SYNCRETISM: INTERPRETATIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Por Cristina Maria-Luisa La Porta

Maria Izquierdo drew on the cultural heritage of colonial Mexico, a creative synthesis of Pre-Columbian elements and Spanish Catholic art. Mexico attracted an impressive group of foreign artists, such as Breton and Antonin Artaud, in part because of the cultural vitality of its syncretism. To many modern Europeans, Mexico seemed unself-consciously surreal. Izquierdo, between 1942 and 1950, wrote numerous articles on contemporary Mexican art in newspapers such as Hoy, The News Graphic, and Excélsior. Commenting on the dubious possibility of surrealist influence in the works of her colleague Antonio Ruiz, she points instead to the small *retablos* of the colonial period as seminal for contemporary Mexican art. As Izquierdo commented in Hoy, colonial *retablos* were "more surreal and interesting than modern surreal works."[1] What many European intellectuals saw as naïve surrealism was, in fact, part of the Mexican vernacular, a complex visual and symbolic tradition, fused from heterogeneous elements: ancient Mexican myths, European Catholicism, and folk culture. Mexican devotion to the Virgin Mary, for example, grew out of native traditions.

In 1531, on a hill outside Mexico City, the site of a former temple of the Aztec mother/serpent goddess Tonantzín, a beautiful, dark-skinned woman appeared to Juan Diego, a Christianized Indian. She instructed him to tell the bishop to build a church on the site in her honor. When the bishop sdoubted the vision, the lady made roses bloom out of season. When Juan Diego took the roses to the bishop, he released them from his cloak, and a miraculous image of the dark-skinned Virgin appeared on the cloth. The Virgin of Guadalupe, a *vera icon*, enshrined in the church, became an important object of pilgrimage. Declared patroness of Mexico

in 1754, she became identified with the native population. During the Mexican Revolution, the rebels marched under her banner.

Twentieth-century Mexican painters played on inherited visual conventions, particularly Mexican genre painting. Maria Izquierdo drew on the familiar pyramidal, low-angle compositions of earlier Mexican still-life painters. Izquierdo liked to reinterpret popular subjects, experimenting with the two-dimensional space of painting.[2] She based some of her compositions on eighteenth-century pictures of *alacenas* (open cupboards), for example, the famous *alacena* of Antonio Perez de Aguilar (1749-1769) in the Pinacoteca Virreinal in Mexico City.

The *alacenas* were similar to the Spanish *fresqueras* or *cantareras*, small alcoves built in walls to keep food at a cooler temperature. These *fresqueras* became popular subjects for still-life paintings. In nineteenth-century Mexico, this genre was especially prevalent in the city of Puebla, notably in the paintings of Augustin Arrieta (1802-1879). Arrieta was the preeminent nineteenth-century provincial still-life painter. A typical painting, Cocina poblana (Dishes from Puebla), is a rich display of delicious, traditional Puebla dishes and the characteristic tropical fruits of the Mexican region--all indicating regional as well as national pride.[3]

A cupboard painting by Antonio Perez de Aguilar consists of three shelves: the two lower ones showcase pewter plates, wine glasses, and a loaf of bread; the top shelf holds a basket filled with kitchen utensils, and a naked and dismembered doll. Her head and torso with arms are propped against the back panel of the cupboard; one leg is thrown over the edge of the basket, giving the entire painting a sense of whimsical oddity. Aguilar paints his *alacena* in Baroque Spanish true-to-life earth colors of greyish-black, dark brown, and beige, with a shimmer of white to indicate light reflections.

Building on the tension between reality and illusion in the Baroque *alacenas*, Izquierdo created a new visual dimension. Her *retablos*, home altars, and *alacenas* feature toys, Mexican Day of the Dead sweets, i.e., sugar skulls called *calaveras*, luscious indigenous and non-indigenous fruits, and folkloric crafts, all rich in associative meanings. These images should not be read simplistically. Rather, they refer to the senses of touch, sight and taste, while revealing Izquierdo's awareness of her hybrid culture.

Izquierdo's Alacena con dulces cubiertos (Cupboard with Covered Sweets), 1946, Trigo crecido (Growing Wheat), 1940, El gato sabio (The Wise Cat), 1943, and Pan de muertos (Bread for the Day of the Dead), 1947, all depict home altars, small-scale theater stages in the form of either cupboards or tables. On these stage sets are displayed evocative groups of disparate objects. In her oil painting Alacena con dulces cubiertos, Izquierdo features a cupboard, like Aguilar's, with three shelves. In contrast to Aguilar's Old World color scheme, however, Izquierdo uses a thoroughly Mexican palette--bright
red, pink, yellow, orange, green, and cobalt blue.

In Izquierdo's painting, the bottom shelf is covered with a bright pink *papel picado*; between a green pepper and a green carafe is a cornucopia of candied fruits, assorted sweets and a large banana. These sweets and candied fruits--usually apple, pear, and quince--are *ofrendas*, offerings placed on Day of the Dead altars. These altars can appear in public plazas, schools, and competitions, but the most important altars are found in private homes. Izquierdo's Alacena becomes in itself a home altar, rich in symbolic and social meanings. Not only do these varied goods renew relations with dead friends and family members, but they also represent the forces of life and fertility. Day of the Dead altars and *ofrendas* are linked to the ancient Mexican ceremonial pyramids of the Mountain of Sustenance, a pre-Catholic altar celebrating the life-giving earth and its forces of regeneration.[4] These symbolic meanings seem to emerge organically from the objects and foods that Izquierdo playfully displays.

Other associative meanings come into play on the next shelf. Dominating the center is a bright pink chalice partly covered by silver ornamentation. Next to the chalice, with its Catholic overtones, are secular, even comical objects, such as a minuscule toy pig placed next to a mandarin. Other objects gathered around the chalice--a fuchsia-colored liqueur flask or perfume bottle, a bowl with a pretty leaf motif painted in cobalt blue, sensuous halved toy-like pears and peaches, a curious turtle shell-shaped object with little red painted flowers and two tiny white doves perched on top--all accent the painter's fanciful imagination. On the top shelf, flanking a small vase with painted red-pink flowers and yellow leaves, are two small white wooden horses. Like a child, Izquierdo places the smaller horse's muzzle above a little porcelain object in the shape of a head of lettuce, which the little horse appears to be eating. Izquierdo liked to buy these *caballitos populares* at the local markets. In her *alacena* paintings, Izquierdo handles beloved objects as a child would. Her cupboards are like dollhouses--full of miniature creatures and furnishings, consciously and artfully arranged.

Izquierdo drew on a variety of visual and compositional traditions. A great admirer of photography and a friend of photographers Lola Alvarez Bravo and Tina Modotti, Izquierdo collected photographs, which she mounted in her extensive family photo album, of little toy horses.

In one photograph, two *caballitos*, one white and one black, are placed in sand that is molded in the shape of a mountainous landscape.[5] Many of Izquierdo's paintings feature horses in toy-like landscape or circus settings.

Trigo crecido (1940) and El gato sabio (1943), two altar pieces combining Catholic symbolism with New World beliefs, illustrate how Izquierdo filtered inherited syncretism through her own personal creative psychology. Both altars are set against a characteristic colonial stucco white-washed wall; the chipping paint reveals rust-brown bricks. The heterogeneous objects on display provide intriguing cultural and psychological resonances. Women's home altars have long been a documented part of cult practice, from the Greek Hestia and Roman Vesta to contemporary Hinduism and Roman Catholicism. Although often overlooked by anthropologists and art historians, altar-making is now being examined as an important mode of self-expression for women, combining belief and aesthetics. Formally, altars used such strategies as "miniaturization, fragmentation, accretion, and layering," notes Kay Turner, in a recent study of the phenomenon.[6] In addition, such altars tend to be syncretic. Turner writes: The "mixing of elements from old and new religions is central to an understanding of women's altar traditions because historically it has always been women who are more likely to keep or reinvigorate old practices.[7] In her painted representations of altars, such as Trigo crecido and El gato sabio, Izquierdo builds on this vital vernacular tradition.Trigo crecido alludes more overtly to the Christian church altar, the communion table where the priest performs the sacrament of the Eucharist. A traditional altar cloth is ornamented with a small red heart, symbol of the Passion of Christ, hovering above a white chalice filled with Christ's blood. Flanking the chalice are blue flowers and bright yellow doves.[8] The red altar cloth is covered by delicate lace. Behind the altar-like table is a *papel picado retablo* (paper doily *retablo*) *of* Christ with bleeding heart and the Virgin Mary partially obscured by a lily, her symbol.A sweeping mustard-colored curtain adds to the theatricality of the composition. Referring to pagan Mexican rituals, a halved squash and growing wheat in a bowl establish continuity with pre-Conquest rituals. These natural elements are *ofrendas*, offerings to ensure fecundity. The objects on the altar fall into three categories: the pagan, the Christian, and the playful-theatrical. A bright pink carnival mask, a pierrot head, and a red chess piece--the knight, a stylization of Izquierdo's favorite horse--represent another layer of Izquierdo's iconography.

While the clown's head may allude to Izquierdo's childhood circus outings, severed heads appear frequently in Izquierdo's iconography, not always in as lighthearted a context as Trigo crecido.[9]

Decapitation is associated with ancient Mexican solar rites. It is linked, Octavio Paz notes, to "Xochipilli, the deity of song and dance, an infant sun who sits on a large shawl decorated with the four cardinal points, clutching a baton with a transpierced heart."[10] This ritual is connected as well to the maize goddess Xilonen, who is also decapitated. In Aztec cosmology, the dismembered bodies of the deities redistribute divine energy to animals, vegetation, and humans. In the Aztec religion, specific human body parts and human sacrifice had enormous power. The most powerful divine force, found in the head, was called *tonalli*, from *tona*, "to make warm with the sun." *Tonalli* was given to the newborn by the god Ometeotl and shaped the child's temperament and destiny. Newborns were placed by the fire or exposed to the sun in

order to increase *tonalli*. Aztec warriors decapitated their enemies in order to increase their *tonalli* during ceremonies.[11]

In another altar picture, El gato sabio (1943), Izquierdo combines a mannequin's head with an enigmatic group of objects. Most of the bare wood table is taken up with a display of opulent ripe tropical fruits. At the left of the composition, a white cat appears to be reading a religious book, one paw pressed against an illustrated page displaying a stylized cross, birds, a heart, a skull and two potted flowers. This is the only reference to Christian tradition in this painting, and it is given an occult undertone by the title The Wise Cat. Here, Izquierdo plays with notions of gender. The male mannequin's head and pipe suggest a masculine presence, while woman is represented by the traditional *huipil*, a colorful Mexican blouse, draped over a green chairback.

The mannequin's head also recalls the traditional wax masks, which had either green or blue eyes with exaggerated eyelashes. These masks were conventionally white-skinned, rather than ochre-colored, or the clay color of Izquierdo's mannequin. In the valley of Oaxaca, these wax masks are used for the Dance of the Moors and Christians, introduced by the Spanish friars and still surviving today.[12]

On a more mundane level, mannequin heads were popularly used to support the fashionable hats that Izquierdo was so fond of wearing.

The disembodied heads in both Trigo crecido and El gato sabio have a theatrical potential, not unlike the masks in Balinese theater which so appealed to Artaud. Each object or mask in Balinese theater represents a metaphysical presence in an impersonal cosmogonic struggle.

For Izquierdo, the *tête coupée* may signify communion with the spirit. Artaud remarks in his essay "The Theater and Culture": "For the Mexicans seek contact with the Manas forces latent in every form."[13] Izquierdo's heads evoke a feminine world of nostalgia, childhood, and memories.

The altar-table of El gato sabio includes strikingly sexual tropical fruits, haphazardly arranged: a halved papaya with its bright yellow flesh and moist seedy black cavity; half-eaten slabs of watermelon, yellow bananas and red-brown plantains bunched together as a flower arrangement. An apple and an orange-red tropical fruit are sliced partially open, evoking female genitalia. Izquierdo's luscious fruits are reminiscent of nineteenth-century Mexican still lifes such as Hermenegildo Bustos's (1839-1907) Naturaleza muerta con frutas (Still Life with Fruit), 1877.[14] However, Bustos's still lifes are essentially straightforward botanical studies of Old World and New World fruits and vegetables. Mixing religious icons, sensuous fruits, and everyday objects, Izquierdo hints at a private world, combining quasi-pagan idolatry, artistic inspiration, and the primal domain of feminine hearth and sexuality.

Often, Izquierdo's still lifes exemplify the Mexican intersection of Old World and New World rituals. Her Pan de muertos (1947), for example, depicts an altar for the *Dia de los muertos*. Aspects of the Day of the Dead already existed in pre-Hispanic times and later became integrated into a European tradition, the Roman Catholic Feast of All Saints, which itself built on European pagan seasonal rituals. Citing a passage from the Florentine Codex: The General History of Things in Spain, Hugo Nutini underscores how offerings for the dead were already practiced before the Spanish arrived.

Written in Nahuatl and Spanish by the Franciscan priest Bernadino de Sahagun, the Codex was the result of years of research on Mayan and Aztec cultures. The priest describes how he discovered ritual practices in which the Indians placed " . . . the image of the dead on

these grass wreaths. Then at dawn they put these images in their shrines, on top of beds of reed, mace, sedge, or rush. Once the images were placed there, they offered them food, tamales, and gruel, or a stew."[15]

In Izquierdo's Pan de muertos, a tabletop altar is presented as a miniature stage set, the objects functioning as stylized characters in a *psychomachia* incorporating Old and New World imagery. Christ is represented by the cross; the devil by a cat-headed toy figure clad in circus motley; death by the whimsical white candied coffin with skull and cross. Set on a colorful pedestal, the folk art cross itself contains a narrative of the Passion in pictograms. The Instruments of the Passion, inherited from European religious convention, are discrete free-floating images that encapsulate various events. The rooster recalls the cock who crowed three times when Peter denied Christ; a blood-filled chalice refers to the motif of angels catching the blood dripping from the wounds of Christ, as well as to the Eucharist. Other Instruments of the Passion include the ladder used to lower Christ's body, two spears that pierced his side, the hammer that drove in the nails, the pinchers that took them out, Veronica's veil bearing the image of Christ, and the keys to heaven granted to Peter. The body of Christ does not appear; rather his presence is communicated through visual metonymy.

Fostered in the New World by Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries, the instruments of the Passion became part of "a special devotional language, which served the literate and illiterate alike."[16] In the cross depicted by Izquierdo, the cross beams are intersected by diagonal pieces of wood forming a superimposed Saint Andrew's Cross. This device alludes to the countless images of Saint Philip of Jesus that Izquierdo undoubtedly saw in Mexican churches, private homes and museums.

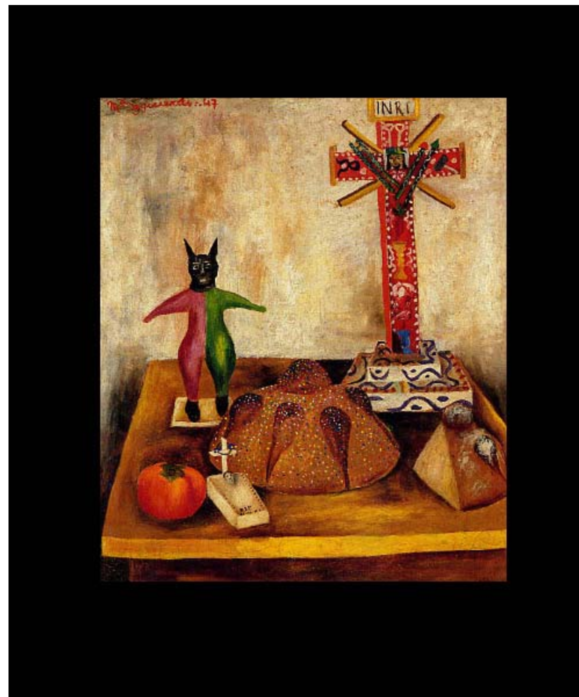
Saint Philip of Jesus was the first Mexican-born saint. Born in 1572, he joined the Franciscan order and was crucified and lanced in Japan. A source of great pride for Mexican creoles, he was beatified in 1627. An eighteenth-century devotional image of Saint Philip of Jesus depicts the saint, wearing heavy gold brocade vestments, stretched out on a standing cross. The popular Roman Catholic image of Saint Philip's martyrdom would also have resonated with ancient indigenous tradition, especially the Mayan scaffold-tree rite of human sacrifice. The victim was bound upright with arms and legs outstretched and tied to flanking wooden posts.

The body was penetrated by darts and arrows, and the blood falling to the ground symbolized the spring rain penetrating the earth. The spread-eagle posture of the victim indicated the female in coitus, while the arrows were phallic; the combination was an emblem of the sacred androgyne.[17] The image of Saint Philip of Jesus echoed another ancient sacred symbol, a more abstract pictogram. Saint Philip's two flanking executioners thrust lances through his body, forming a Saint Andrew's Cross.[18] The symmetrical spears create an almost perfect square in the torso area. This same geometric design, a square with crossing symmetrical spears, appears in Izquierdo's Hacia el paraíso (Toward Paradise), 1954. It also figures in Artaud's description of the Tarahumaras' household doors.

In Pan de muertos, the allegorical figures are accompanied by a tomato and a round loaf of bread, apparently perfect, although a pyramidal slice has been removed from the hidden side. The bread, an *ofrenda*--an offering for the dead--has ornamentations in the shape of tears. It appears monumental next to the toy-like figures. The tomato, fruit of the New World, is plump and red, a symbol, along with the bread, of the reality of sustenance and the pleasure of the earth. Here, the pagan meaning supersedes the Roman Catholic significance of bread as Eucharist. The bread and the tomato introduce the indigenous belief that life and death are intertwined.

Maria Izquierdo's work builds on the folk art hybrid of ancient Indian imagery and Spanish Catholicism. The photographer Lola Alvarez Bravo, a close friend, remarked: "Maria was a very cheerful woman with folk spirit. . . . [T]he inclination that Maria had for folklore was not that of a distant viewer; she seemed rather to be an insider."[19]

In her Ex-voto (1939), Izquierdo closely follows the conventions of the genre: small size (7-1/2 x 12-5/8 inches), a narrative inscription, and childlike figures. Less sophisticated than her other paintings, the image is a deliberately naïve depiction of a traditional theme. A figure kneels with hands clasped and outstretched in supplication to an apparition of Christ crucified, poised in front of a bluish-pink cloud. A pink church perches on a hill in the background. As is the custom in ex-votos, the visual material is supplemented by a narrative inscription, at the bottom of the painting: "While Dr. Helm was staying in Mexico he was afflicted by mordelones de G. Prayers were said to Our Father of Sacramonte to liberate Dr Helm from so much pain. Maria and Raul wish him the best. December 25, 1939."[20] Dr. Helm, an art historian, was the first American to write about Maria Izquierdo's works. Raul Uribe, also an artist, was Maria Izquierdo's second husband.[21]



Izquierdo works with a number of traditional folkloric Mexican genres, *retablos*, home altars, ex-votos. While retaining the compositional format of what are generally perceived as naïve artworks, she explores fresh formal and personal themes. In other paintings, however, Izquierdo uses some of the same syncretic elements but places them in a different context. In El calvario (Calvary), 1940, a landscape with figures, the Christian and pre-Hispanic iconographical elements are more subtly introduced into a study of the Mexican countryside. The barren, hilly landscape is painted in a palette of black and ochre. Only a strip of greyish sky is visible. The left side of the painting, oriented towards Catholicism, features three women in long flowing

dresses, with shawls over their heads. All gaze towards a hill topped with three tiny crosses. The women may be re-enacting the Stations of the Cross.

The right side of the painting, dominated by a leafless tree with truncated branches, alludes to Mayan religion. The Mayan cosmic tree connects the celestial, the middle world and the underworld, and the souls of the dead ascend and descend along its vertical axis. This tree became so full of fruit that it was impossible for it to support the weight, and the fruit dropped to the earth, spreading numerous seeds. The god-tree provided shelter for the new sprouting plants. When it grew old, it was crowded out by the new trees. The remaining stump still marked the central axis of the world. A vestige of the original "Mother/Father," the origin of life, this stump symbolizes renewal and creation.[22]

In Izquierdo's painting, a red-plumed bird with yellow crest perches on the cosmic tree, suggesting a supernatural bird from the celestial regions. The three women seem to turn their backs on the cosmic tree and celestial bird, hinting at an implicit antagonism between Christian belief and Mayan religion.

The truncated tree with heavenly bird is a recurring motif in Izquierdo's oeuvre. In La creación (The Creation), 1940, an Adam-like naked figure stands in an ochre-red landscape, arms raised towards the heavens, surrounded by three trees, two of them truncated.

Here, the figure is not at odds with the Mayan mythological landscape. Three birds appear in the painting. Two, like the one in Calvario, are colorful and crested. The largest of the three birds is the eagle, an important symbol in the Mayan tradition. The eagle cult is characteristically combined with the cosmological belief in the Mountain of the World and the Tree of the World.[23] The eagle sitting on a cactus and holding a serpent is a hieroglyph for the Aztec center of civilization, still used on the Mexican flag.[24] In Izquierdo's painting, the eagle is powerful; its talons clutch the bark of the truncated tree representing renewal and creation. The bird on the truncated tree with exposed roots could also be a vulture. The vulture, states Karl A. Taube, with its "long, down-curving, and blunt tipped" beak is identified as "the King Vulture" in ancient Zapotec (Oaxaca) iconography.[25] The vulture is associated with scaffold sacrifice, and the tree became the symbol of the scaffold. The scaffold sacrifice, a classic Mayan rite, celebrated the vernal renewal of the fields. In La creación, the vulture is associated with agricultural renewal, and the small Adam-like figure seems to be praying to the gods for rain and the warmth of the sun.[26] At the far right of the canvas is a semicircular yellow crater, suggesting a volcano. The trees and the volcanic hills are set against a dramatic fiery red sky.

The volcanic mountains of rock and lava in Izquierdo's painting suggest Artaud's description of the Tarahumara Sierra, what he called "The Mountain of Signs." It was the Mexican land he had already dreamed about, through his reading of Carl Lumboltz's and Carlos Basauri's accounts of the Tarahumaras. In 1935, a year before his visit to Mexico, Artaud remarked: "In Mexico, bound into the earth, lost in the flow of volcanic lava, vibrating in the Indian blood, there is the magic reality of a culture that could doubtless be materially ignited without much difficulty."[27] Izquierdo's paintings stirred Artaud's imagination because they embodied the indigenous Mexican cosmographies which he saw as living myths.

For Artaud, the most mythic Mexicans were the Tarahumara Indians. A poem by the noted Mexican poet Alfonso Reyes, "Tarahumara Herbs," written near the time Artaud visited Mexico, emphasizes the complex syncretism not only of Mexico's history but also of its folk culture.

In the poem, Reyes glorifies the Tarahumara Indians' traditional knowledge of medicinal herbs. For the Indians, these herbs serve a similar function as the Eucharistic bread and wine do

in Christian ceremonies: "Into Catholics / by the New Spain missionaries they were turned / -- these lion-hearted lambs. / And, without bread or wine, / they celebrate the Christian ceremony / with their chicha beer and their pinole / which is a powder of universal flavour."

Artaud's pilgrimage to the Tarahumara Sierra was motivated by a desire to participate in the peyotl ritual, which invested drug-taking with religious meaning. For the Mexican poet Reyes too, the Tarahumaras were closely identified with hallucinogenic experience believed to transcend ordinary consciousness: "The finest Marathon runners in the world, / nourished on the bitter flesh of deer, / they will be the first with the triumphant news / the day we leap the wall / of the five senses." Reyes chronicles the colonial history of the Tarahumara, describing the repression ethnobotany by the Spanish: "(Our Francisco Hernandez / --the Mexican Pliny of the Cinquecento-- / acquired no fewer than one thousand two hundred / magic plants of the Indian pharmacopoeia. / Don Philip the Second, / though not a great botanist, / contrived to spend twenty thousand ducats / in order that this unique herbarium / might disappear beneath neglect and dust! / For we possess the Reverend Father Moxo's / assurance that this was not due to the fire / that in the seventeenth century occurred / in the Palace of the Escurial.)"[28]

Artaud spent twenty-eight days among the Tarahumaras, preparing for the peyote dance. Yet, in his search for a primitive mysticism, Artaud retained images of medieval Europe. Artaud's Mexican visions were palimpsestic, superimposing upon the mountains of the Tarahumaras rubrics familiar from Christian legend. While waiting to undergo the ritual, he experienced a vision of a Hieronymous Bosch Nativity. He describes, in The Peyotl Dance, "the fires of the Child-King" and the "dance-kings"; the Magi wear "crowns of mirrors on their heads and . . . rectangular Phoenician purple coats . . ."[29] For Artaud, the Tarahumara Sierra "the land of the Magi," was a land of religious naïvete as imagined by European painters before the Renaissance. Contemporary scholars drew similar analogies between Mexican pagan rituals and Christian iconography. Theodor-Wilhelm Danzel, for example, compares the ribbon of blood linking a sacrificial bird to the sun god with rays emanating from the wounds of Christ.[30]

Hinting at a common myth, Artaud describes the archaelogical digs that uncovered a lost race of men coming to the Tarahumara tribe, carrying fire: there were three masters or kings, following the Polar Star. The Christian story of the three kings is conflated with the ancient Mexican solar cult.[31]

In his own way, Artaud, too, practices imaginative syncretism. Artaud's syncretism is intellectual. In the eclectic tradition of European occultism, he sampled a variety of Western and Eastern religious systems, while paradoxically seeking a hypothetical primal purity. Artaud hoped to find that purity in the survival of Pre-Columbian religion. Artaud's participation in the peyotl ritual belongs to a tradition of European Romanticism; Thomas De Quincey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Baudelaire--all used drugs in an attempt to evade the rational mind to tap into a mythic state of consciousness. Artaud went further, journeying to an exotic place to share the drug rituals of a "primitive" people, yet he could not bridge the distance. The Tarahumara Indians were wary of Artaud's presence. They feared that he might siphon off some of the collective power the tribe accessed through the peyotl ceremony.

Artaud had gone to Mexico in the hope of finding a vital and therapeutic primitivism. The sophisticated twentieth-century culture of Mexico City, while far closer to his ideal than that of contemporary Europe, did not offer the violent catharsis he sought. Artaud's journey to the Tarahumara constituted a particularly dramatic episode in his pursuit of the infinitely receding primoridal past.

END NOTES

[1] First cited by Elizabeth Ferrer, "A Singular Path: The Artistic Development of Maria Izquierdo" in The True Poetry: The Art of Maria Izquierdo (New York: Americans Society Art Gallery, 1947) 26.
[2] See Luis Martin Lozano's essay, "Maria Izquierdo" in Maria Izquierdo (Chicago: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1996) 52.
[3] For further information, see Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries. Intro. by Octavio Paz (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1990) 520-522. See also Museo Nacional de Arte: Una Ventana al Arte Mexicano de Cuatro Siglos (Mexico: D.R. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994).
[4] See David Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990) 145-146.
[5] See Sylvia Navarrete, "Maria Izquierdo" in Maria Izquierdo (Mexico City: Centro Cultural/Arte Contemporáneo, 1988) 81. Izquierdo wrote in Hoy posthumously about Tina Modotti as an artistic personality and of the visual power of her photography. Izquierdo also referred to the traveling street photographers who influenced her painting.
[6] Kay Turner, Beautiful Necessity: The Art and Meaning of Women's Altars (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999) 101.
[7] Turner 19.
[8] Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica 144. The blue flowers could be painted marigold flowers or, as they are called in the ancient Mexican language Nahuatl, zempoalxochitl (meaning "twenty flowers") which are prominent and crucial in the decorations for the Day of the Dead altars. Carrasco states that in preparation for the Dia de los muertos, "most households grow their own zempoalxochitl in their own gardens and plant the seeds in the middle of August so that the flowers bloom by the last part of October."
[9] See discussion in "Private Symbolism," Chapter IV.
[10] Octavio Paz, Essays on Mexican Art, trans. by Helen Lane (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1993) 50-51.
[11] See Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica 68-69. The other great divine force, *teyolia*, could be found in the heart. At the ancient Aztec temple, Templo Major of Tenochtitlan, the capital city of the Aztec empire, now the site of Mexico City, a very bloody war was fought between Cortes's men and the Aztecs. The Spaniards were defeated, and the Spanish prisoners were brought to the great temple, where their chests were cut open and their still palpitating hearts were taken out and offered as idols.
[12] Donald Cordry, Mexican Masks (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1980) 121.

[13] Antonin Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, trans. by Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958) 11.
[14] Hermenegildo Bustos, an autodidact, was a Mexican Indian painter living and working in the small town of La Purisima del Rincón in the state of Guanajuato. He painted with considerable talent portraits of people from villages close to his town. He also painted murals with religious subjects and ex-votos. According to Octavio Paz, Bustos was a fascinating man with many talents other than painting. Paz states that: "He was a true *bricoleur*. . . . He built walls, repaired roofs, and reconstructed the chapel dedicated to Christ's three falls on the via Crucis. . . . [H]is infusions and herb concoctions (aromatic and medicinal) were celebrated. . . . [H]e excelled at carpentry. . . . He was a tailor. . . . He sculpted and carved . . . wood sculptures of Saints. . . . He also left a series of masks used in the Holy Week pageants." See "I, a Painter, an Indian from This Village," FMR No. 8 (Jan/Feb 1985) 63-64. Paz's essay is also featured, without illustrations, in his Essays on Mexican Art 85-110.
[15] See Hugo Nutini's Todos Santos in Rural Tlax-cala: A Syncretic, Expressive and Symbolic Analysis of the Cult of the Dead (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1988) 56. In her essay, "From Pre-Columbian to Modern," Diana Fane discusses the Christ of Chalma. Chalma was a sacred site during pre-Hispanic times dedicated to the war god Huitzilopochtli in a local cave. A priest entered the cave in 1537 and saw a miraculous image of the crucified Christ, with the stone deity broken at his feet. See Fane, ed., Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America (Brooklyn Museum; New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996) 114.
[16] Fane, ed., Converging Cultures: . . . 250.
[17] See Karl A. Taube's "A Study of Classic Maya Scaffold Sacrifice" in Maya Iconography, ed. by E. Benson and G.G. Griffin (Princeton VP, 1988) 343.
[18] The symmetry of the superimposed crosses is also notable in the crucifixion scene, in an 1801 Life of Saint Philip of Jesus, illustrated by José Montes de Oca, a copperplate engraving. See Fane, ed., Converging Cultures: . . . 110-112.
[19] Lola Alvarez Bravo: Recuento Fotográfico (Mexico: Editorial Penélope, 1982) 104.
[20] Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.
[21] A Chilean diplomat as well as an artist, Raul Uribe took Izquierdo away from her artistic bohemian world and introduced her to a life of receptions, public relations, extensive travel and the art of making money. After her divorce, money, especially after her mounting debts and hospital bills, eluded her to the end of her life.
[22] See Carrasco, Religions of Mesoamerica 101.
[23] Rudolf Wittkower, Allegory and the Migration of Symbols (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1977) 23-24.
[24] Wittkower, Allegory. . . 25. As a solar deity, the eagle appears in Babylonian, Egyptian, Indian, and Greek myths, as well as in the Americas.
[25] See Taube, "A Study . . ." 331-332.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Antonin Artaud, Oeuvres Complètes vol VIII 127.
[28] Octavio Paz, Anthology of Mexican Poetry, trans. by Samuel Beckett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958) 189-190.
[29] Antonin Artaud, Les Tarahumaras (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) 57-58.
[30] See Theodor-Wilhelm Danzel's "The Psychology of Ancient Mexican Symbolism," in Spiritual Disciplines: Papers From The Eranos Yearbooks (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960) 105-106.
[31] Artaud, Les Tarahumaras 83.