, 1927, Charlot wrote in his diary:

> B. A refuse mes autres tableaux parce que il y en a trop et que je suis français !
> 'Bellas Artes refuses my other pictures because there are too many and I am French !'
>
> matin : exp avec Paine etc. on ne m'offre même pas invités. (December 30, 1927)
> 'morning: exhibition with Paine, etc. They don't even offer me guest passes.'

Charlot wrote to Brenner in New York City:

> De mi se queria llevar todo, pero el Encargado de la Academia (un Gariel) dijo que yo era frances y que el Gobierno no podia pagar tanto transporte para un extranjero. Si es mi ultimo incidente en Mexico, me dejara mal sabor. (JC to AB "Desde que me encargaste de ayudar a la S^{ra} Paine")
> 'They wanted to take everything of mine, but the Academy person in charge (a certain Gariel) said that I was French and that the government could not pay so much transportation for a foreigner. If this is my last event in Mexico it will leave a bad taste in me.'

When Charlot was excluded from a Yale exhibition of Latin American art, his friend there, Norman Holmes Pearson, wrote him: "you should have been in it (your Frenchiness was apparently the reason for not being in)."[116] In 1968, Brenner could write that artists not born in Mexico, like Charlot, had been "demoted to second class or limbo" by the art market.[117] Carmen Barreda also blamed the art market that "se dividieron los grupos entre: 'verdaderamente mexicanos' y 'quienes hubieran nacido en otro país'" 'groups are divided between "truly Mexican" and "those who have been born in another country"' (1980: 10). Lester C. Walker stated: "The Mexicans were trying to downgrade him after he left. When he left he was termed a traitor, for they were very jealous about their own national origins. I ran into that kind of idea in talking to several Mexicans about him" (Burnett 1979: 2-E). Even the Sindicato could issue an anti-foreigner statement—later rescinded—that caused Charlot to offer his resignation from the group (Diary February 2, 1924). On the other hand, Charlot imperiled his claim by signing a foreigners' petition in support of the new art movement.[118] Curiously, this attitude appears to continue in art histories that diminish the role of non-Mexicans in the Renaissance, which had once prided itself on its internationalism as well as its Mexicanism.[119] Laura González Matute was surprised at a 1994 panel on Charlot in Mexico that the members "lejos de apreciar las aportaciones plásticas y temáticas, se engolosinaron en desprestigiar la obra de Charlot" 'far from appreciating his plastic and thematic contributions, indulge themselves in depreciating Charlot's work.'[120]

He himself, however, championed the artistic independence of Mexico in his writings to the point of being criticized as chauvinistic (1964 Revolution on the Walls). He undoubtedly felt that the muralists' work was independent at the time and continued to hold that they had made an original contribution, for instance, in their choice of narrative, social, and emotional subjects: "Already, fifteen

years before *Guernica*, the Mexicans had forcefully stated the artist's right to deal in intense human drama, and his duty to master didactic requirements."[121]

Although Charlot never developed the comparison, his discussions of the Mexican Renaissance resemble more his descriptions of the French than the Italian Renaissance or Classicism. Italy was discovering the Classical world on its own. France was doing that and also individuating itself against Italian influence as seen prominently in the decision to reject Bernini's design for the east colonnade of the Louvre in favor of Claude Perrault's.[122] Similarly, the Mexicans had both to find their cultural roots and to resist the influence of the School of Paris. This required a conscious effort beyond the inevitable transformations of acculturation.[123] This required morale-building, which Charlot could do from his French identity and profound admiration of Mexico and Mexicans.[124] For instance, he could criticize the desire of rich Mexican families for French furniture that spawned an industry in which hideous objects were designed for the supposed Mexican taste. Looking at photographs of rural revolutionaries occupying a palace, Charlot said that when the Mexican peasants sat in the Louis XV chairs, they made the *chairs* look ridiculous (*Tabletalk* December 6, 1978). Charlot transferred his self-confessed Chauvinism about French art to Mexico: each country should protect its characteristic art against outside influences no matter how impressive. Indeed, the opposition of Mexican art to French was being mirrored in Charlot's decision to transform himself, to be "born again" as a Mexican artist.

On the other hand, Charlot did not lose his appreciation of French art. He wrote to Brenner about one of her drafts:

> El emphasis sobre 'decorative' in School of Paris is demasiado far-reaching. The best people are far from being decorators. ("Regreso de Boston")
>
> 'The emphasis on "decorative" in the School of Paris is too far-reaching. The best people are far from being decorators.'

In fact, as Charlot considered in retrospect, the artists never severed themselves completely from the European art world: "I now realize that neither one of our mural movements could dissociate itself as thoroughly as it wished from contemporary fashions."[125] The post-revolution Russian artists also combined their national folk art with international avant-garde styles (Fell 1989: 409). Similarly, Charlot could write later: "In our early murals the pre-hispanic factor is not as decisive as contemporary opinion implies" ("Pre-Hispanic Quota" 1946: 12). Charlot's retrospective view is significant because he championed earlier both positions.

Nonetheless, the artists' intentions and contemporary views of their work are historically significant. What the artists wanted to do and thought they were doing is as important as later judgments about what they in fact accomplished. In his 1950s art history lectures, Charlot compared slides of classical and High Renaissance sculpture to illustrate his emphatic distinction between the Italian artists' idea that they were reviving classical art and the very different character of their production. On the other hand, hindsight tends to minimize differences that seem striking at the time. The continued hostility of

much of the art world to Mexican muralism—the continued effort to marginalize it—testifies to the reality of its challenging distinctiveness.

2.5. AUDIENCE

Mexican muralism stems from Vasconcelos' desire for an art that would refine and cultivate the people. He offered the artists walls in public buildings, an act that defined the audience as the general public. The young artists would develop the program they thought appropriate to the walls and to the people, a program that was much more social, didactic, and political than Vasconcelos imagined.[126]

In so doing, they were placing themselves in a tradition. Mexican muralism forms an exception to its period, but public and monumental art have been normal throughout the rest of art history. In Mexico, ideologies have been expressed in images since the earliest excavated temples, through the Colonial Period, and into the Reform Era's statues of heroes of the independence movement. Besides the inherent power of images to inspire emotion, images could still communicate better than writing to many of the audience: "Mexican Indians understand picture writing better than book learning. In that sense the Mexico of 1920 was not unlike the Italy of the 1300's."[127] Indeed, a great part of the population was illiterate, which did not prevent a rich oral culture of speech-making, storytelling, and vernacular theater, all of which Charlot depicted (Meyer 1976: 182 ff.). Part of Vasconcelos' program was a literacy campaign, founding libraries for schools and workers, and publishing Classical texts, another example of his respect for the people.[128] Charlot wrote of Siqueiros:

> Encontró la cosa de que tantos se habían olvidado, la utilidad y la finalidad del arte, pues en un país donde se lee poco, como en México, la pintura conserva su antigua función de propagar ideas, cuya función la hizo nacer y perdurar por el curso de los siglos. Pensó que una pintura, como una frase, era buena si expresaba clara y sobriamente una idea. (Charlot "Rebelde" 1926)
>
> 'He found the thing that so many had forgotten, the utility and purpose of art, for in a land where little is read, as in Mexico, painting retains its antique function of propagating ideas, which function made it emerge and endure through the course of centuries. He thought that a painting, like a phrase, was good if it expressed an idea clearly and soberly.'

The young artists realized that new images were needed for the Revolution, the post-Revolution society, and for the reformist movements in which they were participating. Even more important, the people needed new images of themselves, images informed by the experience of the Revolution: new heroes and new people. Brenner emphasizes the need to raise the morale of a people depressed by the years of carnage (1968 Return of Jean Charlot: 24, 28 f.). A new image was needed also by people who had been depreciated for centuries. As the bourgeoisie became ever more hostile to muralism, the artists became more focused on workers and peasants as their audience. The special audience of the muralists was a reflection of their particular historic situation: "The Mexican artist worked in the midst of a social turmoil quite unlike the secluded quiet of Parisian studios" (1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting").

Charlot always argued for the outreach and accessibility of art against the ideal of rarity (e.g., *AA* II: 136 f.).

The people were the largest audience available for art. In the early 1920s, there were no art galleries in Mexico, no art market, and no established support for modernism among critics, schools, institutions, and publications.[129] All these would come later, not always to the advantage of good art. For the time being, the Porfirista patrons were keeping their heads down, and very few new patrons had arisen among the bourgeoisie, much less from the people. Young artists had to rent space if they wanted to display their work (Mijangos 2000: 193, 199). The artists found most of the critics incapable of understanding their new work, much less criticizing it.[130] The critics were ignorant of art history and thus could not appraise an artist against his sources or evaluate a new movement as a development from earlier periods. As a result, critics were arbitrary, partisan, gossipy, and polemical.

How successful the artists were in reaching their audience, the people, was controverted right from the beginning of the movement. Orozco wrote that doing art for the people was otiose because the people made their own art.[131] He, Leal, and Siqueiros found the people had bad taste.[132] In a conversation in Hawai‘i, Zalce told my father that the workers just threw away the good prints Zalce and his colleagues gave them.[133]

On the other hand, Orozco rejected the idea that only connoisseurs could understand art; “the roughest and most ignorant man can be attracted and subjugated by beauty, wherever it may be found” (Orozco 1974: 93). Most of the muralists greatly appreciated folk arts, along with their creators, which indicated to many—then and today—that Mexican Indians had an artistic aptitude from which much could be learned: “The creators of true folk art are the people, who are its consumers as well.”[134] When studying folk art and artists for her *Idols behind Altars* (1970), Brenner wrote: “Everything these ‘people of the pueblo’ do or have is of impeccable taste and discretion” (Glusker 2010: 119). In his article on *pulquería* painting and often elsewhere, Charlot contrasted “en el mal gusto de los interiores adinerados” to “el buen gusto de los barrios pobres” ‘the bad taste of the moneyed interiors to the good taste of the poor neighborhoods’; the inert bourgeois consumers of art to “una vitalidad enorme de creación plástica” ‘an enormous vitality of artistic creation.’[135] At Milpa Alta and Chich’en Itza, Charlot was living in communities that were still creating and using their traditional arts, and the experience had a strong impact on his view of the people for whom he was creating his own art.

Charlot described an exchange with his favorite model, Luz:

> Of course, one of the great influences on me at the time is Luciana, who was my Indian model. I would ask her what she thought about the things I did, and I would correct them very carefully. For example, I remember once I had put a highlight in her hair. She was in her twenties, and her hair was a beautiful black, and those highlights were, of course, white. And she said, “Why do you put white hair in my head. I don’t have white hair.” So I had to learn and try something else by which I could make her head go round without highlights. It wasn’t easy.[136]

Moreover, the muralists were in close contact with their masons and with the workers constructing, for example, the Secretariat of Education. Charlot described his intense collaboration with his own mason, Luis Escobar,

> Another one of my teachers of the time was my mason, because when I did that fresco, I had a mason, Luis Escobar, and he was quite outspoken about what he liked and what he disliked. I remember that one day in the top of the wall, where I hoped that nobody would see what I was doing, I had done a little bit of thing that was a little bit Cubist. I hoped nobody would see that. So he was up there on the scaffold, and he looked at that, and said, "Oh, you had a headache yesterday, no?" So there went my Cubist knowledge. (March 8, 1972)

> When in Paris, I wished for an art identified with artisanship. In Mexico, the wish found its fulfillment in the Rivera workshop with its bracing manual labor, and in hard fresco work of my own. If this resurrection of past methods escaped the faintly gamy flavor that plagued the nineteenth-century pre-Raphaelite handicraft movement, it was not due to us but to the attitude of the Mexican people. The first time that Escobar greeted me by the title of Maestro, it flattered my Paris-conditioned ego. But the fact that he expected to be addressed in return as Maestro taught me to respect his dominion of the mason's craft as he did my knowledge of art.[137]

Charlot clearly became close on a personal level with both Luz and Escobar and accepted their criticisms and advice. Nor was he the only one, as seen in an anecdote he related about Rivera:

> While at work on his scaffold, Rivera cocked his ear to the opinions of petty employees and master masons, scraped, if need be, and did over a fragment until satisfied that the story was clearly expressed. The naked, flogged and roped man seen from the back that soldiers untie so tenderly in "the Liberation of a Peon" was repainted three times over, the result of a chance remark overheard, "Why kill her after they had had their wish with her."[138]

Charlot continued through the rest of his life to have this close, respectful relation with his collaborators. Evelyn Giddings, Charlot's regular technical assistant during his late years in Hawai'i stated:

> People would tell me, "Do your own thing." I did some jobs along the way. But there was something about him—the thing that he said about living for art—that really satisfied me. I didn't feel like a slave or anything like that. I just felt that I was helping another artist. That's the way the relationship started because I was someone who worked in metal and he wanted someone who could express his expressions in metal. For me, it was a very fulfilling thing. I didn't feel like I was being used. He always gave me full credit for anything that I did for him. (Giddings 2017: 137)

Indeed, such relationships were very precious to him. Weston wrote:

> There must be balance—giving and receiving—of equal import whether in sex or art. The creative mind demands an audience, must have one for fulfillment, to give reason for existence.

> Charlot came to prefer working for the general public:

> To be surrounded by artists is bad—contact with reality lost. (Charlot Lecture Notes)

> Well, I love to work for nonartists. I think that the business of the artists is really to work for nonartists, and I am always a little doubtful of people who know all about art. First, they never know all about it, they just think they do. Secondly, they make sort of snap judgments. And in every mural that I have done, if I could please, let us say, the janitor of the building where I did the mural, I knew that I had achieved my aim. I mean it very seriously. Nonartists are more able to see the impression that the artist would like to give. I don't believe in art for art really very much. That is, I don't see the point. It is a magnificent means, but it should be a means to some end that has to do with that word that people nowadays use so much—communication. (Lesley and Hollis 1961)

> there are some people, for example, who like to be with children and to play with children. We could say that the nonartist—for the artist, anyhow—has kept a quality of sincerity and that naïve quality of the eye that people who are trained—so-called art lovers and, even worse, collectors and museum people—have lost. They have lost it long ago and cannot recapture it. (Lesley and Hollis 1961)

Other artists like Zalce felt the same way:

> Then I went to the TGP. I learned lithography and engraving in 1937. The nice part was the connection with the *people*. Anyone makes good engravings, but we did what the *people* liked and needed. The workers asked for something and we did it. (Zalce July 27–28, 1971)

A traditional conviction of muralism is that the dignity of the walls and the serious purpose of addressing the people elevates both the themes and the esthetic quality of the art. The Mexican muralists took their responsibilities seriously.

Making another criticism, Tamayo said the only people who saw the murals were government workers or people who had business with them (Mijangos 2000: 187). But the images created by the muralists have become almost universal in Mexico, reaching from museum displays down to match boxes and lottery tickets.[139] While visiting a provincial museum, I was very moved to see a Mexican Indian father using artifacts and blow-ups of Rivera's murals to teach their history and culture to his son. In that family, the muralists had achieved their goal.

The audience was, therefore, a defining aspiration factor of the mural movement, influencing subject and style, binding the artists in a common purpose, and contributing to their self-image (Eder

1991: 72). Rita Eder has expressed well how the artists felt “la responsabilidad de transformar la sociedad hacia un orden que equilibrase el progreso con la justicia” ‘the responsibility to transform society in the direction of an order that balanced progress with justice’ (1991:76). Although not a unified program on which all the artists agreed, “el muralismo como pintura y como función social es más fuerte que sus inconsistencias” ‘muralism as painting and social function is stronger than its inconsistencies.’[140]

2.5.1. THE ARTIST IN THE COMMUNITY

Since the muralists grew up in a period in which public, monumental art was depreciated, their decision to practice it requires explanation.[141] Charlot considered himself a liturgical artist; painting a message on walls for the people was already a decision he had made (e.g., Brenner 1968: 23). While working on his first mural, *The Massacre in the Main Temple*, Charlot wrote Walter Pach: “Je me sens porté vers la peinture religieuse et l’art Saint-Sulpice avec une grande force” ‘I feel myself drawn with a powerful force to religious painting and the art of Saint Sulpice [well-known murals in a Paris church]’ (November 5, 1922).

The decisions of the other artists need to be clarified by their biographers.[142] Charlot himself was deeply moved by their decision: Rivera came to realize “that art was greater, that art was better, if it was an art not for the few but for the many” (1960 Mexican Renaissance). For Charlot, this decision was essentially moral. That is, he recognized in the muralists the same principles and emotions that formed him in his vocation as a liturgical artist. First and foremost was the love of fellow human beings. Artists in other fields have spoken of this as a requirement for dealing with human subjects. Michael Apted—director of the series *49 Up*, which has traced a group from childhood into middle age—stated:

> Nonetheless, underneath it all is an affection for them which I think is important in any piece of film, any work of art, in a sense. There has to be a feeling, you know. Out of feeling and love comes any sort of art, I think.[143]

Love entails sympathy, respect, and fellow-feeling, all of which characterized the muralists in their relations with workers and peasants. Charlot discussed this subject at length in his lecture “Art and Communication: Posada” (June 9, 1965):

> I remember that coming from Mexico to New York in the thirties, I found there a school that was called “Social Conscious.” Those people wanted to talk to the people, but I was very astonished how differently they talked, and the point is that they were not considering themselves as part of the people. To tell the truth, they talked *down* to the people. Now the Mexicans have a very different point of view. The point of view of the Mexican artist is that he is a man of the people, and I think that is what saves the quality of the art of the Mexicans from the dangers of being what has been called “social conscious.” We could say that they were completely unconscious that what they were doing was unusual.[144]

Rivera's art is very different: "Now because it is done by a man of the people for the people, there is no strain, there is no effort, there is no talking down." Pablo O'Higgins' art also "has that same *easy* approach to the people by a man of the people." Such art can be found elsewhere. Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* is:

> a statement by a man of the people, and certainly he was a *poor* man of the people at the time, representing people of his own, we could say, *all* his own, because nobody else wanted to take those miners as human beings.

This attitude towards the people informed the muralists' self-image. When the painters and sculptors of the Italian Renaissance started socializing with nobles and clerics, they stopped thinking of themselves as craftsmen and developed their image as genial "artists." In Mexico, the muralists started thinking of themselves as workers like the others on the construction site. This fellow-feeling was made easier by the muralists' being paid as manual workers, that is, poorly.[145]

> Cuando empezamos a trabajar hacia los 20, nuestro concepto era totalmente distinto. Veíamos al artista como artesano, una de las gentes que trabajan con sus manos. Creíamos entonces que este don de pintar, de esculpir o de grabar—sea con o sin genio--no era un fin en sí mismo, sino simplemente un modo especial de servir a la gente, al dar validez óptica a los anhelos de otros, menos articulados.[146]

> 'When we started to work around the '20s, our concept was totally different. We saw the artist as an artisan, one of those people who work with their hands. We believed then that this talent of painting, sculpting, or engraving—be it with or without genius—was not an end in itself but simply a special way of serving the people, of giving optical validity to the yearnings of others, less articulate.'

The muralists dressed like workers and teased their colleagues when they dressed up (Brenner-Charlot 1928: 65). Artists lived in shacks constructed on *azoteas*, flat roofs, the usual quarters of servants and workers.[147] Even a non-muralist like Tamayo could state many years later, "Hay que ejecutar el oficio como artesano" 'One must practice one's profession like an artisan' (Mijangos 2000: 115). The muralists were not the only post-Renaissance artists to think of themselves as workers. Out of sympathy with the people, Daumier was "an artist who refused to be artistic, a man who was an artisan in his own idea"; "He is a manual worker, a manual laborer" (1965 Art and Communication). In post-Revolution Mexico, this image was adopted in surprising places. Torres Bodet reports Vasconcelos exclaiming: "Sobran genios… Lo que necesitamos son albañiles" 'We have too many geniuses…What we need is bricklayers."[148]

Nonetheless, the muralist Leal objected to the worker image as reducing art to technique and playing to the prejudices of the bourgeoisie (1990: 67). Charlot himself was careful to preserve a distinction: "C'est que la peinture si, comme métier, elle peut être assimilée aux autres métiers manuels (couvreur, plombier, etc.), comme résultat elle s'en éloigne infiniment" 'Painting—even if as a craft it can be assimilated to the other manual crafts (roofer, plumber, etc.)—is infinitely distant in result' (July 1924). Art has a special mysterious quality:

Successive generations of searchers have sought to isolate this x in a pure state. A rational approach is of little use where such investigations are concerned. It is emotion that picks beauty…" (1946 "Pre-Hispanic Quota": 7; also 4, 8).

I found that it is a fresco picture painted at least a thousand years ago or more. And there is an attraction in there which survives the painter, which survives the architecture, and that gives to a fragment like this one a great spiritual value. There is in there, we could say, an accumulation of energy or spiritual quality that has been put in there by the painter. And that has been put there perhaps by the painter while he was preoccupied with problems of craft, while he was not thinking in terms of anything else but in terms of craft. And nevertheless that accumulation of the spiritual quality happened, and every time we look at that picture we get a certain jolt, we get a certain energy from looking at it. (February 4, 1952: 17)

Art is essentially religious and best described in religious language:

the painter explained that art is by nature spiritual, since its purpose is to show the things not visible. "Therefore," he emphasized, "religious art is the most natural form of art." (1959 Feel Art)

He told the audience that, to begin with, "*all* good art cannot be anything but religious art," that good art must have a religious mood if not a religious subject, and that "aesthetic quality can only be religious."

To prove the thesis he cited examples of artists who have attempted to paint non-religious art and were forced to admit defeat. One such artist was the Mexican muralist, Jose Clemente Orozco, for whom Charlot entertains a tremendous admiration.

He also pointed out the religious purpose of art and added that, "Some artists are so inarticulate that they cannot make a prayer with words but only with their hands."[149]

Because art is religious, practicing it is a vocation:

art packs a spiritual intensity and as such it can be related, the painter can be related, so much more to the holy man, to the man who really attempts holiness, be it in India or in Europe or elsewhere, than to people in other activities. (February 4, 1952)

when at work an artist should be absolutely simple and totally naive. To him, the lily of the valley must appear truly clothed in more splendor than Solomon in all his glory. (December 14, 1966)

Only in Heaven and in art-making are worth and cost unrelated. (AA II: 140)

Good art exists rather on a spiritual plane and must experience disdain as do those other anti-social virtues of humility and poverty, which are for their devotees a sentence to suffer and often to die…" (Writings Related to *MMR*: Passages Cut)

> La peinture est un métier mais la bonne peinture une vertu comme ces vertus les plus hautes sans "utilité" apparente qui n'excitent que le mépris des hommes raisonnables et la raillerie des médiocres. Bonne peinture, pauvreté, chasteté… (1923 Sur Diego)
>
> 'Painting is a craft, but good painting is a virtue like the highest virtues, without apparent "utility," that excites only the disdain of reasonable men and the raillery of mediocre ones. Good painting, poverty, chastity…'

The religious character of art means that it is despised by the world and artists are persecuted like saints:

> on est peintre comme d'autres martyrs. (Charlot March 1923)
>
> 'one is a painter as others are martyrs.'
>
> elle appartient aux œuvres spirituelles et doit être enveloppée dans le même mépris que ces vertus "antisociales" de pauvreté et d'humilité, par exemple, qui ont conduit ceux qui les ont pris au sérieux jusqu'à l'ignominie toujours et bien souvent jusqu'à la mort. (March 1923)
>
> 'painting belongs to the spiritual works and must be enveloped in the same disdain as those "antisocial" virtues of poverty and humility, for example, that have led those who have taken them seriously all the way to ignominy always and often enough even to death.'

Poverty for Charlot was a virtue and a sign of sincerity. In France, he had noted of Picassso:

> les *profits* eurent été "humainement" plus grands si art courant (Ses arlequins suffisaient). Seul un profit spirituel pouvait l'inspirer. Geste aussi noble que celui d'un Mallarmé rompant avec son milieu pour soi seul.[150]
>
> 'the profits would have been "humanly" greater if current art (His harlequins would have sufficed). Only a spiritual profit can inspire him. A gesture as noble as that of a Mallarmé breaking with his *milieu* for himself alone.'

Indeed, when Rivera and Tamayo became rich, they devoted their money to making collections for the public and building and endowing museums to hold them.

Charlot thus liked the expression "artist-artisan" (M459). The point for Charlot was as always the necessity of having human relations: treating everyone as an equal human being. He thus praises Siqueiros who "quiso ser hombre antes que ser hombre ilustre" 'wanted to be a man before being a famous man.' In fact, Charlot ends his *Mexican Mural Renaissance* with the words of Napoleon to the great French painter, "Monsieur David, vous êtes un homme" 'Mr. David, you are a man!' (1967: 318). The point is that "The implications of this humanistic concern mean more to some artists than artistry itself" (*MMR* 318).

For Charlot, this was same image the young liturgical artists of La Gilde Notre-Dame had adopted from an idealized view of the Medieval cathedral builders.

> We too started on a crusade bent on toppling ivory towers once and for all. We too disdained the twin myths of personality and art for art. We would, through communal effort, create anonymous masterpieces beamed to the people at large. Selfless workers were we, busy at our self-imposed task, our schedule more exacting than any employer would dare impose, and that for the most meager of reward. (1977 Foreword: xv)

Charlot pushed "This mural vocation," as no other muralist did, towards two moral virtues: "Mural painting presupposes in its maker a certain amount of selflessness" and humility (1966 Foreword: ix). Charlot's first article in Mexico, written in 1922, is titled "México de los Humildes" 'Mexico of the Humble.' The second Araujo article of July 19, 1923, an installment largely written by Charlot, argues against "El Egoísmo Individualista" (the subtitle) and for "esta admirable humildad" 'this admirable humility' that characterizes the true artist (see my discussion in Chapter 1). Humility will be a major theme of Charlot's subsequent Spanish writings.

Charlot found "Indian humility" in Mexican art from the classical through native artists of the Colonial period (*AA* II: 149). The virtue also characterized folk art:

> all *retablos* contain the same rare ingredient of a total humility. The folk painter works at his trade with no more egocentric pride than would a shoemaker. The little panels are painted selflessly, as gothic cathedrals were built. (Charlot 1955 Saints and Santos: 81)

The muralist learned from the art of his audience: "folk painting taught us much in matters of mental discipline" (Charlot April 1949: 142). Against the Parisian depreciation of narrative art in favor of "originality and personality," "Folk painting epitomized a virtue never mentioned by the French critics, that of humility." Pushing the muralists towards work "based on anonymity and communal feeling," the art of the people "taught us that in art as elsewhere man may lose himself to find himself."

The religious character of Charlot's language is clear. The ultimate selflessness could be found in art like those Hawaiian petroglyphs that were usually hidden by waves. The artist created in secret works that could seldom be seen and thus praised by human beings. The images were carved for the gods. Similar thinking could be found among Mexican Indians:

> Chip had asked the weaver why she had made the design so complicated, especially since no one could see the whole design when the huipil was worn and folded into her waistband. "Ah ha!" the woman said. "God can see the pattern." (Schele and Mathews 1998:125)

On seeing a blind spot in a sanctuary that had been left blank by the church painter, my mother remarked, "Papa would have made that the best part."

For Charlot, humility constitutes the proper attitude of the good artist. He praises in the sculptor Manuel Martínez Pintao "un verdadero ascetismo y una muy grande humildad en el ejercicio de su profesión" 'an authentic asceticism and a very great humility in the exercise of his profession' because he

respects his material instead of imposing himself on it.[151] This same attitude is the correct one for all human beings before the universe. The good artist is the good human being.[152]

Charlot's view can be schematized. When interest in the subject is strong, the artist tempers his style and becomes humble, an artist of the community. When interest in the subject is weak, the artist focuses on himself and emphasizes his individuality, originality, and so on. Paradoxically perhaps, for Charlot, the former attitude generated the greater art: finding oneself by losing oneself.

2.5.2. THE ARTIST AND POLITICS

Other artists were more overtly political and even gave the Mexican art movement a communist reputation. Rivera, Siqueiros, Guerrero, O'Higgins, Amado de la Cueva, and Tina Modotti were party members, and there were many sympathizers. Siqueiros and Guerrero were active in union organization. Others like Orozco, Charlot, and Anita Brenner did not belong to a particular party but were moved by "a drive to defend the underdog."[153] Mérida and Emilio Amero were not strongly political, nor was Zalce.[154] Siqueiros remembered "Leal and Cahero were the shamed reaccionaries [*sic*] of our group."[155]

In 1920s Mexico, communism came in many flavors, as seen in the later confrontation between the Trotskyite Rivera and the Stalinist Siqueiros. Octavio Paz felt artists and others adopted Marxism because the Mexican Revolution itself had not provided a philosophy (Fell 1989: 405). Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, a professional leftist intellectual and friend of the muralists, devised a *revolución constructiva* 'constructive revolution' opposing both Stalinism and fascism (Baeza Flores 1962: 16; also 8 f.). He himself had received a Catholic education and was not anti-Catholic (Baeza Flores 1962: 62). The communism of the muralists struck many as romantic, given to the grand gesture. On May 1, 1923, Charlot wrote in his diary: "fête du travail. des amis mettent la bannière rouge sur la cathédrale" 'festival of labor. some friends place the red banner on the cathedral.' Another professional leftist intellectual, the Bolivian Tristan Marof discussed the Marxism of certain artists at length in an interview with Stefan Baciu:

> [Siqueiros] quiso ser Jefe al estilo mexicano, con pistolas y grandes comilonas, y muchedumbres como en los tiempos de los villistas.
>
> …
>
> S.B.: Pero Siqueiros era un "Marxista" más bien pintoresco ¿no le parece?
>
> T.M.: "Es curiosa esta personalidad de un gran pintor como Siqueiros. No se distinguía como estudioso ni como teórico del marxismo. Lo entendía poco, elementalmente. Jamás se le ocurrió ojear el libro de Marx, ni en sueños. El marxismo para Siqueiros o para el mismo Diego Rivera, eran ecuaciones que estaban lejos de la pintura…Pero estaba de moda y había habido una revolución mexicana que nada tuvo que ver con la doctrina. Cuando se les oía hablar a los dos pintores de marxismo uno padecía de rubor, porque confundían los términos, los planteamientos y la misma filosofía. Ninguno de ellos se preocupó de leer o más bien de estudiar a fondo los clásicos alemanes o ingleses de donde provenían los estudios de Marx. No

> conocían economía y cuando discutían lo hacían acaloradamente. Era para imponerse, sirviéndose de cuestiones elementales de 'slogans' populares."[156]
>
> 'S. B.: But Siqueiros was more a picturesque "Marxist, don't you think?
>
> T.M: "It's curious, this personality of a great painter like Siqueiros. He didn't distinguish himself as a student or a theoretician of Marxism. He understood it little, elementarily. It never occurred to him to take a look at Marx's book, not even in his dreams. Marxism for Siqueiros or even for Diego Rivera was like mathematical equations that were far from painting…But it was in fashion, and there had been a Mexican Revolution that itself had nothing to do with doctrine. When one heard the two painters speak of Marxism, one suffered from blushing because they confused terms, formulations of problems, and even the philosophy. Neither one of them bothered to read or even less to study in depth the German or English classics from which came the studies of Marx. They didn't know economics, and when they discussed, they did so heatedly. It was in order to impose themselves, using elemental questions of popular 'slogans.'"
>
> "Lo demás era para intelectuales que se sacaban el cerebro leyendo cosas pesadas, y tampoco entendían: ¡Ellos se consideraban hombres de acción!"
>
> 'The rest was for intellectuals who racked their brains reading weighty things and didn't understand them: They thought of themselves as men of action!'[157]

Siqueiros himself wrote of Rivera in the Sindicato: "Rivera's motion was unanimously approved amidst gleeful manifestations, and the corresponding message redacted on the spot. I never knew the answer, but feel certain that it must have produced in Moscow tender expressions of pity" (Writings Related to *MMR*: Passages Cut 242/387). Olivier Debroise describes Rivera's views as "un marxismo simplificado y maniqueo" 'a simplified and Manichaean Marxism' (1984: 60). Leal felt that the later muralists were really bourgeois but pretended to be Marxists to curry favor with the government (1990: 156 f.).

Except for Xavier Guerrero—whom my father told me was a committed and knowledgeable communist—Charlot also found them "de un comunismo romántico, surgido, principalmente, de la mencionada tendencia de *épater le bourgeois*, y no por razones ideológicas" 'of a romantic communism, rising principally from the afore-mentioned tendency to *épater le bourgeois*, and not for ideological reasons.'[158] Brenner found that Amado de la Cueva and others could not give reasons for their communist sympathies (Glusker 2010: 91). Mérida emphasized the diversity of the group and the oppositional spirit that joined them all:

> el Sindicato tenía una prédica que era en cierta forma un comunismo muy, más literario, más intelectual-literario que hondo. Nosotros nunca pertenecimos a ningún sindicato real comunista, ni a ningún sindicato real revolucionario, sin embargo sentíamos aquello y habían unos cuantos, como Siqueiros, que se interesaban por publicar *El Machete* o por publicar otro periódico en el cual muy lindamente se

> insultaba a los curas o se insultaba a los burgueses, pero de ahí aquello nunca pasó a ser una cosa tremendamente ofensiva.
>
> Todos teníamos en el caso nuestro papel, nuestras creencias, nuestra forma de vivir. (Interview January 29, 1971)
>
> 'the Syndicate had a preaching that was in a certain form a communism very…more literary, more literary-intellectual than deep. We never belonged to a real communist union nor to a really revolutionary union. Nevertheless we felt that and had some, like Siqueiros, who were interested in publishing *El Machete* or in publishing another periodical in which clerics or bourgeois were insulted very elegantly, but it never went from there to being something tremendously offensive.
>
> 'In any case, we all had our own role, our beliefs, our way of living.'

Very unusually, Charlot worked closely and amicably with the communist artists: "Charlot is a devout Catholic with a touch of delicate mysticism in his creed, making it singular that he should have been able to work in amity and brotherhood with this Jacobin crew" (Wolfe 1939: 173). Charlot's friend and admirer, the German communist Alfons Goldschmidt even tried to recruit him. Charlot wrote in his diary of June 28, 1924: "8 h ½ Goldsmith réunion politique idiote" '8:30 PM Goldschmidt idiotic political meeting.' Weston was equally unimpressed:

> At Prof. Goldschmidt's last eve, a new Communist group was formed. I shook my head when he asked for my name; I can afford no more complications in my life just now.
>
> The Goldschmidts house is rather well appointed for that of a "red" leader, and they serve elaborately, buy lovely Mexican things which make me envious—all the time complaining over hard times, and owing me money for a sitting. (1961: 82)

Both Emily Edwards and Frances Flynn Paine, who were in Mexico at the time, spoke to me at length on this subject in the 1950s. They and others were most surprised that a devout Roman Catholic could be found working in friendship with such a leftist revolutionary group, but the muralists all got along very well.[159] They both attributed such collegiality to Charlot's personality and his way of handling human relations. The same problem could arise with non-Marxists like Weston:

> As time passes and one gradually eliminates and unconsciously classifies people, the number is reduced to a small group of acquaintances and a still smaller handful of friends. Among these, Jean Charlot remains as the one whom I am most strongly drawn towards, and this despite a slight separation through difference in tongue, albeit his English is usually sufficient. Because of his devout Catholicism, a superficial barrier is presented; though this barrier is not impassible as it might be if he were devoted to Christian Science or Methodism, for at least I can admire the beauty of his religion. Charlot is a refined, sensitive boy, and an artist. (Weston 1961: 79 f.)

Since Charlot's father had been a Bolshevik, Charlot could not view communists as "the other." Also, he had already worked in France with people of different views. La Gilde Notre-Dame included extreme rightists like Vincent d'Indy and more moderate ones like Maurice Denis. Charlot's social goals were closer to those of the Mexican communists than the French rightists. Charlot told me that he did not become a communist because he was Catholic. His socially leftist Catholicism, however, was basically in accord with the goals of his communist friends.[160] When I asked him in the 1950s how he could have worked with communists, he smiled and said they all "wanted the same thing." When I asked what that was, he said "to help the poor and so on."[161] Anita Brenner wrote:

> His combination of scholarliness, technical sophistication, and religious mysticism might seem to fit strangely with the others; but aside from the fact that his family was part Mexican, there was another bond. He was deeply sympathetic to the anti-capitalist views of such Catholics as Maritain. In the Mexican people, the peasants, he felt he had found a Christian world like Francis of Assisi's. (1941: 177)

As a Frenchman, Charlot also had "a strain of primitive Christian anti-clericalism that mingles with his piety" (174; also 173). Charlot's leftist sympathies overrode deference to clerics; for instance, he admired the governor of Yucatán, Felipe Carillo Puerto and mourned him when he was executed by rightists supported by the Catholic church. Charlot was certainly critical of capitalism, accusing it of having "no defense against money." He was interested in the productivity studies of Taylorism, but opposed their use to exploit workers.

Charlot described Siqueiros political activity in terms agreeable to Christianity:

> Il peignit peu et vécut beaucoup, mêlé étroitement à la vie commune des plus humbles de ses compagnons, non comme observateur, mais en frère…Il rompit des *piñatas*, s'agenouilla aux églises, but, certes, tira des coups de revolver !...Il fit de la politique, et en toute sincérité d'âme examinant ce problème aigu du riche et du pauvre, se rangea du côté du pauvre, par amour.
>
> 'He painted little and lived much, mixed in closely with the common life of his most humble companions, not as an observer, but as a brother…He broke *piñatas*, kneeled in churches, but, certainly, took shots with his revolver!...He worked in politics, and in all sincerity of soul, examining this sharp problem of rich and poor, took the side of the poor out of love.'

Charlot described his 1924 woodcut *Los Ricos en el Infierno*:

> It is *not* political, but religious—the eye of the needle. It was a narrow point of contact with the political artists. None of us had much love for the rich. The feeling has stayed with me.[162]

In his turn, Charlot's close friend Siqueiros reported with some puzzlement his conversations with Charlot on common goals and methods:

> Charlot did efforts to demonstrate that our revolution took its place in catholicism, that nothing in our human program could be condemned by the Pope, not even violence, for what more violent than catholicism in its ideological fight.
>
> Said he "Syndicalism rated the blessings of Leo XIII, the best friend of labor. Catholicism is universal, as the communist international pretends to be." These heretical ideas were often mixed with remorse and after signing the syndicate manifestoes Charlot went to confession, in preference to the French Fathers of the Church of Lourdes.[163]

Charlot recognized that communist themes could inspire artists just as religious ones did:

> Marxism and Christianity have little in common. Marxism deals calculatingly with this world exclusively. The true Marxist slights religion as the opium of the people.
>
> However intensely different its creed from that of the builders of cathedrals, Marxism too puts the artist to work.
>
> The Mexican muralists, Orozco, Rivera, et al, [*sic*] felt passion, emotion, inspiration, at the sight of the plight of the proletariat. They felt horror at the hellish hedonism of the capitalist. Sincerity was their salvation as artists. (August 3, 1966)

Some Christian subjects are no longer accepted. Nevertheless, the art they inspired remains.

> In their turn, fables though they may be, Marxist attitudes and prejudices may inspire masterpieces, as did happen in Mexico.

The accommodation was not entirely on Charlot's side. Octavio Paz states that the Sindicato manifesto omitted Marxism so that Charlot and others could sign it (Paz 1993: 139). On the Marxist side, Mexican artists had troubled relations with the Communist Party—just as Charlot did with the church hierarchy—and continued to paint religious themes, many of which they took from Colonial religious art. Charlot wrote of Orozco:

> An avowed freethinker opposed to all established order, and preoccupied with Marxist social goals, he never stopped to please either political friends or aesthetic foes. His frescoes in praise of St. Francis of Assisi were painted on public walls and paid for by a government actively engaged in persecuting the Church, and his Golgothas and Martyrdoms equal those of the Catholic Rouault in spiritual content. (1967 Orozco)

Some artists—like Rivera and Tamayo—with inescapable Mexican religiosity, returned to the Church on their death.[164]

Charlot was clearly liked and respected as a person, which was the ultimate reason, I believe, that he was so accepted by the muralists. All his life, he enjoyed good relations with people very different from himself. In a letter of January 8, 1941 [1942] announcing the fatal illness of Grant Wood, Park Rinard wrote my parents: "the affection and esteem he feels for you—you who are so different from him

in background and work—he will carry with him when he goes." The Mexican colleagues of Charlot's whom I have met personally as an adult—List Arzubide, Mérida, O'Higgins, Zalce, and Ricardo Martínez—glowed with affection when they spoke of him. They were certainly aware of his religion, since he was explicitly "deriving…his 'artistic motivation from a concern with religion as a force, and art'—which he considers as one of the few essentials of human nature—'as a means.'"[165] When O'Higgins' interviewer said, "Charlot is very religious," he answered:

> Well, yes, he is, but in a very honest way. You know what I mean? That's what I admire in Jean. He is what he is. You see what I mean? There are some people who pretend to be what they're not, you know. But Jean is a sincere person from the top to the bottom. That's what I always admired in Jean, and we were great friends, you know.

Mérida addressed the topic in an interview:

> además la religión que él profesaba, y profesa hasta ahorita, la católica, era común a todos nosotros. Nunca en ningún momento él dejó de ser un pintor católico, a pesar de que en ese momento, todos los pintores que capitaneaba Diego Rivera eran de por sí un poco revolucionarios y anticlericales como ellos llamábanse ser. Nosotros por razones de vieja cultura y de familia mantuvimos, yo en lo personal, y Juan también, la religión que nos fue dada por nuestra familia y nuestros padres.
>
> Las relaciones de Juan con Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, Leal, Canal, fueron unas relaciones no solo amicales, sino de trabajo, de trabajo. (January 29, 1971)
>
> 'furthermore, the religion that he professed, and professes up to now, the Catholic, was common to all of us others. Never in any moment did he stop being a Catholic painter, despite the fact that in that moment, all the painters that Diego Rivera led were per se a little revolutionary and anticlerical as they called themselves. We others for reasons of former culture and family maintained—I in my personal life and Juan also—the religion that was given to us by our family and forebears.
>
> 'The relations of Juan with Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, Leal, Canal, were not only friendly relations, but work, work.'

Poets were equally admiring and affectionate. The Estridentist poet Germán List Arzubide told me several times in 1992 that my father was "muy sano" 'very sound.' After describing the revolutionary muralists, Manuel Maples Arce writes:

> Moviéndose en aquel grupo, con su talante sereno y pacífico veo a Jean Charlot…Era un espíritu distinto, pero por su tolerancia, su fino humanismo y su amplitud de visión, armonizaba con los demás.
> Como un sueño oigo la palabra suave de mi amigo, su reflección justa y medida, su comprensión humana…Un espíritu religioso trascendía del alma de Charlot conciliado con su obra pictórica de tan alto sentido moral. (Maples Arce 1982: iii f.)

> ‘Moving within that group, with his serene and peaceful talent, I saw Jean Charlot… He was a different spirit, but through his tolerance, fine humanism, and amplitude of vision, he harmonized with the others.
> ‘As if in a dream I hear the gentle conversation of my friend, his just and measured reflection, his human understanding…A religious spirit rose up from the soul of Charlot in harmony with his visual work of such a high moral sense.’

Charlot’s later friend, Norman Pearson, told me in the 1950s that my father was a sincere Roman Catholic, but he did not follow the Church’s normal, superficial ideas on morality. When Vasconcelos “got tight balls” about some of the frescoes, pop fought against having them white-washed. Looking from the Catholic, anti-communist side at the relationship of Charlot with the communists, Frank Sheed wrote about an incident in the 1930s in New York City:

> Charlot’s faith must have been rockbuilt, invulnerable, or it could not have survived his work with the Mexican Muralists, who were not given to patience with religion. I used to wonder how his faith stood up to them, how they tolerated a man so Christ centered. That it was no matter of toleration on either side I learnt from a single incident. Charlot and I emerged from lunch one day and were walking back to my office when we almost ran into Rivera, one of the greatest of those Muralists. They hailed each other in a kind of ecstasy. I slipped away, my departure unnoticed.
> (Frank Sheed: “Jean Charlot Remembered by Frank Sheed”)

Indeed, the peak experience of the early years of the Mexican Mural Renaissance was itself a strong emotional bond. Charlot once said to me that living through those years united the artists: “Some of us were good artists, some of us less good, but we had all been there together.”[166]

Charlot was sincerely Catholic, but his Catholicism was unusual. Serge Fauchereau wrote me on February 9, 2014: “I remember Maples Arce once told me he liked Jean Charlot because he was a ‘cristiano sin dogmatismo’” ‘christian without dogmatism’; “son propre christianisme était très peu orthodoxe” ‘his own Christianity was very little orthodox’ (Fauchereau 2013: 94). For instance, he had no problem with the existence of Indian and Hawaiian gods, which helped him enter into those cultures. Similarly, “C’est parce que son sentiment religieux n’est ni exclusif ni intolérant que Charlot travaillera fraternellement” ‘It’s because his religious feeling is neither exclusive nor intolerant that Charlot will work fraternally’ with Marxists and anticlericals (Fauchereau 2013: 94). Charlot was not a proselytizer, although he wrote about trying to be a good example. In my opinion, he did not feel as threatened and defensive as the previous generation of French Catholics. In both religion and art, the previous generation had fought the battles that set Charlot’s free to pursue its life and work.

These good relations may have influenced Charlot to minimize the importance of communism in the mural movement (Patterson 1964). Lilia Roura Fuentes devotes much study to the 1920s Communist activities and the artist members or sympathizers.[167] Siqueiros and others felt that the government’s hostile attitude was based on politics, directed against the radicalism of the murals’ content. He supported this view by reporting that Vasconcelos’ successor, J. M. Puig Casauranc, told the Sindicato to choose

between continuing the murals or *El Machete*.[168] Siqueiros and, he claims, the majority were for continuing *El Machete*. Rivera, Charlot, Cahero, Orozco, Castellanos, Lozano, and Tamayo wanted to sacrifice *El Machete* to save the mural movement. Rivera was ousted over the dispute, and Siqueiros argued that he subsequently turned muralism from radicalism towards opportunism and folklorism or superficial nationalism.

Curiously, the connection with communists dogged Charlot for the rest of his life:

> people wonder if in those days I was a communist. In those days, communism was something very nice in a way. It was a fellow with lots of bushy hair and beard, and he was biting a bomb, I remember, in his mouth. I remember a bomb in his mouth. It wasn't at all the communism you know now. But, even so, you didn't need to be a communist to see that even though the revolution had triumphed, there were, shall we say politely, inequalities in the social order. With my knack for doing the wrong thing, I took immediately the party of the underdog. This is a good example of some of my pictures that, when I went later on to the States, people explained to me were social conscious. I didn't know that when I had done it, but I had done it with much feeling.[169]

The Catholic church in Mexico always kept its distance from Charlot, never offering him any recognition, much less a commission. In in the church's eyes, working with communists was as bad as being one. Roberto Rosellini's 1945 film *Rome, Open City* was condemned by the Church for showing a parish priest working loosely with the local communists against the Nazis.

In New York City in 1932, John Sloan, the president of the Art Student League, wanted to hire George Grosz, but the board rejected him as a former communist. Sloan resigned in protest, and Charlot remembered vaguely that he was caught up in the controversy: "I was considered a Mexican communist, so we were linked in clippings."[170] Grosz was hired soon after and taught for many years at the ASL.

Charlot could use his communist connection for positive purposes. In 1952, at the height of the communist scare, the ILWU, itself under attack, courageously commissioned a mural from Pablo O'Higgins, a party member (Vogel 2010: 186–191). A newspaper reporter wrote:

> "Hawaii's best known artist," Charlot, was asked to denounce Pablo, but he "refused to call him a Communist." Even though Charlot (who had "hoped to do the mural") could have prevented Pablo from entering the country…instead he "told reporters 'he's very competent…a good choice.'" (Vogel 2010: 188)

Vogel concludes, "Had Jean Charlot not vouched for him, it is not likely that Pablo would have lasted long in Hawai`i" (186).

Charlot also enjoyed the impact communists could have on a U.S. public. When in Honolulu Charlot was creating tile murals for the United Public Workers, his union contact, Steven Murin, told him that some people were finding them too militant. Furious, Charlot nearly shouted, "Don't they know I'm a communist!" (Murin interview and personal communication). I was told that a Honolulu businessman,

invited to join a project with one of Charlot's sons, said, "I won't have anything to do with those communists!"

2.6. THE END

When Vasconcelos resigned in 1924, the young muralists were dismissed and had to seek work elsewhere. This was the end of the period Charlot experienced and described in his *MMR*: "Thus closed the Vasconcelos era which is the setting for this book."[171] Charlot experienced the end as a tragedy: "With walls denied me, I re-educated myself somewhat shamefacedly to easel painting of small dark pictures, starting in January 1924."[172] The change prompted some sad humor: "Though the lack of walls has made it impossible for me for ten years to pursue my vocation of mural painting I still have an uneasy feeling that painting easel pictures is somewhat akin to embroidering doilies" (Spring 1938). For Charlot, "Mural painting can alone quench the need of the mural painter, and then only while in the making" (*MMR* 317). Charlot saw a soul-mate in Juan Cordero: "había nacido muralista y se sumía en la tristeza cuando no tenía paredes" 'he had been born a muralist and sank into sadness when he had no walls' (1945 "Cordero Muralista"). Away from Mexico, Charlot was out of consideration for mural commissions when they were revived, as Pablo O'Higgins regretted (March 21, 1974).

Despite their fame today, the muralists had always been a small minority. Leal writes that the young ones came from EPAL, but most of their contemporaries preferred to group themselves around Roberto Montenegro, just returned from Paris, at the Academy: Lazo, Tamayo, Fernández Ledesma, and Castellanos (1990: 168). This younger set had less experience of the Revolution and more conventional art interests (Krauze 1999: 173 f.). Tamayo even minimized the difference between muralism and easel painting (Mijangos 2000: 141, 167 f., 175). Charlot described them as an alternative to the muralists in the 1920s and a growing school since then:

> Another group was in the meantime indulging in a more restrained painting, with the accent on pure plastic values. Let us say that while the full orchestra of Mexican muralists was blaring, for those who had keen ears some chamber music was still to be heard. The best of those easel painters have been able to ply to their ends the influx of modernisms, and yet retain genuine style and scope. The impetus they gave gathers force with the 'thirties, spreads the reaction against monumentality. A new emphasis is laid upon the qualities that mural work lacked perforce: the full rainbow range of chemical pigments, a variety of textures, a lighter mood.[173]

Charlot expressed this point provocatively when discussing Ricardo Martínez, a member of the younger generation whose work he admired and to whom he was personally close:

> Martinez is one of my best friends,…and I hold no bitterness toward him when I say that he and other young Mexicans in their twenties like Meza and Soriano would like to see the works of Rivera and Orozco and myself thrown into the ashcan. When the revolutionary mural movement started in the 1920s, my generation in Mexico was concerned with covering large mural areas which mean sacrificing the more delicate

> nuances. The next group—men like Mendez and O'Higgins—transferred our approach to other mediums, particularly woodcuts. But now these youngsters come along and disagree with our performance. They seek refinements aesthetically and psychologically with which we older men were not concerned. They go in for more intimate painting on a smaller scale and I say more power to them. ("Jean Charlot Will Discuss Martinez Paintings Today" 1948)

Charlot did appreciate the Mexican character of these artists:

> In the 1930s, another group of artists reacted against the specialized attitude of the muralists. Rating esthetic problems over social statements, they kept their eyes open on the swiftly changing international art scene. Rufino Tamayo (born 1899) invented sophisticated distortions that came close to those of the School of Paris. Nevertheless, Tamayo's Indian heritage infuses his superb sense of color with a tragic content that remains validly Mexican.[174]

He also recognized the model provided by Carlos Mérida: "Nowadays, with the shooting and the shouting only a memory, Merida emerges as a hero for the younger artists, as being the one among us who had not, in any way, compromised" (January 28, 1971).

Seen from the muralists' perspective, their own characteristics were being countered by their opposites. Without walls, the muralists perforce became different painters. Charlot warned the new United States street muralists:

> Our youthful dread—and, as I gather, yours also—was that, come a potbellied middle age, some of us would weaken, shed anonymity, meekly take their place in the stable of artists of some art dealer. (1977 Foreword: xv)
>
> No wonder that the less stubborn, the more amenable among us, realizing the quandary, come down from the scaffold, shrink their products to easel size and tie themselves to the apron strings of an art dealer. It happened in our Mexico fifty years ago. It will doubtless happen to your brand new generation of muralists. (1978 Message: 30)
>
> Earlier in Mexico, the artists didn't have to buck the dealers: there were none. But young [U.S.] contemporaries have had to go against that *whole dealer set-up*. They're really very brave. (Tabletalk January 26, 1979)

Charlot felt that the mural tendencies of the Cubists had been harmed in the same way:

> Cubism was shrunk by dealers, who couldn't sell big canvases. Gradually the Cubists did what their dealers wanted them to. Rivera's dealer set the price by centimeters of painting. (Tabletalk July 19, 1971)

Besides doing easel paintings, the non-muralists were addressing a different audience and thus choosing subjects that would attract, say, North American buyers (*AA* II: 136, 143). Leal fumed that the

North Americans created their own image of Mexico and its art and then judged Mexican artists by their conformity to it: "Los yanquis tienen que ser los que nos digan cuándo nuestros pintores son buenos y cuales son más genuinamente mexicanos" 'The Yankees demand to be those who tell us when our painters are good and which are the more genuinely Mexican' (Leal 1990: 121). The new audience preferred apolitical art. Siqueiros accused Tamayo of using "parisino-yanqui" 'Parisian-Yankee' abstractionism—along with the School of Paris and the Museum of Modern Art—against the "comunizante" 'communizing' (in quotation marks) painting of the muralists (Siqueiros 1977: 491–497; 1996: 387 ff.).

Accordingly, the non-muralists were finding their inspiration again in the School of Paris rather than in their home country.[175] Mexican artists were also becoming dependent on New York City (Siqueiros 1977: 495 f.; 1996: 225). Leal complained that they had gone from imitating Europeans to imitating Yankees (Leal 1990: 119). Tamayo was the model of such internationalism, stating, "Yo realmente me formé in Nueva York" 'I really formed myself in New York,' and identifying Picasso as his greatest influence.[176] When Zalce visited Hawai'i, he joked, "In Mexico, Tamayo insists he's not a Mexican artist, but in New York, he pulls out his guitar." Zalce told me in a 1971 interview:

> Now young Mexican artists don't want to be Mexican. Tamayo played Mexican when he first went to New York. He played the guitar and dressed his wife as a Tehuana. Now he speaks only of internationalism. The young people are the same. The "Mexican School" is completely out now. Now they do junk murals; they just copy the States. (Interview 1971)

This trend in Mexico was in fact worldwide. Charlot used to admonish his students at the University of Hawai'i:

> "Don't go to Paris, you idiot. Don't go to New York, you idiot, because things here are so rich, so beautiful that you don't need to go anywhere. Just look what's around you." But they didn't believe me, and I've never heard of them again. (1972 "An Artist Looks Back")

From the very beginning, in Charlot's view, the muralists had alienated critics and academics committed to the line of art represented by the School of Paris:

> Este movimiento (obra de todo un grupo y no de un individuo) irradia ya fuera de la República, en tanto que en ella los críticos lo ignoran por ceguera o lo niegan por maldad.[177]
>
> 'This movement (the work of a whole group and not of an individual) radiates itself already outside of the Republic, while in the Republic, the critics ignore it through blindness or deny it through bad will.'

That same art establishment—critics, academies, and museums—turned with all its power against the muralists (Eder 1991: 70, 74). Zalce stated:

> They are responsible for what happened in Mexico. They're just newspaper men. All is wonderful for them. No taste, no sense. They drive the public and are responsible for the bad situation today. (Zalce July 27–28, 1971)

Besides the art establishment and market, Siqueiros blamed the United States government for using its power to exclude Mexican art in a campaign to support a purely formalist art without social content, a campaign embraced by certain Mexican artists and the new bourgeois elements in government.[178] Excommunicating types of art by definition is not confined to the painting:

> the history of jazz teaches us that attempts to exclude whole groups of performers by the application of narrow definitions are usually a sign that something important is underway in the art form. (Gioia 2011: 373)

Charlot would later try unsuccessfully to interest U.S. institutions in mural materials:

> At the Museum of Modern Art, JC gave a lecture to the directors on preserving mural materials: sketches, cartoons, three-dimensional models, etc. The response was absolute silence. JC thought that the reason was that those things had no cash value. Murals don't interest dealers. (Tabletalk July 18, 1971)

Legitimate criticisms could certainly be made of the new phase of muralism. Diego Rivera had managed to save his career and into the 1930s was almost the sole active representative of the movement. Charlot credited him with keeping muralism alive and preventing the walls of other artists from being whitewashed (*MMR* 300 ff.). But the reduction of a whole school to a single member or even three, however great, was an impoverishment.[179] Moreover, without a patron like Vasconcelos, muralism appeared to be more in league with its government patron, and politics became a factor.[180] Leal argued against Rivera's monopoly of government support, which endangered "la amplitud y la continuidad" 'the amplitude and continuity' of the movement (1990: 193). *Los tres grandes* not only hogged center stage in academic histories but exercised undue influence on mural commissions (Leal 1990: 191 f., 194 f.). As to Charlot's exclusion, Tamayo blamed the new establishment on stylistic grounds: "They drove Jean Charlot out because he didn't quite conform to their 'Renaissance' taste."[181] Others preferred political grounds (e.g., Zurián 2002: 86). Charlot feared that style and subject had become routine: "What we created that was without precedent has established, only too well, its precedent."[182] O'Higgins felt the loss of the early ideals: "Anything that is turned into business is something vacant about it. Empty, empty. Superficial, and superficial things are not healthy" (March 21, 1974). As a result of all the above factors, young Mexican artists became indifferent to this great chapter in their artistic past: "The present generation appraises the mural renaissance as past history to be neither embraced nor rejected" (1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting").

Faithful himself to the ideals of 1921–1925—which he had lived and helped create—Charlot celebrated Leopoldo Méndez as their selfless perpetuator into later periods:

> Cuando empezamos a trabajar hacia los 20, nuestro concepto era totalmente distinto. Veíamos al artista como artesano, una de las gentes que trabajan con sus manos.

> Creíamos entonces que este don de pintar, de esculpir o de grabar—sea con o sin genio--no era un fin en sí mismo, sino simplemente un modo especial de servir a la gente, al dar validez óptica a los anhelos de otros, menos articulados.
>
> Aunque todos empezamos firmes en este ideal, en las décadas siguientes fue difícil preservar intacto tal credo. Él que hace obras de arte raramente siente asco cuando llega la oportunidad de ser ensalzado como superhombre.
>
> Pero él supo madurar sin envejecer, es decir, sin menospreciar o traicionar nunca los ideales que tuvo de joven.[183]
>
> 'When we began to work in the 1920s, our idea was completely different. We viewed the artist as an artisan, one of those people who worked with their hands. We believed then that this gift of painting, sculpting, or engraving—be it with or without genius—was not an end in itself, but simply a special way of serving the people, of giving optical validity to the yearnings of others less articulate.
>
> 'Although we all began firm in this ideal, in the following decades it was difficult to preserve such a creed intact. The person who makes artworks rarely feels disgust when the opportunity comes to be exalted as a superman.
>
> 'But [Méndez] knew how to mature without aging, that is, without ever depreciating or betraying the ideals he adopted when young.'

Charlot remained convinced of the value of the heroic stage of Mexican muralism:

> This was the great age in Mexican art—the time of Orozco and Rivera. The frescoes these men painted have never been matched by the later artists…it's still the most important period in Mexico. (Wightman 1960)

For many, Charlot himself embodied the early, idealistic period of the Renaissance when he returned for his 1968 retrospective. As Mérida remembered:

> el 68, se le hizo su retrospectiva, y él vio a sus viejos amigos…Su retrospectiva no fue si no una cosa trascendental para nosotros, porque nos dimos cuenta de los orígenes de la pintura que se había gestado en el veinte, y para Juan fue una cosa hermosa de vernos todos conjuntos, celebrando el trabajo de uno de los grandes generadores de la pintura mexicana de los veintes…Creo yo que Juan ha recibido con su retrospectiva los mejores sentimientos de sus amigos y del pueblo mexicano que se pueden tener de un artista que trabajó en el viejo periodo en una forma tan concisa y tan definitiva. (Mérida Interview 1971)
> 'In 1968, a retrospective was put on for him, and he saw his old friends…His retrospective was nothing if not transcendental for us, because we were made aware again of the origins of the painting that had gestated in the 1920s. And for Juan it was a beautiful thing to see us all joined together, celebrating the work of one of the great

> creators of Mexican painting of the twenties…I believe that with his retrospective Jean received from his friends and the Mexican people the most positive sentiments that could be felt for an artist who worked in the old period in such a concise and such a definitive form.'

But for others, Charlot had been assigned a different role in the art history consensus on the early mural movement. Inés Amor met Charlot and his wife when they visited the José Chávez Morado show at her Galería de Arte Moderno in Mexico City on April 3, 1968 (Diary). On April 5, they left some artworks to be framed and picked them up on April 20. Her estimation of Charlot expresses the common view at the time, a view that can still be heard in whole or in part (e.g., Manrique and del Conde 1987: 81 f.). Charlot is one of the minor artists who form the "telón de fondo para los tres grandes" 'backdrop of the Three Greats.' When she met him in Mexico:

> Siempre me dio la idea de que estaba amargado; parecía resentido con los artistas Mexicanos, creía haber merecido un papel más importante en la plástica mexicana de los años veinte, que no se le reconoció cabalmente. Él se siente uno de los precursores del muralismo en México.
> Pudiera ser que en ese sentido tuviera algo de razón, pero el muralismo ya estaba presente desde antes, con Enciso y el Dr. Atl, si bien no empezó su desenlace sino hasta después.
>
> 'He always gave me the idea that he was embittered. He seemed to resent the Mexican artists. He believed he merited a role more important in the Mexican arts of the 1920s, a role that was not recognized completely. He felt he was one of the precursors of muralism in Mexico.
> It could be that in this sense he had some reasons, but muralism was already present earlier with Enciso and Dr. Atl, even if it did not start its ultimate outcome until later.'

Charlot does deserve credit for his work on Mexican physiognomy:

> Su actitud hacia la figura indígena mexicana propició el que algunos otros hicieran lo mismo. Dio la espalda a su aprendizaje con varias figuras europeas par captar lo mexicano.
> 'His attitude towards the Mexican indigenous figure favored the one that some other artists were making the same. He turned his back on his apprenticeship with various European figures to capture the Mexican.

He is positively viewed as a person: "Fue un entrañable amigo de los muralistas y todos lo veneraban, unos como discípulo, otros como maestro" 'He was a close friend of the muralists, and all venerate him, some as a disciple, others as a master.' Charlot's early period was good, but his later work is poor:

> Esas pinturas son malas repeticiones de lo que hacía en los veintes. El mismo tema, pero no bien resuelto, feo color. Él vive de sus recuerdos de México, sin haber sido nunca una figura de primera línea, lo que no corresponde con la idea que tiene de sí

> mismo.
> ‘These paintings are bad repetitions of what he did in the 1920s. The same subject, but no well resolved, ugly color. He lives from his memories of Mexico without ever having been a first-line figure, which does not correspond to the idea that he has of himself.’

Charlot is the “‘deidad’” ‘“godhead”’ (in quotation marks) of the Jean Charlot Foundation in Hawai‘i, but “En su trato personal es humilde y modesto. No he leído el libro suyo sobre el muralismo mexicano” ‘In his personal manners, he his humble and modest. I have not read his book on Mexican muralism.’ In sum, Charlot is one of the backdrop artists, some of whom are more talented.

[1] Amy Galpin wrote me:

> The Academy of San Carlos, founded in 1783, underwent many name changes during its history. In 1876 it began to be called the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes (The National Academy of Fine Arts). During Ramos Martínez’s time at the Academy as both student and later director, the institution went by this name. The frequent name changes have often caused confusion on the part of many scholars. In talking about Ramos Martínez’s biography, different terms by various scholars are used to describe the same institution, but the National Academy of Fine Arts is the most accurate term.

I will generally use “the Academy of San Carlos” because Charlot most often referred to the institution with that title in his speaking and writing.

[2] Ramírez 1991: 19. Reyes Palma 1991: 50. Besides the relevant sections in *MMR* and *San Carlos*, general descriptions of the period include: Debroise 1984: 16–20; Argüello Grunstein 2010: 47 ff.

[3] Ramírez 1991: 19; 2005: 60, Saturnino Herrán planned a mural. García de Germenos 1991: 67, 83 f. Guadarrama Peña 2010: 23 f. Fernández 1964: 39, a call for murals was made in 1867. Tibol 1996: 28, 36 f. *MMR* 68 f.

[4] Luna Arroyo 1952: 61, 166 f. Guadarrama Peña 2010: 25.

[5] Ramírez 1991: 20 f. García de Germenos 1991: 67, 70, 84. Zavala 2001: 95. The Mexican artists exhibition was a combination of oppositional and official. Less funding and official attention was provided than for the Spanish exhibition, but the Mexican received much public attention. By the 1920s, the oppositional had become emphasized to the point where people can speak of a “myth” being created. This emphasis was due to the favorable view of any opposition shown to the Porfiriato and to the experience of the Revolution, which created an oppositional atmosphere and mentality. Finally, art historiography tends to emphasize opposition.

[6] Leal 1990: 36 f., among the students involved were Nacho Asúnsolo and Manuel Gonzalez Serrano; 165. Flores 2013: 2, 53.

[7] Leal in Writings Related to *MMR*; Passages Cut: "Gospel"; 1990: 28, Leal studied with Garcia Cahero, Siqueiros, and Mateo Bolaños.

[8] Leal 1990: 37. Krauze 1999: 63. Charlot *San Carlos* 159, "This bad man [Huerta] did more for the good of the Academy than good man Madero ever had." Charlot was interested when history failed to follow an expected ideological course:

> In a story of the rise of a national Mexican art, Maximilian, paradoxically, figures as one who did much for it. Himself a cultured European, he could scarcely be impressed by Clavé and the other foreign teachers whose glamour in Mexico rested mainly on the fact that they had been trained in Europe. (*San Carlos* 128)
>
> Whereas the Habsburg Emperor had respected things Mexican, Indian Díaz looked exclusively toward Europe for culture. (*San Carlos* 134)

"Surprisingly" it was the generals who reopened the Academy in 1824 after it had been closed during the independence movement (*San Carlos* 68).

[9] Chávez Sánchez 1998: 164. Meyer 1976: 15, in power Obregón wanted to improve relations with the Church; 40, 60–63, he attempted to make peace during the Cristidiada by conciliatory discussions with the Church. Also Bailey 1974: 34 ff., 38 f.; 1979: 90. Flores 2013: 22, on the general optimism of the time.

[10] *MMR* 82–94; 1960 Mexican Renaissance. Fell 1989: 395, 668. Debroise 1984: 20–24. Many passages from Vasconcelos' writings are relevant: e.g., 1982 *Memorias* 1: 246 f., 267, 294, 296 f., 299, 307, 320, 353, 363, 916, 920; 1982 *Memorias* 2: 12, 17, 63.

[11] Fell 1989: 434–444, 448 f. Flores 2013: 50 f., 270–279, 293. Both Charlot (personal communication) and Siqueiros 1977: 462 f., regretted that this program did not produce important adult artists.

[12] Debroise 1984 : 40 f. Compare Baeza Flores 1962: 25.

[13] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 33, 134. Krauze 1999: 120–125.

[14] Meyer 1976: 30. Bailey 1974: 22, "Two forces that wanted many of the same things for Mexico [later] reverted to old certainties that precluded cooperation."

[15] Fell 1989: 384, 392, 407 f., 418 f., 427, 431 f. Orozco V. 1983: 106 f., contrasts Montenegro's work, which Vasconcelos liked, to Orozco's, which he disliked. John Charlot 2008 Patrocinio. The point is important because some scholars assume that because the government commissioned the works, they dictated the subjects (e.g., Campbell 2003).

[16] E.g., 1982 *Memorias* 2: 166. Charlot 1960 Mexican Renaissance, "Vasconcelos truly was more inclined as a person toward music and poetry than he was toward painting"; also 8 f.; *MMR* 89.

[17] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 15, 17, 26 f., 65 f., 113, 166, 205, 233. Fell 1989: 381 ff. Acevedo 1986: 179, 186. Coleby 1999: 24. Besides the permanent Nacionalista decorations of his office, Ramos Martínez provided watercolors (Torres Bodet 1961: 261).

[18] John Charlot 2008 Patrocinio. Compare Eder 1991: 68 ff.

[19] Fell 1989: 418. Confirmed by Siqueiros 1977: 183. Torres Bodet 1961: 274, Vasconcelos did much in little time.

[20] Writings Related to *The Mexican Mural Renaissance, Passages Cut*. *MMR* 295 f.

[21] 1960 Mexican Renaissance. *MMR* 94. Torres Bodet 1961: 299 ff. Fell 1989: 391.

[22] Fell 1989: 420. Charlot August 3, 1966, on Nazi artists, "The art proved as despicable as the artist"; on propaganda art in general, "Bootlicking and genius never were found to be on speaking terms!" Compare Walter Pach's recommendation for Brenner:

> The Mexican government gave her photographers, transportation, money for expenses, and credentials. The government does not, however, want to the book to appear as publicity or propaganda, and it has no such tendency. It is a perfectly independent piece of critical research…"

An anonymous reviewer of *MMR* wrote:

> In his ideal society the arts held a supreme position, and it was the artist who was to inspire and instruct the scientist, the reformer and the politician alike. Because of this he gave his painters complete freedom. The doctrine of social realism embraced by the artists they evolved for themselves. Never at any point was subject-matter or technique imposed from above; and it is perhaps for this reason that Mexico is the only country in the world to have produced proletarian art of high aesthetic quality. ("Revolution on the Walls" 1964)

[23] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 214, 262 f. Debroise 1984: 50.

[24] Zuñiga 2008: 20–27. Charlot 1947 Pintura Mural; *MMR* 269 ff. Compare Reyes Palma 1994: 27 f., Rivera stopped Méndez from painting murals.

[25] Vasconcelos October 17, 1945; John Charlot 2009. *MMR* 272 f.

[26] Debroise 1984: 39 f., "La primerísima época de la pintura mural revela las intenciones de Vasconcelos, pero no las de los pintores"; "manda ilustrar su propia ideología en forma de epopeya alegórica" 'The very first period of mural painting revealed the intentions of Vasconcelos, but not those of the painters'; 'he ordered his own ideology to be illustrated in the form of an allegorical epopee.' Acevedo 1986: 185 f., 202; 190, Toussaint felt that Vasconcelos imposed his ideas on the artists.

[27] A good example of confusion caused by the idea that Vasconcelos forced his will on the artists is found in Folgarait 1998. He refers to "the officially imposed herd mentality of these years" (85), but must admit that Leal's first mural *Feast of the Lord of Chalma* did not fit Vasconcelos' ideas:

> This raises the question of how closely the Secretary controlled or even observed, was aware of, such choices of themes…evidence that Vasconcelos was less than vigilant in accepting or rejecting subjects to be painted. Again, the suggestion is that of uninvolvement on his part in the selections of subjects for the murals… (49)

Vasconcelos conceived of his role differently from Folgarait.

[28] E.g., List Arzubide 1927: 50, stupid people oppose "las ascendentes arquitecturas de Diego Rivera y de Jean Charlot" 'the ascendant architectures of Diego Rivera and Jean Charlot.' Charlot also wrote that few people were even interested in the muralists' work (1974 *Artists of Hawaii*: 45).

[29] Guadarrama Peña 2010: 29; also 23. Fell 1989: 428 f.

[30] Compare Siqueiros 1978: 79. Debroise 1984: 48. Mello 2002a: 53 and note 178.

[31] Argüello Grunstein 2010: 54, 56 f. Compare Coffey 2002: 15–18.

[32] *AA* II: 319. On tantrums, see Reed 1956: 302 f.

[33] Siqueiros 1977: 94; also 1996: 108. Rodman 1958: 153.

[34] E.g., *MMR* 215 f.; November 1947 Orozco: 259 f., Orozco's experiences during the Revolution. Siqueiros 1978: 35, the importance of Orozco's experience of the Revolution. *MMR* 194 ff., Siqueiros' war experiences. Charlot August 5, 1971, Zalce's experiences as a young boy during the Revolution. Glusker 2010: 62, on Luz Jiménez; 29, on Goitia: "He speaks of the revolution, which interests him as a subject more than any other"; Goitia quoted: "For this is above all a land of pain." Charlot entered in his diary for June 28, 1928: "ciné avec maman révolution mex. très bon et très émotionnant" 'with mama to movie Mexican Revolution very good and very moving.'

[35] 1971 Carlos Mérida, Coloso; June 8, 1966, "It was this kind of art that surrounded me when I was a young painter." Siqueiros 1978: 70, modern Mexican art is the "expresión de la Revolución Mexicana en el campo de la cultura" 'expression of the Mexican Revolution in the field of culture'; also 32, 71. Leal 1990: 38, 119, 169, "un nuevo estado de ánimo" 'a new state of spirit.' Reyes Palma 1994: 157 f. (Leopoldo Méndez). Acevedo 1986: 194 f., Daniel Cosio Villegas stated that the Revolution influenced the new art. Siqueiros 1978: 50, reports that the possible future influence of the Revolution was a topic among the Mexican émigrés in Europe, especially Rivera.

[36] Vera de Córdova 1920a; also, Alva says: "ya somos hombres y bien dispuestos para la lucha" 'we are already men and well prepared for the struggle.'

[37] Siqueiros 1978: 17, 80; 1996: 73 ff. Rodman 1958: 151.

[38] *MMR* 280. Vasconcelos *Memorias* 2: 231 f. Rutherford 1971: 203; 277, the killing of other politicians. Fell 1989: 352. On the violence in 1928, see Anne Goupil Charlot's letters in Volume 1, Chapter 2. Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 317, 319, 339, 342.

[39] *MMR* 105 f. Diary December 12, 1923; for more mentions of unrest, see June 10, November 29, 1923; JC to AB "En la Biblioteca de Bellas Artes a donde voy para olvidar…." Weston 1961: 36. On de la Huerta, Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 304–322.

[40] Diary November 23, 25, 26, 1927. Orozco 1974: 12. Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 342 f.

[41] Diary July 17, 18, September 1, 1928. Charlot was critical of Calles ("Otra cartita tuya").

[42] E.g., *MMR* 155, 244, 254. Siqueiros 1977: 191 f. Leal 1990: 92, 181. Asúnsolo seems to have been the most trigger-happy (e.g., Baciu 1982: 13).

[43] Charlot June 8, 1966. A number of people remarked on Rivera's gun, e.g., Siqueiros 1977: 475 f.; Weston 1961: 35. Rolland 1990: 128 f. Weston himself was offered a pistol by the artists' friend General Hernández Galván (1961: 35).

[44] Rodman 1958: 156. *San Carlos* 164.

[45] Siqueiros 1977: 476, supports Charlot's view and names Revueltas as another whom Rivera feared. In the words of Tristan Marof, Siqueiros later engaged "en una serie de tropelías a la usanza de la revolución mexicana" 'in a series of violent acts in the style of the Mexican Revolution' (Baciu 1974).

[46] July 11, 1923: similarly, they state that conservative newspapers do not accept "las manifestaciones revolucionarias" 'revolutionary manifestations' of art in their columns. Vs. Eder in Mello 1995: 38 f.

[47] Leal "Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut: "Gospel," and for following, 1990: 38 f., 165–168, 170, 180. See also Díaz de León 1965: [7 f.]. Debroise 1984: 31–35. Maples Arce 1981: 39. Tibol 1987: 4. Zurián 2002: 22.

[48] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 65, 86 f. On EPAL in general, see e.g., Flores 2013: 53–56.

[49] Maples Arce 1981: 39 f., lists Bolaños, Leal, Revueltas, Méndez, Tamayo, Díaz de León, Ugarte, and Alva de la Canal (see Flores 2013: 90 f.). Helm 1941: 187, the "Group of Seven" started school at Chimalistac. Leal 1990: 89, "Se trata de un movimiento realmente colectivo" 'It was a case of a really collective movement,' which continued to evolve. Flores 2013: 72 f., 272, 276 f., 279–284, 296, emphasizes their collective spirit.

[50] Torres Bodet 1961: 255, 259. Krauze 1997: 589.

[51] Charlot-Blanchard September 16, 1922. See my discussion in Chapter 1.

[52] Compare Siqueiros 1977: 138.

[53] For instance, Fernández Ledesma (1924) lists Charlot, Orozco, Leal, Alva de la Canal, Revueltas, and Siqueiros. List Arzubide stated:

> todos formamos una sola bola: pintores, escultores, escritores, músicos, políticos, entre otros Diego and Lupe Marín, Germán Cueto, Ramón Alba de la Canal, los Revueltas Fermín y Silvestre, Tina Modotti y Edward Weston, Fernando Leal, etc. (April 12, 1994)
>
> 'we all formed a single ball: painters, sculptors, writers, musicians, politicians, among others Diego and Lupe Marín, Germán Cueto, Ramón Alba de la Canal, the Revueltas brothers Fermín y Silvestre, Tina Modotti y Edward Weston, Fernando Leal, etc.'

A number of non-artists belonged. Lucy Stanton was Brenner's roommate and Mona or Monna Sala was the wife of artist Rafael Sala (Montgomery 2010: 55; Conger 1992: 153, 154).

[54] The wife of sculptor Nacho Asúnsolo, Mireille Barany de Asúnsolo, stated, "Aquel era un grupo muy bonito, muy unido, todos éramos una familia" 'That was a very good group, very united. We were all a family' (Appendini 1972: 3).

[55] Leal 1990: 89. Guadarrama Peña 2010: 32.

[56] Charlot 1966 Forward: ix; "the throbbing drama." Leal 1990: 92, "Realmente aquel fue un hermoso momento de actividad, y decisivo, lleno de fe y de audacia" 'That was really a beautiful moment of activity, and decisive, full of faith and audacity.' Albers 1999: 123, 128. Gaitán Rojo 2010: 17, an exhibition on the group "busca recuperar emociones pérdidas en el tiempo" 'seeks to recuperate emotions lost through time.'

[57] Charlot February 3, 1943: 3. *MMR* 73 f., 310, 317. Compare Siqueiros 1996: 27 f.

[58] *MMR* 140; also 141. Edwards 1966: 174, "truly a workshop." Siqueiros 1977: 208 ff.; 1996: 477, in practice for Rivera, collective work merely meant having assistants.

[59] Rosales 2005: 2. Siqueiros 1977: 196; 1978: 51. Zurián 2002: 130, note 36. Sometimes problems of attribution arise (Guadarrama Peña n.d.: 2 f.).

[60] *MMR* 243; 73 f., "a return to an objective tradition such as that transmitted in the past by guilds, or, in modern terms, syndicates of artists-craftsmen."; also 241–251. Amero 1947. Siqueiros 1996: 24 ff.

[61] Charlot February 3, 1943 Interesting Display: 3. Compare Leal 1990: 95 f., on fresco as the best medium for their intentions.

[62] Charlot April 1919. E.g., Reith-Bronner 2015: 241.

[63] *MMR* 317. Siqueiros often expresses the same ideas and emotions about the period, e.g., 1978: 65.

[64] Charlot *AA* II: 44, 62; also 22. Compare Leal 1990: 159 f.

[65] *AA* II: 9. Charlot often wrote of Orozco's religious character (e.g., 1967 José Clemente Orozco).

[66] Charlot drew a clear line between genius and competence. For instance, during the Korean war, he regretted that the genius Douglas MacArthur had been fired and Matthew B. Ridgway, whom he considered a journeyman, had been put in his place. As many others, Charlot underestimated Ridgway. In my opinion, Charlot's attitude sometimes led him to depreciate teamwork. He felt Ginger Rogers merely followed Fred Astaire. In a young hula group, he felt that one chanter was the genius who was providing the spirit of the group. I myself felt that the second chanter had an equal importance.

[67] Leal 1990: 90, 170–175. *MMR* 163–167; Charlot Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut, "Why Vasconcelos chose as his emissary a twenty-two year-old 'who was only a student at the open air school of Coyoacán' is explained by the previous refusal of older men; also the Secretary's private secretary, James Torres Bodet, had enough confidence in Leal to own and to hang in his home some of his paintings."

[68] *MMR* 151. Similarly, Siqueiros 1996: 494.

[69] Vasconcelos *Memorias* 2: 17, 54, 262. Fell 1989: 396, 412. Mijangos 2000: 143.

[70] Rivera visited the EPAL at Coyoacán, and reports differ on his opinion of the young artists' work. Díaz de León 1965: [8 f.], writes he was positive, but Leal 1990: 172 f., found him discouraging. *MMR* 132 f.

[71] Zurián 2002: 23, calls them the "grupo de Coyoacán" 'the Coyoacán group,' but this expression was not used at the time as far as I know. Of the five willing to attempt murals, only Charlot and Revueltas had studied outside Mexico.

[72] Baciu 1968: 69. Charlot 1972 An Artist Looks Back:

> Mexico was still in revolution. The party that had the power was quite in power and was not against annoying the reactionaries, the bourgeois. Now they could be annoyed in many ways, of course, but I think what annoyed them the most was that the Minister of Public Education, José Vasconcelos, gave the walls of some of the ancient palaces to artists in their twenties to decorate, and to decorate in such a way that you couldn't roll the paint back and forget it. You could, of course, whitewash the wall, and that was the solution that at the time was proposed. But eventually it never happened.
>
> they were a rowdy bunch, shaking their fists at those—they were many—who shook their fists at them; keeping, just in case, cocked pistols within reach while at work on the muralists' scaffolds; outshouting the shouts of the bourgeois who threw rotten eggs at their revolutionary murals, and at the painters too. (Charlot "Art" January 28, 1971)

[73] Charlot January 28, 1971. Mijangos 2000: 197.

[74] *MMR* 305 ff. Leal 1990: 89, was more appreciative of anecdotes.

[75] Siqueiros 1977: 163, 178 f.; 1996: 17–20. Scherer 1996: 94. Leal 1990: 168. Flores 2013: 33 f., 39–42. *MMR* 72 f., 197. The rhetoric of American regionalism was very similar: nationalist, anti-Europe, and macho (see Evans 2010: e.g., 167 f.).

[76] E.g., Fell 1989: 639–657. Pérez Montfort 1999: 180. Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 23–30. On the whole subject, see Basave Benítez 1992.

[77] E.g., Charlot 1926 Report, "Faces of all ages and races with Jewish and Roman noses, so characteristic that they must be mostly actual portraits, are found." Charnay 1885: 118, 158, 195 f., 236, 391, used differences of profiles to reveal racial and cultural differences. Milpa Alta, the village that Charlot knew best, had little race mixture (Zantwijk 1960: 18). When Charlot depicts Indians in the city, they are being exploited.

[78] Siqueiros 1996: 20; also, e.g., 17, 22, 24, "*nuestra raza*" "our race" is the "*pueblo de México*" 'people of Mexico,' 25.

[79] This use can be found often, e.g., Charlot 1924 D. Alfaro Siqueiros, "Ses exemples et ses conclusions sont nés de la race et pour la race… Aimant son pays et sa race…" 'His examples and conclusions are born from the race and for the race…Loving his land and his race…'; Spanish, November–December 1926 Siqueiros, Verdadero Rebelde, "Sus ejemplos y sus conclusiones tienen razón, pues son nacidos de su raza, y por eso tienen la más grande belleza de la emoción"; 1925 Guadalupe Posadas, "avec des traits si forts, si raciaux" 'with characteristics so strong, so racial.'

[80] Araujo July 26, 1923: on Herrán, "sus aportaciones individuales y raciales" 'his individual and racial contributions'; "José Clemente Orozco y Joaquín Clausell, cuyas obras presentaban grandes contribuciones orgánicas raciales" 'José Clemente Orozco and Joaquín Clausell, whose works present great organic, racial contributions'; August 2, 1923: "nada hay más ajeno a nuestra estética local o racial que el orientalismo predominante" 'nothing more alien to our local and racial aesthetic than the predominant orientalism'; "La verdadera pintura mexicana debe manifestarse primordialmente por su NATURALEZA ORGÁNICA, es decir, por un sentimiento racial muy particular…" 'Authentic Mexican painting should manifest itself primordially by its ORGANIC NATURE, that is to say, by a very particular racial sentiment…'; "¿En dónde reside la fuente de esas particularidades raciales?" 'Where is located the source of these racial peculiarities?' In all the above quotations, race and racial cannot be understood in a restricted sense, but to the multi-racial people of Mexico. Even a more technical word like *autóctono* 'autochthonous' can be used along with racial to express the difference with Europe (August 2, 1923).

[81] Siqueiros 1977: 210. Torres Bodet 1961: 285, Gabriela Mistral calls Indians "una raza heroica, olvidada durante siglos" 'a heroic race, forgotten for centuries.'

[82] E.g., Pach 1923: 136:

> To be sure, these elements are not in the exact proportion of the Indian and European elements in the blood of Mexico. If the European characteristics seem at first to predominate to the point of producing an art that presents no marked superficial difference from that of other countries, one has only to look a little more closely to perceive qualities that belong to Mexico alone.

[83] Fell 1989: 397. *Monografía de Las Escuelas* 1926: 9. Debroise 1984: 33 f. Compare Siqueiros 1977: 88.

[84] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 206. Fell 1989: 646.

[85] E.g., Glusker 2010: 745. Rutherford 1971: 234. O'Malley 1986: 120 ff. Basave Benítez 1992: 38 f., 42. Zantwijk 1960: 69–73, at Milpa Alta.

[86] Rolland 1990: 78. Espejo 1994: 34. López 2006: 36 f. Merfish 2013: 72.

[87] E.g., Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 1: 925; 1982 *Memorias* 2: 167, "la pandilla izquierdo-judeo-yanquizante" 'the leftist-jewish-yankeefier gang.' Vasconcelos mentions when people are Jews, especially when he has negative feelings towards them (e.g., 1982 *Memorias* 2: 223, 237, 261). Compare Siqueiros 1978: 49. Lima 1988: 137, Ramón María Valle-Inclán wrote in 1923 that low-class Spaniards in Mexico owned seventy percent of the land; "A revolution…must lead to the cultural supremacy of the Indian race, to the attainment of its rights, and to the expulsion of Spaniards of Jewish and Moorish descent. It would be better, of course, if their throats were slit."

[88] Orozco 1987: 167. Brenner writes to Charlot, May 21, 1963, saying Rivera told her and others that he was Jewish.

[89] Glusker 2010: 634; 85, 87, compare Carlos Orozco Romero's caricatures of Brenner.

[90] 1924 D. Alfaro Siqueiros. *San Carlos* 1962: 154, "racial consciousness anticipated the creation of a truly Mexican style." An exact parallel can be found in Charlot's reference to Pieter Breughel: "his task was inverse. It was to remain true to race and to country. Breughel returned to his Northern *patria* more consciously Flemish than when he left it" (1966 Foreword: x). *People* seems to be the best understanding in the following examples. "una nueva tradición, con rasgos tan fuertes, tan raciales"; "Una raza fuerte no se puede nutrir sino de emociones fuertes. Es realidad indígena el amor a la tragedia, a la sangre, a la muerte" 'A strong race cannot nourish itself except with strong emotions. Love of tragedy, blood, and death is the indigenous reality' (1928 Posada). *Raza* here refers to the Mexican population influenced by its indigenous base (compare the French version 1925 Guadalupe Posadas). Also 1949 Mexican ex-votos: 142. At the 1910 Mexican art show, "racial consciousness anticipated the creation of a truly Mexican style" (1951 Orozco and Siqueiros: 357; *AA* II: 260; *San Carlos* 154). In conversation, Charlot could use race very broadly:

> There are two opposite philosophies, each one consistent with the philosophy of its country.
>
> Mexican-Americans are soaked in US culture. It is heroic on their part to go against the grain of that culture and take sides with the racial culture, Hispanic, nearly the enemy of saxon culture. (Tabletalk, January 1979)

[91] "l'individu de race blanche" 'the individual of the white race'; "tragédie raciale" 'racial tragedy' of the Mexican Indians (1925 Sur la danse). 1925–1926 Ebauche d'un Essai. 1926 Asimilando: "un arte racial" 'a racial art,' speaking of Indians as opposed to Spaniards; also *AA* II: 142. "In times of unrest the Indian quota shoots upwards, more for a symbolical pennant than as a true racial claim" (Winter 1946: 1). "The readiness of individuals to codify racial prejudice…" (*San Carlos* 53).

[92] *AA* II: 149. Charlot identifies Indian artists at San Carlos and publishes a translation of a document bearing on the use of terms for designating race (*San Carlos* 55–65, 62 f.).

[93] *AA* II: 346. Charlot speaks in the same way of Mérida (January 28, 1971). Similarly, Tamayo felt he did not have to try to paint in an Indian way because he was Indian (Mijangos 2000: 119–121).

[94] 1947 Los Papeles 'Picados' de Lola Cueto; May 1946 Introduction. *AA* II: 374, "It may be the Asiatic strain latent in the Indian race that made the native artist try his hand on paper…" Mérida "brings to this recondite work the same racial grace…" (*AA* II: 352).

[95] Siqueiros 1977: 180; also 88, 190; e.g., 1978: 48; 1996: 456 f. Scherer 1996: 73. Baeza Flores 1962: 176, Haya de la Torre criticized Latin American intellectuals for their dependence on foreign thinkers.

[96] Reyes Palma 1994: 157. Leal 1990: 169, mentions Barcelona along with Paris.

[97] Ángel Fernández 1988²: 138. Krauze 1997: 4 f., 13 f. Beezley 2004: e.g., 7, 115, 129 f.; 82 f., 87 f., 91. Rolland 1990: 24 ff., 256, 291–317. 324 f.; he extends the history in detail into the 1940s. Espinosa López 1991: 128, the influence of French architecture. Zavala 2001: 36. Nahui Olín provides an example of French influence on an upper-class daughter: she was sent as a child to France where she learned to speak and write the language and visited cultural sites; on returning to Mexico City, she attended the Colegio Francés and published French poetry; at the end of her life, she liked French films (*Nahui Olin* 1992: 46, 48, 50, 52 ff., 58, 106).

[98] Génin 1908–1910: 1, 140. See also Génin 1910; 1923: IX; 1933: 319–323, 347 f., 389.

[99] Charlot 1924 D. Alfaro Siqueiros. Compare Leal 1990: 60, artists were justifying themselves by referring to prewar French or German work. Baciu 1968: 69, people and even artists tended to confuse Futurism with Cubism.

[100] Siqueiros 1978: 15; also 59, 62, 69 f.

[101] Siqueiros 1978: 34. See also Siqueiros 1977: 495 f.; 1996: 77, 224, 447 f. *AA* II: 20.

[102] Fell 1989: 418. Génin 1933: XV, after living in a Francophile Mexico, now regretted a growing xenophobia.

[103] See also Leal 1990: 175. John Charlot 2009: 34.

[104] Charlot January 28, 1971. Charlot 1972 Xavier Guerrero, "Desligar el muralismo mexicano de su cuota de influencias europeas sería un exceso de nacionalismo" 'To unbind Mexican muralism from its quota of European influences would be an excess of nationalism.' Charlot 1966 Foreword: ix.

[105] Leal 1990: 31. Mijangos 2000: 193. Flores 2013: 31–34, has found numerous Mexican newspaper articles on the latest literature and art in Europe, but in view of Rivera's and Charlot's experience, this information had not sunken in. For instance, articles on Post-Impressionism had made no impact on EPAL, which was enthusiastically Impressionist (Vera de Córdova 1920b). Often a living model and teacher is needed to communicate new ideas.

[106] Fauchereau 2013: 41–59, an excellent survey and evaluation of the European experience for the Mexican artists. Marius de Zayas and Ángel Zárraga made Europe their principal residence.

[107] *AA* II: 155 f. Debroise 1991: 31.

[108] *AA* II: 367. Charlot January 28, 1971, the muralists "were indeed well informed as to what transpired in the international world of art."

[109] Charlot March 8, 1972; also 1966 Foreword: x, "A visitor who was also a well-known art critic, with the forlorn hope of deflecting us toward saner ways, suggested that all Mexican muralists should subscribe to Parisian vanguard magazines!" Charlot in Orozco 1974: 15, a similar remark by a French cultural attaché in Mexico. Contrast the United States artists of the 1930s; Tomkins 1996: 337, they were against "the prevailing American styles of regionalism and social realism (Arshile gorky called the latter 'poor art for poor people') and steeped themselves in the achievements of the European avant-garde"; they read "international art journals and discussed them endlessly."

[110] Vasconcelos 1982 *Memorias* 2: 37. Rivera stated:

> Surely the most insipid and trivial of my paintings were those that I did in Spain in 1907 and 1908…But more powerful, although I barely realized it at the time, was my Mexican-Latin American inferiority complex, my reverence toward European history and culture. (quoted in Magaloni and Govan 2016: 277)

Also, e.g., O'Malley 1986: 8. Pérez Montfort 1994: 117. Mijangos 2000: 139. Zavala 2001: 271 f. Brenner 1968: 24, 28 f., argues that this complex was exacerbated by the sufferings of the Revolution. Siqueiros 1996: 118, felt that Orozco had a complex because he was missing a hand. Zantwijk 1960: 69–73, states that the "trauma de la Conquista" 'the trauma of the Conquest' along with the majority depreciation of their culture led to an inferiority complex among Milpa Alta Indians.

[111] Acevedo 1986: 184 f. Elsewhere Vasconcelos seemed willing to accept Hispano-American foreigners, 1982 *Memorias* 1: 783 f. Torres Bodet 1961: 260, 274, on Vasconcelos' pride and participation in the structuring of the ministry and the construction of the building.

[112] Mijangos 2000: 112; 103, Tamayo argues that insulting others is a symptom of being unsure of one's own work.

[113] Maples Arce 1924: last page. Also Schneider 1970: 84.

[114] Mérida January 29, 1971. Mijangos 2000: 156, Tamayo reported resentment against Mérida because he was Guatemalan.

[115] Charlot to Pach October 27, 1925. In 1925, Charlot wrote his "Letter to W. Alanson Bryan on his Nationality." Bryan was director of the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, which held the First Pan-American Exhibition of Oil Paintings in that year.

[116] Pearson to Charlot February 26, 1966. Andrews 2011: 57 ff., Weston may have been excluded from a 1927 exhibition of Mexican art for the same reason.

[117] Brenner 1968: 28 f. Tamayo argued strongly against this exclusivism (Mijangos 2000: 108 f., 111 f., 122, 137, 139, 167).

[118] *MMR* 285 f. Charlot Writings Related to *MMR*: Appendix III.

[119] Brenner-Charlot 1928: 65. Rashkin 2009:

> Charlot is often overlooked "perhaps because as a Frenchman, albeit of partial Mexican descent, he does not fit in neatly with a heroic-nationalist version of history." (78)
> "Of all the Mexican artists I have know," art collector Bernard Lewin once wrote, "Jean Charlot was probably the most overlooked." (79)

Fauchereau 2013: 185. Baciu 1982: 7.

[120] Terrazas 1994. Manrique and del Conde 1987: 81 f., Inés Amor formulates the minimizing view of Charlot in 1968 Mexico, discussed below.

[121] Charlot 1966 Foreword: x; also, “Romanticism seemed gross, with its accent on experiences shared by all men—passion and pain and death”; “Spanish Picasso reacted as the Mexicans had”; “American and European art lovers, who knew that Picasso could do no wrong, were led to reassess the esthetic potential of historical painting.”

[122] This point is made often in Charlot’s writings. For instance, he emphasized that among travelers to cultural centers, the great artists, like Breugel, returned reinvigorated to their roots. Charlot wrote of Weston:

> The Americanism of Weston grew its backbone in front of the hieroglyphs of another civilization. Magueys, palm trees, pyramids helped him shed, sooner then he would have otherwise, his esthetic adolescence. It was in front of a round smooth palm tree trunk in Cuernavaca that he realized the clean elegance of northern factory chimneys. Teotihuacán, with its steep skyward pyramidal ascent, taught him how to love his own country’s skyscrapers. (Writings Related to *MMR*; Appendix III)

[123] On a trip to Europe in 1968, my parents and I first visited Italy and then France. Accustomed to the rough Italian rustification, I did not recognize that the tidy tracery I was seeing on a French building was supposed to be rustification and asked my father what it was. He laughed and told me. Then mimicking an Italian accent, he said, “Look at what the French are doing to our rustification. It certainly looks funny.”

[124] Charlot maintained this supportive role all his life. Discussing his Asian-American students at the University of Hawai‘i, he stated:

> There is a danger as they learn to be Americanized that they get a little shy about their own racial background and we are doing our best to avoid that. To make them proud, in fact, of their own racial background. (Lesley and Hollis Interview August 18, 1961)

[125] Charlot 1977 Foreword: xvii; also ix. Emerging scholars are now correcting the over-emphasis on Precolumbian as opposed to European influences (e.g., Lozano 1999 Reinterpretaciones, on Rivera).

[126] Fell 1989: 431 f. *AA* II: 153, the muralists were “bent on creating a didactic type of art aimed at a wider circle of men than the aesthetes.” Fauchereau 2013: 98, the manifesto of the Sindicato called for public art for the people; also 100 f.

[127] Charlot 1965 Articles for *EJB*: “Rivera”; 1945–1947 *Cien Grabados*, “ojos todavía más adeptos a descifrar pictogramas al estilo prehispánico que las letras del alfabeto” ‘eyes still more adept at deciphering pictograms in the Prehispanic style than the letters of the alphabet’; 1924 D. Alfaro Siqueiros, “Dans un pays où les 80% ne savent pas lire, la peinture conserve en effet l’utilité de *propageuse d'idées* qui la fit naître et durer au long des siècles” ‘In a country where eighty percent do not know how to read, painting keeps in effect the usefulness of *propagator of ideas*, which gave it birth and duration for many centuries.’ Orozco called murals “painted Bibles” (Reed 1956: 13; Sorell 2002: 261 f.). Haya de la Torre saw the connection as well:

> Rivera, como esos pintores del Renacimiento [Italian], pintó grandes carteles de propaganda. En el Renacimiento no había revistas, ni cinema. Para ayudar a la imaginación el Veronés y Rubens pintaron aquellos cuadros inmensos. Rivera se propuso un muralismo así.
>
> ‘Rivera, like those painters of the [Italian] Renaissance, painted large propaganda posters. In the Renaissance, there were not magazines or cinema. To aid the imagination, Veronese and Rubens painted those immense canvases. Rivera intended this sort of muralism.’

Génin 1908–1910: 136 f., recommended using art for the education of Indians.

[128] Torres Bodet 1961: 260 f., 274. Gaitán Rojo 2010: 17.

[129] Debroise 1984: 48. Mello 2002a: 53, and n. 178. Oles 2005: 30 f., states that the first collectors were friends of the artists and non-Mexicans; Francisco Sergio Iturbe and Marte R. Gómez were the first private patrons and collectors in the usual sense of the term; the galleries important for the artists of the time were in the United States. Brenner thought of establishing a cooperative in Mexico City to market fine and folk art and “eliminate the middleman” (Glusker 2010: 87). Compare the situation in the United States as described by Mancini 2005. From his knowledge of the New York City art market, Siqueiros thought the lack of one in Mexico was an advantage (1978: 18; 1996: 450).

[130] I summarize my detailed discussion of critics in Chapter 1.

[131] Orozco 1971: 141; 1974: 92. *AA* II: 167.

[132] Orozco 1962: 99. Leal 1990: 106 f. Fell 1989: 420, Siqueiros.

[133] Compare for the United States Adams 1995: 286 ff.

[134] *AA* II: 123, also, e.g., 121 f. Siqueiros 1996: 24 ff., 60. Weston 1961: 165–169. Debroise 1984: 34.

[135] Charlot 1926 Pinturas Murales. Charlot-Blanchard September 16, 1922: 18.

[136] Charlot March 8, 1972. The painting involved is probably CL 40 *Luz seated, with basket*. On Luz, see e.g., *MMR* index. Karttunen 1994: 192–214. John Charlot 2001 First Fresco, 2007 (Spanish and English versions). Caballero 2012/3: 246252. Charlot had used highlights in prints: M 7–30, 32–35, 37. Charlot also used acceptance by the Hawaiian community as a criterion of his success in understanding their culture. He told me that he would feel he had really arrived if Hawaiians did not object to his presenting the volcano goddess Pele on stage in one of his plays.

[137] Writings Related to *MMR*: Appendix III. Rivera included a portrait of Escobar in the stairwell of the Ministry of Education: "On a higher level, besides grave-diggers and weeping rebozoed women, a few portraits of mourners included one of master mason Luis Escobar, he whom I had portrayed two years before in my first fresco" (Writings Related to *MMR;* Passages Cut).

[138] Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut. Rivera was still finding his way (e.g., *MMR* 262).

[139] Coffey 2002: 26, "murals have played an important role in the evolution of an increasingly sophisticated and didactic exhibitionary design." Beezley 2008: 17, museums have communicated national identity. Also Snead 2001: 133.

[140] Eder 1991: 70. Compare Leal 1990: 8, "la pintura debe llenar una función social" 'painting must fill a social function'; 53 f., 61.

[141] Charlot June 9, 1965:

> we Mexicans, if I may say so, have had a hard time to make our way into the history of modern art because some people believe that art and story-telling do not go together, and I believe that if it was good enough for the old masters, it is good enough for us and that communication is not a sin. If you tried to work as Hogarth did, and Posada did, to reach the people, it is not a question of having an inferior art. It's just having an art that considers communication as one of its duties.

[142] Charlot 1972 Xavier Guerrero, "Diego Rivera, Alfaro Siqueiros y otros llegaron a muralistas por razones muy distintas y caminos más desviados" 'Diego Rivera, Alfaro Siqueiros and others became muralists for very different reasons and by very diverging routes.'

[143] Apted 2005; also, "there's a feeling of love about it that kind of transmits." Charlot told me that to understand Hawaiians, you have to love Hawaiians.

[144] Guilbaut 1983: 20 f., gives a more positive picture of the leftist U.S. artists, close to Charlot's of the Mexicans.

[145] Charlot "Writings Related to *MMR*, Passages Cut." Zalce stated, "Even Rivera and Orozco weren't rich, though they were very famous" (1971).

[146] Charlot 1969 Méndez; *AA* II: 20, "with the positive belief that they had ceased being artistic and were now artisans." Siqueiros 1996: 18, *Tres Llamamientos*. Brenner-Charlot 1928: 66, Rivera stated, "Je ne suis pas un artiste, je suis un ouvrier en plastique" "I am not an artist; I am a worker in plastic art." Guadarrama Peña 2010: 32. Fell 1989: 447, Manuel Toussaint stated, "el artista no es sino un obrero" 'an artist is nothing except a worker.' References are numerous.

[147] My mother was indignant when an editor tried to eliminate a reference to an *azotea* in Charlot's *Mary and Art* (1958). She felt *azoteas* conveyed an important social significance for my father.

[148] Torres Bodet 1961: 260; he praises authors as good fellow workers (275).

[149] "*Art*: The Work of Jean Charlot" 1949. See my discussion in Chapter 1.

[150] Charlot 1918–1923 Notebook C: "de Picasso." Compare Weston 1966: 165.

[151] Charlot August 5, 1923. Tamayo also emphasized humility (Mijangos 2000: 209).

[152] This was also the view of Vasconcelos (Fell 1989: 393).

[153] Glusker 2010: xxvi. Tibol 1996: 177, "Orozco había hecho burla de cualquier lucha política organizada" 'Orozco had made fun of any organized political struggle'; also 176. Fauchereau 2013: 147 f., holds that Orozco was not political. Charlot and Orozco resembled each other in that they took social problems seriously but were skeptical of proposed solutions.

[154] Amero: Zuñiga 2008: 62 f. Zalce: Merfish 2013.

[155] Charlot's translation of an unpublished manuscript by Siqueiros, "Autobiografía," part of Charlot's research for his *MMR*. See Siqueiros 1977: 211.

[156] Baciu 1974. Baciu 1982: 26, 28, states that Charlot and Marof knew each other in Mexico.

[157] Baciu 1974; also 1970: Pablo Neruda "tiene talento poético y cerebro obturado. No sabe qué es política ni marxismo pero es útil a los comunistas como Sartre. Sucedió lo mismo con Diego Rivera gran pintor y guerrillero de palabras, tan versatil que un día era stalinista y otoro trotskista" 'has a poetic talent and a closed brain. He doesn't know what politics or Marxism are, but like Sartre, he is useful to the communists. The same thing happened with Diego Rivera, a great painter and guerilla fighter with words, so versatile that he was one day a Stalinist and the next a Trotskyite.'

[158] Baciu 1968: 69. Charlot also found the pre-Stalin communism of Russia romantic (69).

[159] Scherer 1996: 98, similarly, the Catholic Federico Cantú was a life-long friend of Siqueiros. Fauchereau 2013: 167, in his fascist period, Dr. Atl was still considered a friend by leftist artists. Flores 2013: 138, 312, 322.

[160] Brenner 1968: 23. Baciu 1982: 25 f.

[161] Lara 2004, reporting the views of Raúl Anguiano that the TGP and Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios were all "progresista":

> En cuanto a los temas y los paradigmas sociales, no hubo controversias…ni intergeneracionales ni entre los miembros del Taller de Gráfica Popular (del que Anguiano fue fundador) y de la Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios.
>
> Ambas instituciones…albergaban a católicos socialistas como Jean Charlot, protestantes como Mariano Palet, y creadores sin preferencias políticas ni religiosas como yo…
>
> 'As to the themes and social paradigms, there were no controversies…not between the generations nor between the members of the Taller de Gráfica Popular (of which Anguiano was the founder) and the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios.
>
> 'Both institutions…sheltered socialist Catholics like Jean Charlot, Protestants like Mariano Palet, and creators without political or religious preferences like me…'

Mijangos 2000: 48, "Tamayo, en silencio, se sentía un hombre de izquierda y socialista" 'Tamayo, silently, felt himself to be a man of the left and socialist.' The only unacceptable artists were the fascists.

[162] M56. Curiously, Charlot wrote of Siqueiros's use of the hammer and sickle as "símbolos no políticos, sino sociales" 'not political, but social symbols" (1926 "Rebelde"). Similarly, when Modotti was organizing political protests for Sacco and Vanzetti, Charlot wrote Weston: "Tina goes hard on social work" (Albers 1999: 175; Argenteri 2003: 92).

[163] Charlot's translation of an unpublished manuscript by Siqueiros, "Autobiografía," part of Charlot's research for his *MMR*. Similar Spanish in Siqueiros 1977: 211. Scherer 1996: 36, Siqueiros' father had ideas similar to Charlot's on Leo XIII and so on. Violence could be justified for right-wing purposes as well (e.g., Rutherford 1971: 286).

[164] Mijangos 2000: 95; also 50, 90. Wolfe 1963: 409. Other artists practiced Catholicism, including Alfonso Reyes (1889–1959), Luis Barragán (1902–1988), Juan Soriano (1920–2006), and Rodolfo Morales (1925–2001).

[165] Reed 1960: 74. Much later, Ana Cecilia Terrazas reporting Raquel Tibol speculating without references:

> Y del enfriamiento entre el pintor francés y algunos miembros de la generación, Tiból comentó:
>
> "Me parece muy importante la carga católica-religiosa de Charlot, que puede ser la que lo distancía de estos artistas ideólogos comunistas." (Terrazas 1994)
>
> 'And about the chilling between the French painter and some members of his generation, Tiból commented:
>
> "Charlot's Catholic-religious load seems very important to me, which may be that which distanced him from those communist artist ideologues."'

The opposite view, equally unhistorical, was expressed by Tom Coffman:

> The person who is recognized by everyone as the great artist in Hawai'i was John [*sic*] Charlot, who was of half Mexican ancestry and half French. He was an early participant in the Mexican muralist movement and, as a Catholic, he became alienated from the Marxists and moved to Hawai`i. He took with him his sense of celebration of peoples and was embraced across the spectrum. Perhaps arriving at some understanding of a multicultural ethic has that healing effect. (Quoted in Izumi n.d.: 112)

Ample evidence exists of Charlot's continuing friendship with his colleagues. For instance, Doly Labadie wrote to me on February 14, 1980:

> During the Olimpic [*sic*] Cultural games in Mexico, in a banquet offered by his artist friends the best proff [*sic*] of their friendly affect [*sic*] was (like says me a person who knows all of them very well) that all the artist [*sic*] went, because some of them never go to a place where they meet another artist.

My mother told me the same thing: at the banquet, a guest looked at the range of artists and marveled, "They never *all* get together like this!"

[166] I am quoting from memory.

[167] Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 69–77, 264–271, 272–280, 283–288, 302, 320, 322, 327 f., 329–337, 339–342.

[168] Siqueiros 1977: 222 f. On *El Machete*, see Lilia Roura Fuentes 2012: 330–337.

[169] Charlot March 8, 1972. Debroise 1991: 33, connects Charlot to "discursos radicales" 'radical discourses.'

[170] Tabletalk March 10, 1972. Charlot was mistaken about the year and some of the circumstances. I have not found a reference to him as a communist in the few printed sources available to me, but he is mentioned in reports on the controversy: "Threaten New Row at the Art League: Sloan's Backers Demand the Retention of Jean Charlot, Modernist Instructor" April 29, 1932; "Art League Meets Tonight," *New York Evening Post*, clippings file 129; "Grosz not on Art Faculty: Students League Catalogue Fails to List Him or Jean Charlot," *New York Evening Post* (Clippings 131). See also "Lie v. Sloan" 1932. "Mild Monster" 1932. "Jonas Lie is Dead" 1940. Gray 2003.

[171] Charlot "Writings Related to *MMR*; Passages Cut"; *AA* II: 22, "such intensity of collective creation could not last long." Edwards 1966: 189, 200. Debroise 1984: 50 f., 89 f. Mari Carmen Ramírez on Acevedo 1986: 216. Leal 1990: 95.

[172] *MMR* 277. Also Siqueiros 1977: 227; 1996: 133, 502.

[173] *AA* II: 22. Mijangos 2000: 172, 179, Tamayo was more critical of the two generations after Rivera and Siqueiros, but saw some hope in the third. The most critical statement Charlot made about the later painters may have been: "José Luis Cuevas (born 1932) stamps man with a sense of despair perhaps more literary in its approach than it is final in its plasticity" (1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting.").

[174] 1965 Articles for *EJB*: "Mexican Painting." Charlot stated: "Though Tamayo wanted to get ahead, he never painted dishonestly" (Tabletalk, mid-1970s).

[175] Siqueiros 1977: 223 ff.; 1996: 460. Zavala 2001: 36, 266 ff., 271 f., 314; Adriana Zavala in Oles and Ramírez 2005: 146. Flores 2013: 291, a resurgent Francophilia can be found among the *Contemporaneos*. An important show of French art was held in Mexico in 1929 (Ades 2005), and French theatre was performed in 1923, 1925, and 1926 (Génin 1933: 483).

[176] Mijangos 2000: 201, 206. Tamayo defends himself against accusations of foreign influence, sympathy for imperialism, and anti-Mexicanism (134).

[177] Charlot July 23, 1925. *AA* II: 397; 1977 Foreword: xvi, "Our refusal to toe the line angered critics." Charlot 1978 Message: 30, the muralists were advised to subscribe to Paris art magazines, "in a word to stop doing what we were doing and toe the line of international art." Leal 1990: 89, Mexican muralism was appreciated more in foreign countries than in Mexico itself.

[178] Siqueiros 1977: 493, 497 f., 500; 1978: 49; 1996: 387 f., 392, 490 f. [art market], 494–498, 500 f.

[179] Leal 1990: 194. Compare Mari Carmen Ramírez on Acevedo 1986: 215. Hagen 1935.

[180] Reed 1960: 191. Azuela 1986: 227. Mari Carmen Ramírez on Acevedo 1986: 208 ff. Leal 1990: 121. González Mello 1995: 11. Mijangos 2000: 142 f., 154.

[181] Rodman 1958: 223. Paz 1993: 139.

[182] *AA* II: 20. Leal wrote strongly against this tendency (e.g., 1990: 95). Baeza Flores 1962: 174, finds that the later Rivera had "pompier" side to his art (in quotation marks).

[183] Charlot May 20, 1969. Charlot found a sad precedent to his marginalized colleagues in nineteenth-century painter Primitivo Miranda, whose Mexican interests and identity caused him to be sidelined in favor of foreign artists: “Disillusioned, Miranda opened his own workshop and lived on income received for commissioned pictures, with only indifferent success” (*San Carlos* 1962: 92).