THE CADAVEROUS CITY: THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE DEAD IN MEXICO CITY, 1875-1930

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores burial practices and funeral rituals in Mexico City during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. I argue that international shifts in ideas about public health, class, and nationalism were reflected in new spaces and practices for dead bodies. Furthermore, I examine how mass death challenged traditional burial practices. The daily practices involved in managing the disposal and veneration of dead bodies illuminate the social and cultural challenges in building modern cities and the ways in which these projects are adopted or rejected by the citizenry.

The first three chapters focus on the modernization of burial practices in the nineteenth century. Burial reform laws in the 1850s led to the foundation of the capital's first large, modern cemetery, the Panteón de Dolores, by the Liberal government in 1879. The cemetery became a microcosm for the clean, modern city, mapping the new social class configuration through the distribution of its graves. Quickly the administrators of the Dolores Cemetery failed to meet ideal due to the realities of daily operation. The cemetery had been imagined as a space that reflected elite ideas of modernity, but it served a capital that was mostly indigent. In response to overcrowding, the technology of cremation, which targeted the poor, created a class division between those who could be buried and those who had to be cremated. Government officials successfully constructed a modern, sterile approach to death and began to wrest away control of the symbolic power of death from the Catholic Church.

The last two chapters focus on the temporary breakdown of these practices and the reinterpretation of funeral rituals in the early twentieth century. Instability and high

mortality rates during the Revolution of 1910-1920 led to overcrowding in cemeteries and spread the dead beyond the cemetery, including impromptu battlefield cremations. A comparison of three funerals in 1928-1929 shows new ways in which the funeral was used to perform ideas about the nation, family, and masculinity. The Revolution's unmanageable casualty levels and the advent modern, secular funerary practices in the period before the Revolution influenced how the government, military, and civilians handled and memorialized death.

INTRODUCTION

The dead frolic vivaciously in the Mexican political and cultural imaginary. In the woodcuts of José Guadalupe Posada and the paper-mâché decorations popular during the Days of the Dead, skeletons, known as *calaveras,* inhabit world of the living, holding jobs, playing music, drinking *pulque* (a fermented beverage), and riding bicycles, seemingly unaware of their physical state.[1] Calaveras engage in political and military conflict through popular song, reminding the living that, in the end, all are just skeletons in a pile.[2] Despite the popularity of these artistic representations in popular culture, the dead are rarely depicted in their own space—the cemetery.

In reality, the living in the nineteenth century came to regard the dead as dangerous not only to one's individual health, but also to the health and progress of the nation itself. Benito Juárez's Liberal government began to reform the spaces and the care of the dead to reflect new ideas about modernity and secularism and new concerns about the spread of disease during the 1850s and 1860s. The international rural cemetery movement influenced public health officials' opinions that overcrowded, Catholic graveyards no longer met standards of health or decency.[3]

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[1] Agustín Sánchez González, *José Guadalupe Posada: un artista en blanco y negro* (Mexico: CNCA 1996).
[2] Anonymous, "Calaveras del montón," popular calavera poem.
[3] Shifts to rural or suburban cemeteries occurred throughout Europe, the United States and Latin America. See, for example, Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement" *American Quarterly* vol. 26, no. 1 (1974): 37-59; Peter Johnson, "The modern cemetery: as design for life" *Social and Cultural Geography* 9, no. 7 (2008): 777-790; Amanda Aparecida Pagoto, *Do âmbito sagrado da Igreja ao cemitério público: transformações fúnebres em São Paulo (1850-1860)* (São Paulo : Arquivo do Estado : Imprensa Oficial, 2004).

The setting for much of this history is the Panteón Civil de Dolores, the oldest operating cemetery in Mexico and one of the largest in Latin America. Since its establishment in Mexico City in 1875, over six million bodies have been placed within its walls. The majority of its dead are part of the nameless masses, but the Rotunda of Illustrious Men at the cemetery's entrance holds some of the lesser heroes of the nation. The Panteón de Dolores was only 1 of 8 operating cemeteries in the Federal District (Distrito Federal) and 129 in greater Mexico City during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (175-1910), but it was the model for cemetery design and operation throughout the nation.[4]

The opening of the Panteón Civil de Dolores marked a significant change in the relationship between the living and the dead and brought about changes in attitudes that endured throughout the Porfirian and Revolutionary (1910-1930) periods. The government gained more control over the spaces of and practices surrounding the dead. These new spaces not only served to prevent disease, but also to educate visitors in proper and modern interaction with the dead.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the concept of the "dead citizen" to trace how ideas about citizenship informed by race, class, and gender changed from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth. At first, the dead formed the most passive constituents, a docile group in which ideas about the nation could be inscribed and

[4] Greater Mexico City included the districts of Tacubaya, Tlalpam, Xochimilco, and Guadalupe Hidalgo. At times, I discuss how the dead escape the boundaries of the cemetery, but it is beyond the scope of this study to include all the burial spaces in the city or country. Nevertheless, I hope this provides a starting point for comparative and regional research on the establishment of modern burial practices and spaces. Reglamento de Panteones del Distrito Federal. March 15, 1887, Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal (AHDF), Fondo Ayuntamiento del Distrito Federal (ADF), Sección Panteones en General (PG), Volume 3456, Expediente 285.

arranged in a civic hierarchy. Yet they were citizens nonetheless, and as such, had certain rights and privileges granted to them by the Liberal government. In exchange for these rights and privileges, they were expected to behave in a manner befitting Porfirian positivists' idea of modernity. As an undesirable group, their occupation of certain spaces and times were limited by law. Like the poor or indigenous, the dead rarely met the standards imposed from above. The Liberal ideal imagined the dead citizenry to be a responsibility of the national and local government, but over time, those with full rights formed a smaller group.

This dissertation goes beyond a narrow history of funeral and burial practices. The spatial relations of power are beginning to be studied historically and spaces of the dead and living in relation to one another reflect attitudes towards death and display ideas about nation and class.[5] As much as Posada's calaveras inhabit the living world, the living world encroaches on the space of the dead and the cemetery is shaped by the political, social and cultural ideas of the living. The large necropolis functioned as a society of its own, albeit one intimately connected the larger, living world of Mexico City. Within the walls of the cemetery resided Indians, immigrants, women, children, artists, murderers, and martyrs whose identities were obscured by the cemetery's egalitarian inhumation records and the lush grounds, but nonetheless, constituted a mapped and planned community of dead citizens. Over the course of decades of operation, cemetery, public health, and government officials along with customers rearranged the citizenry, changing not only the physical space of the dead, but also the

[5] Mike Crang and N. J. Thrift, *Thinking Space*, Critical geographies, 9 (London: Routledge, 2000).

rights guaranteed to them. This process went hand in hand with a shift in a national identity that emphasized hero worship over the modern, Liberal citizen.

Purposely then, this is not a simple history of the deaths and funerals of great men. That work has been done in countless other places. Instead, I focus on the everyday institutions and practices put in place to manage the regular occurrence of death and how these influenced ideas about death and dead bodies. These everyday practices contribute to the emphasis on hero's bodies and funerals that grew during the Porfiriato and Revolution.

Death and the Dead: A Historiographical Discussion

Spaces of burial have long been a rich source in the historical record. Much of what we know about ancient cultures comes from the archeological exploration of tombs and burial grounds.[6] As the written word became more available in the historical record, the spaces of the dead were less required to tell the history of their societies.

By the twentieth century, several scholars pointed out that death had become noticeably absent from modern society and from historical study. Geoffrey Gorer argued in 1965 that death had become taboo and thus pornographic in modern societies.[7] Ernest Becker claimed that the denial of death was central to the nation building process, and

[6] See, for example, Erik Hornung and Betsy M. Bryan, eds., *The Quest for Immortality: Treasures of Ancient Egypt* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002); Salima Ikram, *Death and Burial in Ancient Egypt* (Harlow: Longman, 2003).
[7] Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset Press, 1965).

that the denial of mortality has led to the creation of immortal symbols such as heroes and monuments.[8]

Renewed interest in death as a historical subject arose in the 1970s with the publication of Philippe Ariès's *Western Attitudes Towards Death,* which provided a historical narrative that traced the intimate relationship between the living and the dead from the Middle Ages to the modern period. In Medieval Europe, death permeated the daily lives of the living and mourning was a richly performative affair. Ariès contended that death has become increasingly hidden in Western societies, as part of the ultimate manifestation of modernity.[9] From these early inquiries and theories, the recent field of death studies attempts to deconstruct and analyze the universal and unending presence of death and see how this inevitable experience is handled across various times and places in history.

Since Ariès' seminal publication, death studies have been divided between studies of the livings' attitudes towards their own mortality and the practices and attitudes towards the dead. The concept of death incorporates a variety of levels of practice and social meaning. First, there is the physical fact of death, the cessation of life functions of the body and the consequential disposal of the body. Second, there is the experience of the living at the death of a body and the meaning they give to the passing through funeral rituals. Jack Goody describes these two categories as ideology and internment, and

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[8] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973).
[9] Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present,* Translated by Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). For more on the absence or silence of death, see Phillip Mellor, "Death in High Modernity: the Contemporary Presence and Absence of Death," in *The Sociology of Death: Theory, Culture, Practice*, edited by David Clark (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

contends that the concepts overlap and inform each other and thus cannot be seen as separate.[10]

Studies that emphasize ideology and attitude towards one's own death or the death of a beloved family member use literature, epitaphs, funeral oration, diaries, and letters to show how people imagined and contemplated the end of life and the rituals that they performed to mark the transition.[11] David Stannard has argued that it is death's certainty that makes it the center of rituals that aim to provide a transition or transformation to something that is seemingly an end. In ancient times these rituals involved rich colors and odors whereas today, the trend towards a so-called modern approach to death has been to sanitize it and make it invisible. Any ritual or practice associated with death and even the lack of ritual demonstrates a society's attitude towards the meaning of death. For example, Thomas Lacquer's study of pauper funerals in nineteenth-century Great Britain showed that the living contemplated their class status in the cemetery as well as in the city.[12]

Many studies discuss the idea of the "good death" and how changes in burial practices disrupted the possibilities for a good death. For example, in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Brazil, mortality rates were high and death was an expected

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[10] Peter Metcalf describes Goody's categories in Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); For Goody's extensive discussion of the subject see *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the LoDagaa of West Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).
[11] James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Detroit: Partridge, 1972); Drew Gilpin Faust, "The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying" *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 1 (2001): 3-39; Julie-Marie Strange, "'Tho' lost to sight, to memory dear': pragmatism, sentimentality and working-class attitudes towards the grave, c. 1875-1914," *Mortality* 8, No. 2 (2003): 144-159; Michel Vovelle, "A Century and One-half of American Epitaphs (1660-1813): Toward the Study of Collective Attitudes about Death." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 4 (1980): 534-547.
[12] Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals," *Representations* 1 (1983): 109-131.

occurrence. Therefore, a person must properly prepare for the inevitable and provide a will for his family that also set aside directions and money for his funeral.[13] A good death required a funeral full of Catholic symbolism that was a social event for the whole community. A good death also meant a closeness to God and people believed that the new suburban, extra-mural cemetery established in 1848 threatened this relationship.[14]

Changes in attitudes about a "good death" were led by elites in Mexico. Pam Voekel and Verónica Zárate Toscano have explored elite attitudes towards death in Mexico in the late colonial and early national periods, a time when the Church still maintained a monopoly over life events such as birth and burial. Histories of burial reform tend to focus on the initial ideology behind the changes, such as Voekel, who contends that Liberalism had its roots in elite Catholics' desire for simple burials.[15]

Besides the historical studies mentioned above, much of the scholarship on death in Mexico falls into the category of ideology and arises out of literary and cultural studies. An almost inexhaustible supply of popular ballads called *corridos*, poems, novels, paintings, and films serve as examples of Mexicans' fascination with death. Studies of annual celebrations such as Day of the Dead reveal much more about the

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[13] Maria Luz Marcílio, "a morte de nossos ancentrais" in *A morte e os mortos na sociedade brasileira,* edited by José de Souza Martins, ed. 61-75 (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1983).
[14] Amanda Aparecida Pagoto, *Do âmbito sagrado da Igreja ao cemitério público: transformações fúnebres em São Paulo (1850-1860)* (São Paulo : Arquivo do Estado : Imprensa Oficial, 2004).
[15] Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Verónica Zárate Toscano, *Los nobles ante la muerte: actitudes, ceremonias y memoria, 1750-1850* (México: Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2000).

relationship between cultural traditions and national identity than the daily practices associated with death.[16]

No death ritual has been more explored than the funeral. Historians have focused on the funerals and monuments of famous and infamous people to show the symbolic power of the dead and how the living have employed that power for their own purposes. Political funerals, argue James Lehning and Avner Ben-Amos, are charged events that allow the government to perform and have the public participate in honoring the nation.[17] Yet the public can also use these performances as an opportunity to share their own contradictory values. In a similar vein, Barry Schwartz and Gary Laderman have shown that the public display of Abraham Lincoln's body and the collective mourning of his death transformed him from a controversial president into a national hero.[18]

Historians of Mexico have explored these themes in state and popular funerals. During the Díaz dictatorship, state funerals presented government leaders with the opportunity to perform its military and secular power. Nevertheless, the crowd used the events for their own varied purposes, rendering mute the funeral's intended purpose.[19]

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[16] Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (New York: Zone Books, 2004); At a conference on death (October 2007) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), one presenter argued that the preservation of Day of the Dead in the culture was necessary to prevent the onslaught of U.S. influence, such as Halloween.

[17] Avner Ben-Amos, "The Sacred Center of Power: Paris and Republican State Funerals," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1991): 27-48; Avner Ben-Amos, *Funeral, Politics, and Memory in Modern France*, *1789-1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James R. Lehning, "Gossiping about Gambetta: Contested Memories in the Early Third Republic," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 1 (1993): 237-254.

[18] Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Barry Schwartz, "Mourning and the Making of a Sacred Symbol: Durkheim and Lincoln Assassination" *Social Forces* 70 (1991): 343-364.

[19] Matthew Esposito, "Memorializing Modern Mexico: The State Funerals of the Porfirian Era" (PhD Dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1997).

Similarly, Anne Rubenstein's research on the 1957 funeral of the beloved film star Pedro Infante demonstrates that funerals become sites of conflict over issues of urban space, gender relations, and class relations. Inspired by these studies, my previous work compared and contrasted the funerals of President-elect Alvaro Obregón and his assassin, José de León Toral, in 1928, to examine conflicts over concepts of masculinity and debates over the relationship between church and state.[20] These studies have furthered the understanding of state funerals and the enduring power of political figures from beyond the grave, yet they rarely consider these events and processes in relation to the everyday practices to dispose of the dead.

In contrast to ideology and ritual, scholars that emphasize interment and the body focus on changes in burial spaces, practices, and technologies surrounding the dead body. Thus, it is not an individual's contemplation of his or her own death, but what societies do with bodies of the dead after the living have mourned them in ritual fashion. Treatment of the body and internment hold obvious connections to the attitudes of the living about death itself, but they also reveal attitudes about a myriad of other concerns including disease, class, race, and gender. Many of these studies present the dead body as a daily and unending problem that confronts the living. It decays, it smells, it assaults the eye, and it is dangerous to the living.[21] The ways in which societies manage this

[20] Amanda López, "El Manco Y El Mártir: Funerals, the Family, and Popular Memory of the Assassination of Alvaro Obregón, 1928-1929" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Arizona, 2004).
[21] For a description of how these biological changes prompt people to develop ways of hiding the physical realities of death and the emergence of the modern funeral agency see Gary Laderman, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

unending problem and the governmental or social agencies in charge of managing the dead provide insight into identities and social values.

Many studies have connected changes in burial practices to the emerging field of hygiene. Death became something that could be sanitized and controlled, and death shifted from the hands of the church to medical and funeral professionals.[22] As Claudia Agostoni demonstrated, hygiene connected the health of people with the health of their city. A city's health was based on a combination of sanitation improvements and beautification projects. Thus, the art of hygiene had scientific and moral dimensions.[23] Hygienists, in many places in Latin America, were the leaders of cemetery reform.[24] Church burials, as Cláudia Rodrigues argues, began to be seen as dangerous to hygiene because of miasmas and putrefaction, but also because the dead did belong in the social and moral community of modern Rio de Janeiro.[25]

The difference in styles of burial and the treatment of the body, including mass graves, individual internment, cremation, and embalming illustrate social, gender, and ethnic hierarchies among the living. In many cases, a disconnect between the government's attitude toward the body management and the people's attitude has led to conflict. For example, João José Reis contends that popular resistance to cemetery reform in Salvador, Brazil in the nineteenth-century stemmed from perceptions of

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[22] Celia Almeida Ferreira Santos, "Os profissionais da saude enfrentan-agem a morte" in *A morte e os mortos na sociedade brasileira,* edited by José de Souza Martins, ed. 15-24 (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1983).
[23] Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003).
[24] Christopher Abel, *Health, Hygiene, and Sanitation in Latin America c.1870-C.1950* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1996).
[25] Cláudia Rodrigues, *Lugares dos mortos na cidade dos vivos: tradições e transformações fúnebres no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, 1997).

disrespect towards bodies. The rioters, led by Catholic lay brotherhoods, rejected the idea of the suburban privately owned cemetery and demolished the walls and gates that surrounded it. Reis ties this Bahian uprising to the global change in practices and attitudes towards death, especially in Catholic cultures, that began to separate the living from the dead.[26] Public resistance to funeral reform did not occur in Mexico City, but the ways in which people accepted or were indifferent to the shift to suburban cemeteries provides as much insight as do riots. People's inaction suggests a level of belief or acceptance of government and public health officials about the role of the dead.

Yet not all the government's ideas and practices about dead bodies were accepted equally. Indeed, the body and even body parts have been imbued with power and meaning. Katherine Verdery demonstrates the ways in which dead bodies can wield political power. Lyman Johnson's edited volume on the political power of famous and infamous Latin American bodies and parts have been wielded by the living to instruct the populace on the correct political and social behaviors.[27]

These studies provide valuable insight into abstract attitudes towards death, but they do not examine the spaces, technologies, and practices that the living used to manage death on a daily basis. This is the first study to examine the relationship between the practices and the abstract beliefs. Few have looked at how this ideal, once instituted in law and practice, changed the day-to-day care and burial of the dead. My study places

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[26] João José Reis, "'Death to the Cemetery': Funerary Reform and Rebellion in Salvador, Brazil, 1836" in *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America 1765-1910*, edited by Silvia M. Arrom and Servando Ortoll (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1996); João José Reis, *Death is a Festival: Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of a North Carolina Press, 1991).

[27] Lyman L. Johnson, ed., *Body Politics: Death, Dismemberment, and Memory in Latin America* (University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

much of its focus on the everyday practices and from there derives larger ideas about meanings and ideas and beliefs.

Death and the Nation

Mexico's program of burial reform took place during two critical periods of nation formation, the Porfirian (1875-1910) and Revolutionary (1910-1930) eras, and thus this study demonstrates the connection between social reform, nation building, and the construction of national identity. The role of death in the national imaginary has been explored from various perspectives and inspires much of this dissertation.

What do the dead have to do with nationalism and modernity if they represent the past and not the future? As Benedict Anderson has shown, defining the nation as transcendental and immortal is central to the modern nation building process. Key to the concept of the nation is its "subjective antiquity," a faith in its historical being, usually represented in imagined origin myths.[28] Like the concepts of kinship and religion, he argues, nationalism is relational, rather than rooted in a specific ideology. The dead constitute both a particularly captive audience and malleable representatives of the nation. As Claudio Lomnitz has argued, an imagined, intimate relationship between the living and the dead is central to Mexican national identity.

Yet nations did not arise out of daydreams alone. As Timothy Anna has argued, Mexicanness was forged through the establishment of institutions, the public debate of ideas, and the eventual agreement to balance the sovereignty of disparate states with

[28] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 5.

central power. The officials of the Panteón de Dolores, Superior Sanitation Council (Consejo Superior de Salubridad), Federal District city council (Ayuntamiento del Distrito Federal), the Department of Public Works (Departamento de Obras Públicas), and the Civil Registry (Registro Civil) debated and promulgated laws that monitored the dead citizenry and shared their ideas on how the behavior of these citizens reflected upon the nation. I use the term "dead citizen" to refer to the relationship between nation formation and the control of dead bodies and their places of rest.[29] The ways in which the government regulated the movement of the dead bodies, the spaces where they were allowed, the hierarchal organization of their graves, and their manner of burial were influenced by ideas about Liberalism, class, and national identity.

The development of the civil cemetery and some of the problems that preceded and followed it add to the understanding of urban history, tapping into the importance of space and the social order. But, beyond being just a history of death in the city itself, my study aims to show the connections between practices in the capital and larger beliefs and hints at the diffusion of these ideas across the country.

Despite the immense body of literature on the history of Mexico's Revolution, practices and rituals associated with death have been largely ignored as topics of study. The bulk of the literature focuses on the political goals and outcomes of the conflict on a

[29] A similar term is proposed by Russ Castronovo in his study of the nineteenth-century United States. He uses "necro citizenship" to describe the process of political disenfranchisement that creates a sort of zombie citizen, socially and politically dead. In his view, many bodies are made as if dead before the actual physical expiration of the body. Bringing the citizenry into the idea of nation formation is important because it shows that the nation is made up of individuals. "Dead citizen" speaks more of this figurative life of the dead body, not only from the perspective of the deceased's family and loved ones, but also their importance to the national government. Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001);

national, regional, and individual level and mentions the catastrophic levels of death only in passing.[30] Stanley Ross began a historical debate on when the Revolution itself "died" that has become a common point of contention among scholars.[31] The studies that do discuss death have narrowly focused on demographics and the commemoration of martyred revolutionary heroes.[32] My study of death during the Revolution builds upon recent scholarship that characterizes the Revolution as a political and cultural process that culminated in the formation of a long-lasting revolutionary state and the construction of a mythic revolutionary history.[33]

In addition, scholars have examined the transformation of the revolution from an armed conflict into a transcendental, reified concept that came to define Mexican national identity. Thomas Benjamin has looked at this process through the construction of the myth of the reified Revolution, which Obregón and Calles attempted to construct in the 1920s by promoting the idea of a unified Revolutionary Family.[34] Alan Knight has shown that the myth of the Revolution is based on a collection of ideas, policies, and symbols promoted through institutions and monuments. Yet the reality of regional loyalties, conflicting policies, vague ideologies, and popular dissent challenged the construction of

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[30] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 Vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).
[31] Stanley Ross, ed., *Is the Mexican Revolution Dead?* Second edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975).
[32] Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos.* 19(2003): 367-400; Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History* (Austin: University of Texas, 2000); Jürgen Buchenau, "The Arm and Body of a Nation" in *Body Politics: Death, Dismemberment, and Memory in Latin America*, edited by Lyman L. Johnson (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).
[33] See note 21 and 23. Also Illene V. O'Malley, *The Myth of the Mexican Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).
[34] Benjamin, *La Revolución,* 22.

a stable, centralized government. He contends that a dialectical relationship exists between the myth's promotion and acceptance that made its construction a slow, contested process.[35]

Part of the lacunae of death studies in Mexican history is due to a dearth of sources. The collections of soldiers' letters home that give rich detail to the study of the U.S. Civil War do not exist in Mexico.[36] Yet, families did write to their leaders about the emotional and financial struggles that the deaths caused them.[37] No comprehensive study exists on actual practices, rituals, and experiences surrounding mass death, which I believe are of central importance to understanding how certain memories and representations of death prevailed in the years following the Revolution.

Studies of death during war in other areas have demonstrated how the power of dead bodies and their spaces is heightened during and after periods of violent conflict and war. Indeed, they often lead to significant disruptions and changes in standard burial practices and in some cases, permanent changes. Drew Gilpin Faust examined how rank and file soldiers' deaths away from home during the Civil War challenged conceptions of a so-called proper death.[38] Catherine Merridale argues that death was integral to legitimizing the Russian Revolution and that the dead in cemeteries serve as reminders and maintain the historical memory of the value and cost of the Revolution.[39] In the case

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[35] Alan Knight, "The Rise and Fall of the Myth of the Mexican Revolution" (lecture, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, April 4, 2003).
[36] Drew Gilpin Faust uses private letters from soldiers and nurses in "The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying." *Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 1 (2001): 3-39.
[37] Many of these letters can be found in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in the Fondo Presidentes.
[38] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).
[39] Catherine Merridale, "Revolution Among the Dead: Cemeteries in Twentieth-Century

of Eastern Europe, Verdery argues that digging up or defacing Communist bodies served to ameliorate the pain of war and loss.[40]

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one focuses on how shifts in ideas about public health, religion, Liberalism, class, and nationalism influenced the modernization and commercialization of burial practices in the late nineteenth century. The opening of Mexico City's first municipal cemetery, the Panteón de Dolores in 1875 signaled a new government effort in the management of dead bodies and disease. That same year, the first modern funeral agency opened its doors to offer burials at a cost from five to five hundred pesos. I argue that government officials and mortuary professionals wished to construct a modern, sterile approach to death in part to improve public health and in part to wrest away control of the symbolic power of death from the Catholic Church. These modern approaches to death were praised at home and abroad.

Yet the daily operations in the Dolores cemetery rarely lived up to the ideals espoused in cemetery regulations. Chapter Two examines the day-to-day business of burying bodies in the capital, which required the precise coordination of hospitals, funeral homes, tramline schedules, mourners, and cemetery workers, and shows how the modern ideal suffered. Delays in service due to tramline accidents, late deliveries of paupers' bodies from hospitals and other scheduling problems caused threats to public health. Furthermore, mourners and cemetery workers misbehaved in the cemetery and attracted

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Russia" *Mortality* 8 (2003): 176-189.

[40] Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

the disdain of the foreign press and the government. Finally, the cemetery's requirement to provide burial for all residents of the capital meant that the graves of the poor quickly outnumbered those of the rich, tarnishing Dolores's image as a prestigious place of rest. Overcrowding was a regular concern, and the land's carefully planned gardens and paths had to be converted to graves.

Chapter Three examines the capital's first experiments with cremation in 1909 as an attempt to alleviate the overcrowding problem and offer a modern form of burial. What was praised in the press as the choice for the modern, enlightened individual, in reality, was performed only on indigent, unclaimed bodies. Mexico's first attempt at cremation failed due to enduring religious beliefs. Spurious reports arose that the poor began to purchase fifth class graves after rumors circulated that all sixth class bodies were being cremated. The government's support of cremation for the poor also signaled an increasing distinction in the treatment of dead bodies based on class in the early twentieth century that would influence how death was managed during the revolutionary period.

Chapter Four discusses the disruptions in the daily process of death that arose during the outbreak of the revolution. Existing problems with overcrowding in the city's municipal cemeteries were intensified by the high mortality rates during the Revolution of 1910-1920 and the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918. Political instability and military occupation of the capital intruded on the meticulous systems that recorded mortality and sanitarily transferred and disposed of bodies around the city. These breakdowns in service received international attention and were displayed as examples of

Mexico's barbarous ways. The hierarchies established in the new civil organization of death in the Porfiriato influenced how deaths were handled during the revolution.

Chapter Five examines three diverse funerals in 1928 and 1929 as products of the changes in burial and funeral practices in the nineteenth-century and the extended period of violence in the early twentieth: the fallen aviator, Emilio Carranza; the assassinated president elect Álvaro Obregón; and the Catholic assassin, José de León Toral. The decreasing emphasis on the deaths of ordinary citizens and the exclusion of the Church from public ceremonies created room for the exaltation of military and national heroes, a process that had its roots in the Porfirian period. Thus, the funeral and the body remained powerful symbols, but the government closely managed who could control those symbols and the messages they wanted to convey. Nevertheless, the crowd still controlled their participation in defining who was an appropriate hero, as in the case of Toral.

A Note on Sources

The dead do not speak and thus historians have had to invent unique ways of inserting their voice in the historical record.[41] Primary sources on death often only demonstrate the views of the living on the dead. Because of their silence, the dead can be deployed with extreme power, as seen in studies of state funerals. Yet some sources can be used to see how the dead act in ways that the living neither direct nor want. These sources remind both the living at the time and modern researchers of the power of dead

[41] Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

bodies. Their vast numbers speak loudly and the actions of their bodies sometimes cause alarm.

To give voice to both the living and the dead, I have based my study on a diverse set of sources—cemetery administration reports, public health decrees and inspections, newspapers, maps, and photographs—that provide insight into goals and setbacks in the transformation of burial practices. The Historic Archive of the Federal District (Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal) contains the records of the Panteón de Dolores, which was under the administration of the Department of Public Works and the Mexico City Council (Ayuntamiento), that provide information on the daily operation of the cemetery. Important facts such as burial statistics, price schedules, and employee records make this collection useful. The detailed reports by administrators also reveal problems with overcrowding, regulation violations, and a wealth of interesting cases that demonstrate the daily struggle between the living and the dead. The records of the Superior Sanitation Council in the Historic Archive of the Ministry of Health (Archivo Histórico de la Secretaria de Salud) , including a collection of cemetery laws passed in the nineteenth-century, provide sources that show the role of public health officials in determining the handling of bodies and the spaces in which they were allowed.

By looking at both changes and continuities in the practical management of and the public rituals for the dead, my dissertation will reveal connections between public health regulations, class, and commerce surrounding death and the diverse political, social, and cultural meanings the dead reflected to the living in Mexico. My study not

only provides a greater understanding of the cultural and social implications of modernization and revolution in Mexico.

In opening the Panteón Civil de Dolores, the national government both forged and imagined a community of the dead that would act as ideal representatives of the transcendental nation. Death presents itself in Mexican history as a series of dichotomies: living and dead, modern and superstitious, hygienic and unhygienic, happy and tragic, secular and sacred, everlasting and forgotten. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the civil cemetery became a site where these dichotomies were constructed, mapped, and contested. A closer examination of the processes and practices involved in the daily care of the dead, show that despite leaders' beliefs in these dichotomies, in practice, they constantly overlapped, often due to necessity. Public health officials could not hold all the dead to one standard and thus hierarchies deepened and became more pronounced, especially during war. The changing political and social priorities and identities pursued in the name of the nation throughout the Porfiriato and the Revolution manifested themselves in the changing landscape of the cemetery, the thin surface of which did little to hide the realities that lay below.

CHAPTER 1
The IDEAL CEMETERY FOR THE MODERN NATION

When the federal government purchased a new general cemetery in the hills of Tacubaya outside of Mexico City in 1879, officials claimed that the new burial space would solve decades-old public health and decency problems associated with Catholic churchyard burials in the city center. The capital was in urgent need of an empty and hygienic space for cadavers because the existing churchyards were full and sources of disease. Many saw the new cemetery, named the Panteón de Dolores, as an emblem of modernity for the nation in addition to its perceived benefits to public health. Elite newspapers congratulated President Porfirio Díaz for finally providing a necropolis befitting a city bent on order and progress. Planning to rename the cemetery the Panteón Mexicano, the place would serve as a national cemetery for distinguished heroes, statesmen, and artists in addition to providing free graves to the city's poorest residents.[42] Díaz took special interest in the necropolis and requested that the governor work diligently to beautify the grounds and offer excellent service to the public. At a size of over 276 acres, not only would the Panteón de Dolores accommodate the average of 7000 burials per year, but would also support the maintenance of the Civil Registry with

[42] The cemetery is referred to in some documents directly after its purchase as "Mexicano", but after the City Council and Public Works department took over its administration from the federal government, it reverted to "Dolores." This transition is discussed and cited in Chapter 2.

inhumation taxes and remove the responsibility of registering and interring the dead from the hands of the Church.[43]

The Panteón de Dolores exemplified the Porfirian ideals of order and progress through its location, design, and regulations and thus reconfigured Mexico's dead citizenry. The Panteón de Dolores was the first modern burial space in the city that fulfilled all the requirements outlined in the Cemetery Law of 1859: the land was located distant and upwind from populated neighborhoods, it had a pastoral landscape, and its soil composition and altitude ensured that bodies would decompose within a period of ten years.[44] Graves were standardized and evenly spaced, and beautiful gardens lined the paths between the six classes of burial space. In establishing the cemetery, reformers repeatedly emphasized three qualities that the new cemetery held that would fit the image of a modern and civilized capital: good taste, improved hygiene, and increased income for the civil registry. The obsession with regulation and order demonstrated reformers' beliefs that the cemetery had the possibility of being a dangerous space, full of disease and barbaric and superstitious practices, if its inhabitants and land were not heavily shaped by modern, Liberal ideals.

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[43] The original area of the property was listed as one million square *varas*, a colonial unit of measure. Later documents list the size as 112 hectares. The burial estimate mentioned in the contract seems low. Based on numbers from monthly cemetery administration reports in the Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal (AHDF) burials averaged between 1500-2000 per month. Burial records are dispersed throughout their cemetery records, but see, for example, burial records for 1907 and 1908. Fon. ADF, Secc. Panteón de Dolores (PD), Volume 3487, Expediente 501.

[44] A copy of the 1859 Cemetery Law and other nineteenth-century cemetery regulations can be found in the Archivo Histórico de Secretaria de Salud (AHSSA), Fon. Salubridad Pública (SP), Secc. Higiene Pública (HP), Serie Inspección de Panteones (IP), Caja 1, Exp. 49.

As Michel Foucault has argued, governments have used regulations and technologies of control to exert power and create order and normality among populations. In studies that use Foucault's framework the focus has been on the normalization and discipline of live bodies.[45] Yet nineteenth-century cemetery reform and the subsequent geography and administration of civil cemeteries demonstrate that dead bodies and the spaces they inhabited were subject to their own set of normative standards.

Studies of cemetery and burial reform in Mexico tend to emphasize the ideological shifts that contributed to these changes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[46] Yet the ways in which government officials and lower level administrators put ideas about Liberalism, secularism, individualism, hygiene, and disease into daily practices has not been explored. In Mexico City, the shift from churchyard burials to suburban garden cemeteries occurred slowly, with a large gap between the issuance of law and the institution of practice. In Mexico, as in other parts of Latin America, the threat of disease contributed to the secularization of burial spaces.[47] Some secular spaces had been set up in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century for the bodies of cholera victims.[48] Lack of funds, foreign intervention, and public reluctance all contributed to this delay. The purchase of the Panteón de Dolores in 1879

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[45] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
[46] Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Verónica Zárate Toscano, *Los nobles ante la muerte: actitudes, ceremonias y memoria, 1750-1850* (México: Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2000).
[47] Yellow fever epidemics in Rio led to an end to church burials there by 1850. Cláudia Rodrigues, *Lugares dos mortos na cidade dos vivos: tradições e transformações fúnebres no Rio de Janeiro*. Mexico City did not have a problem with yellow fever, but Veracruz did. As Pam Voekel discusses, many proponents of cemetery reform were centered in Veracruz, *Alone Before God,* 116-140.
[48] "Panteón la Piedad," *Diccionario Porrua*.

represented the fulfillment of these goals; the editors of elite, Liberal newspapers hailed it as such.

Elite groups of doctors and lawmakers headed the public cemetery movement as part of the overall Liberal plan to exercise control over the nascent citizenry. The shift to civil, suburban cemeteries occurred at a similar time in other places as well: Père Lachaise in Paris, the model for the movement, opened in 1804.[49] Soon Latin American countries followed: both Chile and Argentina opened civil cemeteries in their capitals in 1822.[50] The São João Batista cemetery opened in Rio de Janeiro in 1872.[51] Death practices were just as important in putting forth an image of modernity to the rest of the world as participation in World Fairs.[52] Mexican intellectuals were well aware of and even participated in global conference on public health that included ideas about burial methods, cemetery design and location.

The Liberal vision was codified in the reform laws of 1859. One of the most famous, the Ley Iglesias, established a civil registry of births, marriages, and deaths and removed these record-keeping duties from the hands of the Catholic Church.[53] Yet the Catholic Church and its individual parishes did not merely record the passing of

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[49] Frederick Brown, *Père Lachaise: Elysium As Real Estate* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).
[50] Omar López Mato, *City of Angels: The History of Recoleta Cemetery: a Guide to Its Treasures* (Buenos Aires: O. López Mato, 2002). Cecilia Pastore, Andrea Attardi, Eduardo Lazzari, and Pablo Williams, *Cementerio de la Recoleta*. Portfolios de Buenos Aires. (Buenos Aires: C. Pastore, 2005).
[51] Cláudia Rodrigues. *Lugares dos mortos na cidade dos vivos: tradições e transformações fúnebres no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, 1997).
[52] For information on nationalism and world's fair exhibits, see Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
[53] Charles A. Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

individuals; they also maintained the burial spaces in the country and oversaw funerals of members, both distinguished and indigent.[54] Gaining control over death and burial was one way in which the government could begin to get people to think of themselves as citizens instead of subjects. With the issue of the Cemetery Law of 1859, the Liberal government put all burial spaces under civil authority and, in so doing, demonstrated that control over the dead citizenry formed as much a part of its power as did the living. Indeed, where and how societies choose to dispose of and honor their dead reveals much about their political, social, and cultural beliefs. During the Porfirian years, dominant liberal and positivist ideologies in the hands of public health officials and lower level bureaucrats used the captive audience of the dead to reshape these beliefs.

Developing an Ideal

To understand why the ownership and operation of the Panteón de Dolores by the local government represented the ideal relationship between the nation and dead citizen, it is necessary to put it into the context of the long process of changing burial practices and cemetery reform. This reform had been a political and social issue for elite, enlightened Catholics since at least 1787, when a Spanish edict outlawed burials within churches.[55] At the same time elite Catholics eschewed ostentatious funeral ceremonies in favor of simple burials and more personal relationship with God.[56]

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[54] Voekel, *Alone Before God*, 17-42.
[55] Voekel discusses the role of elite Catholics in shifting funeral rituals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries in *Alone Before God*.
[56] Zárate Toscano, *Los nobles ante la muerte en México*, passim.

Despite the Spanish edict, both in the colony and the first Mexican republic, parish and convent churchyards continued to be the norm. But, the growth of enlightened Catholic individualism along with new ideas about the transmission of disease soon led to the establishment of cemetery laws in the early republic. As early as 1833, the governor of the Federal District, issued a decree requiring the establishment of a government-owned general cemetery. Starting in the 1840s, government leaders began to codify more concretely the requirements for burials. These changes were influenced by liberal ideas about government responsibility to its citizenry and scientific ideas about the threat of body decomposition to public health.

In 1842, Governor Luis Vieyra ordered the closure of parish and convent cemeteries, but the decree did not hold.[57] President Ignacio Comonfort issued a law for the establishment and use of cemeteries in 1857 that detailed guidelines for the burial and preservation of bodies and for the opening of new cemeteries.[58] In 1859, President Benito Juárez ordered the establishment of the civil registry of deaths and the secularization of all existing cemeteries in the Republic in the Iglesias Law. That same year Juárez issued another cemetery law that radically redefined the relationship between the dead, the government, and the Church.[59] It prevented secular and regular clergies from being involved in any cemetery business and placed all existing burial spaces under control of the civil authorities. The law required government approval for all new cemeteries and the registration of burials within these spaces with the civil judge. Put simply, the law

[57] AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 6.
[58] Ley para el establecimiento y uso de los cementerios, Ignacio Comonfort, 1857. AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 45.
[59] AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 49.

did not close parish cemeteries nor prohibit religious groups from opening new ones; it merely required that the records, inspection, and taxation of these establishments be managed by the civil authority. Furthermore, the law put the burden on municipal and state governments to provide suitable burial spaces for those communities that lacked them. Beyond the reforms for local cemeteries, politicians had bandied about the idea of a national cemetery as early as 1823, but the notion never came to fruition. [60]

Yet, by the 1870s the government had not established new civil burial spaces, and, out of necessity, most burial grounds in the capital were formerly Catholic holdings. In some cases, clergy were still managing the day-to-day operation of the cemeteries. Indeed, both Presidents Antonio López de Santa Anna and Benito Juárez were buried in historically religious cemeteries. Santa Anna was buried in the Villa de Guadalupe cemetery and Benito Juárez was buried in the San Fernando cemetery, both of which are still in existence—though not in use. No doubt these spaces' famous residents saved them from the fate of similar cemeteries of the time: criticism, closure, and exhumation of bodies. Clearly, civil registry and public health officials had not managed to gain full control over the recording of deaths from the parishes, much less the actual care of the dead.

The sad state of Mexico City's parish cemeteries was well known. These cemeteries posed severe threats to public health and received frequent attention from the press and nearby residents for their poor conditions. Some of the cemeteries had been in operation for over a century and thus, had reached their capacity. Governor Tiburcio

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[60] From the entry entitled "Panteón Nacional" in the *Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México* (México, D.F.: Editorial Porrúa, 1986).

Montiel found bodies buried under the floor of the chancel, the altar and the pulpit of the church of the Hospital Real as late as 1873.[61] The combination of shallow graves, packed niches, and frequent flooding made for pungent and shocking reminders of their increasing threat to health and decency. The government and took over and opened to general use the Panteón La Piedad in 1872 to inter the bodies of cholera victims. The small space filled quickly and received criticism from its neighbors for unhygienic conditions.[62] In short, the Federal District government had secularized the existing cemeteries, but in no way modernized them. The press criticized the administration of President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada for failing to provide a dignified space for burial befitting of a great nation. Newspaper editors argued that the law demanded that the government provide the city with a cemetery and exhibited the public exasperation with the delay in enforcing and realizing the reforms.[63]

The "Sad Necessity" of Dolores

Under these stressed conditions, Juan Manuel Benfield approached the government with a request to construct a new cemetery outside the city in the hills of Tacubaya. Benfield, the son of an English paper merchant, bought the large plot of land, commonly known as the "Tabla de Dolores" in 1852.[64] Most importantly, the immense

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[61] Salvador Novo, *Un año hace ciento, la ciudad de Mexico en 1872* (Mexico: Editorial Porrua, 1973).
[62] The Piedad general cemetery is not to be confused with the Panteón Francés de la Piedad, one of the most exclusive burial spots in the city. No scholarly work has been done yet on the French cemetery and it would be a fruitful area of research. The records of the Piedad general cemetery, starting in 1872 when the government took over control can be found in AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. Panteón de la Piedad (PP), Vol. 3570 and 3571.
[63] See, for example, "El consejo superior de salubridad", *El Siglo XIX*, January 17, 1879 and "Panteón del Distrito Federal, *El Siglo XIX*, January 28, 1879.

area of the cemetery could accommodate the average of 7000 deaths per year. The capital was in urgent need of an empty and hygienic space for cadavers and the government acknowledged it did not have the funds to provide one.

Based on these findings, Secretary of State (Ministro de Gobernación) Cayetano Gomez Pérez granted Benfield the contract in January and the cemetery opened for service six months later. The conditions of the contract held Benfield, Breker, & Co. to the highest modern standards of public health and urban design.[65] The government required the cemetery to be filled with gardens, trees, fountains, and a central area to be reserved for the construction of monuments for national heroes, known as illustrious men. Yet not just elites would benefit from the cemetery; the contract required that the land be opened as a public cemetery for all residents of the district with free graves for the poor. Government approval of the contract in 1875 made Dolores the first truly civil and secular burial space in the capital. The editor of *El Siglo XIX*, the capital's most popular Liberal newspaper, praised the new cemetery and encouraged his readers to embrace it.[66]

Yet during the private cemetery's first four years of service, few residents of the capital chose it for their dead. The characteristics that made it ideal by law made it undesirable in practice. The opening of the Dolores cemetery had not solved the problem of overcrowding and poor hygiene in the district's general cemeteries, used by the poor because the government provided free burial. Although the owners of the Dolores

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[64] "Dolores, Panteón de" in *Diccionario Porrua*.
[65] A copy of the contract can be found in the AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 12. When a controversy erupted over the contract, the Department of Public Works looked in vain for the original contract, never locating it. Apparently, the Sanitation Council held it, because that is the archive that holds it today. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479, Exp. 3.
[66] "Panteón de Dolores", *El Siglo XIX*, April 4, 1879.

cemetery were required to provide free burial as well, the distance of the Dolores cemetery from the city and the cost of transporting bodies made even those who could afford burial continue to frequent the older grounds.[67] Clamoring for a new government-owned general cemetery and the closure of the putrid Campo Florido, La Piedad, and Guadalupe cemeteries increased as problems intensified throughout the nineteenth-century.

Newspaper editorials cited the government's responsibility to the law and the poor in pushing for the purchase or construction of a new cemetery. *El Siglo XIX's* editors argued that the well-being of the entire capital rested on the decision to open a hygienic general cemetery.[68] Rumors circulated about bureaucratic plans for a cemetery in the hills south of Tacubaya or in Xola. Although proposals had been made, neither the national government nor the capital's government had the funds to break ground on new land. Instead they weighed the benefits between the Panteón de la Piedad and Dolores. *La Patria* reported that Piedad already had an established trolley line, but that Dolores's location was better and it was larger.[69] Although its location held the greatest advantage for public health, Dolores's distance from the city presented a problem for the poor. Thus *La Patria* argued that Piedad was a better choice with easier access for the poor bringing deceased loved ones to the cemetery. Neighbors of Piedad complained that the land did not meet any of the legal requirements to be suitable for a cemetery: they argued that it was muddy with standing water and at least two neighborhoods were directly

[67] Unfortunately, the inhumation records for the years the cemetery was owned by Benfield are not located in the cemetery administration's archive, but assuredly the levels are much lower than the average of 1500-2000 burials per month under government ownership.
[68] "Panteón de Dolores", El Siglo XIX, April 4, 1879.
[69] *La Patria*, March 15, 1879.

downwind from it. In addition, the majority of the cadavers interred there were from poor families or victims of accident or disease delivered from hospitals that arrived without a coffin, sometimes nude, and sometimes in a state of putrefaction.[70] Allowing this cemetery to remain open, they argued, showed a lack of respect for the dead and a lack of concern about the welfare of living citizens. Yet according to the *Monitor Republicano*, the government claimed that the mortality rate was too high in the capital to close a cemetery without opening a new place to put the bodies.[71] Despite some focus on the Piedad cemetery, Dolores remained a more attractive choice.

While Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada's government in 1874 had readily agreed to the private ownership of the largest burial space in the capital and the location for the veneration of national heroes, Porfirio Díaz recognized that the Liberal and national campaign needed to be in government hands. In 1878, Juan Benfield suggested changes to his contract that, among other things, offered to fund the construction of a reliable railway line to the cemetery and the beautification of its administration buildings. In return, he brazenly asked government officials to close all other municipal cemeteries in the city with the agreement that all remains be transferred to his cemetery within the next ten years. In addition, he requested that, from this point on, they require every dead body in the capital be interred there, with the exception of American, English, and French cadavers who had their own cemeteries. In short, Benfield, Breker, and Company wanted to corner the market on burial space.[72] Minister of Government Cayetano Gómez Pérez

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[70] *El Monitor Republicano*, "Los Panteones," March 18, 1879.
[71] Ibid.
[72] The complete records of the negotiations between Benfield and the Federal District government can be found in several expedients throughout AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis.

penned an angry letter of rejection in which he accused Benfield of attempting to sabotage the Liberal establishment of a civil registry.[73] Gómez Pérez pushed for the government purchase of the cemetery after Benfield's proposal, in part, he argued, because the cemeteries existed to fund the civil registry and private profit went against this interest.[74] So, in March of 1879, the Federal District government finally managed to purchase the Panteón de Dolores for 130,000 pesos.[75] Thus, many of the proposals made by Benfield that were so insulting in private hands, were responsible government actions in the hands of Díaz. Its opening allowed government officials to put several ideals of modern death management and Liberal citizenry into practice.

After a brief period of ownership by the Federal District government (Gobierno del Distrito Federal), the cemetery passed to the administration of the Mexico City Council (Ayuntamiento del Distrito Federal) and the Public Works Department.[76] A Cemetery Chief—in this period Alberto Hope—oversaw not only Dolores, but also the four other cemeteries in the Ayuntamiento of the Federal District.[77] The administrators that ran the cemetery during its first twenty-five years of service held its employees and its patrons to strict standards outlined in the burial and cemetery laws of 1857, 1859,

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[73] As a result of the liberal reforms in the 1850s, a civil registry of births, deaths, and marriages was established, taking these duties out of the hands of the Catholic Church. For more on Liberalism in the nineteenth-century, see Charles Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in the Late Nineteenth-Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).
[74] Gómez Pérez to Benfield, Breker, and Co., Oct. 18, 1879, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 7.
[75] Notice of the sale was published in *El Siglo XIX*, March 17, 1879.
[76] *Monitor Republicano*, March 18, 1879.
[77] Hope's reports can be found throughout the AHDF, Fon. ADF, Seccs. PG and PD in the years 1904-1910.

1887 and 1902.[78] These laws regulated the hours of operation and duties of the employees of the cemetery, specified the schedules for inhumations, exhumations, standardized grave size and burial costs, and defined proper behavior within the walls of the cemetery.

Newspapers announced the long awaited purchase and reported that Díaz himself had approved of it, calling Dolores the best cemetery in the city and stating that he had considered it one of his most important duties to provide a proper, healthy cemetery for society. The *Monitor Republicano* praised the purchase, saying that although the price might seem high, the dire need for a cemetery and the threat that the other cemeteries had been posing to their neighbors made it worthwhile. Both government officials and Liberal newspaper editors emphasized good taste, hygiene, and increased income in proclaiming Dolores as a cemetery befitting of the culture of the capital.

The Pastoral Ideal

The location of Dolores relative to the rest of the capital suited international trends in cemetery situation and design. The international rural cemetery movement spread the idea that graves needed to be distant from the living to prevent the spread of disease. In addition, cemeteries should be peaceful places with gardens and monuments

[78] Law for the Establishment of Cemeteries, January 30, 1857, Ignacio Comonfort, AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 45; Cemetery Law, July 31, 1859, Benito Juárez, AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 49; Regulation for Federal District Cemeteries, 1887, José Ceballos, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3456, Exp. 285; Regulation for the Dolores Municipal Cemetery, 1902, Juan Bribiesca, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3461, Exp. 999.

that instructed the living.[79] The Panteón de Dolores was like no other cemetery in the city. It was vast, remote, and practically empty: a clean slate to fill with the orderly, modern, and tasteful arrangement of the dead.[80] One editorial suggested that the combination of empty land and the lessons instilled by cemeteries that came before it would make Dolores better in form and beauty than Spanish and Italian cemeteries and exemplary of a civilized and ostentatious capital.[81]

Cemetery reformers believed that the old, crowded churchyards reflected poor taste for a civilized and modern city. Obsessed as Porfirian positivists were with French culture, elite editorials praised the Père Lachaise as a model for the new cemetery.[82] The land should be covered with trees and gardens, artistic tombs. The place should be clean and well taken care of. The Liberal paper *El Siglo XIX* described the perfect cemetery for the federal district as being in the English style, a park with gardens, chapel and buildings.[83]

Its location suited existing ideas about class segregation in the capital. Elites imagined and tried to enforce an east-west segregation between poor and rich.[84] In the late nineteenth-century, prominent families began to move west and south of the city

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[79] For the power of monuments in moral instruction, see Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003). For the rural cemetery movement, see Philippe Aries, *Western Attitudes Towards Death;* Lisa Murray, "Modern Innovations?: Ideal vs. Reality in colonial cemeteries of New South Wales," *Mortality* 8, no. 2(2003): 129-143.

[80] A flier announcing the purchase proclaimed that Dolores was "the best in existence." AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 12.

[81] *El Siglo XIX*, March 17, 1879.

[82] See William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes in Porfirian Mexico*, Second Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

[83] *El Siglo XIX*, March 17, 1879.

[84] See Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); James Alex Garza, *The Imagined Underworld: Sex, Crime, and Vice in Porfirian Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007)

center and construct their neighborhoods in the European style with broad, tree-lined boulevards. The placement of Dolores southwest of the historic center demonstrates its intended association with modernity.[85] The western section of the city was not only a different space, but a different way of life, where the European ideal was performed and constructed.[86] The west was on much higher ground than the east, which was prone to flooding. The east was associated with poverty, disease, and barbarism. The government carefully considered other areas such as Guadalupe, north of the city center. An older cemetery already existed close to the Basilica de Guadalupe and the Superior Sanitation Counsel (Consejo Superior de Salubridad) presented a proposal for expansion. The area around Tacubaya, once a rural retreat for the well-to-do of the capital, had become a center for industry—mostly textiles and paper—in the 1890s.[87] Many factors went in to choosing a suitable location for a cemetery. The land that the government eventually chose represented more about their ideals than the reality since the majority of customers would hail from the east side.

Maintaining this pastoral ideal, the cemetery administration invested in the regular beautification of the land and its buildings. Many projects focused on cosmetic improvements. Workers repainted the gates and the administrative offices at the entrance of the cemetery every year.[88] Plants and flowers were of central importance to cemetery's beauty. The 1859 Reglamento required that new cemeteries be planted with indigenous and exotic trees and bushes. Workers built brick planters to hold fine plants and flowers

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[85] Johns, *City of Mexico*, 5-6.
[86] Johns, *The City of Mexico*, 11.
[87] Johns, *The City of Mexico*, 41-44.
[88] 1891 Report by the Comisión de Panteones, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3457, Exp. 498.

in each section of the cemetery. Two nurseries were constructed in different sections, and, in his 1891 report, the administrator reported that a total of 50,000 plants had been cultivated and planted.[89] Pictures of the cemetery focus on the trees and plants rather than the monuments. Employees were expected to uphold the beauty and décor of the panteón. Failure to do so could result in a fine of five to fifty pesos or up to fifteen days in jail.[90]

The Hygienic Ideal

Reformers argued in capital newspapers that the government held the responsibility for preventing epidemics in the capital and saw cemeteries as one of the main threats to public health.[91] These complaints had existed since the eighteenth-century, but during the Porfirian era, the population of Mexico City reached new heights, increasing the number of dead and the threat of disease. In January, the editors of *El Siglo XIX* pleaded for the legislators to approve the purchase of the Dolores cemetery for general use. They argued that the heat of summer threatened to bring more disease such as typhus to the capital that would only create more need for a large and sanitary cemetery. When the government announced its purchase of the Dolores cemetery in March, it cited both the location and the poor conditions of the existing cemeteries and

[89] Ibid.
[90] 1859 Cemetery Law, Art. 6, AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 49.
[91] "El consejo superior de salubridad", El Siglo XIX, January 17, 1879.

their threat to public health.[92] The Panteón de Dolores represented the hygienic ideal that would save the city and its residents from the ravages of epidemic disease.[93]

Public health officials, before approving the contract for Dolores, made an exhaustive survey to make sure the land fit all the requirements ordered by the cemetery law of 1859 to prevent the spread of miasmas to populated areas. They judged that it was located sufficiently distant and that prevailing winds would carry bad airs away from the city. The composition of the soil, though somewhat alkaline, would allow complete decomposition in a period of ten years.[94]

The crux of the hygienic ideal was the visual, spatial, and olfactory separation of the living and the dead.[95] Although germ theory had begun to be accepted in some scientific circles, popular belief held that disease was transmitted through miasmas, or "bad airs", that escaped from cadavers, sewage, and other waste.[96] Cemeteries located close to neighborhoods endangered the living because of these miasmas. Likewise, moist soil encouraged the release of miasmas into the air and thus low-lying graveyards that were prone to flooding were undesirable.[97] Even if the land were located away from

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[92] *El Siglo XIX*, March 17, 1879.
[93] Several epidemics raged through the city in the nineteenth-century, especially typhus and cholera. That these victims were buried in the existing cemeteries made their continued use even more dangerous. For information on cholera in Mexico in the nineteenth century see Heather L. McCrea "On Sacred Ground: The Church and Burial Rites in Nineteenth-Century Yucatán, Mexico" *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 33-62; Donald F. Stevens, "Eating, Drinking, and Being Married: Epidemic Cholera and the Celebration of Marriage in Montreal and Mexico City, 1832-1833" *Catholic Historical Review* 92, no. 1 (2006): 74-94.
[94] AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 12.
[95] For more on the historical development of this idea, see Juan Pedro Viqueira, "El sentimiento de la muerte en el Mexico ilustrado del siglo XVIII a través de dos textos de la época," *Relacione*s 2, no. 5(1981): 27-62.
[96] Alain Corbin, *El perfume o el miasma: el olfato y lo imaginario social, siglos XVIII y XIX* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987).
[97] Mentioned in several articles. See *El Siglo XIX*, March, 1879.

populous areas, the winds could carry these bad airs to the city. Good conditions required that the land be at an elevation that allowed water to drain from the cemetery. Dead bodies lurked in all parts of the city, and the government finally had a place to consolidate remains away from the city. Public health officials had remains exhumed from parish cemeteries in the city center that were condemned, razed, and built over with fancy residences, businesses, government buildings deposited in the common ossuary. Within the cemetery, this separation was achieved through architecture, scheduling, and grave depth.

The separation of the living and the dead was only one part of an increasing compartmentalization of social life that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. In the first half of the century spaces were mixed—rural and urban, poor and rich—and it was believed that this mixed use of space contributed to the spread of disease and epidemic outbreak.[98] The circulation of air in the city became an important part of public health in the eighteenth century.[99] Like public water places, cemeteries began to be seen as sources of dirty customs. Some of the burial practices began to be shamed. And water was seen as such a threat that the new cemeteries had to be located far away from any public water sources.

When the Cemetery Commission of the City Council suggested the construction of a new depository, they specifically requested that it be built away from the chapel to minimize contact with mourners, who could suffer from the miasmas released from the

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[98] Elsa Malvido and Grégory Pereira, eds. *El cuerpo humano y su tratamiento mortuorio* (México: INAH, Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 1997).

[99] Marcela Dávalos, "La salud, el agua y los habitantes de la ciudad de México. Fines del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX" in *La ciudad de México en la primera mitad del siglo XIX,* edited by Regina Hernández Franyuti, 279-302 (México: Instituto de investigaciones Dr. José Luis Mora, 1994).

decomposing bodies.[100] The government built a depository for bodies awaiting interment that hid bodies from public view and housed them in a simple, elegant structure. The ornamental windows softened the gruesomeness of the building's purpose while the stone construction and strong wooden doors served practically to prevent the emission of noxious gases and shield the public from the indecent scene. Likewise, the administration installed a tall wall around the border to limit access to the cemetery.[101]

The cemetery operated under strict hours that also aimed to keep distance between the living and the dead. The system also worked to guarantee that each body was buried in the correct class and the correct grave space. After death was verified by a medical examiner, the Civil Registry issued a burial ticket for the requested class and the body was delivered to the cemetery. Delivering a body to the cemetery without an inhumation ticket was deemed a punishable offense. Offenders were remitted to the Tacubaya police station and the body was held in the depository until a ticket could be secured.[102]

Once cemetery workers had verified the inhumation ticket, they collected it, buried the body in the appropriate space and placed a hand-punched tin marker with the burial number at the head of the grave until a permanent monument could be installed. For the free burials, the tin marker often remained the only identification. All interments took place in daylight hours.[103] The grave size was standardized for adults and children

[100] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3455, Exp. 218, Vol. 3456, Exp. 227.
[101] The wall remained incomplete for several years and administrators regularly petitioned the council to provide funds to finish it. See, for example, Cemetery Commission to Public Works, February 15, 1887, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3456, Vol. 281.
[102] Reglamento de Panteones, 1902, Art. 8 and 9, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3460, Exp. 999.
[103] AHDF, Fon, ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3482, Exp. 219.

and each grave was spaced 50 centimeters apart.[104] Only one body was allowed per grave. Unclaimed bodies delivered from the area hospitals were required to arrive prior to the opening for the general public at eight a.m. Likewise, any exhumations needed to be performed before eight a.m. Mourners could visit graves and attend funerals during daylight hours and the cemetery remained closed from seven p.m. through the night. These regulations minimized the visibility of the body and its contact with the living.

In the hands of the government, the Panteón de Dolores, newly christened as the Panteón Mexicano, would fill the need for cemetery for the capital and for the nation. The government claimed that the cemetery would finally offer a resting place for all Mexicans. As the main repository for the city's dead with the requirement that each body enter with an inhumation ticket issued by the civil judge, the government guaranteed more accurate reporting of death statistics. In addition, the opening of such a large cemetery to the public allowed the government to close some of the more egregious violators of public health such as the Campo Florido.[105] The government also closed all other cemeteries in Tacubaya and reduced inhumations in the Guadalupe Hidalgo cemeteries of Tepeyac and Guadalupe, thus reducing the mixed spaces of the living and the dead.[106]

Cemetery law also required workers to take responsibility for the health, beauty, and order of the panteón. The cemetery had an administrator that lived on its grounds

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[104] Adults 2 meters x 1 meter x 1.5 meters. Children: 1.25 meters x 80 cm x 1.5 meters. Reglamento de Panteones, 1902, Art. 8 and 9, AHDF, Fon, ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3460, Exp. 999.

[105] After many complaints by surrounding neighborhoods, the government approved the closure of Campo Florido in 1877. AHSS, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 9.

[106] According to the 1879 flier announcing the opening of the Dolores Cemetery and new regulations in other cemeteries in the capital. AHSS, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 12.

and directed the daily operation, consulted with the Chief of Cemeteries and the Departments of Public Health and Public Works. The administrator supervised a group of employees including overseers, scribes, doormen, guards, gardeners, and gravediggers. The administrator, by law, kept meticulous records of inhumations, exhumations, problems, improvement projects, and any other noteworthy events in the daily and weekly operation. Inhumation records had to be delivered daily to the district government and exhumations records were reported monthly.[107]

The Social Ideal

The new Liberal social contract focused on the idea of the individual in society and used the dichotomy of *los de arriba* (those from above) and *los de abajo* (those from below) to define those who had achieved the ideal from those whom positivists deemed hopelessly backwards. The location of the cemetery on the west side of the city placed it squarely in the company of *los de arriba* and the layout of graves within the cemetery reflected the secular and hierarchical organization of the Liberal society.

At the entrance of the cemetery lay the Rotunda of Illustrious Men. Six classes of burial lots radiated out from this exemplary circle. First and second class lots were located closest to the entrance and the rotunda. In the furthest reaches of the cemetery, closest to the ravine that formed a natural border, were the sixth class, or free graves. [108] The poor, considered most dangerous to the modern image of the city by elite leaders,

[107] The guidelines described in this paragraph, and many more, were stipulated in the 1881 Interior Regulations of the Panteón de Dolores. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3454, Exp. 80.
[108] For an 1899 blueprint of the distribution of the graves see AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3460, Exp. 861.

also were the most dangerous dead citizens, for it was believed that they carried more threat of disease. In addition, their simple graves that lacked flowers and monuments did not add to the park like landscape of the cemetery.

The cemetery became a microcosm for the clean, modern city, mapping the new social class configuration through the distribution of its graves and hiding its gruesome inhabitants under gardens and monuments. Each body delivered had to be entered into the cemetery's registry, which noted the following information: date of burial, name, sex, adult or child, lot number, and grave number.[109] Death knew not race, but class, as sources did not reveal the ethnicity of the cadavers. [110] The class system of burial suggests that, at least nominally, social class mattered most in the ideal civic hierarchy.[111] Individuality in death was also seen as more civilized. Newspapers praised the end of the common grave or potter's field for the poor and wrote that in Dolores, to each would be

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[109] This information was also printed in the cemetery's monthly reports to the Department of Public Works. For examples, see AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154.

[110] Thomas Laqueur explains the social stigma of pauper funerals in eighteenth and nineteenth century England in "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals," *Representation*s 1(Feb 1983): 109-131.

[111] From the literal descriptions of the inhumation records, little can be deduced about the racial and gendered distribution of graves. Monthly totals differentiated between adult graves and child graves and by grave class. Individual inhumation tickets recorded name, age, and sex. With the knowledge that a majority of the population of the city at this time was indigenous, it seems odd that race would not be recorded. In fact, I found only one specific mention of race in the fifty years of reports. Nevertheless, the reports' silence on race tells us much about racial attitudes towards death and citizenship. The Liberal reforms brought about major changes in the legal definition of citizenship. With the elimination of corporate privileges, equality before the law was the goal. These legal definitions hardly led to immediate social and cultural changes. But, as with the abolition of slavery in Brazil, there was a social reorganization that was mirrored in the cemetery. As in Brazil, notarial records and civil registry documents do not mention color or ethnicity.

given his own grave.[112] Individualism was a tenet of modern Liberalism and this was reflected in the one-to-a-grave regulation.[113]

Good taste also included the memorialization of national heroes. The placement of the Rotunda of Illustrious Men at the front of the cemetery put ideal Mexicans at the center of a place that spatially organized the modern, civic society. In addition, the original plan to rename the cemetery the Panteón Mexicano shows that the space was intended to symbolically represent the nation.

The difference between temporary and permanent graves marked the dichotomy of rich and poor in the cemetery (See Table 1). It is important to understand that citizens had a choice of two types of burials: temporary and permanent. Public health regulations demanded that bodies be interred for a period that guaranteed the complete decomposition of the organic material that surrounded the skeleton, which was usually a period of five to ten years, depending on the composition of the soil. After that period, if the family could not afford to pay for another tenured or permanent burial, the body was exhumed and the bones were placed in the common ossuary. The government did not offer the option of permanent burial in the sixth class section. The five paid classes of burial offered tariffs for a ten-year temporary interment with the option for renewal and interment in perpetuity. Those citizens that most represented the ideals of the nation received free perpetuities in the Rotunda. Lower level bureaucrats and their families received free graves for their exemplary government service.

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[112] See, for example, *El Monitor Republicano*, March 18, 1879.
[113] For more on the idea of individual Liberalism in the social sphere see Moisés González Navarro, *Historia moderna de México: El Porfiriato, La vida social*, edited by Daniel Cosío Villegas (México: Editoriales Hermes, 1957).

Elite families had the option of following this example by purchasing lots in perpetuity and erecting grand monuments as permanent symbols of their social status. Some families constructed elaborate marble chapels that stood over the family tomb. More modest families erected gravestones on the first year anniversary of the loved one's death. A variety of Italian and Mexican marble companies offered monuments and headstones made of marble and tile and afforded monthly payment plans to make them available to more families.[114]

The Ayuntamiento encouraged cemetery officials to attract customers for first and second class permanent graves because these families built pretty monuments and gardens.[115] Permanent grave were not an option in the sixth class lots. The majority of impoverished capitalinos received a free burial, but their inability to pay for a permanent interment and the inability of the government to offer it demonstrated their marginal relevance in the ideal spatial narrative of Porfirian society. Yet the equal right to individual burial for all reflected the social ideology of Liberalism. To facilitate the poor's transportation of their dead to the new, distant cemetery, the government announced that they would pick up bodies from a drop-off point in the ex-panteón of Campo Florido, and, in later years, the government authorized free transport of dead paupers on the tramline that went to the cemetery.

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[114] The Marmoleria Juan C. Bocaegra advertised its pieces in the yearly almanac and local newspapers. The company had won gold and silver medals in the Mexican Exposition. See an example of their ad in Ireneo Paz, *Tercer almanaque del Padre Cobos para 1878* (México: Imprenta y Litografía de Ireneo Paz, 1877).

[115] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3454, Exp. 72, November 23, 1880.

The Liberal Ideal

The Panteón de Dolores, most importantly, gave the government control over the largest cemetery in the nation and in so doing created a secular space of memorialization for its citizens. By requiring an inhumation ticket from the Civil Registry for every burial, the government made itself the primary partner in its citizens' funeral rituals. Of course, government officials did not remove all religious rites from funeral rituals. A small chapel existed on the cemetery's grounds. Priests were allowed to present a eulogy at the grave site. Mourners could also celebrate Catholic holidays such as All Soul's Day, or as it was popularly known in Mexico, Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos). But, in prohibiting the Church from any economic involvement in the city's burial grounds, politicians secured that income for the government and relegated the Church to a reduced symbolic role.[116] Yet a strict dichotomy between Catholic tradition and secular modernity would be fallacious, as enlightened Catholics pushed for cemetery reform.[117]

The establishment of the civil registry was central to the Liberal reforms of the mid-nineteenth century. The registry that taxed and recorded births, deaths, marriages and other shifted the relationship between Church and subject to government and citizen. It also provided a steady income for the Treasury. The municipalization of burial spaces and the opening of Dolores as a central burial space allowed the government to profit

[116] For information on limitations on clergy in burial spaces, see the 1859 Cemetery Law by Benito Juárez. AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 49.
[117] Voekel.

more effectively on the death of citizens. The high prices charged for first class burials acted as a subsidy for the free pauper burials.

The rhetoric of good taste, hygiene, and Liberalism drove supporters' editorials, speeches, and regulations and supported the Liberal goal of secularization, but the economic benefits of ownership of the largest cemetery in the city drove the plans of lower level city officials. Death was profitable and the Ayuntamiento wanted to be the main provider for its customers. Like the taxation of the sale of Church lands, individual burials also provided income for the national treasury.

A tariff schedule was published with the announcement that listed five classes of paid burials and one free class (see Table 1). Different prices were offered for temporary burials of ten years and perpetuities, with lesser fees for the bodies of children and remains, which included bones from closed church yards or body parts lost in war or accidents. Twenty percent of each temporary and twenty-five percent of each permanent inhumation would go to the civil registry. The prices established for the Panteón de Dolores were higher than the general cemetery, La Piedad.[118] The cost of a permanent grave at Dolores, an unavailable option at La Piedad, quintupled the cost of a temporary five-year interment at the old cemetery. By setting premium tariffs for first and second-class burials, the government aimed to attract elite patrons to their new cemetery and in the process, increase the income to the treasury.

[118] The prices for the Piedad cemetery are also listed in the 1887 Regulation.

TABLE 1

Panteón de Dolores - Inhumation Price Schedule (pesos), 1887				
	Adults		Children or Remains	
Grave Class	Ten Years	Permanent	Ten Years	Permanent
1st	80	250	50	150
2nd	50	150	30	100
3rd	20	100	15	75
4th	10	60	5	40
5th	4	30	2	20
6th	free	not available	free	not available

Source: 1887 Federal District Cemetery Regulations, AHDF, Fon. Ayuntamiento del DF, Secc. Panteones en General, Vol. 3456, Exp. 285.

Article 3 of the 1859 Cemetery Law allowed for the opening of cemeteries by private interests with approval by the government and the fulfillment of public health regulations.[119] Even though Liberal ideology promoted private property, the income that death could provide made government ownership of the cemetery more desirable. The conflict that arose between the private founders of the Dolores cemetery and the government of the Federal District demonstrates the central importance of the Civil Registry and the possibilities of income in the eyes of government officials. Benfield's request that the government close all other municipal cemeteries in exchange for improvements to the Dolores cemetery represented a significant loss for the treasury in burial fees.

Taking over control of the cemetery, the Federal District government aimed to modernize, centralize, and nationalize the care of the dead. By changing the name of the

[119] AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 1, Exp. 49.

cemetery to "Mexicano"- government officials placed themselves in competition with the foreign cemeteries of the capital such as the Panteón Frances and the Panteón Español and simultaneously equated national burial practices and spaces with the highest standards of public health.[120]

Conclusions

The Panteón de Dolores never became the Panteón Mexicano, but it did represent the social and political ideals of the Porfirian government in its first years.[121] It fulfilled an almost century-long struggle to wrest away control of cemeteries from the Catholic Church and to improve the public health standards for inhumations. It remains open today under the operation of the Federal District government and is one of the nation's oldest existing cemeteries. Unsure of the proper connection between themselves and their citizens, both living and dead, government officials tried a variety of arrangements that created hybrid spaces of the dead-private and public, municipal and national, religious and secular until settling on the Dolores to realize their ideal goals. The Panteón de Dolores offered the possibility of a modern burial space that was beautiful and hygienic and that represented the social and political ideologies of the nation.

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[120] Foreign enclaves established their own cemeteries in the capital. They allowed Mexicans to purchase graves at inflated prices and elite families often chose these cemeteries instead of the old churchyards. Little work has been done on foreign cities in the capital. William Schell briefly discusses the American cemetery in *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001) 58-59.

[121] Once it passed from the Federal District government to the Federal District city council (Ayuntamiento), the name reverted back to Dolores. No signage had changed at the cemetery. It was only referred to in government correspondence as "Mexicano." See several expedientes in AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis.

Decisions regarding the Dolores cemetery were motivated by practical and ideological reasons. The inability of the government to establish its own new cemetery and its subsequent problems honoring the contract for Dolores demonstrate that the budget issues had a strong influence on which division of government administrated cemeteries. Current burial spaces were overflowing and the public complained about the health threat these spaces posed to their villages. Yet, the choice of Dolores reflects the Liberal preoccupation with the civil registry. Furthermore, government purchase of a private enterprise demonstrates that the classical Liberal policy was also tempered with a concern for public welfare.[122] Finally, the purchase of the cemetery by the national government for the capital foreshadows the Porfiriato's obsession with the parade of dead heroes, as Matt Esposito has explored in his work on Porfirian state funerals.[123] As it would become more apparent during the revolution, the government's lack of effort in maintaining a national space for the dead reflected their emphasis on symbolic performance rather than the preservation of the actual remains.

The Panteón de Dolores, in 1879, offered a clean slate in which the ideals of the Liberal reform laws and scientific progress could be mapped in an ordered city of the dead. In the next hundred plus years of service, that slate would be filled with the plans, whims, and memorials of government officials and ordinary Mexicans who sought to shape their city of dead citizens.

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[122] For a discussion of this project see Ann S. Blum, "Conspicuous Benevolence: Liberalism, Public Welfare, and Private Charity in Porfirian Mexico City, 1877-1910," *The Americas* 58, no. 1 (2001): 7-38.
[123] Matthew D. Esposito, "Death and Disorder in Mexico City: The State Funeral of Manuel Romero Rubio" in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction*, edited by William H. Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, 87-104 (Wilmington: SR Books, 2000).

CHAPTER 2
THE IDEAL ENDANGERED

Cemetery administrator Rafael Burgos wrote a frantic letter to the Chief of Public Works, Roberto Gayol, in 1904 complaining that a pulquería located across the street from the Panteón Civil de Dolores endangered orderly operations and should be closed. He claimed that its owner, Luis Flores, gave cemetery employees as much as they wanted to drink and then he could not find them in times of need because they were hiding, inebriated, in the far reaches of the cemetery. Making matters worse, mourners and trolley drivers often patronized the pulquería before a funeral, getting thoroughly drunk and then driving recklessly through the cemetery.[124] In a second letter, Burgos recounted a scandalous altercation between Flores' wife and the wife of cemetery employee in which they screamed obscenities at each other and almost came to blows in front of a crowd of visitors and employees.[125] Burgos got his wish and the governor's office shut down the pulquería for various infractions a week later.[126]

This was not the first nor the last time Burgos or other administrators would complain about dangers to the cemetery. Despite their best attempts to maintain order and

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[124] Burgos uses the term "motoristas" and the mode of transportation remains somewhat unclear. According to Robert Buffington and Pablo Piccato, this term most likely refers to tranvía (tram) drivers. "Urbanistas, Ambulantes, and Mendigos: The Dispute for Urban Space in Mexico City, 1890-1930," in *Reconstructing Criminality in Latin America*. Carlos Aguirre, Robert Buffington, eds., (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000) 120. Cars had only been recently introduced to Mexico City and very few people owned them, especially not the poor. Rafael Burgos to Jefe of Obras Públicas, August 10, 1904, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 184.

[125] Rafael Burgos to Jefe of Obras Públicas, August 30, 1904, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154.

[126] As Áurea Toxqui has shown, pulquerías were a common target for reforms. So, these complaints might have been just the excuse officials needed to shut down the establishment. María Áurea Toxqui "'El Recreo de los Amigos.' Mexico City's Pulquerías during the Liberal Republic (1856-1911)" (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008).

enforce regulations, disorder such as tram delays and wrecks, drunkenness, robbery, employee misconduct, and overcrowding constantly threatened the ideal image of Dolores as a peaceful place of repose for the dead. At first, administrators found support from the government for funds for improvement, beautification and basic maintenance. But as demands mounted, public money could not solve all the problems in the cemetery. These elements of disorder made the cemetery a dangerous space, especially at night. The gaze of the government could not see into every corner or make the employees, various businesses, and patrons follow the prescribed orders. Instead, the cemetery took on a life of its own and in many ways, was a microcosm of the capital city it served.

Cemetery administrations at Dolores had a multitude of problems and complaints during the first 30 years of operation. Reformers had praised the new cemetery as the embodiment of the Liberal, hygienic, and social ideal, but administrators struggled to uphold this image once the cemetery opened for daily service. Beyond the initial praise and funding to open the cemetery the everyday realities of the capital caused this ideal to fade and within thirty years the pristinely ordered sections and garden paths were replaced with overcrowding, weeds, insect infestation, and crime. Although there were no overt popular challenges to the increased regulation and municipal control of death rituals, enduring daily habits and the social realities of the capital resulted in popular resistance to elite attempts at social and hygiene reform by means of foot dragging rather than rioting.[127] The fact that many of the violators mentioned in administration reports

[127] Many scholars have focused on popular resistance, including riots, to burial reform. No such protests occurred in Mexico City. See Silvia M. Arrom and Servando Ortoll, eds., *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America 1765-1910. (*Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996). Instead, foot dragging can be seen as one of James Scott's so-called everyday forms of resistance to large-

were employees demonstrates that the cemetery was a site of social and cultural struggle not only against burial reform, but also against the rigid schedules and moral behavior required by the new laws designed to mold modern citizens. These actions, or often inactions, flew in the face of Porfirian reformers' efforts to remove the cemetery and death from the spaces and daily lives of the living.

Furthermore, in meeting the burial needs of the capital's diverse population, the cemetery often fell short of hygienic, beauty, and decency standards. Indeed, some of the qualities that had led officials to praise the cemetery's perfection were the source of its problems including its location and its strict regulations. Though it represented an improvement in health, the cemetery experienced many of the same problems as had the churchyard cemeteries. In pursuit of the Liberal, egalitarian idea of providing a burial place for all the residents of the capital, it ended up driving away the clients it wanted most: the elite, who sought out foreign, private cemeteries for their dead. The Panteón de Dolores was an experiment in modern death management and did not reflect the realities of the care of interment of the dead throughout the capital.[128]

The Panteón Mexicano Endangered

When Porfirio Díaz and the Federal District government purchased the Panteón de Dolores in 1879, they did so with the intention of creating a national cemetery named the Panteón Mexicano that would represent the French influenced modern culture of the

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scale government projects *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[128] In 1887, the government oversaw the operation of 146 working and three historic cemeteries in the municipalities that made up the federal district. For a complete list, see 1887 Reglamento de Panteones, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3456, Exp. 285.

capital. Building and maintaining the empty land in this image would be an expensive endeavor; bickering over costs began almost immediately to move reality away from the ideal. Even under the combined jurisdiction of the Federal District government and the Mexico City Council, funds were rarely sufficient for proper upkeep. The district government began reaching out for money to the city council soon after Díaz bought the cemetery. Within the first month, Governor Luis Curiel asked for 500 pesos from the council to make various improvements to the land, justifying it by saying that the city directly benefited from the service of the cemetery.[129]

Finally in August of 1879, Curiel wrote to the city council pleading that they take over control and responsibility of the cemetery. He stated that he had been well aware of the dire need for a cemetery for the capital since coming into office, but the only funds available had been the earnings of the Civil Registry, too meager to pay for such a large project. The purchase of an existing cemetery had seemed a more manageable expense, but so far, Dolores's monthly earnings had not been sufficient to make the payments. Curiel claimed that although both he and the previous owners wanted to honor the contract of sale, the treasury did not have the money. He pitched his sale by painting a gloomy future: the cemetery would go back to Benfield, Breker, and Co., who would be unable to pay their creditors from the income, and the land would be repossessed, leaving the city in terrible danger. Hope remained only if the council would agree to subrogate the contract for the Gobierno del DF. In making his argument, Curiel focused more on the public welfare benefits and responsibilities than the national identity of the cemetery.

[129] March 24, 1879. AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. HP, Ser. IP, Caj. 5, Exp. 12

He argued that the council had more responsibility than his office to provide a resting place for the city's poor. He assured the council members that the 1500 peso monthly payments would be made easily because as more and more bodies were buried in the cemetery, then more people would want to be buried there. The panteón would be completely under the administration of the city council and any profits made could be allocated at their discretion. The treasury commission of the council approved of the terms and the subrogation was approved in a 7-1 vote. A month later, the council voted to keep the cemetery named Dolores. Thus the Panteón Mexicano, the nation's first and only national cemetery, became a municipal holding.[130]

The Pastoral Endangered

City officials and cemetery reformers looked to Europe for the model of the modern, garden cemetery. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, administrators regularly petitioned the Mexico City Council for funds to plant gardens, build fountains, paint walls, and construct modern buildings. At first, the council rarely denied these requests, but problems with the weather and the size of the cemetery itself made regular maintenance impossible.

The idea of the suburban garden cemetery was predicated on the assumption that nature is peaceful.[131] Unfortunately nature is unpredictable and often uncontrollable and proved to be a constant problem in the upkeep of the cemetery. The land was chosen in

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[130] Ibid.
[131] For a discussion of pastoralism, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

1875 because it was high enough to prevent severe flooding. Yet, during the summer rainy season, the graves regularly flooded and sunk. After a strong rain in September of 1906, Administrator Hope requested funds to hire day laborers to recover 205 sunken graves. Rain also brought uncontrolled growth that the regular employees of the cemetery could not maintain. Weeds grew rampant in the vast sixth class area. Administrators did their best to remove them, especially in the week before Day of the Dead when that area was crowded with visitors.[132]

Visitors proved to be a threat to the pastoral ideal on their own. Cemetery administrators had to work hard to ensure that the public did not pollute the new space with old traditions. Burial yards in and around churches meant that the dead participated in the ritual life of the living. In the modern cemetery, only the funeral ritual and the yearly Day of the Dead festival were allowed. Furthermore, regulations limited the content of ceremonies within the walls of the cemetery, prohibiting music, food, and alcohol. Mourners could visit graves only during daylight hours, which prevented the traditional night candlelight ceremonies for Day of the Dead.[133] In these instances the pastoral ideal went against established traditions, especially those of the lower classes.

Despite administrators' best attempts to foster a peaceful image, robbery at night made the cemetery a dangerous place. Its vast expanse and the paltry group of night watchmen made it easy prey for the enterprising *ratones*, or petty thieves, of the capital. In 1905, only four *veladores* (guards) patrolled the cemetery each night.[134] Without the

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[132] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3484, Exp. 297.
[133] For more on Day of the Dead see Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).
[134] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3483, Exp. 271.

benefit of street lamps, ratones could undertake their enterprise enveloped in the dark and, thus, were rarely apprehended. Marble statues, nickel-plated crosses, and tokens of affection decorating graves comprised the ratones' usual booty.[135] For example, in 1903, the administrator reported that a child's grave in fifth class was robbed of a lamp, a metal crown, and porcelain.[136] Theft seemed to be concentrated on the outer edges of the cemetery in fourth and fifth class because the guards usually remained around the entrance and the first and second class area. In addition, the cemetery lacked a proper barrier to control access to its grounds. Its triangle-shaped perimeter was bordered on its longest side by a deep ravine, but the wall on the other two sides was not continuous, even eight years after the city purchased the cemetery.[137] In 1883, the members of the city council requested funds from the Federal District government to repair the wall on the south and east sides to prevent people from entering unnoticed and taking grave decorations and plants. They received approval to fix the walls and install three covered stations that could be inhabited by watchmen.[138] Yet, repairs and completion of the wall would be a constant concern.[139]

Beyond their inability to watch every square meter of the grounds at all times, the guards were fighting an uneven battle. Few of them had guns. Those with guns handled them inexpertly. When they actually caught someone in the act of stealing from a grave,

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[135] I am not sure whether these items are sold for scrap value or if they are resold to people using them for graves. It was common at this time to reuse markers and monuments. The cemetery had a bodega in which they offered used monuments for sale. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 67.
[136] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 108.
[137] Manuel G. Cosío, Cabildo to Gobernador del DF, Feb. 28, 1887. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 39.
[138] Ayuntamiento to Gobierno del DF, Jun 20, 1883. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 24.
[139] The administrator requested 200 pesos in 1887 to complete the wall, 1887. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD. Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 39.

the guns often failed to fire.[140] In one case, a velador grazed his partner in the eye when his gun accidentally went off.[141] Hope wrote to Gayol asking for better pay and more guards per shift to prevent these losses. In 1906, workers in the panteón received 62 centavos per day, which was not a competitive daily wage. Hope successfully got the rate raised to 70 centavos so that he could attract more workers. [142] Indeed, Hope and other administrators repeatedly asked for money to hire more guards and buy more guns, but their requests were infrequently approved.[143]

Some administrators simply shrugged their shoulders at the robberies. In 1880, after Gerónimo Pimentel complained that a marble cross had been stolen from his wife's grave, Administrator Jesús Ayala reportedly told him that the cemetery was not responsible for any losses. When questioned by the city council on this matter, Ayala responded similarly that the increasing area of the cemetery coupled with the decrease in staff made it impossible to guard and therefore, he nor his employees could be held responsible for the loss of property. He argued that more blame rested on the city council because they had not approved the funds to finish the wall and even where it did exist, it was so low that thieves could scale it easily. [144] During the 1910s, robberies increased. Visitors regularly complained that adornments were missing from their family's graves.

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[140] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 187.
[141] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3483, Exp. 257.
[142] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 97 and Vol. 3482, Exp. 230.
[143] See, for example, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 124, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154, Vol. 3497, Exp. 767
[144] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3454, Exp. 103.

Administrators threw up their hands. It was impossible to monitor the full expanse of the cemetery with a reduced staff and no police.[145]

The cemetery was a hybrid space that was both private and public. Private property decorated graves, but the land itself was open to anyone, which made the possibility of robbery hard to control. To make matters worse, Administrator Hope suspected that many of the robberies originated from within his own staff. On a night that seventeen nickel-plated chains were stolen, Hope reported to Public Works that the robbery was very likely orchestrated by someone who knew the cemetery well.[146] Because of the likelihood that guards were in on the robberies and as an incentive to make them more vigilant, employees were held financially responsible for loss of property that occurred on their watch.[147]

Pinning blame for these crimes became a game of musical chairs that relayed preconceptions about class and crime. While the city council and police blamed the workers, the workers blamed the council and sometimes other lower-level workers, and no one claimed responsibility for the monetary losses. The city council requested that the police investigate the robberies and their report showed that the cemetery's own employees were definitely responsible for the crimes. They singled out the *portero*

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[145] The number of files on robberies are too numerous to list in full. For examples of complaints about robberies in the 1900s and 1910s, see AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 93,Vol. 3481, Exp. 154, Vol. 3482, Exp. 217

[146] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 93.

[147]AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 103, 154.

(gatekeeper) for regularly abandoning his post. Workers were then free to carry out objects through the gate or over the low walls without being caught.[148]

Crime was a part of everyday life for the capital's residents. Certain geographical locations and neighborhoods, especially on the east side such as Tepito, became associated with criminality and danger. In contrast, the western suburbs were portrayed as ordered and civilized spaces. Yet increasing crime in the cemetery, located in the west adjacent to Chapultepec Park, threatened the imagined idea of safety and order in the west because, at night, its vast, unlit grounds created a space that was unknown, unwatchable, and thus, dangerous.[149] Porfirian administrators were obsessed with defining membership in the nation and limiting it by creating a dichotomy between criminal and citizen.[150] The elite defined themselves against the images they constructed of the dangerous and murderous lower class.[151] Although these were imagined differences in the realm of discourse, as the cemetery records show, criminal activity posed real daily problems for lower level administrators who strove to uphold the imagined idea of the municipal garden cemetery.

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[148] An example of this chain of accusations can be seen in letters between Roberto Gayol, of the Department of Public Works, Cemetery Chief Alberto Hope, and W.G. Tejada, a customer in October 1903. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 93, 94, 97.
[149] Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); James Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*; Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).
[150] Robert Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico,* 1-9.
[151] Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*, 1-37.

Hygiene Endangered

The Dolores cemetery's location along with new burial standards were supposed to end the public health threat that parish churchyards had posed to the capital. Yet, several of the old problems and some new ones arose in the new space. In some cases, the location of Dolores ended up bringing the dead and the living in more rather than less contact because it was so far away. Hospitals located in the center and the east had to transport bodies across the city and the poor residing on the east side, had to transport their dead across the city, with more chances along the way for accidents. At first the poor piled their dead in parks and awaited a cart to take them to Dolores on the other side of town. In 1887, a tramline was built into the cemetery to carry bodies and mourners, but this improvement came fraught with its own problems.[152]

Cemetery laws imposed schedules to minimize contact of the living with the dead, yet various problems prevented this system from running smoothly. First, delays in trolley service made many of the bodies arrive at dusk or shortly after nightfall. The cemetery regulation prohibited night burials, so tardy bodies had to be stored in the depository until the next morning.[153] Furthermore, the tramline was in a poor state of repair. Cars carrying bodies, living and dead, regularly derailed and overturned, spilling their contents along the path.[154] Derailments led to backups on the line, causing a bubble of cars arriving and making it hard for cemetery staff to get all the bodies in their proper resting places before sundown.[155] Mourners who had taken the day off were robbed of

[152] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 35.
[153] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 141.
[154] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 136.
[155] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3482, Exp. 219.

the chance to pay their respects to their loved ones. The city council and cemetery administrators admonished the National Tramline Company (Compañía Nacional de Tranvias) for these delays, but they could do little to enforce the time restrictions.

Local hospitals also frequently violated the body delivery schedule and posed a constant headache for cemetery administrators. The Juárez Hospital and the General Hospital delivered unclaimed bodies daily to the cemetery, where they were interred in sixth class.[156] These bodies were most likely lower class men who had died due to drunkenness, disease, or violence, and prevailing ideas about moral health labeled them as particularly dangerous to society.[157]

The lack of care offered to these unclaimed bodies also alarmed administrators.[158] In 1886, the Ayuntamiento issued an order to try to correct this constant problem. In their statement, they vividly described the scene: The naked bodies were piled up high in carts among discarded body parts, all in a complete state of putrefaction. The carts traversed the city in the middle of the day subjecting people to the sight and smell of their dangerous load.[159] Once arriving at the cemetery, the bodies lacked an identification and the administration had to rely on the driver to identify verbally the identity of each

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[156] The Hospital Juárez occupied an old convent and was founded in 1847 to offer service to prisoners. In 1877 it was renamed "Juárez" and opened to the public under the direction of Luís Ruiz, a leading public health advocate. "Hospital Juárez," *Diccionario Porrua*, 1719. Little research has been done on the city's hospitals in the nineteenth-century. For more information on Ruiz, see Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress,* 29-41.

[157] No records show the demographic information about the unclaimed pauper bodies at this time, but from 1910 on, when cremation was used to dispose of them, records show that the majority were adult males (see Chapter 4 on cremation). Also, James Garza describes Hospital Juárez as home to the diseased, the infirm, and lepers. *The Imagined Underworld*, 137.

[158] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3455, Exp. 115, April 21, 1882.

[159] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3456, Exp. 246, May 28, 1886.

cadaver. These shortcomings threatened the system of order required for grave identity and exposed the public to disease and indecency.

The Ayuntamiento ordered that each body must be enclosed in its own box labeled with its statistical information and that bodies must be delivered in the morning to limit contact with the public. In response, the director of the Hospital Juárez claimed that his hospital had done its best to observe moral standards of decency. Morgue workers dressed the men in shirts and underpants and the women in shirts and petticoats. The bodies were transported in a covered cart. But, he did admit that at times, the hospital workers were forced to pile bodies in the carts due to high rates of mortality.[160] This one incident and warning from the city council did not solve the problem. Timely body delivery continued to be a problem for the cemetery throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Social Order Endangered

The Porfirian government took care to map a civil, class-based hierarchy of the dead in the layout of the Dolores cemetery. In addition, regulations required that cemetery workers embody these new Liberal ideas of individual responsibility and hard work. The orderly distribution of the dead coupled with the orderly cooperation of workers created a modern city of the dead befitting a civilized and modern capital. Yet, the growing lack of grave space and the high demand for free graves diminished the

[160] Ibid.

image of a society led by state heroes and elite families. Furthermore, poorly paid employees had little incentive to follow regulations.

In 1879 the Dolores cemetery seemed limitless, but the growing population and high mortality rate in the capital quickly began to cause overcrowding.[161] The mortality rate in the city the year before the cemetery opened was 10,000 people per year. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the number had risen to 26,000 deaths per year, the majority of which received free burials in Dolores.[162] Gravediggers struggled to open new graves fast enough to meet demand. Administrators had to request funds to hire more grave diggers, especially in the free area. After only one year in operation, Rafael Rovalo, Cemetery Commissioner of the Ayuntamiento, urgently requested 1200 pesos to expand the sixth class area because graves had already reached the farthest border.[163]

Gravediggers were paid poorly, usually on a per grave basis. In 1883, Administrator Jorge Arteaga requested a raise for gravediggers and framed the continued poor pay as a threat to public health. The pay had not been raised since the cemetery opened in 1875. Day laborers received 50 cents for first class adult graves. Arteaga attested that the hard ground made grave digging a laborious job that no one would seek out for such a pittance. In consequence, bodies remained in the depository, awaiting graves, decomposing, and releasing their putrid emissions into the air.[164]

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[161] The 1890s saw large-scale migration to the city from rural areas. James Garza, *The Imagined Underworld,* 3.
[162] *Estadísticas Sociales del Porfiriato, 1877-1910*, Secretaria de Economía, Dirección General de Estadística (México: 1956).
[163] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3454, Exp. 70, March 5, 1880.
[164] AHDF, Fon. ADF. Secc. PG, Vol. 3455, Exp. 155.

Yet hiring more gravediggers could not solve the problem of diminishing space. Soon, graves filled the lots and gravediggers had to convert gardens and paths into grave space. In 1915, they converted the gardens behind the administrative offices to first class graves.[165] Two months later they had to move the nursery to make room for 1500 new graves.[166] In 1906, the Superior Sanitation Council approved a reduction in the required period for temporary inhumation from ten years to seven, but it only alleviated the problem for a year or two. Sixth class burials comprised eighty percent of the graves and first class represented less than one percent (See Table 2). Clearly, as the table below shows, the distribution of graves per class represented the social realities of the capital instead of the social ideals.

TABLE 2

Burial Activity, Panteón de Dolores, 1875-1905					
Class of Grave	**Inhumations**	**Exhumations**	**Perpetuities and Extensions**	**Remaining Temporary Graves**	**Total Occupied Graves**
First	1089	398	331	360	691
Second	2810	160	985	1665	2650
Third	8692	3882	1673	3137	4810
Fourth	16609	7894	2057	6658	8715
Fifth	51277	29994	4278	17005	21283
Sixth	329817	205365	0	124452	124452
Total	410294	247693	9324	153277	162601

Source: AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3482, Exp. 229

[165] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3515, Exp. 1125. Dec. 10, 1915.
[166] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1137.

Throughout the late 1910s service for the paid classes was regularly suspended due to lack of space.[167] Obviously, these numbers mirror the social and economic realities of the capital. Reformers proclaimed in Dolores's early years that the cemetery would provide a burial place for all Mexicans. Yet, in so doing, the cemetery began to threaten the imagined capital that the elite had created for themselves on the west side of the city. Despite the official policy to offer burial to all, the residents of the capital hardly shared such an egalitarian outlook on their city. The elite, or *gente decente*, looked down on the poor as dirty, disease-ridden, and dangerous. Elite newspapers, such as *El Imparcial* referred to residents of a poor neighborhood, Candelaria, as human trash.[168]

The elite imagined a criminal underworld was created from a mix of real crime, elite prejudice.[169] It inhabited the margins of the capital. The cemetery, located next to the bucolic Chapultepec Park and just down the road from the emerging suburban enclaves of La Condesa and Roma, brought the marginal into the heart of the elite. Their modern boulevards and tramlines began to be overrun by the poor masses, bringing their dead to the necropolis that seemed more potter's field than Père Lachaise.

Cemetery workers also threatened the imagined social ideal of the cemetery. In response, administrators and the Cemetery Chief portrayed the cemetery as a vulnerable living entity, endangered by the backwards actions of its employees. Employees failed to arrive on time, recorded burial information incorrectly, drank and fell asleep on the job, and in myriad other ways disrupted the tight schedule outlined in the Cemetery

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[167] See for example. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3516
[168] *El Imparcial*, 1909.
[169] Garza, *Imagined Underworld, passim*.

Regulation of 1902. Likewise, they used their skills and the resources of the cemetery to their own advantage. They bargained with customers to plant and maintain private gardens and care for individual graves,[170] In many cases, Cemetery Chief Alberto Hope characterized employee misconduct as a threat to the cemetery itself, not its inhabitants nor its customers, suggesting that Hope saw the cemetery as a sacred space that was protected by law and endangered by human agency. Similarly, in a report to Cemetery Commission, Administrator Ayala claimed that employee "defects" endangered the "order and progress" of the Panteón.[171] This statement represents how public space could embody the tenets of Porfirian positivism and Liberalism. Administrator Ayala accused employees of making money on the side by overcharging customers for brickwork, burying them in higher classes than they paid for. He labeled this disobedience anarchy and warned that it threatened the life of the cemetery. In this rhetoric the cemetery becomes a living being that must be protected from the bad habits of those who cared for it.

An ongoing conflict between Hope and administrator Rafael Burgos illustrates the ideals and imagined threats of employee neglect. Before being promoted to Cemetery Chief in 1904, Hope had served as administrator for a year so he was well acquainted with the responsibilities and demands of the job. Soon after Burgos was appointed, Hope began to complain to the Public Works Chief Roberto Gayol about him. Central to his complaint was the stipulation of Art. 23 of the 1902 Regulation that the administrator must reside in the cemetery and be present at night to help prevent theft. In Hope's

[170] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3455, Exp. 111.
[171] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3455, Exp. 111, Jan. 24, 1882.

periodic visits, he found the cemetery "abandoned" regularly by Burgos, who, according to regulations, could only leave the cemetery twice per month.[172] Burgos tried to defend his absences by claiming he was on cemetery business, but Hope found out that he was also living off the grounds on several occasions. His frustration with Burgos grew into an intense dislike that he voiced in numerous complaints.

Hope reported that Burgos let his sheep graze indiscriminately in the cemetery and that a woman discovered them eating the flowers on a first class lot she owned.[173] Foraging livestock ruined the modern image of the cemetery, causing the rural to intrude on the city and converting the space from garden to pasture.[174] In another complaint, Hope claimed that Burgos left the water running by his house, flooding the bodegas and wasting resources. Burgos promised to comply but testily admonished Hope for sneaking around his house. In 1905, still frustrated with Burgos' frequent absences, Hope told him that he would be held responsible for anything that happened to the panteón while he was gone.[175] From September 1905 to June 1906, Hope lodged five formal complaints against Burgos and successfully had him fined for abandoning the cemetery. In July, 1906, he was fired.

Hope's critiques of Burgos stemmed from his dedication to and belief in the order of law and the reflection of that order and modernity in the cemetery. He provided detailed reports and intensely monitored employee activity and he pushed the limits of modern innovation and technology in the panteón, installing street lamps and a crematory

[172] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154.
[173] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3482, Exp. 226.
[174] Beezley mentions as similar occurrence with turkeys being herded through the streets, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 12.
[175] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3482, Exp. 240.

in later years. In contrast Burgos retained a more relaxed attitude towards his job, and I believe that Hope saw this as a backwards or traditional approach to administration. For example, when Hope was administrator, he purchased a bicycle for the cemetery.[176] Two years later, Burgos purchased a horse so that he could patrol the expansive grounds. The purchase of a horse betrays Burgos's traditional persuasion. Horses, mules, and donkeys were still widely used in the capital, but were not fit for daily use by high level officials.[177] But, in Burgos' defense, the horse was a practical purchase. The cemetery grounds, especially during the rainy season, could be treacherous to navigate on the thin rims of a bike. The conflict between Hope and Burgos demonstrates the conflicted visions that lower level Porfirian administrators held of their responsibilities and suggests that class formation and behavior was being actively constructed and contested on a daily basis.

Indeed, just as Hope admonished Burgos for endangering the safety and order of the cemetery, in turn, he defined himself against the inappropriate behavior of his employees by filing complaints against them. In response, most employees ignored him or challenged his authority. When he reprimanded a foreman, Francisco Zulueta, for sitting on a grave reading a magazine, Burgos wrote to Hope that the employee showed him no respect and ignored his order to get to work.[178] Foul language also caused concern for administrators who found it undignified. In 1905, Burgos fired Federico Millan, the worker who's wife caused a scene with the pulquería owner's wife, because he was

[176] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp. 130, June 1904, Report by Alberto Hope. For more on the vogue of bicycles in Porfirian Mexico City see William H. Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club.*
[177] Beezley notes that working horse culture such as the charreada was looked down upon by Parisian visitors and subsequently, the Mexican elite. *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 6.
[178] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3479bis, Exp. 85

careless and used bad language.[179] Likewise, after receiving a complaint from a customer about the care of her plot, Burgos approached the person in charge of it, Alberto Lozano, who proceeded to curse him with "obscene, inappropriate words for a dignified and cultured employee."[180] Customers also noticed employee laziness and reported it to Public Works. In a letter to Roberto Gayol, Chief of Public Works, W.G. Tejeda claimed that wood and other materials were stolen because the administrator and workers were not doing their jobs and keeping an eye on the cemetery. The cemetery chief, administrators, and customers held these employees to impossible standards of perfection. Most cemetery workers received a paltry daily pay and the lowest level peones did not even have shoes. Nevertheless, they were expected to behave as so-called modern citizens. Employees' unwillingness and often, inability, to confirm to the strict standards set out for them, demonstrates the limits of the Porfirian modernization project.

Although employees and thieves posed the most common threat to the cemetery, cemetery customers also caused concern for the administration, usually due to drunkenness. The consumption of alcohol in concert with burial rituals held a long tradition in Mexico, but under new regulations, alcohol was expressly forbidden within the walls of the cemetery.[181] Drinking during the festivities for the All Saints' Day and Día de los Muertos, or All Souls' Day, proved to be difficult to stop. Day of the Dead was targeted, among other traditional celebrations such as Judas burnings and bullfights,

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[179] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154.
[180] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3482, Exp. 205, May 1906.
[181] See Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God*; Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*; Luís Salazar, Secretary of Gobernación wrote to the Obras Públicas Chief to issue and order banning food, pulque and other alcoholic drinks. Sept. 8, 1903, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3480, Exp.108.

for control.[182] Earlier in the century, officials had gone so far as to close cemeteries on November 1 and 2, but, in these years the gates of Dolores stayed open to visitors, albeit under strict vigilance.[183] Administrators wrote to the Ayuntamiento to request extra police to surround the cemetery and prevent mourners from bringing in alcohol, food, or musical instruments. Yet, visitors often found ways to smuggle in alcohol. After a November 2 celebration in 1905, Burgos informed Hope that two women had been apprehended for having alcohol and fighting in the cemetery. Problems with crime and drunkenness increased during the revolution and, with police and military engaged in the national conflict, the cemetery was left vulnerable. Miguel Pliego complained after Day of the Dead in 1914 that people of "poor conduct" came into the cemetery in the afternoon to drink and fight. On one day, he counted fourteen drunken men and women in a stone fight. The workers had to pry them apart and hold them in the storehouse for the police.[184]

Those who could not sneak alcohol in simply got drunk before coming into the cemetery. Both cemetery employees and mourners frequented the pulquería across the street. As part of the overall project to regulate and control lower class spaces of socialization, many pulquerías were closed. But, for at least six years, the pulquería in front of the cemetery remained open. That it was finally closed in 1906 suggests that the

[182] Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 4.
[183] Authorities closed burial grounds in 1825 to prevent the desecration of the holy day with festivities and again in 1848 and 1874. Voekel, *Alone Before God*, 214, 216.
[184] Miguel Pliego to Jefe de Cementerios, November 5, 1914, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1009.

government wanted to create distance between the spaces used by the living and the dead.[185]

Conclusions

The Panteón de Dolores served as a model, albeit an imperfect one, for cemeteries across the city and the country. Like many other reforms of the nineteenth-century, cemetery ideals failed to be maintained in practice. The daily problems with scheduling, overcrowding, drunkenness, crime, and employee misconduct demonstrates the limitations to instilling the Porfirian ideals of order and progress, even among spaces of the dead. When the cemetery was founded in 1879, the Liberal newspaper *El Siglo XIX* published an editorial advising the government on the future of the newly purchased cemetery. They pleaded for the government to maintain the cemetery in a way that would uphold the culture of the capital. Their idea of culture meant hygienic, ordered, and beautiful space reminiscent of garden cemeteries in the United States or in France.[186]

The stale dichotomy that pits religion and tradition against science and progress collapses by showing that *sensatos*, or Enlightened Catholics, promoted cemetery and funeral reform based on Liberal ideas about individualism and public health.[187] Looking at the practices instituted by government leaders in the century after these reforms, it becomes clear that the delineation between traditional and modern were not absolutes. Modernity, hygiene, order, progress, and civilization were relative terms, embodied by

[185] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 184
[186] "Panteón de Dolores," *El Siglo XIX*, March 17, 1879.
[187] The focus of Voekel's study.

some and imposed on others. Public officials decreed that unclaimed pauper bodies traversing in uncovered carts across the city were "dangerous," "offensive", and "indecent." At the same time, the Porfirian government exhumed the remains of state heroes to parade them across the city for re-interment in a space more fitting of their symbolic power. Perhaps the government's lack of effort in maintaining a national space for the dead reflected their emphasis on symbolic performance rather than the preservation of the actual remains.

The cemetery was not just a static, idyllic space of dead bodies, but instead a vibrant, dynamic community of employees, mourners, animals, and thieves, some of whom subscribed to the Porfirian ideal and some who could not or would not because of their social and economic position. Alberto Hope's constant efforts to maintain order in the cemetery illustrates how some lower level bureaucrats embodied the positivist ideals of the Porfirian elite. The countless files regarding labor conflicts between bosses, administrators, lower level office workers, and guards and grave diggers highlights the importance of relational identity of workers, manners and morals, as described by Bill French in northern Mexico.[188] Likewise, crime and drunkenness, challenged the imagined dichotomy between rich and poor and east and west in the capital. As problems and disorder increased, especially after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910, the cemetery's idyllic image faded and the elite sought spaces even more removed for the burial of their dead. Although the cemetery did not reflect the culture of the city as imagined by the elite, it did reflect the social and cultural reality of the capital.

[188] William French, *Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

CHAPTER 3

THE HOLY TERROR OF THE OVENS

When the directors of the capital's largest municipal cemetery, the Panteón de Dolores, installed two crematory ovens—one for individuals and a larger one for mass cremation—on its grounds in 1909, papers praised the government for bringing the most modern, hygienic form of burial to help further civilize their city and encouraged their readers to adopt the practice. Yet the majority of the capital's residents rejected cremation as a dignified end for their loved ones. Instead, the ovens served as a cost and land saving measure for the government by providing less expensive disposal of unclaimed pauper bodies from the city's hospitals. Cremation thus became associated with poverty, drunkenness, and disease. More disturbingly, the ovens often failed to function properly due to breakdowns or lack of fuel, leaving bodies to fester in the open air. Despite setbacks, government officials believed it to be the answer to the constant shortage in burial space and the threat of disease that came with interment. The Director of Public Works, Alberto Pani, pushed to expand the practice to include all paupers, who accounted for over ninety percent of monthly burials.[189]

The establishment of cremation in Mexico City formed part of the larger campaign of creating a sanitary and modern capital that targeted the supposedly unclean and superstitious practices and spaces of the poor. Public health and works officials drew on the international cremation movement's discourse of modernity and cleanliness as well as they believed it held the possibility to cleanse the city both physically and morally by

[189] Burial statistics are discussed in Chapter 2.

reducing degenerate members of society into harmless ash. They also addressed prevailing practices of burial with a double standard, in which the elite praised cremation as modern and civilized but rejected using it while they mocked the poor as superstitious and backwards for similarly rejecting the fiery end.

Forgotten Beginnings

The first efforts to establish cremation in the city failed, and historians have ignored the unsuccessful campaign. The *Encyclopedia of Cremation* states that it was not instituted until 1934, a full 25 years after the ovens opened.[190] Argentina usually receives credit for being the cremation leader in Latin America, with the construction of rudimentary ovens in Buenos Aires as 1887, but it did not renovate their crematorium with modern ovens until 1913.[191] The Dolores cemetery also had ovens for the cremation of bones and remains in the nineteenth-century. Latin America, in general, is described as slow to adopt the practice.

In Argentina and the world's leading cities in the practice—London, Paris, and San Francisco—cremation was financed and popularized by civic leaders who formed cremationist societies. They loudly proclaimed its benefits and publicized it through the cremation of high profile individuals.[192] No such society existed in Mexico; cremation's advent was fully government funded. Its implementation was more subdued and its

[190] Douglas J. Davies and Lewis H. Mates, *The Encyclopedia of Cremation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005) 292.
[191] Ibid, 29.
[192] See for example Stephen Prothero's discussion of cremation societies in the United States in *Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

customers more reluctant. These differences in practice led to different attitudes and different memories of cremation's beginnings.

Mexico's cultural and religious history made the capital city an unlikely candidate for early adoption of cremation as the practice was slow to gain hold in Latin America because of its overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. Church doctrine decried cremation as anathema to salvation because it prevented the resurrection of the body. Some Pre-Columbian societies practiced cremation, but Spanish priests successfully targeted it along with other indigenous mortuary practices for eradication after conquest.[193] At first, these changes were not readily accepted and Indians dug up graves on occasion to cremate their dead.[194] The colonial clergy quickly reached a *de facto* compromise in ritual and practice, allowing continuity in Indian's mourning rituals while eliminating Pre-Columbian cremation. The practice of burial in the floors, walls, and yards of churches and convents remained standard until the late-nineteenth century. Furthermore, the growth of the world-wide cremation movement led the Church to restate its ban in 1886.

Despite the cemetery reforms in Spain and Mexico in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century that began to create distance between Church doctrine and burial practices, burial of the body remained central to salvation. Elite Catholics influenced by modern beliefs about individualism eliminated ostentation in their burial rituals in favor

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[193] Little is known about how widespread the practice of cremation was among indigenous groups. The Aztecs believed that burning the body not only helped the heart, *teyolia*, separate from the body and descend through the nine levels of the underworld, but also that the ashes helped to feed the earth gods.[193] Cremation was used by all levels of Aztec society and families often buried the ashes of their dead in their home or field. Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico,* 161, 171-172.

[194] Ibid, 173.

of a singular relationship with God, but they still wanted to be buried in the soil.[195] The body and the grave formed necessary parts of the annual ritual of Day of the Dead, or All Soul's Day, when, according to Mexican practice, souls return to visit their bodies and loved ones left gifts in their honor. The cemetery reforms that brought the subsequent development of standard, individual graves in expansive suburban cemeteries even increased the visitation and veneration of individuals.[196]

Visitation, veneration, and memorialization as rituals maintain a relationship between the living and the dead. Those who hold more symbolic power in the family, the Church, or the nation receive greater honors in the form of monuments and holidays, for example.[197] Claudio Lomnitz posits that a familiarity with death, including the body itself and the material culture and burial ritual has constituted for centuries an essential part of *mexicanidad*. In this vein, the government of Porfirio Díaz began to use death of state officials as an occasion to perform its power and legitimacy. Ostentatious government funerals and elaborate monuments aimed to create a new civic pantheon of heroes.[198] The development of private and municipal cemeteries and the establishment of Italian marble

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[195] Pam Voekel refers to these Catholics as *sensatos* and argues that religion, far from being opposite to modernity, was one of the main conduits for modern ideas about the individual in society. Pam Voekel, *Alone Before God*.

[196] In colonial Catholic burial practice, bodies were often buried several to a grave, tomb, or niche. Nineteenth-century cemetery regulations established a one body to a grave limit. (See Chapter 1 on cemetery reform.)

[197] There is a large body of work on the idea of status, class, power in visitation and veneration. See, for example, Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present,* Translated by Patricia M. Ranum, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), Avner Ben-Amos, Avner, *Funeral, Politics, and Memory in Modern France*, *1789-1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Thomas Laqueur, "Bodies, Death, and Pauper Funerals." *Representations* 1 (1983): 109-131, Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[198] Matthew D. Esposito, "Death and Disorder in Mexico City: The State Funeral of Manuel Romero Rubio" in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction*, edited by William H. Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy (Wilmington: SR Books, 2000) 87-104.

companies gave the elites the location and materials to build shrines to their social power. The government guaranteed by law a grave space for even the poorest families, so that those who could not afford marble memorials, could at least decorate graves with flowers and mementos on All Soul's Day, thus ensuring the possibility of visitation for all. [199]

In light of this history, cremation represented a profound shift in thinking about the corpse. As characterized by Philippe Ariès, cremation represents the ultimate manifestation of enlightenment and modernity, a complete erasure of death from life.[200] The fire destroys the body, preventing the practices of visitation and veneration. Ariès argues that a society where cremation is the dominant manner of body disposal has achieved the final stage in modern attitudes towards death, what he calls "forbidden death." Despite the Porfirian social and political elite's desire to be considered modern, their society's relationship with death still incorporated many traditional, especially Catholic, rituals.

When the government instituted cremation, going against cherished cultural and religious beliefs, little, if any, public outcry occurred. Instead, capital city newspapers praised it as a modern innovation and claimed that it did not violate Catholic dogma. Ultimately, cremation, as it was first instituted in the capital, did not pose a threat to people's religious and cultural beliefs and practices about burial and the afterlife. In Porfirian Mexico City, the government instituted a modern and industrial approach to death that erased those most marginal in society. Thus, modernity was something

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[199] Many scholars have explored the religious and cultural history of Day of the Dead. See for example Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*.
[200] Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death*, 91.

imposed on those who had no power to resist it. To be a candidate for cremation, in a sense, was equivalent to not being a real Mexican.

Understanding the unique beginning of cremation in Mexico City begins with the ideas circulated in the international cremationist movement and how officials believed these ideas advanced the Porfirian government's larger project of "Order and Progress."

The Campaign for Cremation

The modern cremation movement arose in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century in response to Enlightenment ideas about reason, civilization, and public health. The 1874 publication of *Cremation or the Treatment of the Body After Death* by Sir Henry Thompson, one of the main advocates for cremation in England and a founding member of the Cremation Society of Great Britain, outlined the *raison d'être* of the cremationist movement. His treatise praised cremation as the only absolute method in eradicating the hygienic threat of diseased cadavers. He further argued that the process would be best in all cases of death because the long process of putrefaction presented many opportunities for contamination. In contrast, the rapidity of cremation rendered the threat of contagion into harmless ash.[201] Secondary benefits included the conservation of land necessary for cemeteries for varied uses for the living such as farmland, parks, or neighborhoods.

Privately- organized and funded cremationist societies across Europe and the United States took up this argument and led the way in legalizing and promoting the

[201] Sir Henry Thompson, *Cremation, The Treatment of the Body After Death*, third edition (London: Smith, Waterloo & Co, 1884).

practice in their cities, states, and nations.[202] Indeed, cremationist societies financed many of the first cremation ovens and crematoriums in the United States, German, England, and France.[203] They promoted the practice through highly-publicized cremation such as that of the Baron de Palm in Pennsylvania in 1876.[204] Likewise, cemetery administrators and hygienists hoped that cremation would developed along similar lines in Mexico. Yet in reality, it followed a much different, more practical path. The majority of Mexicans eschewed the fire due to religious objections and the wide availability of burial space.

Along with changes in intellectual attitudes, technological advancements led by Italian and German engineers, enabled the design of efficient, high temperature industrial ovens that could contain the body and reduce it to pure ash.[205] Professor Brunetti displayed a model of his design at the 1873 Vienna Exposition that helped spread knowledge about the practice around Europe.[206] In fact, Thompson cited the oven as an inspiration for his seminal treatise. Frederick Siemens constructed the first modern cremation oven in Germany, also in 1874, and it became the leading one in use around the world.[207] Beyond the ability of modern technology to purify the dead, the ovens also

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[202] Thompson's advocacy for cremation in England led to the passage of the 1902 Cremation Act. Davies and Mates, *Encyclopedia of Cremation*, 398.
[203] For information on cremationist societies in each of these countries, see Davies and Mates, *Encyclopedia of Cremation*. Also, Peter C. Jupp emphasizes that private societies such as the Cremation Society of Great Britain were vital in legitimizing cremation and did so without the help of governments, religious groups, or the mortuary industry. "The 125th anniversary of the Cremation Society of Great Britain *and* 'Cremation and the environment': the 125th Anniversary of the Royal Dutch Cremation Society," *Mortality* 4, no. 3 (1999): 333-334.
[204] Prothero, *Purified by Fire*, 15-45.
[205] Despite its lead in technology, parts of Germany were slow to adopt cremation. Prussia did not legalize the practice until 1912. Timothy Pursell, "The Burial of the Future': modernist architecture and the cremationist movement in Wilhelmine Germany," *Mortality* 8, no. 3 (August 2003): 233-250.
[206] In all the sources I have seen, he is only referred to by his last name. See, Davies and Mates, *Encyclopedia of Cremation*, 75, 135.
[207] Fred Rosen, *Cremation in America* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004) 46.

allowed for efficient mass cremation. Mass cremation of bodies erased the individuality of graves and prevented visitation and veneration. The city government's item in the 1907 contract to build ovens for the Dolores cemetery for a large oven capable of burning ten bodies at a time sheds light on the early Mexican ideology of cremation, which did not intend it as a replacement for the burial ritual. Technical and scientific reports focused on the process and its product rather than the ritual. An 1892 article on science included the factoid that only eight ounces of ash remained after the cremation of a body.[208] These articles expressed wonder at modern technology.

Mexican doctors and public health officials learned about these new ideas and technologies at international hygiene conferences and in medical journals. They began to circulate information about cremation through speeches, journal articles, and the press. For example, in 1891, two representatives from the Superior Sanitation Council attended the International Congress on Hygiene and Demography in London, where they attended a panel on the benefits of cremation to state hygiene by Thompson. The representatives' official report commented specifically on Thompson's talk and pointed out that cremation seemed especially beneficial in the case of war.[209] Clearly, the nineteenth-century Wars of Reform and Intervention had acquainted the government all too well the troubles of disposing of masses of cadavers.

Likewise, Ángel Rodríguez, chief doctor of the army and professor at the Military Hospital, published a paper a year later in support of cremation. Unfortunately,

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[208] "La Ciencia en Fragmentos," *Diario del Hogar*, March 24, 1892.
[209] Report from the Consejo Superior de Salubridad to the Secretaria del Estado y del Despacho de Gobernación, AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. Congresos y Convenciones (CC), Caj. 1, Exp. 9.

Rodríguez did not specifically address the advantages of cremation for the nation or its military. Instead, his report consisted of little more than a translation of the research reported by the Belgian Public Health Society and various Italian and French cremationists. From these early mentions of cremation's benefits, public officials revealed their understanding of the practice as a method to control disease and handle instances of high mortality. Yet, Rodríguez concluded that he believed Mexican society's acceptance of and transition to cremation would be a long process because progress had to struggle to overcome sentimentality and tradition.[210] Rodríguez's conclusions illustrated the Porfirian obsession with European ideas and progress and foreshadowed elite attitudes towards the lower classes during cremation's advent in 1909.

Order, Progress, and Public Health

The initiation of cremation in Mexico reveals much about the values and goals of Porfirian society. The political upheaval of mid-nineteenth century—foreign interventions and the wars of the Reform—had been subdued under the banners of order, peace, and progress embodied in Porfirio Díaz's thirty-five year control of the national government. Using Mexico City as the showcase for this project, Díaz and government officials under his direction pursued a complex modernization campaign that combined technological and industrial innovation, beautification, and social reform.[211]

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[210] Ángel J. Rodríguez, "La Cremación," in *Gaceta Médico-Militar*, *Vol. 4.* (México: Imprenta Ignacio Escalante, 1892) 3-13.

[211] Díaz and positivists' impulse for order and progress through development and performance is chronicled in a number of works. See, for example, Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*; *Beezley, Judas at the Jockey Club*. Ann S. Blum, "Conspicuous Benevolence: Liberalism, Public Welfare, and Private Charity in

Hygienists, a group of physicians, engineers, and architects serving in public institutions, especially the Departamento de Obras Públicas (Public Works Department) and the Consejo Superior de Salubridad (Superior Sanitation Council), strived to clean up physically and morally the city's spaces and people, including cemeteries.[212] They built street lights and trolley lines. They oversaw the implementation of a citywide drainage system to control the yearly flooding and reduce disease due to contact with contaminated water. Huge monuments and public parks were erected to mimic the stately urban elegance of Paris. The majority of these improvements focused on the capital's center and its suburban area west of the capital where elite and middle-class families relocated.

Yet improvements on the west side did little to hide the gritty reality of most *capitalinos*'—as the residents of the capital were known—lives. By 1910 the population had tripled in size from 1875, reaching half a million, most of which were poor.[213] Aristocrats viewed the urban masses as a problem.[214] However much the elites wanted to project a clean, peaceful international image, in reality the capital, like most large cities, was rife with crime and poverty. The poor, derogatively referred to as *leperos* or *pelados*, ruined the idyllic vision of Parisian-style boulevards. Petty crime, drunkenness, and murder plagued the city. Its victims' bodies were sent to the Juárez Hospital's morgue, often with no one to claim them.

Porfirian Mexico City, 1877-1910," *The Americas* 58, no. 1 (Jul. 2001): 7-38, Michael Johns, *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).
[212] Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress,* 2-43.
[213] Johns, *The City of Mexico*,15.
[214] Richard Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens*: *Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2001) 3.

Hygienists and other government officials embarked on reforms to hide or eliminate the unclean aspects of the city and they targeted the urban poor for their unsanitary and dangerous practices.[215] Improving the city meant improving its inhabitants. Officials began to focus on forging a modern citizen. In an effort to civilize the population, they waged a moral and hygiene campaign against cantinas, vagrancy, and dress.[216] New penal codes elaborated appropriate behavior.[217] The 1897 ratero law allowed the arrest of suspicious characters. Those who violated these imposed norms filled the halls of the new penitentiary or the barracks of the army. Military leaders strived to mold dutiful soldiers out of mixed group of country boys and petty thieves.[218] For those who could not be civilized in life, hygienists saw cremation as way to civilize them in death.

Nineteenth-century public health discourse described the dead as a threat to the living and to the positivist evolution of the living city.[219] Hygienists and public health officials targeted burial practices and spaces for reform. After moving the cemeteries to the outskirts of town, they decided that burial was not sufficient enough to eradicate the threat caused by some bodies. Officials had outlined strict burial requirements that lessened the threat of dead bodies to the living, but, in times of epidemic disease or flood, emanations from putrid bodies caused concern. In addition, the poor, who often left their

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[215] Agostoni claims hygienists saw the poor as the major threat to the city's sanitation, *Monuments of Progress*, xiii.
[216] For information on curbing drunkenness see María Áurea Toxqui "'El Recreo de los Amigos.' Mexico City's Pulquerías during the Liberal Republic (1856-1911)" (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008). For campaigns against crime see James Alex Garza, *The Imagined Underworld: Sex, Crime, and Vice in Porfirian Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).
[217] Robert M. Buffington, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000) and Pablo Piccato, *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-1931* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
[218] Stephen Neufeld, "Servants of the Nation: The Mexican Military and Nation Formation, 1876-1911" (PhD dissertation, 2009, University of Arizona).
[219] See Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*.

dead on street corners to be picked up by the cemetery cart were targeted as a public health threat. The bodies of pelados who died in fights and accidents on the street or diseased vagrants who died in hospitals with no one to claim them released dangerous putrid emanations. This environmentalist theory of disease saw a direct relationship between the dead and living: the more dead bodies, the more threat of death to the living.

Cremation provides one of the best examples of the ways in which government officials developed campaigns for their ideas of modernity against populations they considered as social threats or backward obstacles. A 1902 study by medical student José Najera on the advantages of the cremation of cadavers illustrated the prevailing ideas about cremation and public health. Najera argued that the inhumation of cadavers spread poisonous germs and poor health. He countered religious objections, saying that it did not impede religious rites for the dead. In fact, cremation was the most considerate practice for the feelings of the family because it showed the most respect for the dead because the body was not consumed by worms.[220] He praised modern cremation as quick, economical, and hygienic because it completely destroyed all organic material without odor.

Cremation fit the hygienists' campaign because it wholly removed the threat of these bodies from their modern city. Just as running into a drunk pelado outside of a pulquería ruined the elite aesthetic, the sight of a decomposing pauper body ruined the tranquility of the suburban cemetery.[221] As a result, the Federal District's government instituted

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[220] *Diario del Hogar*, September. 30, 1912.

[221] For more information on elite efforts to hide the poor from their gaze, see María Áurea Toxqui "'El Recreo de los Amigos.' Mexico City's Pulquerías during the Liberal Republic (1856-1911)" (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008).; James Garza, *The Imagined Underworld*.

cremation in Mexico and, at the same time, created a class division between those who were buried and those who were cremated.

Cremation the Mexican Way

The elite had interest in cremation, but they did not push for its practice as compared to other societies. Luis E. Ruiz, science editor of *La Libertad*, a Liberal newspaper, strongly praised cremation and even had the remains of his son and father-in-law exhumed and cremated to set an example. But deceased relatives were only symbolic gestures in hygienists' sanitation campaign. The real focus was the perceived dangerous lower class. A gap exists between the ways in which cremation was advocated by officials and elite newspapers and how it was practiced in its initial years. Despite a few unsupportive or ambivalent reports, the consensus was largely salutatory. It was widely praised among elite circles as a boon to public health and the modernization of the city. The coverage in the press suggested that the practice was modern and that the editors and their readers would adopt it wholeheartedly.

Reports on the history and practice of cremation abroad often discussed France, Germany, and the United States and reflected both elite desire to emulate these so-called modern nations and wariness of it.[222] Some references, like the 1890 notice about the International Congress on Cremation in Berlin, merely reported the information without opinion.[223] Another about a tuberculosis conference in France stated that Paris was

[222] "Que es la cremación?" *El Imparcial*, August 29, 1897.
[223] More articles on cremation appeared in the *Diario del Hogar* (literally, the "Home Daily") than the other newspapers in the capital. I do not know enough about the paper to make a full analysis, but its masthead

considering the mandatory cremation of those who perished from the disease.[224] But others, such as a collection of responses from French intellectuals on the question "Burned or Buried?", dealt humorously with the mixed emotions that cremation presented. French novelist, Alphonse Daudet, wrote that both seemed disagreeable choices.[225] For example, the *Diario del Hogar* featured a detailed story translated from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the cremation of a woman in Germantown in Philadelphia, Mrs. Juana Van Wisselingh.[226]

Editorials and articles about the hygienic benefits and the social evolution that cremation would bring to Mexico implored the national and city government to institute this most important measure of public health. One of the main arguments for cremation was eradicating the threat of contagion from bodies that perished from infectious disease. The city's loamy soil and lack of drainage made cemeteries such as Dolores dangerous places because contaminated water lay stagnant threatening surrounding communities. The threat could be easily eradicated, it was argued, with the cremation of bodies that died of infectious diseases such as typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and colitis. Furthermore, cremation was a hygienic practice that was associated with the world's leading cities and through them modernity and progress. [227]

Published arguments against cremation were few. On the whole, elite newspapers praised the practice. The articles also addressed the cultural and religious reservations

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claimed it provided news "for the family." Perhaps elite women read this paper and issues of death and the family were important to them. *Diario del Hogar*, August 9, 1910.
[224] "Incineración," *Diario del Hogar*, August 16, 1891.
[225] "Quemado o Enterrado," *Diario del Hogar*, January 25, 1891.
[226] "Cremación del Cadaver de la Sra. Van Wisselingh," *Diario del Hogar*, August 15, 1889.
[227] "La cremación en México," *Diario del Hogar*, January 20, 1894

that some might hold against cremation. For example, the Van Wisselingh story included the speech at the service by the President of the Philadelphia Cremation Society who claimed that cremation did not show irreverence toward the dead, but instead demonstrated the utmost respect. The report attempted to allay fears that cremation prevented the commemoration of the deceased by mentioning that the society offered a variety of fine urns that could be engraved with a name and epitaph. In the case of Mrs. Van Wisselingh, her family accompanied her body to the crematory and the performed the traditional religious customs before she was reduced to ashes. [228] Yet the article also reported that some people present had disgusted looks on their faces. This particular story demonstrates the ambivalent attitude towards cremation in the capital's papers. The public health benefits were acknowledged, but considering a loved one's body subjected to the process still made decent people uncomfortable.

Other papers did not directly endorse cremation for the entire population. *El Contemporáneo* published an article that stated that it considered both sides of the debate (progress vs. religion) and admitted that the 1886 outlaw of cremation by the Catholic Church made it an unacceptable practice for Catholics. But, the author also argued that for paupers, the common grave, in which men and women's nude, mutilated bodies lay side by side, was a much more indecorous end than the fire.[229]

When an argument was made expressly against cremation, it was not based on religious reasons, but instead on different perceptions of what constituted order and progress. In 1884 the *Diario del Hogar* reported that a cremation experiment was

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[228] "Cremación del Cadaver de la Sra. Van Wisselingh," *Diario del Hogar*, August 15, 1889.
[229] "Murmuraciones Hebdomadarias," *El Contemporaneo*, June 3, 1909.

performed on the body of a boy, Alfredo B. Westrup, in the capital. Although the editors agreed that cremation was the most hygienic option, they also cautioned that the complete destruction of the body also resulted in the destruction of evidence that could be used in the prosecution of a crime.[230] The article claimed that this legal argument provided a legitimate critique of the practice and was not motivated by fanatical ideas. The argument presents cremation as a threat to the order of law and justice and divulged a certain assumption about cremation's possible candidates, the population of *rateros* and their victims.

For the most part, the capital's religious papers remained curiously quiet on the subject even though the 1886 Catholic ban on cremation was not officially rescinded until 1963.[231] *El Tiempo*, the main conservative Catholic paper, did not publish any articles on cremation. The *Abogado Cristiano* even published a series of articles advocating cremation and explaining how it did not violate Church doctrine. Perhaps this tacit and sometimes explicit approval existed because the editors were aware that the government did not intend to implement cremation for their readers.

In 1900, the National Association of Spiritualists came out in favor of cremation. They argued that the spirit remained alive in the body after death and those spirits that have bad thoughts pollute the world of the living. Cremation fully destroyed the body as well as the spirit and was the only method that ensured that spirits would not continue to

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[230] Autopsies were regularly used in homicide cases. In fact, a request for exhumation for autopsy resulted in the discovery that the wrong body had been buried in a case in late-nineteenth century. *Diario del Hogar*, December 31, 1884.
[231] Rosen, *Cremation in America*, 74.

haunt the living.[232] Again, a bias shows up that suggests that those who were cremated were morally degenerate and would have evil spirits that needed to be destroyed.

Cremation was a popular subject in the capital's papers because of its novelty and the graphic imagery it provoked in readers' minds. Cremationists attempted to paint inhumation as more grotesque than incineration, which they described as sanitary and odorless. Although science was the dominant discourse that pro-cremationists used, they mixed in cultural, economic, and religious arguments as well. The public discourse on cremation emphasized its benefits to the health of the city and contributed to the gradual implementation of the practice.

Cremation around the Capital

The 1888 Cemetery Law did not explicitly prohibit cremation, but required that all cadavers be issued a burial ticket by the Civil Registry and be interred in one of the municipal or private cemeteries, making the practice de facto illegal. Nevertheless, some forms of incineration existed around the capital that paved the way for the introduction of human cremation as a public health measure.

Epidemic outbreaks caused alarm and rallied cries for cremation. In cases of epidemics where the threat of contagion was high, officials had bodies cremated on improvised pyres. In 1885, Manuel Romero Rubio issued a decree to prevent cholera outbreaks in the nation that required the cremation of any victims along with their bedding and clothing. With approval from the Department of Public Health and the city

[232] "Congreso Nacional espírita," *Diario del Hogar*, April 6, 1900.

council a neighborhood could designate a space for the burial of the ashes.[233] In 1898, the Ayuntamiento approved tests to measure the best way to cremate bodies of individuals that had died of infectious disease.[234]

In other cases, incineration of remains became part of Porfirian development and the city's population growth. As the capital expanded and cemeteries moved to the suburbs, colonial structures were demolished and remains were uncovered that were often were cremated as well. For example, in 1906, Manuel Cortina García notified the cemetery that he had unearthed ninety-one barrels of human bones during the construction of a residence on Humboldt street. Chief of Cemeteries Alberto Hope ordered that the bones be incinerated because the ossuary could not hold such an amount.[235] In 1904, the cemetery built an oven to incinerate the remains exhumed from the 1893 and 1896 burials because the ossuary was full.[236] In all of these cases, the remains were cremated either on makeshift pyres or in ovens designed to incinerate trash.

The construction of modern ovens to handle the cremation of animal carcasses and other organic waste was the first technological step towards the cremation of cadavers. In 1896, the Ayuntamiento approved the construction of a new crematory oven in the city's slaughterhouse, the Rastro.[237] The oven cost twenty thousand pesos and produced no odor or smoke; it was used for dead horses, blood, spoiled meat, trash, and manure. The ashes

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[233] Circular issued by the Secretaria del Estado y Despacho de Gobernación, July 16, 1885. AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. Presidencia (P), Serie: Secretaria (S), Caj. 6, Exp. 3.
[234] *Diario del Hogar*, Aug 13, 1898.
[235] Enrique Ortiz Molina to Alberto Hope, November 11, 1906, AHDF, Fondo: ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3485, Exp. 329.
[236] Bodies were only required by law to be interred for a period of seven years, after which, if the family could not afford to extend the time, the remains would be dug up and placed in a common ossuary or cremated. Alberto Hope to Jefe de Obras Públicas, June 28, 1904, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154.
[237] "Notas de Cabildo," *Diario del Hogar*, Oct. 22, 1896.

produced were sold as fertilizer to help pay for the oven.[238] The opening of the oven was a source of pride for the capital's government: a lunch was hosted to inaugurate the ovens that was attended by the Secretary of State, Governor of the Federal District, Municipal President and members of the city council (Ayuntamiento).[239] Likewise, newspapers praised the ovens as an improvement for the Rastro, which in the past had previously presented such a hazard to public health, especially to the impoverished communities that surrounded it. The motivations that led to the installation of the slaughterhouse oven would also influence the decision to implement cremation for human cadavers.

The decision to build the Rastro's oven was influenced by a 1894 report by Mateo Plowes, who returned from studying the benefits of cremation in the United States and presented his findings to the city council. Plowes advocated incineration to control the spread of disease and contagion from trash, animal carcasses and other waste, but he did not discuss the cremation of human cadavers because he believed that the government could not subsidize the cost of human cremation. An editorial in *El Diario del Hogar* chastised Plowes for ignoring its public health advantages because of its startup costs.[240] Reform and progress were expensive, but over time, a cleaner, hygienic city would make a full return on the investment. Repeatedly, cremation was associated with creating a cleaner city, and, soon, the bodies of its dirtiest inhabitants would be targeted for the fire.

Cremation remained in the realm of debate and discourse until 1907 when a contract was signed to purchase and construct ovens in the Dolores cemetery. Despite the

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[238] "Horno de cremación en el Rastro," *Diario del Hogar*, September 22, 1896

[239] Perhaps more so than the Dolores ovens. I have found no record of a formal inauguration ceremony in 1909.

[240] *Diario del Hogar*, Jan. 20, 1894.

rhetorical focus on disease, hygiene would not be the chief impetus that brought the advent of human cremation. Instead, cemetery administrators saw the ovens as an answer to the ever-worsening shortage in grave space. In practice, cremation did little to combat public health threats, but instead created a new class marker that divided those who deserved to be buried, and thus remembered, and those who deserved to be burned, and thus forgotten.

1907-1909: Installation and Tests

The Dolores Cemetery, with its once seemingly infinite expanse of over two million square meters threatened to burst at the seams after thirty years in operation.[241] Cemetery administrators regularly informed the Civil Registry to suspend tickets for the paid classes of burial because no grave space remained.[242] The largest area in the cemetery was designated for free sixth-class interments, and administrators believed that some of it could be reassigned for fourth and fifth class burials, especially if unclaimed bodies were no longer taking up valuable room.[243] Cemetery Chief Hope estimated that twenty spaces per day were used for bodies from the hospitals. The cemetery's oven for exhumed remains did not generate enough heat to incinerate fully fresh cadavers, nor was it considered acceptable practice to burn human bodies with trash and old bones.[244] In an environment in which free space had become premium, the cost of importing, building,

[241] The Dolores cemetery, located in the hills of Tacubaya, close to Chapultepec Park, stretched over one million square varas, but its expansion was limited by a large ravine that created a natural border on one side and the park on another.
[242] For examples of these incidents, see the index from AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PG.
[243] Much of the sixth-class area remained unexcavated and cemetery administrators had begun converting parts of it to paid burials while moving the free burials further to the edges.
[244] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3481, Exp. 154, Jul. 19, 1904.

and operating the large ovens seemed worth it. Every aspect of installation from the contract to the tests emphasized efficiency and economy.

In 1907, the Federal District government signed a contract with Caesar Marburg, a German engineer, to construct two crematory ovens for human cadavers: one large capacity for mass incinerations of bodies from the area hospitals, and one small capacity for individuals who requested cremation.[245] Marburg planned on ordering the system from Germany and overseeing the assembly and construction. Officials considered both German and Italian models before settling on a gas system designed by Rich Schneider in 1885. The Schneider oven, a modification and improvement of the original Siemens oven, was used by thirty-three crematoria in Germany, the San Francisco Cremation Company, and the Geneva Cremation Society among others.[246]

This system featured an elaborate network of tubes that moved combustible gas through three interior chambers and out of a tall chimney, in the process neutralizing foul odors. A grated chamber held the fuel, usually wood and coke, below the incineration chamber.[247] The body entered the incineration chamber on a platform that also served as the grate once the body was inside. As the gases entered the air-filled chamber, they combusted, incinerating the body. The ovens were completely enclosed except for a small window on the door of the incineration chamber, sparing the public from the ghastly sight

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[245] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3486, Exp. 446, Oct. 19, 1907.
[246] Davies and Mates, *Encyclopedia of Cremation*, 149. A German-language brochure for the Schneider oven is in the City Council archive. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. Panteones Contratos, Vol. 3475, Exp. 1.
[247] Coke is a porous coal-derived fuel used in furnaces and steam engines. One of its advantages was that it produced little to no smoke. Chris Evans and Göran Rydén, eds., *The Industrial Revolution in Iron : The Impact of British Coal Technology in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

of burning bodies.[248] The Schneider system was one of the most modern and economical available at the time.

Construction of crematory ovens moved slowly. The project encountered problems with funding and the availability of qualified engineers and workers to put together the complicated system. Once completed in 1909, cemetery and public health officials administered tests to ensure that the ovens met the standards outlined in the contract.

Officials measured the performance of the ovens by three criteria: the amount of coke used to complete cremation, the time required to reduce the body to ashes, and the quality of the ashes that remained. In the 1907 contract, the Public Works administrators set the standard at 100 kilos of coke and 2 hours per body, with the product being white ash and pieces of bone no larger than 2 centimeters.[249] Furthermore, the contract added that any smoke or gas that the ovens emitted needed to be free of foul odors. A clean city was also a deodorized city in the mind of Porfirian hygienists.[250] Thus, one of the main requirements in the oven contract was that the smoke emanating from the chimney be odor-free. Nevertheless, the reliance on coke illustrates the industrial aspect of body disposal. The fuel that fired the construction of the Industrial Age also fired the destruction of those it left behind.

Bodies from the Juárez Hospital served as test subjects and they were introduced to the fire in a variety of ways: individually, individually inside a coffin, and in a group

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[248] A detailed description of the process is available in the *Encyclopedia of Cremation.*
[249] The standard for the time was around 250 kilograms per body. Davies and Mates, *Encyclopedia of Cremation*, 146; AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3486, Exp. 446, Oct. 19, 1907.
[250] Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*.

without coffins. At first, results varied widely. One body took four hours to reduce to a fine ash and another burned for sixteen hours without ever completely breaking down. The intricate recipe of fuel, oxygen, and time had yet to be perfected.

By February of 1909, the workers had learned to operate the oven consistently, and they administered an official test of the ovens for high ranking government officials, including the Directors of Public Works and Public Health. The large oven burned 5 bodies in 2 hours at a cost of 33 pesos of coke. The small oven burned one body in 2 hours for the cost of 21 pesos of coke. Each oven took 9 hours to heat up.[251] Regular operation of the large oven resulted in an expense of 2 to 3 pesos per body. Since cremation freed up land for paid burials, the expense seemed worthwhile.

Form fits function

Beyond the construction and fine-tuning of the ovens, their location and housing in the cemetery bespeaks their intended purpose. Caesar Marburg submitted a blueprint for a multi-story crematorium. But, the funds were not approved in the initial years. Chief of Cemeteries Alberto Hope thought in practical terms about the daily needs and uses of the ovens and requested funds to build a depository for the bodies and a cover or building for the ovens themselves. The need to conceal pauper bodies from public view concerned Hope. He pointed out that a daily average of twenty bodies arrived from the hospitals nude and usually in a state of decomposition. The large ovens burned only five bodies at a time, and he believed it would be improper to leave the cadavers exposed to the

[251] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3488, Exp. 521, Feb. 16, 1909.

elements and in plain view of mourners.[252] They represented not only a threat to public health, but also to public decency. His proposed depository would provide an enclosed space that would conceal the bodies and that could be disinfected regularly. Hope proposed a design in which bodies would travel on a covered, moving platform from the depository directly to the oven. When the Ayuntamiento denied this proposal, he requested to build a simple shed to cover the ovens from the elements, which was approved. [253]

Crematoria in Europe and the United States were often on the cutting edge of architectural design.[254] Their form encouraged the idea of cremation as a ritual befitting the passing of a beloved family member. The elaborate structures hid the stark industrial ovens under a peaceful façade. In contrast, the Dolores ovens remained bare, an iron blight on the garden aesthetic of the cemetery. The reluctance to contribute more funds to beautify the project demonstrates the government's emphasis on economic efficiency and hygiene rather than ritual and memorialization.

The Federal District government inaugurated the ovens in February of 1909. Reports showed that between 200 and 250 bodies were cremated per month. Considering the cemetery became home to over 2000 bodies a month, those cremated represented only a small percentage of bodies.[255] The scarcity of coke hampered the regularity of

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[252] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3489, Exp. 545, Jan. 20, 1909.
[253] Included was an elaborate building designed to house the ashes of cremated cadavers, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3489, Exp. 562, May 12, 1909.
[254] For a discussion of modernist architecture and cremation see Timothy Pursell, "'The Burial of the Future': modernist architecture and the cremationist movement in Wilhelmine Germany" *Mortality* 8, no. 3 (2003): 233-250.
[255] AHDF, Fondo: ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3488, Exp. 528, 1909.

cremation. Each body required between 300 and 500 kilos of the fuel to reduce it to a fine ash.

Hygienist Luis Ruiz presented a report on the new ovens at a meeting of the National Academy of Medicine in June of 1909. He described the layout and operation of the ovens, and mentioned that a crematorium with gothic architecture would soon be constructed over them to house the ashes.[256] This detail suggests that Ruiz saw cremation as the future choice for the respectable classes of the nation, not just a means of disposal. Thus hygiene was a mixture of cleanliness and beauty. Ruiz led by example. In June of 1909, he had the remains of his son and his father-in-law exhumed and cremated in the ovens.[257] The hygienists' belief in their practice stayed with them all the way to the ovens. Luis E. Ruiz had his son exhumed and cremated as soon as the ovens were ready for service.

In November of 1909 the Secretary of Hacienda and Public Credit established and published a fee schedule for cremation. Adult bodies could be cremated for a fee of forty pesos, while the fee for children's bodies was twenty, prices equivalent to a first class burial. Remains of adults and children could be cremated for fifteen and seven pesos, respectively.[258] This represented a considerable charge compared to the cost, which averaged 1 to 3 pesos per body. Unfortunately, no record exists about the decisions made regarding pricing, but perhaps individuals were charged at such a higher price to cover

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[256] *El Imparcial*, June 6, 1909.
[257] *El Imparcial*, June 9, 1909.
[258] "La cremación de cadaveres," *El Diario*, November 10, 1909

the cost of incinerating the paupers. Likewise, the high price for individual cremation established it as an elite choice.

Public officials saw cremation as a new technology that needed to be measured and recorded meticulously. In July of 1909, the Consejo Superior de Salubridad requested weekly reports on cremations to be submitted for their demographic bulletin.[259] The cemetery already kept detailed records on inhumations and exhumations and immediately added cremation, recording not only the total number of bodies, but also the amount of fuel used, time spent, and cost per body. They also noted demographic information about the types of bodies being burned. Names usually did not appear on the lists because the bodies were often unidentified.

These records provide insight into whose bodies the government cremated. Adult men most frequently went into the ovens. Women made up only twenty-five percent of the cremations each month. Children and infants made up an even smaller percentage. Besides whole bodies, the ovens were also used to cremate parts, and reports divided them up between legs, arms, and heads. The higher percentage of men in the ovens reveals that they were the most likely to die and remain unclaimed in the morgues. Transient men living in *mesones,* or cheap hotels, rarely had families and were often involved in crime and plagued by alcoholism.[260]

For the first few months of operation, reports on the operation, benefits, and opinion on the ovens filled the capital's newspapers. The majority of the reports touted

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[259] Other information in the bulletin included births, deaths, and marriages. Deaths were listed by cause, age, and sex. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3490, Exp. 584.
[260] Johns, *The City of Mexico,* 48.

the ovens as a sign of the nation's evolution and modernity and the government's strength in combating the superstitions of the lower classes.[261] President Díaz described more practical benefits in his annual address to Congress in 1910. He claimed that not only did cremation benefit hygiene, but also it saved space and simplified cemetery administration.[262] Díaz stressed that only individuals who requested it or those who had no family would be cremated.[263] Luis Ruiz gave a speech to the National Academy of Medicine that detailed the operation of the ovens, which was published in the capital's papers.

Editorialists countered cultural objections to cremation by using graphic imagery and religion. They reminded their readers that, in the ground, worms consume the body and in comparison burning was a more dignified end. They quoted *Ecclesiastes* that stated from dust we came and to dust we will return.[264] These arguments also echoed the work of the Italian cremationist, Brunetti, who said, "Saved from the worms, we are consumed by the flames."[265]

While hygienists praised cremation as a step towards progress, the poor reportedly feared it as a "holy terror." Spurious reports of lower class fear in the face of fire fed the idea of a superstitious pueblo. Papers claimed that poor families, motivated by rumors that the cemetery covertly disinterred and cremated all free sixth class burials, began

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[261] *El Diario*, May 29, 1909.
[262] Discurso de Porfirio Díaz al abrir las sesiones ordinarias del Congreso. Abril 1, 1910.
[263] *La Iberia*, April 5, 1910.
[264] *El Diario*, May 29, 1909.
[265] These words were displayed in Latin on a glass box of human ashes at the 1873 Vienna Exposition. Prothero, *Purified by Fire*, 9.

scraping together the four peso fee for a fifth class burial to ensure that their loved ones' bodies would not be burned.[266]

Inhumation records and cemetery reports verify that no such clandestine cremations occurred. Records show that the average remained 1500 hundred bodies per month in sixth class and 200-300 bodies cremated. At the cost of 2 pesos per body, incinerating all poor cadavers would cost the government at least 3000 pesos per month, not to mention the added cost of interring and disinterring the body. Furthermore, public health law prohibited the exhumation of cadavers before seven years without written permission. In addition, the wrongful cremation of a body was a punishable offense. In 1916, cemetery worker Clemente Patino accidentally cremated the body of Sra. Francisca Corona, and he was arrested.[267] She was scheduled to be buried in sixth class, so it shows that compulsory cremation of all sixth class bodies had not been instituted. Finally, the claim of increased fifth class burials seems specious. The monthly cemetery ledger shows no significant decrease in the number of sixth class burials and no increase in fifth class burials [see Table 1]. They averaged around sixty percent and fifteen percent respectively of all burials.

The alleged fear of cremation among the poor allowed advocates to repeat many of the nineteenth-century arguments advocating the practice. Foremost, cremation improved public health by eradicating the toxic gasses of putrefaction. Cremation also guarded against the common fear of being buried alive. Apparently, being burned alive had not been considered a possibility.

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[266] *El Diario*, April 21, 1909.
[267] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3516, Exp. 1236, Dec. 14, 1916.

Problems with Progress

The establishment of the crematory ovens was met with pride by many who believed in national progress toward civilization, but in reality, its implementation was fraught with stumbling blocks. However much the scientific and medical establishment touted cremation as the most modern and hygienic form of burial, among all classes the practice remained an undesirable end throughout the 1910s and 1920s. Yet for the most marginal sector of the population, the crematory ovens were the only option. Individuals occasionally requested the cremation of exhumed remains, for which the cemetery charged 15 pesos per body. The ovens' association with pauper bodies furthered their reputation as unsuitable for respectable people. Only the poor saw the ovens as a threat because only they could not afford the fees for a temporary or permanent burial in first through fifth class.

Cremation did not attract upper and middle class families for several reasons. First, the government delayed in committing funds to construct a chapel that would promote the practice as a form of memorialization. Caesar Marburg submitted a plan for the construction of a crematorium that would feature niches to store ashes. Other plans were submitted for elaborate edifices, but no records indicate that any of the plans were approved. For the first few years, the ovens were covered by a perfunctory tin roof shed. The ashes were dumped in the ravine that bordered the cemetery, the detritus teeming

over during the rainy season.[268] With the approval of Public Works, the cemetery began using the ashes as fertilizer.[269]

This image of the ovens did not match the costly forty peso fee for an individual cremation. For only ten pesos more, a family could buy a ten year plot in the second class area of the cemetery or they could buy a third class plot and have twenty pesos left over to buy a tombstone. In addition, inhumation companies did not list the option in their advertisements. Cremation did not allow companies as much of an opportunity to add other fees and services such as wreaths and elaborate caskets. Nevertheless, some wealthy individuals chose cremation.

In the first two years of operation, cemetery records show fewer than twenty individual cremations. Even rarer was the individual who specifically requested to be cremated. In 1909, Don Luis Reyes Spindola prearranged cremation through the Compañía Nacional de Inhumaciones, or National Inhumation Company, for the cost of forty pesos.[270] In November, the *Mexican Herald* reported that Miss María Rossel, a well-known writer, would be cremated per her request and her ashes would be stored in an urn.[271] The rare occasion of individual cremation was always cause for notice local newspapers.

The most common customers for private cremation were foreign citizens, often Freemasons, living in the capital. For example, A.H. Freudenstein, member of the Toltec lodge and a superintendent at Water Pierce Oil, was cremated in 1910 after receiving a

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[268] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3518, Exp. 1352.
[269] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3518, Exp. 1352.
[270] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3491, Exp. 599, Sep. 21, 1909.
[271] "Miss Maria Rossel to be Cremated," *Mexican Herald,* November 18, 1909.

solemn sendoff from the lodge master, the well-known photographer C.B. Waite.[272] The 1888 law regulations for exhuming and transferring bodies by rail and across national boundaries were extensive and costly. Cremation, by 1910s was widely used in the United States and much more economical. Ashes, according to the U.S. postal service could be mailed at the cost of one cent per one hundred grams.[273] When George Samuel, an English trader, died, he was cremated and returned to London for burial, partly because there were no Jewish burial spaces in the city.[274] Likewise, when Edmund North, an American engineer, died in a mining accident, he was cremated so that his body could be sent to his home in Los Angeles.[275]

Some of the growth of cremation as practice was limited by the spotty performance of the ovens themselves. Coke, especially during the revolution and World War I, became a scarce and, therefore expensive commodity. At other times, only poor quality coke was available, and it did not burn hot enough to reduce the cadavers to small pieces and white ash.[276] When coke could not be found, the administrators resorted to burying the bodies in the sixth class section, compounding the scarcity of space. In 1917 they tried wood instead because of the exorbitant price of coke.[277]

The efficient and economical operation of the crematory ovens depended on cooperation and regularity from the local hospitals. Regulations required that the bodies be delivered between 6 and 8 am each day. That way, the ovens would remain warm for

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[272] "Flowers at Funeral of A.H. Freudenstein," *Mexican Herald*, June 29, 1910.
[273] *Diario del Hogar*, Nov. 10, 1911.
[274] "Samuel Mystery is Still Unexplained," *Mexican Herald*, December 21, 1910.
[275] "Edmund D. North Dies in Hospital from Injuries," *Mexican Herald*, June 23, 1910
[276] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD Vol. 3491, Exp. 606, Nov. 3, 1909.
[277] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3518, Exp. 1392.

all of the cremations, saving coke and reducing the public's exposure to the dead bodies. Yet, delayed arrivals were a constant problem for cemetery officials. In April 1909, only two months after inauguration, Hope complained that the Juárez Hospital often delivered bodies too late in the day, wasting fuel.[278] The government sent a stern letter to the hospital administrator, but it continued to be a problem. In 1917, the administrator complained that the Juárez Hospital bodies did not arrive until noon and yet the ovens had been heated since six a.m. Not only did it literally waste tons of coke, but it also caused public scandal. By noon, the cemetery was full of mourners and the decomposing bodies were carted, uncovered, through the cemetery for all to see.[279] In 1918, newspapers reported that the cremations created a stench that wafted through Chapultepec Park, adjacent to the cemetery. To lessen the irritation, the administrator suggested that the cremations be performed at night instead of during the day. All hospitals under the Department of Public Welfare were ordered by the Ayuntamiento to send their bodies at 5 pm to the cemetery, in service to public health.[280] These undesirable bodies were meant to be completely hidden from public view, but in reality, they intruded regularly.

Although some officials during the 1910s pushed for cremation in lieu of free sixth class burials, annual cremations actually decreased. Partly due to broken ovens and lack of fuel, but even after the ovens were repaired, the cemetery cremated bodies at only half the rate they had been in 1910, the first full year of service. During the height of

[278] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3489, Exp. 558, April 12, 1909.
[279] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3516, Exp. 1242, Dec. 5, 1916 and Feb. 28, 1917.
[280] 'En Bien de la Salubridad," *El Nacional*, Sept 6, 1918.

revolutionary fighting from 1910-1920, the ovens were regularly broken. In 1916, a notice appeared the local newspapers that the ovens had reopened for service and reminded readers that only one day's notice was required to use the small oven for private cremations.[281] In 1917, the ovens broke down mid-cremation, leaving bodies half-burned inside and fetid smoke diffusing throughout the cemetery.[282] Indeed, the incineration of the poor probably furthered the disaffection among the elite with the Dolores cemetery. The ovens remained a simple form of disposal and an inefficient one at that.

All of the scheduling of cremation suggests that cemetery administrators and the public health department wanted to hide it from public view. Cremation of human bodies, it seemed, was not a polite subject of discussion. In preparation for the 1910 Popular Exposition of Hygiene for the centennial celebration featured an exhibit on sanitary advancements in the capital. The exhibit featured the hospitals, the penitentiary, the anti-rabies campaign, and the incinerators for trash. Centennial officials did not include the Dolores crematory ovens in the exhibit even though they had been lauded for their contribution to hygiene.[283] The ovens were seen as central to controlling the moral and physical hygiene of the city, but only under cover of anonymity. The ovens were not to be seen, heard, smelled, or celebrated.

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[281] "Los hornos crematorios del panteón de Dolores," *El Democrata*, April 23, 1916.
[282] Luis Ezquerro to the Jefe del Departamento de Obras Públicas, November 14, 1917, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3474, Exp. 71.
[283] "Anoche se efectuó la perura de la exposición y conferencias de higiene," *El Diario*, September 3, 1910.

Cremation and Class

The free sixth class burials ensured that even the poorest families could offer their loved ones internment. Throughout the 1910s, the ovens remained the final resting place for only the most marginal population: the diseased, the insane, and the unclaimed. Juárez Hospital, the General Hospital, the Churubusco military hospital, and the La Castañeda Asylum for the mentally ill sent their bodies to the ovens. Other municipal cemeteries in the area, including Mixcoac and Coyoacán requested to have the bodies from the hospitals and asylums in their area sent to the ovens to stem problems with overcrowding.[284] Yet by 1912, increased mortality created a crisis in space, even largest sixth class area of the cemetery.

Cemetery administrator Miguel Pliego sent urgent requests for help with the overcrowding issue to the Department of Public Works. Alberto Pani, Director of Public Works, suggested that space could be freed and money could be saved if the cemetery simply cremated all sixth class bodies instead of burying them. He acknowledged that this practice might upset popular sentiment, but he urged that "thinking calmly" about the issue made it clear that the incineration of the bodies was faster, cheaper, and more hygienic than burial. Furthermore, the energy and labor costs would be low because the constant arrival of bodies meant that the oven would never have a chance to cool down.[285]

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[284] AHDF, Vol. 3497, Exp. 781, Nov. 13, 1911; AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3503, Exp. 887, Dec. 24, 1912.

[285] Cremation had been an option since the late nineteenth century, but never had it been enforced upon the population.

Pani sent his proposal to the Secretary of State, who agreed with the economic advantages of incineration, but denied the request and reminded Pani that the current political conflict that engulfed the country (the revolution) made it an inconvenient time to challenge the deeply rooted beliefs of the lower class.[286] By Christmas of 1912, the increased death rate at the city's military hospital prompted Pani to suggest again that the bodies be transferred in hearses from the hospital straight to the incinerator. He listed among his concerns the spread of disease and the lack of space in the cemetery. The Governor of Mexico City agreed that the city might have to resort to mass cremation, but he still needed approval from the Secretaries of Treasury and War.[287] A little more than a month later, when the battle to overthrow the President Francisco Madero broke out in the city, the debate proved moot as the number of dead in the streets necessitated mass cremations, often on the spot.

The violent battle that raged across the city in February of 1913 claimed thousands of lives and is remembered as the Decena Trágica. Surprisingly, cremations at the Dolores cemetery did not increase. Bodies of humans and animals were either burned *in situ* or loaded onto Red Cross carts, taken to the outskirts of the city, and burned in makeshift funerary pyres. In the weeks that followed, sanitary inspectors occasionally found bodies buried in shallow graves and had them taken to the crematorium. Thus the ovens did not help much during the highest threats to public health, battles and epidemics, because they were not designed to handle high traffic.

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[286] Communication between Miguel Pliego, Alberto Pani, and the sub-secretary of state, May 10, 1912-November 14, 1912. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3503, Exp. 878-901.

[287] Communication between Alberto Pani and the Governor of the Federal District, December 24-31, 1912. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3503, Exp. 878-901.

The director of the Juárez Hospital, Germán Díaz Lombardo, reported that many bodies arrived at the hospital already in a state of decomposition. Because of the threat to public health, they were ordered incinerated. The incinerator at the hospital could not handle the job because it was designed for trash and medical waste and worked irregularly. Instead the bodies were loaded onto carts and taken to Valbuena, doused in petroleum, and over the course of two days, 289 bodies were burned. Only sixteen bodies were taken to the Dolores ovens.[288]

Continued problems with overcrowding in cemetery grounds brought Pani's master plan for mandatory sixth class cremation back after the political situation stabilized in the capital. But the limited finances of the treasury made visions grander than what was realistically possible. The Department of Public Works estimated that in order to bury all sixth class bodies, another large oven or two would be required. The current oven only handled seven bodies per day and an average of thirty-five bodies per day arrived into sixth class. The annual budget for cremation would double or triple to as much as 50,000 pesos per year.[289] In 1913, the *Mexican Herald* reported that two new crematories would be constructed in Dolores for paupers and that the government and Sanitation Council had ordered the mandatory cremation of all paupers and those who had died of contagious disease. The *Herald* reported that Jesuits had already spoken in favor of cremation and that Catholic bishops would not oppose the measure.[290] Even if these reports were false, they demonstrate the intentions of the government.

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[288] "Las víctimas de la 'Decena Trágica,'" *El Diario*, August 3, 1913.
[289] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3506, Exp. 936, July 9, 1913.
[290] "Two Crematories for Pauper Dead," *Mexican Herald*, August 16, 1913.

The plan was never implemented. Despite these lofty goals, coke was so scarce that the ovens stopped running. In 1915, they had to resort to burying the hospital bodies in a common grave. In 1916, the Cemetery Chief again asked to cremate all sixth class burials. He argued that it wasted fuel keeping the ovens hot when the numbers of bodies from the hospitals were low. Furthermore, most of the sixth class burials did not have mourners and should be considered the same as a hospital body. Nevertheless, the push to eliminate free burial and replace it with cremation denied the poor the right of a culturally and religiously appropriate burial.

By 1920, the government had built a grand chapel for the crematory ovens, but praise for their modernity had disappeared from the papers. That same year, *el Democrata* featured a two page story on the Panteón de Dolores praising its administration, the famous statesmen buried in its Rotunda, and its beautiful gardens. Although it featured a photo of the crematory chapel, the article did not discuss the ovens at all.[291] Cremation did not inspire the same idyllic vision of death as the garden grave. In the end, the crematory ovens barely managed the overcrowding problem and they were often broken or insufficiently operating in times of urgent need.

Conclusions

Today cremation has become a commonly accepted practice in Mexico City. The Panteón de Dolores has been full since the 1970s and the cost of interment in other cemeteries remains out of financial reach for the majority of the population. Construction

[291] "La Vida Múltiple y el Misterio Sagrado del Panteón de Dolores," *El Democrata*, July 4, 1920.

is underway at the Basílica de Guadalupe for an enormous chapel for ashes.[292] Those who choose to have their ashes buried in the chapel's niches will lay in a final resting place that is both modern and sacred.

The initial experiment with cremation in the capital, despite the claims of the newspapers, did not convince the public that it served as an acceptable form of burial. The implementation of cremation can be understood as part of the larger Porfirian project of cleaning and sanitizing the city, an extension of the waste disposal program begun during the late nineteenth-century. It came to be associated with disease and poverty rather than hygiene and veneration. Cremation, advertised as the most hygienic form of burial, targeted those bodies seen as most dangerous to public health. These bodies, deprived of the rituals associated with a proper death, became trash. Cremation of human trash reduced the threat of contagion from disease. It removed unclean threats to the community and it provided a technological answer to the moral problem of urban riffraff. In the minds of officials, it was a technological advancement that allowed the modernization of the city. The crematory ovens were one of the most important public works projects of the Porfiriato.

Thus, the opening of the crematorium in the Panteón de Dolores made it one of the main centers of waste collection and disposal. This perception in combination with the ever-growing scarcity of space in the higher class areas of the cemetery added to the exodus of elite bodies to private, foreign-owned cemeteries. The placement of the ovens in the Dolores cemetery only furthered its reputation as a place for the poor.

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[292] While visiting the Basílica in April 2008, the excavation was visible and huge tents with advertisements for the niches were set up on the grounds.

At the heart of the cremation versus interment choice was the idea of disposal versus veneration. Philippe Aries argues that cremation is a sign in a complete revolution of attitudes towards death, signifying modernity and finality. Cremation, he argues, breaks the tradition of visitation and veneration.[293] It is the ultimate realization of the modern erasure of death from public life. The Porfirian government brought veneration of state heroes to unprecedented levels, staging elaborate funerals and going so far as to exhume and rebury bodies just for the pageantry of it all. Yet, there existed a parallel process in which the ceremony surrounding death and burial was eradicated for bodies that did not fit the Porfirian image of order and progress. Initially, cremation was only an option for those who had no one to visit or venerate them- their invisibility in life and the Porfirian government's wish to erase them from its public image made them invisible in death.

[293] Ariès, *Western Attitudes*, 91.

CHAPTER 4

DEATH IN THE CEMETERY AND BEYOND: THE REVOLUTION

Solo el que carga el cajón sabe lo que pesa el muerto

-Mexican proverb

Jesús Herrera of Coahuila received the devastating news on June 17, 1919 in a personal letter from General Álvaro Obregón that his father and brother had been killed in battle. Obregón assured him that the men sacrificed themselves for the worthy cause of the Revolution. Herrera responded gratefully to the general's letter, yet he spoke of the pain that the loss had caused his family: with these two latest deaths, he became the only surviving male in his family and assumed the responsibility for twenty-one orphans and six widows.[294]

Along with Herrera's brothers, an estimated one out of ten Mexicans died during a series of national and regional rebellions—known as the Revolution[295]—initially aimed at toppling the repressive, thirty-five year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz.[296] After revolutionaries ousted the octogenarian dictator in a matter of months in 1911, the seemingly unified rebellion gave way to a civil war, in which the violent death of national leaders, military personnel, and ordinary people was an everyday occurrence for the next

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[294] Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elias Calles (FAPC). Fondo: Plutarco Elias Calles (PEC), Fondo: 11, Serie 030100, Exp. H-016/349, Inv. 1418, legajo. 1 – Herrera C. , Jesus. Parras de la Fuente, Coahuila, fojas 1-2.

[295] Historians have attempted to move away from a reification of the revolution. I use "revolution" when discussing the events or providing analysis and "Revolution" when I refer to the project associated with official memory or discourse or if it is capitalized in the original text. For a thorough discussion on the reified revolution, see Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución*.

[296] No completely accurate numbers exist, but demographic historians estimate the war claimed between 1.5-2 million lives. Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos,* 19(2003): 367-400.

twenty years. Soldiers shot each other in battle, executed prisoners by firing squads, assassinated enemies in ambushes, and caught innocent citizens in crossfire. Raiding armies beat women and children to death. Civilians and soldiers succumbed to disease and starvation. In short, no social group or economic class escaped the common revolutionary experience of death.

Death due to violence and disease influenced the care of dead bodies, the importance and sites of funerals and burials, and the memory of the Revolution itself. The physical reality of the profusion of dead bodies challenged standard practices of corpse disposal and burial thus reshaping attitudes on what constituted a proper death and interment. Battles that resulted in a mass of bodies especially strained systems in place to dispose quickly of the dead. Improvised battlefield graves and pyres became fodder for the international media and were displayed as proof of the nation's barbarity. The revolution's combination of unmanageable casualty levels and the advent of modern, secular funerary practices in the preceding decades influenced how the government, military, and civilians handled and memorialized death.

Death figures largely in the narrative of the revolution but it has rarely been the focus of study.[297] According to the official history, in exchange for the terrible price of war, the nation established a socially just constitution and created a pantheon of martyred

[297] For a thorough understanding of the state of scholarship on the revolution and descriptions of some of the more violent episodes, consult these standard works: Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution: Genesis under Madero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1952) and *Mexican Revolution: The Constitutionalist Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, 2 vols.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986); John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

leaders as an inspiration for the living.[298] This official story has been questioned in literature, music, and art, but has not been examined from the historical perspective of the experience of death itself during the conflict. The hierarchies of death that had been established during the Porfiriato continued during the revolution, but the legal organization of death management suffered from high mortality rates, financial shortages, and military authority. The ways in which death practices became classed in the nineteenth-century also influenced how the dead were venerated in the twentieth century.

Dignity in death became difficult to maintain during the revolution and the ways in which soldiers', officers', and civilians' bodies were handled lends insight into changing social and political hierarchies. In addition, space plays a part in the formation of memory and thus, where bodies were interred became critical during the Porfiriato and continued during the revolution. Because of the political chaos and lack of unified authority, legacy in death was contested and different viewpoints could make a body be deserving of a first class burial or a trip to the pauper's field. Should a revolutionary faction win the civil war, their fallen must deserve the highest honors. Not only soldiers, but also family members vied to secure a decent burial for their fallen soldiers. Granted requests for assistance were contingent on the soldier's rank and interpretations about the value of their service and circumstances of their death. In other words, hierarchy in burial remained important, but the determiners of this hierarchy changed. While in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, hierarchy was based on class and piety, during the Porfiriato and the Revolution it became based on class and nationalism. The martyred

[298] See for example the various biographies of revolutionary heroes by Enrique Krauze. *Mexico: Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

heroes of the Revolution often represented such powerful symbols of the nation that they escaped the bounds of the cemetery and were interred in monuments around the city.

A Vast Graveyard

By all accounts, the revolution cost countless lives between 1910-1930. The majority of the deaths occurred in the first ten years, but demographer Robert McCaa argues that the 1921 census is too flawed to be used to assess the loss. In addition, it fails to include the lives lost during the *Cristero* rebellion in 1926-1928. Using the more accurate 1930 census, McCaa calculates 1.5 million excess deaths due to violence, disease, and starvation, which would place the revolution among the ten deadliest conflicts of the twentieth century. Demographers' invaluable research helps make understandable the overall impact of the war, but the numbers lend little insight into the personal experience of mass death.

Testimonies that remain through ethnographies, memoirs, newspaper articles, and images describe death as a ubiquitous assault on the senses. Many memoirs of the time tell of streets filled with bodies.[299] The violent deaths captured the most attention. Generals like Obregón utilized the tools of modern warfare such as machine guns and airplanes that resulted in increased deaths on the battlefield.[300] Other leaders used

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[299] Edith O'Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico: Letters from the American Embassy at Mexico City, Covering the Dramatic Period between October 8th, 1913, and the Breaking Off of Diplomatic Relations on April 23rd, 1914, Together with an Account of the Occupation of Vera Cruz* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916); Louise Böker, "Keeping House in Revolutionary Mexico City," in *Mexico Otherwise: Modern Mexico in the Eyes of Foreign Observers,* edited and translated by Jürgen Buchenau (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

[300] Linda Hall, *Álvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981).

scorched earth methods in which whole villages were burned and bodies hanged from trees.[301] For some, like Obregón in his letter to Jesus Herrera, these deaths represented a costly, but worthy sacrifice.

For others, the deaths were a waste and the violence was barbaric. U.S. consul William O. Jenkins saw no meaning in the deaths and called the soldiers pigs and dogs without any scruples who murdered in cold blood.[302] Citizens caught on the wrong side of the conflict also described the savage cruelty of the violence: Pedro Martínez expressed his disgust for General Venustiano Carranza, even though he was an official hero, because he recalled the brutality of his actions in Morelos, a Zapatista stronghold. In the capital, rumors that they were cannibals preceded the Carrancistas' arrival. [303] International reports frequently described and commented on the deaths of women and children, whose suffering served as an example to the irrationality of the violence. These deaths were used as evidence that soldiers were barbaric. Widespread famine and disease killed those who escaped the bullet. Starvation made international news, with some reports claiming that women were boiling cats in stews to feed their children.[304]

Famine made the population even more susceptible to disease. Whole regiments succumbed to malaria. The 1918 Spanish influenza hit Mexico harder than any other country. Indeed, some demographers believe that the influenza epidemic killed more people than violence did. [305] The same year, the Red Cross stopped distribution of soup to

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[301] Described in Oscar Lewis, "Pedro Martinez" in *The Mexico Reader*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 379.
[302] William O. Jenkins, "Mexico Has Been Turned into a Hell" in *The Mexico Reader*, 357-363.
[303] Ricardo Pozas, "Juan the Chamula" in *The Mexico Reader*, 393.
[304] James Blanely, "Mexico Vast Graveyard: Famine in the Land," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1915.
[305] Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions," 347-400.

the poor and deaths from starvation skyrocketed. In 1918, the cemetery records show a drastic increase in deaths, especially among children.[306] These increased deaths made timely burials difficult.

Families tried their best to give their loved ones decent burials, but often could not due to lack of time, money, and threat of further violence. When Tepoztlán was under Carrancista occupation, leaving the house meant risking one's life. Esperanza Martínez remembered having to bury her mother quickly in a simple mat, or *petate*, and lamented not being able to provide her with a coffin. When a young daughter died, Esperanza was unable to bury her in the cemetery close to their home because it was surrounded with soldiers. Instead she carried the child to a neighboring city. A soldier's body had more of a chance of receiving a decent burial if the man was involved with a soldadera. The women would comb through the dead in a battle's aftermath to find their men.[307]

Under the pressure of war, people resorted to traditional means to maintain burial rituals. The practice of mourners carrying coffins on foot from the home to the cemetery returned because the trolleys ceased regular service. Parts of the tracks had been destroyed and the tranvía company did not have the materials to repair it. Other people used their own cars or carts to deliver their loved ones to their graves.[308] The Department of Public Health did not approve of the use of passenger cars for body transport, but could do little to stop the practice or provide other alternatives. The revolution increased

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[306] Of the 1260 bodies buried in the sixth class section in July of 1918, almost 70 percent were children. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3521, Exp. 1623, 1648.
[307] Stephen Neufeld's dissertation discusses gender relations among soldaderas and soldiers in the barracks. "Servants of the Nation: The Military and the Making of Modern Mexico" (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2009).
[308] Miguel Pliego, Administrator to 4th Section Chief of Obras Públicas, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, December 15, 1915.

deaths throughout the nation as well as interrupted established methods of burial and body disposal.

Festival of the Dead-The Decena Trágica

The changes described above intensified during battles. Revolutionary clashes in cities and pueblos caused overwhelming mortality rates that disrupted the standard methods of corpse disposal. Dead bodies in the streets posed serious health threats to the living. The dead encroached on the spaces of the living. The hierarchy of the living and the dead was overturned; the dead took over the streets and the living hid in their houses.[309] Mexico City suffered under the festival of the dead during ten days of battle, popularly known as the Decena Trágica.

On February 9, 1913, worshippers dutifully and faithfully streamed into Sunday mass at the national cathedral. Across the city square, or *zócalo*, counterrevolutionaries Bernardo Reyes and Felix Díaz, newly escaped from prison, led an army of two thousand against President Francisco Madero who was ensconced in the National Palace. The parishioners were caught unaware and two hundred fell in the crossfire, along with Reyes.[310] The violence and chaos that enveloped the city for the next ten days while Madero held out against the onslaught would come to be known as the Decena Trágica.

During the ten days that Madero's general, Victoriano Huerta, and Díaz exchanged fire, thousands of soldiers, civilians, horses, and buildings became intentional

[309] Mikhail Bakhtin has described the reversal of social hierarchy as carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World*, Translated by Hèléne Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
[310] In Lesley Bird Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 300.

and unintentional targets.[311] Fires raged around the city. People did not venture outside for fear of being hit by stray bullets and shells. Stores and newspaper offices were forced to close and people did not have access to food. Electric service was interrupted. The violent conflict had strewn chaos throughout the city and fatigue and anxiety intensified among its residents, whether rich or poor, as no end appeared to be near.[312] Ten days later, after Huerta had betrayed Madero and joined Díaz to take control of the capital, the city lay quiet and the bodies of people and horses littered the streets. Madero and his vice president, José María Pino Suárez, soon counted among the dead, assassinated under the cover of darkness on February 22.

The betrayal and tragedy involved in those ten days have become excessively commonplace in the narrative of the Revolution and mark a time of increased violence and the beginning of the civil war that would engulf the nation for the next seven years.[313] Historians see the Decena Trágica as pivotal because it was the first time violence entered the capital during the revolution. Its brutality and ambition was a foreboding microcosm for the larger revolution and the assassination of Madero created a Revolutionary martyr that was a more effective symbol in death than in life.[314] But beyond its symbolic importance and its memory, the battle also provides a glimpse at

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[311] Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico, Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[312] Above descriptions are from Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, and Susan M. Deeds, eds., *The Course of Mexican History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 500-505 and Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2, 1-11.

[313] Many histories gloss over the violence during the battle and focus only on the deaths of Madero and Pino Suárez. For example, see John Hart *in Oxford History of Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Berta Ulloa, "La lucha armada" in *Historia general de México*, Versión 2000 (México: El Colegio de México, 2000) 776-778.

[314] Charles Cumberland comments on the Decena Trágica as a microcosm in *The Mexican Revolution: The Constitutionalist Years,* 10. For discussion of Madero as a martyr, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 490 and Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 50.

how the dead became unmanageable through the course of the war. These changes in everyday practices lend to its memory and symbolic power as much as its martyrs.

However much the ubiquity of the dead led to a sense of indifference by the living, their commonplaceness also gave them power in the public sphere.[315] Madero might have become the lasting symbol of the Decena Trágica, but the anonymous dead were the immediate ones. In the short weeks following the battle, officials were concerned with returning the city to its regular order. Removing the dead from public spaces was an important first step in this process. No accurate numbers exist on the number of casualties, but newspaper reports suggest that they were high, and possibly in the thousands. The *New York Times* reported that three hundred people were dead in the first day of fighting, among them three Americans.[316] The *Los Angeles Times* described streets so filled with bodies that carts and cars could not pass them.[317] In order to manage the problem, a variety of measures were used. These methods went against officials' perceptions of modernity and progress, but the so-called modern system they had set up did not suffice.

In its place arose an ad hoc approach to the dead. City services had to prioritize their duties. Alberto Pani, Director of Public Works under Madero, had made lowering the high mortality rate and public health his top priorities. In his memoirs, he recalled that unrelenting cannon blasts prevented the timely recovery of bodies and, in times of ceasefire, the city lacked enough workers to clear the streets of the dead.[318] Hospital

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[315] Laderman discusses this indifference during the U.S. Civil War, *The Sacred Remains*, 94, 101.
[316] *New York Times,* February 10, 1913.
[317] "Cannon Pile Up Slain in the Streets of Mexico," Los Angeles Times, February 19, 1913.
[318] Alberto Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos, Memorias y testimonios* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios

ambulances were occupied in transporting the wounded. The dead were relegated to street cleaning wagons that took them directly to the plains of Valbuena, where they were doused in petroleum and burned in large pyres.[319] Citizens often took matters into their own hands, burying bodies in shallow graves underneath houses or in yards and parks. For weeks after, sanitation officials found the shallow graves and delivered them to the cemetery for cremation or burial.[320] The numerous dead overwhelmed the sanitation, medical, and cemetery services in the capital and made impossible the proper identification and disposal of the dead.

Images of the numerous dead were distributed throughout the nation and into the United States via postcards.[321] These images portrayed a city in which the dead ruled the streets, creating a sort of carnival of the dead. Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque represents a temporary halt in the order of the day and the social hierarchies of the living. It applied originally to the written word, but photographs also convey a carnivalistic and festivalistic mood. These images have come to represent the official memory of the conflict and have been displayed in the National Museum of Art.[322] Many of the postcards portray the battle as a festival in which violence and death provide the main attractions. Likewise, the other photographs in the exhibit illustrate the similarities

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Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 2003) 147-155.

[319] "Approached Enemy in Water Mains," *New York Times*, February 18, 1913.

[320] The body of Gustavo Madero, the president's brother, was found in a shallow grave in the Ciudadela arsenal on February 25. Alberto Pani recalled in his memoirs that was allowed to present the body to the family but without any presence of pomp, friends, photographs, or journalists. He had to be buried quietly because of the danger to the incumbent government. Madero was buried, as was his brother, in the French cemetery. Alberto Pani, *Apuntes autobiográficos*, 168.

[321] A collection of these postcards is held by the archive of the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.

[322] These images are available in the published collection *La Ciudadela de fuego: A ochenta años de la Decena Trágica* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993).

between festivals and battles: they exist within a finite time; they involve performers, exhibits, and spectators; and they convey messages about a society's beliefs and values.

This analysis of festivals and their relationship to nationalism is based on Mona Ozouf's work on festivals during the French Revolution.[323] In particular, she argues that the early festivals lacked the order and overt didacticism of later festivals. Furthermore, festivals often arose out of periods of riots. Nevertheless, these early festivals formed an incipient nationalist ritual in which diverse groups, including soldiers and women, participated. The Decena Trágica contained some elements of early revolutionary festivals, although order often dissolved into chaos.[324] The photographs in the collection highlight the ritualistic, performative, and spectative aspects of the tragedy and how the dead were central to this spectacle. The depiction of the body is central to Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque. He describes the gluttonous portrayals of people consuming food and the importance of the grotesque as a form of critique. Although these images are real, they appear a gross exaggeration of death and the dead body itself from the tranquil image of a modern death. They mock the idea of the peaceful slumber. The publication and replication of these images in newspaper articles and postcards also served to uphold stereotypes of supposed Mexican barbarism and contradicted the modern image that was so important to public health officials.

Dead bodies were the festival's featured attraction. Most of the dead in these images are wearing civilian clothing. In one image, a corpse lies decaying in the street,

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[323] Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, translated by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) passim.
[324] For a discussion of later festivals see Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución,* 93-152.

attracting the curious gaze of passersby. The photo shows that the city government was unable to clear the streets of the dead before the living had to resume their daily lives outside of the home. Another postcard portrays a body being burned in the street where it fell. A man holds his hand over his mouth because of the stench. A photograph of the makeshift funeral pyres in Valbuena depicts dozens of bodies piled high. The fires did not burn at a sufficient temperature to destroy the bodies fully, and the outlines of the blackened, smoldering corpses are clearly visible. A group of men stand beside the pyre observing and one man appears to be smiling at the camera.

The dead intruded visually and fragrantly on the spaces of the living during the Decena Trágica. They were a contradiction, at once more alarming and more commonplace. Frequent contact and interaction with dead bodies led to regularization and dehumanization. Regular caretakers of the dead—funeral directors, cemetery workers, and medical professionals—often experienced this, but the general population also began to exhibit this same detached indifference. Their abundance and dominance of public space dehumanized them, and thus, the bodies were handled without care and as if they were trash.[325]

Photographs of the dead further the idea of bodies as trash. The angle of the photograph often obscures the face of the dead, making it an abstract symbol. The anonymous bodies reinforce the anonymity in which many people died during the battle. The photographs emphasize the spectacle of the dead by making the body the central feature and including live spectators in the background.

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[325] Drew Gilpin Faust describes this same phenomenon in her examination of death during the U.S. civil War in *This Republic of Suffering*, 61-101.

The Decena Trágica resulted in the death of thousands of civilians and the elected president and vice-president of the nation. The intense battle foreshadowed the extreme violence that would plague the country for the rest of the decade and would claim more than one million lives. Battles and assassinations served as ritualistic festivals during the early years of the revolution in which competing groups fought to perform their idea of revolution. Violence was removed from later festivals, but early rituals including the military parades of young cadets and bands began as triumphant victory marches at the end of battles.[326] Analyzing the Decena Trágica as a festival demonstrates the interconnections between war and nation and puts violence and death at the center of revolutionary imaginary. However much later governments would obscure death in favor of revolutionary accomplishments, photographs of the early festivals serve as a reminder of the destruction that cleared a path for the construction of a new nation.

The Revolution in the Panteón

The capital never again experienced the level of violence that it did in 1913, yet throughout the rest of the decade, the revolution regularly intruded on the daily order. At times, the city became a battle site as factions vied for control of the national government. Like other businesses and services, the cemetery suffered from the fighting throughout the city.[327] The topsy-turvy chaos in the upper levels of government left

[326] Benjamin, *La Revolución,* 93-152.
[327] Louise Böker describes the destruction to her own business as well as neighboring shops in "Keeping House in Revolutionary Mexico City" in *Mexico Otherwise: Modern Mexico in the Eyes of Foreign Observers, e*dited and translated by Jürgen Buchenau (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

lower level bureaucrats such as cemetery administrators unsure of whom to petition for help. Money, resources, and eventually, labor, were diverted towards the war.

As the revolution turned the world upside down among the living, so did it among the dead. The beleaguered population viewed the cemetery as an emergency resource: reports claimed that women carted off the wood of exhumed caskets to use as kindling in their homes.[328] Yet, however much the Dolores cemetery had fallen from the ideals on which it was conceived over 35 years in operation, it still served the burial needs for the majority of the population. In addition, it remained an important national place of honor for statesmen buried in its Rotunda. Its symbolic and practical importance was heightened during periods of violence. The ways in which the residents of the city and the competing factions used and abused the cemetery demonstrate the multiple conceptions of the space: it existed simultaneously as sacred and profane.

In 1914 and 1915, as Constitutionalists and Zapatistas battled for the control of the city, the rival armies viewed the cemetery's limited, but vital resources as theirs for the taking, presenting the administration with even more difficulty in upholding legal and public health regulations.[329] Brigades allowed their horses to graze among the graves, sinking them in, leaving manure, and chomping on wooden crosses.[330] Cemetery administrators had little recourse to protest the use of their land for pasture, but still incurred the reprobation of the sanitation council.

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[328] James Blanely, "Mexico Vast Graveyard," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1915. A report from a site inspection by the Superior Sanitation Council also commented on this practice. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 110.

[329] For more information on the war between the Constitutionalists and the Zapatistas, see Knight, *the Mexican Revolution,* 263-321.

[330] On two occasions, Pliego identifies the regiments as the General Zepeda's brigade and the San Diego cuartel. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1100, 1106.

More injurious than the physical damage to the land, regiments frequently commandeered the cemetery and hospitals' mules and carts, leaving cemetery employees with no way to transport bodies to their graves.[331] On a morning in 1914, two men dressed in wide sombreros and white cotton pants and shirts rode into the cemetery claiming to be in Emiliano Zapata's army. They took two mules, "El Mosco" and "El Sapo," in the name of the Revolution.[332] Administrator Miguel Pliego suspected that the men had merely disguised themselves as Zapatistas. Pliego complained to the Department of Public Works that the lack of carts and mules posed a serious threat to public health and his workers' health specifically.[333] Gravediggers had to carry the decomposing bodies by hand to the recesses of the land. The late arrival of bodies caused logistical problems in burial as well. Cemetery officials complained the some bodies were in such a state of decomposition that they were difficult to bury. In some cases, Pliego's complaints resulted in a return of property, but in most cases, nothing could be done.

The cemetery occasionally became a battle site. Constitutionalists pursued the Zapatistas through the cemetery leaving behind nine dead soldiers and an innocent casualty: an eighteen-year old mule named "Maguey."[334] Troops and bullets from battles in the areas surrounding the cemetery spilled over the walls. At times, the gunfire was so heavy that administrators had to suspend service to protect workers and mourners.[335]

At the same time revolutionaries plundered the cemetery for its resources and disrupted burials, they still expected it to operate for its intended purpose. Military

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[331] Eduardo Lemus to Cemetery Chief, April 6, 1915, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1027.
[332] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1029, March 15, 1915.
[333] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1013.
[334] Miguel Pliego AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1028. February 19, 1915.
[335] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1027.

regiments entered the cemetery bringing the bodies of fallen comrades and demanding an immediate burial according to their wishes. They ignored the regulations in place that required purchasing a burial ticket through the Civil Registry and rarely paid the appropriate fee.[336] When Constitutionalist Captain Fernando Talamantes died in battle, the Constitutionalists ordered the cemetery administrator to bury him in first class.[337] Considering the crisis in available grave space in the first and second class sections, the graves they requested were the most desirable in the city.

Administrators tried to follow the rules, and, when bodies of soldiers and officers were dropped off without tickets, they left them in the body depository until one could be procured. They quickly learned to break the rules and comply with soldiers' demands.[338] On one occasion, the administrator had a soldier arrested for bringing the body of Captain Anacleto Moreno without a ticket, as was required by law. Pliego received an angry letter from the headquarters of the Zapata's *Ejército Libertador* demanding the immediate burial of Moreno and the release of the soldier who had been "arbitrarily" imprisoned.[339] Thus, revolutionaries toppled the sacred system of social and hygienic order imposed by the cemetery regulations of the nineteenth-century by demanding honor and prestige in death for their fallen leaders.

The armies not only demanded that the workers bury their leaders and fellow soldiers, but also their prisoners and victims. In February of 1915, a firing squad from the

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[336] Administrators regularly reported soldiers being dropped off for burial without inhumation tickets to the Cemetery Chief and the Department of Public Works. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1027. March 1915.
[337] General J. de la Brigada Mayor de Ings. Del E.M., cuerpo de Ejército del Noreste, Constitucionalista to Director de Obras Públicas, February 18, 1915, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1029.
[338] AHDF, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1133.
[339] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1027.

Constitutionalist Army brought two Zapatistas to the cemetery for execution and burial. The workers buried the bodies in the sixth class area.[340] In 1916, the administrator complained that the Tacubaya Regiment had been dumping bodies of "yaqkis" without inhumation tickets. The bodies were discarded without coffins and in plain sight of the public.[341] The delivery of bodies, whether honored or executed, to Dolores suggests that it was viewed as an all purpose space for the dead.

Despite these constant setbacks, officials still held Pliego responsible for imperfections. The shortage of graves, workers, and carts led to a backup of bodies in the depository and brought Pliego under criticism from the Department of Public Health. A health inspector discovered this violation and reported the ghastly scene to his superiors. Two bodies had been there so long that they were practically skeletons. Another two bodies had been typhoid victims. The inspector also complained that workers performed exhumations in front of mourners and visitors even though regulations stated that all exhumations should be done before the cemetery opened every morning. The Department of Public Works demanded that Pliego correct these deficiencies immediately and suggested that they would be looking for a replacement administrator.[342]

These deficiencies demonstrate how Pliego and his workers frantically tried to keep up with the body delivery. As many as one hundred men worked opening graves in the sixth class area to accommodate the 115-175 bodies arrived for burial a day. Besides opening new graves, workers had to exhume old ones. In order to uphold public health

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[340] Eduardo Lemus to Jefe de Cementerios, February 15, 1915, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3509, Exp. 1027.
[341] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3516, Exp. 1217.
[342] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1106.

standards, they resorted to violating public health laws that limited the hours for inhumations and exhumations, engaging in a circle of grave digging and filling all day long and sometimes into dusk to meet the demand.[343]

The pile-up of bodies in combination with poor pay made workers complain about the dangers of the job. In hope of receiving funds to keep workers, the cemetery chief wrote to the Public Works department describing the awful conditions. He described the job as hard, stinky work that made his employees sick. No food was available during the twelve-hour shifts and they were overwhelmed with fatigue and hunger. The pay was so paltry that they would prefer to quit than have to put up with the conditions.[344]

Workers could find much better pay in other places. In 1916, the administrator complained that he was losing workers to the National Weapons Factory who paid 10 pesos a day to ironworkers and 4.5 pesos to peons, or twice their daily wage at the cemetery.[345] Pliego pleaded for a raise to one peso and fifty cents daily and a ration of corn or beans from the Red Cross or Public Welfare Office. But, these requests were not met and Pliego could not even recruit extra workers to prepare the cemetery for Day of the Dead by offering a prize.[346]

That death had escaped the bounds of the cemetery did not go unnoticed in the international press. Reports on starvation and overcrowding in cemeteries were used to portray the ineptitude and disregard of the revolutionary governments. A *Washington Post* report claimed that families in the "old quarter" of the city were burying their dead

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[343] James Blanely, "Mexico Vast Graveyard: Famine in the Land," *Los Angeles Times*, , November 14, 1915.
[344] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1106.
[345] The cemetery only paid 4.5 and 2.5 pesos for those respective jobs AHDF, Vol. 3516, Exp. 1246.
[346] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1106.

in backyards without coffins.[347] The *Los Angeles Times*, in yellow journalistic hyperbole, called all of Mexico a vast graveyard. On a tour of the Dolores cemetery, correspondent James Blanely remarked on the jovial indifference of the gravediggers as they worked burying hundreds of putrefying bodies. In error, he also reported that the bodies were brought to the cemetery in the wee hours to avoid the judging eyes of the foreign press.[348] In fact, regulations stipulated that bodies be delivered before the cemetery opened for regular service to avoid exposure to the public. Despite errors, reports such these most likely increased the scrutiny of the public health department upon the daily operation of the cemetery.

The press did have its facts correct when it reported that the city's cemeteries had reached capacity. Throughout the 1910s, the threat of suspension of service due to lack of empty graves was a daily concern. The right to an individual grave came under attack for those with the least rights—the pauper dead. Even though they held the least rights, sixth class bodies represented the majority of the cemetery's population and thus occupied the most land. Administrators increasingly looked for ways to lessen the burden of the poor on space and time. Rules were not set in stone and could be modified in times of extreme need. In 1914, the Public Works department requested that the Public Health department authorize the early exhumation of sixth class children's' graves to make space for paid classes of burial, which were full in their own lots.[349] A public announcement was made that more space was needed for adult graves and suggested that families that wanted to

[347] Although the report does not specify where this was happening by name, its focus on poor people's starvation suggest that it was probably Tepito and the surrounding areas of the Zócalo "Hundreds Dying Daily," *The Washington Pos*t, March 5, 1915.
[348] James Blanely, "Mexico a Vast Graveyard," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1915.
[349] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3508, Exp. 1001, September 1914.

rebury their children could purchase a grave in fifth class.[350] In 1915, overcrowding was so severe that only fifth and sixth class lots had open space and the Cemetery Chief warned Public Works that they might have to close the cemetery. In an effort to stave off the closing, the cemetery began opening private lots, such as the Colegio de Corredores, to public service.[351]

In December of 1915, Public Works approved common graves for indigent bodies from hospitals since the ovens were not running. Besides the Decena Trágica, this was the first time that the common grave was used again in the city. The Liberal promise of to each his own individual grave could not withstand the pressure of overcrowding and the threat of disease.[352] Making matters worse, a typhus epidemic had broken out and cemetery workers complained about having to handle these bodies after several of them also developed the disease.[353] In part because of this epidemic, the Department of Public Works approved the common grave.

The abundance of cadavers and the delay in burials led officials to push for cremation instead of burial. The order came from Adolfo de la Huerta, a senior official in the Constitutionalist government. Yet this order demonstrates de la Huerta's ignorance of the daily problems in the cemetery. The ovens were regularly broken and coke was

[350] Announcement, Departamento de Obras Públicas, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3508, Exp. 1001, October 10, 1914.
[351] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3510, Exp. 1054, Sep. 14, 1915.
[352] Obras Públicas to Luis Ezquerro, Administrator, Dec. 29, 1915, AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1137.
[353] AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1137, December 23, 1915.

too scarce and expensive to implement mass cremations.[354] In 1922, Mexico City had one of the highest death rates in the world. Sanitation, despite all of the improvements of the Porfiriato, was still a major concern.

Conclusions

The hierarchies established in the new civil organization of death in the Porfiriato influenced how deaths were handled during the revolution. Many scholars have emphasized the memorialization and consolidation of the bodies and body parts of national heroes in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men and other monuments as a nation-building project.[355] Yet, the ways in which the deaths of regular citizens were portrayed and how their were disposed of and buried also served to construct the nation's image.

The intense battles, epidemics, and starvation resulted in the deaths of countless civilians. Most of these dead received an unceremonious interment in the sixth class area. During the Decena Trágica, civilian deaths reached in the thousands. Bodies were buried quickly to avoid public health threats and many of the safety measures to identify the bodies thrown out for the sake of expediency. The government's inability to manage the large numbers of dead brought them shame and the nation's weakest moments were publicized widely on 1-cent postcards. The political and social upheaval intruded on the daily operation of the cemetery and, with this chaos, the dead became more threatening to the living.

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[354] The price of coke was 29 dollars a ton. Adolfo de la Huerta, Official Mayor de Secretaria de Gobernación, Gobierno Constitucionalista de Mexico, to Alfredo Robles Dominguez, Director General de Obras Públicas, Dec. 6, 1915 AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PD, Vol. 3513, Exp. 1123.

[355] Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*, 375, Esposito, "Death and Disorder in Mexico City" Buchenau, "The Arm and Body of a Revolution."

The events that occurred in the cemetery reveal the contradictory attitudes towards the importance of space. In some cases, its relevance as a sacred space of the dead was completely forgotten as it was ransacked for resources. In others, its symbolic and practical importance as a burial site was heightened, when soldiers demanded, against established laws, that their fallen compatriots receive burials. The ideals that administrators strived to uphold fell under the weight of horses' hooves, artillery shells, and thousands of dead bodies. The previous order that characterized the layout of graves disappeared and with a shortage of workers, the landscaping and upkeep of graves, especially in the far reaches, became too large a task. The Panteón de Dolores in this state could no longer be considered a rural garden cemetery nor a national cemetery. Instead, it was described as a "potter's field."[356]

Not only do these instances highlight the difficulties that the lack of leadership and increased mortality caused the daily operation of the cemetery, but also they demonstrate the increased distance between those who merited a proper burial and those whose bodies were a burden. The Superior Sanitation Council and Department of Public Work's reprimands about disorder in the burial system reveal that their main concern remained hygiene instead of equitable and honorable burials. In contrast, the chaos in the cemetery and the demands for burial made by regiments reflect revolutionaries' emphasis on hierarchy in death. The military's usurpation of first class grave spaces can be

[356] Potter's fields were public cemeteries reserved for the burial of the poor. The term is used by U.S. reporters when describing Dolores and other cemeteries in the city. See James Blanely, "Mexico Vast Graveyard," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 14, 1915.

understood as part of the general disregard towards the wealthy during the Revolution.[357] Military authority trumped legal authority and class hierarchy.

The opening of the Panteón de Dolores in 1879 for public service fulfilled a Liberal promise and gave all citizens the right to a decent, individual grave. By 1910, this right had become a burden on the Departments of Public Works and Public Health. Throughout the 1910s the mortality rate skyrocketed and labor and resources became scarce. Problems that were a nuisance to administrators in the 1890s became severe threats to public health and decency in the 1910s. The onset of the revolution only increased these problems by uprooting the hierarchal systems of burial based on class. By the end of the armed phase of the revolution, the Liberal promise of a grave for every citizen had dissolved. In its place a potter's field, cremation for paupers, and grandiose monuments for martyred heroes had arisen. The cemetery became befitting of lesser national heroes such as Emilio Carranza, an aviator who perished in flight in 1928. The political and social upheaval intruded on the daily operation of the cemetery and with this chaos, the dead became more threatening to the living. In the years following the fighting, bodies were moved from their original resting places to represent the official story more accurately.

The Panteón de Dolores, albeit a national cemetery, is not a Revolutionary cemetery. The Revolution, in its mythic state, was far too big to be contained in one space. Undoubtedly, many people who died during those decades were laid to rest within its walls, but they have long since been exhumed and cremated.

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[357] Alan Knight discusses this attitude in *The Mexican Revolution*.

What began in the mid-nineteenth century attitude towards death as an experience of equality, through practice and overcrowding ended with pageantry towards those exalted by the state and burdensome duty towards those the state was beholden to by law. During the revolution, this inequality was heightened and state funerals and graves took on new meaning in the myth and memory of the nation.

CHAPTER 5:

THE AVIATOR, THE ASSASSIN, AND ÁLVARO OBREGÓN

July 1928 started off triumphantly for the Revolutionary President-elect Alvaro Obregón. He won re-election, proving that the Revolution had stabilized into an established governing regime. The *Cristeros*, a rebellion of Catholics in central Mexico, still raged with sporadic violence in the countryside, but Ambassador Dwight D. Morrow had exerted much diplomatic effort and rumors circulated that the rebels were ready to compromise. Furthermore, aviator Emilio Carranza, labeled the Mexican Charles Lindbergh, had made a series of goodwill flights back and forth to the United States, capturing the hearts of the citizens of both nations. Renewed international attention focused on these successes instead of descriptions of barbarity that filled newspaper pages in the 1910s. Finally, Mexico was emerging from two decades of violence, political upheaval, and betrayal.

The promise of July turned sour on the twelfth. Carranza was waiting in the plaza of the Waldorf Astoria in New York City for the rain to let up so that he could complete his goodwill journey home. He expected to be greeted in Mexico City by congratulatory celebration for setting a national record for the longest-non stop flight. Against all advice, the young pilot got impatient and decided to test his luck with the rain. He took off in the *Mexico-Excelsior* from Roosevelt field. Only an hour after his journey began, Carranza flew into an electrical storm and lightning brought his monoplane down in rural

New Jersey. A family of huckleberry pickers stumbled upon the wreckage and the mangled body of the aviator in a bog early the next morning.[358]

Citizens of Mexico and the United States alike were thrown into shocked grief at the sudden death of Carranza. Captain Carranza had been a revolutionary, helping put down the rebellion of Adolfo de la Huerta in Sonora. In the U.S., his ability to speak English and his friendship with Charles Lindbergh made him an acceptable and modern representative of Mexican masculinity. Obregón even postponed his triumphant return to Mexico City after a successful reelection to show deference and honor to the pilot. Carranza's death was the topic of talk across the country, a hero that all could agree on. One young, devout member of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, told his spiritual advisor, Madre Conchita, that he wished God had struck down the vile Obregón instead. Madre Conchita agreed that, until the anti-clericalist president was dead, the Church and Catholics would never achieve peace or freedom.[359]

As Carranza's body received an elaborate send off in New York City and rode the rails towards home, Obregón rode the rails to Mexico City to be welcomed back as President-elect. On July 17, he headed to a banquet at the posh La Bombilla restaurant in the suburb of San Ángel and joked that it might be dangerous because someone could set off a bomb. As he sat at the banquet enjoying his meal and a glass of wine, a young caricaturist approached him to show the general his drawings. Obregón looked up into the

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[358] Details of the flight preparations and crash are taken from the *New York Times*, July 11-15, 1928. The American Legion Post 11 of Mount Holly, NJ, the site of the crash, maintains a website in honor of Carranza and hosts an annual memorial in his honor. *www.post11.org/carranza*.

[359] *El Jurado de Toral y La Madre Conchita. Lo que se dijo y lo que no se dijo en el sensacional juicio* (México: Versión taquigráfica, 1929) 11. The date cited for the conversation in the trial proceeds is incorrectly listed as July 7, so this anecdote has to be viewed with suspicion.

barrel of a pistol that felled him with six shots at point blank range. The assassin later identified as a Catholic fanatic and Cristero sympathizer, José de León Toral, closed his eyes and waited for death. Yet his death would have to wait.[360] Obregón's friends cried for him to be apprehended and interrogated so that the real authors of the crime could be uncovered.[361]

The funerals of the aviator, the assassin, and Álvaro Obregón demonstrate the renewed importance of public funerals as a means of political expression.[362] They were the largest public events in the years in which the revolutionaries moved from battlefields to government offices. In the summer of 1928, Mexico lost two of its most dynamic avatars of the Revolution's promise of a brighter future in Captain Carranza and General Obregón. Their deaths filled the front pages of national and international papers and engulfed the nation in grief. An estimated one hundred thousand people bid Obregón's body farewell as it left the capital by train on its way to his home state of Sonora for burial. As many, if not more, met the body of the dashing pilot as it arrived by train for burial in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men in the Panteón de Dolores. Nine months later, a firing squad executed Obregón's assassin, José de Leon Toral, and his body was laid to rest in the Panteón Español. Over two hundred thousand people, mostly women, viewed his funeral procession, despite a ban by the Chief of Police. The revolutionary

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[360] Many sources agree that Toral thought he would be killed immediately. Reportedly, a note was found on his person that said "To my family knowing that I am going to die in compliance with a principal, I send you my farewell, Signed, J." Agustín Sánchez González, *El General en La Bombilla*, (México: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 1993) 39.

[361] Descriptions of Obregón's last days and death are taken from *El Universal* July 18-20, 1928, *Excelsior* July 18-20, 1928.

[362] Some of the details about the funerals of Alvaro Obregón and José de León Toral come from my master's thesis. see Amanda López, "El Manco Y El Mártir: Funerals, the Family, and Popular Memory of the Assassination of Alvaro Obregón, 1928-1929" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Arizona, 2004).

government used the funerals to promote its unification project, commonly known as the Revolutionary Family in a time of crisis, but citizens, often divided along gender lines, interpreted, supported, and contested the government's actions in their own ways. [363]

Death and the Pantheon of Revolutionary Heroes

These funerals occurred within a larger history of assassinations, executions, and violent deaths that characterized the revolutionary period. Much has been written on the pantheon of Revolutionary heroes and the symbolic power they held in the inculcation of the ideals of the Revolutionary Family.[364] Only the most exemplary leaders of the family received honored places of rest, and in most cases, this required exhumation and transfer of the body to a more appropriate place. The death of Obregón gave the fledgling revolutionary government its first opportunity to honor a legitimate Revolutionary hero, albeit under strained circumstances. Obregón was not the first martyr of the Revolution, but he was the first to die at the hands of the Church. Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, Venustiano Carranza, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa had all been betrayed by their own. Obregón's death came at the unlikely hands of a fervent, but mild-mannered Catholic who had never fired a gun before he killed him. Emilio Carranza, a lesser hero,

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[363] Avner Ben-Amos, "Patriotism and Popular Culture in the State Funerals of the French Third Republic," *History of European Ideas* 16 (1993): 459-465; James R. Lehning, "Gossiping about Gambetta: Contested Memories in the Early Third Republic," *French Historical Studies* 18:1 (1993): 237-254.
[364] Illene V. O'Malley, *The Myth of the Mexican Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940 (*New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

but a hero nonetheless, had led an aerial unit in quelling the de la Huerta revolt. President Plutarco Elías Calles's government reinstituted Porfirian pomp in the funerals of Obregón and Carranza, but the political climate and the burial customs had changed since the days of the *ancien régime*.

The funeral reforms in the fifty years preceding the 1920s in combination with the unmanageable population loss during the revolution made elaborate funerals and public viewings a rare privilege. The value of individuality in the burial of ordinary citizens and rank and file soldiers had fallen to mass graves and cremations. During the revolution, the number of bodies often became so overwhelming that they were viewed as more of a nuisance and a threat. Most soldiers did not receive a proper burial, and battlefields carried little memorial significance after the fighting stopped.[365] Many civilians also lost the privilege of individual burial, due to mass death in battles and epidemics.

Instead, the revolutionary government constructed a nation built on the promises of the future instead of the bones of the past. They put money into public art and education campaigns to inculcate the young into the Revolutionary Family. [366] The bodies of revolutionary martyrs, honored in monuments around the city, stood in for the bodies and graves of the million lost. But by 1928, the fighting had died down and the nascent revolutionary government searched to establish its legitimacy, the funeral once again became a powerful symbolic performance.

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[365]This is in contrast to the U.S. Civil War, during which bodies carried so much importance that entire battlefields were transformed into national cemeteries, Laderman, *The Sacred Remains*, 144.

[366] Elena Jackson Albarrán examines the efforts at inculcating children in the new revolutionary nation in "Children of the Revolution: Constructing the Mexican Citizen, 1920-1940" (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008).

Yet the cemetery no longer seemed suitable as final resting place for the Revolution's most important heroes. During the Porfiriato, state heroes were buried in the Panteón de Dolores. Some heroes were even exhumed and reburied in a place more fitting for their status. Cemeteries needed to reflect the social hierarchy of the living and thus need to be headed by Liberal men.[367] During the first decade of the Revolution, although funerals were more haphazard and spontaneous, the Panteón de Dolores still remained an appropriate place for burial for military heroes. By the 1920s, this had changed.

The Rotunda of Illustrious Men continued to receive the bodies of cultural and historical citizens of note, but the remains of leading revolutionary heroes were provided places outside the cemetery itself.[368] None of its major figures are buried within the Panteón de Dolores, and only two are buried within cemeteries.[369] The Monument to the Revolution, located near Reforma street and originally planned by Díaz as a legislative building, was made into a Revolutionary monument by the government in 1933.[370] Venustiano Carranza, originally buried in a humble third-class grave in the Panteón de

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[367] Matthew D. Esposito, "Death and Disorder in Mexico City: The State Funeral of Manuel Romero Rubio," in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction*, Eds. William H. Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy (Wilmington: SR Books, 2000); Esposito's study is influenced heavily by similar studies on French state funerals. See Avner Ben-Amos, "Patriotism and Popular Culture in the State Funerals of the French Third Republic," *History of European Ideas* 16 (1993): 459-465. and *Funerals, Politics, and Memory in Modern France, 1789-1996,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James R. Lehning, "Gossiping about Gambetta: Contested Memories in the Early Third Republic," *French Historical Studies* 18:1 (1993): 237-254.

[368] My master's thesis describes a revolutionary state funeral. See Amanda López, "El Manco Y El Mártir: Funerals, the Family, and Popular Memory of the Assassination of Alvaro Obregón, 1928-1929" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Arizona, 2004).

[369] Madero's vice president, José Maria Pino Suarez's body was moved to the Rotunda de Hombres Ilustres in 1986, but he is the only assassinated Revolutionary figure within it. In addition, nothing about the revolution is mentioned on his tombstone.

[370] Benjamin, *La Revolución*, 117-130.

Dolores, was transferred to the Monument to the Revolution in 1942.[371] Likewise, the body Francisco Madero, originally interred in the Panteón Francés, now rests in the Monument, eventually joined by Plutarco Elías Calles, Lázaro Cárdenas, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. The deaths of these revolutionaries as well as their funerals took place at a time when daily violence was still a major concern and their funerals were rushed, and public participation was discouraged if not explicitly made illegal.

As scholars have pointed out, the Monument to the Revolution attempted to unite all the diverse and regional factions of the revolution within a symbolic family tomb.[372] The placement of bodies and body parts outside the hallowed ground of the cemetery give them more symbolic power because the location of the Monument off of one of the main streets for parades allowed them to be part of national holidays. The separation of the dead and the living continued to be important to public health, but some remains served as power instructors for the living and thus could not be hidden in the cemetery. Zapata, in death, it seems, became too large a figure for even the Monument to the Revolution, and now rests in the base of a poorly sculpted likeness in Morelos.[373] In all, the leaders of the Revolutionary Family were too important for any cemetery because cemeteries had declined as national spaces due to the overcrowding issues of the

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[371] John Foster Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 59.
[372] For discussion of the Monumento de la Revolución see Benjamin, *La Revolución*. Samuel Brunk "The Mortal Remains of Emiliano Zapata" in *Death, Dismemberment and Memory,* 141-178.
[373] Brunk says that his resurrection as a counter-cultural and political figure in the 1970s thwarted the PRI's attempts to add him to the family tomb, "The Mortal Remains," 166-167.

preceding decades.[374] The Revolutionary Family, as suggested by the government's actions, deserved better than a potter's field.

Yet Obregón and Carranza both rest in public cemeteries and were not part of the monumentalization and memorialization of the myth of the Revolutionary Family. Thus, the funerals of the aviator, the assassin, and Álvaro Obregón reveal much more about the role of public funerals in performing and contesting the political and social programs of the time rather than their power in constructing a collective memory of the Revolution. They took place at a time when all public religious rites had been suspended and government and national iconography and rhetoric could be performed without competing religious symbols.

Toral's funeral offers an example of the public rejection of the messages in the Obregón and Carranza funerals and the display of defiance by women. The absence of national symbols, except for the coercion and repression represented by the police, allowed the crowd to fill the ceremony with their own, mostly religious, meaning. Furthermore, that many residents of the capital likely attended at least two if not all three of the funerals demonstrates that they could hold seemingly contradictory allegiances and that in the end, the crowd decided who was worthy of mourning and support.

[374] Benjamin has looked at this process through the construction of the myth of the reified Revolution, which Obregón and Calles attempted to construct in the 1920s by promoting the idea of a unified Revolutionary Family. *La Revolución,* 22.

The Aviator

In the weeks before his tragic death, Americans had warmly welcomed Captain Emilio Carranza as a good-will ambassador and a Mexican equivalent of the beloved aviator, Charles Lindbergh. Carranza's multiple flights between Mexico and the United States made in him a popular hero—young, handsome, and bilingual—that citizens of both countries embraced as a symbol of the Mexico's new era, devoid of revolutionary connotations of violence and betrayal. When the twenty-two year-old pilot's plane crashed, the two countries were bound in shared grief. A crowd of 200,000 attended his funeral service in New York. At the time, it was the largest public gathering for a foreign citizen in the history of the United States. Likewise, over 250,000 residents of Mexico City met the train that carried his body. His funeral sendoff in New York and final burial in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men demonstrate the ways in which death and its accompanying rituals can serve as symbolic acts of international diplomacy.

The United States ceremonies for Carranza demonstrated the spirit of cooperation, the acts of diplomacy, and the military strength of both countries. U.S. government officials provided Carranza with a state funeral in New York with full military honors bestowed upon him by the U.S. State Department. Furthermore, it honored the request of Consul General Arturo M. Elías that no religious services be held.[375] The government politely declined the United States government's offer to transport the remains back to the capital on the *USS Florida*, a navy warship, stating that travel by rail would be more practical

[375] *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1928.

and allow Coahuilans a chance to bid farewell to their native son.[376] Indeed, traveling by rail across the border and through Mexico gave more people in both countries an opportunity to mourn the fallen hero.

Americans displayed genuine grief and curiosity at the death of Carranza. The aviator's body had reached New York by Sunday and crowds demanded to see it. A team of nine surgeons worked in vain to reconstruct his mangled face, but in the end, suggested that the coffin remain sealed. Nevertheless, the body was displayed in a plain oak coffin with a glass panel for viewing his head and shoulders. The plainly visible injuries did not deter mourners: over 200 people filed past his body within the first hour and the funeral home had to extend viewing hours well past midnight.[377] After two days, the Consul General Elías ordered that the coffin be closed, but people continued to file past to pay their respects. The *Washington Post* noted that women formed the majority of the visitors.[378] Carranza's father, Sebastián, an accountant in the Mexican consulate, refused to view his son's body, but planned to accompany it on the journey home.

The funeral march to Pennsylvania Station on Wednesday remains the largest public demonstration of grief for a Mexican citizen in the United States. The ceremonies mixed symbolic elements of ritual from both nations. A crowd of 250,000 watched in silence as the coffin, draped in the flags of Mexico and the United States, paraded down Broadway Avenue. A riderless horse shrouded in black with a pair of boots reversed in the stirrups—one of the nation's most prestigious military honors—followed behind. Ten

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[376] *The Washington Post*, July 15, 1928. In addition, the idea of a U.S. warship off the Mexican coast most likely brought back unpleasant memories of the invasion of Veracruz in the minds of politicians and citizens.
[377] *New York Times*, July 15, 1928.
[378] *Washington Post*, July 17, 1928.

thousand U.S. troops marched in the cortege to the train station. Several civic and fraternal organizations participated. The pall bearers included diplomatic representatives of both nations. The U.S. military band played the Mexican national anthem. The combined ceremony in honor of Carranza's death was a rare example of cooperation in the tenuous relationship between the two countries.

Curiosity and admiration extended far beyond New York. Advances in communication technology allowed the whole nation to participate in mourning the young pilot. His memorial service was on Saturday night was one of the first country-wide broadcasts, carried by stations in Washington, Chicago, Detroit, and Atlanta, for example. Stations also broadcast the funeral cortege, featuring a play-by-play by a clergyman and microphones along the parade route to recreate the experience for the listeners.[379] In addition, demand from cities across the U.S. to see the body made the funeral cortege reschedule its quick journey home. The train stopped in Dayton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; and San Antonio, Texas, among other cities. All along the rail route, military men, civilians, and local officials came out to greet the train. Planes flew low to drop flowers on the traveling Pullmans.[380] Mexican citizens living in San Antonio along with military officials from Fort Sam Houston planned a memorial with infantry, cavalry, and a military band. In addition, a group of over one hundred airplanes planned to meet up with the train in Austin to accompany the train to San Antonio.

Meanwhile, when the news of the death reached Mexico, the capital transformed itself into a funeral parlor to honor a national hero. The government declared a week of

[379] *New York Times*, July 17, 1928.
[380] *Washington Post*, July 20, 1928.

official mourning, lowered all flags to half mast, and raised the captain's rank to general. Businesses and homes draped their facades with black crepe. Theater performances and celebrations were cancelled. President-elect Alvaro Obregón ordered the festivities for his triumphant return to the capital to be suspended and the French colony even cancelled its annual Bastille Day celebration. Cities along the rail route also planned events to honor the pilot, some with only a tangentially related national theme. For example, when the train stopped in Querétaro, the city performed a reenactment of the execution of Maximilian, the Austrian prince who had served as Mexico's emperor under French occupation in the 1860s.[381] These preparations were based on state funeral protocol developed during the Porfirian age and demonstrate a continuity, at least for lesser heroes, in the rituals and places of burial.

As the country busied itself in planning a proper funeral for the aviator, it was shocked and engulfed in grief anew with the assassination of Obregón. The crime took Carranza off of the front pages, but did not lessen the popular interest in his body and funeral. The preparations for the president-elect's funeral were hasty and ad hoc compared to the days of planning put into the pilot's. The president-elect's body left Mexico City by train several days before Carranza's body arrived.

When Carranza's train pulled into the station at Tacuba, it became clear that the public outpouring of sorrow for the aviator eclipsed the politically-charged ceremony of Obregón.[382] Over 250,000 mourners greeted the train upon its arrival in the capital on July 22 and lined the streets from the station to the National Palace, where the body lay in

[381] *New York Times*, July 23, 1928.
[382] Only 100,000 turned out in Mexico City for Obregón's final sendoff.

state overnight in the offices of the Ministry of War. A group of 25,000 school children were organized to follow and throw flowers at his coffin in the cortege from the train station to the office of the Ministry of War. The next day, over 100,000 accompanied it to the Dolores Cemetery.[383]

The spirit of diplomacy that characterized his ceremony in the U.S. continued in Carranza's home country. Ambassador Morrow met the train at the station and the crowds parted in respect to let him approach the coffin. U.S. newspapers stressed the respect and friendliness shown to Morrow by Mexicans as a sign of their civility and deference. U.S. military men accompanied the body and stood in the honor guard along with Mexican officers. Even within the national palace, the casket remained draped with the flags of both nations.[384]

The national government saw in Carranza's funeral an opportunity to bring the nation together in collective mourning in hopes of alleviating the political tension that had been building up since Obregón's death. Toral had yet to make a full confession and Calles, CROM (Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers) leader Luis Morones, and others had suffered accusations of complicity in the crime. Obregonistas Aurelio Manrique and Antonio Soto y Gama had even threatened war if Morones, whom they suspected, did not resign. The *New York Times* reported that the government was worried about a public demonstration. Both Obregonistas and the CROM planned to march in the procession and there was the added threat of a clash between revolutionary and religious groups.

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[383] *New York Times*, July 20-24, 1928. The report on July 24 claims half a million people greeted the train upon its arrival, but most sources use the quarter million estimate.
[384] *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1928.

Instead, politics were set aside, and the mass of people calmly paid their respects to the fallen aviator. In eulogies, officials emphasized the value of sacrifice, courage, and devotion for the good of the nation.

A crowd of all classes stood and marched along the route and heard these eulogies. Among the funeral procession were an estimated 30,000 members of the CROM. Barefoot peons marched alongside uniformed cadets along the Paseo de la Reforma. Women and children showered the coffin with flowers. Airplanes flew over the cemetery during the procession and service. In place of a priest, Minister of War Joaquin Amaro presided over the burial. Calles did not attend, supposedly due to illness, but most likely to lessen the possibility of public disturbance. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that it was the largest crowd since Madero led the revolutionaries into capital triumphantly after the fall of the Díaz government in 1911.[385]

The death of Emilio Carranza created a bond of grief between Mexico and the United States. His funeral ceremony and posthumous honors in cities across the United States demonstrated a renewed respect for Mexico that had eroded during the revolution. For Mexicans, who had been shocked by Obregón's assassination and the possible return of political uncertainty and violence, Carranza's funeral in the capital represented a chance to set political differences aside temporarily to mourn a non-partisan hero. Though his popularity exceeded Obregón's, his placement within the Rotunda of Hombres Ilustres foretells the increasing use of the burial space for cultural heroes, by a

[385] John Cornyn, "Great Thongs Mourn the Mexican Goodwill Ace," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 25, 1928.

revolutionary regime focused on building a nation led by the martyred heroes of the Revolutionary Family.

Álvaro Obregón

Less than a week after Carranza's plane went down in New Jersey and before his body returned to Mexico, President-elect Álvaro Obregón's reputation for immortality died at the hands of a young religious fanatic. The assassination of the president-elect endangered the nascent stability of the revolutionary government and eradicated the patina of invincibility that enveloped the legendary general. In accordance with Obregón's wishes, he was buried in his home state of Sonora. His body received a nationally organized send-off in Mexico City and provides the best comparison with those of Carranza and Toral.[386] The steps that the government took to honor Obregón and the eulogies of his closest friends reflect the delicate balance required to maintain order in a time filled with suspicions and accusations. The living patriarch of the Revolutionary Family had fallen and his funeral called on his nation of sons to continue in his image.

The details of Obregón's funeral echoed those of Porfirian funerals, but the context was heightened because of the political upheaval caused by the death. The general's body lay in state in the National Palace overnight, then was escorted through the city past throngs of people and loaded onto a train bound to Sonora for burial.[387] The

[386] For an analysis of the train ride home and the burial in Huatabampo, Sonora, see López, "El Manco y el Martir," 2004.
[387] Despite his national reputation, Obregón identified himself as a Sonoran, and returned to Huatabampo to vacation as often as possible. For more information on Obregón's Sonoran identity, see Linda Hall, *Alvaro*

official ceremony in Mexico City for the dead general provided President Plutarco Calles and other national figures the opportunity to pay homage publicly to Obregón and dispel any rumors of complicity in the crime. During these four days, Obregón still held strong popular support, and his reputation as a peacemaker was furthered in his death. Eulogies, speeches, and announcements given in the aftermath show how the discourse and concept of the family was articulated.

His political family bestowed on him a somber and patriotic sendoff in Mexico City. Political leaders and allies invoked his identity as a father and a revolutionary in the aftermath of his death to legitimize their views about the political and ideological configuration of the revolutionary regime. His symbolic identity as the embodiment of the Revolution and his private identity as a father intermingled in speeches, correspondence, and newspaper articles. His funeral ceremonies proved to be his final act as a peacemaker as the nation mourned the loss of the head of the Revolutionary Family.

After the smoke cleared and the assassin was in police custody, Obregón's closest associates, Aarón Sáenz, Arturo H. Orcí, Aurelio Manrique, Ricardo Topete, and Federico Medrano, accompanied his body to his house on Avenida Juárez. Crowds, mostly of men, had already gathered outside. Mounted police were dispatched to maintain control of the onlookers who waited for a chance to pay their respects to the president-elect.[388] President Calles and his personal secretary, Fernando Torreblanca,

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Obregon: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981).

[388] *El Universal*, July 18, 1928.

arrived at the house shortly after the corpse.[389] Calles's actions at this critical moment required careful consideration of the potential volatility of the situation, and, above all, the necessity of order. He was considered by many to be the prime suspect as the intellectual author of the assassination.[390]

The general had stipulated the details of his burial long before his death. Obregón requested a simple funeral without military representation, on his hacienda "El Nainari" instead of in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men.[391] Even if these wishes had not been explicitly expressed, there was little chance that Obregón would have been buried at the Panteón de Dolores. He was too important of a figure to be buried in the Rotunda. If he had been buried in the city, he most likely would have been buried in the Panteón Francés or Panteón Español. No doubt, these places did not really fit his grandeur either, and thus, the only option was for him to go home. The government followed his wishes, but Calles could not afford to dispatch Obregón's body to Sonora without any public honors because it would suggest his support of the assassination. Yet pomp was kept to a minimum: the viewing and the funeral procession were completed in less than twenty-four hours after the assassination.

The national government and other political groups publicly encouraged citizens to take to the streets to show their support for their fallen leader. On July 18, *El Universal* printed an announcement from President Calles informing the public of the

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[389] Besides being the general's friends, Sáenz was the director of the Centro Director Obregonista, Orcí had served as Minister to Holland, Manrique was a deputy from San Luis Potosí, Topete was a deputy from Sonora, and Medrano was a deputy and president of the Confederation of Socialistic Revolutionary Parties of Guanajuato. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 105,367, 370.
[390] Ibid, 371, 380.
[391] *El Universal,* July 19, 1928. In the end, the general's wishes were not met and he was buried in a public cemetery in Huatabampo, Sonora.

assassination and inviting the city's residents to accompany the casket to the Estación Colonia, where it would be transported to Sonora. El Centro Director Obregonista petitioned people to show their support and protest the detestable crime by attending the funerals.[392] In addition, the city itself became funeral parlor and cemetery. Cantinas and casinos had been ordered closed out of respect. In Sonora, the governor ordered eight days of mourning, including the closure of public offices.[393] These closures freed people to attend the funeral instead of being distracted by work and vice.

The National Palace served as the secular funeral chapel for the fallen leader. On the night of his death, Obregón's body was taken to lie in state in the Ambassadors' Salon.[394] His body had been embalmed to preserve it for the train ride to Sonora, but the coffin would remain closed.[395] The entrance featured an honor guard that saluted the car as it passed through the gates. President Calles and others watched from the balcony as the casket was unloaded from the car by a mixed group of civil and military pallbearers.[396]

Yet these ceremonies lacked the overtly military character of the Porfirian era. Obregón wore a black suit instead of his general's uniform. He rested in a dark copper coffin with bronze adornments that sat on a catafalque flanked by four large electric

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[392] Ibid. July 18, 1928
[393] Topete to Municipal Presidents, July 17, 1928, Archivo General del Estado de Sonora (AGS), Tomo 89, Tranquilidad Pública.
[394] *El Universal*, July 18, 1928.
[395] Embalming was still a relatively new process in Mexico and had only begun to be practiced with regularity in the last ten years. For example, in 1918, a doctor suggested adopting the process for Spanish flu victims. AHDF, Fon. ADF, Secc. PC, Vol. 3475, Exp. 1, 1918.
[396] Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, 269, 312, 451.

candelabras.[397] The mirrors and windows of the salon were draped with black crepe curtains, details provided by the Eusebio Gayosso Funeral Agency, the oldest and most respected in the nation.[398] The lack of any religious iconography reflected the anti-clericalism of the government. In fact, religious rites were also absent in his home viewing and burial.[399] The honor guard that stood vigil mixed civilian friends and military generals, including U.S. Ambassador Dwight Morrow and President Calles.

Public mourning included displays of emotion, even by politicians. Indeed, their emotions acted as an instructive model for all men within the Revolutionary Family. *El Universal* reported that the emotion was visible on Calles's face as greeted the coffin.[400] The governor of Jalisco, Margarito Ramírez, gave a speech in which he claimed to have considered suicide upon hearing of the death of the general.[401] *El Universal* reported many in the funeral procession were crying and that Aaron Sáenz's eyes were visibly red due to his weeping. A group of "distinguished ladies" related to Obregón, including Sara Tapia de Polín and Mercedes E. de Obregón, his sisters-in-law, sat together in an adjacent room and no one was allowed to visit them except immediate family. Their emotion and mourning, deemed more private, was not acceptable for public viewing.

Newspaper reports showed that people heeded the call for the final tribute to the general. *El Universal* stated that over 60,000 paid their respects to Obregón in the

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[397] *El Universal*, July 18, 19, 1928.
[398] Much work needs to be done on the Eusebio Gayosso agency and its role in commercializing the funeral industry, but the sources remain elusive. For a preliminary inquiry, see Amanda Lopez, "A Coffin for Every Class: The Eusebio Gayosso Funeral Agency and the Consumption of Death in Modern Mexico, 1875-1930" (unpublished paper, 2009).
[399] *Arizona Republic*, July 23, 1928.
[400] *El Universal*, July 19, 1928
[401] Ibid, July 20, 1928.

National Palace.[402] Every five minutes, groups of 240 were allowed to enter the palace and view the body. As the funeral procession left the National Palace, hundreds of people blocked the entrance, straining for a look, and a multitude filled the zócalo. The procession headed down Avenida Madero, led by the cadets of the Cavalry School of the Military College, followed by the coffin, the Presidential Guards, and the Guard of the Industrial School of Public Charity. A military band accompanied the procession, playing a march of honor. *El Universal* reported that the National Army had wanted to offer more posthumous honors to Obregón, but, to fulfill his wishes, they had restricted the military honors to two lines of battalions and the schools. Instead, Obregón received a light dash of Porfirian pageantry.

President Calles marched in the funeral procession, following solemnly behind the funeral car. The balance of authority and deference was crucial for Calles. Too much prominence during the funeral procession might support the theory of his complicity in the murder and invite rebellion. Yet some visibility prevented rivals from using the ceremony as a venue to proclaim their legitimacy against Calles's government. The small procession did dual duty of honoring Obregon's request and limiting the size of the crowd in case of rioting. Despite the large crowds, the gatherings seem to have been peaceful; no reports of violence or injury appeared in the papers.

The crowds of men that lined the Paseo de la Reforma and other major streets in the capital listened to eulogies given by some of Obregon's closest friends and associates. These speeches reinforced the general's ideal image as a leader and father in the nation

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[402] Ibid.

and the national family. Aarón Sáenz, a close friend and the former governor of Nuevo León, gave a lengthy, emotional speech in front of the Obregonista headquarters. Sáenz directed his speech to Obregón, as if the general were still alive, requesting permission from the general to pay him tribute. He praised Obregón's reputation for facing his opponents openly and subtly recalled the sacrifice of Obregón's arm for the Revolution. Obregón displayed courage and generosity because he had selflessly given his talents to the *patria* and to the Revolution. Sáenz called the crowd the "sons of the Revolution" and asserted that only under Obregón's plan and example would the Revolution continue to fight. Finally, he pledged that they would continue in his name and with the same faith as their mentor. Sáenz never referred to himself directly in the speech, but included himself with the audience by using "*nosotros*" or "we." At the doorway of the funeral train, Obregón's close friend, Deputy Aurelio Manrique, gave an impassioned speech and called to the crowd to shout "justicia", or "justice." The crowed answered "justicia" and the men of the crowd raised their arms in reply, showing that they too suspected that authors of the general's death could still be unknown.[403] These speeches attempted to build allegiance around the figure of Obregón as much as the Revolution, suggesting that much infighting still remained.

When the body reached the train station, a squadron of twelve military planes flew overhead, releasing red carnations on the crowd that had gathered before the arrival of the cortege. The families of Obregón's relatives and associates had provided the decorations for the chapel created within a car of the Tren Olivo, the official presidential

[403] This section is based on *El Universal*, July 19, 1928.

train. Over one hundred funeral wreaths filled the cars of the train. Inside, the general's coffin was covered with the Mexican flag. A bouquet of white carnations given by Sáenz's wife, Margarita Couret de Sáenz, in honor of the general's widow, María Tapia, lay at the foot of the coffin. The red flowers signified the deep love and respect towards Obregón and the white flowers suggested innocence in death.[404] Many who did not attend, such as President Calvin Coolidge, Secretary Frank B. Kellog, and Ambassador Morrow, sent flowers.[405]

Obregón's farewell precariously balanced the final requests of the general and the needs of the government. Obregón had specified that the military should refrain from any tributes, but unceremoniously loading the body onto a train, considering the mysteries around the murder, would have been dangerous. The limitation in the formal procession to schools, the band, and the lower battalions indicated an attempt to follow Obregón's wishes, and also reinforced his image as a father-figure in the revolution. Furthermore, burying him in a suit instead of his military uniform complied with his wishes and foreshadowed the government's transition from military to civilian rule. The brevity of the ceremony officially followed Obregón requests and allowed the government to remove the body, a symbol of its vulnerability, from the charged atmosphere. The ceremony appears to have been judged as appropriate because the event remained peaceful.

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[404] According to the Victorian language of flowers, deep red carnations signify "Alas, my poor heart." James McCabe, *The Language and Sentiment of Flowers* (New York: Applewood Books, 1999).
[405] *New York Times*, July 19, 1928.

Nevertheless, groups still used the ceremony subtly to promote their authority. Obregón's body led the procession because the question of succession remained uncertain. The display of Obregón's body in the National Palace and the participation of national and international dignitaries reinforced the image of Obregón's authority. The invitation from Plutarco Calles to the city indicated the official nature of Obregón's sendoff and reaffirmed that the government was under his control.

Yet the Centro Director Obregonista also published a formal invitation. Instead of showing unity with the government, this suggests that the Center claimed authority in the invitation as the true representative of Obregón and therefore, the Revolution. Calles's muted appearance at the ceremony enabled him to show respect for his fallen friend without making any statements that could be incendiary. Sáenz demonstrated his deference to Obregón's authority even in death. Obregonistas used the funeral procession to demonstrate their continued support for the general and some used it to challenge Calles. Involving the crowds in their speeches allowed them to show their potential support.

Since presidential succession had still to be decided, no revolutionary could afford to act as a leader at the funeral because it might indicate desire for national control. Overtly using the general's funeral as a means for political advancement could cast suspicion on involvement in the murder or on plans for rebellion. Obregón's identity became the center of attention not only because it was his funeral, but also because the situation was too volatile for politicians to draw attention upon themselves. Therefore, revolutionary leaders deferred to the authority of Obregón by invoking his memory and

power lay symbolically in the body of the dead general.[406] Commitment to Obregón became synonymous with commitment to the revolution.[407]

From his assassination at the all-male banquet to his send-off at the Estación Colonia, men dominated the ceremonies, as participants and onlookers. The women who were allowed to participate, mainly family members, were segregated from the rest of the participants. When Sáenz spoke of the sons of the revolution and implored for the crowd to carry on Obregón's ideal, he was speaking strictly to men. The open weeping of many of Obregón's associates, including Sáenz and Manrique, suggest that displays of emotion were acceptable for men in public and that political allegiances approximated familial ties. Finally, the almost exclusively male participation in the funerals highlights the gendered construction of the idea of the Revolutionary Family. The family was made of and for men, and women could only play a marginal role.

Government officials and subordinate revolutionaries used Obregón's funeral to claim their authority as the legitimate heirs to his legacy. Popular attendance at the farewell, encouraged by the government and Obregonistas, represented allegiance to the revolution and protest against the shocking crime. The peaceful attendance at the cortege that marched through the city demonstrated the government's ability and authority to maintain control, even in times of political crisis.

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[406] Katherine Verdery argues that bodies have a power much stronger than abstract notions in promoting the government's program because bodies have physical presence that the citizenry can confirm. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) 27-33.

[407] Jürgen Buchenau has shown that in subsequent years Obregón's memory was used by politicians to both legitimate the power of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and criticize it from straying from the true ideals of the revolution. My research indicates that this tactic began immediately after his death. Jürgen Buchenau, "The Arm and Body of a Revolution: Remembering Mexico's Last Caudillo, Alvaro Obregón" in Lyman L. Johnson, ed., *Death, Dismemberment, and Memory: The Politics of the Body in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

The Assassin

The deaths of Carranza and Obregón shocked, but their funerals allowed the government to honor model citizens and leaders. In contrast, José de León Toral was an enemy of the nation and of the Revolutionary Family. The government ordered that no public demonstration of mourning would be permitted after his execution, but hundreds of thousands of people, mostly women, defied the order and lined the streets along the path of the funeral cortege.[408] Toral's funeral eclipsed Obregón's in public participation and demonstrated a strong resistance to the idea of a Revolutionary pantheon of heroes. It served as one of the most powerful protests against the anti-clericalism of the revolution. In death, the young Toral represented the million martyred sons and husbands that the revolution had claimed.

Toral's execution was widely opposed. He was a hero not only to the Cristero movement, but also to a huge population of devout women whose religious lives had been disrupted by the anticlerical reforms and the Church strike. Obregón's assassination stalled peace negotiations between the Cristero rebels and the government.[409] Toral, a young, handsome father, was also a member of the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty (LDLR). He had been a close friend of Father Miguel Pro, who was executed in 1927 for allegedly attempting to assassinate Obregón. Women who believed that Pro had been unjustly executed saw in Toral many of the same qualities as the young

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[408] Robert E. Quirk mentions the large turnout at Toral's funeral, but says that the government did not interfere with the funeral. The pictures and news reports of the event disagree. *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church*, *1910-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973) 238.

[409] Quirk claims that no progress had been made between the assassination and the execution. *The Mexican Revolution and the Catholic Church*, 237.

priest.[410] Despite Toral's guilt in murdering the president-elect, his image as a pious believer, father, and son drew women to his cause. Throughout the trial, middle and lower class women sat as the attentive audience.[411]

Women's interest in the trial and support of Toral made them targets of anti-Toral propaganda. Anonymous fliers published in newspapers and posted in streets appealed to the widows and orphans of the Revolution and called on the jurors to bring justice.[412] This discourse included women within the Revolutionary family and argued that his execution would bring justice for their husbands. Many women could not be swayed so easily.

Instead, they flooded the penitentiary with messages for Toral and organized letter writing campaigns to President Emilio Portes Gil, who had been appointed interim president by Calles in 1928, begging for clemency.[413] They bombarded not only Portes Gil, but also his wife, Carmen, and Obregón's widow, María Tapia, with requests for clemency and they invoked their role as mothers and Mexicans in the letters. Toral's lawyers appealed to the Supreme Court who denied the request on February 6, 1929. Two days later, President Portes Gil sealed Toral's fate when he denied the petition for executive clemency. [414] Toral's execution was scheduled for the next day.

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[410] Rubén Alberto Arroyo Gaitán, *Calles, el conflicto religioso, y el martirio del Padre Pro* (México: Instituto de Ciencias, 1988); David C. Bailey *¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).
[411] *Excelsior*, February 7, 1929.
[412] Anonymous Flier, Archivo General de la Nación (cited hereafter as AGN), Colección Presidenciales, Emilio Portes Gil, caja 24, expediente 779/104.
[413] *Excelsior*, February 9, 1929. For a discussion of some of these pardon requests see Lopez, "El Manco y el Mártir," Chapter 3.
[414] *New York Times*, February 8, 1929.

From the moment Toral's body left the penitentiary until his coffin was lowered into a grave at the Panteón Español, women and men rejected the government's ban on a public funeral and vociferously claimed their right to participate in public religious rites and mourn a fallen son. In so doing, women, and some men, challenged the authority of the revolutionary government, demonstrated their opposition to its anti-clerical policies, and indicated a boundary between what they regarded as public and private space. The great show of support for Toral forced the government to compromise its enforcement of order and relinquish some control of the city to its residents and thus recognize the wide support for the Cristero cause.

Residents of his family's suburban middle class neighborhood, Santa María la Ribera, showed some of the strongest public support for Toral. A crowd of mostly women began to gather outside the Toral family home on 214 Sabino Street awaiting the body's arrival from the penitentiary.[415] Established in the 1880s, Santa María was regarded as a modern, clean neighborhood. Its women were educated and devout Catholics.[416] The death of the young, religious man of the community brought the pious women and men of the neighborhood into the streets, to their windows, and onto their rooftops. When the police and fire department entered their space, they were unaccustomed to such encroachment. Men and women reacted to the government's

[415] *Excelsior*, February 10 & 11, 1929.
[416] Although Johns' description is of Santa Maria during the Porfiriato, the neighborhood was still considered middle class in the 1920s. Michael Johns, *The City in the Age of Diaz* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 28-29,47,49,77. For an in depth discussion of the emerging middle class neighborhood see Susanne Eineigel, "Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico City's Middle Class, 1890-1940" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, in process).

violation of their privacy and what they believed was their right to mourn the loss of a neighbor and friend.

Female friends of the family gathered outside since early morning in anticipation of greeting the body. Women perched on balconies and roofs to get a good view, and photographers took pictures of the crowd from open windows. Only family members and close friends were allowed inside the house to await the body's arrival. Police officers attempted to restrain the crowd and limit the numbers that gathered outside the house, even before the corpse arrived.

Mourners disobeyed the prohibition on public religious gatherings. The sight of Toral's body arrival swept the crowd into a religious fervor. The noise grew as women chanted prayers and said rosaries, while they uncontrollably sobbed. Some women, dressed in black, claimed to be relatives, and got angry when told they could not enter the house. Others in the crowd called to those inside to let them in. Many women remained outside, praying in unison and singing hymns. Angry members of the crowd launched bricks and rocks at the police, prompting them to shoot into the air to disperse the crowd.

Within the privacy of the Toral home, the family was allowed to decorate the temporary chapel with religious iconography. The decorations were supplied by the Eusebio Gayosso funeral agency and echoed the religiosity and piety of the family and the class too. Four large candelabras and a wide array of flowers—lilies of the valley, pansies, and gardenias—surrounded the coffin, which was adorned with a silver relief of

Christ. The white flowers, common in funerals, symbolized the purity of the deceased.[417] At its head stood a large golden cross. The government could not interfere with these private displays of faith, but attempted to restrict the public's viewing of the body.

People crowded into the small house. To make room to clean the body a human chain had to be formed around the coffin to hold back the crowd. The body was cleaned and prepared by a doctor, and a priest anointed the coffin with holy water. Women clamored outside because they wanted a chance to see the corpse and touch it with small handkerchiefs, pieces of cloth, and rosaries.[418] The mourners filed past the body and viewed the face under the glass of the coffin. By evening, the line to see the body still stretched down Sabino Street and the family had to limit each person's viewing time. Women especially stood, intently gazing at the body.

Outside the house, the crowds continued to gather all night and the police struggled to contain them. Policemen fired shots in the air that alarmed many in the neighborhood, but no one was injured. Firefighters arrived at the scene, sounding their horns, and then sprayed the crowd and pedestrians indiscriminately to clear the street. The *New York Times* reported that a crowd of women from all classes tried to enter the Toral home and were pushed away by the firefighters' hoses.[419] From the balconies of several homes across the street, people threw rocks at the police and firemen.[420]

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[417] White was most commonly used in children's or virgins' funerals. Susan Drury, "Funeral Plants and Flowers in England: Some Examples" *Folklore* 105 (1994): 101-103; McCabe, *The Language and Sentiment of Flowers*.
[418] This section based on reports from *Excelsior*, February 10, 1929.
[419] *New York Times*, February 10, 1929.
[420] *Excelsior*, February 11, 1929.

Yet the crowds in the neighborhood were small in comparison to the number that turned out for the funeral that was planned for the Panteón Español at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 10. The Chief of Police ordered that the service should be simple, restrained, and quick and no information about the time or details of the funeral were allowed to be printed in the capital's newspapers. Nevertheless, the residents of Mexico City came out of their homes and into the streets to bid farewell to the young assassin.

Reports estimated crowds exceeded 100,000 and the *New York Times* claimed it was the largest public gathering in the past few years.[421] In 1921, the national census measured the capital's population at 906, 063, almost 55% of who were women. Furthermore, 96 % of women in Mexico City defined their religion as Catholic.[422] Conservatively, more than 10% of the capital's female population attended the funeral. Neither religious preference nor gender guaranteed support of Toral, but the combination of the two increased the likelihood of support. In short, this was a protest led by women.

In contrast to Carranza and Obregón's funerals, the assassin's procession to the cemetery was a spontaneous affair, and thus the majority of the symbolic gestures came from the crowd. No parade of horse-drawn carriages, diplomats, and military cadets followed the hearse. Instead, Toral's funeral cortege was a modern and motorized affair. A hearse carried the coffin and the family followed in cars behind it. Many people parked their cars along the route to get a better view of the hearse.[423] Hundreds of cars waited on the side streets to try to join the cortege. Spectators populated roofs and

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[421] *New York Times*, February 11, 1929.
[422] México, *Departamento de la Estadística Nacional, Censo general de habitantes: 30 de noviembre de 1921* (México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1925-1928).
[423] *Excelsior*, February 11, 1929.

balconies along the route as well. The appearance of so many cars suggests that many people from the middle class supported Toral.

The government tried to exercise its authority during the event, but this only inspired more outrage from the crowd. Mounted police and firefighters attempted to control the crowds. The procession, a mix of mounted police and automobiles, was headed by Captain Rodríguez Rabiela, the man who delivered coup de grâce shot—with none other than Obregón's pistol—to Toral's body. Women targeted Rodríguez Rabiela shouting at him and trying to hit him. The women shouted in defiance "Viva Toral!" while they threw flowers at the coffin. The closer the procession got to the cemetery, the larger and more unruly the crowd became. The police pushed into the crowd, striking out with the butts of their rifles. Still, the masses surged forward, and the police drew sabers. At the intersection of Toluca and Calzada, a group of women attacked the soldiers trying to hit them, but they were pushed back. At every intersection, the police in the procession were attacked with insults and defiant "vivas." Firefighters sprayed the crowds with hoses, and many women angrily fought back by throwing rocks. The growing crowd along the funeral route threw flowers that showered the hearse. The crowd strained to get a closer look at the hearse and the police were unable to contain them.

Only Toral's family and friends and some reporters, a group of about fifty people, were allowed to pass through the gates of the Panteón Español. Despite the police's efforts to keep people from entering, many pushed through. Others scaled the walls to attend the funeral. The multitude shouted and prayed in union and sang hymns ending

with shouts of "Viva Cristo Rey", or "Long live Christ the King", a common cry of the Cristero rebellion. Inside the funeral chapel, the solemn ceremony proceeded, led by the two priests in civilian dress that had been with Toral before the execution.[424] The crowd continued to grow within the cemetery and gathered around the open grave. A group of mounted police rushed the crowd, trying to herd them out of the cemetery. When mounted police armed with drawn swords entered the cemetery, the crowd roared "Viva Toral." The coffin, covered by the flag of the Liga Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa, emerged out of the chapel and the pallbearers carried it to the grave. The crowd sang the "Himno a Cristo Rey", the Eucharist hymn, and the national anthem. The mourners who might have opposed the revolutionary government still identified themselves and Toral as citizens of Mexico and claimed that identity through singing the anthem.[425]

In Toral's middle class neighborhood and along the funeral route, mourners resisted the police and risked injury to pay final homage. In the crush of the crowd and clashes with police, three people were killed and over thirty were injured. The Red, White, and Green Cross units were on the scene to treat injuries in the crowd. The majority of the throng supported Toral, but one incident was reported in Tlaxpana, where a man shouted "Viva Obregón." Several mourners in the crowd attacked him.[426] Government officials were overwhelmed by the size of the crowd, and were forced to yield public space to it.

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[424] *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1929.
[425] *New York Times*, February 11, 1929; *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1929; *Excelsior*, February 11, 1929.
[426] *Excelsior*, February 11, 1929.

Mexico City's streets filled with faithful mourners and curious bystanders for José de León Toral's funeral. They showed their support by wearing black, showering his coffin with flowers, and crying "Viva Toral" as the police tried to hold them back. The funeral provides an opportunity to see how the government and its citizens negotiated the anti-clerical restrictions exacerbated by the Cristero Rebellion. By stating officially that no demonstration should be made for Toral, the government enforced its legitimacy against the assassin's. Yet the government did not interfere with Toral's request for last rites, or with the family's request for a church burial. Still, the government made itself present during the wake, cortege, and funeral with members of the police, fire department, and army. Moreover, giving Rodríguez Rabiela, the leader of the firing squad, the lead in the cortege, gave the government symbolic and actual authority over the event. These government representatives acted violently against the crowd when they believed that the show of support had become too boisterous. The residents of Santa María viewed the scene from their balconies and rooftops. When attacked with fire hoses and frightened with gunshots, they claimed their right to mourn by attacking the officials with rocks, bricks, and fists. In addition, they marked the boundaries between public and private space by refusing entrance to their homes.

Attendance at the funeral was an act of political protest, and the majority of the protestors were women. They challenged the government's anti-clerical policies by praying and singing religious hymns in the streets. By singing the National Anthem, mourners identified themselves as Mexicans without identifying themselves as revolutionaries. In a nation where the government placed paramount importance on the

authority and legitimacy of the Revolutionary Family, the thousands of mourners in February fought to mourn for another family.

Conclusions

The rights of the dead citizen decreased in importance to the nation-building process as a new pantheon of martyred heroes emerged from the ashes of the Revolution. Despite the immense popularity of these men at their funerals, they did not remain powerful political symbols. They are not carried as banners in political protests and their graves are not in public monuments or sites of pilgrimage. Indeed, Obregón's arm had a more colorful political history than his body.[427] Nevertheless, they were exemplary deaths for their time.

These diverse men—a traditional military hero, a modern man, and a devout Catholic—provided men and women the opportunity to mourn properly and publicly, a privilege that no doubt many had been denied during the many years of warfare and epidemic. The participants in these public spectacles were as diverse as the men themselves: a broad international audience for the aviator, laborers, soldiers, and politicians for Obregón, and pious women for the assassin. Obregón's funeral was an attempt by the revolutionary government to echo the grandeur and legitimacy of Porfirian military funerals, but its rushed preparation, the conspiracy rumors surrounding it, and the ongoing Cristero conflict, showed that not all had bought into the idea of the Revolutionary Family. Carranza's funeral several days later drew more spectators and

[427] Jürgen Buchenau, "Arm and Body of the Revolution" in *Death, Dismemberment, and Memory*.

received more international press and acted as salve to the wounded international image of the nation. Toral's funeral was an opportunity for the women of the nation to protest the revolutionary family and make known in public who they believed deserved a large, public funeral. The varied participation in the mourning of these exemplars represents the persistence of contradictory ideals within the citizenry, both living and dead, of the new revolutionary nation.

CONCLUSIONS

The Panteón de Dolores, which, when founded in 1875, lay outside the boundaries of the city at the edge of Chapultepec Park, has long been engulfed by the sprawling megalopolis. It has been officially full since 1976, but cremations, exhumations, and temporary burials take place daily.[428] From the ornate arched entrance a path leads to a peaceful circular garden, the Rotunda of Illustrious Persons, where famous Mexicans such as Diego Rivera and Dolores del Río lay at rest. Beyond this national space of honor, the cemetery dissolves into disorder. Even stately nineteenth-century tombs, like that of the Matías Romero family, are overgrown with weeds. Graves face every direction. Some tombstones are broken open from earthquakes or erosion and filled with trash. Families have carefully painted others in bright colors and decorated them with fresh flowers. In the far reaches of the cemetery, clothes hang over graves and trees—its central location has made it a desirable spot for the homeless.[429]

The history of Mexico's transition to secular burial spaces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is written in the layout of the Dolores cemetery. After decades of attempts at burial reform, the government of Porfirio Díaz purchased the Dolores cemetery to provide a hygienic alternative to church burial yards in the city center and to fulfill the Liberal promise of a civil cemetery in which all citizens deserved an individual grave. This dissertation examines the successes and failures of this

[428] The cemetery is now under the administration of the Cuauhtémoc delegation, one of the sixteen sub districts within the Federal District. Throughout the capital, grave shortage has become a constant problem. Ángel Bolaños Sánchez, "En el DF sólo hay 80 mil fosas disponibles," *La Jornada,* Nov. 2, 2008.
[429] Jonathan Pardiñas, "Viven entre los muertos," *El Centro*, May 13, 2008.

transition and considers how it influenced the veneration of the dead in the twentieth century.

The push for a suburban cemetery was part of the hygiene movement that began in the late eighteenth century and put public health at the center of modernization. The health of a city, viewed as a living organism, was measured through its cleanliness and order. This belief led to reforms in the drainage system and other city services, to move unsanitary elements out of the city. Dead bodies did not fit the image of a hygienic city and thus were also targeted for reform. The cemetery reform laws of the mid-nineteenth century specified the requirements for new cemeteries to meet these new standards in public health and the Dolores Cemetery was the first that met all of these standards and elite perceptions for the modern image of the capital.

But, as Claudia Agostoni has argued, hygiene also had moral and social dimensions. According to the tenets of Liberalism, individuals were the basis of modern society. Thus, Dolores provided all citizens an equal opportunity to be buried in a national, civil space. Social hierarchy was reflected in the layout of the cemetery, with the national political and cultural leaders at the entrance followed by the orderly arrangement of the dead citizenry divided by class. As visitors walked through the Rotunda of Illustrious Men and elite classes to reach the free graves, they experienced a spatial lesson in the model social hierarchy of the nation and their proper place in society.

Elite and poor citizens were slow to adopt Dolores as their preferred burial space because of its distance and the availability of other options. Government sponsored funerals and reburials brought attention to the Dolores cemetery and made the public

active participants in the construction of its reputation as a national place of honor. Civic, labor, and military groups followed this model and purchased private lots within the cemetery to honor their members. The government closed older burial spaces and provided tramline service to Dolores and made it the only space to offer free burials. Several state governments requested copies of the Dolores cemetery regulations to guide their plans for civil cemeteries. Thus, Porfirian administrators successfully transferred the instructive, spatial organization of the dead within church walls and floors that placed saints at the head of the social and spiritual hierarchy to the civil cemetery with the bodies of presidents, generals, and politicians at the head of the new Liberal hierarchy.[430]

Yet the ideal Liberalism of the dead was quickly challenged by overcrowding and other logistical. The capital's population doubled in the first thirty years of operation. The areas for paid classes of graves filled first, sending paying customers, especially wealthy families, to private, foreign-owned cemeteries. Soon, even the enormous area of free graves was full and cemetery workers resorted to digging up gardens and paths for grave space. Not even reducing the requirements for temporary burials from ten to seven years alleviated the problem. Scheduling problems with area hospitals disrupted the body delivery schedule and the idyllic image of the garden cemetery was assaulted with the arrival of naked cadavers in broad daylight. The decline of the reputation of the cemetery took away from its power of instruction.

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[430] As Michel Foucault has shown the construction of space is related to the construction of ideas about mentalities. In Discipline and Punish he demonstrates the relationship between the panoptical design of prisons and changing ideas about crime and punishment For an in-depth discussion of Foucault's concept of spatial relations and history, see Chris Philo, "Foucault's Geography," in *Thinking Space*. 25-38.

Not only did overcrowding tarnish the cemetery's image, but also it made city officials reconsider the Liberal promise of individual graves. The early experiment with cremation in 1909 carried out on unclaimed paupers' bodies convinced some officials and intellectuals, especially hygienists, that cremation of all paupers was the answer to the overcrowding problem. Several limitations made this goal impossible. First, the general aversion towards cremation across all classes due to the Roman Catholic ban on the practice led more prudent officials to limit it to unidentified bodies. Second, the ovens regularly broke down or ran out of fuel, making them only sporadically available and thus, not a reliable form of disposal for thousands of bodies a month. Third, the municipal government's inability or unwillingness to pay for the construction of a crematorium left the industrial ovens in plain view, making them more instruments of disposal instead of veneration. Nevertheless, as deaths due to disease and war intensified the grave shortage, officials resorted to even cruder forms of disposal to rid the capital of decomposing corpses.

The revolution brought untold levels of death to the nation and neither the capital nor the cemetery was spared from the horrors. The political instability disrupted the daily operation of the cemetery and further weakened the orderly hierarchy of the graves. Burials within the Rotunda of Illustrious Men ceased. Armies delivered their fallen leaders to the gates and demanded first class burials without tickets or payment. The pastoral beauty of the land made it attractive for brigades to graze their horses. After intense and deadly battles, such as the 1913 Decena Trágica, the city did not have the

resources to bury the bodies in a timely manner and officials chose the efficiency of mass pyres on the outskirts of city in lieu of individual burials in the cemetery.

The inability to provide proper burial in similar violent conflicts such as the American Civil War led to battlefield memorials in later years. Yet, in Mexico, this did not happen. Instead, the pragmatism and indifference towards the mass dead that began in the revolution continued during the era of the Revolutionary party. There seems to have been no effort on the part of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) to commemorate the fallen rank and file soldiers and civilians. In short, these experiences of uncontrollable mortality levels and lack of space ended the Liberal dream of one person per grave.

When, in 1927, President Calles issued the first federal regulations of cemeteries and burials since the nineteenth-century, no stipulations on grave depth or number of bodies per grave were listed.[431] Individual graves remained the norm for those who could afford it, but the law's silence allowed room for more efficient practices. Now, up to three bodies are allowed to be stacked in a grave in the Dolores cemetery.[432] These shifts in everyday burials influenced the burial and veneration of national heroes.

Throughout the course of the Porfirian and Revolutionary eras, overcrowding, disease, and warfare diminished the ideal image of the Panteón de Dolores and transformed its use from a national cemetery with military heroes as leading dead citizens to a municipal cemetery of pauper bodies with cultural heroes as leading dead citizens. The burial of Captain Emilio Carranza within the Rotunda in 1928—one of the first since

[431] A copy of Calles's cemetery regulation can be found at the AHSSA, Fon. SP, Secc. Servicio Jurídico (SJ), Caj. 5.
[432] Personal conversation with Dolores cemetery worker, November 5, 2007.

the start of the Revolution—demonstrates the shift from military to cultural heroes. Although Carranza participated in the revolution and served in the army, his popularity was due to his reputation as an international cultural ambassador. Middle class families chose private cemeteries such as the Panteón Francés or the Panteón Español for their loved ones. After the institutionalization of the Revolution into a political party in 1929, government officials reclaimed many of the Porfirian strategies of hero veneration for their own Revolutionary martyrs who had been buried quickly and without pomp during the war. Yet the Dolores cemetery was no longer suitable for the larger-than-life heroes such as Francisco Madero and Venustiano Carranza. In the 1940s, the Monument to the Revolution functioned as the Rotunda for the fathers of the Revolutionary Family.

Popular funerals with and without the support of the revolutionary regime in the late 1920s brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets of the capital, in the largest public gatherings since the start of the Revolution. The funerals of Alvaro Obregon, Emilio Carranza, and José de León Toral drew the largest crowds. Obregón's funeral utilized his reputation as a peacemaker and father to calm fears about renewed political unrest and allowed attendees, mostly men, to pledge their support to the Revolution, which was organized as a political party the following year. The popular and international support for Carranza repaired Mexico's reputation for violence and helped shift focus from the recent assassination. Devout women of the capital demonstrated their opposition to the idea of the Revolutionary Family by attending Toral's funeral despite official orders against it. The funerals of the aviator and the assassin, both young fathers, allowed people to mourn the fathers and sons lost during the twenty years of

fighting. The spontaneous support for Toral revealed the endurance of Catholic beliefs and a compromise was reached to end the conflict only four months later. Although the memory of these men has not been employed in any enduring political or social movements, their funerals demonstrate the flexibility of mourning and burial rituals in diverse political and social contexts.

The experiments with reform and the eventual decline of the Panteón de Dolores demonstrates the connection between social reform, nation building, and the construction of national identity. During the Porfiriato, Liberal and hygienic reformers upheld the cemetery as a model for the capital, which could not so quickly and easily meet their ideals. But, as James Scott has argued, government programs often fail consider the local realities of the spaces and people that they aim to reform.[433] Such was the case of Dolores. It was designed and heralded as a peaceful, hygienic space of the dead that would be filled with the stately tombs of Mexico's elite. Yet, as the only cemetery available for the city's poor, it became instead a potter's field. Poor, dead citizens began to encroach on the spaces of the elite, just as they did in life.

By the time of the Revolution, the dead took over the spaces of the living as well. Cemetery reform did not play a role in the revolution and standards of public health remained the same between the Porfiriato and Revolution. But, unlike their positivist predecessors, Revolutionaries did not build the new national image of the ideals of Liberal individualism. Instead, the mythology of the Revolutionary family upheld the

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[433] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

sacrifices of a few as a model for the many. The cemetery diminished in importance as a social and political space of instruction, but the funeral remained a powerful event for diverse groups to voice their beliefs and honor the dead they held as leading citizens of the nation.

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