

From the Spiritual Doctrine in *La Raza Cósmica* to the Politicized Themes in

Contemporáneos

by

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Thesis Abstract: **From the Spiritual Doctrine in *La Raza Cósmica* to the Politicized Themes
in *Contemporáneos***

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Literary journals and collections in post-revolutionary Mexico developed with vigor due to the secretary of public education, José Vasconcelos's financial backing. The literary group, los Contemporáneos, received support from Vasconcelos and went on to pen the first Mexican literary canon of the century. Carlos Pellicer, Jaime Torres Bodet, Xavier Villaurrutia, José Gorostiza, Enrique González Rojo, and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano published the literary journals: *La Falange* (1922-1923), *Antena* (1924), *Ulises* (1927-1928), y *Contemporáneos* (1928-1931). Vasconcelos's administrative role as a patron of the arts evolved into that of a political leader when he published the philosophical doctrine, *La Raza Cósmica*, and ran for the presidency in 1929. The Contemporáneos' literary journals and collections from 1920 to 1940 juxtaposed with Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cósmica* bring to light the artists' and the politician's conviviality and shared prerogative of introducing "authentic" Mexican arts. In addition, the correspondence between the authors, Vasconcelos, and the Mexican Secretary of Public Education reveals how the politics of the time directly formed the following themes in the literature: travel, race, and dehistoricization. Vasconcelos offers prologues for the literature, secures travel funds, and ensures employment for the authors; however, when Vasconcelos loses his presidential campaign and his philosophy is seen as positivistic the Contemporáneos' readership also declines. The literature by Vasconcelos and the Contemporáneos have travel,

race, and dehistoricization in common, and by considering these three motifs it is clear how the arts first prospered from Vasconcelos and then suffered from his political failure.

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Introduction

The conviviality between the arts and the nation in post-revolutionary Mexico is complex. This study first calls attention to the Mexican government's financial support of authors and then to the predominant themes within the literature. The specific Mexican branch of government is *La Secretaría de la Educación Pública* (SEP), and the literary group in question is the Contemporáneos. To narrow the subject material further, I will focus on Mexico's first secretary of public education, José Vasconcelos, and his philosophical doctrine in *La Raza Cósmica* (1925). With respect to the Contemporáneos' participants, I will highlight works from Carlos Pellicer, Jaime Torres Bodet, Xavier Villaurrutia, Enrique González Rojo, and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano. It is necessary to frame the exchange of ideas between the SEP and the literature with even more detail due to the long relationship between Vasconcelos and the Contemporáneos. In order to limit the ambiguity of the study I will only be sampling from the literary journal, *Contemporáneos*, from 1928 to 1931. Another component of this project is the selection of the publications. The literary journal and collections contain short prose, poetry, and essays. I will involve the three genres of literature not only to present the authors' different poetic voices, but to demonstrate how the Mexican authors dedicated themselves to a variety of literary expression as well. This period of time and the textual references have encouraged critique ranging from the political atmosphere to biographies concerning the fraternity within the literary group, but readers have not yet placed a thematic lens over Vasconcelos and *Contemporáneos*.

The Contemporáneos' literary collections and journal juxtaposed with Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cósmica* bring to light *Contemporáneos*'s and the politician's relationship and shared prerogative of introducing a better quality of art in Mexico. In addition, the correspondence

between the authors, Vasconcelos, and the Mexican Secretary of Public Education (SEP) reveals how the politics of the time directly formed the following themes in the literature: pre-Columbian history, race and travel. Vasconcelos offers prologues for the *Contemporáneos*, secures travel funds, and ensures employment for the authors; however, when Vasconcelos loses his presidential campaign and his philosophy is seen as positivistic the *Contemporáneos'* readership also declines. I will use pre-Columbian history, race, and travel found in *La Raza Cósmica* and *Contemporáneos* as entry points to make more transparent why these Mexican arts first prospered via Vasconcelos and then suffered from his political failure.

This argument concerns the negotiation between Vasconcelos and the *Contemporáneos* found in *La Raza Cósmica* by the former and short prose, poetry and essays in the literary journal; however, I will divide the study into chapters with regard to themes in *Contemporáneos*. A look into Vasconcelos as the secretary of public education and the contents of *La Raza Cósmica* will open the discussion. The reasoning behind beginning with this is to first clarify how the printing of *La Raza Cósmica* can serve as a point of departure for the analysis of Mexican literature's direction. Apart from interpreting the text and Vasconcelos's career, the section will also draw out the themes: pre-Columbian history, race and travel, in *La Raza Cósmica*. The proceeding chapter will focus on the literary journal *Contemporáneos* and capture the journal's use of the themes.

To understand *Contemporáneos* as a complete text I will offer notes on the way it emerges from Mexico City in 1928 as a movement instead of separate works by individual authors. Vasconcelos's resignation and the passage of the new secretary of public education to Bernardo J. Gastelúm are two key events for the publication. Considering these changes in Mexico's political structure makes it possible to see how Enrique González Rojo, Xavier

Villaurrutia, Jaime Torres Bodet and Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano function as editors and authors within Mexico's governmental infrastructure. Raymond Williams's *Marxism and Literature* will serve as tool to interpret the relationship between "institution" and "formation".

The questionable participation of Carlos Pellicer with the journal solidifies William's veneer. Despite Carlos Pellicer being an author in *Contemporáneos* and maintaining friendships with authors listed above, his role in the magazine is not clear. Pellicer's disputed participation allows for an even clearer picture of the traits of a Contemporáneo, because the dialogue has lead to certain conclusions about the authors and their publication. Vasconcelos and Pellicer's travels to South America during the time of *Contemporáneos* and Pellicer's continued involvement with Mexican literature present a technical link between *La Raza Cósmica* and *Contemporáneos*. The argument for or against Pellicer as a member of the group is metonymic for *Contemporáneos'* inability to usher out Vasconcelos's spirituality.

This second chapter is most concerned with bringing to light how *Contemporáneos'* and Vasconcelos's usage of the themes: pre-Columbian history, race and travel, run parallel and deviate from one another. The essays, short prose and poems in the literary journal contain a rhetoric that affirms *La Raza Cósmica* and disavows from it, and once this point is clear it is possible to suggest *Contemporáneos* is guilty by it's relationship with Vasconcelos's largely unpopular doctrine. From this connection between Vasconcelos and *Contemporáneos* it is feasible to propose travel, race and pre-Columbian history are entryways that tie *La Raza Cósmica* to *Contemporáneos*. In this final part it is necessary to interrogatively look at what else comes of the layering of Vasconcelos with *Contemporáneos* and take note of the advantages and disadvantages of approaching it thematically. This penultimate comparison study gives way to

the last explanation: the two texts intertwined help explain how and why the *Contemporáneos*' association with Vasconcelos converts the latter into an institutionalized literary publication.

A Note on New Research Possibilities:

Despite the great amount of research and analysis of these works two current events have invited historiographers and literary critics to reconsider the relationship between Vasconcelos and the *Contemporáneos*. In late September of 2012 SEP transferred over 92 million papers regarding

the artistic and educational direction in Mexico overlapping the dates of 1920 to 1931 to the *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN). The move caused much voiced opposition from many researchers in Mexico and the U.S. due to the difficulty of transporting such documents safely. The relocation of the portfolios required new organization, and as a result access to materials formerly not considered are available to academics. In August of 2013, a second occurrence enriched the possibility of coming across never before seen data about Vasconcelos and *Contemporáneos*. On site in Mexico City, SEP inaugurated their *Fondo Vasconcelos* that boasts original copies of books printed while Vasconcelos was secretary among other resources. SEP, AGN and the *Academia Mexicana de la Lengua* supported me in my documentation of certain academic articles, clippings, and administrative files in the summer of 2013, and I will be referencing a specific article detailing communication between the Mexican diplomat Enrique D. Ruiz and the Mexican secretary of public education Aarón Saenz in 1930.

Chapter I: *La Raza Cósmica*, José Vasconcelos

José Vasconcelos published *La Raza Cósmica* in 1925, and the appearance of the text at this time proves to be critical for the *Contemporáneos*' publication three years later. *La Raza*

Cósmica proposes one primary theory: the mixing of races or *mestizaje* produces a superior human being. Vasconcelos reinforces this belief by history, spirituality, science and instinctive feelings. Before analyzing the actual contents of *La Raza Cósmica* it is valuable to understand Vasconcelos had attempted to crystalize his theories from his role as the secretary of public education in Mexico. In the last paragraph of *La Raza Cósmica* Vasconcelos states, “Para expresar todas estas ideas que hoy procuro exponer en rápida síntesis, hace algunos años, cuando todavía no se hallaban bien definidas, procuré darles signos en el nuevo Palacio de la Educación Pública de México” (32). Vasconcelos reveals he tried to emphasize the ideas in *La Raza Cósmica* from within *La Secretaría de la Educación Pública* of Mexico. From this statement it is clear the *La Raza Cósmica*, the department of government, and *Contemporáneos* come together to influence one another. The union between these three entities during the years from 1920 to 1931 encourages a study that represents the triple faceted progression; therefore, an analysis of *La Raza Cósmica* is necessary to comprehend the complexity of the relationship the *Contemporáneos* shared with Vasconcelos.

The thesis of *La Raza Cósmica*, digresses into polemical ideas. The preface of the text reads, “La tesis central del presente libro es que las distintas razas del mundo tienden a mezclarse cada vez más, hasta formar un nuevo tipo humano, compuesto con la selección de cada uno de los pueblos existentes” (1). The themes, pre-Columbian history and race, surface repetitively in the *La Raza Cósmica* as Vasconcelos declares that races mix over time and later will arrive at a final synthesis. Travel is a strong feature in the second part of Vasconcelos’s book *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*. These memoirs tell of Vasconcelos in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. Vasconcelos published the two works together in the 1925 publication of *La Raza Cósmica*¹.

¹ *La raza cósmica. Misión de la raza iberoamericana. Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*. Agencia Mundial de Librería, Barcelona: 1925.

Despite the fact that the second work is less well-known Vasconcelos emphasizes the inclusive heterogeneous act of travel, and the different nations in America are the settings for more of his spiritual doctrine.

Vasconcelos approaches race with definitiveness. The comparison between the Egyptians' and the Greeks' multi-ethnicity with this *mestizaje* determines that Latin America's diversity will refine its race. The U.S. serves as another correlation for the *mestizaje* when Vasconcelos comments, "La América Latina debe lo que es al europeo blanco y no va a renegar de él; al mismo norteamericano le debe gran parte de sus ferrocarriles, y puentes y empresas, y de igual suerte necesita de todas las otras razas. Sin embargo, aceptamos los ideales superiores del blanco, pero no su arrogancia" (21). Vasconcelos portrays the European influence on the U.S. and relates Europe with the U.S.'s success in industrialization. At the same time, Vasconcelos depicts the Caucasian population of the northern part of America with superior ideals and arrogance. The critic Tru Leverette approaches how *La Raza Cósmica* sought to establish a new ideology in Latin America, "It was imperative for Vasconcelos's aims [. . .] therefore, that he reconceptualized the nation-state by rethinking the place of race and racial difference within it. This is not to suggest, however, that the nationalism as espoused in this idea of a Cosmic Race was anti-racist; in fact, it was inherently racist" (78). What Leverette calls racist does not remain solely against those that do not belong to Europe and the U.S. *La Raza Cósmica* voices a partiality towards specific regions and cultures in Latin America as well.

The notion of superiority in the essay just a page before shows that Vasconcelos also pronounces a hierarchy within Latin America's regions and demographics:

La tierra de promisión estará entonces en la zona que hoy comprende el Brasil entero, más Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, parte de Perú, parte de Bolivia y la región superior de la Argentina. Existe el peligro de que la ciencia se adelante al proceso étnico, de suerte que la invasión del trópico ocurra antes que la quinta raza acabe de formarse. Si así sucede, por la posesión del Amazonas se librarán batallas que decidirán el destino del mundo y la suerte de la raza definitiva. (20)

The excerpt uncovers two different parts of Vasconcelos's structure. The tropics turn into a threat for the Amazonas ethnic development. And the word "definitiva" clears away any doubt that Vasconcelos saw the race of his *mestizaje* in union. For Vasconcelos, *la quinta raza* is an absolute, and a true arrangement of "la Blanca, la Roja, la Negra y la Amarilla" awaits its realization (34). The "promisión", "proceso étnico", and use of the future tense throughout the citation lends itself to segue into the function or non-function of pre-Columbian history before we look into the travel characteristic in *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*.

Vasconcelos refers to the Egyptians and the Greeks in order to display his theory that his *mestizaje* produces measurable superiority. It is noticeable that the Egyptian pyramids are proof enough for Vasconcelos, because he goes on to remark on their construction taking place during the second kingdom. Vasconcelos asserts America also needs to supersede the indigenous cultures of the past:

El atraso de los pueblos hispanoamericanos, donde predomina el elemento indígena, es difícil de explicar, como no sea remontándonos al primer ejemplo citado de la civilización egipcia. Sucede que el mestizaje de factores muy disímiles tarda mucho tiempo en plasmar. Entre nosotros, el mestizaje se suspendió antes de que acabase de estar formado el tipo

racial, con motivo de la exclusión de los españoles, decretada con posterioridad a la independencia. En pueblos como Ecuador o el Perú, la pobreza del terreno, además de los motivos políticos, contuvo la inmigración española. (4)

Vasconcelos admits his controversial opinion “is difficult to explain” and resorts back to the greatness of the Egyptians pyramids in order to present his theory with more objectivity. The Egyptian pyramids must belong to the second kingdom for his thesis to withstand objections, but this is not the case. The Egyptian pyramids were built throughout the Old and Middle Kingdoms, but not in the New Kingdom¹¹. Even though the information is incorrect Egypt serves as evidence for Vasconcelos, and this allows him to continue on to say Ecuador and Peru unfortunately do not have a stronger Spanish influence. In this light Vasconcelos appears to nearly recommend colonization if his *mestizaje* is the result. *La Raza Cósmica* attempts to persuade its reader to neglect pre-Columbian history and celebrate the European glosses over the indigenous society. Vasconcelos augments his convincing tone in the essay even more to ensure his readers there is truth in his theories.

In hope to quash any critics Vasconcelos takes it upon himself to speak for the indigenous population. *La Raza Cósmica* becomes a polyphonic doctrine; one point of view is that of Vasconcelos and the other is an indigenist assumed by Vasconcelos, “el elemento indígena no se había fusionado, no se ha fusionado aún en su totalidad, con la sangre española; pero esta discordia es más aparente que real. Háblese al más exaltado indianista de la conveniencia de adaptarnos a la latinidad y no opondrá el menor reparo” (13). Vasconcelos does

¹¹ Edwards, I.E.S. *The Pyramids of Egypt*. 1947. “The Pyramid Age, *par excellence*, covers the second of [nine periods]—the period beginning with the IIIrd Dynasty and ending with the VIth Dynasty” (1-2). Vasconcelos offers a new prologue in a 1948 publication of *La Raza Cósmica* and certain corrections. Vasconcelos does not amend the error concerning Egyptian history.

not go as far as speaking for the indigenous population; however, he does speak for the indigenist. As a result pre-Columbian history appears less significant in his *mestizaje* formula. The indigenist who studies the indigenous cultures of Latin America becomes a part of Vasconcelos' persuasive tone. Vasconcelos refers to the indigenist to further diminish the possibility of the indigenous population appearing misrepresented. The contradiction is clear between the disregard for pre-Columbian history and his thesis, "vivir el júbilo fundado en amor, ésa es la tercera etapa" (24). The argument in *La Raza Cósmica* does not materialize, because the counterpoints accumulate and go against the general solution of Vasconcelos' *mestizaje*.

Vasconcelos's work *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur* is based on an excursion to South America in 1922. Vasconcelos, with Carlos Pellicer, travels to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay^{III}. National banquets, tours of universities and trips outside of the major cities take up most of the memoirs in *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*, but Vasconcelos does not stray far from his political and spiritual commentary. Travel serves as a heterogeneous opportunity for Vasconcelos; one that involves different peoples, cultures and languages. The continuation of these polemical remarks is not surprising, because Vasconcelos published *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur* in conjunction with *La Raza Cósmica*. Vasconcelos offers more critical opinions of race and history and uses the act of travel to present his subjective views of humanity, and this is evident when Vasconcelos writes, "La mayor tortura del viajero es no poder retener con nitidez, siquiera las emociones más profundas, las vistas más bellas . . . Frágil conciencia que sólo posee el instante; nos soñamos arcángeles y somos gusanos reptando en un planeta inferior" (59). The excerpt displays how Vasconcelos uses travel to perceive society. For Vasconcelos, the traveler experiences a sense of fleetingness that builds up a false greatness of life. The imagery of worms crawling in an "inferior planet" quickly frames the way Vasconcelos gives his opinion

^{III} Mullen, Edward J. *Carlos Pellicer*.

on early 20th century humanity and is constantly encouraging the synthesis of an improved people. Vasconcelos offers the passage in order to place the traveler in a space where he or she can have opinions on society and philosophy. The traveler, Vasconcelos, comments on a variety of subjects: preference of certain countries, natural settings in the U.S. and South America, human anthropology of the South American countries and architecture. Even though Vasconcelos admits traveling is a transient experience, the author comes to definitive conclusions about geographically distinct cultures.

It has not been common to view *La Raza Cósmica* and *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur* as a pair that come together to show Vasconcelos's doctrine. Literary historians and critics have most likely chosen to study *La Raza Cósmica* independently, because the English translation, *The Cosmic Race*, does not contain the second section on Vasconcelos's travels^{IV}. The scrutiny races and pre-Columbian history come under in *La Raza Cósmica* seems to originate from the consciousness of Vasconcelos's traveler. *Notas de viaje América del Sur* portrays Vasconcelos as a cultural anthropologist who is set out to distinguish the superior traits from the inferior traits of different peoples. Vasconcelos pronounces his simple and instinctual indifference to the U.S. and Canada and recounts why Spain is better than Argentina, Argentina is better than Brazil and Mexico, and Mexico and Brazil are better than the U.S. and Canada. Under this hierarchal structure Vasconcelos celebrates certain natural settings and denounces others.

^{IV} First edition: *La raza cósmica. Misión de la raza iberoamericana. Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*. Agencia Mundial de Librería, Barcelona: 1925. Second edition: includes a new "Prólogo" with the old one renamed "El Mestizaje". Espasa-Calpe Mexicana. Mexico and Argentina: 1948. Third edition: *Obras completas*, 1958. Fourth edition: Aguilar. Madrid: 1967. Fifth edition (First English edition): Includes "Prólogo" and "El Mestizaje", but excludes *Notas de viaje a la América del Sur*. California State University, Los Angeles: 1979. Sixth Edition (Second English edition): Reprint of first English edition. John Hopkins. Baltimore: 1997.

It is apparent that travel is a technique Vasconcelos uses to insert diverse ways of living that he can then form hypotheses from. The conviviality between Vasconcelos and the member of the Contemporáneos, Carlos Pellicer, takes place in *Notas de viaje América del Sur* while the two are with a group of sightseers at Iguazu Falls in Argentina. Vasconcelos recounts how Carlos Pellicer approaches the edge and gives the group a sense of vertigo. The event permits Vasconcelos to transition into a comparison between Niagara Falls in the U.S. and Iguazu Falls in Argentina. While speaking of the waterfall in Argentina Vasconcelos ensures:

En toda la región hay saltos de menor importancia relativa, pero los datos anotados bastan para convencer de que esta región será algún día el centro de la industria del mundo, pues si alrededor del Niágara y en la región de los Lagos, desde Chicago hasta Nueva York se ha creado el gran imperio industrial de nuestra época, ni siquiera podemos imaginar lo que será dentro de años o siglos esta zona brasileño-argentina, que contiene las mayores reservas naturales del mundo. (156)

Vasconcelos, the traveler, returns to his opinion that South America has the most potential in the world and does this again by referencing the U.S. The juxtaposition of Niagara to Iguazu shows how Vasconcelos does not fail to relegate the U.S. to empower a biased Latin American perception. Vasconcelos does not only insert his geopolitical points via the different region's respective natural wonders, but through his associates as well.

Carlos Pellicer is one of many secondary characters that make space for Vasconcelos's political opinions. The two Brazilians Silveira and Penha make a strong enough impression on Vasconcelos that he says the former "también me tocó el corazón" (85). Women also take an important role in *Notas de viaje a América del Sur*, "Mujeres que no sólo encantan sino que

ponen angustia en el cuello, inquietud profunda, casi desgarradora, en las entrañas; dolor en el corazón; leve temblor en los músculos; deslumbramiento en la mirada. Sólo la abundancia alivia de la pena, porque siempre hay otra, y otra más, que hace olvidar el primer encuentro” (114).

The metropolitan surroundings and the development of new acquaintances in South America show how Vasconcelos, the traveler, interacts socially. In the Rio de Janeiro area Vasconcelos meets the “commander of the zone”, and from this encounter Vasconcelos reiterates his points on race, “El general tenía apellido y sangre francesa; pero era brasileño, y esto bastaba para darle un sentido de solidaridad con la sangre, hoy desdeñada de los portugueses” (86). The general’s French and Brazilian background fits within Vasconcelos’s theory of *mestizaje*, and the act of travel with its transient characters again gives way to subjective anthropological descriptions. In addition to the argument about the superiority of other countries, the comparison of natural wonders and human anthropology, Vasconcelos also provides commentary on the cityscapes of South America.

The political gloss that Vasconcelos places over architecture will complete our study of the major characteristics of travel in *Notes de viaje a América del Sur*. Travel is a theme that facilitates Vasconcelos’s opinions on race, pre-Columbian history and national interests. As a traveler Vasconcelos feels at liberty to make sweeping assumptions and to form his spiritual doctrine. The travel memoirs seem to be an excuse to further Vasconcelos’s political agenda, and this is most clear with the quick change in topic from Buenos Aires’ architecture to the idea that the arrival to a superior race is possible. A typical journal of a traveler witnessing Buenos Aires transforms into a persuasive essay when Vasconcelos remarks:

Una ciudad europea, sin duda, pero con médula castellana, con
civilización ultra española, porque allí es donde España se muestra en

mayor adelanto y progreso. México es indio, se siente allí por doquiera el ámbito indígena; Cuba es mulata, aunque hay allí mucha gente blanca, se siente la influencia del negro; es colonial, es antigua con algo de Asia; Santiago es severamente castizo; sólo Buenos Aires es cosmopolita y por lo mismo representa el espíritu español en su expresión universal” (113).

Vasconcelos's heavy-handed favoritism is obvious considering the words, “mayor”, “doquiera”, “aunque” and “severante”. These words develop a tone that diminish the worth of the respected regions and climax when Vasconcelos declares “sólo Buenos Aires es cosmopolita”. It is from the space of a traveler that Vasconcelos expresses his definitiveness on how he sees South America contrasted with the U.S. and South America contrasted with itself. Vasconcelos portrays the traveler with a “fragile consciousness”, and from this state the traveler easily succumbs to a grandiose world. Vasconcelos shows the traveler with a heightened alertness to the differences between cultures. By these means the travel memoirs accommodate Vasconcelos as he pontificates with an unprecedented certainty on the contrasts between the Americas.

It is pertinent to observe that the three themes: pre-Columbian history, race, and travel develop alongside the commentary: on positivism, sexual encounters between races, and religion. Vasconcelos continues to defend this theory by referencing the scientific discussion between Darwin, Sablon and Noüy regarding *natural selection*. Throughout *La Raza Cósmica* Vasconcelos mentions the science behind *mestizaje*. Vasconcelos juxtaposes *mestizaje* with *natural selection*, and states that the former, “Se operaría en esta forma una selección por el gusto, mucho más eficaz que la brutal selección darwiniana” (27). *La Raza Cósmica* hinges on its difference from positivism, because this is how Vasconcelos is able to write of “amor” instead of a violent racial development. Vasconcelos tries to show the brutality of positivism in order to

strengthen his recommendation, a *mestizaje* that emphasizes a sexual appeal. Vasconcelos's *mestizaje* and Darwin's *natural selection* function as opposite binaries in *La Raza Cósmica*, but Vasconcelos fails to realize that Darwin too speaks to the sexual element of evolution^v. The misreading of *On the Origin of Species* in *La Raza Cósmica* destabilizes Vasconcelos's doctrine. The error in the reading of Darwin underlines the volatility of *La Raza Cósmica*. In addition to the contradiction of *mestizaje* and *natural selection*, Vasconcelos perceives an endpoint to the combination of distinct ethnicities. Even though Vasconcelos erroneously claims Darwin is a reductionist it is he in all actuality that synthesizes and believes there is an ending to humanity (29). The breaking away from Darwin is not clean due to Vasconcelos's confused reading of Darwin and the dialectic nature of his *mestizaje*. Despite the two inconsistencies found in the close reading of Darwin and the assumption that an absolute does not emerge in *mestizaje*, Vasconcelos seeks to explain in detail the way in which a sexual approach is best in understanding Latin America's possibility of having a superior race.

When Vasconcelos speaks of "gusto" it is a sexual pleasure he refers to. Darwin represents an exclusive module of the world for Vasconcelos, but *La Raza Cósmica* suggests a similar view on sexual appeal and religion. Vasconcelos rejects Darwin's theories, and from this point of departure Vasconcelos reveals that sexual attraction is the motor behind *mestizaje*. Vasconcelos writes of the sexual characteristic of *mestizaje* and erroneously attempts to replace Darwin's "brutal" theory with his vision of America. To discredit the accepted science of the

^v Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species* (1859). "Inasmuch as peculiarities often appear under domestication in one sex and become hereditarily attached to that sex, the same fact probably occurs under nature, and if so, natural selection will be able to modify one sex in its functional relations to the other sex, or in relation to wholly different habits of life in the two sexes, as is sometimes the case with insects. And this leads me to say a few words on what I call Sexual Selection. This depends, not on a struggle for existence, but on a struggle between the males for possession of the females; the result is not death to the unsuccessful competitor, but few or no offspring. Sexual selection is, therefore, less rigorous than natural selection" (107). Darwin continues his discourse of *sexual selection* in his work *The Descent of Man* (1871). Darwin furthers his analysis of the amorous connection between humans.

time Vasconcelos explains that in America “se consumará la unidad por el triunfo del amor fecundo” (15). Sexual “amor” in *La Raza Cósmica* serves as the catalyst for the “la quinta raza”:

Los llamados latinos, . . . persisten en no tomar muy en cuenta el factor étnico para sus relaciones sexuales. Sean cuales fueren las opiniones que a este respecto se emitan, y aun la repugnancia que el prejuicio nos causa, lo cierto es que se ha producido y se sigue consumando la mezcla de sangres. Y es en esta fusión de estirpes donde debemos buscar el rasgo fundamental de la idiosincrasia iberoamericana. (16)

Vasconcelos deems Ibero-America unique, because its population has not been selective with respect to the importance of ethnicity when procreating. In this way the U.S. is a rival force in *La Raza Cósmica*. On the topic of the U.S.’s disinterestedness in Asian populations physically Vasconcelos offers stereotypes that strengthen his thesis that “la quinta raza” will include all races to form his *mestizaje*; however his slanted stereotyping about U.S.’s physical preference in the end destabilizes his statement:

En los Estados Unidos rechazan a los asiáticos, por el mismo temor del desbordamiento físico propio de las especies superiores; pero también lo hacen porque no les simpatiza el asiático, porque lo desdeñan y serían incapaces de cruzarse con él. Las señoritas de San Francisco se han negado a bailar con oficiales de la marina japonesa, que son hombres tan aseados, inteligentes y, a su manera, tan bellos, como los de cualquiera otra marina del mundo. Sin embargo, ellas jamás comprenderán que un japonés pueda ser bello. (17)

The generalization that women from the U.S. will never find Japanese men attractive leaves space for much speculation of Vasconcelos' success in understanding the complexity of sexuality and ethnicity. Vasconcelos documents the differences between the U.S. and his future "quinta raza" by making assumptions about how the two see physical beauty. The subjects of love, ethnicity and beauty are large topics to address, and Vasconcelos tries to sustain all three to define the functionality of his "universópolis". The result is unclear. Vasconcelos limits the possibility of a U.S. woman ever liking a Japanese man; therefore, Vasconcelos reveals himself as much of a reductionist as the reality he argues against. *La Raza Cósmica* continues to exclude despite the original thesis of "mixing races" when Vasconcelos remarks on the role of religion in *mestizaje*.

The topic of religion is a reoccurring feature of *La Raza Cósmica*, and Vasconcelos clearly outlines the process of *mestizaje* singularly with Christianity. Along with Japanese men, Vasconcelos distances Jewish people from America's new race due to their ties with a nation:

Este amor será uno de los dogmas fundamentales de la quinta raza, que ha de producirse en América. El cristianismo liberta y engendra vida, porque contiene revelación universal, no nacional; por eso tuvieron que rechazarlo los propios judíos, que no se decidieron a comulgar con gentiles. Pero la América es la patria de la gentilidad, la verdadera tierra de promisión cristiana. (29)

The anti-Semitic comment contradicts the love Vasconcelos underlines and which is supposedly the backbone of *La Raza Cósmica*. The ideas project an incoherent thesis on race and leave the reader seeing gaps in the text. Vasconcelos makes dangerous jumps from one ethnicity to a belief

system with his assumptions when he comments on Japanese men and Judaism. A similar move occurs when he compares these ideas with the indigenous.

In an almost chiasmic structure Vasconcelos uses his disregard for Asians and distrust of any religion apart from Christianity to come to conclusions about the indigenous populations in the U.S. Vasconcelos complements Asians on their supposed isolation and then questions their belief system in order to collect more evidence that his *mestizaje* is a true interpretation of Latin America: “En efecto, la decadencia de los pueblos asiáticos es atribuible a su aislamiento, pero también, y sin duda, en primer término, al hecho de que no han sido cristianizados. Una religión como la cristiana hizo avanzar a los indios americanos, en pocas centurias, desde el canibalismo hasta la relativa civilización” (4). The words “avanzar” and “civilización” provoke the understanding that Vasconcelos views the indigenous cultures as barbaric. Vasconcelos believes the U.S. indigenous population was fortunate to receive the Christian influence, because the religion facilitated the civilization of cannibals. Again the movement from the non-Christian Asians’ decline to the refinement of the Christianized U.S. indigenous comes off questionably.

La Raza Cósmica hosts enough subjectivity and false citations that it always remains on the surface level. By not reading Darwin carefully Vasconcelos loses his distinction between *mestizaje* and *natural selection*. The assumption that the Egyptian pyramids emerged from a second empire with superior people is also empty of content when it was known Egypt’s Old Kingdom constructed the obelisks. Vasconcelos’s sweeping generalizations about the inferiority of the indigenous, Asians and Jewish population impede a rational reading. The critic Joshua Lund states, “If Vasconcelos is interesting today, it is not because he thought about *mestizaje* in a right or wrong, productive or unproductive, way. Rather it is because his way of formulating it, even in its failure, has entered the realm of ideology” (108). It is in this way that the study of the

Contemporáneos' processing of the ideology is pertinent. Vasconcelos's formulation involves the themes of pre-Columbian history, race and travel, and *Contemporáneos* both follows suit and contests *La Raza Cósmica* when they use these ideas in their literature. Even though the current reader today only finds *La Raza Cósmica* as a loose weaved text based on self-contradictory arguments, it is evident *Contemporáneos* was apprehensive about leaving Vasconcelos behind.

Chapter II: The “institution” of the SEP, *Contemporáneos* as a “formation”, and Pre-Columbian History, Race and Travel

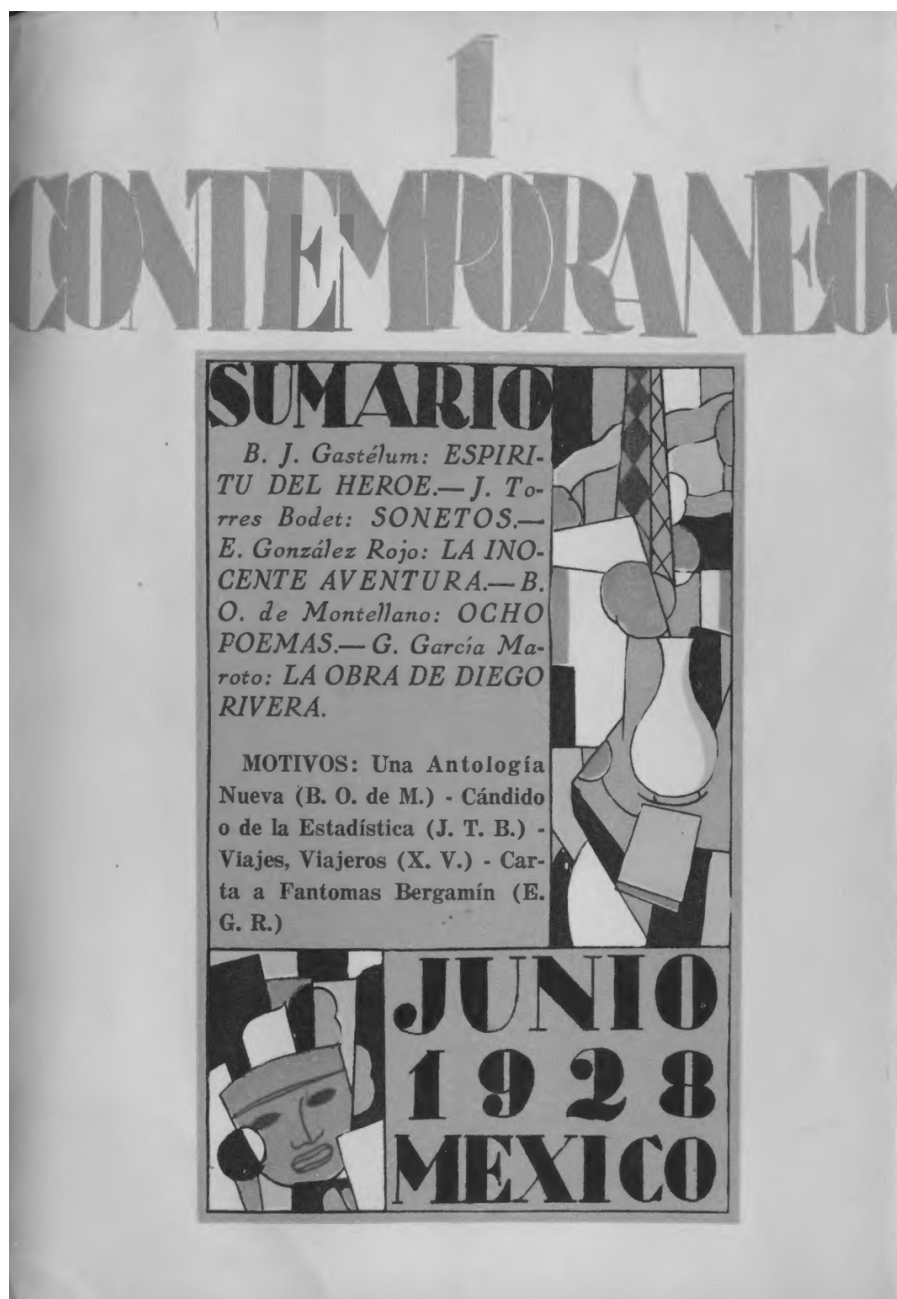


Fig. 1.^{VI}

^{VI} Fig. 1. Cover of *Contemporáneos* No. 1.

I. The Institution of the SEP and its Literary Moves, Raymond Williams's "formations" and Carlos Pellicer according to "grupo sin grupo"

The lineage of the SEP (la Secretaría de la Educación Pública) secretaries calls attention to the *Contemporáneos*' gubernatorial role: José Vasconcelos (1921-1924), Bernardo J. Gastélum (1924), José Manuel Puig Casauranc (1924-1928), Moisés Sáenz (1928), Ezzequiel Padilla (1928-1930), Aarón Sáenz (1930), Carlos Trejo Lerdo de Tejada (1930-1931) and Narciso Bassols (1931-1932). Vasconcelos put together the SEP, and the secretaries that followed fell in line with the funding of the *Contemporáneos*. From 1928 to 1931 the SEP published *Contemporáneos* and in turn put authors who shared Vasconcelos's ideas about pre-Columbian history, like Ortiz de Montellano, to work in an art industry.

Villaurrutia suggests the *Contemporáneos* write adhering to other Mexican literary expectations when he calls the authors "el grupo sin grupo"^{VII}. It is difficult not to see the *Contemporáneos* grouped with the SEP due to numerous ties that made entire careers for Torres Bodet and Pellicer. But to emphasize the influence of the SEP on Mexican literature it is best to look at primary sources. From 1920-1923 during Vasconcelos's time as secretary several of the authors of *Contemporáneos*, including Torres Bodet and Villaurrutia, collaborated in the magazine *México Moderno*. Seven years later from April 22 to October 31 of 1930 the S.E.P. processes the funding for *Modern Mexico* in New York City. The S.E.P. was publishing *Contemporáneos* for the third year when it added this English translation to its track record of Mexican literary expansion.

^{VII} In a 1924 conference in Mexico City Xavier Villaurrutia names the authors, who would later be known as the *Contemporáneos*, the "grupo sin grupo". *Xavier Villaurrutia Obra Poética*.

Forster, Merlin H. "Frases como 'grupo de soledades' (Torres Bodet), 'grupo sin grupo' (Villaurrutia), y 'grupo de foragidos' (Cuesta) comprenden a la vez la existencia de una agrupación y la imposibilidad de una unificación de divergencias individuales" (21).

The correspondence between the Mexican diplomat Enrique D. Ruiz and the S.E.P. presents the across the board support for these writers; however, it also demonstrates how the magazines become a voice for the Mexican state. Ruiz writes the then Secretary of Public Education Aarón Saenz:

En días pasados me permití enviar a usted un número de la revista 'México Moderno' de que le hablé durante mi estancia en ésa, esperando que lo habrá encontrado de algún interés y que se servirá acordar alguna ayuda para esta publicación, y sea tomando algunas subscripciones o en cualquiera otra forma que usted crea conveniente, pues dicha publicación se está sosteniendo sin la ayuda oficial. Me permito llamar la atención de usted de manera especial al artículo que aparece en la sección en español del número de abril, que se titula 'México en Estampas' escrito por José Juan Tablada y el cual contiene unos grabados sumamente interesantes de la Ciudad de México. Estoy seguro de que este artículo puede tener un gran interés para la Secretaría de Educación Pública. Como usted verá, se ha procurado darle un carácter práctico y serio a dicha revista utilizándola como medio para dar a conocer en este país todo aquello que signifique labor constructiva del Gobierno, para lo cual suplicaría a usted que me enviara lo que usted desee que se divulgue aquí, encargándonos nosotros de la traducción respectiva. (AGN 771)

The persuasive tone is evident in this request for financial backing and relies on the potential benefits for the S.E.P. Despite that the letter pertains to *Modern Mexico*, it exemplifies the international business behind Mexican literature in 1930. The SEP invested in the

Contemporáneos as it published its “labor constructiva del Gobierno” in the English translation of *México Moderno*. It is not far fetched to think the allocation of money even came from the same account. This is noteworthy, because it links *Modern Mexico* and *Contemporáneos* to the same Vasconcelian beginning.

In addition to the overlapping print dates, the secretary of public education turned co-founder of *Contemporáneos*, Bernardo J. Gastélum, also establishes the beginning of the magazine. In a biography on the *Contemporáneos* the author Merlin H. Forster writes, “Vasconcelos renunció al puesto de Educación . . . dejando todo en las manos del subsecretario, Dr. Bernardo J. Gastélum. Gastélum continuó los programas de Vasconcelos, y extendió el mismo patrocinio al grupo de jóvenes poetas en el Ministerio. (13). The political workings behind *Contemporáneos* directly influence the thematic study of the magazine, and this is clear when we consider the former secretary Gastélum publishing in and editing for the literary journal^{VIII}. The S.E.P. does not only approve and finance the pre-Columbian history, race and travel glosses in the literature, but authors them as well. In Gastélum’s short time as secretary he employs González Rojo, Ortiz de Montellano, and Torres Bodet, and Forster points out their “puestos ofrecían prestigio y cooperación, así como valioso apoyo financiero para sus proyectos editoriales” (13). The *Contemporáneos* in this sense embody the SEP; therefore, Villaurrutia’s “grupo sin grupo” might not function as well when we study the writers with an institutional angle. Villaurrutia uses the term to speak about the group’s resistance to the authors of

^{VIII} Gastélum, Bernard J. “Espíritu del Héroe”. *Contemporáneos*. June, 1928. Gastélum introduces the essay and the magazine with Vasconcelian rhetoric, “La historia existe solamente para aquello que es capaz de evolucionar: seres o cosas, pero la que nos interesa comprender esencialmente se refiere al hombre: la que lo interpreta dentro del sentido cósmico y expresa su contenido como una realidad”.

estridentismo from Xalapa^{IX}, Mexico, but both by artistic and financial influence the S.E.P. can certainly serve as the Contemporáneos' "group". Now that the political feature of *Contemporáneos* is clearer, I would like to present travel, race and pre-Columbian history in the works in *Contemporáneos*. By looking at these motifs adjacent to the S.E.P. we can see how the latter utilizes the former to attempt at forming the ideals in Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cósmica*.

Before aligning *La Raza Cósmica*'s major themes of pre-Columbian, race and travel to *Contemporáneos* it is valuable to offer some analysis of the bureaucratic workings behind *Contemporáneos*. The behind the scenes relationship between the SEP and *Contemporáneos* motivates a documentable understanding of *La Raza Cósmica*'s influence on the literary journal. Vasconcelos structures the SEP (la Secretaría de la Educación Pública) in a way that directly influences the nation of Mexico and its people. Vasconcelos's SEP supports the muralists, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco^X, and the Contemporáneos, and this financing brings light to the notion that Vasconcelos produced a hegemonic institution^{XI}. A Marxist analysis reveals Vasconcelos and the SEP as two influences that galvanized Mexico with the hope of a cosmic race. Raymond William writes about the relationship between educational institutions and nations in *Marxism and Literature*:

Formal institutions, evidently, have a profound influence on the active social process. What is abstracted in orthodox sociology as 'socialization'

^{IX} Salvador A. Oropesa in *The Contemporáneos Group* states, "The other important avant-garde group, the Estridentistas, defended the nationalistic positions. They in turn attacked the 'exotics' (the others, the non-Mexicans) and requested the dismissal from public office of the poets open to foreign influence." (11)

^X María Stoopan draws attention the artistic relationship between Jorge Cuesta, an author in *Contemporáneos*, and Orozco, who received work from the SEP in her article, "La crítica de Arte como Revelación Poética. El Encuentro de Jorge Cuesta con José Clemente Orozco".

^{XI} Marentes, Luis A. *José Vasconcelos and the Writing of the Mexican Revolution*. "For the next three years [1921-1924] he led the ministry of education in the building of schools and libraries. He sponsored the publication and distribution of journals and inexpensive editions of class literary texts; the development of handicrafts, ballets, and orchestras; a volunteer-based literacy campaign; and the development of rural 'cultural missions.' He also made available many walls of ministry-owned buildings for the work of the Mexican muralists" (13).

is in practice, in any actual society, a specific kind of incorporation. Its description as ‘socialization’ the universal abstract process on which all human beings can be said to depend, is a way of avoiding or hiding this specific content and intention. Any process of socialization of course includes things that all human beings have to learn, but any specific process ties this necessary learning to a selected range of meanings, values, and practices which, in the very closeness of their association with necessary learning, constitute the real foundation of the hegemonic. (118)

Williams suggests that formal institutions, like the SEP, bring about particular molds of society.

The society inspired by the SEP is not accidental despite the many features of “socialization”.

Vasconcelos plans to take the Mexican presidency in 1929, and this is after he held the two positions, director of UNAM (La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and the Secretary of the SEP. It is clear Vasconcelos aspired to form a society while possessing the most influential role.

There is no need to speculate on a Mexico with Vasconcelos as president, because his role as the secretary of the SEP adequately presents Vasconcelos, the politician. Williams mentions a department of education’s impact on a society, “Education transmits necessary knowledge and skills, but always by a particular selection from the whole available range, and with intrinsic attitudes, both to learning and social relations, which are in practice virtually inextricable,” (118). Williams’s “institution” relies on education, and the SEP relates to this type of “institution”. Vasconcelos during his years as the first Secretary of the SEP publishes a specific collection of literature that includes: *The Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Euripides*, Plato, and Plutarch. Along with these classics Vasconcelos also financially backs the

publication of millions of pedagogical pieces of literature^{xii}. Through this printing production it is apparent how Vasconcelos created what Williams calls “a selected range of meanings, values and practices”. *Contemporáneos* just four years later, in 1928, emerges out of Mexico City alongside the SEP, and Williams calls this outlet a “formation” and writes, “This is why, in any analysis, we have also to include *formations*. These are most recognizable as conscious movements and tendencies (literary, artistic, philosophical or scientific) which can usually be readily discerned after their formative productions” (118-119). It is evident that *Contemporáneos* worked adjacently and from the inside of the SEP, but it is also clear that the literary journal exemplifies what Williams calls a “conscious movement”. The Vasconcelian SEP, or in other words the SEP organized by the ideals of *La Raza Cósmica*, and *Contemporáneos* share an interplay that both runs parallel and diverges.

Contemporáneos and the SEP are connected in a multitude of ways through finances, employed authors and through principal themes. Nevertheless, Williams elaborates on the ambiguity of “formations”, “Often, when we look further, we find that these are articulations of much wider effective formations, which can by no means be wholly identified with formal institutions, or their formal meanings and values, and which can sometimes even be positively contrasted with them” (119). “Formations”, like *Contemporáneos*, permits a different look at a hegemonic structure, because it can participate affirmatively and negatively^{xiii}. The different authors and their ranging degree of involvement with *Contemporáneos* offers an example for

^{xii} Marentes, Luis A. *José Vasconcelos and the Writing of the Mexican Revolution*. “Beyond the classics the ministry published 1,000,000 elementary reading books, 500,000 educational pamphlets, over 2,000,000 alphabet cards, editions of Justo Sierra’s Mexican and world history books, a collection of readings for women edited” (126).

^{xiii} Williams explains why it is necessary to consider the way “formations” agree and disagree with institutions, “What is really being analysed, in each case, is a mode of specialized practice. Moreover, within a apparent hegemony, which can be readily described in generalizing ways, there are not only alternative and oppositional formations (some of them, at certain historical stages, having become or in the process of becoming alternative and oppositional institutions) but, within what can be recognized as the dominant effectively varying formations which resist any simple reduction to some generalized hegemonic function” (119).

Williams's "formation". The multi-faceted nature of a "formation" makes it impossible to definitively link *Contemporáneos* with *La Raza Cósmica*; therefore, using the themes race, pre-Columbian history and travel in the two texts facilitates a connection in addition to the "socialization" of the Mexican people and *Contemporáneos* as a "formation".

Carlos Pellicer serves as an example that explains why Xavier Villaurrutia called the *Contemporáneos* a "grupo sin grupo" and proves Williams's point that a "formation" can contest and go along with an institution. The question if Pellicer belongs to the group allows for a closer analysis of Vasconcelos's influence and the lack thereof on the *Contemporáneos*. The threads of race, pre-Columbian history and travel are commonalities in *Contemporáneos* and *La Raza Cósmica*; however, Pellicer's minimal participation in the magazine shows how a distance grew between the *Contemporáneos* and Vasconcelos^{xiv}. José Luis Martínez points out the uniqueness of Pellicer, "Algunos de los Contemporáneos tienen una leyenda, sobre todo Novo, Cuesta y Villaurrutia. Ninguna tan rica y jovial como la de Carlos Pellicer: el trópico y la selva, el bolivarismo, la cárcel que sufrió por su vasconcelismo" (45)^{xv}. Considering Pellicer's work before and during the publication of *Contemporáneos* allows for an entryway to better clarify how the juxtaposition of the literary journal and *La Raza Cósmica* works.

In Pellicer's collection of poetry *Piedra de Sacrificios Poema Iberoamericano* (1924) Vasconcelos writes the prologue and states, "Pertenece Carlos Pellicer a la nueva familia internacional que tiene por patria el Continente y por estirpe la gente toda de habla española"

^{xiv} Mullen, Edward J. *Carlos Pellicer*. "More recent criticism has justly tended to exclude Pellicer from the generation *Contemporáneos*. Although he must certainly be studied in relation to the group, in a conceptual sense he was not a member of the generation" (28).

Martínez, José Luis. *La Obra de Carlos Pellicer*. "[Pellicer] es el más antiguo y menos 'contemporáneo' de los Contemporáneos. Su formación y su temperamento difieren también de los del grupo. Antes que intelectual y francesista o anglicista, prefirió una sensualidad ávida de las ofrendas del mundo" (45). Carlos Pellicer publishes only two works in *Contemporáneos*: "Estudios" and "Grupos de Figuras".

^{xv} Mullen, Edward J. *Carlos Pellicer*. "1930-Imprisoned for political activities related to Vasconcelos' campaign for the presidency" (13).

(58). Vasconcelos celebrates Pellicer as a “buen místico” and affirms their fraternity in the prologue. It is relevant to know that Vasconcelos had given Pellicer a wide range of positions at the SEP (La Secretaría de la Educación Pública) beginning in 1922. Pellicer worked as a language teacher and an inspector of libraries under the SEP^{XVI}. It is also necessary to make note that Vasconcelos relates Pellicer to his philosophy when he writes that *Piedra de Sacrificios Poema Iberoamericano* brings to his attention the following:

Gente de bruma y gente de claridad, así se dividirían los pueblos si la
cortedad de los medios materiales no nos tuviese tan apegados al
territorio que nutre, por desolado y mudo que sea su suelo. La humanidad
futura si es más poderosa, llegará a imponer su fantasía, sobre
conveniencias y entonces la raza suprema de obrar será la de mayor
belleza, porque deleita y porque en ella se encuentra el camino más corto
para la otra existencia. (5)

The race-based ideas of Vasconcelos in Pellicer’s prologue show how the two shared theories that would penetrate *Contemporáneos*. Vasconcelos and Pellicer even approach pre-Columbian history, race and travel with similar rhetoric^{XVII}. Apart from the prologue the poetry in *Piedra de*

^{XVI} Archivos General de la Nación. Documents 200-244.

^{XVII} Ruxandra Chisalita speaks of the Pellicer’s poetry, “El tiempo de la poesía es eterno, es tiempo fuera del tiempo: ‘esa mañana duró toda la vida’. El sentimiento es lo que condiciona el tiempo, la sensación o la intensidad del conocimiento: ‘Al rumor temporal siguió la eterna/ contemplación’. La movilidad de la poesía de Pellicer se debe a que la sensibilidad del poeta rearmoniza con el ritmo cósmico, percibido en todas las cosas”. (218).

Octavio Paz’s view of Vasconcelos in *Laberinto de la Soledad* explains the sentimentality in *La Raza Cósmica*: “Vasconcelos era anti-intelectualista. Filósofo de la intuición, considera que la emoción es la única facultad capaz de aprehender el objeto. El conocimiento es una visión total e instantánea de la realidad. Vasconcelos elabora más tarde una “filosofía de la raza iberoamericana”, que continúa una corriente muy importante del pensamiento hispanoamericano. Pero la influencia de este pensador se dejará sentir años más tarde, cuando ocupa la Secretaría de Educación Pública en el Gobierno del nuevo régimen. (126)

Sacrificios Poema Iberoamericano, Pellicer's second book of poetry^{xviii}, harmonizes with Vasconcelos with the lines:

Toda nuestra América vanidosa y absurda
se está pudriendo.
¡Oh destino de la tragedia inexorable y gigantesca!
¿Nadie podrá detenerte?
¿Volverás a ponernos las plantas en el fuego?
¿Vendrás con tus manos brutales
del país de los yanquis, mediocre, ordenado y corpulento?

Pellicer's approach to America reflects Vasconcelos's rhetoric in both the critique of the U.S. and the desire for a transformation of America. This 1924 publication is but the beginning of Pellicer and Vasconcelos's literary relationship. The conviviality between the two has placed Pellicer further and further away from the Contemporáneos.

Vasconcelos and Pellicer traveled as representatives of Mexico together from 1921 to 1926 to several countries. In 1921 Vasconcelos and Pellicer travel to Argentina and Brazil. Later in 1926 the two go to Egypt, Italy and Iraq. Between these trips in 1925 the SEP under the direction of José Manuel Puig Casauranc gives Carlos Pellicer a grant to study in Paris, France, for a year^{xix}. The SEP's continued support of Pellicer once again makes transparent how other secretaries maintained Vasconcelos's original structure of the institution. Correspondence between Pellicer and another Contemporáneo José Gorostiza fill in the period between Pellicer accepting a prologue from Vasconcelos to later going to jail for him.

^{xviii} Pellicer, Carlos. *Colores en el mar*. 1921. This is Pellicer's first book of poetry.

^{xix} Archivo General de la Nación. Document 33. On the 5th of January, 1925, The SEP (Secretaría de la Educación Pública) sets Pellicer on a monthly 240\$ peso pay rate. Considering conversion rates that is \$6,576 a month.

While in Italy Pellicer receives a letter from Gorostiza, who writes from the Mexican Consulate in London. On June 29, 1928, Gorostiza informs Pellicer:

Querido maestro: De México me piden poemas tuyos para
Contemporáneos, revista, intento último, ordinal y espacial, aunque muy
 interesante. También míos me piden . . . Pero yo quiero contestar con los
 tuyos que es como si fueran míos, ya que todos los míos recuerdan lo
 que no hubieras querido escribir tú. (166)^{xx}

Pellicer responds from Rome on July 12, 1928, “Sí: seguramente que la revista de Jaime et ses amis ha de ser la maravilla de las maravillas. Pero tú sabes, o sabes de sobra, que yo no tengo costumbre de publicar versos en revistas” (168). Pellicer distinguishes himself from the *Contemporáneos* in his answer to Gorostiza, and there are only two exceptions to what Pellicer says above. *Contemporáneos* publish Pellicer’s “Estudios” and “Grupos de Figuras” in numbers 41 and 42, October and November 1931. The relative separation between Pellicer and the *Contemporáneos* also distances Vasconcelos from the literary journal. This point is especially evident when Pellicer returns from Europe to help Vasconcelos campaign for his presidency and proclaims, “Volví a México sólo para caer en la cárcel bajo la tutela de don Eulogio Ortiz. ¿Cómo y por qué? Por ser vasconcelista” (Gordon 53). Pellicer’s resistance to *Contemporáneos* and strong alliance to Vasconcelos makes Villaurrutia’s naming the *Contemporáneos* “grupo sin grupo” both right and wrong. It is true Pellicer did not join with the *Contemporáneos*, but it is certain that he strategized with *La Raza Cósmica* and grouped with Vasconcelos.

^{xx} Sheridan, Guillermo. *José Gorostiza/Carlos Pellicer Correspondencia 1918-1928*.

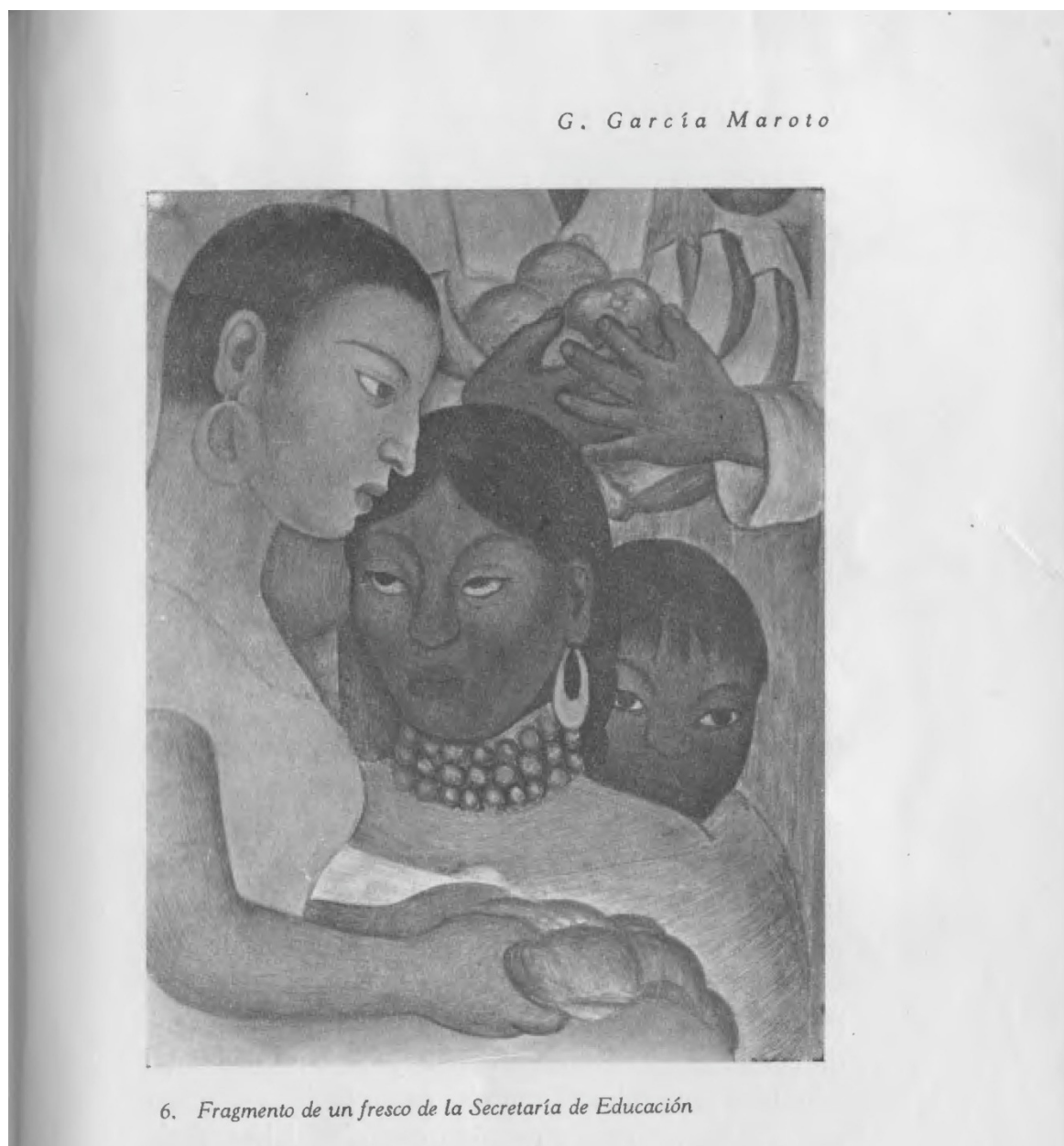


Fig. 2.^{XXI}

^{XXI} Fig. 2. Diego Rivera. In *Contemporáneos* No. 1 Gabriel García Maroto publishes “La Obra de Diego Rivera” and offers this fragment of a fresco found at the Secretaría de la Educación Pública.

II. Pre-Columbian History

In order to strengthen the pre-Columbian history element in Vasconcelos and then later in the *Contemporáneos* it is pertinent to return to the former's quote, "Sucede que el mestizaje de factores muy disímiles tarda mucho tiempo en plasmar" (4). Vasconcelos states that it is a question of time when considering races, because with the passage of time "la quinta raza" will rise. *La Raza Cósmica* highlights Greek and Egyptian history to present how societies progress dialectically and states the hope for an ultimate race. History develops in *Contemporáneos* similarly with specific regard to Ortiz de Montellano. The literary journal relates history to race and promotes the idea of up-and-coming races; however, it has a less derogative regard for the pre-Columbian past. With the Vasconcelian layer put in place *Contemporáneos* becomes both an echo and a clash of *La Raza Cósmica*.

The theme of history surfaces in the *Contemporáneos*' first publication in June 1928, when Ortiz de Montellano takes it on in *Ocho Poemas*: "Historia":

El color y la música del barro adherido a las raíces aéreas de las manos;
el dibujo de aromas jeroglíficos retenido en el viento de la memoria; el
relieve de líneas y paisajes grabados en la obsidiana de nuestros ojos,
guardan, para siempre, los tres tiempos del verbo de mi vida. (38)

The excerpt immediately reveals the poetic approach to history. Ortiz de Montellano uses synaesthesia with "aromas jeroglíficos" to internalize history. The imprint of history on the poet's eyes that Ortiz de Montellano writes of also emphasizes the connection with time. The distant "aerial races" brings forth the argument regarding a future race like "la quinta raza". These elements all function with Vasconcelos's view of history, but Ortiz de Montellano distinguishes the role of history in his poem from *La Raza Cósmica*. The fact that the three

tenses, which are past, present and future, will retain themselves in the poet's eyes forever goes against Vasconcelos's work. Vasconcelos suggests a complete refinement of races by the passing of time. Ortiz de Montellano claims that there is still an unreachable race while he has reverence for the past and present, and this provoked Jorge Cuesta to write that Ortiz de Montellano "decepciona a nuestro folclor" in his 1932 article "¿Existe una crisis en nuestra literatura de Vanguardia?"^{XXII}. *Ocho Poemas: History* serves as the first example of how the Ortiz de Montellano continues with rhetoric found in *La Raza Cósmica*, and this pastiche occurs in different literary forms by the author later in the publication.

The ninth publication of *Contemporáneos*, February 1929, contains Ortiz de Montellano's "Historia Literaria de México". Ortiz de Montellano demonstrates the link between *Contemporáneos* with *La Raza Cósmica* when he returns to the topic of pre-Columbian history. The critique in "Historia Literaria de México" focuses on Carlos González Peña's book *Historia de la Literatura Mexicana*. Ortiz de Montellano comments that González Peña's work diminishes the importance of pre-Columbian history and Mexican spirituality:

Cuatro siglos de tradición de cultura europea que imporrable presidirá ya para siempre el desarrollo espiritual de México. Sin embargo, creemos, falta a la Historia de González Peña el estudio, incompleto, inseguro como es hasta hoy, de los antecedentes espirituales de los pueblos precortesianos, de esa literatura si non e vero e bien trovato de los himnos guerreros y religiosos de los aztecas y de aquel príncipe Netzahualcóyotl, salomónico, y del libro sagrado de los Mayas—el Popol-Vuh—de íntima formación poética olvidado por todos los historiadores y comentaristas literarios. (179)

^{XXII} Cuesta, Jorge. "¿Existe una crisis en nuestra literatura de Vanguardia?". *Obras de Jorge Cuesta*. 1932.

Ortiz de Montellano argues that pre-Columbian history does not play a large enough role in the 1928 publication saying it is “incomplete”. The absence of the Aztec and Mayan history provokes Ortiz de Montellano’s critique and contrasts to Vasconcelos’s recommendation that Mexico should move past pre-Columbian history. At first glance the passage proposes that Ortiz de Montellano is against Vasconcelos’s theories. While Vasconcelos highlights the future in “la quinta raza” Ortiz de Montellano calls attention to pre-Columbian history, and in this way it is true that Ortiz de Montellano does not align his work with Vasconcelos’s ideals. On the other hand Ortiz de Montellano passes the Aztec and Mayan history through a Judaic filter with the word “salmónico” and a European lens with the Italian phrase. Ortiz de Montellano explicitly calls González Peña out for not including pre-Columbian history, but the use of Judaic references and European languages ultimately guide Ortiz de Montellano’s reasoning for studying the Aztecs and Mayans. The inclusive characteristic of all races in *La Raza Cósmica* comes out with Ortiz de Montellano’s study of comparative literature. The Pre-Columbian history’s connection with Spain also emerges in Ortiz de Montellano’s following statement in “Historia Literaria de México”.

Apart from the Judaic and Italian focus, Ortiz de Montellano cites a Spanish influence similar to the way Vasconcelos references the Spanish feature of “la quinta raza”. Ortiz de Montellano proposes a study of Aztec and Mayan history and linguistics by referring to a 12th and 13th century Castilian language, “La lírica indígena y la lírica popular merecen admisión como cosa de juglaría, y aún cuando sea con breve audiencia” (179). Vasconcelos and Ortiz de Montellano categorize Mexico and Mexican literature by bouncing their arguments off of Spain.

Ortiz de Montellano juxtaposes indigenous languages to Mester de Juglaría^{xxiii}, and Vasconcelos is very specific with his partiality to Spain:

Comienza a advertirse este mandato de la Historia en esa abundancia de amor que permitió a los españoles crear una raza nueva con el indio y con el negro; prodigando la estirpe blanca a través del soldado que engendraba familia indígena y la cultura de Occidente por medio de la doctrina y el ejemplo de los misioneros que pusieron al indio en condiciones de generar en la nueva etapa, la etapa del mundo Uno. (14)

Again it is clear that Vasconcelos's doctrine is skewed to a radical bias that involves the fortune of colonization. Western missionaries receive praise from Vasconcelos in this excerpt, and states that "love" was the catalyst that drove Spanish and Latin American peoples to procreate and begin what he calls "One World". The Spanish underpinnings are also present in Ortiz de Montellano's argument for a closer look at Aztec and Mayan cultures. Ortiz de Montellano sums up that if Europe celebrates Mester de Juglaría Mexicans should do so with Nahuatl and Mayan. As a key figure Ortiz de Montellano makes the *Contemporáneos* emerge as a cosmopolitan literary journal involving many languages and cultures.

It is significant that Ortiz de Montellano presses for more research and better history texts containing America's indigenous populations, but the connection with Vasconcelos is in his Judaic, European and Spanish references he uses to make his point that González Peña is not an

^{xxiii} Juan García Única talks about the national connection Mester de Juglaría has with Europe in "De juglaría y clerecía: el falso problema de *lo culto* y *lo popular* en la invención de los dos mesteres". "Los numerosos estudios que se han realizado conjeturando sobre textos supuestamente perdidos (Deyermond, 1995) apuntan a todo tipo de hipótesis, con más o menos acuerdo, pero apenas consideran el papel que pudo jugar la traducción como parte del aprendizaje gramatical y retórico en el nacimiento de las literaturas románicas, algo nada extraño si tenemos en cuenta que la crítica europea desde el romanticismo ha privilegiado la originalidad de los textos de cada parcela nacional, ese espacio culturalmente arraigado en la lengua que le sería propia, lengua en la que residiría el espíritu del pueblo -*Volkgeist*- hecho carne, o cárcel, o calcificado, en su literatura".

attentive historian. Before Ortiz de Montellano can finish his article he himself reduces the interest in indigenous studies to a “breve audiencia”. To employ a final example to Ortiz de Montellano’s take on pre-Columbian history, after the readings above of *Ocho Poemas*: “Historia” and “Historia Literaria de México”, we will take note of his “Antiguos Cantares Mexicanos”. Ortiz de Montellano publishes the article in the twelfth number of *Contemporáneos* in May 1929 and discusses the translation of Netzahualcōyotl songs by José Joaquín Pesado and D. Mariano Rojas. With a similar rhetoric found in “Historia Literaria de México”, Ortiz de Montellano writes:

La antigua poesía de los mexicanos pertenece pues a una época de formación, primitiva y religiosa, con aspectos de juglaría, conservada tradicionalmente, anónima, por tanto, aun cuando se recuerden los nombres de Netzahualcōyotl –historico Rey– y Quetzalcatl –creador legendario –símbolos de la sabiduría de los pobladores del Valle de México” (104).

Ortiz de Montellano finds guidance in studying Netzahualcōyotl and Quetzalcatl from Europe’s studies of history when he places them in a time of “primitive formation” and returns to their comparison with Mester de Juglaría. The article reveals Ortiz de Montellano afraid that Netzahualcōyotl songs will not hold themselves up in literary history. Instead of viewing the translations of the songs as clear evidence that indigenous cultures are self-sufficient Ortiz de Montellano says that they are rudimentary works and Spain has them too. In this light Ortiz de Montellano is on the fence about pre-Columbian history. Ortiz de Montellano has good intentions when he encourages an in depth study of a subject, but at the same time he shows his poor reasoning when he uses Spain to explain the importance of the study and states that

Netazhualcóytl's and Quetzalcatl's works were just the preliminary steps before reaching actual Mexican literature.

The theme of pre-Columbian history stands out in Ortiz de Montellano's works. As the director and a co-founder of *Contemporáneos* Ortiz de Montellano drives the literary journal's message about a reconsideration of pre-Columbian history. Ortiz de Montellano asks his readers to approach Mexico's past and its cultures and arts, "En los estudios históricos de nuestra literatura no debe faltar el capítulo dedicado a la literatura" ("Antiguos Cantares Mexicanos" 104). With this said, it is critical to remember that the chapter of indigenous literature for Ortiz de Montellano contains "primitive" and "salomónico" tones and has worth due to Spain's interest in "mester de juglaría". Vasconcelos in *La Raza Cósmica* relies on Spain to improve the Latin American race and facilitate his "One World", and with these theories he helped found the SEP (la Secretaría de la Educación Pública).

III. Race

Vasconcelos offers a mestizaje based on his view of "amor" and believes that the aesthetic appeal will form his "One World", his "Universópolis and "la quinta race"; however genetics also plays a role in his doctrine. Latin America's colonization by the Spanish is a positive in *La Raza Cósmica*:

En cambio, nosotros los españoles, por la sangre, o por la cultura, a la hora de nuestra emancipación comenzamos por renegar de nuestras tradiciones; rompimos con el pasado y no faltó quien renegara la sangre diciendo que hubiera sido mejor que la conquista de nuestras regiones la hubiesen consumado los ingleses. Palabras de traición que se excusan por el asco que engendra la tiranía, y por la ceguedad que trae la derrota.

Pero perder por esta suerte el sentido histórico de una raza equivale a un absurdo, es lo mismo que negar a los padres fuertes y sabios cuando somos nosotros mismos, no ellos, los culpables de la decadencia. (11)

Vasconcelos criticizes people who voice that an English colonization of Latin America would have been better and calls them “traitors” for not being gracious for the Spanish imperialization. The focus on a blood that alters the Mexican “world” continues throughout *Contemporáneos*.

In number 22 of *Contemporáneos*, March 1930, Ortiz de Montellano publishes “Poesía” and speaks of a “world” reached by the physical body:

Voluntad en mis manos que conecta
la sombra de otro mundo a tus cabellos
dispuestos a nublarse
cuando la noche ciaga blandamente en ellos.

Aire gráfico, solo,
corredor de noticias de la muerte,
en los banco de arena de los mares
cambio peces
por sombras de aviadores
y entraña voluntad –timón de submarino–
con la lente de sol del microscopio
en la gota de sangre azul celeste
enciendo estrellas olvidadas
(195).

It is clear that Ortiz de Montellano depicts a progression supported by hands, hair, blood and entrails, all of which relate back to an image of race. Ortiz de Montellano does not approach the Vasconcelian focus on blood in the same manner. Instead the poet writes of a microscope that lights forgotten stars. The reference to the scientific tool in the poem follows Vasconcelos’s argument that we must study our blood to come to conclusions about humanity. The similarities between *La Raza Cósmica* and *Poesía* bridge together and make clear the dialogue between Vasconcelos and *Contemporáneos*.

Another look into the way the theme of race is chronologically consistent in the SEP (la Secretaría de la Educación Pública) and its literary journal *Contemporáneos* is through particular translations. In number 41-42 of *Contemporáneos*, October and September 1931, Villaurrutia translates by the famous African American author Langston Hughes. The poem “I, too” concerns race in the U.S. Nevertheless, Villaurrutia’s translation extends it out to the interpretation that the *Contemporáneos* continued Vasconcelos’s emphasis on race. Villaurrutia entitles the poem “Yo También”:

Yo también canto a América.
 Soy el hermano oscuro.
 Me mandan a comer en la cocina
 cuando llegan visitas,
 mas yo me río
 y como bien
 y crezco fuerte.

Mañana,
 me sentaré a la mesa
 cuando lleguen visitas.
 Entonces,
 nadie se atreverá
 a decirme
 —“Ve y come en la cocina”.

Además,
 verán que soy hermoso
 y se avergonzarán.

Yo también soy América.(158)

The poem connects Villaurrutia’s translation with *La Raza Cósmica* in the imagery of skin color and the remark on aesthetic beauty; however, there is an even more significant commonality. The last line, “Yo también soy América”, speaks of a race that defines a nation for Hughes and a continent for Vasconcelos. Villaurrutia selects this specific poem with themes of race to translate, so even the distance between an original and a translated text does not change the

verisimilitude that the *Contemporáneos* echoed *La Raza Cósmica* if not ideologically, thematically^{XXIV}.

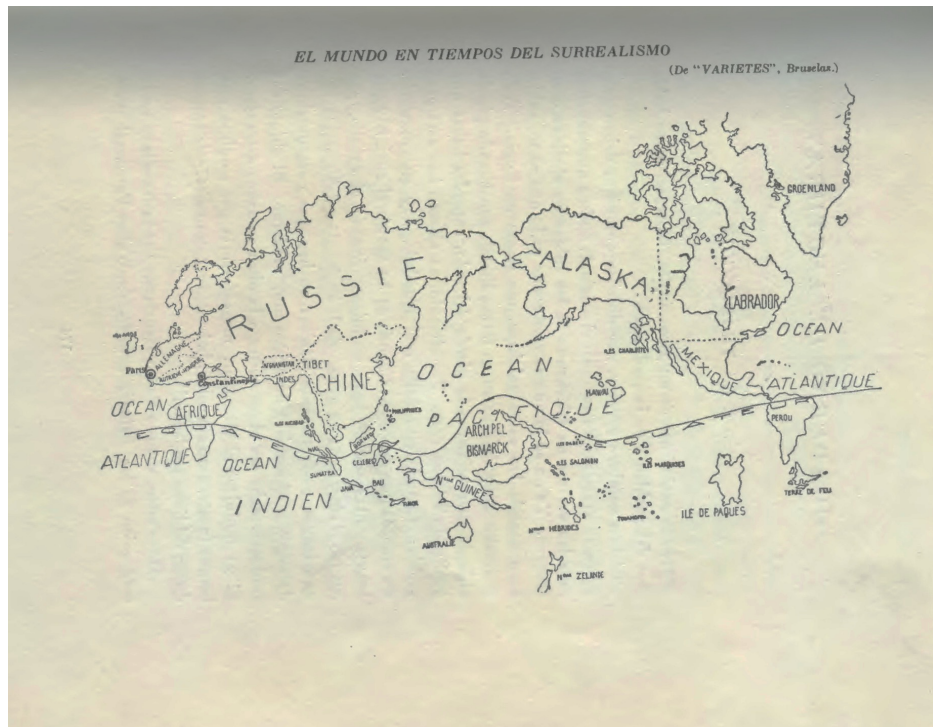
A final close reading of race in *Contemporáneos* that is significant to the conviviality between Vasconcelos and the *Contemporáneos* belongs to a republication of the article, *Indios*, by the Mexican Guillermo Prieto between the years 1853-1855. In the numbers 42 and 43 of *Contemporáneos*, November and December 1931, Ortiz de Montellano returns to his discourse on literary history, “Uno de los deportes en la literatura mexicana es el redescubrimiento de temas y libros olvidados” (233). Ortiz de Montellano introduces the article, “Aparte cierto tono retórico del discurso, inherente a la época, por su veracidad de documento y la inteligente claridad con que el autor apunta sus observaciones, merece este capítulo la exhumación que realizó” (234). The revivification of the text comes from an indirect source similar to the translation of Hughes, but Ortiz de Montellano’s presentation exemplifies the *Contemporáneos* approach to the indigenous race. The reprinting of Prieto includes:

El indio se fastidia, se cansa del trabajo y se emborracha; pero el indio, que vive casi desnudo, que come mal y que pasa su vida en el martirio del esclavo, que no tiene patria, ni presente ni porvenir, es muy natural que busque algún lenitivo a sus dolores y que oponga su resistencia de raza al interés de sus opresores, a quienes en el fondo de su corazón odia mortalmente. (242)

^{XXIV} The author Barreda also translates chapters of D.H. Lawrence’s 1927 publication of *Mornings in Mexico* in number 34, March 1931, *Contemporáneos* and chooses passages dealing with race in Mexico, “Son en su mayor parte bajos de cuerpo, zapotecas de sangre: hombres pequeños con pechos levantados y rápidas rodillas, que avanzan con indomable energía, en medio del polvo. Y hieráticas mujeres, pequeñas, de cabezas redondas, que corren descalzas, enredando su rebozos azules en los hombros, y a veces llevando en ellos un niño. Las ropas blancas de los hombres son an blancas que sus rostros se vuelven invisibles: oscuras manchas bajo los grandes sombreros” (230).

To think that the Contemporáneos offer this straightforward commentary on race in the last number of *Contemporáneos* exemplifies the direction of the politics and the literature. Possibly more than in any other work in the literary journal, this excerpt the group chose to print links Vasconcelos's *La Raza Cósmica* to *Contemporáneos*. The politics and the arts of the time join together to publicize ideas about race in a largely indirect way, but the Contemporáneos personally participate in the final theme of travel which *La Raza Cósmica* and *Contemporáneos* share in common.

IV.Travel

Fig. 3. ^{XXV}

The majority of the Contemporáneos traveled extensively, and in order to analyze the travel motif with a panoramic view it is critical to make note of their sojourns. Torres Bodet held diplomatic positions in Madrid, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Paris and The Hague beginning in 1929 up until World War II. González Rojo lives in Chile from 1920-1922 and works for the Mexican embassy. Along with Gastélum, González Rojo goes to Italy again employed by the Mexican government in 1928^{XXVI}. Pellicer also traveled a great amount, but I will cover his biography in the last chapter. Villaurrutia is the exception, because his travel log only contains his year at

^{XXV} Fig. 3. “El Mundo en Tiempos de Surrealismo” appears with a reference to *Varietes* of Brussels in *Contemporáneos* No. 33. The map shows *Contemporáneos* outward look from Mexico and indicates its attention to literary movements.

^{XXVI} *Los Contemporáneos, Una antología general, clásicos americanos.* (50)

Yale's Drama School from 1935-36 while on a Rockefeller Foundation grant^{xxvii}. Apart from Villaurrutia the authors spend the twenties and thirties on varying types of trips, ranging from college education to diplomacy. With this biographical gloss considered, travel becomes more than just a Vasconcelian poetical device to introduce opportunities to opine and ruminate on; it enhances the understanding of why travel surfaces so often in *Contemporáneos*. From this point it is now appropriate to segue into the role of travel in the literary journal and how it links *Contemporáneos* to *La Raza Cósmica*.

The least traveled, Villaurrutia, remarks on travel through a study of its literature. Like Vasconcelos does in *Notas de Viaje a la América del Sur*, Villaurrutia molds travel into a heterogenous environment. Villaurrutia approaches travel as a trope in his essay, "Viajes, Viajeros" in the first publication, June 1928. The following three authors along with three works come under study in *Contemporáneos*: Jacques de Lacretelle, "Lettres Espagnoles", Waldo Frank, "España Virgen" and Manuel Gómez, "España Fiel"^{xxviii}. Villaurrutia interprets the texts one by one and suggests a comparativist view is necessary to comprehend how travel to Spain varies depending on the nationality of the author:

Así ha dejado solos, de pronto y como sin objeto, sobre mi mesa, tres
libros de tres hombres que podrían entablar una conversación superficial
si hablaran el mismo idioma, y a que visitaron no hace mucho tiempo el
mismo país: España . . . ¿Qué buscaba cada uno? ¿Qué ha encontrado

^{xxvii} Dauster, Frank. *Xavier Villaurrutia*. (7).

^{xxviii} It is necessary to understand that Villaurrutia selects these texts to continue the dialogue of travel literature and correlate the genre with Mexico. Jacques de Lacretelle publishes about travel apart from *Lettres Espagnoles* and *Histoire de Paoula Ferrani* in the following: *D'une colline. Quatre jours à Bayreuth* (1928), *Quatre nouvelles italiennes* (1928) and *Le demi-dieu ou le voyage en Grèce* (1930). Waldo Frank's canon also contains other works involving travel: *Our America* (1919), *The Rediscovery of America* (1929), *Primer mensaje a la América Hispana* (1929) and *South of Us* (1931). Manuel Gómez Morin serves as a Mexican element for Villaurrutia's article. Gómez Morin does not publish anything more on travel besides *España Fiel*.

cada quién? Ninguno de los tres ha llegado a España sin objeto preciso.

Viajar por viajar es difícil. El viajero nace. No lo improvisa el azar o el dinero. (87)

Villaurrutia continues on to tell of a romantic inclination for Lacretelle's travel to Spain and summarizes the French author's desire to end a love affair nonviolently. According to Villaurrutia, Lacretelle finds the "plaza de toros" to be only dull theatrics and brutal. As Villaurrutia directs his attention to Frank when he concludes that Lacretelle arrived to Spain with blank sheets of paper and Frank with clear ideas and expectations. Due to the precision Frank practices in his writing Villaurrutia say, "*La España Virgen* de Waldo Frank es mucho más que un libro de viajes. Pero también mucho menos" (90). Villaurrutia believes travel is a planned act without randomness, and travelers have different reasons for leaving their country and arriving to another.

Frank as a person from the U.S. goes to Spain to confirm his ideas of the nation, and Lacretelle as a Frenchman who ventures to Spain seeking romantic conciliation. Villaurrutia concludes the short essay with an interpretation of Gómez Morín that reveals Spain's promising environment surprising him. The close reading of Gómez Morín's "España Fiel" portrays the author's captivation:

Sus ojos de hombre de acción buscaban en España la pereza inactiva, la pobreza, la rutina del trabajo primario y han encontrado fuerzas activas, riquezas repartidas, trabajos modernos. En vez de decepcionarlo, de robarle fuerzas para la acción, España lo asegura y él, en recompensa, escribe y lee públicamente unas cuantas páginas—de las que Waldo Frank no está ausente—cálidas, discretas, agradecidas (91).

From this passage it is evident Villaurrutia believes Gómez Morín's finds hope and certainty in Spain, and this points the readership of *Contemporáneos* to Spain for literary solutions and guidance. The fact that Villaurrutia selects three books concerning Spain presents the *Contemporáneos*' focus on literature outside of Mexico. At the same time that Villaurrutia's consideration of travel expresses a bond with Europe it has also encouraged a connection with an alternate reality. García Gutiérrez states, "Villaurrutia coincidió con el surrealismo en su idea de búsqueda, viaje y exploración como meta espiritual" (95). This point suggests Villaurrutia's interest in foreign experience is also a desire to escape artistic foundations. For Villaurrutia the theme of travel involves both a distancing from Mexico and a priori structures in art. Travel continues to accumulate different angles for looking at *Contemporáneos*' politically charged relationship with *La Raza Cósmica* with Torres Bodet's analysis of travel literature.

In *Contemporáneos*, number 13, June 1929, Torres Bodet writes "Apuntes sobre dos Libros de Viajes" in the *Motivos* section of the literary journal. *Motivos* contains the authors' critiques in *Contemporáneos*, and Torres Bodet begins this publication comparing Paul Morand's *Hiver Caraïbe* (1926) and Jacques de Lacretelle's *Histoire de Paola Ferrani* (1929)^{xxix}. Torres Bodet deems both of the works poor examples of travel literature. For Torres Bodet *Hiver Caraïbe* is not a good response to his question "¿Qué es un libro de viajes?" Torres Bodet concludes that the work shows an indifference to the travels, a focus on the exotic and an overall condescending tone:

Encerrado en el camarote de su transatlántico, Morand ve pasar las
costas de Cuba, de Haití, de Santo Domingo o de México con la misma
avidez fría con que, hace algunos años, tocaba toavía la piel morena,

^{xxix} Torres Bodet adds Paul Morand to the travel literature collection in *Contemporáneos*, and Morand, like Lacretelle and Frank, has a number of publications concerning travel: *Paris- Tombouctou* (1929), *New York* (1930), *Route de Paris à Méditerranée* (1931) and *Air Indien* (1932).

blanca, negra, rubia de las amantes artificiales de sus personajes
 nocturnos . . . Paul Morand hubiese tenido que viajar más—para escribir
 menos. (264)

Torres Bodet questions Morand's writing and distrusts the Frenchman's portrayal of the Caribbean and Mexico. The critique approaches the theme of race via travel revealing *Contemporáneos'* concern for the highly emphasized motif in *La Raza Cósmica*. Travel and race emerge in Torres Bodet's close reading of Morand; while his critique of Lacretelle regards the pretention found in "Histoire de Paola Ferrani".

Torres Bodet claims that Lacretelle mimics other authors in *Histoire de Paula Ferrani* and diminishes the significance of travel on a writer. Similar to Vasconcelos' *Notas de Viaje a la América del Sur*, Torres Bodet proposes that the act of travel holds secrets and Lacretelle does not elaborate on its complexity:

la delicia del viaje pierde toda su importancia de prueba moral; deja de ser
 la aventura. La curiosidad que yace en el secreto de todo movimiento, se
 convierte, así, en una cualidad de segundo orden, que no parte de las
 cosas para tocar al ser; sino de la tradición hasta las cosas; que no la
 empobrece, pero la depura; que no la aumenta tampoco, pero la mide.
 (268)

Torres Bodet arrives to the conclusion that Lacretelle's focus on things instead of travel weakens *Histoire de Paola Ferrani*. Travel does not only take precedence in this critique of French literature by Torres Bodet's, but the essay "Invitación al Viaje", number 16 of *Contemporáneos*, also approaches the theme. For a final example of the overreaching theme of travel in *La Raza*

Cósmica and *Contemporáneos* it is necessary to look at the Contemporáneo, Enrique González Rojo.

The cinematographic short story “El Día más Feliz de Charlot” by González Rojo is in number 5, October 1928, of *Contemporáneos*. González Rojo parallel with Charlie Chaplin’s film *The Immigrant* (1917) and Eugene O’Neill’s play *The Hairy Ape* (1922) tells the story of his protagonist, Charlot, on a ship arriving to New York City. The evident intertextuality demonstrates González Rojo’s attention to the theme of travel in foreign literature and draws him closer to *La Raza Cósmica*’s view of travel. González Rojo depicts three characters that line up with Vasconcelos’s work. First, González Rojo describes how Charlot observes a woman aesthetically, “La muchacha que viaja sola tiene los cabellos rubios, dorados, reunidos en dos trenzas sobre la espalda. Sus ojos son azules como el mar, la nariz respingadilla, la boca pequeña y roja. El vestido—tan corto!” (117). The physical description of the woman in González Rojo’s work compares to Vasconcelos’s framing of women in *Notas de Viaje a la América del Sur*, but González Rojo’s point of view of the U.S. puts his short story even closer to Vasconcelos.

As Charlot and the young woman described above embark on New York City González Rojo writes:

El barco ha entrado en la bahía y se desliza lentamente sobre las aguas turbias del Hudson. Atrás ha quedado la enorme masa de la estatua de la Libertad, dando la espalda a los Estados Unidos y alumbrando las sendas tumultuosas del mar. Los rascacielos de Nueva York se vislumbran penosamente entre la bruma. Elevan sin misericordia sus agujas y de tanto picar la esfera azul harán que un día caiga sobre nosotros desinflada e inútil. (129)

Vasconcelos uses travel to meet foreigners, see different countries' landscapes and observe national icons. González Rojo narrates a romance between two travelers with layers of political commentary. *Contemporáneos* publishes these ideologies, which match up with *Notas de Viaje a la América del Sur*, through González Rojo's media of a "cuento cinematografico" (113). Along with Villaurrutia's "Viajes, Viajeros" and Torres Bodet's "Apuntes sobre dos Libros de Viajes" González Rojo continues the role of travel and pulls the link taut with Vasconcelos's *Notas de Viaje a la América del Sur*.

Conclusion

Fig. 4. ^{xxx}

To crystalize the way pre-Columbian history, race and travel in *La Raza Cósmica* surface in *Contemporáneos* it is necessary to observe another member of the group Contemporáneos.

^{xxx} Fig. 4. Cover of *Contemporáneos* No. 38 and 39.

Jorge Cuesta publishes in *Contemporáneos*, and later in 1932 his article “¿Existe una crisis en nuestra Literatura de Vanguardia?” spells out the groups’ intentions:

Hace valer lo mismo la literatura y el arte franceses, que los de cualquier otro país. Admite cualquier influencia. Admite la cultura y el conocimiento de las lenguas. Admite viajar y conocer gentes. Admite encontrarse frecuente a cualquier realidad, aun la mexicana. Es una actitud esencialmente social, universal. Revolucionarismo, mexicanismo, exotismo, nacionalismo, son en cambio, puras formas de misantropía” (173).

Cuesta highlights the *Contemporáneos* as an inclusive group and adds another gloss to Williams’s theory of “formations”. It is clear Cuesta perceives the *Contemporáneos* think in a “universal” manner. Vasconcelos’s hope to arrive to the “Universópolis” connect *La Raza Cósmica* to the material in *Contemporáneos*; therefore, Williams’s statement that “formations” can both go with and against an institution like the SEP applies to Cuesta’s article. Cuesta argues that the *Contemporáneos* seek poetics that permit a heterogeneous Mexico, but there is another side to this claim, a controversial one. To privilege outside sources and relegate the history and race of the geographical place in question suggests the complexity of *La Raza Cósmica*’s influence on *Contemporáneos*.

Cuesta’s 1932 answer to the title of his article is “no”, but his points do not consider the repercussions of sponsoring Vasconcelos’s intent to supersede pre-Columbian history and improve the indigenous Latin American race with Spanish and Caucasian genetics.

Contemporáneos funded by the SEP continued to work with cornerstone ideas in *La Raza Cósmica*. The least problematic of the three themes is travel, because it is an action for the

Contemporáneos that encourages comparative literature markedly more than the diminishing of indigenous history or racial subversion. Depending on the issue of *Contemporáneos* the authors either promote or stray from Vasconcelos's theories on pre-Columbian history and race.

Contemporáneos do not write of Vasconcelos's *mestizaje*. The literary journal's ideology does not coalesce with *La Raza Cósmica* without fringes, but as we are considering the literary journal as a single text it is evident that *Contemporáneos* works in the shadows of *La Raza Cósmica*.

This is true in several ways: financial backing from the SEP, publishing self-proclaimed "Vasconcelistas", and above all the reiteration of pre-Columbian history, race and travel.

Returning to Villaurrutia's name for the *Contemporáneos*, "grupo sin grupo" after observing the lucrative relationship between *Contemporáneos* and the Vasconcelian SEP suggests that the authors did indeed have a "grupo". Despite the range from celebrated to estranged members and difference in the *Contemporáneos*'s "grupo" is the SEP. Either in the monetary connection or the thematic one regarding pre-Columbian history, race and travel the *Contemporáneos*'s conviviality with the SEP and in turn with *La Raza Cósmica* is impossible to miss, and this institutionilization of *Contemporáneos*, even though polyphonic in its nature, continues to negotiate with a Vasconcelian imperialization headed for "la quinta raza".

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