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TINA MODOTTI'S VISION:
PHOTOGRAPHIC MODERNISM IN MEXICO, 1923-1930

by
SARAH M. LOWE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art
History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

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Date

Linda Nicklin
Chair of Examining Committee

6.13.96
Date

RCW Soney
Executive Officer

Ch. W. Armstrong

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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PREFACE

Precisely how the life story of an artist affects the reception of his or her art is one of the questions this biography addresses, and it becomes an especially vexing question when the artist is a woman. Restated, one might ask, how does the knowledge of an artist's gender, filtered through culturally constructed myths, shape our preconceptions and the ultimate place such art work has in the canon? The myth of artist-genius has had a deleterious effect on Tina Modotti's place in the history of photography. Besides being a woman, Modotti practiced photography for only seven years, from the fall of 1923 until October 1930, thus failing a major criterion for a "serious artist". A more subtle prejudice also comes into play once it is known that Modotti acted professionally on the stage and in films, and modeled for numerous artists. She is often cast in the role of muse, portrayed as an inspiration and helpmate to her lovers, both the artists and the activists. Having appeared on the "wrong" side of the camera early in her life, her status as "artist" becomes more difficult to see. I would suggest these are just two of the many reasons that serious investigation and analysis of her art is missing from the literature on Modotti.

This is not to say that other factors have not

contributed to Modotti's lack of recognition, factors having nothing to do with gender. Considerations such as her commitment to the Communist Party and the overtly political content of her photographs, the fact that she worked outside the two "centers" of photography (the United States and Europe), and the lack of an archive of her photographs, have had an undeniable negative impact upon Modotti's artistic reputation. The ideological basis that informs the various biases at work, as well as the practical repercussions of these issues, are specifically addressed in this dissertation.

Conspicuous by its absence in most literature on Modotti is mention, let alone recognition, of any artistic influences upon her work beyond that of her teacher, the photographer Edward Weston. This neglect results in an impoverished depiction of Modotti and reflects a reluctance to endow her with the capacity to assimilate influences other than Weston's. There is no question that Modotti adopted Weston's "straight" aesthetic and was herself as rigorous as he about formal composition of the photographic image. But other artistic phenomena converged in her work.

Modotti's work bears a strong relationship to the Movimiento Estridentista -- the Mexican response to Futurism -- a short-lived but notable force in Mexico's cultural scene of the 1920s. The poets and painters of

Estridentismo rejected outmoded cultural ideals and embraced a machine aesthetic. Equally important was the fact that their art and poetry focused on the Mexican scene and on modern Mexican life, a phenomenon sometimes called "Mexicanidad."¹ Modotti knew many of the adherents to Estridentismo: she made striking portraits of many, her work was published in Horizonte, one of their many journals,² and she acted in one of their plays. Yet her work has yet to be analyzed in light of this connection.³

Neither has the effect of Modotti's close ties with the members of the Mexican mural movement been examined. Her friends Diego Rivera, Clemente Orozco, Máximo Pacheco and Jean Charlot, all contributed significant works to the public walls of Mexico. Their aesthetic, while often realist, nevertheless was profoundly subversive: not only did their subject matter champion lower and working classes, but the very unsalability of the stationary mural undermined one of art's *raison d'etres*.

Furthermore, Modotti's photography is rarely seen in the context of photographic modernism of the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, her style shares with other photographs of the period elements that link it to the international phenomenon known as the "new vision."⁴ Radical, sometimes jarring points of view, machine-age subject matter, and abstracting of space and form are

characteristic of new vision practice and are evident in Modotti's photographs.

Modotti's artistic lineage should also be linked to her familiarity with the tenets of the Arbeiter-Fotograf movement in Germany. Although she did not subscribe completely to their practice, some of her photographs were published in the two principal journals of the Worker Photography Movement, Der Arbeiter-Fotograf and Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung. Both journals published photographs that were engaged in social issues and advocated making images that were readily legible to the untrained eye.

Before Modotti ever took a photograph, she had a rich cultural education, yet few writers have scrutinized her artistic life before she met Weston, despite the fact that it is somewhat difficult to reconcile the often repeated stories of impoverishment, debilitating factory labor, and lack of education with the sophisticated actress, bohemian opera lover, reciter of poetry, and sensitive photographer who emerges a few years later. Previous biographies of Modotti overlook the discrepancies in the story, and by ignoring Modotti's earlier life, make the discredited assumption that her "natural genius" would emerge regardless of life's circumstance. Modotti is supposed to be a working-class, Italian immigrant, an under-educated, struggling seamstress who was "discovered" by various older (male) artists (her husband, Roubaix de l'Abrie

Richey, and Weston): the undeniable specter of Pygmalion shifts Modotti into yet another already-constructed role. The invocation of these myths, whether conscious or unconscious, has served to discourage serious scholarship of Modotti's formative years and put into question Modotti's self-determination, resolution and agency.

This text will reconstruct a "cultural biography" of Modotti, and bring to bear newly-discovered facts that present her in the context of the many art worlds she occupied. A fact-based history overlaid with a critical re-reading of the existing literature on Modotti using feminist methodologies will illuminate the gender-bias that colors most of her work.

1. Mexican nationalism coincided with a growing interest in the indigenous art, an interest that occurred in other Latin American countries and was reflected in contemporary vanguard movements. Thirteen manifestos issued between 1921 and 1961 throughout Latin America are reprinted in translation in Dawn Ades, Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1920-1980. Contributions by Guy Brett, Stanton Loomis Catlin and Rosemary O'Neill. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989: 306-337.

2. The Estridentistas produced a number of short-lived, but vital small magazines, including: Actual (1921-1922); Ser (1922-1923); Irradiador (1924) and Horizonte (1926-1927). These titles and dates are given by Serge Fauchereau in "The Stridentists," Artforum 24 (February 1986): 88.

3. Several of the authors in the exhibition catalog, Modernidad y Modernización en el Arte Mexicano: 1920-1960 (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1991) tacitly connect Modotti with the Estridentistas by reproducing her photographs in their essays. Carlos Blas Galindo includes Modotti in a list of artists who were "brought together" by the Estridentistas (See his "Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and the Avant-Garde)."

4. See Christopher Phillips' insightful commentary on the "new vision" photography in Christopher Phillips, ed. Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Aperture, 1989). Phillips states in his introduction that the new vision was "characterized by the exploration of techniques like photomontage, the photogram, and the purposely disorienting vantage point." (xi).

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CHAPTER I

To assume the period most relevant to a study of Modotti's work are the seven years she made photographs does an injustice to her complexity as an artist. Yet that is precisely the period about which most is known, not coincidentally, because the richest sources of information are documents that chronicle her affiliation with Edward Weston. The two most significant sources are published: Modotti's thirty-one letters (plus fragments of letters) to Weston, and Weston's diary, which he referred to as his Daybooks.

The letters from Modotti to Weston, now carefully transcribed and extensively annotated, present a valuable resource for the period during which she corresponded with him, from circa January 1922 through January 1931.¹ Modotti's personal growth, artistic development and the evolution of her politics are evident therein, and the letters are as close a reflection of the person, albeit during a limited period, as it may be possible to have. Although Modotti apparently kept a diary in Mexico, it has yet to be found.² Other letters written by Modotti have been located, though few have been published.³

Weston's Daybooks span twenty-two years, from November 1922 until April 1944, and they act as a counterpart to Modotti's letters. The two volumes, titled

Mexico (I) and California (II) were first published in 1961 as The Daybooks of Edward Weston, and although remarkable for their details, they are highly mediated sources, on several accounts. The "original" diary no longer exists and the published volumes were edited down at least twice. Additionally, their function must be taken into account. They appear to have been written with an eye toward posterity, and cannot be seen as an impartial transcription of reality but a carefully negotiated rendering of information pertinent to Weston's career. Nevertheless, the diaries are extremely helpful in placing Modotti at a certain time and in a certain place; they also give insight into Weston's conscious and unconscious perceptions of her, and of their relationship.⁴

Limited information has been published about Modotti in the years before she met Weston; much of the information is anecdotal and has been confirmed by searching church registers; national, state and municipal records; newspaper accounts; and individual archives. Equally arduous is tracking down Modotti's activities between early 1931, when she last wrote to Weston, and 1942, the year of her death. A significant source is a fifty-two page booklet published as a memorial to her in 1942.⁵ The document stands as an index of Modotti's sphere of influence at the time of her death, and

indicates the breadth of her circle of friends, acquaintances, and advocates. Following an eight-page, biographical sketch by Vittorio Vidali, and fellow Stalinist, Pablo Neruda's paeon, "Tina Modotti is Dead," are statements and testimonials by seventy-five individuals, among them artists María Izquierdo, Lola and Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Pablo O'Higgins, the architect Hannes Meyer, and writers Anna Seghers, Egon Erwin Kisch and Simone Téry.⁶ Sixteen political organizations from Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Spain, and the United States sent acknowledgments, and excerpts from her obituary in seven international newspapers and periodicals were included. [See Appendix II] Those responsible for gathering the quotations and articles and for publishing this slim volume, were, for the most part, Communist Party officials, and thus, with the exception of an exhibition of fifty photographs that was mounted two months after her death, Modotti was memorialized primarily as an activist, not as an artist.

With two notable exceptions, Modotti's name and her photographs went virtually unnoticed for the next thirty years. In the late 1940s, Dee Knapp, a young photographer working in the Photography Department of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, was encouraged by Nancy and Beaumont Newhall to gather information on Modotti. She eventually abandoned her research after being warned by others that

the political content of the work would draw attention in the current anti-communist climate.⁷ A second effort to recover Modotti's reputation was made by the photographer David Vestel in his 1966 article "Tina's Trajectory." It is an important piece on several counts: as the first article to appear about Modotti in English since 1929;⁸ for its ten full-page reproductions of Modotti's photographs; and for reprinting statements made by Diego Rivera about Modotti's work and made by Modotti herself.⁹ Vestel quotes from his correspondence with people he contacted who knew Modotti (Anita Brenner, Carleton Beals and Ella Wolfe). The article furnishes biographical information gleaned from the essay in the 1942 memorial booklet, but provides no visual analysis of the photographs themselves, letting the ten images stand on their own. Vestel's speculations on Modotti's relative obscurity are remarkably astute and remain valid: "She was in Weston's shadow, especially since her work did not continue long," and "...people were afraid to talk about her [because] she had been a Communist."¹⁰

Interest in Modotti was kindled and eventually ignited in her native Italy in 1971. When the commune of Udine, where Modotti was born, held a conference recognizing its citizens who had participated on behalf of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, she was included. Her artistic career was rediscovered, and two

years later, under the auspices of the local government, Tina Modotti, garibaldina e artista was published to accompany an exhibition of her work.¹¹ The text, in Italian, is a translation of the 1942 booklet, and offered little new material. But for the first time twenty-three photographs by Modotti were published, as well as a number of photographs of her. Tina Modotti: Fotografa e Rivoluzionaria came out in 1979; its careless English translation followed in 1981. In addition to a short, insignificant foreword by Vittorio Vidali, a new essay on Modotti by Maria Caronia, the book reproduced over fifty photographs by Modotti. Caronia offers the first outline of Modotti's political career, but her insistently Stalinist bias precludes any discussion of Modotti's cultural spheres except her contacts with fellow travellers and sympathizers.

It is apparent that Caronia relied upon the first edition of Mildred Constantine's biography Tina Modotti: A Fragile Life, published in 1975.¹² This first full-scale biography of Modotti is invaluable as an easily available source where none previously existed. Although useful for presenting the outlines of Modotti's life, Constantine's text, however, lacks political distance, and she romanticizes Modotti's life and the complexity of her world.

This volume was reprinted verbatim in 1983, and while

it reproduced more images, its handful of corrective notes fail to significantly alter the problems with the text. The reprint boasts 115 reproductions, roughly fifty reproductions of Modotti's work--its most useful feature--of which only a small percentage had never been published before. Ironically, more than a third of the illustrations are formal and informal, nude and clothed, photographs of Modotti, ironic because Constantine tells the reader at the beginning of her text: "Nothing so aggravated Tina as the references to her beauty."¹³

In 1982, Vidali expanded his earlier biographical sketch of Modotti into a full biography Ritratto di donna Tina Modotti. He is most expansive during the period of her life when he knew her, from circa 1927 until her death. Vidali passes over her life before they met with startling speed, and deals only perfunctorily with Modotti as a photographer. He concentrates on their shared life in the Communist Party, from the early 1930s when in Moscow they became companions until the late 1930s when they were in Spain during the Civil War.¹⁴ He recounts, for the first time, Modotti's activities in the service of MOPR [Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi revoliutsioneram or International Red Aid] under Elena Stassova, its president from 1927-1938.

Because Vidali focuses on the political aspects of Modotti's life, and her life and work were thoroughly

enmeshed with his, he cannot be seen as a disinterested witness. As may be true with his autobiography, Vidal's objective might be colored by his desire to play down some of the less honorable episodes in his life.¹⁵

In 1982, the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London mounted Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti, with an accompanying catalogue of the same name. The essays by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen were the first to seriously consider Modotti's photographic output and critically discuss her work, placing her in the context of post-revolutionary Mexico. She is seen in overtly political terms, and her work is pointedly read from a feminist perspective. Using the notion of marginality as their starting point, the essays succeed especially when they diagram the role Mexico's artists played in international art scenes, tracing lines of influence between New York and Mexico City and between Mexico City and Moscow.

The issue of marginality governs their discussion of Modotti and Kahlo, and the feminist analysis is at its best when it deals with issues which had been raised by the women's movement of the 1970s, i.e., the retrieval of forgotten women artists and the problematic relationship between high art and popular culture. The overall structure of their argument, which compares and contrasts Modotti with Kahlo, thereby throwing into relief varying feminist approaches, is less helpful. They reason that

these two women artists "naturally" and culturally had more in common with each other than with their male colleagues, an assumption that results in empty parallels, hollow likenesses, and sometimes senseless, even insensitive, contrasts. In "The Discourse of the Body" section, Mulvey and Wollen state that "The art of both Kahlo and Modotti had a basis in their bodies: through injury, pain and disability in Frida Kahlo's case, through an accident of beauty in Tina Modotti's."¹⁶ In their enthusiasm to celebrate women's art, they state that "both [Kahlo and Modotti] produced work that is recognizably that of a woman," an indefensible and unsupported claim.

This now out-of-print volume is especially useful because Mulvey and Wollen collect and reprint several important articles that are among the scarce source material on Modotti. These are: Modotti's own treatise, "On Photography," Carleton Beals' essay, Diego Rivera's statement "Edward Weston and Tina Modotti," (both originally published in English) and an English translation of Marti Casanovas' 1929 "Revolutionary Anecdotes," from the short-lived radical journal, ¡30/30!.

The thirty-seven photographs by Modotti reproduced in Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti are well-chosen, some newly published, and represent a thoughtful presentation of her as an artist. The exhibition travelled in Europe, and in the Americas. The German edition was a translation of the

English, but the Spanish-language edition produced for the mounting of the show in Mexico City was greatly revised: the exhibition was significantly supplemented and new essays by contemporary critics on both Modotti and Kahlo were added.¹⁷

The provocative issues raised by Mulvey and Wollen instigated a number of responses to and additional writing about Modotti. Herbert Molderings' review of the show criticizes the show and catalogue on political grounds. He finds the Mulvey/Wollen project profoundly flawed, deeming it unconscionably ahistoric to place the Trotsky-supporting Kahlo in the same political arena as Modotti, a committed "Stalinist" and, he claims, an agent of the GPU, Stalin's secret police. "The Stalinist legend of Tina Modotti is erased," he states, "by exploiting the artistic prestige of Frida Kahlo."¹⁸

Molderings' central point, albeit ardently anti-Stalinist, brings to the fore issues that heretofore have been overlooked or even purposely obscured, in part because Vidali has been the main source of information on Modotti's post-Mexican political life.¹⁹ As Molderings notes, Vidali is unsuitable as an objective witness, and yet he is a critical player in the biography of Modotti, not only during her lifetime, but in her subsequent resurrection. Trying to sort out precisely what role Vidali has played is difficult because the literature on

him is fraught with partisan prejudices. The pro-Trotsky/anti-Stalinist camp takes to task anyone who does not denounce Vidali outright. They hold that Vidali was a cold-hearted murderer who did Stalin's bidding, and credit him with the political assassinations of Andres Nin and Carlo Tresca, link him indirectly to Trotsky's murder, and even suggest he was responsible for Modotti's death.

An insightful and well-stated review of the six books that appeared between 1973 and 1983 is Robert D'Attilio's "Glittering Traces of Tina Modotti."²⁰ D'Attilio points out glaring oversights, overstatements and shortcomings in the texts, but more important, asks thoughtful and thought-provoking questions about Modotti's life. His informed essay provides new material, and is flawed only by his distrust of Vidali.

Modotti's relationship with Weston is one of the thorniest issues one faces when writing her biography. One can argue that without Weston, Modotti would never have been noticed as a photographer. To this I would say there have been numerous Weston disciples--many women, many were his lovers--of whom we hear very little today.²¹ I would suggest, rather, that Modotti's association with Weston has inhibited a clear evaluation of her photographs. Their teacher/apprentice relationship has led many to conclude that Modotti's photographs must be judged as derivative of Weston's. Additionally, as his

nude model, Modotti plays mistress to Weston's status as a "master" of modern photography, posing on the wrong side of the camera, the subject of art, not its creator.

A blatant example of how Modotti's photographic career has been made invisible by comparisons to Weston, is her treatment by Amy Conger in Edward Weston in Mexico. Modotti played a significant role during Weston's time in Mexico. Yet her presence in Edward Weston in Mexico is nearly erased. Conger consistently refers to Weston as Weston, but to Modotti as Tina (rarely as Tina Modotti) and never as Modotti.²² Stylistic clarity and variety aside, Conger uses first names primarily when referring to Weston's children and to Modotti. In the index, she is identified as: "Weston's pupil and companion." This subtle, perhaps unconscious omission diminishes Modotti's presence as a photographer and artist in Weston's life during this period, as well as discounts her eventual achievements. It is inaccurate historically, as well, since Modotti's professional life began in Mexico.

When Conger ostensibly addresses both artists in her article "Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," she contributes new facts about Modotti, but her primary interest is in Weston. Her visual assessment of Modotti is detailed but technical, and she fails to ponder the possible effect Modotti's aesthetic may have had on Weston's work, most significantly, Modotti's production of still-life

photographs.

The single most important text to appear since Constantine's biography is Christiane Barckhausen's Auf den Spuren von Tina Modotti, which was published in 1988 in Germany, and in 1989 in Spanish.²³ Barckhausen, an East German and a Communist, had access to Party archives and fills in immense gaps in Modotti's political story. While the illustrations in the book are poor, Barckhausen includes an extensive bibliography of a dozen journals and periodicals in which Modotti's photographs appear, as well as some of the political articles she wrote in the service of MOPR. Barckhausen's travelled in Europe and Latin America, but her research in the United States was severely limited by her Communist affiliation. This invaluable source, weak on Modotti's California period as well as on her photographic career, is, nevertheless, a critically important volume.

Since Barckhausen's book came out, a number of other volumes and articles have been published, but none that add as much important primary data, and none that deliver a narrative of Modotti's life as an artist or any analysis and evaluation of her photographic oeuvre.²⁴

1. Amy Stark [Rule], ed. "The Letters from Tina Modotti to Edward Weston," The Archive. No. 22 (January 1986): 4-81. The text is interspersed with chronologies that cover the period in which the letters were written. This volume is also indexed.

2. Letter from Tina Modotti to Edward Weston, December 27, 1924, Center for Creative Photography, hereafter cited as CCP. See also Stark [Rule], 27, footnote 5.

3. Christiane Barckhausen uncovered a cache of letters written to Modotti. Seven from her brother, Benvenuto Modotti, are reprinted, and the correspondents are listed in Barckhausen-Canale, La Verdad y Leyenda de Tina Modotti, Casa de las Americas, La Habana, Cuba, 319-329, 336.

4. Beaumont Newhall's passing reference (Forward, The Daybooks, vol. I. Mexico, ix) to the fact that Weston edited the original manuscript is an considerable understatement. In her introduction to the same volume (xiv), Nancy Newhall writes: "The Mexican period exists now only in a typescript badly done sometime in the late 1930s or early 40s: 'Yes, the MS was "monkeyed with" by a German girl. It was supposedly just copied... In my original copy, which was longhand, the punctuation was dashes -- ("modern") -- Since the first typewritten copy, each person has punctuated, paragraphed and spelled according to heart's desire.'"

One might presume Newhall is quoting Weston, either from a letter or a conversation: she provides no footnotes. The typescript was further edited by N. Newhall: "I have cut only redundancies -- the parties, the bullfights, the Mexican toys which in the original become monotonous, -- and a few vulgarities and sentimentalities of the kind Edward could no longer stand..." (xiv). She adds, "Edward burned the original MS." Stark [Rule] identifies the "German girl" as Weston's friend, Christel Gang, and notes that the original typescript copy is in the collection of the Weston Archive. Stark [Rule], 26, note 5.

5. [Vidali, Vittorio], Pablo Neruda, et al. Tina Modotti. Mexico, 1942.

6. Vidali must be the author of the unsigned "Datos Biograficos," in [Vittorio Vidali], Tina Modotti (1942), 3-10, since he knew her better than anyone at the time of her death. This biography was translated from Spanish to Italian by Laura Weiss, Vidali's companion at the time, for the printing of Tina Modotti, Garibaldina e artista (Udine, Italy: Circolo Culturale "Elio Mauro": 1973): 9-

15, where it is signed by him. Additionally, the "Nota biografica" in Vidali's Ritratto di donna: Vittorio Vidali racconta la sua vita con Tina Modotti (1982): 83-86, in Italian, is a variation on these two predecessors. An English translation exists in the Tina Modotti Artist File, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Neruda dedicated this homage to Carlos J. Contreras, Vidali's nom de guerre. See Neruda's autobiography for his account of his encounter with Modotti. Neruda, Memoirs, Translated by Hardie St. Martin (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976): 255-6.

7. Knapp worked at the Museum of Modern Art from 1946 until 1951. Dee Knapp, interviews with author, September 23, 1988 and March 16, 1993; Tina Modotti artist file, Museum of Modern Art, New York; author's personal files.

8. The last important article that appeared during Modotti's lifetime was Carleton Beals, "Tina Modotti," Creative Arts. 4 (February 1929): xlvii-li.

9. Diego Rivera, "Edward Weston and Tina Modotti," Mexican Folkways. 2 (April/May 1926): 16-17; Tina Modotti, "Sobre la Fotografía/On Photography," Mexican Folkways. 5 (October/December 1929): 196-198.

10. Vestel, "Tina's Trajectory," Infinity. 15 (February 1966): 5.

11. For the background on the publication of this volume, see Robert D'Attilio, "Glittering Traces of Tina Modotti," Views (Boston) 6, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 6.

12. Mildred Constantine, Tina Modotti: A Fragile Life. New York: Paddington Press. 1975. Second edition, New York: Rizzoli, 1983.

13. Constantine, (Tina Modotti: A Fragile Life, second ed.): 19.

14. D'Attilio, "Glittering Traces," 6, calls Modotti Vidali's compagno di vita. They became a couple in Moscow after each had had other lovers: Modotti writes about a new man (unnamed) in her life (letter from Tina Modotti to Frances Toor, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover Institution Archives) and Vidali fathered a daughter with Paulina Hafkina (Barckhausen, Verdad, 232, 248). By 1932, Modotti and Vidali were working at MOPR headquarters and were considered an couple (Castano, "Mosca 1932," 24).

15. Dorothy Gallagher observes that the many volumes of Vidali's autobiography might be called "revisionist." [Gallagher, All the Right Enemies, The Life and Murder of Carlo Tresca (New York, Penguin Books, 1988): 287.] D'Attilio is more explicit in his interpretation of Vidali's motivation: "Concern over his historical reputation led Vidali, a Soviet agent, to begin a large-scale apologia pro sua vita based upon diaries that he had supposedly kept throughout his life (one should be skeptical that any Soviet agent would do this) so that as he put it, he could "demythologize" his life (7).
16. Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti. Exhibition catalogue. Essays by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1982), 25.
17. Frida Kahlo y Tina Modotti. Exhibition Catalog. Mexico City: Museum Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1983. New essays were: Raquel Tibol's "Algunas Razones para juntar a Frida y Tina," 8-13, and Elena Poniatowska's "¿Qué de hace a la hora de morir, Tina Modotti?", pp. 19-27.
18. Herbert Molderings, "Tina Modotti: Fotografin und Agentin der GPU," Kunst forum International. [FRD]. 9 (November 1982), 93.
19. For example, when he lists the painters involved in the muralist movement, he leaves out David Alfaro Siqueiros, a known Stalinist, who attempted to murder Trotsky. (94)
20. Robert D'Attilio, "Glittering Traces of Tina Modotti," Views (Boston) 6, no 4 (Summer 1985): 6-9.
21. After Modotti, Brett Weston, Edward's son, is perhaps the best-known photographer that studied with Weston. Cole Weston also studied with his father. Among some of Weston's other students were: Llewellyn Bixby-Smith (Conger, EWP, 46/1920); Sonya Noskowiak (Sonya Noskowiak Archive, Guide Series Number Five, Center For Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ); Sibyl Anikeeff [EWP 659/1931]; 711/1933].
22. For example, Modotti is never formally introduced in the text: her last name is only found in brackets, in footnotes, or in captions for portraits of her, until nearly halfway through her text.
23. Christiane Barckhausen, Auf den Spuren von Tina Modotti. Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1988; Christiane Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti.

Havana: Casa de las Americas, Ensayo Premio 1988, 1989.
Spanish translation of Auf den Spuren von Tina Modotti.

24. Among the books that have appeared since 1988 are: Valentina Agostinis, ed. Tina Modotti: gli anni luminosi (Pordenone, Italy: Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Cinemazero, 1992) which includes several new essays but which is primarily an Italian-language survey of some of the short literature on Modotti; and Antonio Saborit, ed. Una mujer sin país: Las cartas de Tina Modotti a Edward Weston, 1921-1931 (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1992). Saborit reprints (verbatim and without permission) letters and footnotes in Stark [Rule]'s Archive issue. The most recent full-scale biography of Modotti is Margaret Hooks' Tina Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary. San Francisco: Harper/Collins, Pandora, 1993.

Modotti has also inspired creative writers who take her dramatic life as a springboard for inspiration. Among them, Elena Poniatowska's novel, Tinísima (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1992) is outstanding. Poniatowska spent ten years researching for this book and gathered valuable material in the form of interviews with people who knew Modotti, and who are now deceased. The book was conceived of and written as a work of fiction, and thus it is not possible to separate fact from fabrication.

CHAPTER II

Tina Modotti was born in the town of Udine, in northern Italy, on August 17, 1896, the second daughter and third child of Giuseppe Modotti and Assunta Mondini. Named Assunta Adelaide Luigia, she was called Tina, short for Assuntina, a diminutive of her first name, which distinguished mother from daughter.¹

The commune of Udine lies on a high, fertile plain below the Austrian Alps, an area known for hunting and gaming. The narrow streets of this ancient town are laid out in concentric circles as protection from invasion. Medieval piazzas and Renaissance palazzos proclaim its affluent past, and at the turn of the century, Udine remained a prosperous municipality known for the production of fine cloth. It was then a conservative and strongly Catholic town, whose power elite maintained social stability in the face of political change.

Among the working and lower classes there were tendencies toward socialism and radicalism. The Modotti family demonstrated a marked political disposition and from the beginning of her life, Tina was thus inscribed: the register of the parish church where the five-and-a-half month old was baptized names Demetrio Canal, a noted socialist organizer, as one of several witnesses to the rite.² Giuseppe was a socialist,³ but the exact nature

of the alliance between Modotti and Canal is obscure, since Canal was a shoemaker,⁴ and Modotti was a mechanical engineer.⁵ Canal was the director of L'Operaio, one of the earliest, albeit short-lived, socialist daily newspapers of Udine, which began publication the same month Tina was born. It may have been a point of contact between the men, or their association may have evolved around labor issues and the strikes that flared in Udine during the late 1890s, which were supported by Canal and his associates.⁶ It is unlikely, however, that Giuseppe himself worked as a laborer in the factory, in light of his mechanical skills, and those of his family. His brother Francesco, younger by a year, was also a mechanical engineer, and Pietro, born seven years after Giuseppe, was a successful photographer in Udine.⁷

The Modotti family seems to have struggled to make ends meet, but they were not the impoverished peasants some sources make them out to be. Rather, they were skilled craftsmen with a radical orientation.⁸ Tina inherited a social consciousness from her family as well as the mechanical skills Giuseppe shared with his brothers: her technical aptitude and her mastery of the camera some years later confirm it.

Udine is the capital of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of northern Italy, a region whose borders changed

regularly: today, Italian and German are both spoken there. Shortly after Tina's birth, her father, like thousands of other Italians, crossed the nearby Austrian border in search of a better paying job.⁹ Unlike others, however, he returned shortly afterward and in 1898 the whole family -- Giuseppe and his wife Assunta, and their three children, Mercedes, six years old, Ernesto, four, and Tina, aged three -- emigrated to the area of Kärnten (Carinthia) in southern Austria where they remained until 1905.¹⁰ The peregrinations of the Modottis can be traced by the births and deaths of their children. Ernesto died in 1898 in St. Ruprecht, Austria;¹¹ Valentina Maddalena was born in January 1899 in Ferlach, Austria, roughly ten miles south of Klagenfurt near the frontier of Yugoslavia;¹² and both Iolanda (also called Yolanda) Luisa and Pasquale Benvenuto were born back in St. Ruprecht, Klagenfurt in July 1901 and May 1903, respectively.¹³

The hardships endured by migrants -- both the brutal trek and the harsh, sometimes inhumane living and working conditions in Austria -- generally dissuaded whole families from emigrating.¹⁴ The fact the Modotti family went as a unit has led to the conjecture that Giuseppe left for political reasons -- that his socialist activities impeded his ability to earn a living in Udine - - or that he was fleeing the local police for these

activities.¹⁵ Despite the loss of their eldest son, the Modotti's may have fared slightly better than most in Austria because of Giuseppe's skills. He was employed as a mechanic in a bicycle factory in Ferlach, and was presumably more secure economically.¹⁶ This is a marked contrast to the experience of the hundreds of thousands of Italian migrant laborers who were employed in the construction of roads and railways.

Spending six formative years in Austria (from age three to nine) explains Modotti's later aptitude for languages: she spoke at least four -- Italian, German, English and Spanish (she may have picked up Russian or French when she lived in the Soviet Union and France in the 1930s) -- and regularly provided translations for publications, including El Machete (Mexico) and New Masses (New York) during the 1920s, and Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (Berlin) and MOPR (Moscow) during the 1930s.

Life in Austria was harsh, and the Modotti family, though better off than some, was subject to intolerance bred of suspicion. While Italian workers played a significant economic role in Austria, they remained culturally unassimilated. Italian along with Slavic immigrants in Austria found themselves the object of blatant discrimination -- politically active and racially motivated -- and more pronounced there than elsewhere in Europe.¹⁷ This shared discrimination may have created a

common cause between two groups with a long tradition of animosity toward each other, and may have served as Tina's first lesson in class consciousness.¹⁸ The grinding poverty around her and the condition of being a member of a group which saw discrimination daily may provide a possible source of Tina's later commitment to social causes. Family legend promotes this impression: Tina is said to have been taken, as a small child, to a May Day parade by her father, a story that further enhances her political lineage.¹⁹

The Modotti family returned to Udine in 1905, a date marked by another birth in the family: Giuseppe Pietro Maria was born in Udine in August 1905.²⁰ That same year at the peak period of Italian immigration to the United States, the elder Giuseppe Modotti emigrated to America.²¹ He left Europe from the French port of Le Havre in mid-August and arrived in New York on August 27; his final destination was Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, where his brother, Francesco, lived.²² What occupation the brothers found is unknown, but Turtle Creek was full of opportunities. It was a rich coal-mining region, as well as the site of major industries, including Carnegie's first steel-mill and a Westinghouse air brake factory.²³ Around 1907, Giuseppe moved to California, and opened a photography business as Joseph Modotti & Co., in North Beach, the heart San Francisco's Italian Colony.²⁴ An

advertisement in the San Francisco Directory lists "J. Modotti and A. Zante, artistic photographers and all kinds of view work." The enterprise was not successful, and the following year, "Giuseppe Modotti" advertised a new business: "machine shop, marble working, machinery made and repaired," on Montgomery Street, an industrial area adjacent to the residential North Beach.²⁵

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Details about this period of Tina Modotti's life are extremely scarce, but what facts are available contradict the implication made in most accounts: that the family was poverty-stricken. It is probably the case that the promise of economic gain motivated Giuseppe to leave his family and emigrate to the United States, and that life was spare for his wife and six children. Assunta was not without resources, however: she was a professional and skilled seamstress, and her needlework brought in income.²⁶ She taught her daughters how to sew, and three of them later in their lives earned a living thanks to their mother's instruction.

Tina attended school for two years in Udine, from October 1905 until December 1907, her only recorded formal education.²⁷ Six years later, Modotti identified herself as a "student" when immigration officials ask for her occupation, stating she could read and write Italian. While this is suggestive of additional education, none so

far has been documented, although Modotti was taken to Venice as a child.²⁸

Tina's strong character is a theme especially evident in accounts of her life that emphasize her commitment to the Communist Party. Family narrative has it that Tina was the sole breadwinner for the family after her older sister Mercedes joined her father in the United States in 1911.²⁹ This scenario is unlikely, though Tina, like many young girls, was employed at the Domenico Raiser e Figlio, the local silk factory.³⁰ A story Yolanda Modotti, Tina's younger sister, recounts is often cited as well. Once, their Aunt Maria, the wife of Pietro Modotti, gave Tina a beautiful blue scarf, which she raffled off to the girls at the factory in order to raise money to buy bread, cheese and sausage, enough food for her family to eat for a week.³¹

Yolanda's anecdote raises the suggestion that a relationship existed between Giuseppe's family and that of Pietro. A nettlesome and unresolved question remains: how much contact did Tina have with her photographer uncle, beyond his taking formal portraits of Tina's siblings.³² Pietro Modotti ran one of Udine's most successful portrait photography studios, as well as a school of photography. He was an effective teacher and was mentor to several distinguished photographers of the Friuli region.³³ Pietro was single-minded in his preoccupation with light:

in 1896 he perfected a technique that blocked the direct light source to create a subdued illumination, an effect can that be seen as a manifestation of a pictorialist impulse. Modotti wrote extensively about his experiments. His impassioned articles, which appeared in journals in Italy and internationally, provoked an ongoing discussion regarding the status of photography as an art form, and the merits or wrong-headedness of creating photographs that imitate pictorial models in painting, arguments typical of the period.³⁴

Little is known about the connection between the future photographer and her famous uncle.³⁵ Recent research suggesting that Tina did work in Pietro's atelier before immigrating to America in 1913 is tentative at best: a current resident of Udine recalls speaking with her father who saw Tina in Pietro's studio in 1908 when his portrait was taken.³⁶ There is little doubt, however, that the young girl must have had clear memories of her uncle, and that his life as a photographer may well have had an influence on her future course.

1. August 17 is the date on Modotti's birth certificate and is contradicted by her baptismal record which gives August 16. Transcriptions of both documents in Modotti Archive, Special Collections, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities.

Giuseppe Saltarini Modotti [1863-1922] was born April 20, 1863, and died March 14, 1922. (Death certificate). Assunta Mondini [1863-1937] was born on November 29, 1863, and baptized the same day. Barckhausen, Verdad, 19. For additional genealogical information on Tina Modotti's immediate and extended family, see Appendix I.

2. A transcription of the baptism record, though the texts differ slightly, are provided in: Barckhausen, Verdad, 19 and 21; Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 6, 10. Barckhausen reproduces the register from the parish church Santa Maria delle Grazie in Udine, where the ceremony took place.

3. Caronia, Tina Modotti, 6.

4. Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 15, note 8.

5. Giuseppe is listed as a mechanic on Tina Modotti's birth certificate indicates and as an engineer on the ship's manifest. (Giuseppe Modotti, Death Certificate; Immigration Records, 1905). In contrast to these documents, Vidali's states that he was a carpenter and mason, thus demonstrating Vidali's lack of knowledge about Modotti's life before he knew her, and that Giuseppe was not the "common laborer" as Vidali implies. [Vidali], Tina Modotti, 30.

6. Canal's political activities continued, and the following year he founded a social group, which the Udinese police dissolved because of its support of a local strike of textile workers. Tiziano Tessitori, "Albori del socialismo in Friuli," Memorie Storiche Forogiuliesi. Udine, 1966, 11-49, cited in Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 10.

7. See Immigration Records, 1904.

8. The notion that Tina came from purely proletarian roots promoted by Caronia and first brought into question by D'Attilio in "Glittering Traces," passim.

9. Barckhausen, Verdad, 29.

10. According to Barckhausen, the family lived in Austria from 1898-1905. Barckhausen, Verdad, 24. This corresponds with Vidali's statement that Modotti lived in Austria

until she was nine years old. [Vidali], Tina Modotti, 3.

11. Ivana Bonelli et al., "'Un cappello caduto nell'acqua' Tracce di Tina nella sua terra d'origine," paper delivered March 1993, Udine, Italy. Bonelli, M. Pia Tamburlini and Rosetta Porracin, are members of the Comitato Tina Modotti collective in Udine. The Comitato houses copies of documents related to the Modottis that have been found in municipal and ecclesiastic archives and repositories in Udine and in towns where the family lived in Austria.

12. Barckhausen, Verdad, 38.

13. Barckhausen, Verdad, 41; Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 6.

14. Single men who pooled their expenses could make money, while families, like the Modotti's, generally found it impossible to accumulate any savings. Robert F. Foerster, The Italian Emigration of our Times, 1919 (Reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1968): 15.

15. Barckhausen, Verdad, 29-30. The "Círculo Socialista" organized in Udine in 1897 and directed by Luigi Pignat, Arturo Zambianchi and Demitrio Canal, was disbanded by the authorities after a few months. Ellero suggests that Giuseppe may have left Udine in 1897 for political reasons, then returned home the next year to take his family to near-by Austria. Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 10.

16. Barckhausen, Verdad, 39-40.

17. Foerster, Italian Emigration, 199.

18. Barckhausen, Verdad, 41-2. The woman who delivered the two Modotti children who were born in St. Ruprecht was Slavic, and thus she concludes: "The common experience of exploitation and isolation...had opened the eyes of both the Slavs and Italians. They had a firsthand notion that beyond the barriers of language and nationality, solidarity constituted their only effective weapon." (author's translation).

19. Constantine states: "Yolanda relates Tina's nostalgic memories of her childhood, when her father carried her on his shoulders as he participated in the noisy May Day demonstrations" [in Austria]. Constantine, Fragile Life, 24. Barckhausen states: "Vidali says that Tina remembered, all her life, her father leading her by the hand at worker manifestations of the first of May...". (Barckhausen, Verdad, 41).

20. Tina's youngest brother, Giuseppe Pietro Maria (his first name was anglicized to Joseph, and he was called Beppo), was born August 30, 1905, two months after his father left for the United States. Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 6.

21. See immigration records, 1905. Between 1902 and 1906, nearly a quarter of a million Italians immigrated to the United States. See compilation in Foerster, Italian Emigration, 15.

22. Francesco Modotti first emigrated to the United States in 1892 and lived in Pittsburgh for some years, and then returned to Italy before the end of the decade. Immigration records, 1904.

23. Turtle Creek experienced a coal-mining boom in 1852 with the arrival of the Pennsylvania Railroad. After the Civil War, industry came to the area: Andrew Carnegie build his first steel mill which became the largest rail-making factory in the world, and George Westinghouse established an air brake factory in 1875. Xerox copies of newspaper clippings dated January 25, 1932 and January, 15 1933; undated publication of the Welfare Planning Association. Originals in Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Department, Pittsburgh, PA.

24. According to his death certificate, Giuseppe Modotti lived in California for 15 years.

25. Crocker-Langley City Directory: San Francisco, 1908 and 1908-9 editions.

26. Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti, 6.

27. Rosetta Porracin, letter to author, July 9, 1994. This information is published; see Tamburlini, "Tina promossa a pieni voti," Messaggero Veneto [Udine, Italy] (25 September 1992).

28. Modotti states as much in a 1920 interview. Some years later, after reading Dreiser's A Traveler at Forty, she mentions her visits to that city. "Una Estrella de Cine que Ama y Conoce a México," El Heraldo de Mexico [Los Angeles] (May 16, 1920): 7; DBI, 69 (May 2, 1924).

29. Immigration records indicate Mercedes arrived in the Port of New York on April 12, 1911. The ship's records no longer exists.

30. Ivana Bonelli et al., "'Un cappello caduto nell'acqua'".

31. [Vidali], Tina Modotti, 15. Yolanda Modotti's account of life in Italy, translated into English, mistakenly appears as evidence of the hardships endured by the family in San Francisco in Constantine, Fragile Life, 25.

32. A portrait of a young boy, said to be Benvenuto, Modotti's younger brother, is reproduced in Constantine, Fragile Life, 21.

33. The following discussion of Pietro Modotti career is drawn from Zannier, Fotografia in Friuli, 1850-1970, 17-19.

34. Zannier cites the following journals: The International Annual of Anthony's Photographic Bulletin; The American Annual of Photography and provides the following specific citations: La Gazzetta della Fotografia. [Milan] (March 1905); Annuario Santoponte. [Rome] (1905); Il Progresso Fotografico [Milan] (September 1904) and (April 1905); and Annuario del Corriere Fotografico [Torino] (1911) 25.

35. Yolanda Modotti (who was interviewed several times before she died in 1991) did not mention Pietro Modotti in connection with her sister's activities as a photographer. One explanation for her silence has been the suggestion that he was a supporter of Mussolini. Barckhausen, Verdad, 27. Barckhausen deduces from letters written to Pietro by his son Dino, who left Italy in 1926 for Bolivia. These letters were intercepted by the Italian Government, transcribed and now reside as documents in state archives Italy.

36. See Ellero, "Nuove fotografie de Pietro Modotti," and "Gli allievi de Pietro Modotti."

CHAPTER III

Tina Modotti left Italy by way of Genoa on June 24, 1913, and arrived in the Port of New York on July 8. She had \$100 with her, and a ticket paid for by her father for her final destination. Modotti made the trans-continental trip by train, arriving at 1952 Taylor Street in San Francisco a week or so later. When Giuseppe Modotti arrived in California, he along with hundreds of Italians settled in North Beach, the heart of the Italian community of San Francisco.¹ He was not, however, a typical working-class Italian immigrant. Giuseppe's profession, and that of his family -- mechanics and seamstress -- were among the trades highly respected in the Italian immigrant population.² And, unlike the majority of new immigrants, he had the business acumen and financial wherewithal to have a telephone installed.³

Tina's first years in the New World would have been much like other recent immigrants, though no hard evidence corroborates the various stories related. Vidali, never a stickler for facts about Modotti, states that within a week of Tina's arrival "she began working at a textile factory. When she abandoned the loom in 1917, it was to replace it with the needle of a dressmaker."⁴ In spirit, Vidali is perhaps accurate: probably before her sixteenth birthday, Modotti would have found some employment. It is

extremely doubtful, however, that Modotti worked in a "textile" factory, and thus, could not have "abandoned the loom." She may have been involved in garment assembly. Yolanda Modotti gives conflicting reports, stating in one interview that her sister worked in a hat shop, and at another interview, that she worked with their sister Mercedes, in a sewing room at I. Magnin.⁵ It is possible, too, that Modotti began working for herself in 1917.

Modotti seems to have gone to work for herself, at home or perhaps in a sewing studio, suggesting the family's entrepreneurial spirit. She would have depended upon her skills as a seamstress, skills she learned from her mother. Modotti's faculty with a needle and thread stood her in good stead a few years later, too, when she was living and working in Los Angeles.

On the eve of World War I, the garment industry across the United States was experiencing vigorous unionization and Modotti can not have been untouched by the activities--shop meetings and numerous strikes--that marked the labor movement on the Pacific coast. There was a strong Italian presence in unions, both in membership and leadership, especially in the garment trades. A year before Modotti's arrival in the United States, the strikes in the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts, marked a turning point for the Italian-American community. The

arrest and trial of east coast I.W.W. organizer Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, an Italian-American poet, editor of Il Proletario, and secretary of the Italian Socialist Federation galvanized the movement. For nine months, Ettor and Giovannitti made national and international news, and incited demonstrations in support of the labor leaders. One meeting was held in Washington Square Theater in San Francisco's Italian colony, the same theater Modotti performed in several years later.⁶ The events of 1912 united the fractious Italian-American labor community, while demonstrating the significance of the Italians in the labor movement.⁷

In July 1917 Modotti's name appears in a theater advertisement in the local Italian-language newspaper. The precise route she took from the factory to the stage, and later, to Hollywood, may have involved sewing costumes for the theater. One event had a significant impact on her artistic growth: her encounter with a poet and painter who called himself Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey. Modotti and Richey met at a function at the Pan Pacific International Exposition which San Francisco hosted in 1915.⁸ By 1913, Richey, known to his friends as Robo, was living on Golden Gate Avenue in San Francisco. He had shed all traces of his background and convincingly embraced the bohemian life for which San Francisco was renowned.⁹

It is likely that Modotti knew little of the

conditions of Richey's childhood, and if she did, she nevertheless honored his persona when she eulogized him in The Book of Robo, published in 1923, a year after his premature death just weeks before his thirty-third birthday. She dismisses the relevance of Richey's personal history -- "When, where, and under what circumstance, Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey...was born, will be of little importance to the reader of this book." Her guess about the origins of Richey's "French" name -- "perhaps some ancestor, of generations ago, sent out to the Louisianas from France by one of the Louises lived again the romance of life in this young poet," have led to the conjecture that the Richey family came from New Orleans.¹⁰

Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey was, in fact, born Ruby Richey, in March 1890 in Oregon, and grew up on a farm near Portland. His paternal grandfather, Stuart Richey born in Kentucky, was one of hundreds of settlers who crossed the Rocky Mountains on the Oregon Trail to claim land grants offered in 1850 and 1853. Ruby's father, James Richey, was born in 1848 in Iowa; James' sister Mara A. was born in Oregon five years later and his brother, Gus, was born there in 1860.¹¹

In 1887, James Richey married the twenty-seven year old Rose Booth, herself born in Oregon. Three years later Ruby was born, and his sister, Mara An, was born in 1896,

several months after Modotti's birthday. Ruby's maternal grandmother was from Illinois; his maternal grandfather, from the French-speaking part of Canada, is the clue to the birthright he identified with.¹²

James Richey, his brother Gus, and his brother-in-law, were all farmers, and lived with their families either on the same farm or on adjacent land in what was then known as the Goesham Precinct of Multnomah County. Ruby may not have taken to rural living, but it is unlikely his life was "desolate and lonely," as Modotti states: by 1900 the ten-year-old boy had seven cousins and had been attending school for six years. Farm living did not suit him, even though, as Modotti writes, it "helped to develop his inborn gift for refinement and beauty and his understanding for those rare substances which are realities only to the dreamers and visionaries."¹³ By the time he was twenty-three, Ruby had transformed himself into Roubaix the artist, leaving behind the rustic Oregon farm life for good.

Precisely because so little is known about Richey, his importance to Modotti has not taken seriously. He is often treated as a side show to what is deemed the main event: either Modotti's artistic awakening via Weston, or her political awakening in Mexico. The air of mystery that surrounds the figure of Robo is in part self-created, in collusion with Modotti no doubt, and in part, due to

his untimely death and limited artistic achievements. The material proof of his artistic output is evident in The Book of Robo, a collection of his poetry, aphorisms, an unfinished short story, and reproductions of several paintings assembled by Modotti after his death.¹⁴

Richey was also an illustrator and cartoonist, he made exquisite batiks, and as early as 1912, had published several short stories in a prestigious West Coast literary magazine.¹⁵

If a Jack London ruggedness figured at one end of San Francisco's literary spectrum, then Richey embodied the Bohemian at the other. Richey's fin-de-siecle style mirrored the Bohemian vogue embodied by the likes of George Sterling and Ambrose Bierce. Among his literary colleagues he counted poet Andrew Dewing, a good friend of Sterling's; the critic Sadakichi Hartmann; and the Welsh writer and lecturer John Cowper Powys, who wrote a brief introduction to The Book of Robo.¹⁶

Although Richey has been dismissed as an ineffectual aesthete and a fop, he was, quite literally, a self-made man, self-created into his own image as an artist. Moved, as if by a spiritual conversion, Richey writes about his *modus vivendi*:

...suddenly I conceived the beautiful life as never before. It appeared to me not as a thing itself which required ease and wealth, but as a matter of

selection...and I came to realize that I too live beautifully, live as beautifully as my present soul will permit...it is still possible to make beautiful selections and cast our lot with beauty.¹⁷

Richey's determination and conviction to leave behind his provincial background should not to be underestimated or too quickly dismissed. He found public venues for his poetry, prose, and drawings, and he designed and created beautiful and marketable batik fabrics.

Modotti may have been attracted to Richey as a handsome, driven artist, but she may also have been drawn to him by his politics. Richey was probably an anarchist: Weston photographed him wearing the a black four-in-hand tie, the badge of anarchism.¹⁸ He may have subscribed to a literary brand of anarchism, the sort practiced by Hartmann, among others. Or, his beliefs may have run deeper. The proof of a more ardent conviction is his stance against U.S. intervention in Mexico which may be deduced from cartoons he published several years later.

Modotti's decision to go on stage was perhaps influenced by Richey: he wrote poetry, and she recited beautifully, a talent that captivated Weston several years later.¹⁹ With Richey as her model did Modotti visualize wider horizons for herself? By the age of twenty-two, Modotti was a minor celebrity in the Italian colony and

was in the midst of her six-year acting career.

Theater, from opera to comedy to tragedy, played a prominent role in the cultural life of the Italian Colony.²⁰ In addition to providing entertainment, it was a crucial instrument for perpetuating the Italian language in the New World. The professional teatro Italiano developed, not from of high art opera which had thrived in San Francisco since the 1860s, but out of popular amateur groups, or compagnie filodrammatiche, which put on shows on behalf of political societies and social clubs.²¹ Such amateur performances occurred sporadically until 1905, when Antonietta Pisanelli founded the first professional troupe. She also refashioned a local theater by removing seat rows, and introducing tables and chairs, transforming it into "a combination café-chantant, theater, opera house and club," offering the Italian community "an endless potpourri of opera, comedy, farce, tragedy, duets, solos and song fests."²²

After peaking between 1909-1914, the variety theater went into serious decline. Chief among them were the impact of World War I, the enactment of harsher immigration laws, and growing discrimination against Italians, which resulted in the younger generation disdaining the things of their parents' world in order to hasten their own assimilation.²³ Further, the advent of moving pictures drew audiences away from live

entertainment: San Francisco's first theater dedicated to showing films, Grauman's Imperial, opened in December 1912. Two years later, over thirty full-time movie houses were in operation; by early 1917 San Francisco boasted one hundred.²⁴ In the Italian colony too, many theaters began to offer nickelodeon-type entertainment, and Italians were beckoned to see screenings of films by Charlie Chaplin and D. W. Griffith through advertizing in the Italian language newspapers.²⁵

Interest in Italian variety theater was rekindled in 1917, however, with the reopening of the Liberty Theater, the appearance of the Compagnia Città di Firenze, and in the following year, the arrival of the comic-dramatic company Bruno-Seragnoli Company at the Washington Square Theater.²⁶ Modotti was in the cast of both troupes and with regularity throughout the 1918 season, the Italian daily L'Italia singled out her performances in its reviews. Even before it opened on July 28, Modotti received notice for her upcoming role as the protagonist in Bayard's comedy, Il Biricchino di Parigi. The reviewer applauded her "intelligent and decisive artistic inclination" and predicted "an excellent performance, especially because only the strongest members of the company will participate."²⁷

Modotti's greatest triumph came near the end of the season, when she played Marta Regnault in Dario

Niccodemi's La Nemica. The reviewer for L'Italia made a point of bringing Modotti's performance to the attention of its readers:

Tina Modotti, whom all in our colony have so often admired, and whom we may say, we all love, as much for her goodness as for her brilliant artistic qualities. She is still at the beginning of her career...and yesterday surprised even her warmest admirers by the dramatic intensity of her acting, especially in the great final scene of the second act. Always careful, conscientious, Signora Modotti has already obtained--if we may so phrase it--her diploma as an artist and continuing to study as she does her career is assured.²⁸

It is worth considering the impact Modotti's experiences in the theater had on her artistic sensibility and development. Without a reasonable degree of self-confidence and poise, it is unlikely a young woman would have joined a theater company. Modotti must have had the requisite flair for improvisation that is crucial to Italian acting. With its roots in the popular Commedia dell'Arte of the late Renaissance, modern Italian theater demanded players who could make rapid adjustments to accommodate different roles each week. Memorization was

not as important as the ability to enter the spirit of a new character, and thus Modotti's suitability to the theater parallels her capacity to successfully renegotiate the ever-changing terms of her own life.

Further observation will suggest that Modotti would have acquired a good deal of informal education by her participation in and attendance of theatrical productions presented to the Colony. In March of 1918, Modotti played the daughter of a convict in Paolo Giacometti's 1861 La Morte Civile, a social drama that Emile Zola praised when it opened in Paris in 1877 as a brilliant example of realism.²⁹ She was singled out for her performance in Gli Spettri, a popular translation of Hendrik Ibsen's Ghosts, which had its premier in Italy in 1892. And in August 1918, Modotti drew praise for her role in Gerolamo Rovetta's "Disonesti", a play which exemplified the realist theme that men are made good or evil by circumstance, not by principle.³⁰ This first-hand experience with literature is only one facet of Modotti's cultural education, but it remains one of the few for which there exists unassailable proof.

In 1918 Modotti was naturalized, as clear an indication as any that she was seeking a less insular and more urbane world.³¹ Modotti may have been known and beloved in the Colony, but Robo was her ambassador into the literary and artistic milieu of Bohemian San

Francisco. As she distanced herself from the parochial Italian quarter, she was relishing the more sophisticated circles in which Richey moved. The literary allusions that fill Modotti's letters from just a few years later confirm that she was familiar with current trends in poetry, art, music, dance, as well as classical music, and especially opera.

One of the most colorful and flamboyant figures in San Francisco at this time was Sadakichi Hartmann, whom Richey knew and admired. A painter, poet, dramatist, art and photography critic, Hartmann arrived in San Francisco around 1916, and availed himself of its Bohemian culture:

...society matrons swooned over him at studio teas, he staged Ibsen's Ghosts in his little theaters "The House of Mystery" on Russian Hill, hobnobbed with George Sterling and entertained the intelligentsia in his flat at 900 Green Street, gave lectures at Paul Elder's and presented his famed perfume concert.³²

Hartmann's politics were equally idiosyncratic: although he showed no disposition for activism, he joined Anarchist Emma Goldman in founding Mother Earth.³³ In December 1916, his "Art and Revolt" appeared in Blast, a radical magazine edited in San Francisco by Goldman's close friend and colleague, Alexander Berkman.³⁴

Hartmann knew many of the working photographers in San Francisco at this time, among them Francis Bruguière and Arnold Schröder, both of whom took his portrait.³⁵ Richey would have had many artist friends and Schröder was likely among them. Richey's Golden Gate Avenue address places him just south of a number of artists' studios, including Schröder's, who, for a time, had one of the many studios located at 1625 California Street. The studio building served occasionally as a gathering place for artists, writers and journalists, as well as the society types that patronized the arts.³⁶ Hartmann was a frequent visitor to the building, and is remembered as "a sophisticated, eccentric genius and self-appointed poet...[who] often gave candlelight poetry readings in the old Verdier mansion on Taylor Street on Russian Hill," just a few blocks from where Modotti lived.³⁷

It is certain that Schröder met Modotti: he took at least two undated photographs of her.³⁸ The theatrical poses of these studies were not formal portraits of the kind he made for the society pages of the San Francisco Chronicle, but rather "glamour shots," that is, photographs used to promote and advertise the actress. They point to the likelihood that Modotti had set her sights on a professional career in acting, not just on the stage, but in film as well.³⁹

1. Immigration records, 1913. Modotti left from Genoa, not Trieste, as Barckhausen suggests. (Barckhausen, Verdad, 32). Tina Salterini-Modotti, as the ship's manifest indicates, was sixteen years old, single, a student, and was on her way to San Francisco with \$100 to meet her father, Giuseppe Salterini-Modotti, who lived at 1954 Taylor Street. She had a ticket for her final destination, which her father had paid for. Modotti was five foot, one inch tall, in good mental and physical health with no deformities or marks of identification.

2. Foerster, The Italian Emigration, 333.

3. D'Attilio, "Notes for Future Biographers of Tina Modotti," 2.

4. [Vidali], Tina Modotti, 3.

5. Yolanda Modotti, interview with author, October 18, 1988; Yolanda Modotti, interview with Margaret Hooks, February 23, 1990, cited in Hooks, Tina Modotti, 18, 258. Yolanda gave these interviews as she was approaching ninety years old. Since she was just 12 at the time, and still abroad, perhaps she remembered her own experiences upon arriving in California when she and Mercedes both did indeed work at I. Magnin. See Crocker-Langley City Directory: San Francisco, 1922.

6. Broadside "Tutti al Grande Comizio" scheduled for July 20 [1912] in Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA. Thanks to Susan Sherwood for bringing this to my attention.

7. Summary of the Lawrence strikes is drawn from Vincent J. Tirelli, "The Formation of the Italian-American Working Class," Fifty Years of Progress. New York: Italian-American Labor Council, Inc., 1991: 2-23.

8. Constantine cites Yolanda Modotti. Constantine, Fragile Life, 26. An article announcing their marriage in 1918 states this as well. L'Italia (October 16, 1918).

9. The Crocker-Langley City Directory: San Francisco, 1913 lists Richey at 568 Golden Gate Avenue. In the 1872, a group of journalists, painters and poets established the Bohemian Club but it quickly expanded to include prominent business men and lawyers, and transformed into more of a "gentlemen's club than bohemian outpost." The artists and writers worked in close proximity, first on the "Montgomery Block, a warren of writers' rooms and artists' studios" and later, its center relocated to Telegraph Hill. Boas, The Society of Six: California

Colorists, 17-18.

10. Modotti-Richey, The Book of Robo, 9.

11. See 1900 Oregon census record.

12. Richey led those around him to believe that he was Canadian. See 1920 San Francisco and Los Angeles census records.

13. Modotti-Richey, The Book of Robo, 9.

14. Although Modotti is cited as the compiler in the subscription announcement for the book, she relied upon the editorial advice of a Blanche Marie d'Harcourt, with whom Robo and John Cowper Powys corresponded. See Announcement of the Publication of a subscription edition of The Book of Robo which states: "This book which has been compiled by his wife..." and letter, undated John Cowper Powys to Blanche Marie D'Harcourt. Private Collection, San Francisco, CA. The book appeared in an "edition of 210 numbered copies, of which 200 will be for sale to subscribers." "The covers will be stretched with an unusual, and for this edition especially imported Batik paper."

15. On cartoons: see 1920 Census, San Francisco, CA; El Universal Ilustrado (Mexico) año V, no 253 (May 9, 1922), 242; Gales (Mexico) May and September, 1920, cover illustrations. On batiks: see Duell, "Textiles and Interior Decoration Department, 19; Borough, "Art, Love and Death," 22. On writing: see short stories "Webfoot," Overland Monthly 60 (September 1912), 240-3; "Dice of the Gods," Overland Monthly 60 (December 1912), 475-80 and poem "Streetscape" Lyric West I, no 9 (January 1922). Lyric West, a small poetry magazine based in California, was edited by Grace Atherton Dennen. Other contributors included better-known poets such as Genevieve Taggard, Zona Gale, and Babette Deutsch, as well as more obscure poets such as Sarah Bixby Smith, the wife of Edward Weston's friend.

16. On Dewing: Letter from Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey, c. 1922 to Blanche D'Harcourt. (Private Collection, San Francisco, California). Andrew Dewing had in his collection the papers of George Sterling. (Elsie Whitaker Martinez: San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists, introduction by Franklin D. Walker, Interview conducted by FDW and Willa Klug Baum, Berkeley Oral History Office, Bancroft, 1969). Dewing was a poet: see "To George Sterling," The Lantern. 3, no 9 (December 1917), 276; "Cathedral Spires," The Lantern. 3, no 12 (March 1918),

381; "Kwannon," Lyric West 2, no 2 (May 1922), 19. On Hartmann: Modotti writes that the two men corresponded and shared common interests. Modotti-Richey, The Book of Robo, 10.

17. Modotti-Richey, The Book of Robo, 11.

18. D'Attilio makes this point. "Glittering Traces," 9.

19. Weston claims he took three dozen negatives of Modotti reciting poetry at a sitting in October of 1924. DBI, 95. (October 4, 1924).

20. Lawrence Estavan, ed. The Italian Theatre in San Francisco, San Francisco Theatre Research Series, W.P.A. Project, Monograph 21, volume 10 (San Francisco, CA: 1939): 5.

21. Deanna Paoli Gumina, The Italians of San Francisco, 1850-1930 (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1978, 1985): 61.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid, 69.

24. Edmond M. Gagey. The San Francisco Stage: A History. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950): 211.

25. Gumina, The Italians of San Francisco, 63 and advertisements in L'Italia from this period.

26. Estavan, ed. The Italian Theatre, 122-3; Gumina, A The Italians of San Francisco, 69.

27. L'Italia (July 25, 1918): n.p. Translation, Luisa Sartori.

28. L'Italia (29 August 1918): n.p. Translation from Estavan, The Italian Theatre, 56-57 and Luisa Sartori.

29. An article in L'Italia (March 2, 1918) praises Modotti's excellent diction and acting in the role. Estavan, The Italian Theatre, 56.

30. See Marvin Carlson. The Italian Stage: From Goldoni to D'Annunzio (Jefferson, N.C., & London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1981). On "La Morte Civile," 145; on "Gli Spettri," 186; on "I Disonesti," 184.

31. 1920 Census record, Los Angeles County, California.

32. Harry Lawton, "The 'Last Bohemian' - A New Culture Hero?" San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, This World Sunday (4 April 1971), 38.

33. The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, 5.

34. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Art and Revolt," Blast. I, no 22 (1 December 1916), 3.

35. There is a portrait of Hartmann by Bruguieres dated c. 1917. The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, 45. There is one of Hartmann by Schröder dated c. 1920. The Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, 111. Schröder signed his names with an umlaut, but in print, his name varies from Schroder to Schroeder.

36. Schröder's address in the classified section under photography is: 1625 California Street. Best's Art School also occupied space in the same building. Crocker-Langley City Directory: San Francisco, 1917.

37. Valenti Angelo Arts and Books: A Glorious Variety. Introduction by James D. Hart. Interview conducted by Ruth Teiser and Katherine Harroun, 1977-1979. Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 1980, 52, 78. For Valenti's description of Schröder, see 49.

38. Reproduced by Constantine, Fragile Life, 34 and 35. Arnold Schröder [1881-?] was a portrait photographer of some note. He had a thriving Fifth Avenue business in New York in 1912. By 1915 had moved to San Francisco, and by 1920, he relocated to Los Angeles. Undated article, Scrapbook, Box 22, Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, Riverside, California; 1920 Census, Los Angeles County, California.

39. See Jacob, "Tina Modotti a Hollywood," 211-222 for Modotti's youthful encounter with cinema in Udine.

CHAPTER IV

Modotti's training on stage in the Italian quarter helped launch the next phase of her acting career: she received three known film roles between 1920 and 1922. Modotti may well have made her way to Hollywood through friends in the thriving film industry in San Francisco. A number of actors, actresses, and directors active in the Bay Area were also involved in the films Modotti made. Lawson Butt, who played opposite Modotti in The Tiger's Coat her first film, might have introduced her to that film's director Roy Clements after hearing about her stage successes. Or Clements, himself a bit actor for the Essanay Studio, one of the more prominent studio's in the Bay Area, may have gotten wind of her compelling stage presence.¹

Modotti and Richey were married in Santa Barbara in October 1918, and moved directly to Los Angeles. They lived with Rose Richey (Richey's widowed mother), his grandmother, and his sister, Marionne, who, like her brother, had gallicized her given name, Mara An.² In Los Angeles, Tina and Robo supported themselves in the theater arts and film industry, as well as the art community. Modotti was much sought after as a model, by photographers and artists: many photographs of her have survived that appear to be not portraits but studies. In addition to

modeling for artists, Modotti was a member of the La Dramatica Moderna Company based in San Francisco.³ Richey's handmade batiks were used as stage settings, mural decorations and wall hangings, as well as for costumes and women's gowns that Modotti sewed.⁴ One source states that Robo worked in the checkroom of a Hollywood cabaret.⁵ Modotti also sewed small fabric dolls that were much in demand.⁶

In 1919, the Richey's found jobs in Pasadena modeling for photographer Jane Reece, who came to Los Angeles from Dayton, Ohio, presumably to supervise three exhibitions she had there that year.⁷ Although Reece is considered primarily a portrait photographer, her oeuvre includes a great many images that fall somewhere between portraiture, with its emphasis on rendering the personality of the sitter, and genre, which depends upon narrative. As early as 1905, Reece asked friends to pose for her, and gave titles to the photographs which, although acknowledging the sitter, are more allied to the traditions of genre and tableau vivant, than to true portraiture.

Reece took at least eight photographs of Modotti during her visit. One she called Madame de Richey and it appears less a formal portrait than a study of an actress or even a character.⁸ Modotti, dressed in a Spanish-type costume, with large gold hoop earrings, two black curls plastered to her forehead, a black lace mantilla and open

bodice, sits rather demurely, gazing serenely at the viewer.

Madame de Richey appears to be related to a series of dramatic scenes that Modotti and Richey acted out for Reece.⁹ It is possible that she was dressed in "Spanish" costume as a cast member in John Steven McGroarty's The Mission Play -- the story of founding of the San Gabriel Mission by a Franciscan priest from Mexico -- that had been performed annually since 1911 at San Gabriel Mission.¹⁰ One of the tableau scenes with Modotti and Richey called Romance/On San Gabriel Steps, further connects Modotti's costume in Madame de Richey with the theatrical production at San Gabriel.

In an unrelated photograph by Reece, Modotti is seen through a pictorialist haze. She sits on the floor, facing the camera, legs drawn up toward her and her chin resting on her hands, which are loosely clasped on her knees.¹¹ Her direct, sphinx-like stare and elaborate "Eastern" costume -- her hair tucked away in a tightly-wrapped scarf, glints of gold jewelry and thread -- reinforces the allusion to the exotic that the title indicates. Reece titled this image Have Drowned My Glory in a Shallow Cup, a line from Edward Fitzgerald's 1859 translation of Omar Khayyám's Rubáiyát, a favorite, if overused, source for bohemian inspiration.¹²

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long

Have done my credit in this World much wrong:

Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,

And sold my Reputation for a Song.

Stanza 93

This image, and one Robo sat for alone, focus on the physical features of the Richey's, rather than plumbing their personalities, thus reinforcing the idea that they were models and not portraits.¹³

By mid-summer 1920, Modotti had begun work on her first film, The Tiger's Coat, which premiered in October 1920.¹⁴ Modotti's coup was to land the starring role in The Tiger's Coat: she played a Mexican "peon" who, through a series of misimpressions, is taken for the daughter of a close Scottish friend of the protagonist. He falls in love with her but upon discovering her true "racial" identity, breaks off their engagement. She leaves town, but in the end, they are reunited after Modotti's character makes a rousing return as the star of a dance company. The film was a bit daring for its day, defending miscegenation, and allowing for love to triumph over racial prejudice.

Playing the lead role in The Tiger's Coat was the highlight of Modotti's film career. Although not an exceptional film, The Tiger's Coat was a good vehicle for Modotti to show her dramatic abilities. In the days of silent film, overacting was necessary, and the pantomime

and impromptu parts she had had in San Francisco stood her in good stead. Her character undergoes a great many changes in the film, and Modotti transforms herself from a frightened peasant girl into a diva, passing through a number of roles along the way. Modotti is in most scenes of the film, and those without her are less interesting. After The Tiger's Coat, however, Modotti was cast in only minor parts. Her two later films were Riding With Death, which appeared the following November, and I Can Explain (also known as Stay Home) which came out in March 1922.¹⁵

Modotti and Richey made an irresistible pair. A photograph by Wallace Frederick Seely of them in their studio from 1921 evokes the Bohemian life they led. Modotti is seen sewing and Richey painting. Their clothes are nonconfining and comfortable: Modotti's appears to be handmade and Richey wears a loose artist's smock and open shoes. Moreover, this image represents their world as they chose to project it and discloses something of the conditions of their physical environment: the large and airy room with bare wooden floors has but a few mission-type pieces of furniture. On the wall hang two pieces of fabric (perhaps a few of Richey's batiks) and what appears to be a portrait of Modotti.¹⁶

Modotti modeled for several of the drawings Richey made for a book of poems by the exiled Mexican poet, art

critic and archeologist Ricardo Gómez Robelo. The book, Satiros y Amores, was published in Los Angeles in 1920.¹⁷ With his "disregard for the modern spirit of this age,"¹⁸ Richey was an astute choice for Gómez Robelo. The nineteen drawings he executed for Satiros y Amores are ideally suited to the tenor of the book, harking back to Symbolism and Aubrey Beardsley rather than showing any signs of the contemporary trends of modernism or Expressionism. These drawing share with the British fin-de-siècle illustrator both a highly stylized, black-and-white Art Nouveau aesthetic, and a turgid, erotic content that suited the poems they accompanied.

Richey's contact with Gomez Robelo might well have sparked the American's interest in Mexico. If the expatriates of the 1920s were drawn to Europe for its culture and Russia for its politics, then Mexico offered both, and during World War I, it had been a refuge for slackers who hoped to avoid the draft. A. E. Gale, another Mexican connection for Richey, was among the latter. Gale's, founded in 1917 and subtitled A Journal of the New Civilization, Socialism, New Thot., Internationalism, was published in Mexico City. Gale was eccentric, but devoted to radical politics: by the January/February 1921 issue, his paper's title was Gale's International Journal for Revolutionary Communism.¹⁹ Although predisposed to support off-beat causes, Gale

consistently published articles on a range of radical thought, from the orthodox Socialism of Lenin to the revolutionary Syndicalism of the I.W.W., and included regular contributions by Margaret Sanger and other supporters of birth-control.²⁰

The stories reported in Gale's, which listed Richey as a contributing editor/cartoonist on the masthead of the May 1920 issue, set the stage for Modotti's seven-year stay in Mexico. Among the articles, one written by Gale himself, is the not unbiased account of the founding of the orthodox Mexican Communist Party (Partido Comunista Mexicano or PCM) which developed during the summer of 1919 as a result of a power struggle at the First Congress of the National Socialist Party of Mexico City.²¹ Fighting for control of the party were Indian nationalist Manabendra Nath Roy (who had the economic support of Comintern), Mexican labor leader Luis Morones, founder of CROM (the Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers/Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos) and Gale himself (who was deported within a year). The fight resulted in the founding of the PCM in September 1919.²²

Gale's also ran a series of articles about Mexico's ongoing struggle to regain control of its natural resources, especially oil, in the face of heavy investments on the part of American corporations. This

conflict, which dated back to 1912, came into sharp focus with the ratification of Mexico's revolutionary Constitution of 1917. This constitution came as a result of the eventual dissolution of Porfirio Díaz's government, also called the Porfiriato, that had lasted some thirty-odd years, from 1876 until 1910. The Porfiriato was marked by an effort to modernize Mexico, to push the country into the twentieth century, a project that backfired and brought on the Revolution instead. The ideological backbone of Díaz's effort was formulated by a group of influential bureaucrats known as the Científicos (scientific thinkers). Their positivist philosophies saw Mexico's future in the continued dominance of the minority of white Mexicans over the mezitzos and pure Indians, who made up the majority of the population. A cheap, uneducated labor pool, divested of their land was the cornerstone upon which the Científicos built their program of modernization.

The revolution that broke out in 1910 was fueled in part by organized labor. Díaz quietly sought exile in Europe, and the protracted civil war that ensued was carried out by his supporters against those who opposed him, as well as by the revolutionary forces of Emiliano Zapata. The seven bloody years of fighting subsided with the ratification of the Constitution and ended in 1920 when General Álvaro Obregón was named president of Mexico.

Two provisions in particular had a profoundly negative affect on U.S.-Mexican relations: Article 27, which restored proprietary ownership of subsoil resources to the government, and Article 123, which established new conditions of Mexican labor.

At the heart of the oil controversy was the notion, inherited from Spanish law that the state held subsoil rights to all natural resources.²³ Díaz had reversed this concept, issuing decrees that granted landowners rights to the underground materials. Although such measures encouraged foreign investment in Mexico, they ran deeply counter to assumed national rights, and were, in no small measure, a direct cause of the Mexican Revolution. In spite of the capital that the decrees brought in, the Díaz government was perceived to be literally "giving away" the country's natural resources.

The foreign companies that had invested in Mexico looked upon the changes vested in the 1917 Constitution as an unjust confiscation of legally acquired subsoil rights, while the Mexican government saw it as a way to redress unfair foreign domination. As Mexico slowly began to implement the changes required by the Constitution, the American oil companies, sometimes backed by the U.S. State Department, aggressively sought to have Mexico surrender its sovereignty and waive taxes and other restrictions.

During World War I, the issue of oil became an

international affair, and the U.S. worried that Mexico, despite its stance of neutrality, might not only cut its own supply of oil, but also support the German war effort. Although Woodrow Wilson tried to keep relations cordial with the Mexican government (at the expense of protecting American nationals and companies in Mexico), then-leader Venustiano Carranza sought to channel anti-American sentiment toward his own political gains. At the end of the war, the United States turned its attention almost immediately to Mexico and a more decisive battle ensued, bringing the controversy into both the mainstream and radical press, including Gale's.

Two cartoons signed "Robo" appeared on the cover of Gale's during 1920, and both are bluntly anti-capitalist, anti-American-intervention and anti-imperialist in content. The cover for the May 1920 issue, for example, depicts a Mexican "bandito" with a smoking gun and bloodied knife wearing a serape with the words "Wall Street" stitched in. The image gives the impression that it is American business interests that are the real bandits in Mexico. A more pointed drawing appears on the cover of the September 1920 issue. Here, an overweight businessman with a nose signalling that he is Jewish, wears a vest decorated with American dollar and British pound signs. He sweats nervously as he watches a parade of workers marching through a field of oil wells carrying

a banner that reads: "Viva el bolshevismo." The unmistakable message is Wall Street's perception that workers are being organized into unions by outside, Communist forces.

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In Los Angeles, the Richeys had a wide circle of friends, and were known for their all-night parties where they provided food and saki, music and dancing. Gómez Robelo greatly enjoyed these occasions with their array of writers, actors, musicians, dancers, and artists, and after returning to Mexico he remarked in a letter to Edward Weston, who frequented the Richey's parties, how he longed for a party at Robo's.²⁴ Indeed it may well have been he that introduced the Richey's to Weston.²⁵

By the time Modotti and Weston met, no later than April 1921, she had become, as one friend recalled, "the most cultivated person."²⁶ The few letters of hers that exist from this period are peppered with literary and musical references, suggesting not so much scholarship, as an inquiring mind, that read and listened for artistic expressions of her own feelings. Weston was thirty-five years old in the spring of 1921 and was running a successful portrait-photography business that supported him, his wife and four sons.

In 1907, at age twenty, Weston matriculated at the Illinois School of Photography (Illinois was his home

state), but left without a diploma six months later. According to Weston J. Naef, "Trade schools [such as Illinois States School of Photography] typically taught specialized photographic skills... Indoor photography was stressed and lessons were aimed at imparting the skills needed to work in the kind of professional portrait studios that thrived in almost every town of any state. Weston learned the tried and true methods of creating photographs that would satisfy the customer."²⁷ Weston then moved to Los Angeles in 1908, where his sister lived, and a year later, he married Flora Chandler, a member of the powerful and wealthy Chandler family. Between 1908 and 1911, Weston was apprenticed in two commercial photography studios and then left to open his own shop.²⁸

In spite of his determination to "be successful," his dedication, and his blind ambition, Weston was still self-consciously shedding his conventional mid-Western background when he met Modotti. Los Angeles bohemia intimidated him:

...I was suddenly thrown into contact with a sophisticated group,-- actually they were drawn to me through my photography which had gone steadily ahead... They were well-read, worldly wise, clever in conversation,--could garnish with a smattering of French: they were parlor radicals, could sing I.W.W.

songs, quote Emma Goldman on freelove: they drank, smoked, had affairs...²⁹

Modotti and Weston became lovers sometime after Modotti posed for him in April 1921, but precisely how they met or when they began their romantic involvement is still conjecture.³⁰ The friendship that existed between Richey and Weston continued unabated until the former's untimely death in February 1922.

Weston aspired to be an artist, but was still "a very naive, provincial man, that hadn't seen the world, but...had a taste, an inclination, an intuitiveness..."³¹ With limited formal training, and no artistic education, Weston found aesthetic guidance in the person of Margrethe Mather, whom he met sometime after 1912. By all accounts, including his own, Mather was his first important artistic influence: she was exceptionally sophisticated and had been a practicing photographer before she met Weston.³² Mather and Weston were business partners for several years and worked together from about 1916 until 1923, when Weston moved with Modotti to Mexico.

The idea of moving to Mexico may well have been Richey's, and when he invited Weston to share a studio, Weston was eager to go.³³ It is impossible now to fully understand the arrangements the three had worked out. Weston believed that Modotti and Richey were never

officially married, and this would concur with Richey's anarchist beliefs which precluded state sanctioning of a union between two people.³⁴ Modotti never married any of the men she lived with during the rest of her life and when her name was dragged through the press as a loose woman who took lovers, she answered her detractors by referring specifically to the men she lived with as her companions. This suggests that she and Richey were in accord, and one might guess that when Richey was confronted with the deeply passionate romance between Modotti and Weston, or perhaps had his own affair outside their marriage, he got on with his life.

It was apparent at the time that Modotti was Mather's successor as far as offering Weston entrée into certain art cultures.³⁵ Modotti provided him with important contacts with the artists in Mexico and in Los Angeles, while Weston introduced Modotti to his friends, artists and photographers, whom she later turned to for encouragement. She met photographers Dorothea Lange and Imogen Cunningham, and Cunningham's husband, etcher Roi Partridge. One of Weston's closest friends at the time was photographer Johan Hagemeyer, a Dutchman with strong Anarchist leanings. She was drawn to him because of his collection of "good books and music."³⁶

In the early fall of 1921, Modotti made a trip to Mexico probably to shoot her second film, Riding with

Death, which premiered to luke-warm reviews.³⁷ Richey left for Mexico in late November 1921 and Modotti, already at work on her next film, I Can Explain, planned to go with Weston to meet up with her husband.³⁸ Richey went to Mexico "to paint the atmosphere and scenery of the country."³⁹ Upon arriving, Richey wrote exuberantly about Mexico, telling Weston it was an "artists' paradise." Despite his explicit criticism of U.S. intervention in Mexico, Richey recognizes, but does not condemn, the chasm between the haves and the have-nots in Mexico: he rhapsodizes about the picturesqueness of the poor and the laborers, noting: "This is the 'Land of Extremes.' Great wealth and great poverty move side by side but there is little that is devoid of its beauty."⁴⁰

In early February, Richey contracted small pox and died within a matter of days.⁴¹ Modotti and her mother-in-law, Rose Richey, left for Mexico to bury him. Modotti remained there for two months (February-March 1922) and made contacts that may well have influenced her decision to move there a year and a half later. She saw Gómez Robelo and through him met other notables, as Robo had within the first two weeks of his arrival.⁴² Gómez Robelo had been recently named chief of the Education Ministry's Department of Fine Arts by José Vasconcelos, Secretary of Education and architect of Mexico's vast

post-Revolutionary educational reforms, of which the mural movement was a vital part.⁴³ In that capacity, Gómez Robelo had agreed to mount an exhibition (as of December 1921, it was still unrealized), which materialized as a group show shortly after Robo's death. It included a familiar group: Robo, Weston, Jane Reece, Margrethe Mather, and Arnold Schröder.⁴⁴ Modotti was in Mexico when it opened and wrote to Weston that his work had sold well.⁴⁵

Modotti was devastated by Richey's death, which was followed in a few weeks by the death of her father. From Mexico, she wrote a friend: "Oh! How bitter I feel against life & nature! But I must defy it & smiling ask to it: What next? I must look at nature as an enemy not as a conqueror..."⁴⁶ Mexico was completely associated in her mind with her lost husband:

...I walk the streets & go places he used to go to [sic] - recalling his beloved figure & I torture myself imagining him at my side - or following me - or ahead of me (waiting for me some place --- But surely he is at my side, unseen - or better yet he is in me - I am filled with his wonderful love & influence. I am just part of him it seems!⁴⁷

Recalling their shared life, Modotti felt that it was impossible to return alone to their studio: "how can I ever live again there - where so many memories will haunt

me?"⁴⁸

By May, Modotti had returned to her home in Los Angeles. She arranged to have Richey's batiks and paintings exhibited at MacDowell Club of Allied Arts,⁴⁹ and offered them for sale. Characteristic of her practical nature, Modotti recognized that however dear they were to her, "They will do no good here or locked up in trunks."⁵⁰

Her relationship with Weston seems to have deepened into a long-term commitment, for by the fall of 1922, it appears they had already decided to move to Mexico, though it took them nearly a year to get their lives in order and leave.⁵¹ Weston got to know the Modotti family during this time, and he made a tender, evocative image called "Mother & Daughter" (Tina and "Mamacita") in which Tina's disembodied head hovers like a muse above Assunta, both widows dressed in black mourning clothes.⁵²

Modotti's decision to move to Mexico coincided with her decision to become a photographer. She looked back on this time in her life with gratefulness to Weston for offering her the opportunity to learn photography.⁵³ In April of 1923 Weston left her in charge of his studio, evidence that Modotti's familiarity with the workings of a photographic studio may have already developed beyond her purported childhood experience with Pietro Modotti.⁵⁴ Her interest in art, sparked perhaps by Richey, continued,

and she regularly visited art exhibits with friends in San Francisco and in Los Angeles.⁵⁵ But Mexico also held the promise of an exciting political as well as artistic environment. Modotti may have been radicalized in Mexico, but she left California with an already-heightened sense of political consciousness. Before she sailed from Los Angeles on July 30, 1923, Modotti had sent a poem to the Dial magazine, which was published in the May 1923 issue:

PLENIPOTENTIARY

By Tina Modotti de Richey

I like to swing from the sky
And drop down on Europe,
Bounce up again like a rubber ball,
Reach a hand down on the roof of the Kremlin,
Steal a tile
And throw it to the kaiser.
Be good;
I will divide the moon in three parts,
The biggest will be yours.
Don't eat it too fast.⁵⁶

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The figure of Modotti attracts writers precisely because she took part in many of the cultural and political highlights of the twentieth century. But to romanticize or idealize her life is to lose sight of her humanity, and to ignore the trauma and personal toll of her ordeals. Her life story is remarkable, as was her ability as a young woman to negotiate her way in public life in America during the first decades of the twentieth century. It has been argued that while the streets of the modern city gave rise to the public man -- the flâneur or

the étranger -- a female counterpart -- the flâneuse -- is a social, even linguistic impossibility. Simply put, a woman of the street is a streetwalker, a prostitute. The experience of modern life -- the fleeting sights, the anonymous encounter, purposeless wandering -- was a visual experience that was virtually unavailable to women.⁵⁷

In this light, Modotti's passage takes on a new dimension. She was transported from a small town in Northern Italy at the age of sixteen to the city of San Francisco. Her first contact with the public there may have been in the factory, a site that embodies the modern ideal of rationalization. As a female worker in a male run and owned institution, Modotti both defied and enacted two seemingly contradictory positions. For while the increasing segregation of men and women into public and private spheres was one of the by-products of the rise of a middle-class consumer society, this same society depended upon the labor of the working class, including working class women, to supply them with goods and services.

Modotti quit the factory to work for herself as a modiste, as an entrepreneur. This marks the beginning of her move to the social rank of artist, a status that put her outside the social structure imposed by the Colony. Shortly thereafter, she returned to the public by way of the stage, as an actress in the Italian theater of North

Beach. She placed herself in the arena of the art world, as Richey had when he adopted the identity of bohemian as a means to escape his rural origins. The culture of bohemia, to a certain degree, offered Modotti a freedom of movement and liberty of thought, a life with fewer constraints and less restrictions, than a typical working or lower-middle class woman could expect.⁵⁸ The course from actress, to artists' model and later to film star can be seen in the context of Modotti's attempt to escape the confines of social regulations while still maintaining a degree of honor.

Despite her seeming indifference to social convention, Modotti was keenly aware of appropriate female decorum, choosing to determine her own fate as well as she could. Modotti speaks to the circumscription of her freedom of movement in a letter from 1922, written from Mexico City after Richey's death:

Sanborn's! An American joint! Is it not terrible that here in this lovely & picturesque country I should find myself still clinging to America? Is it habit? Or a matter of choice? Neither! But Sanborn's being American is about the only place where ladies can go alone & Roy [Rosen] I just had to be alone to-day.⁵⁹

She was completely alone now and realized her livelihood depended solely upon herself. Thus, Modotti's

decision to become a photographer should be seen first as a means to support herself. With her husband and father recently dead, her film opportunities dwindling, she followed the example of her uncle Pietro and her father before her, and became a professional photographer. From 1923 until 1930, Modotti earned a good living from the trade and thereby gave herself economic independence.

Yet Modotti's self-determination and resolve have been undermined in accounts of her that cast her as a *femme fatale*, a characterization that runs through much of the literature on her. The figure is a loaded one, full of ambiguities and one of the most persistent incarnations in the modern era. Mary Ann Doane articulates some of the connotations and apparent contradictions inherent in the term, perceptively noting that the *femme fatale*'s "...most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be." Doane adds that "she harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable," and "thus transform[s] the threat of the women into a secret, something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered..."⁶⁰

The way Modotti figures and is figured in Weston's life turns around the representation of her as a *femme fatale*, a position that serves to justify Weston's behavior, which might otherwise be censured by society. Patently evident throughout his letters and evidenced even

in his highly edited Daybooks, is Weston's deep contempt for women. Although his misogyny is rarely commented upon,⁶¹ Weston's cynicism toward women, whatever its emotional or psychological source, was overtly manifest.⁶²

But why cast Modotti as a femme fatale, specifically, as Weston's femme fatale?⁶³ Why is it so difficult to see her as a committed artist and talented photographer? Underlying the perception of Modotti as femme fatale are her professional careers, as an actress and model, activities in which women are re-represented and in which spectatorship is the principle means of access to them. The fascination Weston, and later, historians of Weston and of photography, had for her is complicated by her association with images of her. For example, when looking over Richey's drawings for Satiros y Amores, it is apparent that Modotti posed for some of the illustrations: three to five of the sixteen drawings that face the poems give this impression.⁶⁴ In light of her success as an artist's model, and of her presumed availability to her husband, this is not surprising nor even worth mention, were it not for the fact that the drawings, especially "Tentación," have been interpreted as reflections of Richey's feelings toward his wife and her role in his life as temptress, a femme fatale.⁶⁵ This one-to-one correspondence between Modotti the person and the subject

of the drawing implies there is a single interpretation of the image, and the assumption that meanings in images are transparent, rather than culturally constructed.⁶⁶

Modotti's photographic career has been mediated by representations of her by chroniclers of Weston, but also by representations of her in Weston's photographs. With a few notable exceptions, Weston only took nude photographs of Modotti. These images help formulate and perpetuate a mythology of Modotti's sexuality, as alluring but threatening, which diminishes our ability to see her as a professional photographer. They perpetuate and maintain an ideology of the sexually available model. This thoroughly passive role, according to convention, nullifies Modotti's capacity for active creation.

Whether or not Modotti cultivated a persona of the "femme fatal" is not the question here, but rather, to understand that when such a role is excised from descriptions of her, Modotti's life before Mexico appears rich with cultural sources and fertile ground for understanding the formative years of her artistic life. In Mexico, she takes up the camera, using this tool to produce some of the most perceptive and representative photographs of the modernist era.

1. See compilation of personnel at various Bay Area independent film companies in Bell, The Golden Gate and the Silver Screen, 166-167. The two most important, the Essanay Studio (active between 1907 and 1916) and the California Motion Pictures Corporation (active between 1914 and 1918), recruited from theaters, vaudeville houses and cabarets in San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento and Oakland. Bell, 77-78, and 172, footnote 21.

2. The Richey household lived at 1407 11th Street. By 1921, they had moved to 313 S. Lake Street. Crocker-Langley City Directory: Los Angeles, 1920-1923; 1920 census record, Los Angeles Township, CA.

3. Modotti cites actress as her "trade, profession or particular type of work done," and La Moderna Dramatica Co. as her place of employment (1920 census record, Los Angeles Township, CA; Hooks, Tina Modotti, 28-29). In 1920 Modotti's whole family (with the exception of her sister Valentina) had emigrated from Italy. Giuseppe Modotti moved from 1952 Taylor Street around the corner to 901 Union in 1919, in anticipation of his wife, two sons and one other daughter joining him. 1920 census record, San Francisco County, CA.

4. Duell, "Textiles and Interior Decoration Department: A Note on Batik," 19. Duell explains the history and process of batiks. By 1928, batik was popular enough to warrant an exhibition that included five artists who showed their work at the Los Angeles Museum's Fourth Annual Exhibition of Arts and Crafts. The artists featured were: Victoria Avakian, Pauline Blank, Mildred Hartzig, Grace Haynes, and Marie T. Scott. Notice of this show is included in the Scrapbook dated January 1928 through July 1929, in the archives of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

5. Estavan, The Italian Theatre in San Francisco, 57.

6. Letter from Tina Modotti to Betty [Brandner], undated, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. Modotti writes about her handmade dolls that she calles "nuns of perpetual adoration."

7. Reece had an exhibition at the Los Angeles Public Library that was reviewed Alhambra (November 18, 1919), n.p. She was also included in Camera Pictorialists Salon and an show at the Exposition Park Art Gallery. (Chambers, Jane Reece: A Photographer's View of the Artist, 161-173.) Reece dated her photograph of Modotti 1919.

8. Reproduced in Constantine, Fragile Life, 31. A print exists in the Dayton Art Institute, acquisition no. 52.12.129.

9. There are six known images from this series: five are at Dayton Art Institute: "Romance/On San Gabriel Steps: 52.19.134; "The Tryst: no accession number; plus three others, without accession numbers. The sixth, published in the first edition of Fragile Life, 34, is in the Modotti Archive, Special Collections, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, CA.

10. Reece photographed the Shakespearean actor Frederick Warde during her trip to Los Angeles. At the time he was celebrating his fiftieth year on the stage with a special appearance as Father Junipero Serra in the annual San Gabriel performance of The Mission Play. The play opened February 10, 1919 and ran for some months. Although Modotti's name is not mentioned in the 1919 program, her costume in Madame de Richey strongly suggests that she was one of the ten to twenty dancing "Spanish girls" the pageant called for. Parenthetically, Tyrone Power made his stage debut in the 1921 production. See Chambers, 142-146; Frederick Warde, Fifty Years of Make Believe, New York: The International Press Syndicate, 1920; The Mission Play, 1919 performance program notes, San Gabriel Historical Association Archives; and miscellaneous clippings in the Robinson Locke Collection, envelope 2490, a photograph of The Mission Play in MWEZ + n.c. 8434, and a 1915 playbill for The Mission Play in MWEZ + n.c. 20,242, all at New York Public Library, Performing Arts Research Center at Lincoln Center, Theater Division.

11. Now in the Dayton Art Institute, acquisition number 52.12.131.

12. Edward Fitzgerald's mid-nineteenth century translations of Omar Khayyám Rubáiyát introduced the West to the eleventh century Persian poet's over 1,000 epigrammatic stanzas expressing hedonistic philosophy. Reece never considered this picture part of a series. Fifteen years earlier, Bay Area photographer Adelaide Hanscom established her reputation as an innovative pictorialist with her illustrations for a 1905 version of The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. Dimitri Shipounoff, "From Kitsch to Culture," Berkeley Monthly (October 1979), 17.

13. Richey sat for Reece individually in a photograph she titled Son of Man (Dayton Art Institute, acquisition number 52.12.132). With his eyes lowered, his aquiline nose and wavy hair emerging from the tenebrous background, Reece posed him to represent the enigmatic title which

refers, perhaps, to process of the soul's purification as it passes from the "natural" or worldly realm to the spiritual.

14. The July 3, 1920 issue of Motion Picture News, a Hollywood trade magazine, carried a mention that the Dial Film Company's production of The Tiger's Coat, starring, among others, Tina Modotti, was "well underway." "'The Tiger's Coat' is Well Under Way," Motion Picture News, (July 3, 1920), 264. The movie was being filmed at the Brunton Studios in Los Angeles and was mentioned regularly in trade magazines during the next few months. Motion Picture News (August 14, 1920), (October 16, 1920), (November 13, 1920), and (December 18, 1920); Moving Picture World (July 3, 1920), (October 30, 1920); Variety (December 30, 1920). Two other articles, dated November 12, 1920 and December 25, 1920 (source unidentified) are in files at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA.

15. For information about the cast, directors, citations in the trade magazines, as well as a summary of the plot, see The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures in the United States (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1971): Volume 1, 933; Volume II, 654 and 372, respectively. To date, only The Tiger's Coat has been found in film form: Riding with Death exists as a script with the title Pony Tracks, and I Can Explain has vanished. A print of The Tiger's Coat is available through the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The script for Riding with Death is contained in the Twentieth Century Fox Archive, Collection 010, folder #148.1, at the Theater Arts Library, UCLA.

16. See Amy Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography (Tucson, AZ: Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona and the Arizona Board of Regents, 1992): 117/1924, note 1.

17. Ricardo Gómez Robelo, Satiros y Amores. Illustrations by Roubaix de L'Abrie Richey. Los Angeles, 1920. Facsimile reprint: With introduction by Fernando Tola de Habich, Tlahuapan, Puebla, Mexico: Premia Editora S.A., libros del bicho volume 60, 1984.

18. Modotti-Richey, Book of Robo, 12.

19. See Gale's (October 1918) through (January/February 1921); Schmitt, Communism in Mexico: A Study in Political Frustration (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965): 4.

20. For example, "Russia, A Socialist Fatherland" by Nikolai Lenin, translated from Pravda, the official organ of the Bolsheviks, appeared in the December 1918 issue of Gale's, 2. Max Eastman, editor of The Liberator, advertized in Gale's, as did the editors of the two radical "Negro" publications of the day, The Crusader and The Messenger.

21. Schmitt dates the Congress August 25 through September 4, 1919 (Schmitt, Communism in Mexico, 5).

22. See Schmitt, Communism in Mexico, 3-7. The somewhat imperialist nature of the founding of the PCM, i.e. that fact that it was established, and for some years run, by foreigners, is a point not lost on subsequent members of the Party.

23. The following discussion about the oil controversy is drawn from Lesta Van Der Wert Turchen, "The Oil Expropriation Controversy, 1917-1942, In United States-Mexican Relations." Doctoral Dissertation, Purdue University, 1972): Chapters I - III, passim. He provides a concise history of subsoil rights in Mexico and a detailed but lucid account of the diplomatic history between Mexico and the United States.

24. Letter from Ricardo Gómez Robelo to Edward Weston, Weston Archive, CCP. This correspondence opens the possibility that Gómez Robelo may have introduced the Richey's and Weston.

25. Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, April 18 1921, Edward Weston Archive.

26. Peter and Rose Krasnow, interview by Harry Lawton.

27. Naef, "Edward Weston: The Home Spirit and Beyond," 12

28. In Los Angeles, Weston apprenticed in two commercial photography studios: in 1908, he worked with George Steckel for a short time, and later, for A. Louis Mojonier until 1911. Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 2; Maddow, Edward Weston, 38).

29. DBII, 209 (March 17, 1931).

30. In a letter to his friend Johan Hagemeyer, Weston writes that he is quite pleased with some photographs he has made "of one Tina de Richey - a lovely Italian girl..." In the same letter he mentions photographing Gómez Robelo (thus the supposition that he supplied the introduction). Weston tells Hagemeyer: "Life has been

very full for me--perhaps too full for my good--I not only have done some of the best things yet--but also have had an exquisite affair..." (Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, April 18 1921, Edward Weston Archive, CCP). The conjecture that the affair began as early as April 1921 is based on slim, if not faulty evidence. A fragment of a passionate and unreserved love letter from Modotti to Weston has been dated April 21, 1921, but its accuracy is uncertain. The fragment is a transcription of a transcription: Weston copied a letter from Modotti into his Daybooks, and someone, possibly Nancy Newhall, typed the Daybook entry onto another piece of paper. Neither the original letter from Modotti, nor the original Daybook entry still exist. (Fragment in Edward Weston Archive, CCP). Amy Rule as suggested that the transcription was made by Nancy Newhall. (Letter from Amy Rule to author, 1992).

31. Peter Krasnow, interview with Harry Lawton. Krasnow met Weston in 1922, shortly after Weston met Modotti. Krasnow's personal papers, collection of Aimee Brown Price, New York, NY.

32. Weston gives Mather credit for being "the first important person in my life," in 1925 (DBI, 145). Later he editorializes his reminiscence of Mather, suggesting that it was he who gave more to her (Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 4). Among artists and photographers who concurred with this opinion were Imogen Cunningham (Justema, "Margaret: A Memoir," 9); Roy Rosen (Interview Harry Lawton); Peter Krasnow (Interview of Peter Krasnow by Harry Lawton). Nancy Newhall writes that Weston "...fell in love with art and Margrethe Mather at the same time, and for some eight years could not separate them. (Introduction to DB, xvii).

Information about Mather is scarce in spite of the influence she had on Weston. One notable exception is an issue of the CCP's Archive from 1979 devoted to Mather.

33. Letter from Edward Weston to Flora Weston, September 1, 1923, cited in Stark [Rule], Archive, 17.

34. In a note dated 1944, Nancy Newhall wrote: "Tina's first husband was Roubaiz [sic] de Richéy, (she was never actually married to him but that is confidential)" and in another, dated 1965 -- [Tina]...married Roubaix de Richez [sic]. (Weston said they were never actually married.)" A copy of these notes, dated July 25, 1944 and August 30, 1965, are in the Tina Modotti Artist File, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Modotti was naturalized in 1918 (see Chapter III, note 31) but whether or not this occurred by dint of a state-sanctioned marriage or she

chose to do so independently has yet to be determined.

35. Roy Rosen, interview with Harry Lawton.

36. Letter from Tina de Richey to Johan Hagemeyer, August 21, 1921, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

37. Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, undated, Edward Weston Archive, CCP; Film Daily Sunday, (November 13, 1921), 13 and Variety (December 16, 1921).

38. Edward Weston to Flora Weston, February 22, 1924, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. Cited in Stark [Rule], Archive, 17.

39. Lyric West 1/11 (March 1922), 27.

40. Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey to Edward Weston, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

41. Modotti states that Robo died in Mexico in February 9, 1922. (Modotti-Richey, The Book of Robo, 13.) Conger incorrectly give his death date as 1923. (Conger, "Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," 67.) Precisely what Richey died of is also unknown. His contemporaries report the cause of death was smallpox (Borough, "Art, Love and Death," 22; Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, February 13, 1922, Edward Weston Archive, CCP), but two later writers, without giving sources, maintain he died of tuberculosis (Vestel, "Tina's Trajectory," 6; Bertram Wolfe, The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera. New York: Stein & Day, 1963: 194) while another, that he died of cholera (Ben Maddow, Edward Weston. Boston: New York Graphic Society, An Aperture Book, [1978], 47).

42. Letter from Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey to Edward Weston, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

43. Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey to Edward Weston, Edward Weston Archive, CCP; and Pacheco, "Inventario: Ricardo Gómez Robelo," 52.

44. Rafael Vera de Córdoba, "El Arte Moderno en México," El Universal Ilustrado (October 14, 1926): 42, 66. Translated and reprinted as "Art in Mexico," The Art Digest. (December 15, 1926): 10.

45. Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, April 6, 1922, in Weston-Hagemeyer Archive, CCP. Cited in Stark [Rule], Archive, 12.

46. Ibid.

47. Letter from Tina Modotti, Sanborn's, Mexico City, to Roy Rosen, California [Los Angeles], Sunday, March [19?], 1922. Xerox copy courtesy of Lawrence Jasud, Memphis, TN.

48. Ibid.

49. Rueben W. Borough, "Art, Love and Death: Widow Must Sell Batiks," L.A. Record. (May 1922): 22. Weston may have helped with the arrangements since he had had an exhibition of his work there from March 19-April 14. Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, April 6, 1922, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

50. Ibid.

51. DBI, 8. Weston writes that his brother-in-law sent him money to visit sister in Ohio "prior to sailing for Mexico."

52. Reproduced in Constantine, Fragile Life, 18.

53. Stark [Rule], Archive, 55 (c. January 8, 1928).

54. Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, April 9, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. Cited in Stark [Rule], Archive, 12, 13, note 18. Maddow notes that Modotti planned to open a photography business in California, but gives no additional evidence. Maddow, Edward Weston, 48.

55. In one letter she mentions going to Johan Hagemeyer's photography exhibit with a friend, Mrs. Brady. Letter from Modotti to Johan Hagemeyer, c. October 1922, Johan Hagemeyer Archive, CCP. In another, she writes: I spent Sat. night at Miriam's - & most part of yesterday - (Sunday) Mr. Kaufmann also came up there - we had lunch together then went to Exposition Park to see an international exhibit of water-colours." Letter from Tina Modotti to Betty Brandner, undated, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

56. Dial 74 (May 1923), 474.

57. Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity," Theory, Culture & Society 2, no 3 (1985): 45; Giuliana Bruno, Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Norari. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1993): 50. George Sand, when she dressed in drag, was able to see Paris, but her experience was the exception to the rule, and she travelled as a flâneur, not as flâneuse.

58. See Nina Miller's insightful discussion of the bohemian woman. "The Bonds of Free Love: Construction the Female Bohemian Self," Genders 11 (Fall 1991): 37-57. Miller summarizes the conflict between feminism and art: "Having constructed the social field in terms of a primary dichotomy between artistic idealism and bourgeois materialism, [Greenwich] Village discourse implicitly articulated the issue of gender relations within this model. On the one hand, feminism as an ostensibly positive value, belong to art and the Village, while antifeminism fell to the reactionary mainstream. On the other hand, bohemian individualism implicitly took as its subject the Romantic artist, a paradigm of experience effectively and traditionally male in its privileging of transcendence over materiality. In practice, this meant that the obligations associated with heterosexual domestic arrangements and the constraints they imposed on the pursuit of art could be relegated to the degraded bourgeois world, precisely because the were material concerns." (40-41)

59. Letter from Modotti, Mexico City, to Roy Rosen, California [Los Angeles], Sunday, March [19], 1922. Xerox copy courtesy of Lawrence Jasud, Memphis, TN. Roy Rosen was a photographer, and a friend of Margrethe Mather and Weston. His papers are held in the Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library, Albuquerque, NM.

60. Doane, Femmes Fatales, 1.

61. It is ironic that Conger refers to Richey as "somewhat of a misogynist," basing her conclusion on his drawing and the poetry, prose and aphorisms in The Book of Robo. Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 8.

62. Figuring Modotti as femme fatale effectively cancels out the possibilities of close friendships with women, which, in fact, seem to have been especially warm and generous, supportive and sympathetic, contrary to previous assertions that she "...did not particularly enjoy the companionship of women." (Conger, "Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," 64). In fact, the opposite is true: evidence of Modotti's friendships with women at this time is difficult to produce, but this list comes from looking over letters written before she went to Mexico, and from memoirs and memories of her circle of friends. In California, she writes to and about many women friends, among them Betty Brandner, Miriam Lerner, a Mrs. Brady, and Marie Blanche D'Harcourt.

63. As late as 1993, Conger introduces Modotti in a biographical text on Weston as a "femme fatale and an actress." Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 8.

64. Richey produced sixteen drawings, plus a portrait of Gómez Robelo, an end drawing and the cover illustration.

65. For example, Conger argues that "Tentación" (Temptation), demonstrates Richey "perception" of Modotti. Conger "Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," 67.

66. Feminist critics have demonstrated that representation in general, and "images of women" in particular, do not, in fact cannot, correspond to reality. For ground-breaking discussions of the problematic notion of the term "images of women," See Griselda Pollock, "What's wrong with images of women?" Screen Education, no. 24 (Autumn 1977); Elizabeth Cowie, "Woman as Sign," originally in m/f, 1 (1978), anthologized in Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie, eds., The Woman in Question "m/f" (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, An October Book, 1990): 117-133.

CHAPTER V

When Modotti arrived in Mexico in August 1923, she came not as a tourist, but intending to live and work there permanently, and she came with a good deal of knowledge about her newly adopted country (her third one, so far). Reading Gale's (and, one may suppose, other radical journals that circulated in California) she gleaned information about the vicissitudes of Mexican politics. Modotti was also involved in the Mexican community of Los Angeles, where her reputation as an actress preceded -- by eight months -- the opening of her first film, A Tiger's Coat. A local Spanish-language paper, El Herald de Mexico, featured an article on Modotti's life and career in a piece entitled "A Star of the Cinema who Loves and Knows Mexico."¹ Moreover, before she left California, Modotti established friendships with several Mexicans whom she met again during her years in Mexico.²

Weston's reasons for going to Mexico appear somewhat more ambivalent than Modotti's. Weston, too, had met a number of Mexicans in Los Angeles, and was encouraged by the warm reception his photographs received in Mexico. On the one hand, he brandished professional necessity to justify leaving his wife and children, waving his artistic development as the ostensible reason for this trip. On

the other hand, immediately after the particulars of finding a suitable residence were resolved,³ Modotti and Weston set about getting their darkroom furnished and began seeking clients. Before the end of September, they were in business and by early October, they had several sittings pending.⁴ It is ironic that Weston aimed to earn money in Mexico by making society portraiture, the very source of income that tormented him in California.⁵ Though it has been argued that in Mexico, Weston "was finally dedicating himself to self-expression,"⁶ his Daybooks and letters are strewn with anxieties related to the portraiture that supported this Mexican household.⁷

Not surprisingly, Weston found the whims and eccentricities of his sitters in Mexico as offensive as those he'd left behind. And if he came believing that Mexico held the promise of the sustained experience of untarnished discriminating culture, he was disillusioned to find that "the middle-class Mexican has no better taste than the middle-class American." With a condescension that revealed his naivete he concluded that "middle-class minds and aspirations are the same everywhere."⁸

Moreover, Weston's anticipation of adventure with Modotti must have been transparent to all who knew him. He relished the lack of prudishness and temperance, and delighted that "one can sip a glass of wine without endangering one's life and freedom and no one questions

when we register [at a hotel] as Edward Weston and Tina Richey."⁹ Still, he felt compelled to write to his family:

a fine friendship exists between Tina and myself--nothing else---however-I am not so hypocritical as to say I shall not "fall in love" with some dark-skinned Señorita!.¹⁰

Relocating to Mexico with Modotti had many practical aspects -- Weston was not the most practical man¹¹ -- and from the start, Modotti proved extremely useful to him: "[Tina] is invaluable--I could do nothing alone," Weston acknowledged.¹² Modotti managed the household, which consisted of Weston, his eldest son Chandler, then just thirteen, and Llewellyn Bixby Smith, (step-son of Weston's friend, Paul Jordan Smith, who was taking photography lessons from Weston).¹³ Modotti's previous visit enabled Weston to anticipate some of the logistical and technical difficulties that lay ahead. Modotti's command of the language was invaluable: she was able to bargain on their behalf for goods and services, and was not merely a translator but acted the part of ambassador for Weston. With remarkable alacrity, she provided introductions to the small but active artistic circle that he treasured during his few years there. Within weeks of arriving in Mexico Modotti brought Weston to meet Diego

Rivera and see his latest murals (although Weston regretted that he was unable to converse easily with Rivera because he did not speak Spanish).¹⁴ Shortly after their arrival, Weston himself credits Modotti with securing an exhibit of his work, and she seems to have agreed to sit in the gallery, either as receptionist or perhaps salesperson.¹⁵

That fact that Modotti was also beautiful and charming was immensely helpful, although Weston harbored mixed feelings about this blessing; for while her presence afforded him advantages he might not otherwise have enjoyed, he tended toward jealousy, whether or not Modotti reciprocated the admiration of other men.¹⁶

Hardly irrelevant (though rarely mentioned) is the contractual nature of the understanding Modotti and Weston had. One of the motivating forces behind Modotti's move to Mexico was to learn photography from Weston, and while there, she was Weston's darkroom assistant. She saw this an opportunity to learn a trade that would enable her to earn a living, but she was also aware that Weston set standards far above the norm. Weston spelled out the contract they agreed upon: "[Tina] has so far gotten room and board from this proposition - and a lot of responsibility - worry and hard work - but she prefers to take a chance on the future - if she left - I would fail and she would lose too - she wants to learn photography

and is doing well -- she has no wish to return to the stage and photography would make her to some extent independent."¹⁷ And despite Weston's disingenuous reassurances to his wife, Modotti and he were more than just friends, but at this point, friendship, romance, and mutual respect were strong. Modotti, however, thought of herself as a free agent; as a partner, but nevertheless, as an individual. She had her own room in their homes and she had an active role in the daily business decisions, taking her responsibility for the financial well-being of the group quite seriously.¹⁸

Despite the complex reasons Modotti and Weston went to Mexico, Weston's decision to move to Mexico is invariably recounted as a symbolic choice between two women. His wife, Flora Chandler Weston, represents bourgeois convention, an obstacle in Weston's artistic destiny, cast off without recrimination. Modotti, his "Latin" lover, embodies an exotic alternative: her sexuality is inseparable from the idea of "primitivized Mexico." The telling of this story inevitably recalls Paul Gauguin's trajectory, which has served as a model for (male) avant-garde artists. Weston's trip to Mexico invokes Gauguin's flight from Paris (and his marriage), to Brittany and then to Tahiti where he set up a new household with a "native" woman.

In a photograph Weston took of Modotti in the

courtyard of their first home in Mexico, he renders her as a "native:" she sits in a window behind an iron grill in a pose and costume that illustrate exactly Weston's first impressions of Mexico: "Often the barred windows framed lovely black-gowned señoritas..."¹⁹ This image hovers between portraiture and the picturesque. Weston pictures a Latin woman, Italian or Mexican it makes no difference, reminding the viewer of Modotti's Italian, working-class background, and underscoring her status as Other, as model rather than artist.

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Tina Modotti took her first photograph in Mexico during late 1923 or the spring of 1924. Her earliest dated image is a portrait of Weston from February 1924 and is one of four photographs (two pairs) of Weston with his camera. [Figure 1] The staginess of Weston's poses in these images suggests they were a collaborative effort between two photographers, a collaboration that makes itself apparent in a number of other photographs as well. This funny, self-conscious suite depicts performances by the "master" photographer for his "student." The photographs embody Weston's lessons and technical guidelines that Modotti adopted for much of her work. Both photographers used large-format cameras: Modotti took her earliest photographs with a 4 by 5" Corona, a stationary view camera that required a tripod. A few

years later, during a trip to San Francisco, she shopped for a 3 1/4 by 4 1/4" Graflex, a hand-held, single-lens reflex camera that freed her from the tyranny of the tripod, which she felt restrained her. After 1926, she used both: she found the precision of the Corona was ideal for formal portraiture and for documenting murals, and the Graflex gave her more flexibility and allowed for more spontaneous images. Nevertheless, like Weston, Modotti subscribed to the all-importance of composing an image on ground glass and to rigorous formal construction, evident in much of her work.²⁰

Modotti's printing technique matched Weston's, and for the most part, she used a contact method, placing a negative directly on sensitized paper and exposing it to light. In Mexico, she used sunlight; later in Germany, it became immediately apparent to her that Berlin lacked sufficient natural light, and she found it was impossible to print without an enlarger.²¹ In part, the practice of contact printing was not a choice but a necessity for Modotti: the platinum paper she (and Weston) preferred was less light sensitive (the emulsion was slower) than gelatin silver and it required ultra-violet light waves, those found in the sunlight.

It is axiomatic in contact printing that the size of the negative determines the size of the final image. To overcome this limitation, both photographers made

interpositives to the size they required, and then used the contact printing method to make an enlarged negative. For this procedure, they used an enlarger, and it explains how photographs of all sizes were made from the original 4 by 5" and 3 1/4 by 4 1/4" negatives.²²

Two other observations about Modotti's early work are in order. Modotti never experimented with pictorialist imagery although she was familiar with it. Weston had been among the original members of the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles who formed their association in 1914. By 1923, he had abandoned its soft-focused and literary imagery in favor of a more advanced idiom of sharp-edged, "straight" photography.²³ Interestingly however, among the first photographs that Weston took of Modotti is White Iris from 1921. Impressionistic in mood and pictorialist in conception, its poetic message is achieved through the blurred, carefully composed image of a Modotti's bare breast with a flower, a conventional linking of woman with nature. At the same time, Weston had begun experimenting with images that were more abstract and emphasized the tonal qualities of the photographs. This is true especially of his series of figures in an attic, where the angles and spare emptiness are what generate interest. But the soft focus renders them heavily atmospheric, especially in contrast to the subjects Modotti focused on that bear a similarity to

these.²⁴

A second point with regard to the importance of Modotti's life in California should be made. Modotti's previous professions affected her photographic style. Between 1918 and 1923, Modotti was a successful stage and film actress, and modeled for painters, illustrators, print makers, and most importantly, photographers. Working on the other side of the camera -- both in moving and still pictures -- would have given Modotti invaluable insight: not only would she have been introduced to technical aspects of taking pictures, but quite probably this experience stimulated her to think about aesthetic issues such as composition and tonality. It is not so unbelievable that an actress and model might resolve to become a photographer as a calculated decision to seize control of the gaze.

From the start, Modotti set to work on discovering the physical limitations and artistic possibilities of the camera. Among her earliest photographs are several that appear to be exercises in tonal composition and that explore the abstracting property of the camera angle. Two interior shots, Staircase [Figure 2] and Open Doors [Figure 3], both probably dating from 1925, are carefully constructed out a series of angles with varying gradations of light. In Open Doors, a succession of whites from matt grey of the bare wall to the brilliance of the sun-

bleached panel on the farther most door lead the eye through the spaces depicted. In the case of Staircase, the spiral effect suggestive of a nautilus, is flattened by the high point of view. Stepping outdoors, Modotti made Laundry (1924-1926) [Figure 4] and Tree and Shadows (1924) [Figure 5]. Intent on studying tonal variation as a function of transparency or shadow, their lack of narrative links them to the modernist strategy of emphasizing the objectivity of photography. At the same time, they display Modotti's maturing photographic competence and her interest in abstracted patterns.

Without Modotti's written first-hand reactions to Mexico, one reads between the lines of Weston's Daybooks and turns to her photographs for evidence of her life in Mexico. The Daybooks record their many activities: meetings and parties, discussions and debates, and above all, the artists and patrons, writers and archaeologists, that populated their social life. Before the year was out, they had met (or become reacquainted with) most of the friends whom they saw regularly over the next few years, among them the painters Dr. Atl and Nahui Olín, Diego Rivera and his wife Guadalupe Marín, Ricardo Gómez Robelo, Alberto Best Maugard, painter Xavier Guerrero and his sister Elisa, painter Rafael and Monna Sala, and French expatriate painter Jean Charlot.

During the first few months, the Modotti-Weston

household went out touring the city and its environs, sometimes exploring as a foursome, and sometimes with friends as guides. They visited the Floating Gardens of Xochimilco just south of Mexico City, where ancient Aztecs had raised vegetables and flowers, but which were now islands connected by canals (and reminded Modotti of Venice); they saw colonial churches El Convento de Churubusco and Convento de la Merced; and they attended a Sunday bullfight at the Plaza de Toros, finding seats in the bleachers -- the cheapest ones -- and contending with the blazing sun.²⁵

Often the outings were occasions for photographing, and Interior of Church was taken during a trip to Tepotzotlán in April during Semana Santo -- Holy Week -- of 1924. Modotti and Weston, together with a group of friends, spent a productive week photographing and exploring Tepotzotlán, a town lying twenty-five miles northwest of Mexico City. Through the auspices of Jorge Encisco, curator of the National Museum, the group was given the "'key'... and permission to sleep and live in the convent."²⁶ The central square is dominated by a church built by Jesuit missionaries in the 1580s, one of the best examples of High Baroque Churrigueresque style. In contrast to the ornate facade, the convent which adjoins the church is austere and plain. At some point later that year, Modotti returned to the convent and took

a series of photographs that demonstrated her interest in architectural subjects. The empty courtyards and passageways in Convent at Tepotzotlán (Stairs through Arches) and Convent at Tepotzotlán (Arch, Wall, Fountain) (1924) [Figure 6] with their unexpected sources of light and their sculptural thresholds, provide Modotti with the opportunity to concentrate on purely formal compositions. In one, a succession of arches leads the eye to a staircase that ascends to darkness; each opening in the wall is a plane that moves back in space, diminishing, rather than expanding, the vista. Despite the intensely systematic design, the photographs have a mysterious allure that draws the viewer in: one imagines the previous inhabitants of the convent passing silently through the doors and across the patios, moving from shadowed obscurity to dazzling sunlight and back to shade. Charlot's insightful remarks on these photographs was the prediction that these "whitewashed adobe walls will be rediscovered in time as precursors of the minimalists."²⁷

As much as the awe-inspiring Pre-Columbian sites and the elaborate ecclesiastic and government buildings constructed during Spanish control of Mexico interested Modotti, the contemporary spectacles and festivals with roots in both cultures held Modotti's real interest. Here was one of the differences that came between Modotti and

Weston. For while the choreographed brutality of the bullfight fascinated Weston throughout his sojourn in Mexico, news of De la Huerta's violent uprising in late 1923 in the far reaches of the country gave Weston pause. The Daybooks chronicle Weston's growing wariness, a discomfort tinged with distaste, as the violence intruded on his arcadian existence. He seemed unable to reconcile himself to the Mexico of the present: "All the splendor of Mexico, aside of course, from nature, lies in its past; the present here is an imposed artificiality, lacking the crude and chaotic but vital and naturally functioning growth of the big American cities."²⁸

Modotti, on the other hand, embraced street life and everyday work. Along with her studies in light, early on her photographs reflect and record the attention she turned toward Mexican life. She and Weston seem to have experienced two different countries; they quite literally, saw Mexico through two different lenses. When the Gran Circo Ruso came to town, Modotti and Weston each photographed under the luminous circus tent with markedly different results.²⁹ Weston's response was intellectual (this despite his strong emotional reaction to the circus³⁰). He avoids all social content, creating what he called an "experiment in abstract design" where space is ambiguous and scale unclear. In contrast Modotti's Circus Tent [Figure 7] acknowledges the dynamism of the

space as well as a social element, and she grounds the image by including four patrons.

Circus Tent is one of a very few images by Modotti in which she depicts Mexicans at leisure: another is her Exterior of Pulquería from around 1926, which depicts a bar where pulque, a popular intoxicant made from fermented juice of the agave or maguey plant, was served. Pulque was considered sacred by the Aztecs and figures prominently in their mythology.³¹ In Modotti's day pulquerías were frequented, for the most part, by the working-classes. Modotti photographed Exterior of Pulquería [Figure 8] from a strictly frontal view, the same pulquería Weston photographed.³² Both photographers, especially Weston, delighted in the enigmatic murals that frequently beautified the walls of pulquerías, and enticed patrons to these drinking establishments.

At the same time Modotti was producing architectural studies, exploring Mexican themes, and starting to take portraits, she embarked on a series of photographs of plant forms.³³ Indeed, photographic still life suited Modotti. Her use of a large-format camera imposed certain restrictions on her mobility: it was simply impractical to take "snap-shots" with such an unwieldy machine. Historically, artists have used still-life painting (which embraces the sub-genre of flower painting) and still-life

photography to study formal issues--light, pattern, composition, and tone. The genre is also a vehicle for conveying symbolic messages in which ordinary things take on a meaning beyond their morphology. Modotti used both strategies in her photographs: she combined demanding formal considerations while seeking objects from her everyday world to use as metaphors of abstract ideas.

Modotti began each image with a careful selection of an object or two she wished to photograph; her pictures reveal a measured deliberation about how close in to bring her camera and what degree of intimacy or distance she wanted to convey. Her pictures tell of studied framing on the ground glass of her camera, and equally studied cropping in the darkroom. Modotti chose objects with a wealth of interpretations and connotations, in contrast to Weston who professed his images had no meaning beyond their formal issues. "The camera should be used for a recording of life, for rendering the very substance and quintessence of the thing itself, whether it be polished steel or palpitating flesh," Weston wrote in March 1924.³⁴ If his photographs had other meanings, Weston purported not to care.

Some of Modotti's earliest photographs, Flor de Manita [Figure 9] and Geranium [Figure 10] appear at first unlikely candidates for a symbolic undertaking. They are plain, homely flowers, contrasting sharply with the

subject of Imogen Cunningham's photographs made a few years later.³⁵ Where Cunningham chose flawless specimens, Modotti found her subject precisely in the imperfection and individuality of each flower. She does not offer them as in any way exceptional, but rather, by disregarding conventional depictions of flowers she suggests their presence in her life and the lives of Mexicans.

At times, the flowers and plants Modotti pictures have an emotional pull, stirring an empathy in the viewer. It is easy to read Flor de Manita as a desperate, wretched grasping hand -- Weston was so taken with it he mentioned it in his Daybooks: "We purchased too a weird flower, like a witch's claw, blood stained: flor de manitas."³⁶ Modotti's photograph is an example of the "pathetic fallacy," the attribution of human feelings to nature.³⁷ In the other two photographs, the badly chipped pot in which the flower is planted in Geranium, and the irregularity of the lily in Calla Lily [Figure 11], beginning to fade, to wilt and shrivel, convey a sense of suffering, or rather, prompts a projection of human suffering onto the flowers, while reminding the viewer that death and decay is evident even in the most beautiful objects.

Still life as a genre in photography has received relatively very little consideration. One of the most

astute comments on the practice has been made by A. D. Coleman who proposes that "still life is not a subject of art, it is a form of art."³⁸ Coleman's shifting the emphasis away from the literal content, on the one hand, acknowledges the capacity of still life to make reference beyond itself, while on the other, it pushes the boundaries of what still life is or can be. With this in mind, I would suggest that still life as a procedure, as a "form of art," dominates Modotti's entire oeuvre; that her photographs realize a transformation of the mundane into the realm of the symbolic. Almost without exception, Modotti approaches all her subjects as she does these early still flowers, even when the content is not what is traditionally classified as still life.

Modotti's early still life photographs are generally characterized as derivative of Weston's, this despite the fact that hers are not remotely like his.³⁹ The student/teacher relationship intrudes on viewers' perceptions: neither history or the photographs bear out such an analysis. On the contrary, Modotti's close-up "portraits" of flowers may have influenced Weston's later "pepper" photographs. Modotti's preoccupation with this form of art may have induced Weston to begin thinking about still-life photography, which he did in Mexico for the first time in his photographic career.⁴⁰ After leaving Mexico, Weston began a series of still life

photographs, producing dozens of images of a shell, images that made his reputation. Modotti was bowled over by these photographs when he sent her a few. "They disturb me not only mentally but physically -- There is something so pure and at the same time so perverse about them -- They contain both the innocence of natural things and the morbidity of a sophisticated distorted mind...They are mystical and erotic."⁴¹ Weston was surprised at her response, and denied they were anything other than "pure form." He refused to acknowledge they referred to anything other than themselves.

One of the hallmarks of Modotti's photographs is their fusion of form and content. In Roses (1924) [Figure 12] Modotti creates a screen of pattern that can be read in straight, formalist terms. It is a sharply focused, close-up of four white roses. Their luminous petals animate the surface of the image with their curling edges and infinite variety of shadows. Yet its rich content has both an intellectual and a popular appeal. On the one hand, it falls into art historical discourse as a memento mori. These roses, not upright in a vase but heaped together appear to outlived their usefulness as things of living beauty, and their differing degrees of deterioration signal human mortality.⁴² On the other hand, an unschooled interpreter would instantly understand the rose as time-honored symbol of love, from its Roman

association with Venus to its role in contemporary Mexican courtship. Thus it would seem that Modotti was as concerned with the prosaic meanings as she was with conceptual considerations.

As much as Modotti may have learned from Weston, she also made several experimental photographs at the very beginning of her career that were at odds with his most deeply held ideas about the medium, and mark her independence from her teacher. Interior of Church [Figure 13] for example, an extraordinary image of the inside of a tower taken at Tepotzotlán in 1924, was made with an enlarged positive, so that the image is a negative print. Modotti mounted it upside down, and Weston couldn't help but be impressed by her audacity, as well as by the final result: "I, myself, would be pleased to have done it..." Weston wrote: "...in truth, [it] may not be the best usage of photography, but it is very genuine and one feels no striving, no sweat as in the Man Ray experiments."⁴³

Another notable departure from Weston's practice, Experiment in Related Form [Figure 14] also of 1924, is a double exposure: the same image -- five wine glasses -- appears twice in the print, but in differing sizes. The doubling occurs not on the photographic paper, but before, on the negative and the result is a screen of floating reflections and elliptical shapes on the surface of the image which fluctuate between legibility and

abstraction.⁴⁴

Modotti's Experiment in Related Form resonates on several levels as an elegant and succinct homage to modernity. The print flaunts its mechanical origin and its status as a product inherently endlessly repeatable. Furthermore, the differing degrees of transparency allude to another photo-based invention, X-ray: by aligning the stems of the center glasses in both negatives, Modotti creates a kind of inorganic spinal column.⁴⁵ The repetition of the ordinary wine glasses visually evokes the rhythm of mass-production.

Modotti's overtly experimental photographs should be understood as part of an international phenomenon referred to variously as modernist photography, the "new photography" or "the new vision." As a photographic practice of the 1920s and 1930s, new vision was not an aligned movement so much as a innovative way of looking at the world and the introduction of new techniques that pushed the bounds of the medium. Among its most notable traits was the use of collage and photomontage, a fascination with the "abstract" qualities of cameraless photography such as photograms, and the introduction of distorted or unusual points of view, including the extreme close-up. American modernist photography, as practiced by Weston, Paul Strand, and Alfred Stieglitz, was characterized by its formalism and emphasis on the

materiality of the object depicted, even when pursuing abstract photography. In Europe, including the Soviet Union, new photography was a visual response to the social upheavals in the aftermath of World War I.⁴⁶

Although Modotti is known for her overtly political images, she was not indifferent to the allure of abstraction, although she made few purely abstract images. Her explorations of the monochromatic subtleties and abstracting properties of photography is visible in Texture and Shadow [Figure 15] and Abstract: Crumbled Tinfoil [Figure 16]. Bringing her camera in close, as she did in her still lifes, further abstracts the images, demonstrating the new vision tendency to adapt novel, sometimes jarring points of view. Moreover, her images bear out the notion that the camera is a tool and that the photograph does not simply issue from a machine but from the active intervention of a creative artist.

Modotti worked at a distance from the industrial centers associated with the emergence of new vision photography, but she drew on tendencies evident on both sides of the Atlantic. To modernist subject matter (crowd scenes, industrial sites) and techniques (extreme angles and points of view), Modotti added a uniquely "Mexican" point of view. In this effort, she is allied with two strains of Mexican modernism, the mural movement, sometime called the Mexican Renaissance, and the Movimiento

Estridentista whose genesis and unfolding coincided with the years Modotti lived in Mexico. Experiment in Related Form, an image emblematic of modernism, is her earliest example of Modotti's aesthetic link with the Estridentistas.⁴⁷ The Movimiento Estridentista, or Stridentist Movement, was announced by Manuel Maples Arce with his 1921 manifesto issued in Mexico by Revista Actual in a broadside format.⁴⁸ Deliberately provocative and outrageous -- predicated as it was on manifestos published by the Italian Futurists -- Maples Arce denounced bourgeois taste and stale formulas of academic practice, calling instead for a new, radically modern aesthetic: "All Stridentist propaganda must praise the modern beauty of the machine... gymnastic bridges tautly stretched over ravines on muscles of steel...". Just as echoes of Futurist principles resound in their manifesto, stylistically, the Estridentistas favored a formal dynamism and fractured imagery that typically characterized the Italians' work. At the same time that the Estridentistas looked abroad for a precedent, they were rejecting their predecessors at the Mexico's San Carlos Academy which had, throughout the Porfiriato dictatorship championed European taste and adopted the tenets of Romanticism, Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism in an effort to prove that Mexico could be just as European as Europe. The Estridentistas moderated their

adaptation of Futurism with an intent to forge a distinctly Mexican aesthetic. (Eventually they distanced themselves from the Futurists, especially as their fascist tendencies became more overt.) The Estridentistas flourished from the 1921 until about 1927/1928, publishing several journals and exhibiting, until the political climate no longer tolerated their political position.⁴⁹

Modotti became friendly with many of the members of the Estridentistas. Their haunt, the café Europa, which they dubbed café de Nadie (the Café of No One or Nobody's Café) was poetically evoked by one of its adherents, Arqueles Vela: "Everything [in the café] becomes hidden and patinaed, in its alchemist atmosphere of retrospective irreality. The tables, the chairs, the customers are as if beneath the mist of time, cloaked with silence."⁵⁰ Vela's description lacks in specificity but he effectively depicts the necessary ingredients for artistic fermentation: a bar where intellectuals gathered to discuss and argue new ideas amid a haze of cigarettes, between cups of coffee or glasses of wine.

The café de Nadie also functioned as a showplace and the first "exhibition of Estridentism" was held there on April 12, 1924. All art forms -- literature, music and the plastic arts -- were presented on an equal status with each other -- creating an Estridentista environment, perhaps nourished by the "alchemist atmosphere." No doubt

Modotti attended this festive event, since Weston had been invited to show six photographs, a fact he seems to have found a dubious honor.⁵¹ In any case, Modotti already knew several of the participants. Germán Cueto -- she had been to his home for chocolate just a few months earlier -- showed some of his masks made of plaster and papier-mâché, innovative not only for their materials but for their marriage of Expressionist and Cubist forms. Modotti's first known photograph is an image of a puppet, probably one of Cueto's constructions. Jean Charlot had several paintings included, as did Fermín Revueeltas. Charlot became a close friend of Modotti's and she took his portrait on several occasions.⁵²

A few months after the exhibition, Modotti herself was invited to appear in an Estridentista event. Luis Quintanilla, a diplomat by profession, had published two books of poetry--under the homophonic name Kin Taniya--with typically Estridentista titles: Avion [Airplane] and Radio. His Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago (Theater of the Bat) was first performed in mid-September, with Modotti as one of the players. Quintanilla was inspired by Balieff's Chauve Souris, which had impressed him in New York a few years earlier, in the same show Modotti had urged Weston to see when he visited New York in 1922.⁵³ While the Russian impresario created his production from an assortment of Russian folk motifs, Quintanilla

incorporated elements of Mexican folklore, including ritual dances performed by dancers imported from the provinces, such as "Juego de los Viejitos" with a lineage dating to the pre-Conquest period, and "Danza de los Moros" introduced by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. While Teatro Mexicano del Murciélagó was not particularly modern in content, it did subvert conventional notions of theatre. As a fusion of many forms of performance, and significantly, the inclusion of traditional Mexican culture in a "high" art setting, it is striking as a work of Estridentismo. Although the Teatro Mexicano del Murciélagó was vaguely reminiscent of the variety-type entertainment of the Italian theater in San Francisco, Quintanilla's production was intended as an experiment in vanguard theater. Thus, it would be a mistake to dismiss Modotti's return to the stage as a lark: her involvement speaks, at least to some degree, of her investment in the movement.⁵⁴

Modotti's photograph of telephone or telegraph poles from 1925 was admired by the Estridentistas. In this image, and the better known Telephone Wires [Figure 17], Modotti conceived a new kind of "landscape" photography, one that literally bypasses the land, but uses new elements springing from the ground that announce the modernization of Mexico. In contrast to late-nineteenth century anxieties about the changing, modernizing world,

Modotti's vision is optimistic: the installation of these new means of instant communication achieved the seemingly contradictory task of shrinking the world while at the same time opening it up. The acute angle at which Modotti has framed her photograph allies the image to other modernist images, both in painting and photography. In structure, it calls to mind the dynamism of Futurism and the lines of energy in paintings by Wyndham Lewis or Charles Demuth. Modotti's photograph presents these man-made, constructed objects as otherworldly: the wires emanate from the slightly off center and aslant crossbars and posts which convey them, giving a sense of boundless possibilities, of infinite destinations. Their potential to act as metaphors was apparent to Germán List Arzubide who reprinted the image in his 1927 history El Movimiento Estridentista, calling them "electrical antlers."⁵⁵ A few years later, the same image was published in Eugene Jolas's modernist journal, transition (subtitled, An International Quarterly for Creative Experiment), along side photographs by Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy.⁵⁶

Estridentismo was a crusade to modernize Mexico culturally, to bring her into the twentieth century. Undeniably, strong parallels exist between artistic iconoclasm and political insurgency, and while their primary goal was overhauling the arts of poetry and painting, the social concerns of the Estridentistas as a

group, and of List Arzubide, individually, culminated in the November 1926 issue of one of their several journals, Horizonte. In this issue, the Estridentistas decisively allied their work with the Mexican Revolution, and Modotti was among the visual artists included here along with Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma.⁵⁷

While the Estridentistas stimulated Modotti aesthetically, it was the circle of politically active artists who, in late 1922, had rallied behind the manifesto of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors. Their tract was published in the first issue of El Machete, a newspaper dedicated to workers and peasants. With David Alfaro Siqueiros positioned as Secretary General, and Rivera, Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, Orozco, Ramón Alva Guadarrama, Germán Cueto and Carlos Mérida all co-signers and committee members, this formidable alliance was composed of the country's most influential artists, most of whom Modotti was to associate with during her seven years in Mexico.⁵⁸

The proposition advanced by the Syndicate was, simply put, a call to reclaim Mexico -- specifically its pre-Columbian culture and contemporary art by indigenous peoples -- as a visual resource for artistic inspiration: "The art of the Mexican people is the most important and vital spiritual manifestation in the world today, and its

Indian traditions lie at its very heart." Explicit in the relocating of their aesthetic allegiances was a denunciation of influences from abroad, especially Paris, paradoxically, the mecca which had drawn many of the signatories of the proclamation earlier in their careers.⁵⁹ It is also evident that the form this newly articulated nationalism took explicitly recalls the manifestos issued by Europeans such as the Futurists and Dada artists.

The syndicate's relationship to the government was initially positive. During his term (1921-1924) as education minister in the administration of president Álvaro Obregón, José Vasconcelos put into place an ambitious plan, replete with messianic overtones, designed to reach the illiterate and rural populace of Mexico. Under the banner of the Revolution, and incorporating his own pedagogical and social philosophies (based on Pythagorean theories), Vasconcelos fostered programs to improve the life of the nation's poor, a policy which depended upon the visual arts as its primary vehicle. Vasconcelos enlisted artists to paint the walls of public buildings throughout the country and thus the Mexican mural movement may be seen as a direct consequence of this "cultural evangelism."⁶⁰

Mural painting has a long history in Mexico dating back to the pre-Columbian period, and the modern muralists

saw themselves as heirs to this tradition of decorating temples and palaces. They were also keenly aware of both the high art sites of wall painting (such as were found in colonial churches) and the work of untrained artists who painted the secular walls for pulquerías or advertisements, and deemed both sources relevant for their movement. Charlot, an astute art critic and art historian, commented years later on the relevance of work he performed in the Yucatán where he "copied bas-reliefs and murals as they were brought to light, before their polychromies began to fade. Mayan art was truly meant for the community at large. It was exciting to thus compare frescoes done five centuries ago with those we painted in Mexico City with a similar aim."⁶¹ Influence from abroad is also evident, most conspicuously in the work of Rivera and Charlot (who is said to have imported the buon fresco technique to Mexico), both of whom had had the opportunity to study Italian frescos of the Renaissance in situ.⁶²

When the muralists began painting frescoes at the National Preparatory School (where the Syndicate was formed), they combined the ancient art of wall painting with a varied, unprogrammatic assortment of subject matters drawn from all periods of Mexico's history, using a diverse range of styles. With minimal control exerted by Vasconcelos and little inter-artist coordination, each

painter chose his [sic] own theme. From Revueltas' "Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe," (symbolizing Mexican nationalism) to Rivera's, Byzantino-cubist "Creation," (symbolizing the fusion of indigenous traditions with Judeo-Christian moral imperatives), from Charlot's "The Combat of the Great Temple," (a scene of the invasion of the Spanish the Aztec defense of Tenochtitlan) to the biting political work of the late-comers to the Preparatory walls, Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros: the only theme the murals had in common was the recognition and significance given to ancient native culture, and to the contemporary religious and social life of the indigenous population.

Among the artists who were lucky enough to get commissions there was great excitement in this bold experiment. The general public, however, was not as enthusiastic. The murals were ridiculed in the press, sometimes virulently. Then in June 1923 the students at the school first protested, and then vandalized several murals. The Preparatory was an elite state-run post secondary school for teenagers of privileged, upper and upper-middle classes. (Recall that Frida Kahlo had been attending since 1922, and it was here that she first set eyes on Rivera.) The riot arose from the perception, and rightly so, that these painters were engaged in a new order of art, one that did not prettily aestheticize the

past but rather rudely reminded viewers of what the Revolution promised. As writer Salvador Novo aptly put it, the murals "aimed to awaken in the spectator, instead of aesthetic emotions, an anarchistic fury if he is penniless, or if he is wealthy, to make his knees buckle with fright."⁶³

Vasconcelos, like the artists of the syndicate and the Estridentistas, was impelled to forge a uniquely "Mexican" art. The idea of an art elusively Mexican was, of course, illusory. Artists could hardly aspire to be part of the modern movement and not draw from art centers abroad, just as it was impossible to be a Mexican artist and not acknowledge the nation's multiracial and syncretistic heritage. These inconsistencies aside, both branches of Mexican modernism were influenced by the social upheavals of the Revolution, and both turned their attention to Mexico's indigenous population, its culture and its social condition, as well as the huge population of poor and working Mexicans whose material conditions the Revolution was intended to improve. Yet the movements were distinct: the Estridentistas fashioned an aesthetic art based on formal innovations and sought technical reform, while the muralists, though more politically radical, based their work on a more conservative, figurative tradition. As the decade of the twenties came to an end, conflicts arose between some muralists and the

increasingly conservative Mexican government; after all, the artists were paid to propagandize in favor of, rather than criticize, the state. Along with her colleagues in the syndicate, Modotti too grew more acute in her condemnation of the government; some of her later photographs were acerbic attacks on what she came to call Mexico's "revolutionary" government.⁶⁴

In November 1924, after a year of intense work, Modotti hung ten prints alongside Weston's at a group show at the Palacio de Minería in Mexico City. (Among some of the other artists who participated were their friends Rafael Sala, Jean Charlot and Felipe Teixidor.) This exhibit marks Modotti's first public showing, as Weston notes in his Daybooks, and he wrote "I am proud of my dear 'apprentice.'"⁶⁵ The quotation marks around apprentice hint at an uneasy joke between them. Just a week before, Modotti has signed herself "your apprentice of the past - present - & may she be of the future."⁶⁶ Modotti's achievement in so short a time reflected well on him, proof of his own abilities. "Tina's [photographs] lose nothing by comparison with mine -- they are her own expression"⁶⁷ If he harbored fantasies of Modotti as his Galatea, she more resembled the independent-minded Shavian Eliza than Pygmalion's passive love object. The apprenticeship was ending. Indeed, before the end of the year, Edward and Chandler were on their way to California,

and Weston had left "his" portrait studio in Modotti's charge.⁶⁸

1. "Una Estrella de Cine que Ama y Conoce a México," 7.

2. Modotti has already met Ricardo Gómez Robelo and the painter Xavier Guerrero. According to Katherine Anne Porter scholar Ruth Moore Alvarez, cinematographer Roberto Turnbull, and painters Adolfo Best-Maugard, Emilio Amero, Julio Castellanos joined Guerrero in Los Angeles to accompany an exhibit of Mexican art for which Guerrero was the art director. Katherine Anne Porter wrote a catalogue to accompany the show: Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts (Los Angeles, CA: Young & McCallister, Inc., 1922. The show opened in Los Angeles in November 1922. Letter from Ruth Moore Alvarez to author, February 5, 1990; Hank Lopez, "A Country and Some People I Love: An Interview by Hank Lopez with Katherine Anne Porter," Harper's (September 1965): 58-68.

3. Their first residence, a house leased in Tacubaya, was a forty minute trolley ride from the city (DBI, 15). The commute and the lack of a telephone conspired to severely limit their commercial prospects, and on September 15, 1923 they moved to Lucerna 12, Colonia Juárez. DBI, 21. Llewellyn Bixby Smith suggests they even lacked running water, indicating that it is unlikely they had a darkroom running until after the September move. Letter from Llewellyn Bixby Smith to Sarah Bixby Smith, September 22, 1923. Collection AG6: Box 5, subgroup 32, CCP.

4. DBI, 22; letter from Edward Weston to Flora Weston, October 2, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

5. As Conger writes, "portrait work he was doing [in 1923] to support his family was not aesthetically enriching for him; it did not satisfy his desire or need to express himself...". Edward Weston in Mexico, 3.

6. Conger, Edward Weston in Mexico, 74.

7. Weston reflects upon his time in Mexico from distance of six years. In March 2, 1932 he wrote: "I can blame three things, conditions for my failure in Mexico: immaturity, psychic distress, and economic pressure. The latter condition kept me waiting in the studio for work [i.e., sitters] which seldom came." DBII, 247. While there, he lamented this pressure and the need to take portraiture: "Of the future, I hardly dare think, for all I can see ahead is day after day of professional portraiture, trying to please someone other than myself." DBI, 25 (October 30, 1923).

8. DBI, 15, 17.

9. Letter from Edward Weston to his family, August 8, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. "Not the police but death or blindness was what people...had to fear from Prohibition." Diana Trilling, "Intellectuals in Love: My Speak-Easy Romance With Lionel Trilling," New York Times Book Review (October 3, 1993), 15.
10. Letter from Edward Weston to his family, September 1, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.
11. After a month as Weston's pupil Llewellyn Bixby Smith notes confidently "with a little of Mr. Weston's art, and a lot of American ingenuity which he lacks, I can make a pretty good pile..." Letter from Llewellyn Bixby Smith to Sarah Bixby Smith, September 30, 1923, CCP.
12. Letter from Edward Weston to his family, September 1, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. Few have credited Modotti with all the duties she took on or acknowledged her importance to Weston's career. The exception is Gary Higgins who articulated the many roles Modotti played in Weston's life: "In Tina Modotti [Weston] would find a friend, lover, peer, nurse, model, muse, apprentice, translator, agent, studio manager, and occasional porter, cook and maid." Gary Higgins, Truth, Myth and Erasure: Tina Modotti and Edward Weston. History of Photography Monograph Series, School of Art, Arizona State University, No. 28 (Spring 1991).
13. See correspondence between Llewellyn Bixby Smith and Sarah Bixby Smith in CCP for more details. Llewellyn Bixby Smith left Mexico November 21, 1923. DBI, 32. A year later one of his photographs was included in the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles annual exhibition. The Pictorialist. no. 2 (December 1924), 16.
14. DBI, 17.
15. Letter from Edward Weston to his family, September 1, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP; DBI, 99. In contrast, Conger writes: "By September 13, he had already arranged for an exhibition of his work," and adds, "We do not know how he arranged this...". Conger, Edward Weston in Mexico, 14.
16. On the ship to Mexico, for example, Weston writes: "Thanks to Tina--her beauty--though I might have wished it otherwise!--el Capitán has favored us in many ways: the use of his deck, refreshing drinks in his cabin, his launch to carry us ashore." DBI, 13.

17. Letter February 22, 1924 Edward Weston to his family, Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

18. Weston writes in a letter home: "Each of our rooms has its own door opening directly to the large patio or garden--its almost as though all of us had our own little house--First comes Llewellyn--then Tina--then the entrance...then my room--the studio room and Chandler's..." Letter from Edward Weston to Neil Weston, September 6, 1923, Edward Weston Archive, CCP. Nancy Newhall acknowledges their contractual relationship. DBI, 212.

19. See Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 104/1923 and 105/1923 and DBI, 14. The photograph, untitled (Tina Modotti in window of house in Tucabaya, Mexico City, 1923) is in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.2/3 POR. Reproduced in Stark [Rule], Archive, 6.

20. Letter from Edward Weston to Johan Hagemeyer, October 21, 1924, in Edward Weston Archive, CCP; Stark [Rule], Archive, 41. (Letter 26.1, January 23, 1926); Jean Charlot, foreword to Clemente Orozco, The Artist in New York: Letters to Jean Charlot and Unpublished Writings, 1925-1929 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974): 18; Conger, "Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," 68.

21. Stark [Rule], Archive, 73. (Letter 30.4, May 23, 1930).

22. Weston writes in his daybooks on October 7, 1924: "I am utterly exhausted tonight after a whole day in the darkroom, making eight contact negatives from the enlarged positives." (DBI, 96). Also see Beaumont Newhall's "Edward Weston's Technique," DBI, 204-206.

23. Margery Mann in California Pictorialism (The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1977): 66; Camera Craft (May 1914), 250. Thanks to Peter Palmquist for substantiating Mann's statement for which she gives no citation. Margrethe Mather was also a member of the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles at this time.

24. John Pultz and Catherine B. Scallen, Cubism and American Photography 1910-1930. Exhibition catalogue (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Sterling & Francis Clark Art Institute, Williams College, 1981): 51.

25. DBI, 24, 27, 32.

26. DBI, 63, 210.

27. Charlot, forward to Orozco, The Artist in New York, 18.

28. DBI, 81 (June 27, 1924).

29. Both photographs are reproduced in the following texts: Sarah M. Lowe, Tina Modotti: Photographs (Exhibition catalogue. Philadelphia and New York: The Philadelphia Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1995): 24, plate 16; and Stark [Rule] (The Archive): 18, 19.

30. DBI, 53.

31. For detailed description of history and manufacture of pulque, see Frances Toor, A Treasury of Mexican Folkways (New York: Bonanza Books, 1985): 15-18.

32. Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 209/1926. Each image includes a plaque with the street name: Avenida Jesus Carranza in the case of Modotti and Calle de Bartolomé de las Casas in the case of Weston. These streets intersect in Colonia Morelos, some ten blocks north of the Zócolo. Weston writes about photographing this image in his Daybooks. DBI, 161 (June 1, 1926).

33. The following ideas have been discussed in Sarah M. Lowe, "Fixing Form: The Still Lives of Tina Modotti," History of Photography. Special issue: Women in Photography, 10, no 1 (Fall 1994):

34. DBI, 55. (March 10, 1924).

35. For examples of Cunningham's flower photographs, see Imogen Cunningham: Frontiers, Photographs 1906-1976 (Exhibition Catalogue. The Imogen Cunningham Trust, Berkeley, CA, 1978), especially plates 34, 37, 56 and 62.

36. DBI, 109. (December 12, 1924).

37. Robert Rosenblum borrows this term from John Ruskin to describe the attribution of human emotions to inanimate objects, especially in landscape painting. Rosenblum's Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, New York: Harper & Row, Icon Editions 1975, 36.

38. A. D. Coleman, "The Photographic Still Life, A Tradition Outgrowing Itself", European Photography [Göttingen, Germany] 4, no 2 (April/May/June 1983): 5.

39. "[Modotti's] photographs resembled Weston's in subject but were less assured and perfect..." Hancock de Sandoval, "One Hundred Years of Photography...", XII. "Maize Plants

[Corn] is a study in natural forms that might of have been done by Weston." Andre, "Body Language," 20.

40. Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 11.

41. Stark [Rule], Archive, 51. (Letter 27.4, June 25, 1927).

42. The memento mori or vanitas still life was a specialty of seventeenth-century Dutch painters, wherein arrangements of flowers in various states of growth and decay, as well as specific objects like hour glasses and skulls, spoke of the transience of life.

43. DBI, 69.

44. A negative for this image is housed in the INAH photographic collection in Pachuca, Mexico. It appears that Modotti made this print by exposing an image of the five glasses, and then making two inner positives, each different sizes which she sandwiched together and contact printed the final negative.

45. In February, Modotti and Weston had visited a Dr. García who had an X-ray machine. Weston reported: "Dr. G. offered to turn the X-ray on us -- Tina was first. We watched the weird revealment - saw her heart beat - noted that her lungs were in fine shape..." Letter from Edward Weston to Flora Weston, February 2, 1924, in Edward Weston Archive, CCP.

46. For a thorough discussion of the issue surrounding "the new vision" see The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars. Exhibition catalogue. Essays by Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989 and Christopher Phillips' insightful commentary in Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Aperture, 1989.

47. The Movimiento Estridentista was a loose alliance, and artists drifted in and out of the group. Thus it is difficult to draw up a definitive list of its "members." To the original Estridentista group -- painter Fermín Revueltas and his musician brother Silvestre, and engraver Leopoldo Méndez -- came painters Jean Charlot and Alva de la Canal, as well as poets Salvador Gallardo and Germán List Arzubide, Guatemalan novelist Arqueles Vela and sculptor Germán Cueto. Salvador Novo and Luis Quintanilla joined later. On the Estridentistas, see Serge Fauchereau's excellent overview, "The Stridentists,"

Artforum. 24 (February 1986): 84-89. Also see Germán List Arzubide, Movimiento Estridentista. Jalapa, Veracruz. Ediciones de Horizonte, 1928. Reprint. Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987 and Luis Mario Schneider, El Estridentismo. Mexico: Ediciones de Bellas Artes, 1970.

48. Maple Arce's manifesto is translated and printed in Dawn Ades, Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980. With contributions by Guy Brett, Stanton Loomis Catlin and Rosemary O'Neill (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989): 306-309. All quotations are from here.

49. The Estridentistas produced a number of short-lived, but vital small magazines, including: Actual (1921-1922); Ser (1922-1923); Irradiador (1924) and Horizonte (1926-1927). Titles and dates are given by Fauchereau, "The Stridentists," 88.

50. El café de nadie (Jalapa: Ediciones de Horizonte, 1926), 11, cited in John S. Brushwood, Mexico in its Novel: A Nation's Search for Identity. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, The Texas Pan-American Series (1966), 1970): 193. The address, 100 avenida Jalisco is today Álvaro Obregón in Colonia Roma. Schneider, El Estridentismo, 72.

51. DBI, 63.

52. Modotti met Jean Charlot in mid-November 1923 (DBI, 34). She met Germán and Lola Cueto, and Fermín Revueltas in January 1924 (DBI, 43). Cueto went on to experiment with stone, wood, bronze, iron wire, sheet metal, cement, cardboard, and mosaic (Fauchereau, "The Stridentists," 89).

53. Parmenter, Lawrence in Oaxaca, 8; Ruth Stallsmith Quintanilla, interview with Ross Parmenter. My thanks to Ross Parmenter for sending transcriptions of his interviews and sharing his thoughts with me. On Weston in New York, see DBI: 4.

54. DBI, 92; Ruth Stallsmith Quintanilla, interview by Ross Parmenter, courtesy of Ross Parmenter. On the meanings and sources for the dances, see Toor, A Treasury of Mexican Folkways, 347-348; 356-357.

55. List Arzubide, El Movimiento Estridentista, 54.

56. transition no. 15 (February 1929), after page 272. This issue also published Mexican Peasants as "Strike Scene" following page 272. transition no. 18 (November 1929), following page 278, reproduced Bandolier, Corn, Sickie with the caption, "Crisis".

57. Schneider, El Estridentismo, 163.

58. The manifesto is translated in Ades, Art in Latin America, 323-4. All the quotations that follow come from here. See also Jean Charlot, The Mexican Mural Renaissance: 1920-1925, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963): 241.

59. Of the eight who signed the manifesto, four had been to Europe and two had travelled to the United States before 1923. Siqueiros went to Paris in 1919 and to Barcelona in 1921. Rivera went to Spain in 1907, to Paris in 1909, and to Italy in 1920 and then returned to Mexico in 1921. Guerrero went to Los Angeles in 1921 (where he met Modotti and Weston) and in 1927, he moved to Moscow for a number of years. Orozco traveled to New York and San Francisco in 1917; in 1927 he returned to New York where he remained for several years; Mérida, born in Guatemala, studied in Paris in 1910, traveled to Belgium, Holland and Spain, and settled in Mexico in 1919; Germán Cueto travelled abroad in 1916.

60. See Karen Cordero Reiman, "Constructing a Modern Mexican Art, 1910-1940" in James Oles, South of the Border. Washington, D.C and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993: 10-47.

61. Charlot's foreword in Orozco, The Artist in New York, 19.

62. Rivera's appropriation of Giotto's Arena Chapel Meeting at the Golden Gate and Charlot's Uccello-esque The Combat of the Great Temple in the National Preparatory School are just two examples. The painter Marion Greenwood who went to Mexico in the early 1930s to work with Rivera remembers analyzing reproductions of frescoes by Giotto and Piero using the golden mean. Marion Greenwood, interview by Dorothy Seckler, January 21, 1964, Woodstock, NY, Archives of American Art, Roll 85.

63. Cited in Charlot, Mexican Mural Renaissance, 235.

64. Tina Modotti, "La Contrarrevolution Mexicana," Amauta (Lima) no. 29 (February 1930), 94.

65. DBI, 101.

66. Inscription by Modotti, October 1924, Mexico scrapbook, page 36, Edward Weston Archive, CCP; see in Stark [Rule], Archive, 18.
67. DBI, 101 (November 2, 1924).
68. El Universal English News Section (December 18, 1924), 6.

CHAPTER VI

Modotti was well-prepared for the task of running the studio: she had been making portraits steadily throughout 1924. Her modern portraits, like Weston's, sought to capture the individuality of the sitter, in contrast to the old-fashioned tableau-vivants with artificial props and fanciful backdrops still favored by commercial portrait photographers in Mexico. (As a joke with a serious side, Modotti and Weston had several "anniversary" portraits taken in August 1924, commemorating their first year in Mexico and Weston's decision not to leave as of yet. Recalling the incident in his Daybooks, Weston derides the hack who poses them with a plaster Christ against a background of a vaulted church or the "dusty, dirty bunch of roses," a prop to signify love.)

Modotti was a sensitive portrait photographer and her manner with her sitters contributed to her success. She worked, one of her friends recalled, with an "easy efficiency."¹ In her most successful portraits, Modotti was able to seize on some integral aspect of her subject's character and personality. Among her earliest portraits are two that appear somewhat experimental and do not fit comfortably into the genre. Her friend P. Khan Khoje [Figure 18], an agriculturist from India, stands by a table contemplating ears of dried corn. His pensive silhouette is highlighted by the triangular shaft of light against the back wall, suggestive of divine inspiration, a composition fa-

vored by seventeenth century Dutch painters. One of Modotti's most disturbing portraits is of Elisa Ortíz [Figure 19], who became part of the household in November 1923 as a criada or housekeeper. Elisa's hands are set off against the expanse of black on her lap, emphasizing their twisted, disfigured forms. The photograph testifies to the trust between Modotti and Ortíz: she had "hands like witches' claws"² which were burned in a childhood accident.

Modotti was commissioned by friends and colleagues alike, and tried to seize some aspect of the personality of her sitters. Her portrait of Jean Charlot [Figure 20] catches him in a pensive mood. She illuminates his face with several light sources in order to sharply defined his profile against the shadowy background. Compare this sensitive portrait of a sensitive man with the image she made of Carleton Beals [Figure 21], a journalist with leftist sympathies she met soon after her arrival. Modotti has Beals focus his gaze directly at her lens and the viewer. Unsmiling and menacing, Beals pulls a scarf around his neck, negating vulnerability, one of the very striking components of the Charlot portrait. Modotti reveals qualities distinctive to each sitter. Where Beals took himself seriously, and expected other to, Charlot was more self-effacing.³

Modotti was friendly with many members of the large Marín family: she photographed the good-looking doctor Federico Marín--brother of Guadalupe Marín, Rivera's second

wife--and their sister María Marín de Orozco. In a 1924 portrait of Federico, he strikes a pose, [Figure 22] leaning against a wall, restless, impatient. His youthful energy and his self-conscious demeanor are evident, as is the easy rapport between sitter and photographer. Two years later, Modotti's quite different portrait of Federico takes into account his transformation from youth into young adult. [Figure 23]

The portraits Modotti produced over her seven-year career range from formal, elegant likenesses to more casual pictures, to some that demonstrate her interest new vision photography. Given the fairly conservative role of women in Mexican society, Modotti adapted a sophisticated but subdued manner of portraying women. This is evident even in her portraits of women who were public figures, such as the actress Dolores del Río and Carolina Amor de Fournier, founder of the influential Galería de Arte Mexicano. Modotti's photographs of María Marín are sumptuous. [Figures 24 & 25] In keeping with rules of etiquette, Modotti presents María as alluring but chaste: with eyes averted, she appears ethereal. In one image, Marín's head is set off by a transparent black scarf flowing across her neck; in another, a simple black dress creates an undulating line that adds visual interest but does not detract from her face.⁴

Modotti took portraits of artists at work, among them puppeteer Louis Bunin, who sits with one of his creations,

and muralist Máximo Pacheco on his scaffold, engaged in the act of creation. Both artists utilized their skills to educate the illiterate, one through theater, the other visually, and these portraits reflect Modotti's political belief that work must be for the good of others.

Among Modotti's most interesting portraits, however, are several of some of Mexico's cultural elite. She used the same innovative pose several times and to good effect. Writers Salvador Novo and her friend List Arzubide (as well as an unknown woman) [Figures 26 & 27], sit with their heads bowed forward. Rather than attempt a likeness, Modotti's insistently "modernist" portraits dramatically distort the sitters' appearance, emphasizing the site of ego, and thus stretching definitions of the genre.

It became quite fashionable to have one's portrait taken by Modotti, and between 1924 and 1930 she photographed over fifty subjects. Some are known, others are unidentified, but they signal the extent of her friendships and of her reputation.

In Weston's absence, Modotti changed profoundly. "I cannot," she wrote him in California, "as you once proposed to me--'solve the problem of life by losing myself in the problem of art,'" a declaration of independence that signals a new conviction in Modotti. Art was the highest goal for him. "In my case," Modotti continued, "life is always struggling to predominate and art naturally suffers...I put too much art in my life...and consequently I

have not much left to give to art."⁵

It was not Weston's second and decisive departure from Mexico in November 1926 that marks Modotti's entry into political life, but his leaving after less than a year and a half in Mexico, in December 1925 that marks a significant change in Modotti's aesthetic. The fault line between them is perhaps best seen as one of class consciousness: where Modotti felt a compulsion to identify with those less fortunate with herself, Weston felt none.⁶

Modotti's conflict between art-making and political action came into relief with Weston gone as she became involved in activities revolving around the Communist Party.⁷ Her friends Siqueiros and Guerrero, both members of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors and founders of El Machete, were active on its editorial board when it converted to an organ of the Communist party on May 1, 1925.⁸ Modotti became associated with the newly formed Mexican branch of the International Red Aid, a Communist version of the Red Cross founded in 1922 with a mandate to provide aid to those oppressed by political forces, regardless of political affiliation.⁹ As its name implies, the Red Aid had sections around the world: Socorro Rojo in Spain; Rote Hilfe in Germany; Secours Rouge in France; and in Russia, it was known by its acronym MOPR. Modotti would eventually be associated with each of these branches. The form of aid varied: campaigns were made in support of amnes-

ty for political prisoners; agitation instigated to provide asylum for victims of political persecution; financial support and legal advice were offered to political exiles. The IRA initially proclaimed itself the enemy of all political oppression, a stance that attracted international support, especially from within cultural circles. At its height in 1929, the International Central Committee included Albert Einstein and Henri Barbusse.¹⁰

The Mexican section of the IRA was organized during the spring of 1925.¹¹ Like the sections abroad, it attracted political radicals as well as arts and cultural figures; here, however, the differences between them were less noticeable, since art and politics were more closely associated. Within five years, the organizing committee include familiar names: Rivera, Siqueiros, List Arzubide, and Modotti herself.¹² Ella Wolfe was among the founding members of the Mexican IRA, and an active member of the Pan-American Anti-Imperialist League (to which Modotti also belonged), which sought to highlight imperialist actions committed by the United States toward the countries of Latin America. Wolfe arrived in Mexico six months before Modotti, entering clandestinely with her husband Bertram Wolfe, who subsequently helped found Mexico's Communist Party.¹³ Ella saw to the practical aspects of publishing the League's organ, El Libertador--Rivera was officially editor--which put out its first issue in 1925.

Soon Modotti's political activities were encroaching on her photography. In July she lamented in a letter to Weston that since he left, she had produced "less than a print a month."¹⁴ Modotti must be referring to her "art" photography, although she may have had doubts about her ability to earn a living as a commercial photographer. In April she decided to accept a job working in a bookstore for \$250 a month, a position that lasted five hours. Once home for lunch she realized she could not return. Laughing at herself she wrote Weston, "I may be ridiculous absurd - a coward anything you want but I just had to quit--I have no other reasons in my defense only that during the first morning of work I felt a protest of my whole being".¹⁵ Hard work never bothered Modotti: it was the idea of being prisoner in the store for nine hours each day. With renewed vigor, Modotti rededicated herself to photography, even as she also saw political action as important to her life.

Weston returned to Mexico in August 1995, eight months after he had left, with his son, Brett. Modotti had arranged, with the help of Carlos Orozco Romero, another exhibition at the State Museum of Guadalajara: this time Modotti and Weston showed as equals. Siqueiros reviewed their exhibition, calling it "THE PUREST PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPRESSION...the most impressive demonstration of what can be done and what MUST be done with the camera."¹⁶ José Guadalupe Zuno, governor of Jalisco, bought a number of

prints by Modotti and Weston for the State Museum.¹⁷

If the presence and accolades of Siqueiros, whose labor organizing had dominated his recent life, did not give Weston the hint, it became immediately clear to him that Modotti's political commitments had become more pressing while he was away. Toward the end of a long journal entry (in which he describes his arrival in Mexico and several day-trips around Guadalajara), he becomes somewhat rueful, noting that the trip back to Mexico City was discomfiting because Modotti "insisted" on riding in the second class carriage; Weston, with his first class tickets purchased in Los Angeles, spent the night trip shuttling back and forth between his sleeping son and Modotti.¹⁸ Weston's jealousies of other men seemed to pale before the tension that arose between them over Modotti's radicalization and her more pronounced commitment to social issues. A decisive break came a few weeks later.¹⁹

While the romance between Modotti and Weston was inexorably deteriorating, they continued living in the same house and working together in their studio. Modotti had placed an advertisement for their services in the August/September 1925 issue of Frances Toor's new journal, Mexican Folkways. For the remainder of the year, Modotti attention was diverted from her photography by the arrival of her sister, Mercedes, who joined the Modotti-Weston household in the middle of October and stayed for six

weeks.²⁰ Modotti was further distracted when she agreed to pose for Rivera who was at work on his murals at Chapingo, the site of Mexico's School of Agriculture. Rivera's program for the walls of the chapel constituted a visual demonstration of dialectical materialism, juxtaposing social and natural evolution. Modotti posed for the figure of "The Virgin Earth," a giant recumbent nude nurturing a seedling. Far from being jealous, Weston found that with Modotti gone, he could carry on with Elisa Ortiz's sixteen year old sister, Elena, who come to the household as a criada.²¹

Two weeks after Mercedes' departure, Tina's mother Assunta Modotti fell seriously ill and in mid-December, Modotti left hastily for California.²² From San Francisco, Modotti wrote revealingly to Weston about her experiences, startled and dismayed at her reception: "...of all the old friends and acquaintances not one takes me seriously as a photographer--not one has asked me to show my work--only the new group met through you."²³ If her family took her seriously, it was because she was called upon to take portraits of them: photographs probably taken during this trip of Benvenuto, Mercedes and Yolanda survive.

This new group of friends that Modotti mentions included photographer Consuelo Kanaga, whom Weston had met during his return to California. Kanaga was back in San Francisco after two years in New York where she had gone drawn to the work of Stieglitz she saw in his Camera Work

journal. Throughout Modotti's visit to San Francisco, Kanaga provided her with much needed professional advise and emotional support. As a self-taught photographer, Kanaga was extremely resourceful, and as a friend, she was especially warm and loyal. She shepherded Modotti to camera shops to find a Graflex, and invited friends over to her studio one evening to provide Modotti with a venue to show her work to interested artists and potential patrons.²⁴

Among Modotti's friends and colleagues who appreciated her work were photographer Imogen Cunningham and her husband, the print-maker, Roi Partridge, and the latter was instrumental in placing Modotti's Experiment in Related Form at Mills College Gallery in Oakland (where Partridge taught). Dorothea Lange assisted Modotti, and in a gesture of camaraderie, lent her studio for portrait sittings Modotti had arranged, and made her darkroom available. As a portrait photographer herself, Lange would have been sympathetic to Modotti's need for a place to work.

It was during her trip to California that Modotti formed into words one of her most astute commentaries on photography, specifically, her own intentions and goals in the medium. Her insight came at some emotional cost, for her several months abroad had shaken her confidence, and events converged that forced her to focus on her own future. Her mother's near death; her separation from Weston; the encouragement she received in San Francisco from artist friends;

all this came together in a paroxysm of insight during a visit at the home of her mother-in-law in Los Angeles toward the end of her stay. It was a painful experience. Having stored some belongings with Rose Richey, Modotti was now faced with decisions about what to do with all her things, books and letters that inevitably recalled her past life in California and her time with Robo; she had to face the fact that she simply did not see herself returning to California. Writing to Weston in February 1926 as she was trying to set her life in order, Modotti remarked:

"I have been all morning looking over old things of mine here in trunks--Destroyed much--It is painful at times but: "Blessed be nothing." From now on all my possessions are to be just in relation to photography--the rest--even things I love, concrete things--I shall lead through a metamorphosis --from the concrete turn them into abstract things...and thus I can go on owning them in my heart forever.²⁵

With a grave pragmatism Modotti made decisions about her future. As she had when Robo died, she cut out the unnecessary elements of her life, almost ruthlessly. Her determination to commit herself to photography comes two years after her earliest dated photograph. Here Modotti declares her commitment to photography and articulates her ambition: to transform the tangible into the intangible, to transmute matter into ideology. While some of her earlier photographs show evidence of these aspirations, her work after this turning point in her emotional and artistic life attest to her achieving her goal.

1. Emily Edwards interview with Mildred Constantine, cited in Constantine, Fragile Life, 81.
2. These are Weston's words, cited in Maddow, Edward Weston, 69.
3. This image mitigates the impression Beals made in person. He was described by a friend as "...an adventurer who during his six years of wandering in Spain, Italy and Mexico has always managed to be where the bullet flew...is a small, slightly-build, fair-haired, blue-eyed young man of thirty who seems so shy that you would never think him capable of doing anything except reading books. When he talks, however, there's bright, shrewd glitter in his eyes, and a smile on his face which shows a capacity for great endurance, and a contempt for comfort." Letter from Joseph Freeman to Harry Freeman, December 10, 1924, Joseph Freeman Archives, Hoover.
4. Several American women are depicted less demurely than their Mexican friends. Her portraits of Frances Toor and Anita Brenner, each of whom fostered Mexican culture, are as different from each other as the two women were. Toor, an anthropologist and writer, promoted traditional Mexican folk arts in her influential magazine, Mexican Folkways. Her determination is readily visible in Modotti's portrait, seated behind her indispensable typewriter. In contrast, the not yet twenty-five year old Brenner poses in a more dramatic, self-conscious photograph: her triumphs, indispensable books on Mexican history and art, were yet to come. Ione Robinson, a brash young painter who came to Mexico to find a "wall to paint on" fell in love with political journalist Joseph Freeman. Modotti depicts her openly radiant.
5. Stark [Rule], Archive, 39-40. (Letter 25.4, July 7, 1925).
6. At one point Weston comments: "I would probably be a first-class Fascist, if I would let my (contempt) for the Masses get the upper hand; but instead I have pity (a very dangerous virtue) just as one feels deeply over a lost dog, cat, child." Maddow, Edward Weston, 21.
7. My discussion of Modotti's activities with the Communist Party and its fronts draws on Barckhausen reconstruction. Barckhausen, Verdad, 103-108. Hooks restates Barckhausen's account. Hooks, Tina Modotti, 104, 110-111.
8. Tibol, ed. Julio Antonio Mella en "El Machete" (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Popular, 1986): 9. Charlot dates the conversion November 1924. Charlot, Mexican Mural Movement, 248.

9. My understanding of the history, scope and operation of MOPR derives from James Martin Ryle, "International Red Aid: A Case Study of a Communist Front Organization." Masters Thesis, Emory University, 1962.

10. The American section of the IRA was the very active International Labor Defense founded in 1925. It brought attention to itself through its celebrated campaign in support for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti, and convicted trade-unionists Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, as well as its championing of the nine black youths who were the subject of the Scottsboro trial. An array of American intellectuals, writers and other notables lent their support to the ILD, including Ella R. Bloor (Mother Bloor), Clarence Darrow, Elizabeth G. Flynn, Scott Nearing, Upton Sinclair, Anna Louise Strong, Genevieve Taggard, and Anita Whitney. Ryle, "International Red Aid," 45.

11. Letter from Ella Wolfe to Carleton Beals, March 25, 1925, Carleton Beals Collection, Boston University.

12. Others were Prof. Miguel O. de Mendizabal, Head of the Department of Ethnography at the National Museum, who joined the editorial staff of Frances Toor's Mexican Folkways at the same time Modotti did in spring 1927; his wife, Carmen Herrera de Mendizabal, a singer with a reputation in Los Angeles, and collector of popular songs; Renato Molina Enríquez, who wrote a glowing tribute to Modotti in Forma, (the cultural journal started by Salvador Novo and Gabriel Fernández Ledesma); and Ramon de Negri, whose portrait Modotti took, and who was named Mexico's ambassador to Spain during the Civil war. Among the other members of the executive committee who were in some way to touch Modotti's life were: Salvador de la Plaza, a journalist who regularly contributed to the Labor Defender, the organ for the International Labor Defense; Ursulo Galván, founder of the Liga Nacional Campesino (National League of Peasant/Farmers); Jacobo Hurwitz, a Peruvian left-wing journalist; Herman Laborde; Tristan Marof (the pseudonym of Gustavo A. Navarro) a Bolivian writer [1898-1979]; Fritz Bach; and Dr. Ignacio Millan. These names were published in as part of a list of organizing committees in sixteen countries. Der Rote Aufbau (Berlin) 3 (July 1929): 105.

13. For an informative essay on Ella Wolfe, see Daniela Spenser Gollová, "Cabos Suelos: El tiempo de Ella Wolfe," Nexos [Mexico City]. (April 1991): 5-11.

14. Stark [Rule], Archive, 39 (Letter 25.4, July 7, 192)5. A photograph a month suggests that as of July she had made five or six photographs which pleased her.

15. Stark [Rule], Archive, 37. (Letter 25.2, April 2, 1925) and 44, footnote 4.
16. Siqueiros, "Una Transcendental Labor Fotográfica: la Exposición de Weston-Modotti, "El Informador [Guadalajara] (September 4, 1926): 6. Translated and reprinted in Newhall and Conger, Edward Weston Omnibus, 19-20.
17. DBI, 183.
18. DBI, 129 (September 22, 1925).
19. Weston wrote in his Daybooks: "Rereading letters before burning. Love like art returns in measure the emotion one carries to it, -- one finds what one seeks -- Well, already I have been compensated by my loss...a little brown Indian girl came to live with us, to help..." (DBI, 130 [October 3, 1925]). While he was in California, Weston had started an affair with Miriam Lerner, a friend of Modotti's. See letters in the Miriam Lerner [Fisher] Collection, Bancroft.
20. Weston letter to Miriam Lerner, October 15, [1925] states "Tina's sister Mercedes arrives here tonight." Miriam Lerner [Fisher] Collection, Bancroft; Mercedes Modotti's diary, private collection.
21. Maddow, Edward Weston, 70.
22. Edward Weston to Miriam Lerner Fisher, December 14 [1925]. In Miriam Lerner [Fisher] Collection, Bancroft.
23. Stark [Rule], Archive, 41. (Letter 26.1, January 23, 1926).
24. Letter from Consuelo Kanaga to Lee Witkin, August 9, 1973. Lee Witkin Archive, CCP.
25. Stark [Rule], Archive, 43 (Letter 26.4, February 9, 1926).

CHAPTER VII

When she returned to Mexico in late February 1926, Modotti saw her professional commitment to photography further validated by Diego Rivera -- himself no mean critic -- who distinguished her photographs as "more abstract, more ethereal, and even more intellectual" than those of Weston.¹ Rivera's opinions were published in Mexican Folkways: he was now art director, having replaced Charlot (who left Mexico City for the Yucatán, where he was serving as staff artist for the archeological excavations at Chichén Itzá.²) The same issue of the magazine published one of Modotti's photographs: an image of a cardboard Judas accompanied a short piece by Frances Toor about the custom of burning or shooting up effigies of Judas on Glory Saturday (the day that falls between Good Friday and Easter).³ Over the course of the next few years, Modotti contributed some forty-five photographs to this journal, some credited, others not. Some images were published as examples of her art work and others appear to be commissioned as illustrations for articles.⁴

Relations between Modotti and Weston had cooled. Even so, they remained courteous, even attentive, to each other. Within six weeks of her return from California, Modotti and Weston discussed the possibility of an extended trip through Mexico together to photograph

decorative arts of the country. The expedition was organized by Anita Brenner, a young American with strong Mexican ties: she was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, where her family owned a ranch and studied anthropology and archeology in Mexico City. In 1925 the National University of Mexico commissioned her to make a study of Mexican art; she contracted Weston to photograph two hundred objects and deliver four copies of each by the first of September.

Brenner supplied lists of objects to be photographed, an inventory compiled during her own travels, and provided any number of formal letters of introduction and official-looking certificates to facilitate access to museums, churches and private collections.⁵ It was, nevertheless, a formidable undertaking, and one that Weston knew he could not realize without Modotti; after they finished, he affirmed his opinion.⁶ Both Westons (Edward and Brett) and Modotti left Mexico City with three cameras at the beginning of June, headed south to the states of Puebla and Oaxaca, and returned a month later with dozens of negatives. After two weeks of developing and printing, they set off again, this time west and north, through the states of Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Querétaro.

While the trip inevitably provided numerous adventures, Modotti and Weston felt the pressure of the immense job they had agreed to perform. They deviated from

their assigned agenda once in a while to see sites not on Brenner's itinerary and made a habit of heading for the markets of each town they visited in hope of discovering authentic folk art. Nevertheless, the burden of their project permeated their enjoyment, and the trip was taxing and arduous. To save money, the three travelers shared a room, often in decent hotels, but some provided diversions such as fleas, bed bugs, or slats that fell out of the bed at night. The weather was often uncooperative, and transportation unreliable. Perhaps the greatest handicap they faced, however, came as a result of President Plutarco Calles' anticlerical policies: the cessation of all church services provoked the Cristero revolt in the western states. The mood of unrest throughout the countryside made Weston especially nervous, and created complications for the photographers. They were eyed mistrustfully at every church door they approached, suspected of being government spies; worse, they would find after arriving at a church filled with objects to be photographed that its sacristy had been sealed by the government.⁷

Between 200 and 400 photographs were taken during the course of the four-month trip; ultimately, there was only room for seventy to illustrate Brenner's book Idols behind Altars (1929), in which she credited Modotti and Weston with "sharing the commission". When Modotti received a

copy of the book from Brenner, she wrote back immediately to thank her and let her know what a "tumult of emotions and memories it brings to me looking over the several photographs done in so many corners of Mexico."⁸

Some of the photographs from the trip for Brenner Weston claimed as his own, and clear evidence -- in the form of negatives, signed prints and photographs published during his lifetime -- corroborates his assertion. But the project was collaborative on all accounts, from gaining entrance to a collection, arranging the "still life" or choosing an angle in architectural sites, setting up the camera, and so forth, all tasks at which Modotti was proficient. None of the pictures from the trip that remain in Brenner's estate, however, are signed by Weston; rather several dozen bear descriptive captions on the back in Modotti's hand.⁹ The photographic expedition had provided Modotti good training and enabled her to hone skills by which she earned a living, both before Weston left, and after he was gone. She was soon sought after by artists, both muralists and easel painters, and commissioned to reproduce their work.

Shortly after the trip, Frances Toor asked Modotti to be a contributing editor of Mexican Folkways and she began photographing of folk objects for the publication. Most are straightforward recordings but some are interesting in and of themselves. Mask on Petate [Figure 28] and Mask

with Horns for example, stand out from the over twenty-five images of masks Modotti photographed for an issue of Mexican Folkways a few years later. She set the already interesting masks on petate mats so that the combination of materials, textures and tones animates the composition. Modotti also went out on the streets of Mexico City at Toor's behest and made a least four photographs of piñatas.¹⁰

Modotti's status as an artist was growing and her reputation burgeoning. In early October, a massive group show was mounted at the Gallery of Modern Mexican Art on the prestigious Paseo de la Reforma. The gallery hoped to distinguish itself as a showplace for new and important work. Both Modotti and Weston were included in the "Exhibition of Modern Mexican Art" as were many of their friends: Rivera, Charlot, Pablo O'Higgins, Dr. Atl, Revueltas, Roberto Montenegro.

Among the images Modotti exhibited was Baby Nursing (1926) [Figure 30]. The photograph is one of a series from 1926 and the woman pictured is Luz Jiménez, who also modeled for Weston, Charlot and Rivera.¹¹ The photograph is tender without being sentimental, descriptive without objectifying the subjects. It speaks to both personal intimacy and the condition of motherhood. Modotti tackles a theme fraught with already-given symbolism and effortlessly remakes it. She moves her

camera in close, positioning herself level with the child, and tightly crops the image so that the geometric roundness of the breast and of the baby's head become significant structural elements. The woven, plaid patterning of Jiménez's rebozo and the delicate polka-dotted sleeve of the infant flatten out the image. Modotti's approach here recalls her still-life images, and presages future photographic series that use human elements.¹²

This image, and one other by Modotti, were featured in the October 14 issue of El Universal Ilustrado. In one of the two reviews published there Modotti is singled out -- acclaimed as "an exquisite artist of formative sensitivity" -- in a separate paragraph. "How many painters," the reviewer asks, "would wish to create, at least one solitary painting that records the emotion contained in the photographs of this modern...artist...?" It must have given Modotti great pleasure to find that this review by Rafael Vera de Córdova (a painter himself who may well have met Modotti during her 1921 trip to Mexico) was translated into English and printed in the December 15, 1926 issue of Art Digest.¹³ By the time the review appeared in the United States, however, Weston had already returned to California: in mid-November, he and Brett had boarded a train headed North.

Weston's expurgation of Modotti in the end portion of

his Mexican Daybooks subsides only on the last page: "The leaving of Mexico will be remembered for the leaving of Tina," he wrote. Modotti symbolized Mexico for Weston, as the earlier photograph of her dressed as a "lovely black-gowned señorita" suggests. His caustic remarks made during their summer trip further this perception, as his growing frustration with their relationship is displaced onto the country, and he raves that "Mexico breaks one's heart. Mixed with the love I had felt was a growing bitterness, - a hatred I tried to resist."¹⁴ Weston's construction of Modotti as inscribed within the idea of Mexico is linked to his attempt to live outside his conventional marriage. Yet Weston (and other male avant-garde and bohemian artists) failed to reformulate their ideas and expectations of women. His fantasy of who Modotti is is based less on reality than on his projection of her: in Weston's mind she was both less than his (social) equal and larger than life. Another measure of his inability to "see" Modotti and his tendency to respond to her for what she represented is evident in his revealing "description" of his portrait of her in which he reads:

"the face of a woman who has suffered, known death and disillusion, who has sold herself to rich men and given herself to poor, whose childhood knew privation and hard work, whose maturity will bring together the bitter-sweet experience of one who has lived life

fully, deeply, and unafraid."¹⁵

Weston's sense of Modotti's inner strength did little to alleviate his jealousies and it is likely that Modotti had other lovers while Weston was in Mexico. Speculation on who they were is rampant (many have been put forth as candidates) but finally this pastime distracts from Modotti's work and interferes with her status as a serious artist. Weston's peccadillos -- his affairs between 1923 and 1926 are well-catalogued in his Daybooks -- are seen not only as the prerogative of the male artist, but almost as a requisite; similar behavior by a female artist is never connected with creativity but rather with her status as "woman".

Modotti was philosophical about their conflicted relationship:

"...you were embittered and had lost faith in me - but I never did because I respect the manyfold possibilities of being found in all of us and because I accept the tragic conflict between life which continually changes and form which fixes it immutable..."¹⁶

Her reflections make an apt analogy for her artmaking; her photographs reflect a mediation between the vicissitudes of living and the permanence of art.

Their paths diverged irreconcilably, now not just

intellectually but physically. In the United States, Weston pursued his art for art's sake, while Modotti, in Mexico, turned her attention to making politically-charged photographs, and increasingly committed more time to radical activities. She chose not to mention these activities in her letters; rather, she focused on things of concern to Weston, and daily events which she hoped will amuse him, and thus they provide few clues to Modotti's political life. The best primary sources for her intensifying political commitments are the photographs she produced during the next few years; they literally fill in the picture of her biography.

Modotti created her most politically powerful work from mid-1926 on. Shortly after her return from California in the spring of 1926 Modotti made Workers Parade [Figure 30], a photographic tour-de-force that synthesizes social content with formal considerations. It was published at least five times (with five different titles) during her photographic career, first in the August-September 1926 issue of Mexican Folkways.¹⁷ Workers Parade marks the beginning of a new phase in Modotti's photographic practice, the point at which she realizes her ambition to marry politics and art in her photography. Modotti achieves this in Workers' Parade, on the one hand, by demonstrating a command of the fundamental formal rules of photography she had mastered over the past few years.

Evident is her aptitude for framing and composition, in short, the artistic decision-making that went into the composing the picture: the camera angle, calculated distance from the mass of marchers, the elimination of a horizon line, and the overall scrim effect created by the sea of sombreros that unites the surface of the picture. Equally important, however, is the content of this photograph: a mass demonstration of workers. By depicting the trabajadores and campesinos themselves, engaged in activities in which they appear as the heart of the movement to which she was committed, Modotti found a powerful tool to demonstrate her vision of a socially-relevant photography. These were the very people for whom, and in large part, by whom the cause was being fought. The photograph conveys the message of unity suggesting that the source of power to make political changes lies with the peasants.

Modotti devoted her energy to a number of organizations, most of which were either directly or indirectly associated with the Comintern in Russia. Modotti's work for El Machete was ongoing, as were her ties with the International Red Aid and Anti-Imperialist League, which spawned the Hands Off Nicaragua Committee in which she was active. Nineteen twenty seven also saw international protests of outrage over the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti, and in Mexico, Modotti participated in these

demonstrations. By the end of the year, Modotti formalized her alliance with Communism and joined the Mexican Communist Party (MCP).

The position of the Party in the mid-to late 1920s was one of growing dissatisfaction with the ruling government to the point of finally denouncing it as "counter-revolutionary." American journalist Joseph Freeman, who came to Mexico in 1929 as a correspondent for TASS, summarized MCP's attitude succinctly:

"The Party further attacked the government's compromises with the clerical and porfirist elements, as exemplified by the pact with the church; its cooperation with American imperialism, represented at the time by Dwight Morrow [American Ambassador to Mexico]; its reorganization and rationalization of industry in the interests of native and foreign capital; its agrarian policy which robbed the peasant of his land."¹⁸

The new objective of the Party was to agitate workers and peasants into a political bloc that could force the government to reverse these trends.

Modotti was also enlisted by the Party and its members to document events and take portraits. For her effort she was, Charlot wryly observed, rarely paid, because being a Communist and a photographer, she was

expected to provide her comrades with family portraits free of charge.¹⁹ Most of these photographs are without distinction, and only their documentary qualities stir any interest.²⁰ Over the next few years, Modotti's camera bore witness to the existence of a number of "red" organizations, among them the Federation of Young Communists of Mexico, the Hands off Nicaragua Committee and documented their numerous demonstrations, such as the International Red Aid rallies, in which Rivera participated.²¹

One photograph Modotti took for the Party commemorates a reception at the Soviet Embassy in 1927: on the wall behind the three rows of comrades, is a photograph of a hammer and sickle. It is one of an exceptional series of photographs that Modotti made in 1927, a series in which she brought her still-life aesthetic to bear on a few commonplace objects -- an ear of dried corn, a guitar, a bandolier, and a sickle -- and in the process, created a new kind of political picture. [Figures 31 & 32] The photograph's impact relies on the powerful associations of the objects depicted as well as on Modotti's effective formal composition. By uniting implements of agriculture, music and war, Modotti inevitably evokes the Mexican Revolution, and the images function then as "revolutionary icons." Here Modotti fulfills her goal of turning concrete things into

abstractions, and thus they mark an eloquent synthesis the formal and the political.

The challenge of making "political art" has vexed artists throughout the twentieth century, when artmaking was often deemed an inherently bourgeois activity. Modotti may have struggled to come to terms with certain contradictions inherent to her twinned goals, but in her choice of medium -- photography -- and the politicized content of her work, she allied herself with the tradition of popular graphics that flourished in Latin America. It is the work of the turn-of-the-century printmaker, José Guadalupe Posada, that most clearly exemplifies the power of the medium. His satirical political prints peopled with the popular calavera (skeleton) was "discovered" by the muralists around the 1920s and valued as a folk art tradition undiluted by European taste. More than just content, it is the reproducibility of the print (and of photography), and thus its accessibility that has historically set it apart from so-called "high" art.²² Mexican artists were finding innovative ways to fulfill the mandates of the post-revolutionary period -- to make public art. Printmaking was one way and virtually every muralist produced a powerful body of prints. The mural itself, of course, appearing on walls that were accessible to the populace, was deemed a suitable form of public art. Furthermore, unlike easel painting, the mural cannot be

purchased and so resists becoming a commodity. Modotti took a place among her colleagues and transformed her medium into a tool for revolution.

The ideology of mural painting depended upon such a notion of public art, an argument forcefully expressed by Xavier Guerrero with a fervor just this side of righteousness in an article published in the May 1927 issue of New Masses. "The plastic arts," he declares, "must be put to the service of world revolution." Guerrero sketches out an economic analysis of artmaking in relation to the class war, and predicts that the villages of Mexico -- where unschooled painters, artists of the people are nurtured -- will be the site of the revolution: "with them we will paint in fresco the struggles of workmen and peasants...[and] tell stories to the country people...we will give them plain visual forms to read. Our function is to paint in union halls, in cooperatives, in workers' meeting places, always leaving the stamp of the class struggle on our work." Guerrero concludes his anti-clerical, anti-capitalist invective with a prophecy that art can lead to class consciousness and ultimately, to a "classless culture of the future."²³

Modotti was familiar with the sentiments expressed by Guerrero: she translated this article from Spanish into English for the New Masses. Whether or not she subscribed wholeheartedly to the principles he laid out is

questionable, especially in light of his single-minded intensity which places Guerrero at one end of the spectrum of artmaking; Weston and his unwavering dedication to art for art's sake marks the other extreme. Modotti tried to strike a balance between these two poles: faced with a path toward making purely formal art, Modotti became politicized; and meeting the intense pursuit of political art in Guerrero led her to reaffirm her dedication to "artistic" considerations.

By the time Guerrero's article appeared, Modotti and he were romantically involved. Guerrero was a man exactly her age whom she had known since 1922 when he was in Los Angeles shepherding a massive exhibition of Mexican folk art through a maze of bureaucratic complications. The attraction between them must have been physical and intellectual, for like Modotti, Guerrero was both good-looking and dedicated to creating art with a decisive political content. He was among the first artists to paint on public walls under Vasconcelos' art program, although he was without formal, academic training. His father had been a house painter and had passed on to his son various formulas and techniques that played an important role of the early, experimental days of the mural movement. Supplementing his father's recipes with research trips to examine ancient murals himself, Guerrero convinced Rivera to give up the wax-based encaustic he had been using, and

taught him the art of fresco painting that Rivera had admired in Italy. By employing a medium that dated back to the pre-Columbian period, the muralists saw themselves as champions of a native Mexican art form, and as fulfilling their mandate to create a contemporary art based on their own heritage. This choice is yet another aspect of the post-revolutionary nationalism called Mexicanidad.²⁴

In the early years of the mural movement, Guerrero's role was primarily one of advisor and assistant, first in 1921 to Roberto Montenegro in the church of SS Pedro y Pablo, and then for several years to Rivera at the Preparatoria, the Ministry of Education, and at the School of Agriculture at Chapingo. In 1925, he painted murals on his own in Guadalajara and designed a door for the house of Governor Zuno.²⁵ (The carvings were, incidently, among the objects Brenner had assigned Modotti and Weston to photograph.)

Not only did Guerrero inherit traditional fresco techniques from his father, but he was heir to his father's legacy of active union organizing and participation in street demonstrations in support of labor, a much more risky endeavor during the days of the Porfiriato. Now, in the post-revolutionary period, Guerrero and his fellow muralists donned coveralls and worked side by side on the scaffolds with masons and plasterers, and they began to appreciate the intrinsic

affinity between the labor of artisans and that of artists. In the pages of El Machete and other leftist journals, Guerrero found an outlet for his politically-charged woodcuts.

While Modotti shared Guerrero's beliefs in the social value of art, she also pursued a more traditional path, following Weston's example by showing her work in art exhibitions both in Mexico and in the United States. She entered the Tenth International Salon of Photography, Los Angeles Museum, a juried show, held under the auspices of the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles, which was mounted in January 1927. Three untitled, platinum prints were exhibited and her photographs were singled out in a review (only seven of the over 170 photographers were mentioned by name) with the following comment: "Tina Modotti formerly of Los Angeles, now of Mexico City, by omitting titles for her prints, also makes a gesture of the modernist, which is an invitation to the audience to do its own interpreting."²⁶ Two years later her work was included in a group show at the Berkeley Art Museum, that included Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston, Brett Weston, Dorothea Lange, Roger Sturtevant, Anton Bruehl, among others, and some unnamed members of the Japan Camera Club of Los Angeles. A reviewer commented that "Mexico is represented by Tina Modotti and M. Álvarez Bravo. Miss Modotti's prints contain some excellent qualities, but Mr.

Bravo may scarcely be said to have, as yet, mastered the art of pictorial photography."²⁷

Modotti also sought a wider audience for her photography through the newly powerful picture press. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, Modotti's photographs appeared internationally in the many journals, magazines and periodicals which flourished during the period. The statistics are rather remarkable: in 1926, six of Modotti's (non-commercial) photographs appeared in two different journals; in 1927, ten appeared in three different journals; and during the three years, 1928, 1929, and 1930, over 50 of her photographs were published in a variety of venues internationally: in left-wing, journals such as Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung and Der Arbeiter-Fotograf (Berlin), CROM (Mexico City) and New Masses (New York), in literary periodicals such as transition (New York) and BIFUR (Paris), as well as in art magazines such as Forma and Mexican Folkways (Mexico City), Creative Arts (New York), and L'Art Vivant (Paris). Not surprisingly, her work was also represented in journals that mixed art and politics, for example: ¡30-30! (Mexico City) and International Literature (Moscow) (which printed half a dozen of her photographs in 1935 and 1936.)²⁸

During the 1930s, photography (along with film) came to be seen as the medium that best reflected the new

experiences of modern life, due in large measure to technological advancements in photography and the higher standards for professional and press photographers. Modotti recognized photography as the medium of modern literacy, and grasped its potential role in shaping culture and politics. She exploited its graphic nature and its capacity for mass communication.

Modotti was certainly aware of photographic trends abroad, but she shaped her vision of modernism to suit her subject, Mexico, and her work indicates her commitment to a new social order there. Her strength was not as a documentary photographer or photo-journalist: it lay in her ability to create, from the same subjects, powerfully political pictures by using her camera as an instrument of craft. Nevertheless, sometime before the spring of 1928, Modotti took a series of documentary photographs that were clearly influenced by the Arbeiterfotograf movement in Germany that emerged in the mid-1920s.²⁹

The Arbeiterfotograf movement was the creation of the brilliant Communist propagandist Willi Münzenberg who struck on the idea of a "worker photography association," and made it a part of the communications empire he built in Berlin during the 1920s.³⁰ In 1921 Münzenberg, at Lenin's behest, organized the Workers' International Relief (International Arbeiter-Hilfe or IAH), and from its original objective -- to influence capitalist countries to

contribute food and financial aid to mitigate the impending mass-starvation of Russian peasants -- sprang a vast array of organizations: soup kitchens, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, film companies and distribution societies, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist organizations, all headed by the protean Münzenberg.³¹

With earnestness and charisma, Münzenberg enlisted some of the most prestigious writers, artists and scientists of the day, which led to his reputation as the "patron saint of fellow travellers." His success was in part due to his remove from Moscow and the independent status he held. He distanced himself from the KPD [German Communist Party], functioning as a free-lance agitator, making sure non-aligned members of his various enterprises were prominent while the Communists were less visible. Among the non-Communists who supported Münzenberg were Albert Einstein, artists Käthe Kollwitz and George Grosz, writers George Bernard Shaw, Anatole France, as well as Henri Barbusse (who joined the French Communist Party in 1923). Even more effective were Münzenberg's innovative propaganda cum recruiting techniques devised on the principle that an emotional commitment stands the test of time. He asked workers to sacrifice something tangible connected with their daily lives, such as a day's wages or a product from a factory, to other workers, and thus recast charity as solidarity.³²

The Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (Workers Illustrated News, known as AIZ) was one of Münzenberg's most successful magazines -- in Germany alone its circulation reached over 250,000 copies by 1924. As it evolved from its original purpose -- an organ for IAH -- into a popular journal, its focus shifted away from Russia and toward Germany and the working classes of all nations. In format it was analogous to a growing mass-media form, the illustrated magazine, but in content it differed from other dailies and weeklies in that its articles offered working men and women decidedly partisan opinions on current events, from sports to art. Significantly, its featured photographs were not the usual photo-journalist fare, but depictions of the conditions of the working and lower classes. Traditional (bourgeois) picture agencies failed to meet their demand for images of proletarian life -- after all, the liberal press required photographs that represented the "joy of life"³³ --- and AIZ conceived of an ingenious way to create an inventory of appropriate imagery. The March 1926 issue announced a photography competition, calling for workers to send in "pictures of the proletariat." Münzenberg rightly understood photography's potential as a political tool. He went one step further, and with uncanny prescience, seized on the idea that a camera in the hands of the worker could politicize both the viewer of the photograph and the

photographer who took the image.

Motivated by the potential venues provided by Münzenberg's emerging distribution system, photographers formed the Vereinigung der Arbeiterfotografen Deutschlands (VdAFD, the Association of German Worker Photographers) and founded, in 1926, a monthly trade magazine, Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, (a Münzenberg concern, of course). Within its pages the worker-photographer was supplied with practical information and instruction about theoretical propositions. For example, an article "The Working Man's Eye" outlines how to be "the eye of the working class," contrasting the vision of a German industrialist, on the one hand, with that of the working man's eye on the other. Its author concludes: "...you need the eye of a certain class in order to perceive the signs of prevailing social conditions in the internal and external life of our fellow-beings..."³⁴

Illustrating the article "The Working Man's Eye" was a photograph by Modotti, her Hands Resting on Tool [Figure 33] with the caption "We are building a new world." Modotti was surely aware of the Arbeiterfotograf movement and its journal from its inception: her friendship with Alfons Goldschmidt virtually ensures it. Goldschmidt founded Mexico's IAH section in 1924: Modotti (and Weston) probably were present at its genesis.³⁵ Three years earlier Goldschmidt (along with Grosz and Kollwitz, among

others) were charter members of Münzenberg's IAH. Trained in Germany as an economist, Goldschmidt's sympathies were leftist and his interest in the arts led him to actively support the movement toward a mass and popular culture. In 1923 Goldschmidt travelled to Argentina to teach at the University of Córdoba; there he met José Vasconcelos, who offered him a professorship in economics at the University of Mexico. Goldschmidt and his family arrived in Mexico May 1923. His courses in Marxian economics were extremely popular and he quickly became the center of an ardent following.³⁶

Through Vasconcelos, with whom he shared an interest in ancient philosophy, Goldschmidt met the left-leaning artists who were also friends of Modotti and Weston. Weston was won over by Goldschmidt's warmth and infectious laugh, and overcame his impatience with the writer's Communist inclinations, which he saw as slightly anomalous with the Goldschmidt's relatively high living standards and their enviable collection of popular Mexican art. Goldschmidt turned out to be a good friend to both Weston and Modotti, and an integral part of their social circle.³⁷

Like his literary forbearer, the traveler-explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, Goldschmidt recorded his impressions of Mexico. He wrote a number of travel articles for the German press (AIZ, among other

journals) and his extended thoughts on Mexico, published in 1925 in Berlin, caused a sensation, inciting a Mexican craze in Germany.³⁸ Goldschmidt deserves credit for introducing Germany to the work of the muralists in general and to Rivera's painting in particular. Through his initiative, the first non-Spanish language monograph on Rivera, richly illustrated, presumably with Modotti's photographs, was published in Germany in 1928: the publisher, Neuer Deutscher Verlag was the parent body of all of Münzenberg's publishing enterprises.³⁹

Goldschmidt kept up a steady flow of communiqués back to Germany and probably showed Modotti Münzenberg's German publications. A handful of her photographs are comparable to the kind of work that the worker-photographers made abroad, and are radically different in sensibility to the rest of Modotti's work. For example, Modotti made a series of images of the shocking living conditions and impoverished children in one of the poorest barrios of Mexico City, the Colonia de la Bolsa.⁴⁰ Its reputation as Mexico City's "Bad Lands" was notorious. Modotti and Weston had planned to visit there, not to see the poverty, but rather, a school built by Miguel Oropeza. Modotti was exhilarated by the success of his teach-yourself system and wrote to Weston about it in the summer of 1927.⁴¹

The school was a small shining light in the midst of hopeless destitution. The photographs Modotti produced

depicted Mexico "from the inside," and they formulate a sharp indictment of the policies under Mexico's president Calles.⁴² These photographs, which were destined for the pages of El Machete, reflect the consequences of the unfulfilled promises of the Revolution. Two Children [Figure 34], is the most impressive, in part because the image is severely cropped, showing Modotti's intervention. By eliminating all distractions, Modotti's composition brings the children up to the surface of the photograph, intensifying our reaction to their poverty.

These photographs bear out the Arbeiterfotograf precept that a camera can be "the eye of the working class." Modotti too, understood photography's power, and identified herself as a worker-photographer. She developed her own vision and trained herself to see with a "class eye." Her camera served as a way to interpret the world: "I look upon people now not in terms of race [or] types but in terms of classes. I look upon social changes and phenomena not in terms of human nature or of spiritual factors but in terms of economics."⁴³

Münzenberg's calculation that the camera could be a powerful tool for awakening class consciousness derived in part from current new vision photographic practice and theory of the avant-garde. Perhaps no artist articulated photography's cultural and artistic significance more clearly -- especially its significance in Germany -- than

the Hungarian-born László Moholy-Nagy. He was, in part, reacting to the technological culture emerging in the 1920s, fueled by an unprecedented production and availability of illustrated books, magazines and newspapers, which in turn gave rise to an "image-hungry public."⁴⁴ Moholy-Nagy advanced the idea that society should learn to use a camera or suffer from a modern form of illiteracy. The camera was a tool which enabled modern society to broaden its visual horizons and sharpen its perceptions. Photography offered an important "link between the critical avant-garde and an emerging mass, technological culture."⁴⁵

Ironically, virtually none of Modotti's documentary photographs were published in AIZ and Die Arbeiter-Fotograf. Instead, it was her carefully composed, emblematic signature photographs that reached an international audience through their pages. Modotti approached these subjects in the same manner as she did her still-lives and applied the same strategies she found so useful in her botanical and revolutionary icons. Rather than fix on inanimate objects, Modotti began to include a human element. Hands Resting on Tool (1927) and Labor 1 (also called Hands Washing) (c. 1927) [Figures 33 & 35], both depicting workers' hands, are among her most striking images and may be seen as pendants. Their simplicity and modesty belies the effectiveness of their message. Through

close cropping and elegant composition, Modotti creates icons that fairly explode. Literally, these hands do the necessary work for Mexico, while figuratively, they represent the potential political power vested in the campesinos and trabajadores.

Modotti pictures workers in various relationships to the work they perform. Some remind the viewer of the chronic lot of the lower classes, with only their bodies as a means to a bitter existence. Other workers, however, are placed in a relationship to machinery, but are presented neither as the subservient laborer exploited by capitalism nor as the glorified worker so prevalent in Russian photography. Modotti envisions the obrero as the backbone of the Mexican economy, working in concert with modern implements of steel, the path to the "the classless culture of the future."

Modotti created some of her best-known photographs of work and workers in 1927 for a book of poetry by List Arzubide called El Canto de los Hombres (Song of Mankind).⁴⁶ Tank No. 1 [Figure 36] is an especially eloquent example. A worker atop a reservoir tank is seen from a dramatic worms-eye view. Modotti captures him poised at the brim, highlighted by sunlight hitting his white pants, and partially silhouetted against the sky. The delicate accent of light on the diagonal ladder and the perpendicular pipe point dynamically to the laborer

performing his job. In Labor 2 [Figure 37] another image for this project, a construction worker grabs hold of a bar framed by a network of girders, one of the most ubiquitous symbols of modernism. In both images Modotti deliberately waits until the sun is low in the sky so that strong shadows are cast by the rivets which hold these structures together, suggesting perhaps an analogous position of the worker within economic reform.

In addition to the photographs she made for El Canto de los Hombres, Modotti took others that may well have been part of their project. In half a dozen she depicts workers caught in action (Construction Worker [Figure 38] and Loading Bananas for example, while others appear to have been posed, or uncropped versions of the hands series (Woman with Olla, and Campeño with Bundles [Figures 39 & 40])).

The power and originality of Modotti's work arises from her ability to portray, on the one hand, something individual, even intimate, about the workers she photographs, while on the other hand, they stand for all workers, and their very universality prevents them from being seen as either anthropological documents or as instantaneous recording of reality. In contrast to her journalistic photographs for El Machete, these images move beyond documentary imagery and function as contemplations on the nature of work.

Modotti's choice of subject matter for her art is in itself provocative, even in the post-Revolutionary period. It is worth remembering that riot that broke out in the Preparatoria was in part a result of the subject matter of the murals on its wall. Vasconcelos' mandate -- to formulate a Mexican art -- was premised on the notion of aesthetizing indigenous art to create the impression of an national culture; to make palatable to the middle classes the government policies of educational reforms designed for the lower and working classes, many of whom were of Indian descent. It is easy now to overlook the subversive power of Modotti's photographs and to miss the fact that images such as Worker Reading "El Machete" [Figure 41] and Campesinos Reading El Machete were seen as potent manifestos of revolt. The young obrero reading El Machete is a reminder that the Revolution's promise of universal literacy would only be fulfilled by the activism of the people.

By championing the cause of a social movement that was at its core completely allied with the masses, Modotti's work, however superb in formal terms, resists easy categories. As early as 1925, she used a number of strategies that are associated with the European avant-garde photography: the crowd of campesinos in Workers Parade [Figure 30] and the high angle at which it was taken express this aesthetic, just as do the subject

matters and low viewpoints in Tank No. 1 [Figure 36] and Telephone Wires [Figure 17]. Furthermore, virtually every photograph she took pays tribute to the stringent, formal concerns of Weston and his American contemporaries.

"Modernists," however, may be distinguished from the "avant-garde" artists by looking at the relationship each group holds toward mass culture (as opposed to high art). Modernists tend to keep clear, while the avant-garde is inclined to involve elements of mass culture in its work. Modotti's photographs resist interpretation using this model and as such, are among the most original solutions to the persistent challenges of making political art. Any uneasiness towards this marriage of art and politics is the result of a Eurocentric point of view, as Fredric Jameson has argued. "What politics -- what a politics -- might be in the first place...[is] a perplexity no doubt meaningless in the rest of the world..., [in Latin America]...the political is destiny, where human beings are from the outset condemned to politics, as a result of material want..." Furthermore, although Modotti photographs can be understood as part of the international phenomenon of "modernism," that is, as advanced cultural representations of industrial society, her setting, her metropolis, was vastly different from cosmopolitan centers where other modernists were working. Industrialization had claimed for itself far more territory in Europe than in

Latin American during the 1920s, and it had altered the material reality of the Mexican middle classes far less extensively. It was not until he left Mexico for a three-year stay in the United States that Rivera, who received the now famous commission in Detroit, incorporated machinery that was part of the industrial society north of the border in his work. Modotti too, in spite of her years in the United States, tailored her vision of modernism to suit the circumstances at hand: she was not working near the metropolises of post-war Europe, but in an essentially agrarian Latin American country still reeling from changes wrought by revolution.

1. Diego Rivera, "Edward Weston and Tina Modotti," Mexican Folkways. 2 (April/May 1926): 17. Translation by author.
2. Mexican Folkways. 1, no 5 (February-March 1926), 10; Karen Thompson, "Jean Charlot: Artist and Scholar," Jean Charlot: A Retrospective (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Gallery, 1990), 16. For Charlot's summary of his activities, see his foreword in Orozco, The Artist in New York, 19-20.
3. Frances Toor, "Judas Lives," Mexican Folkways 2, no 1 (April-May 1926), 18-19. Modotti's photograph appears on page 19.
4. Not included in this number are the dozens of reproductions of the murals of Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, and Máximo Pacheco Modotti took to support herself.
5. Edward Weston to Anita Brenner, June 28, 1926, in the Brenner estate. Cited in Conger, Edward Weston in Mexico, 52.
6. DBI, 175. Weston's account of their trip provides a entertaining travelogue. DBI, 162-190. See also Conger, Edward Weston in Mexico, 60.
7. DBI, 175.
8. Letter from Modotti to Brenner, October 9, [1929]. Collection of Anita Brenner Archive, courtesy of Dr. Peter Glusker and Susannah Glusker.
9. Conger claims that all but one photograph was made by Weston. Conger, Edward Weston in Mexico, 50. Although Weston was the member of the party who signed the contract with Brenner, Modotti's deference to Weston's mastery of photography (evident in her letters to him), her lack of proprietary disposition, even her sensitivity to his vanity, may have prevented her from claiming credit.
10. Three of Modotti's photographs of piñatas were reproduced in the following issues of Mexican Folkways: April-May 1926; December 1926-January 1927; April-June 1929.
11. Two photos of Jiménez by Weston are reproduced in Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 434/1926; 435/1926. She is recognizable in many drawings and paintings by Charlot and Rivera. Weston remarks in his Daybooks that Charlot showed him thirty sketches of "Luziana." DBI, 109. (December 12, 1924).

12. This photograph is one of series of five that Modotti took of Jiménez and her daughter Concha, probably in 1926. While Baby Nursing was published in 1926, another Aztec Baby is signed and dated 1927.

13. Vera de Córdova, "El Arte Moderno en México," 42, 66 and in translation as "Art in Mexico," The Art Digest (December 15, 1926), 10; Cuesta, "En la Exposición de Arte Moderno," 43, 63. The two photographs by Modotti were reproduced in El Universal Ilustrado: "Los Judas" on page 10 and "Baby Nursing" on page 42. Vera de Córdova reviewed the exhibition which included Robo's work that Modotti attended in 1921.

14. DBI, 202.

15. DBI, 49. (February 14, 1924).

16. Stark [Rule], Archive, 43-44. (Letter 26.5, November 14, 1926).

17. This image was published in the following five magazines under these names: Mexican Folkways 1926): "Workers Parade by Tina Modotti"; New Masses. 1928, caption: "May Day in Mexico"; Creative Art Magazine 1929, caption: "A Peasants' Manifestation Photograph by Tina Modotti"; transition 1929) caption "Tina Modotti: Strike Scene"; and BIFUR 1930, caption: "Mexique."

18. Joseph Freeman, "Painting and Politics: The Case of Diego Rivera," New Masses (February 1932): 23.

19. Charlot, forward to Orozco, The Artist in New York, 18.

20. Modotti's intense portrait of Stanislas Pestkowski, Soviet Ambassador to Mexico from 1924 until October 1926 when Alexandra Kollontai replaced him, is an exception. It is by any standards a remarkable portrait, and is indicative of Modotti's long-standing familiarity with members of the Russian Embassy.

21. Some original and many copy prints of Modotti's political photographs may be found in CEMOS (Centro de Estudios del Movimiento Obrero Socialista) in Mexico City.

22. Walter Benjamin, of course, articulated the significance of technical aspects of the photograph and its mechanical origins and thus mechanical reproduction in his decisive essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," reprinted in Walter Benjamin, Illuminations (Edited and with an introduction by Hannah

Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 217-252.

23. Xavier Guerrero, "A Mexican Painter," New Masses (May 1927): 18.

24. A similar kind of nationalism was behind the exhibition of Mexican folk art that Guerrero organized on behalf of the Government, a massive assemblage of 80,000 objects that was to travel throughout the United States on a tour arranged by Katherine Anne Porter. At the time, the US was refusing to recognize the Obregón regime and thus declined to designate see the show as art, but labeled it "political propaganda." It languished in a railroad siding for two months until duty was paid on it as a commercial enterprize and it was sold to a private dealer in Los Angeles.

25. In the 1940s, after he returned from Russia, Guerrero travelled to Chile where he received several commissions. For additional information about Guerrero's art, see biographical entry in Art in Latin America. For Guerrero's role in the Syndicate, see Charlot, Mexican Mural Renaissance, chapter 19, 241-251. For Guerrero's contribution to fresco technique, see Desmond Rochfort, Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros. (New York: Universe, 1993): 36.

26. Elizabeth Bingham, "Camera Pictorialists at Museum," Los Angeles Saturday Night 7, no 11 (January 22, 1927): 9.

27. "Art in Photography," The Argonaut (October 12, 1929): 16. See also "Creative Photography on Exhibition at Berkeley Art Museum," The Courier [Berkeley, CA] October 5, 1929): 10.
and "Exhibition of Photography, The Courier [Berkeley, CA] October 12, 1929): 10.

28. The following is a partial list of citations of reproductions of Modotti's photographs: Mexican Folkways, vol. 2 (1926); vol. 3 (1927); vol. 4 (1928); vol. 5 (1929). New Masses, December, 1927; January 1928; April, October, December 1928; April, June, September, December 1929. Der Arbeiter-Fotograf IV H7 (1930). Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung, October 1930; May 1931. BIFUR vol. 5 and 6 (1930). transition February (1929); (November 1929). CROM January (1928).

29. See Leah Ollman, Camera as Weapon: Worker Photography between the Wars. Exhibition catalogue. San Diego: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1991, passim.

30. On Münzenberg, see R. N. Carew Hunt, "Willi Münzenberg," St. Anthony's Papers [London], 9 (1960): 72-87; Helmut Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire 1921-1933," Journal of Modern History. 38 (September 1966): 278-297; Jorgen Schleimann, "The Organisation Man: The Life and Work of Willi Münzenberg," Survey: A Journal of Soviet and Eastern European Studies. 55 (April 1965): 64-91.

31. Branko Lazitch, in collaboration with Milorad M. Drachkovitch. Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern. New, Revised, and Expanded Edition. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University: 1986): xxix. For an excellent history of the IAH, see the U.S. Department of State's "Memorandum on the Workers' International Relief (based exclusively on Communist and Soviet Sources) that was compiled in late 1932. RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 1930-1939 Central Decimal File, Box 4516A 800.00B Worker International Relief, Civil Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

32. This perceptive analysis is Arthur Koestler's, cited in Schleimann, "The Organisation Man," 90.

33. On the lack of suitable imagery, see Ute Eskildsen, "Photography and the Neue Sachlichkeit movement," Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the 20s (Exhibition catalogue. Heyward Gallery, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979): 93. For a lucid description of one of the most successful liberal publishing houses and how their politics effected their policies, see Maud Lavin, Cut with a kitchen knife: The Weimar photomontages of Hannah Höch. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993: 54-61.

34. Edwin Hoernle, "Das Auge des Arbeiters" (The Working Man's Eye), Der Arbeiter-Fotograf V, no 7 (1930). Reprinted in translation in David Mellor, ed. Germany: The New Photography, 1927-1933. Exhibition catalogue. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978: 47-48.

35. DBI, 82. El Machete reported the formation of a Mexican section of the Workers' International Relief or International Workers Aid. Hooks, Tina Modotti, 104. Münzenberg's IAH functioned much like the International Red Aid, with which it is often confused -- Hooks makes this mistake. Tina Modotti, 208-209. Their differences lie with their respective aims of their aid: the former assisted in economic struggles while the latter provided relief for political prisoners. Indeed, the Russian-based organization eventually came to see Münzenberg's expansive power as problematic.

36. Before he left for Mexico, Goldschmidt had visited Russia, and then founded the Berlin League for Proletarian Culture in 1919, and later, the Proletarian Theatre. Willett, Art and Politics in the Weimar Period, 56. See also Kiessling's biographical essay in Goldschmidt Mexico/Auf den Spuren der Azteken.

37. DBI, 60 (April 2, 1924); 82 (June 27, 1924).

38. Wolfgang Kiessling, "Das Weg nach Mexiko," introduction essay in Alfons Goldschmidt, Mexico/Auf den Spuren der Azteken. [1925/1927] Leipzig: Verlag Philip Reclam jun., 1985: 5. Goldschmidt's second book on Mexico, In Search of the Aztecs (1927) was illustrated by Rivera. The film company Universum-Film-AG began production on a film based on his text of Mexiko and he planned to do another book on Mexico with photographs by Hugo Brehme.

39. Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire," 287. Modotti, whose photographs, were undoubtedly used for the production, is not credited.

40. Modotti visited the Colonia de la Bolsa in the summer of 1927 and some have dated this series from that year. Xavier Moyssén, "Una colección de fotografías de Tina Modotti y José María Lupercio," Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas. XII, no 44 (1975): 139; Stark [Rule], Archive, 53. (Letter 27.5, July 4, 1927). Many of the photographs were published in El Machete between May and September 1928. See discussion below.

41. Stark [Rule], Archive, 53. (Letter 27.5, July 4, [1927]). Also see Brenner, Your Mexican Holiday, A Modern Guide, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941): 337-338.

42. Moyssén, "Una colección de fotografías," 139.

43. Letter from Modotti to Brenner, October 9, [1929]. Collection of Anita Brenner Archive, courtesy of Dr. Peter Glusker and Susannah Glusker.

44. See introduction in Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era for a concise summary of issues of importance to photography in the 1920s and 1930s.

45. Ibid, xii.

46. It does not appear that the project was ever completed, although List Arzubide published Cantos del Hombre Errante - Poemas estridentistas (Edición Rosilbert, Mexico, D.F., 1971) which does not contain any photographs by Modotti.

CHAPTER VIII

Modotti joined the Communist Party before the end of 1927, shortly before Guerrero, who had abandoned art making, was called to Moscow to take part in a three-year course at the Lenin School. Possibly Modotti felt the need to express her long-term commitment to him on the eve of his departure by this symbolic act. Guerrero was an intense personality, with a fierce and almost humorless dedication to the Party. His letters to Modotti from Moscow are stern, even somewhat patronizing, and he admonished her in one to refrain from befriending those outside her political circle for fear of scandal.¹

At first he and Weston appear to be opposites: the one, quiet, dignified and highly political, and the other, gregarious, at times slightly rowdy, with an aversion to organized groups, let alone political alliances. The only revolution Weston said he would take part in was an aesthetic one.² Yet Guerrero and Weston resembled each other in their single-minded dedication to a radical stance with regard to the status quo, one in the social field, the other on an artistic plane. In both relationships, Modotti appears to have struggled between her role of helpmate and equal partner. Her attraction to men with such unwavering ambitions represented a challenge to her in forging a individual position for herself.

Photography provided her with personal satisfaction and an individual identity, and was an enduring passion for her. Within a month or so of Guerrero's departure, she wrote to Weston reaffirming photography's significance in her life:

You don't know how often the thought comes to me of all I owe you for having been the one important being, at a certain time of my life, when I did not know which way to turn, the one and only vital guidance and influence that initiated me in this work that is not only a means of livelihood [sic] but a work that I have come to love with real passion and that offers such possibilities of expression...I find myself again and again speaking with friends about this precious work which you have made possible for me.³

Modotti was inundated with commissions at this point in her career.⁴ She was especially pre-occupied with making reproductions of murals by Rivera, Orozco, and Máximo Pacheco (a young painter who she had come to know and admire), who were dependent upon her to make reproductions of their murals. She continued to provide photographs for Mexican Folkways: in mid-1929, she photographed over twenty-five masks for the July/September issue.

Precisely when Modotti began the immense task of documenting the Mexican mural movement is unclear; it is certain that by the summer of 1927, she had committed an enormous amount of energy to photographing work by Rivera and Pacheco. In the April/May 1927 issue of Mexican Folkways, Toor announced the availability of photographs by Modotti of thirty-three of the latest frescoes by Diego Rivera from the Ministry of Education. In the next month's issue, Toor published a list of photographs by Modotti of Rivera's Chapingo murals, plus additional photographs of the Ministry of Education murals; a separate advertisement in the same issue announced the availability of photographs of the frescoes of Pacheco.⁵

Beyond illustrating several monographs -- for example, Ernestine Evans' The Frescoes of Diego Rivera (1929) and Alma Reed's José Clemente Orozco (1932)⁶ -- Modotti's ongoing documentation of the Mexican mural movement had a significant effect on art of the 1930s: her photographs were reproduced in art magazines and political journals throughout the world and thereby gave international visibility to the muralists whose work was inaccessible except to those who could travel to Mexico. By 1927, her name had become synonymous with the mural movement. From California, late in 1927, philanthropist Albert Bender, who had begun investing in the Mexican art, ordered an entire set of fifty prints of Rivera's murals

directly from Modotti. Bender's collection formed the core of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's collection of Mexican art. Meanwhile, that December in Moscow, Alfred Barr, who was soon to become director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, noted Diego Rivera's arrival in Moscow in his Russian diary. Barr eagerly anticipated seeing a complete series of Modotti's photographs of Rivera's Mexico City frescos, and shortly thereafter had the opportunity to examine them. Throughout 1928, near the beginning of his eight-year stay in New York, Orozco wrote frequently to Charlot to be certain that Modotti was making reproductions of his mural work. Not only were they crucial to show prospective patrons, but he hoped to have them framed and placed in "offices, studios and shops of the best architects in New York."⁷

Modotti's formal affiliation with the party may account for the series of journalistic photographs she made in the Colonia de la Bolsa for El Machete in the spring of 1928. They were published between mid-May and the beginning of September: six paired "contrasts of the regime" and seven single shots of poverty and destitution. The presentation of the photographs was anything but subtle: antithetic subjects were paired under sardonic headings. In one instance, a child sitting pretty in an elegant baby carriage on the Paseo de la Reforma, dressed

in delicate baby clothes is juxtaposed with an ill-dressed toddler playing in a wooden box on the street under the caption in quotation marks, "All Mexicans are equal before the law." Although most of the photographs -- and possibly all -- were by Modotti, only one is credited to her, and it is at least possible that Modotti did not wish to acknowledge the others and may have felt somewhat apprehensive about this use of her art. Elegance and Poverty [Figure 42], the one she acknowledged as her own, is a photomontage, a single image created out of pictures taken at different places and seamlessly united.⁸ A billboard, lifted from one part of Mexico, appears conveniently above an image of an obrero sitting on the curb. The lower image is not a candid, street photograph, but another example of Modotti's careful composing, similar to Worker Reading "El Machete" [Figure 41]. Posed with his face cast in deep shadow, this worker is transformed into "every worker," or rather, every unemployed, working class man. Modotti's placement of him in front of a stone wall literally isolates him and figuratively suggests the impossibility of his rising out of his situation. The billboard for Estrada Hnos (abbreviation for hermanos or brothers) promises "From head to foot we have everything a gentleman needs to dress elegantly," effectively reiterates the metaphoric division: between top and bottom in the picture as well as

in the social stratification.

Modotti's use of photomontage differs from the way it was used in Germany where the medium was developed by the Berlin Dadaists just after World War I, and is another example of Modotti's adaptation of international trends modified to suit her own needs. Photomontage, as it was practiced in Germany by avant-garde artists such as Hannah Höch and John Heartfield was a means of reflecting modern life and a mechanism for making stinging political commentary.

Their work is characterized by visual fragmentation and non-linear narrative. In contrast, Modotti brought disparate elements together to make a photomontage that looked like a seamless photograph, ensuring a specific, rather than an open-ended meaning. It is significant, however, that Elegance and Poverty shares with European montage the use of ready-made image and text. Where her colleagues abroad tended to use scraps cut out of newspapers and magazines, that is, appropriated snippets from mass media, Modotti chose a medium that was more familiar and certainly more accessible to the lower classes, the public billboard.

It is tempting to speculate that not crediting the street photographs in El Machete to Modotti was not an oversight, but deliberate; that perhaps she chose not to identify herself with reportage photography. Elegance and

Poverty, impressive for its deft use of photomontage and its overt but carefully constructed political message was a photograph that Modotti could sign her name to with pride.

If Modotti's blatant propaganda photographs were appropriate for the overt political point the editors of El Machete hoped to make, her more original revolutionary still-lives resonated with the goals of the Treintatreintistas, a group of artists who came together to protest conservative trends in the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes (National School of Fine Arts) where many of them were employed. Their political aims were evident in the name they chose: the 30-30 was a rifle used by revolutionary forces during the initial uprising in 1910 and hence a popular icon of the Revolution.. The Treintatreintistas identified themselves, figuratively, with the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, on the one hand, and on the other, literally, their protests and actions invoked the racket of this infamous firearm. Modotti had already made a link between the revolutionary connotations of the 30-30 when her photograph Bandolier, Corn and Sickle was published one year earlier facing the lyrics of a corrido (or ballad) with the same title.⁹ Appropriately, there were thirty members of the founding committee, most of whom were painters -- with the exception of Cuban writer Martí Casanovas, who wrote a

defense of Modotti's use of art on behalf of political change in the first issue, ¡30-30!, the group's journal.¹⁰

The Treintatreintistas were particularly enraged by the government-controlled school's reactionary position toward the Open Air Painting School (Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre) that had flourished throughout the 1920s on the outskirts of Mexico City, providing alternative educational instruction to the children of workers and peasants who populated these semirural areas.¹¹ The Open Air Schools became models for teaching art to the masses, and therefore fulfilled the mandates of the Revolution: to regenerate a Mexican culture. By 1928, however, they had become a sites of populist radicalism, and the National School proposed drastic modifications in their curricula. In response to what the more radical artist-instructors perceived as diminished artistic independence and a growing reversion to academic, traditional art education, the Treintatreintistas published a series of statements, manifestos, and protests between July and December.¹²

There are uncanny similarities between the mandates set by the Treintatreintistas and another group of dissenters, the Oktyabr group, whose manifesto "October -- Association of Artistic Labor," was published in March 1928 in Moscow.¹³ Oktyabr included artists working in a

variety of disciplines, especially the industrial and applied arts such as architecture, poster art and book design, film and photography (the last two represented by Sergei Eisenstein and Aleksandr Rodchenko), who found themselves walking a fine line between avant-garde aesthetics and the unpolished forms of expression characteristic of mass culture. They advocated art that derived from popular Russian art, but that rejected both realism, which they associated with reactionary ideas, and Constructivism, condemned as art for art's sake by this point. In part they were reacting against the drift toward social realism and the growing tendency for the Russian State to dictate the parameters of artmaking. Their fears were not unfounded: Stalin's 1932 decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations" liquidated all existing arts organization, institutionalized "social realism," and effectively eliminated innovative art for decades to come.¹⁴

Rivera, who had spent six months in the Soviet Union beginning in September 1927 as a guest of its government, signed the Oktobyr manifesto.¹⁵ Back in Mexico by June, Rivera delivered a lecture at the National University on Russian art and culture, at the same time the Treintatreintistas were forming their group, and he is credited with editing the "Protest" manifesto issued in November, which adamantly rejects academic practices,

stating that no matter the subject, conventional art can never fulfill revolutionary aims: "Even a good ex-combatant in the Revolution who paints pictures in the sterile colonial academic aesthetic, is counterrevolutionary in artistic terms."¹⁶

It is inconceivable that Rivera did not share his experiences abroad with Modotti personally. Both artists were attempting to come to terms with the difficult questions raised by the Oktobyr and Treintatreintista groups. How was one to make revolutionary art uncontaminated by bourgeois culture, but produce work not alienating to the masses? What forms of art can be on the one hand innovative, and the other, easily apprehended? It appears that Modotti found this question increasingly perplexing, and if she felt little pleasure in making the kind of pictures that El Machete could use to draw elementary political lessons, she was probably becoming equally uncomfortable making images that were not directly useful to the party.

In September 1928, Modotti wrote an anguished letter to Guerrero, revealing her attachment to another man, and making a definitive break with him. She had delayed for months, dreading the task which would hurt Guerrero, and yet her letter confirms the suspicion that Modotti may have confused allegiance to the party with loyalty to Guerrero. With the hope of mitigating the pain she was

causing him, Modotti assured Guerrero that her new love would not interfere in any way with her work toward "revolutionary action" -- "this has been my greatest concern, even more than my concern for you...": Hardly a comforting thought for Guerrero, but perhaps indicative of Modotti's feelings toward him.

Julio Antonio Mella, like the other men with whom Modotti became romantically involved, was passionately devoted and driven. A dynamic orator, persuasive writer, and charismatic figure, Mella threw himself into fighting for workers' rights as well as the rights of Latin American countries (especially Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru) to independence and freedom from imperialist and capitalist interests. Although not yet twenty-three when he arrived in Mexico in early 1926 as a political refugee from his native Cuba, Mella was already a legend in Communist lore.¹⁷ He made a name for himself as the leader of the university reform movement and vigorously agitated against the intervention of the U.S. in Cuban affairs. Mella proved to be a far-sighted radical leader, working for concrete improvements for the disenfranchised, founding the short-lived "Popular University José Martí" devoted to educating workers, while at the same time orienting himself toward the establishment of an international proletarian state. When the Cuban Communist Party formed in August 1925, Mella was among the founding

members and was elected to its Central Committee. He was assigned two major tasks: to edit the party newspaper, Lucha de Clases, and to direct the education of new members. Mella also took it upon himself to organize the Communist Youth League, fomenting revolution among his university colleagues and urging their membership in the Party. That same year he founded the Cuban section of the Anti-Imperialist League and began an attack on Cuba's President-elect Gerardo Machado, whom he labeled "a tropical Mussolini." Hoping to quash Mella's influence, Machado jailed Mella in December 1925. The dictator's plan backfired, and instead, Mella brought worldwide attention to himself and his cause by going on a nineteen-day hunger strike: the press, both mainstream and leftist, covered his story. Before the end of the year the government released Mella and shortly thereafter deported him.¹⁸

From birth, Mella was doubly stigmatized: born out of wedlock and of mixed national heritage. His given name was Nicador MacPartland. His mother, Cecilia MacPartland, was British, and his father, Nicanor Mella, a Dominican tailor who raised him when his mother moved to New Orleans. After an attempt to direct the young Mella toward a military career seemed doomed to failure, Mella studied law at university, where he began his activist career. It was in Mexico that he took as his first name

Julio Antonio and as his family name Mella, for its revolutionary connotations (his paternal grandfather had played a prominent role in the struggle for independence in the Dominican Republic).¹⁹ The symbolic import of names was not lost on Mella, and he used others as well. A number of articles he published in El Machete he signed Cuauhtémoc Zapata, a shrewd fusion of two of Mexico's most revered heroes, both of whom had stood up to outside aggressors. (One cannot help but recall Modotti's husband's metamorphosis from Ruby Richey, farm boy, into the bohemian Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey.)

Although Mella was clearly a man of action, his hyperactivity may to some extent reflect a fervent search for a sense of identity. His forced exile from Cuba deprived him of his country; his mother had already abandoned him, and now he had left his father behind. Almost upon setting foot in Mexico, Mella became active in the various Party organizations, among them El Machete (which he helped edit and to which he contributed regularly), Hands Off Nicaragua Committee (Manos fuera Nicaragua), and the committee in support of Sacco and Vanzetti -- all organizations in which Modotti was involved. He became secretary of the Mexican Section of the International Red Aid.²⁰ In Mexico, he published some of his most important pamphlets, and continued his fight against capitalist interests.²¹ If the affair

between Modotti and Mella had by necessity begun secretively, after her break with Guerrero in September they became an acknowledged couple and began living together. Before the end of the year, Rivera memorialized their union in his mural in the Ministry of Education. The pair is seen handing out arms for the Revolution, Modotti holding a bandolier that had appeared in her revolutionary icons.

Modotti made two very different "portraits" of Mella. One, dramatically lit and thoroughly heroic, reflects her devotion to and admiration of him. Mella, posed in a classical profile and photographed from a low vantage point, is resolute. The image has all the earmarks of a publicity shot, and it was this photograph that appeared in newspapers and journals around the world after his death, the portrait by which his is still remembered.

The other photograph, La Técnica [Figure 43], also known as Mella's Typewriter, can be seen as an abstract portrait, related in spirit to the drawings of machines Francis Picabia made as symbolic portraits of his friends. (The most famous was his drawing of a camera called, Ici, C'est ici Stieglitz.) Modotti was almost certainly familiar with Ralph Steiner's 1921 photograph Typewriter Keys, which appeared in the October 1927 issue of the New Masses.²² She was, however, more likely inspired by the typewriters that were the indispensable tools of her

intellectual and political friends and here pays tribute to the machine that was explicitly used in the service of her party. (Indeed, the typewriter was an apt emblem of Mella's historical contribution to Latin American radicalism: his written legacy has a crucial role in Cuba's history. Not only are his articulations of Marxist ideas acknowledged as laying the groundwork for the revolution in Cuba, he is also recognized as the first to expose the exploitative nature of US imperialist policy in the Caribbean as a whole, and to link the Cuban bourgeoisie with capitalist interests to the north.)

Modotti's closely cropped, tightly composed image -- made up of simple geometric shapes that balance and echo one another -- is remarkably flat and makes clear the process of communication: from the round white keys, awaiting the writer's touch, to the arching type rods poised for action, to the silvery ribbon, that thin membrane into which the type is struck, which converts the reversed matrix into a positive image on the paper. The event has already occurred. In the top corner, a piece of paper held in place by the platen, bears the words: "inspiración, artística, en una síntesis, existe entre la" (inspiration, artistic, in a synthesis, exists between the). Modotti has in effect montaged a text into her photograph, and in this case, drawn not from advertising but from politics. The fragment is part of a statement by

Leon Trotsky. The full citation reads:

Technique will transform itself in a more profound inspiration than that of artistic production: in time, it finds a sublime synthesis, the contrast that exists between technique and nature.²³

The alternate title of this photograph, Mella's Typewriter, was supplied by Vittorio Vidali (nearly fifty years after the fact) who asserted that the text was part of an essay Mella was writing on Modotti's photography, that it remained unfinished, and that it was his last piece of writing before being assassinated in January 1929.²⁴ He thus imbued the image with a eulogistic aura. In point of fact, Modotti had made La Técnica before September 1928, and Mella himself praised it and encouraged her work and her skill in transforming a ordinary keyboard into something "socialized."²⁵

Nevertheless, there is an emotional charge emanating from this photograph, which derives from the fact that Modotti's life was absolutely altered by Mella's murder. She was with him on the evening of January 10, 1929, when he was shot down in the street with two bullets: he died in surgery a few hours later. Modotti was persecuted by the police in the aftermath of the assassination: she was interrogated repeatedly, her apartment was searched, and photographs (some nudes of her by Weston), love letters,

and diaries that were found were seized. All was leaked to the press, to be made into fodder for lurid front-page stories. Modotti's unconventional romantic relationships, her foreign nationality, and her political activities were enough to indict her: the police charged Modotti with the slaying and placed her under house arrest.

The press repeated the police contentions that Mella's murder was a crime of passion, that a rival lover shot Mella, a ploy the authorities used to effectively minimize the political dimensions of the crime. "It is an infamy," she declared, "for the police to try to make out that this was a sentimental case. It is purely a case of political assassination."²⁶ In the eyes of his supporters around the world, Mella -- just weeks before his twenty-sixth birthday -- became an instant revolutionary martyr, a hero to those fighting "Yankee" imperialism and Wall Street interests. Mass demonstrations were held throughout Mexico and in the U.S. as well. Mella was the subject of corridos and poems in his honor, and his death inspired radical artists who used him symbolically as the victim of capitalism.²⁷

Mella's assassin was, in all likelihood, one José Magriñat, sent from Cuba by Machado to put a stop to what the dictator began to see as a significant threat to his rule. In addition to publishing Cuba Libre (the organ of Cuban revolutionary refugees) from Mexico, Mella had been

planning a coup, which was abandoned when word leaked out to Cuba. Although Magriñat was arrested, the Mexican government shortly thereafter set him free and no one was ever charged with the murder. Like many political assassinations, Mella's has given rise to various theories over the years, among them, the suggestion that the Comintern arranged for Mella's liquidation because of his unwillingness to subordinate himself to the Communist Party, and because of his Trotskyist leanings. If this was the case, Modotti's inclusion of Trotsky's words on the brochure accompanying her December exhibition was truly a defiant, if not reckless act. Trotsky's increasingly sharp criticism of Comintern -- particularly of the Stalinist policy that elevated the defense of the Soviet Union above all other revolutionary goals -- had led to his expulsion from the party in November 1927 (and eventually his exile from the Soviet Union in February 1929). Understandably, many Communists outside the Soviet Union had a tendency to reject "socialism in one country" in favor of Trotsky's commitment to a more internationally oriented notion of "permanent revolution."

A week after the murder Modotti was acquitted, but the ordeal had been devastating. From Weston she received little solace: more concerned about his own reputation, and oblivious to the impact these harrowing events had upon Modotti, he wrote in his Daybooks after reading the

news in the California press: "My name was brought in, but only as having gone to Mexico with Tina. Poor girl, her life is a stormy one."²⁸

Modotti was determined to carry on with her political work, but with her obligations to party work increasing, she found it more and more difficult to devote serious attention to her photography.²⁹ Rather than compromise her art, she considered giving it up entirely.³⁰ Ironically, at this time she was beginning to receive significant recognition as a photographic artist outside Mexico. In addition to an exhibition at the Berkeley Museum of Art in October 1929, Creative Art published an eight-page article (including seven reproductions) by Carleton Beals in the February 1929 issue. This was the first, and until 1966, the only article on Modotti's photographs published in an English-language art magazine. Beals, a journalist and not an art critic, wrote sensitively about Modotti's work, drawing a connection between her Italian heritage and the imagery and construction of some of her pieces. In Two Callas he reads the "delicacy and innocence reminiscent of the angel trumpets of Fra Angelico, but depicted in some gray dawn of which Fra Angelico never dreamed," while in other work he sees the structure of Piero della Francesca.³¹

The final months of 1929 were to be for the most part Modotti's last as an active photographer. In late summer,

she traveled to the south of Mexico to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and photographed, perhaps for as long as a month, the women of Tehuantepec, presenting them at work--carrying baskets and washing clothes--without a trace of sentimentality. Women's work is neither idealized nor trivialized, but presented with sober matter-of-factness as if to say, here is the proletariat of the proletariat.³² Most of the thirty-odd images from the trip are unposed, candid "street" photographs, which she herself saw as flawed. Whatever good Modotti found in them stems from their susceptibility to seem like something else. On the back of one photograph [Figure 44] -- a woman descending the steps of a covered, outdoor market -- Modotti made a note to Weston: "Too bad the woman moved! Does the market place not look like a Greek temple?"³³ Modotti's approach, her aesthetic, allows for the transformation of the austere, cylindrical columns that supported the roof in this provincial, dusty corner of Mexico into a reference to the civic splendor of an ancient Greek monument. The image also makes the point that conditions of the poor have altered little since classical times.

Some of the photographs that resulted from her trip, however, exemplify the mode of photography that Modotti had invented for herself. In particular, the heads of the women of Tehuantepec are as distinct from her portraiture

as they are from the documentary shots by virtue of their careful composition and symbolic content. In her photograph Woman from Tehuantepec [Figure 45], the tightly cropped, intense close-up shot makes the image function like still life, precisely because Modotti chose not just any woman, but a well-known Mexican "type" -- the Tehuana -- to photograph. The Tehuana provided her with an already-given meaning since Tehuantepec is a matriarchal society, where women have a significant voice in the running of the local economy and politics. Modotti uses the Tehuana to make the powerful political point that women were capable of independent political action.

By November, Modotti had plans to leave at the beginning of the year, though she seems not to have decided on her destination.³⁴ Since April, Modotti had felt acutely her status as a foreigner, subject to Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution, which permitted the expulsion of "pernicious" aliens without a trial. "I am still in Mexico," she wrote to Weston in September 1929, "but it is so disagreeable to not know how much longer one is allowed to remain, it makes it almost impossible to make any plans for work, but of course the wisest attitude is to simply go on, do everything one intends to do as if nothing was ever going to happen to spoil one's plans."³⁵ Attacks on Communists were, indeed, escalating, growing more frequent and more violent; the

offices of the Communist Party of Mexico and El Machete were closed by the government in June 1929 (although the newspaper continued to be published and distributed in a haphazard manner).³⁶ In a series of detailed dispatches, Joseph Freeman, who was in Mexico from mid-July through mid-October as a TASS reporter, recounts the growing intolerance of the Communists by the Portes Gil government. His vivid, albeit not completely impartial, transmissions back to New York report on attacks by the "White Terror" -- murders, kidnappings, illegal jailings and deportations of Communist and left wing peasants.³⁷ Modotti's status as a public figure in Mexico with a growing international reputation probably saved her life.³⁸

To Modotti's consternation, Rivera was expelled from the Communist Party just before the end of September. He was a long-time friend and had come openly to her defense during the Mella trial: now she was required by Party rules to renounce her friendship with him. Rivera's position in the Party had always been irregular, not that his deep-seated and intellectual commitment to Marxism was questioned, but as one observer astutely noted, "Most of those who knew him felt that communism was for Diego what theosophy was for Yeats - a source of metaphor."³⁹ Moreover, Rivera's disinclination to attend with any regularity the endless committee meetings that were

required of members in good standing was a perpetual source of contention. While he was arguably the world's most visible and well-known Communist painter, Modotti felt that the Mexican government used him cynically: "The reds say we are reactionaries, but look, we are letting Diego Rivera paint all the hammer and sickles he wants on public buildings!"⁴⁰ When he was offered -- and accepted -- the Directorship of the San Carlos Academy, his integrity was utterly compromised in the eyes of his fellow Communists. Rivera was far too astute not to foresee the consequences of his action, and yet either felt himself to be above the fray, or found this move a convenient means to free himself from the constraints of the Party line.

For Modotti, no such compromise was acceptable. Earlier in 1929, when offered the position of photographer of the National Museum, she turned down the honor, unwilling to work for the government that she believed was complicit in Mella's murder.⁴¹

Living with the ever-present threat of deportation -- her house was under surveillance by the police⁴² -- Modotti directed her anxiety into a powerful series of photographs of puppets. It is poetic justice that Modotti should end her photographic career in Mexico with the same subject she began it some seven years earlier, although the earlier playfulness of that first photograph dubbed,

My Latest Lover! is a great contrast to photographs she made in response to the precarious situation in which she now found herself.⁴³ Her photographs of the puppeteer's hands [Figures 46 and 47] operate not only as dramatic studies of light and dark, but function on a symbolic level as well. The puppet controlled from above is a metaphor for the asymmetrical power relations between those governing and those governed, a perceptive comment upon the current social and political conditions in Mexico and upon Mexico's relationship to the United States at the time.⁴⁴

During 1929, Modotti had befriended a young American artist, Louis Bunin, who wrote to Rivera, asking if the master would accept him as an apprentice.⁴⁵ Rivera responded favorably; Bunin drove from Chicago to Mexico arriving in early 1929 and began working with Pablo O'Higgins on Rivera's National Palace murals. In addition to his duties for Rivera, Bunin began experimenting on his own, creating puppets and using them as a means of social commentary. Modotti and Bunin found that their interests coincided around theatre -- Modotti had, after all, left a career of acting -- and the art of political metaphor. They spoke at length about creating puppets that idealize a concept and of the potential of marionette characters on the puppet stage, as opposed to human actors. In a country with widespread illiteracy and a prevalence of

handicrafts, the puppet theatre appealed to them as an effective medium for conveying social and political messages. Throughout the fall, Modotti made photographs with Bunin, and their collaboration proved exceptionally fruitful.

Among Bunin's handmade marionettes were the cast of Eugene O'Neill's The Hairy Ape (1922), an acerbic, expressionistic play with a decidedly anti-bourgeois thrust. Elizabeth Morrow, wife of the American ambassador to Mexico, agreed to fund Bunin's theatre with the condition he abandon plans to produce The Hairy Ape. He refused, and apparently found support for the production from writer and patron of the arts, Antonieta Rivas Mercado. Some of the prints Modotti made relate directly to O'Neill's text, and are rather striking interpretations of the figure of Yank, the anti-hero of the play. In lieu of a detailed set for Yank and Police Marionette, [Figure 48], the confines of a jail cell is suggested with a few rough charcoal lines drawn on the wall, and more innovatively, with dramatic shadows that evoke the bars of the prison. Modotti's high camera angle renders Yank impotent, while the "empty" space above him contributes to the oppressiveness of his incarceration.

Bunin (and Modotti) were also capable of working on the lighter side. Although Morrow declined to support the O'Neill work, she did fund at least three performances of

less somber fare for diplomatic functions at the embassy. She arranged for spotlights and the construction of an elaborate stage furnished with curtains and a backdrop. Bunin was less than enthusiastic about the "slap-stick vaudeville stuff" Morrow was willing to sponsor, but rose to the occasion (for a 300-peso fee) and created one of his most endearing puppets, a René d'Harnoncourt marionette, "monocle and all." D'Harnoncourt, who was to succeed Barr as Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1949, arrived in Mexico from his native Austria in early 1926. There he supported himself as a free-lance artist, making tiny paintings for sale to tourists and decorating shop windows until he found a permanent job working for Frederick Davis at the Sonora News Company, a shop which was an important center for the exhibition and sale of Mexican folk art.⁴⁶ He had met Modotti during her travels with Weston in the summer of 1926, and they had remained on friendly terms. His graciousness endeared him to her and she in turn made two charming photographs of his "puppet" which appear to have been staged in Davis's shop. In one, [Figure 49], D'Harnoncourt bows to the viewer, motioning to three retablos, miniature paintings, which appear in proportion to the puppet. These would be the trophies of d'Harnoncourt's travels, as would the toy bird crafted from a gourd he comes nose to nose with in the pendant

photograph.

The marionette photographs underline the enduring attraction to Modotti of an art that makes its point by metaphor and association rather than with dry facts or blunt propagandizing. As an artist, she hoped to awaken in the viewer a sense of class consciousness rather than deliver a lecture on dialectic materialism. This attitude is also evident in her assessment, rendered before Rivera's expulsion from the party, of Mexico's two greatest muralists:

Orozco's...things overflow with inner potentiality which one never feels in Diego's things. Diego comments to much, lately he paints detail with an irritating precision, he leaves nothing for one's imagination. With Orozco's things, you feel that you can begin where he leaves off,...he never says all he feels and knows...he just suggests.⁴⁷

Here it is clear that Modotti is fatally at odds with her politics, and she found herself recoiling from the narrow esthetics that the party line imposed at the very moment that her political allegiance to the party was becoming stronger.

Modotti had another motive in mind when she made the series of puppets: she intended to include them in an exhibition she was planning for December.⁴⁸ Modotti

knew her departure from Mexico was inevitable and imminent, and she felt obliged to present the work she had done there: "I am thinking strongly...", Modotti wrote in September, "to give an exhibit here in the near future, I feel that if I leave the country...[and] I feel pretty sure that ere long I will be going...I almost owe it to the country to show, not so much what I have done here, but especially what can be done, without recurring to colonial churches and charros and chinas poblanas.⁴⁹ (She was referring to the hackneyed objects, including men on horseback and Indian village girls, that were the conventional tourist souvenirs of a picturesque holiday in sunny Mexico).

Modotti's first major one-person exhibition opened December 3, 1929, in the vestibule of the centrally-located Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) under the auspices of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma to great critical acclaim.⁵⁰ Her friends, painters Carlos Mérida and Carlos Orozco Romero, arranged for the exhibit. The opening reception included speeches, revolutionary songs by her friend Concha Michel, and a talk entitled "Photography and the New Sensibility." Daily hours were planned to accommodate those who would not otherwise be able to see the show because of work-related obligations. On the last day of the show, December 14, Siqueiros delivered a talk entitled "The First Revolutionary

Photographic Exhibit in Mexico," which pleased Modotti, for placing her work within the history of political art.⁵¹

In a single folded sheet of paper that accompanied the show, Modotti published her only statement on photography: this thin pamphlet included the quotation from Trotsky, which she had used in La Técnica. Her statement appeared as "On Photography" in Mexican Folkways, and in the same issue, Frances Toor paid Modotti the honor of reviewing the show herself.⁵² Modotti's comments in "On Photography" convey her self-image as a photographer and map out what she hoped to achieve in the medium. She is quick to distinguish her work from photographs that use "'artistic' effects" stating that she tries "to produce not art but honest photographs..." that avoid "imitating other mediums of graphic expression." What she most values is the "photographic quality" of the medium, the camera's ability to record present reality, and she holds that photography is "the most eloquent, the most direct means for fixing, for registering the present epoch." Modotti does not engage in the argument of whether or not photography is a true art form; rather she sets out her criteria for what makes good photography: a practice which "...accepts all the limitations inherent in the photographic technique and takes advantage of the possibilities and characteristics the medium offers." In

this view, she is close to Weston.

Modotti's short essay ends, however, with a paragraph in which she alludes to the conflict between making art and making politics. The question she addresses is not posed from an aesthetic point of view -- can propaganda be art. Rather, she reverses the question -- can art be revolutionary -- and in this sense, she justifies her own art making by placing it in a Marxist framework.

Photography, precisely because it can only be produced in the present and because it is based on what exists objectively before the camera, takes its place as the most satisfactory medium for registering objective life in all its aspects, and from this comes its documental value. If to this is added sensibility and understanding and, above all, a clear orientation as to the place it should have in the field of historical development, I believe that the result is something worthy of a place in social production, to which we should all contribute.

Despite her notoriety and the obvious political nature of her work, the press treated the show with dignity and accorded Modotti a large measure of respect. She wrote: "the exhibit...aroused enormous interest and I feel quite proud of it..."⁵³ Thus, it can only have been an utter shock that six weeks after the show closed,

Modotti was jailed; two weeks later, she was deported from Mexico. The police used an assassination attempt on the newly inaugurated president, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, as a convenient excuse to round up "enemies of the state," and Modotti was among them. The secret service arrived at her home February 7, and took her to the Police Headquarters where she remained for a week; she was then moved and held incommunicado at the notorious Lecumberri Penitenciaría, where only convicted criminals were imprisoned. She was frightened and had every reason to be. The physical discomforts of a "regular cell of iron and stone, an iron cot without mattress, an ill smelling toilet right in the cell, no electric light, and the food, well, the usual food of prisoners, I guess," (she wrote to a friend, hoping the letter might be smuggled out) were "nothing compared to my mental anguish in not knowing anything from the comrades." Modotti was concerned that her transfer had gone unnoticed, and probably feared for her life. Though willing to endure this hardship, she hoped, at least, that her suffering could be used to help the cause: "I would like that it served something from the stand point of our propaganda."

This letter and another, asking her American friend, Mary Doherty, to get in touch with a lawyer on her behalf, (the same one who had defended her against the charges in the Mella case), were intercepted. Their intended

recipients never read them. Ironically, Modotti's desperate attempts to communicate reside in the collection of Mexico's National Archives, now housed in the very same jail from which they were written, a building renovated to hold the important papers of the state.⁵⁴

1. Cited in Barckhausen, Verdad, 139.

2. DBI, 187. (July 4, 1926).

3. Stark [Rule], Archive, 55. (Letter 28.1, January 8, 1928).

4. Modotti remarks in a letter to Weston that "as far as work is concerned I have plenty of it, in fact more that I can do..." (Stark [Rule], Archive, 68. [Letter 29.3. September 17, 1929]). In addition to muralists Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, and Pacheco, Modotti photographed the paintings of a number of artists. As Toor noted in her short article on Modotti, "No artist will have his paintings copied by anyone else..." (Frances Toor, "Exposición de fotografías de Tina Modotti," Mexican Folkways. 5 (October/December 1929): 192). Modotti's professional stamp has been found on photographs of work by Abraham ángel, Rosa Rolando Covarrubias, Xavier Guerrero Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Carlos Mérida, Ione Robinson, as well as sculpture by Juan Gonzalez. Rivera used her reproductions of his work to sell paintings he didn't wish to send out to potential patrons.

5. The earliest reference that firmly establishes Modotti's involvement in making mural photographs dates from 1927. Mexican Folkways, 3, no 2 (April/May 1927) and 3, no 3 (June/July 1927). Nothing supports Hooks' suggestion that the mural published in the February/March 1926 issue of Mexican Folkways is by Modotti, nor that the list of photographs of the murals Toor publishes in the December/January 1926/1927 issue of Mexican Folkways are Modotti's. Hooks, Tina Modotti, 119-120. Most likely, the painter and photographer José María Lupercio, is their author. He is credited with a mural reproduction in the August-September 1926 issue of Mexican Folkways, and at least ninety-five photographs taken by him exist today in the collection of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM. Moyssén, "Una colección de fotografías de Tina Modotti y José María Lupercio," 139-140. In addition, Modotti wrote to Weston telling him that although Rivera asked her to repeat Lupercio's copies, she declined. Archive, 49. (Letter 27.1. March 22, 1927).

6. Precisely how many books and monographs reproduced Modotti's mural photographs is unknown: she was rarely given credit. William Spratling's review of Evans' book in Mexican Folkways 5, no 4 (October-December, 1929), 205 attests that Modotti's photographs were used, "credit for which was not published" Charlot asserts in his forward to Orozco, The Artist in New York, 19, that he personally sent or carried Modotti's photographs to Reed who

reproduced most of them in her book. Although she is not credited, there is every reason to believe that Modotti's photographs of Rivera's work were reproduced in the publication Das Werk Diego Rivera, which was published in Germany. During his trip abroad in 1927, Rivera he stopped in Berlin to see Münzenberg, whose Neuer Duetscher Verlag published the volume a year later. Diego Rivera, My Art, My Life, An autobiography with Gladys March (New York: The Citadel Press, 1960): 142; Gruber, "Willi Münzenberg," 287.

7. Letter from Tina Modotti to Albert Bender, Mills College, November 17, [1927], in the Bender Collection; Alfred H. Barr, Jr. "Russian Diary 1927-1928," October 7 (Winter 1978): 15, 34; Orozco, The Artist in New York, passim and 75.

8. One other example of a photomontage by Modotti is Código Federal del Trabajo (1929), a photograph of a worker's hand holding a hammer in the air, surrounded by text clipped from a broadside, or possibly from an issue of El Machete. It is a visual call for workers to unite against the government's changes in the Federal Work Code. It was intended for publication in New Masses but was never reproduced there. A print is in the Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover. Reproduced in Hooks, Tina Modotti, 185.

9. Mexican Folkways. 3, no 4 (August-September 1927), 189.

10. Marti Casanovas, "Las Fotos de Tina Modotti: El Anecdótico Revolucionario," ¡30-30! [Mexico] No. 1 (July 1928): 4-5.

11. Karen Cordero Reiman, "Constructing a Modern Mexican Art, 1910-1940" in James Oles, South of the Border (Washington, D.C and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993): 39; Francisco Reyes Palma, "Arte Funcional y Vanguardia (1921-1952)," in Modernidad y Modernización en el Arte Mexicano: 1920-1960, Exhibition catalogue (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1991): 86-88.

12. See Laura González Matute, 30-30: contra la Academia de Pintura 1928. Exhibition catalogue. With Carmen Gómez del Campo and Leticia Torres Carmona (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1994): passim.

13. For a summary of various Oktyabr publications, see John E. Bowlt, ed. and trans. Russian Art of the Avant-Garde, Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934 (New York: Viking Press, 1976): 273-279.

14. John Bowlt, "Russian Art in the Nineteen Twenties," Soviet Studies. XXII, no 4 (April 1971): 583-591. The growing conservatism in art sanctioned by the governments of Russia and Mexico, and the radical reaction to it bespeaks an international trend. The United States experienced a similar phenomenon after the 1929 Wall Street Crash, with the prominence regionalism represented by Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton being challenged by the radicalism of Stuart Davis and Ben Shawn.

15. After fulfilling his official duties, Rivera immersed himself in art-related matters: he toured Moscow and its environs, sometimes Barr, to see examples of ancient and contemporary Russian art; gave lectures to art groups; was made an instructor at the Academy of Fine Arts; illustrated a number of covers for Soviet magazines; contributed his name to the Oktyabr statement; and signed a contract to do a fresco in the Red Army Club. The mural was never realized, for both practical reasons -- his assistants were completely unskilled in fresco painting -- and political reasons. In a published interview, Rivera criticized current Russian art as relying too heavily on realism and easel painting, which displeased not only established artists who saw his commission as bread from their mouths, but also annoyed the authorities who had invited him in the first place. Rivera was released from his contract and asked to leave the country. For a summary of Rivera's period in Russia see, Lisa Messenger, "Art and Political Intrigue," unpublished manuscript, Drawing Department, Museum of Modern Art, New York, *passim*; Bertram D. Wolfe, Diego Rivera: His Life and Times (New York and London: Alfred A. Knoff, 1943): 235-247; and Rivera, My Life, My Art, 146-166.

16. Wolfe, Diego Rivera, His Life and Times, 245; English translation of November 7, 1928 "Protest of Independent Artists '30-30'" in Ades, Art in Latin America, 325-6. See also González Matute, ¡30-30!, Contra la Academia de Pintura, 51.

17. Biographical information on Mella is drawn from Jaime Suchlicki, University Students and the Revolution in Cuba, 1920-1968 (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969): 20-23.

18. An AP dispatch was released noting that "requests for the release of Mella had been sent to President Machado from throughout Latin-America, the United States and Europe." Cited in Manuel Gomez, "Rescuing a Prisoner of Imperialism," Labor Defender 1, no 2 (February 1926): 25.

19. When Mella applied to enroll in the Universidad Nacional de Mexico in February of 1926, he used Nicanor MacPartland. Raquel Tibol, "Julio Antonio Mella: símbolo del antimperialismo," in Mexico y Cuba: Dos Pueblos unidos en las historia. Mexico City: Centro de investigación científica, Jorge C. Tamayo, A.C., 1982): 549.

20. Although the IRA professed non-affiliation, it was their practice to have high-ranking Communists placed as secretaries in the various sections. Ryle, International Red Aid, 79 cites an article in Inprecor (February 1, 1929): 95.

21. In February 1927, Mella went abroad, to Brussels as delegate at the First Anti-Imperialist Congress, organized by the ubiquitous Willi Münzenberg. (Alfons Goldschmidt was also a delegate.) In March he traveled to the USSR where he spent several weeks and returned to Mexico via Paris. Julio Antonio Mella, J.A. Mella: Documentos y articulos. Edited by Eduardo Castañada et al. (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1975): 649.

22. Steiner's photograph is reproduced in The New Vision: Photography between the World Wars, plate 16.

23. The Spanish reads: "La técnica se convirtiera en una inspriación mucho más poderosa de la producción artística: más tarde encontraba su solución en una síntesis más elevada el contraste que existe entre la técnica y las naturaleza." The quotation was attributed to Trotsky by Modotti and was published on the brochure that accompanied her only major one-person show in her lifetime in the fall 1929.

24. Tina Modotti, garibaldina e artista: 27. The text reads: Il giorno in cui venne ucciso, J.A. Mella stava preparando un articolo sull'opera fotografica di Tina. In questa fotografia, eseguita de Tina Modotti, sono rimaste le ultime parole scritte dal grand rivoluzionario assassinato.

25. Letter transcribed (in Spanish) in Barckhausen, Verdad, 141. Excepts printed in English in Constantine, Fragile Life, 123 and Hooks, Tina Modotti, 156, 159. The letter was probably found among Modotti's personal papers when her home was searched. It was printed in a Mexican press.

26. Daily Worker, January 14, 1929. Clipping from MID files, National Archives.

27. See obituary in Labor Unity 3, no 1 (February 1929), 15. A corrido was published in El Machete; a poem by Helen Colodny, "To Julio Mella" appeared in the Labor Defender IV, no 4 (April 1929), 80. A rather grisly (purely imaginary) painting by Jakob Burck of Mella's murder appeared in the Labor Defender IV, no 3 (March 1929), 49.

28. DBII, 108. (January 26, 1929).

29. Modotti was in prominent attendance at the five-day Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) labor conference headed by American Albert Weisbord, which convened on January 26 in Mexico City. A photograph of Modotti standing beside Wiesbord in front of a mural-sized drawing of Mella (done after one of her portraits of him) was published. Labor Unity. III, no 2 (March 1929), 2. TUEL was founded in 1920 by William Z. Foster and was replaced later in 1929 by the Trade Union Unity League, the American section of the Red International of Labor Unions, which functioned as the industrial arm of the Communist Party. In February, Modotti presided at a memorial held in Mella's honor organized by the Mexican branch of the International Red Aid. In July that year, the IRA of Mexico began publication of its organ, Mella. Speakers at Mella's memorial included Rivera, Jacobo Hurwitz, Rafael Pedruza, among others. Broadside in collection of Centro de Estudios del Movimiento Obrero Socialista (CEMOS), Box 4, File 17b, 1929; Freeman dispatch from Mexico, Caribbean Organ of the IRA, No. 2, July 22 [1929], Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover.

30. Stark [Rule], Archive, 67. (Letter 29.2, July 4, 1929).

31. Beals, "Tina Modotti," xlvihi.

32. My contention that Modotti went to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in late summer is based on the fact that her brother, Benvenuto, was issued a visa on January 16, less than a week after Mella's murder. He came to Mexico and remained there until August 4 when he sailed for New York (Immigration Records 1929), and it is unlikely that Tina would have traveled during his visit. Robinson notes that Benvenuto worked in a cement factory while in Mexico. (Robinson, A Wall to Paint On, 86). Modotti writes to Weston in mid-September sending him "snapshots done in T." adding that "all the exposures had to be done in such a hurry, as soon as they saw me with the camera the women would automatically increase their speed of walking; and they walk swiftly by nature." Stark [Rule], Archive, 67. (Letter 29.3, September 17, 1929).

33. This photograph is in the collection of the George Eastman House, Rochester, NY (accession number 74:061:171). Modotti sent contact prints of many of the photographs she took in Tehuantepec to Weston, and noted their defects on the back of several photographs.

34. Letter from Tina Modotti to Anita Brenner, October 9, 1929. Anita Brenner Papers, courtesy of Dr. Peter Glusker and Susannah Glusker; Letter from Louis Bunin to Joseph Freeman, November 4, 1929, Joseph Freeman Archive, Hoover. Barckhausen cites an interview for Deutsches Magazin von Mexiko, a German-language magazine published in Mexico in which Modotti is said to have wanted to go to Germany. Barckhausen, Verdad, 199.

35. Stark [Rule], Archive, 67. (Letter 29.3, September 17, 1929). This letter is dated in Stark [Rule] on the 17th but internal evidence suggest it is either a typo or Modotti's slip: it was probably written on the September 27, the day after Rivera was expelled from the Party.

36. Other radical publications were suppressed as well, for example, Bandera Roja (organ for the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc) and Spartak (organ of the Young Communist League, at which time Frida Kahlo was a member). Freeman, "Painting and Politics," 23.

37. Freeman paints a picture of a confused and muddled political landscape, with opposition groups at odds with each other as well as with the government. The government itself was in chaos and rumors of a military coup d'état circulated wildly. With an upcoming election, coalitions were being formed and reformed, alliances cemented and broken. Letter from Joseph Freeman to Kenneth Durant, August 20, 1929 in Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover.

38. In May, Modotti received two requests for her photographs: the Pacific International Salon of Photographic Art in Portland Oregon asked her to submit entries to their juried show; and the editor of the Belgian review Variétés, who had seen her work reproduced transition, obtained her address from its editor, and wrote Modotti asking her to send photographs for publication. In July, the British Journal of Photography wrote with a similar request. Copies of letters are in the Modotti Archive, Getty Center. I have found no evidence to suggest that Modotti followed through on any of these requests.

39. Draft of letter from Joseph Freeman to Bertram Wolfe, January 11, 1963, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover.

40. Stark [Rule], Archive, 69. (Letter 29.3, September 17, 1929).

41. Ibid.

42. Ione Robinson noted this during the short period she stayed with Modotti a few weeks in July. Ione Robinson, A Wall To Paint On (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1946) 91.

43. The title comes from an inscription on the back of the photograph which is in the collection of the CCP.

44. That this series of photographs were intended to be seen as political is corroborated by Louis Bunin in a letter to Freeman, in which he refers to them specifically as "studies of...control." The metaphor inherent to these photographs transcended Mexican politics: Freeman notes from New York shortly after the November elections that "Tammany Hall can make better puppets than Louis [Bunin]..."

45. Bunin stayed in Mexico until April 1930. For sources on Bunin see letter from Joseph Freeman to Kenneth Durant, September 30, 1929, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover; letter from Louis Bunin to Joseph Freeman, July 6, 1933, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover; letter from Louis Bunin to Joseph Freeman, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover; Louis Bunin Archive, CCP; and Bunin, interviews with author, New York, NY, February 28, April 18, and March 9, 1990.

46. On d'Harnoncourt, see Robert Fay Schrader, The Indian Arts & Crafts Board: An Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 124-126. My thanks to Anne d'Harnoncourt for her editorial comments.

47. Stark [Rule], Archive, 56. (Letter 28.3, September 18, 1928.).

48. Letter from Louis Bunin to Joseph Freeman, November 4, 1929, Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover.

49. Stark [Rule], Archive 67-68. (Letter 29.3, September 17, 1929).

50. From examination of a photograph taken of Modotti at the exhibition, it can be ascertained that the following photographs were in the show: Portrait of Mella, Campeños Reading "El Machete", Construction Worker, Stadium, Loading Bananas, Veracruz, Man with a Beam, Hammer and Sickle, Woman with Flag, Stadium, Stadium

Exterior, La Técnica, Elegance and Poverty, Hands Resting on Tool, Tank No. 1, and Circus Tent.

51. Stark [Rule], Archive, 62.

52. Modotti, "Sobre la Fotografía/On Photography," 5 (October/December 1929): 196-198; Toor, "Exposición de fotografías de Tina Modotti," 192-194.

53. Letter from Tina Modotti to Anita Brenner, December 11, 1929. Anita Brenner Papers, courtesy of Dr. Peter Glusker and Susannah Glusker.

54. Letter from Tina Modotti to Beatrice Siskind, February 17, 1930 and letter from Tina Modotti to Mary Doherty, no date. Fondo Presidentes, Archivo Nacional de la Nación, Mexico City. Thanks to Antonio Saborit for sharing the fruits of his research with me.

CHAPTER IX

Modotti was released from prison two weeks after she had been imprisoned, given two days to pack her things, and then expelled from Mexico. She gave away what she could not take with her. When she had put her affairs in order as well as she could, the police escorted Modotti to Veracruz and on February 24, 1930, placed her in custody on the cargo ship SS Edam, which was headed back to its home port in the Netherlands. A month and a half later she disembarked in Rotterdam only to find representatives from Italy eager to deliver her back to their fascist leaders. The Dutch branch of the International Red Aid interceded on her behalf and Modotti was issued a visa to Berlin.¹

Germany may not have been her first choice of a place to relocate, but it presented certain advantages. Modotti had some command of the language (having lived seven youthful years in Austria), she had several friends and acquaintances who lived in Berlin (including Alfons Goldschmidt who had since returned to Germany), and she had professional (and political) ties, especially with Münzenberg and his publishing concerns. Modotti also arrived with some knowledge of the art scene: she was cognizant of the new vision photography and the work of the Arbeiterfotograf movement; very likely she knew the work of leftist artists such as Käthe Kollwitz and George

Grosz who had both been active in Münzenberg's Workers' International Relief since its founding.² Although not a political artist, the still-life work of Albert Renger-Patzsch was also known to her.³

Once in Berlin, Modotti immediately set about finding a place to live and determining how best she could earn a living with photography.⁴ Prospects were grim and she felt out of her element. She missed the bright sun of Mexico, and bemoaned the cold, nasty weather, so unreliable for taking pictures. Modotti was also somewhat bewildered by the level of photographic sophistication in Germany and quite unsure of herself. She was keenly aware of the stiff competition from all sides, professionals and amateurs alike. "Here everybody uses a camera," she wrote, and the workers themselves make those pictures and have indeed better opportunities than I could ever have, since it is their own life and problems they photograph.⁵

Portraiture should have seemed a dependable source of income, yet Modotti hesitated because of the excellent quality of the work she saw, even in shop windows. She felt herself unfit for street photography, and turned down the opportunity to do "reportage," believing she was not aggressive enough. Her methods of working in Mexico were simply incompatible with the pace of Berlin.

By far the most serious impediment, however, was the fact that European photographic supplies were manufactured to specifications that did not match her cameras. Modotti considered buying a Leica, the newly invented 35mm camera and even tried one out, but found she could not get used to it. She does not seem to have used the one she eventually acquired.⁶ Out on the street she felt conspicuous with her bulky Graflex, but the smaller camera did not suit the way she was "accustomed to work, slowly planning my composition, etc."⁷

Modotti did manage to produce a small body of work during her six months in Germany.⁸ She made at least two photographs "on the street" but was forced to rethink her practice, both subject matter and strategy: with typical resourcefulness, Modotti sought out sites where she could work unobtrusively. This is evident in Couple at the Zoo, Berlin: the stout, bourgeois couple engrossed by some caged animal were completely unaware of her camera. Out on a public plaza, Modotti set her camera up as if her subject was a sculpture, and the passers by, in one case, a pair of nuns [Figure 50], paid no attention to either the photographer nor the over life size female figure, sensuously and eternally offering her fruits to some unknown lover. Modotti's attempt at ironic humor is, on the whole, less successful than the incisive social commentary of her Mexican work.

Soon after she arrived, Modotti applied for and received membership in Unionfoto, a press agency, hoping to get some commissions. It is likely that Modotti made Schön Wieder (Yet Again), of a pregnant woman holding a child (one of at least two photographs using the same model), for hire. To make this image, she could rely on her usual method, using a model. The forced reverence smacks of a formulaic approach that does not do her vision justice. Another commission, Young Pioneers, appeared in the October 1930 issue of AIZ as the cover of an insert announcing a competition for children. Modotti's photograph had been cut into fourteen pieces: members of the Young Pioneers, a Communist youth group, were to piece the parts together like a jigsaw puzzle to win a prize. In the only known print, Modotti carefully touched up the badges so as to obscure the allegiance of the children, which explains why the photograph is often thought to represent Young Russian Pioneers. No matter how good the cause, she can hardly have been pleased to see her photograph carved up in this way.

Life in Germany was trying on more than one level: she wrote to Weston: "I often recall that wonderful line from Nietzsche you told me once: What does not kill me strengthens me. But I assure you this present period is very near killing me."⁹ With the rise of Hitler and the spreading of fascism across Europe, Modotti's safety was

still in question: she cautioned her correspondents not to put her name on the front of her letters, but to send them in care of another party member. Modotti was struggling to keep up her standards of photography, but even when she first arrived, she had resolved she would go where she could "be most useful to the movement," and now that appeared to be in Moscow. Before she left Berlin, Modotti hoped to have a small exhibit, and Lotte Jacobi offered her studio where she hung some of her work.¹⁰

Modotti arrived in Moscow in October 1930. Her experiences would have been similar to others who had come to work for the Party. While the utopianism of the first five-year plan buoyed hope, the rapid spread of Stalinism cast a pall over daily life in Moscow in the early part of the thirties. Modotti, used to a diverse cultural and intellectual life, found herself more and more restrained from uninhibited dealings with non-Communists. It was easier to restrict herself to a small circle of trusted friends. On the other hand, Moscow mirrored Mexico in some respects. Alfred Barr's remarked that "...only the superficia[ls] are modern, for the plumbing, heating, etc, are technically very crude and cheap, a comedy of the strong modern inclination without any technical tradition to satisfy it."¹¹

Some of Modotti's friends came to Moscow. Pablo O'Higgins arrived in 1931 -- indeed he financed his trip

by selling Rivera drawings and Modotti photographs along the way.¹² He remained there for some months, teaching painting. While in Moscow, Modotti served as his guide and introduced him to Serge Eisenstein.¹³

When she arrived in Moscow, Modotti still planned to continue with photography: an exhibition of her photographs of the November 7 celebrations marking the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution was to have been held in New York in the winter of that year, but if they ever existed, the pictures are lost.¹⁴ Artists were feeling the pall of growing restrictions, however, and the obligation to propagandize grew more pressing. No doubt, Modotti found this hard line impossible to reconcile with her ideals and decided to give up photography. The prospect of taking only documentary photographs for the party must have been fearfully disheartening. Her cameras were virtually useless in Russia, thus her practice obsolete. Light, too, was a problem -- Moscow, Like Berlin, did not have enough sunlight.¹⁵

Just at the moment Modotti abandoned her photographic career, she was being recognized as a significant constituent of an international movement in photography. In February 1930, she was scheduled to be included in the "All-American Photo Exhibit" held in New York and sponsored by the Workers Camera League. Later that year, in November, ten of her photographs appeared in the

prestigious "Photography 1930," an exhibition of 170 works organized by Lincoln Kirstein and held at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, Cambridge, MA. The brochure for the Harvard show announced her upcoming exhibit at the Art Center in New York, which had been in the works since August. The astute, if left-leaning, film and photography critic Harry Alan Potamkin (who died prematurely at the age of thirty-three in 1933) understood her work to be an important aspect of modern photography. In his 1931 essay, "New Eyes, New Compositions, New Conscience," he placed Modotti in the context of the new photography. The momentum of her reputation made itself felt even two years after she ended her artistic career when her work was included in "International Photographers" mounted by the Brooklyn Museum.¹⁶

In Moscow, Modotti gave up photography in order to devote herself completely to the Party.¹⁷ She spent the next few years working in the headquarters of the MOPR, run then by Elena Stassova who had taken over from Clara Zetkin. Her facility with languages and her familiarity with the organization made Modotti invaluable. It is possible that during this time Modotti was recruited as an agent for the GPU, Stalin's secret police, and that she was sent on missions out of the country.¹⁸ This conjecture is strengthened by her close association with Vittorio Vidali, a fellow Italian, whom she first met in

Mexico. During her time in Russia, she and Vidali became an acknowledged couple, and remained so until Modotti's death in 1942. Vidali had many of the same characteristics of her previous companions: although lacking classical good looks, he was extremely charismatic, and was possessed early in life by a passion for political intrigue in the guise of fighting fascism. He, like the other men Modotti was close to (except Weston) had several pseudonyms: in the United States where he had lived before moving to Mexico he was Enea Sormenti, and in Mexico he was known as both Carlos and Jorge Contreras. Whether or not it was love that drew them together initially, or a shared past, or indeed, their ability to communicate in the dialect of northern Italy, their alliance was both a source of security and sometimes pain for both.

For the next ten years Modotti and Vidali carried out several missions together on behalf of the International Red Aid. They administered the Parisian office of the Secours Rouge (as the IRA was called in France) in 1933 and 1934. Their activities in France included aid work, organizing and publicizing the plight of political prisoners, as well as more clandestine tasks that proved more risky. In 1935 they returned to Moscow, and by early 1936, they were in Spain, sent by Stassova, and ostensibly working for the IRA. Each took a nom de guerre: Vidali rose quickly in the Communist ranks, and was known as

Commandant Carlos, the fearless and ruthless head of the Fifth Regiment. Modotti became simply María, with no last name, no specific country, and unavoidable allusions to biblical ancestors. She was remembered for her work in hospitals and shepherding orphans to safe houses.¹⁹

After the fall of Madrid in 1939, Modotti escaped over the Pyrenees, and obtained a ticket to New York aboard the Queen Mary. She travelled with a Spanish passport under the name Carmen Ruíz Sánchez. When she arrived on April 6, 1939, Modotti was detained for six days by the U.S. immigration officials who suspected that her documents were not quite in order. They refused her entry. On April 13, she was put on the ship Siboney bound for Mexico. Modotti became one of the forty thousand Republican refugees of the Spanish Civil War who flooded into Mexico where they found asylum despite the growing nationalistic tendencies and strong anti-foreigner mood in the country.²⁰ It was with people who had shared her experiences in Spain that Modotti associated during her last few years: few of the many friends she had made before her deportation even knew she was back. Known simply as María, she was persona non grata in the country where she had lived longer than anywhere else. In March 1941, Modotti applied for and was granted official political asylum in Mexico, and reclaimed her name. Tina Modotti died less than a year after her pardon, late on

the evening of January 5, 1942, while traveling in a taxi in Mexico City.

An homage to Modotti organized by Spanish refugees was held at the end of February. A pamphlet was published for the occasion and the speakers commemorated their comrade who had fought fascism and on behalf of the disenfranchised for her adult life.²¹ Two months after Modotti's death, she was honored as an artist with an exhibition at the now flourishing Galería de Arte Mexicano (founded by Carolina Amor de Fournier whose portrait Modotti had taken several years before). Forty-nine of her photographs were displayed,²² borrowed from, among others, artists Manuel and Lola Álvarez Bravo, Adolfo Best Maugard, Miguel Covarrubias, Leopoldo Mendez, Carlos Orozco Romero, Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, and writer Salvador Novo. It was the last major exhibition of her work held in a metropolitan center until New York's Museum of Modern Art mounted their 1977 exhibition.

Modotti's death certificate certifies that she died of congestive heart failure, a diagnosis some have questioned.²³ Indeed, almost every item on the "acto de defuncion" is incorrect. While there is little to suggest Modotti ever picked up a camera after abandoning photography in Moscow in 1930, her occupation at the time of her death is given as "housewife."²⁴

1. Vittorio Vidali, Ritratto di donna: Vittorio Vidali racconta la sua vita con Tina Modotti (Milan: Vangelista Editore, 1982): 18-19.
2. Along with Otto Dix, they designed posters and placards in support of the IAH, "held art exhibits for the benefit of famine victims; they gave the proceeds from the sale of their drawings and books to the relief fund." Beth Irwin Lewis, George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic (Madison, Milwaukee and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971): 101.
3. In a recent interview, Manuel Álvarez Bravo recalls Modotti showing him a copy of Renger-Patzsch Die Welt ist Schön. Hooks, Tina Modotti, 196).
4. Unless otherwise noted, description of Modotti's period in Berlin are derived from the three letters she wrote Weston, April 14, May 23, and May 28, 1930. Stark [Rule], Archive, 71-75. (Letters 30.3, 30.4 and 30.5).
5. Stark [Rule], Archive, 74. (Letter 30.4, May 23, 1930).
6. Though she acquired a small-format camera, a Leica, probably in Germany, she lent it to a fellow Friulian who borrowed it for four years until spring 1936 when she left for Spain. Silvano Castano, "Mosca 1932: Tina e Angelo, cinemazero supplemento No. 1 Cinemazero Notizie Anno. XI, no 11 (December 1992): 22-25.
7. Stark [Rule], Archive, 74. (Letter 30.4, May 23, 1930).
8. Only five or six photographs can be dated to this period.
9. Stark [Rule], Archive, 74. (Letter 30.4, May 23, 1930).
10. The evidence that Modotti had a show at Jacobi's studio comes from the statement by Egon Erwin Kisch in [Vidali], Tina Modotti, 31-32.
11. Barr, "Russian Diary," 13.
12. Letter from Katherine Anne Porter to Peggy Cowley, December 9, 1931. Katherine Anne Porter Collection.
13. Pablo O'Higgins. Text by Elena Poniatowska and Gilberto Bosques. Exhibition catalogue. (Fondo Education de la Plástica Mexicana, Mexico, 1984), 156.

14. On the proposed exhibition, see letter from Frances Flynn Paine to Mrs. John D. Rockefeller. August 13, 1930. Rockefeller Archives Center, Tarrytown, NY.

15. Katherine Anne Porter writes that Pablo O'Higgins had written her: "Tina well and cheerful -- Doesn't do photography any more because there isn't enough light." Letter from Katherine Anne Porter to [Eugene Pressley?], December 21, 1931, Katherine Anne Porter Papers.

16. An announcement for the upcoming "All-American Exhibit" was published in New Masses (5, no 8 [January 1930]: 16, but there is no evidence that the exhibit ever occurred; "Photography 1930," Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, Cambridge, MA. November 7 -29, 1930; Harry Alan Potamkin, "New Eyes, New Compositions, New Conscience," in Photographic Amusements, Frank R. Fraprie and Walter E. Woodbury. 10th edition, revised and enlarged (Boston: American Photographic Publishing Co., 1931): 248, 251, 270; "International Photographers," Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY. November 8-31, 1932.

17. In a letter to Joseph Freeman dated November 12, 1931, Frances Toor writes that Modotti had given up photography and was working in an office. (Joseph Freeman Papers, Hoover.)

18. Barckhausen, Verdad, 241-2.

19. For details on Modotti's activities in Europe during this period, see Barckhausen, Verdad, 229-293 passim.

20. See Immigration Records, 1939; T. G. Powell, Mexico and the Spanish Civil War. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981): Chapter 5.

21. Letter from Mary Doherty to Katherine Anne Porter, February 28, 1942. Katherine Anne Porter Papers.

22. See Appendix IV for list of photographs in the exhibition. Tina Modotti artist file, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

23. Federico Marín, who became a medical doctor, did not believe Modotti died of a heart problem. He also thinks she arrived at a hospital alive, but dying. (Fernando Gamboa, interview by Mildred Constantine). Bertram Wolfe obliquely points a finger at Vidali. His summary follows: "[Modotti's] end was tragic. According to the story told by her Communist friends, she died suddenly of a heart attack. According to the report in the Mexican press at the time of her death, revulsion at Commissario Carlos's

[Vidali] purge activities in Republican Spain caused her to break with him upon their return to Mexico. He gave her a farewell party, from which she fled alone in a taxi, asking the driver to rush her to a hospital, and died on the way, some said of heart failure, others of poisoning. The Mexican press gave many details of the death, but none of the autopsy." (Wolfe, The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera, 195). Molderings is more direct: "Probably [Modotti] was liquidated by Vidali and his relentless band, because she started to lose her nerve and the GPU feared she would begin to speak." (Molderings, "Tina Modotti," 103. Translation by author).

24. There is little evidence to suggest Modotti ever picked up a camera after abandoning photography in Moscow in 1930. There was a suggestion that she took photographs to illustrate a book by Spanish writer Constanca de la Mora, who was exiled in Mexico. This story which originated was based on a misunderstanding and has been adequately dispelled by Hooks. Modotti did, in fact, work on de la Mora's project but as an advisor, not as the photographer. Margaret Hooks, "Assignment, Mexico: The Mystery of the Missing Modottis," Afterimage. 19, no 4 (November 1991): 10-11.

CONCLUSION

It is fair to say that Tina Modotti is the best-known unknown photographer of the twentieth century; now over fifty years after her death, this is the first comprehensive study of her photographs. The fascination with Modotti's biography -- her many professions, her unconventional romances, her dedication to radical politics -- is the result of an extraordinary life, one that intersected with many of the most significant artistic innovations, social upheavals, and political conflicts that occurred in the West during the first half of the twentieth century. It is Modotti's career as an artist and her original aesthetic that has been the focus of this dissertation. Her photographs are distinguished by an extraordinary formal clarity coupled with incisive social content. They constitute an important component of the modernist movement in post-revolutionary Mexico, and parallel international trends in photography during the decades of the 1920s and 1930s.

This study has elucidated Modotti's relationship to artistic trends in addition to those she knew through her teacher, Edward Weston, specifically, the Movimiento Estridentista, the practice of new vision photography, and the Arbeiter-Fotograf movement in Germany. Previous resistance to endowing Modotti with the capacity to

assimilate influences beyond that of her teacher has resulted in an impoverished depiction of her capabilities as an artist and goes a long way to explaining her disappearance from the cannon. This account of Modotti's life and work has brought to bear new material that presents the social, political and artistic factors that played on the creation of Modotti's work and illuminates the many art worlds she occupied.

APPENDIX I

Modotti Family

Giuseppe Modotti: April 20, 1863 - March 14, 1922

(Tina Modotti's father)

Father: Dominico Modotti; Mother: ? Dominica; both born in Italy; cause of death: Cancer of the stomach

Sources: Giuseppe Modotti: Death Certificate, March 14, 1922. Department of Public Health, City and County of San Francisco

Tina Modotti's Baptismal certificate, transcription in Modotti Archive, Special Collections, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, CA

Francesco Modotti: 1864 - ?]

(Tina Modotti's uncle, Giuseppe Modotti's brother)

Emigrated to the United States in 1892; mechanical engineer; returns to Italy probably before 1900; returns to United States in 1904; destination: a friend in Oyster Bay, Long Island; by 1905, has moved to Turtle Creek, PA; by 1925 is in San Francisco, lives with rest of Modotti family

Sources: Immigration records: Passenger Lists, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Archives, Washington, D.C.: 1904, Francesco Modotti: S.S. La Gascogne Passenger Manifest, Sailing from Le Havre, France, November 13, 1904, arriving New York November 21, 1904, page 18, line 30

Pietro Modotti June 28, 1869 - February 9, 1950]

(Tina Modotti's uncle, Giuseppe Modotti's brother)

Married María Huber; children Cora and Dino (Tina Modotti's first cousins); Dino left Italy for Bolivia in 1926; his views were anti-fascist, anti-clerical, and anti-monarchist; had direct contact with anarchist leaders and thinkers [in Bolivia]; worked as a roving photographer in Cochabamba and later occasionally as a construction worker; arrested in 1933 by order of the Bolivian Minister of War for communist propaganda

Sources: Barckhausen-Canale, Christiane, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti. Havana: Casa de las Americas, Ensayo Premio 1988, 1989. Translation of Auf den Spuren von Tina Modotti: 25-28

Mario Modotti, November 12, 1912 - ?] Udine;
 (Relation to Tina Modotti unknown)
 1943, belonged to the group of organizers in the guerrilla struggle against fascism; captured in '44, tortured, condemned to death by a German military tribunal; he was shot with 28 other guerrillas, on the patio of the prison of Udine, according to the Léxico de la Resistencia: 760; Tina Modotti's biography is on 761

Sources: Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti: 31

Attilio Saltarini Modotti c. 1893-]
 (Relation to Tina Modotti unknown)
 Father: Giovanni Saltarini; married Luisa Magnano; mechanic; emigrated to the United States October 1913 at age 20; destination: Dorchester, Massachusetts to friend Luigi Modini

Sources: Immigration records: Passenger Lists, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Archives, Washington, D.C.: 1907, Attilio Saltarini Modotti: S.S. Re D'Italia Passenger Manifest, Sailing from Genova, Italy, October 25, 1913, arriving New York November 15, 1913, page 18, line 6

Angelo Modotti 1874 -?]
 (Relation to Tina Modotti unknown)
 Born in San Vito dei Normanni (36K from Udine, 23K from Pordenone, Italy); emigrates to United States March 1907, age 33; single, mechanic; destination illegible (Vil__usburg, PA) to join friend, Pietro Liberto in destination illegible (Walnorberg, PA)

Sources: Immigration records: Passenger Lists, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Archives, Washington, D.C.: 1907, Angelo Modotti: S.S. Nord America Passenger Manifest, Sailing from Genova, Italy, February 27, 1907, arriving New York March 17, 1907, page 5, line 12

Tina Modotti's Siblings:

Mercedes Margherita Modotti: November 4, 1892 - 1965
 (Sister to Tina Modotti)
 Emigrated to United States 1911; arrived New York,
 April 12, 1911; in 1930, returns to Italy

Sources: Ellero, Gianfranco, The Childhood of Tina Modotti. Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1992.
 (Originally published as "L'infanzia di Tina Modotti," Corriere del Friuli. [Italy] (October 1979): 6

Information provided by Comitato Tina Modotti,
 Udine, Italy, 1993

Immigration records: Passenger Lists, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Archives, Washington, D.C.: 1911.
 Manifest no found in microfilm, but indication of immigration noted in Soundex

Ernesto Modotti: August 29, 1894 - March 3, 1898],
 Ruprecht, Austria
 (Brother to Tina Modotti)

Sources: Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti: 6

Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti: 29

Valentina Maddalena Modotti: January 7, 1899 - 1967
 (Sister to Tina Modotti)
 Son, Tullio, born (out of wedlock) January 15, 1918, in Chieti, Italy; moves away from Udine to Trieste in 1930; Tullio's father may have been a soldier; Tullio takes the name of Dante Cosolo; Tina Modotti sent for Tullio in 1928-9, but he couldn't leave; Tullio marries Argia; they have a child, Bruno, born c. 1950; Tullio dies in late 1980s

Sources: Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti: 6

Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti: 33-6, 38

Information provided by Comitato Tina Modotti,
 Udine, Italy, 1993

Letter from Bruno Cosolo to Elena Poniatowska

Iolanda Luisa Modotti: July 7, 1901 - 1991

(Sister to Tina Modotti)

Born Sanct Ruprecht, Klagenfurt; emigrated to the United States; arrived New York: January 27, 1920; married artist Guido Gabrielli, May 29, 1924, in San Francisco (his sister was a well-known opera singer, Irene Veneroni; by 1927, living back with her family by 1927, i.e., no longer married)

Sources: Ellero, The Childhood of Tina Modotti: 6

San Francisco Chronicle (May 30, 1924): 4, column 2

Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti: 41

Crocker-Langly San Francisco Directory 1927

Pasquale Benvenuto Modotti: May 18, 1903-?]

(Brother to Tina Modotti)

Born in St. Ruprecht, Austria; emigrated to the United States; arrived New York, January 27, 1920; by Oct 1928, living in Pasadena; November 1928, asks Tina Modotti to write him in care of G. Brogelli, 2914 Main Street, Los Angeles

Sources: Barckhausen-Canale, Verdad y leyenda de Tina Modotti: 41

Giuseppe (anglicized to Joseph) called Beppo: c. 1906-?
(Brother to Tina Modotti)

Emigrated to the United States; arrived New York, January 27, 1920; listed in undated list of "subversives" in San Francisco as: Joseph Modotti, 2206 Filbert Street, Metal Workers Industrial Union

Sources: Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff, 1917-1941, (MID), National Archives, Washington, D.C.: file 10110-2669-40 Exhibit A

APPENDIX II

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APPENDIX III

ExhibitionsKnown Exhibitions Before 1942

1924

November 1 - [10]: Palacio de Minería, Mexico City

"Tina and I for the first time are showing together; indeed, it is her first public showing and I am proud of my dear 'apprentice.' ...under the auspices of the Secretario de Educación Pública hung ten prints each in the Palacio de Minería. It is a big affair: Rafael, Charlot, Felipe among our friends are also showing." [DBI: 101]

Manuel Álvarez Bravo remembers seeing the show with Fred Davis hadn't met her yet [Manual Álvarez Bravo, interview with Mildred Constantine]

1925

August 31 - September 6: Museo del Estado, Guadalajara, Mexico

[with Weston: from Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 60]

1926

January: Studio of Consuelo Kanaga, 1371 Post Street, San Francisco, CA

Kanaga recalled the show in a letter to Lee Witkin August 9, 1973. She was reminded of the show by the publication of ten photographs of Modotti's in the Massachusetts Review, with a short note by Lisa Baskin. "The Mass Review with photographs by Tina Modotti - tucked under my arm by you at our Gallery is a great treasure. I admired everything about her - she was rich and wise and so beautiful - When she walked in my studio one evening (a little party I gave to show her work and sell it to friends) everyone felt her presence. She was lovely." [Letter in Witkin Archive, Center for Creative Photography].

[March: Exhibited with Weston: "The Emperor of Photography," from Fragile Life, 78, 80. Constantine believes Rivera's piece in Mexican Folkways was a response to it; no mention of it in Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs or DBI, 152, Weston uses this term, Emperor of Photographer, Belisima Tina Modotti, and the League of Writers of America]

October 6 - ?: Galeria de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, D.F.
[Hooks, Tina Modotti, 128; Conger, Edward Weston: Photographs, 60]

See El Universal Ilustrado (October 14, 1926) "Las Pequeños Grandes Obras de Tina Modotti" (illustrations: Portrait of Pepe Quintanilla and Laundry)

"She exhibited new prints on October 7 in a mixed-media exhibition at the Galeria de Arte Moderno, along with Weston, Rivera, Charlot and others."
[Hooks, Tina Modotti, 128]

Vera de Cordova's article translated and printed in The Art Digest (December 15, 1926): 10, without illustrations. He says: "Lastly, I wish to speak of an exquisite and tremendously sensitive artist: Tina Medotti [sic]. How may painters would wish to create, at least once in their lives, one solitary painting which should record the emotion contained in the photographs of this modern and potential artist!"

Other artists mentioned are: Rivera, Weston [who receives no comment other than acknowledgement that he is in the show], Fermín Revueltas, Montenegro, Atl, Charlot, O'Higgins, Fernandez Ledezma, Leon Venado, Guillermo Ruiz. Show seems to have been organized by Ernesto Cervantes

1927

January 1 - 31: Tenth International Salon of Photography, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park. Juried show held under the auspices of the Camera Pictorialists of Los Angeles.

Modotti showed three untitled, platinum prints [see catalogue, unpaginated]. Modotti was singled out by a reviewer in a review [one of only seven photographers mentioned by name] with the follow comment: Tina Modotti formerly of Los Angeles, now of Mexico City, by omitting titles for her prints, also makes a gesture of the modernist, which is an invitation to

the audience to do its own interpreting." [Los Angeles Saturday Night vol 7/ no 11 (January 22, 1927): 9. Reviewer for this paper is Elizabeth Bingham.]

1928

August: Group exhibition, place?

"...had I told you about an exhibit of Photography took place here? Gee, I wish you had seen it; it surely was a mess! I also exhibited; I first had refused, but nice people like [Antonio??] Garduno insisted so and I could see that they interpreted my refusal to snobbery, so I accepted and got a prize thereby. But don't get exited, it was just the first part of a first prize, since thy had five first prizes; a delicious way of pleasing several at one time, and of not showing partialities...I wish you could have read some of the newspaper comments on the various prints... (Stark [Rule]: 56 letter September 18, 1928).

This exhibition is reviewed in ;30-30! 2 (August 1928) by R.A.C.

1929

October 4-31: Group Show, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA.

"Mexico is represented by Tina Modotti and M. Álvarez Bravo. Miss Modotti's prints contain some excellent qualities, but Mr. Bravo may scarcely be said to have, as yet, mastered the art of pictorial photography." ["Art in Photography," The Argonaut (October 12, 1929): 16.]

The other photographers in this show were: Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston, Brett Weston, Dorothea Lange, E. A. Nievera, Roger Sturtevant, Ira Martin, Anton Bruehl, Andrew Foka, and some unnamed members of the Japan Camera Club of Los Angeles. [see "Creative Photography on Exhibition at Berkeley Art Museum," The Courier [Berkeley] October 5, 1929): 10. and "Exhibition of Photography, The Courier [Berkeley] October 12, 1929): 10.

On May 1, 1929, EW received package of M. Álvarez Bravo's photographs [DBII: 119] EW suspected they may be by Tina Modotti. It may be that these photographs are the ones that end up in this exhibition.

December 3-14: Solo exhibit: La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Edificio de la Biblioteca Nacional (Av. Uruguay e Isabel la Católica) at Library of National Autonomous University of Mexico;

At the inauguration: words by Enrique Fernández Ledesma; Songs by Concepción Michel; lecture "La fotografía y la Nueva Sensibilidad" by Prof. José Romano Muñoz; inauguración by Sr. Lic. Ignacio García Téllez, Rector of the UAN[M]

1930

February: "All-American Photo Exhibit" sponsored by the Workers Camera League: Modotti's work would be included: New Masses (5, no 8 [January 1930]: 16. So far, no evidence that this show ever took place has been found.

October: Lotte Jacobi's studio, Berlin, Germany

The only evidence that corroborates this is the recollection of Check journalist Egon Erwin Kisch, who recalled seeing the show. His recollection is from the homage published after Modotti's death.

November 7 - 29: Photography 1930, Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, Cambridge, MA

This exhibition of 170 images included work by Berenice Abbott, Atget, Bourke-White, Bruehl, Evans, Arthur Gerlach, Pirie MacDonald, Modotti, William Rittase, Sheeler, Sherril Schell, Steichen, Steiner, Stieglitz, Strand, Ulmann, Weston and an assortment of non-art photographs in the following categories: Aerial, Astronomical, Press, and X-ray.

"Tina Modotti. Born in Italy. Has spent many years in Mexico, very active in Communist agitation. At one time assistant to Edward Weston in his photographic work. Deported from Mexico for Communist activity, and at present in Moscow for the 7th of November celebration, her photographs of which will be exhibition at the Art Center in New York this winter.

Photos included:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 61. Girl | 66. Hands |
| 62. Roses | 67. Hands |
| 63. Baby Nursing | 68. Cactus |
| 64. Still life | 69. Water Carrier |
| 65. Baby | 70. Tank |

lent by Art Center [NY]

1932

November 8 - 31: International Photographers, Brooklyn Museum

Modotti was listed as an Italian photographer and was represented by two photographs: Mother and Child and Mexican Mother. The photographs were loaned by the Delphic Gallery.

In the preface, the Museum states: In arranging this first International Exhibition, the Brooklyn Museum wishes to express its gratitude for their advice and cooperation to Conde Nast Publications, Inc., and to Helen Appleton Reed
Alma Reid [sic]
Julien Levy
John Becker
D. M.F. Agha

Other artists included were: AMERICAN: Abbott, Kurt Baasch, Bourke-White, Maurice Bratter, Cunningham, Evans, Pratt Lynes, Lee Miller, Outerbridge, Douglas Robbins, Thruman Rotan, Sheeler, Sherril Shell [sic], Stella Simon, Steichen, Luke Swank, Doris Ulmann, Weston; FRANCE: Florence Henri, Kertesz, Eli Lotar, Man Ray, Roger Parry, Emile Sougez, Maurice Tabard, Hoyningen-Huenè; GERMANY: Herbert Bayer, Ilse Bing, Walter Hege, Herman Lerski, Alice Lex, Lucia Maholy [sic], Hans Neuner, Umbo, Maholy-Nagy [sic], Peter Weller; MEXICO: Augustin [sic] Jimenez; ITALIAN: Modotti; ENGLAND: Cecil Beaton.

Selected Exhibitions after 1942

1942

March 19 - 28: Exposición de fotografía: Tina Modotti. Galeria de Arte Mexicana.

Xerox copy of announcement of show in Tina Modotti Artist File, Museum of Modern Art; catalog of photographs exhibited with short homage by Manuel Álvarez Bravo; 49 photographs hung included.

1975

Women of Photography. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1975. Margery Mann and Anne Noggle, curators.

Works included: Elisa
Roses
Telephone Wires
Mother and Child from Tehuantepec
Untitled

1977

Tina Modotti. Museum of Modern Art, 1977. John Szarkowski, curator. Fifty photographs included. Many were modern prints for Modotti's negatives.

1978

Photographs of Mexico: Modotti/Strand/Weston. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY, 1978-1979. Rebecca Zurier, Curator.

Works included:

Two Children
Nursing Baby
Mother and Daughter Carrying Pots
House in Tehuantepec, Mexico
Woman Carrying Pot
Electrical Wires
Mother and Baby
Marionette and Marionette Shadows
Ceramic Sculpture

1981

Cubism and American Photography, 1910-1930. Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 1981-1982. John Pultz and Catherine B. Scallen, curators.

Works included: Untitled (Men loading Bananas)
Untitled (View from Rooftop)

APPENDIX IV

"Tina Modotti: Exposition de fotografia," Galería de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, 1942. The single page, folded sheet of paper accompanied the exhibition. Manuel Álvarez Bravo wrote a short statement and a catalogue of the fifty prints was listed.

1. Alcatraz (Calla Lily)
2. Cabeza de Cristo (Head of Christ)
3. Ranita de Atzompa (Little Frog from Atzompa)
4. Obrero Petrolero (Oil Worker (could be Tank No. 1)
5. La Carpa (The Tent)
6. Pajarito de Coyotepec (Little Bird from Coyotepec)
7. Arbol y Sombras (Tree and Shadows)
8. Arquitectura Tepotzotlán 1 (Tepotzotlán Architecture, 1)
9. Arquitectura Tepotzotlán 2 (Tepotzotlán Architecture, 2)
10. Arquitectura Tepotzotlán 3 (Tepotzotlán Architecture, 3)
11. Flor de Manita
12. Tendedero (Clothesline)
13. Arquitectura de Convento (Convent architecture)
14. Niño de Barrio (Child of the quarter or slum)
15. Cabeza de Niño (Head of a child with sombrero)
16. Cántaro de Guadalajara (Pitcher from Guadalajara)
17. Manos de Trabajador (Hands of a Worker)
18. Obrero Constructor (Construction Worker)
19. Elegancia y Pobreza (Elegance and Poverty)
20. Construcción (Construction)
21. Código Federal del Trabajo (Federal Work Code)
22. Abajo la Guerra Contra Rusia (Down with the War against Russia)
23. "El Machete"
24. Revolución Mexicana, 1 (Mexican Revolution, 1)
25. Revolución Mexicana, 2 (Mexican Revolution, 2)
26. Revolución Mexicana, 3 (Mexican Revolution, 3)
27. Julio Antonio Mella
28. La Técnica
29. Concha Michel
30. Niñita Mexicana (Little Mexican Child/Mexican Baby)
31. Niña Orozco Romero (Daughter of Orozco Romero)
32. Paisaje de Estaño (Landscape of Tin)
33. Copas (Glasses - Experiment in Related Form)
34. Luz Ardizana
35. María Orozco Romero, 1
36. María Orozco Romero, 2
37. Lupita Rivera (daughter Lupe and Diego Rivera)
38. Cañas (Sugar Cane)
39. Miguelín (little Miguel, portrait of Miguel Velasco?)

40. Francisco Marín
41. Campesinos (Rural Workers, or Farmers)
42. Lola Velázquez Cueto
43. La Madre Azteca (Aztec Mother posed by Luz Jimenez?)
44. María e Hija de Tata Nacho (Maria Nacho and her daughter)
45. Azucenas (White or Easter Lilies)
46. Autoretrato (Self Portrait)
47. Retrato de Tina Modotti por Edward Weston (Portrait of Modotti by Weston)
48. Salvador Novo
49. Manuel Rodríguez Lozano
50. La última fotografía (The last photograph)

APPENDIX V

WORKING CATALOGUE OF TINA MODOTTI'S PHOTOGRAPHS

The following list is a working catalogue of photographs by Tina Modotti. It is incomplete and is intended only to give an overview of her production.

-Order: The catalogue is presented in chronological order; each year is divided into four sections: Portraiture, Still Life, Architecture/ Landscape, and Figures.

-Title: Modotti rarely titled her images and the titles here are descriptive where none is known.

-Date: Dates are given when known. When dates are given with "c." this indicates that the exact date is unknown and it is my sense that the photograph was taken within the period indicated. The photographs are listed in the earliest possible year they could have been made.

1923 Portraiture

Charlot sitting on chest, 1923

1924 Still Life

Roses, 1924

Calla Lily, c. 1924-5

Geranium, c. 1924-1925

Texture and Shadow (Cloth Folds), 1924-1926

Abstract: Crumpled Tinfoil, 1924-1926

My Latest Lover, c. 1924

Experiment in Related Form or Glasses, 1924

1924 Architecture/Landscape

Interior of Church Tepetzotlán 1924

Interior of Church, variation, 1924

Interior with Doors 1924-1926

Arbol y Sombras or Tree and Shadows, 1924

Laundry (Tendedero), 1926 or earlier

Arches with Stairs, Tepetzotlan, 1924

Arch, Wall and Fountain, Tepetzotlan, 1924

Arch, Tepetzotlan, 1924

[Tepetzotlan? (courtyard with ruins)], c. 1924-1926

Circus Tent, 1924

1924 Portraiture

Edward Weston, Looking Up with Camera, 1924
Edward Weston with Camera (variant, vertical), 1924
Edward Weston with Camera (turning away, lens cap off),
 1924
Edward Weston with Camera (with pipe), 1924
Edward Weston with Camera (with pipe, adjusting lens cap),
 1924
Edward Weston in Window, writing, 1924
Federico Marín, c. 1924
Jean Charlot, 1924
Charlot, facing right, c. 1924
Charlot, facing left, c. 1924
P. Kahn Khoje, 1924-5
Carleton Beals, 1924
Carleton Beals Reading, 1924-1926

1924 Figures

Elisa Kneeling, 1924

1925 Still Life

Two Callas, 1925
Nopal Cactus, 1925
Easter Lily and Bud, I, c. 1925
Easter Lily and Bud, II, c. 1925
Flor de Manita, 1925
Head of Christ c. 1925-1926
Flagellation of Christ (3/4 view), c. 1925-1926
Flagellation of Christ (full view), c. 1925-1926

1925 Architecture/Landscape

Staircase, c. 1925-1926
Telephone Wires, 1925
Telephone Poles, c. 1925

1925 Portraiture

Stanislas Pestkowski, c. 1925-1926
Concha Michel, 1925-1929
Anita Brenner, c. 1925
Dolores del Rio (looking right), c. 1925
Dolores del Rio (looking left, smiling) c. 1925
José (Pepe) Quintanilla, c. 1925-1926
María Marín de Orozco (faced right, eyes down, hair
 loose), c. 1925
María Marín de Orozco (with scarf), c. 1925

María Marín de Orozco (facing left, looking up, hair pulled back), c. 1925
Maria Orozco Romero (?), c. 1925-1926
Germán List Arzubide I, 1925-1928
Germán List Arzubide II, 1925-1928
Germán List Arzubide III, 1925-1928
Germán List Arzubide IV, 1925-1928
Salvador Novo, c. 1925-1928

1926 Still Life

Skeleton, c. 1926
Judas's (with church), 1926
Judas's for Sale, c. 1926
Untitled (Charlie Chaplin Piñata), c. 1926
Untitled (Piñatas), c. 1926

1926 Architecture/Landscape

Pulquería, Mexico, c. 1926
Houses on a Lake Pátzcuaro, c. 1926
Roofs of Pátzcuaro, c. 1926

1926 Portraiture

John Dos Passos late 1926-Early 1927
Elisa (?), 1926 or later
Federico Marín, 1926
Baby Marín (?), 1926
Lupe Marín as a baby, c. 1926
Lupe Marín as a baby, variation, c. 1926
Moises Saenz, c. 1926-1929
Guadalupe Posada, Singing, with Children, c. 1926-1928
Guadalupe Posada, Singing, II, c. 1926-1928
Portrait of a Woman, c. 1926-1929
Portrait of Woman, facing left, with Earring, c. 1926-1929

1926 Figures

Worker's Parade or Mexican Peasants, 1926
Aztec Mother or Luz Jiménez with Child (horizontal), 1926
Child Nursing (L. Jiménez) (vertical format), 1926 or 1927
Child Nursing with Earring Nursing, 1926 or 1927
Luz Jiménez with Braids and Child (vert. format), 1926 or 1927
Woman with Olla, 1926-1927

1927 Still Life

Bandolier, Corn, Guitar, 1927
Bandolier, Corn, Sickle, 1927
Bandolier, Guitar, Sickle, 1927
Hammer and Sickle, 1927
Hammer, Sickle, Sombrero (with trim), 1927
Hammer, Sickle, Sombrero (plain hat), 1927
Los Muertos, Jugete (Altar Day of the Dead), c. 1927-1929
Pequeña ofrenda, c. 1927-1929
Nacimiento, c. 1927-1929
Nacimiento fragmento, c. 1927-1929
Untitled (Ceramic Bird) "Parjarito de Coyotepec," c. 1927-1929
Untitled (Frog Ornament), published 1927
The Little Mule, published 1927
Seven Mexican Toys, c. 1927-1929
14 Masks c. 1927-1929

1927 Architecture/Landscape

Stadium (Interior) 1927
Stadium (Exterior) or Architectural Study, 1927

1927 Portraiture

Frances Toor, c. 1927-1929
Pacheco working on a Mural, probably 1927
Ramon de Negri, c. 1927-1929
Luz Ardizana, c. 1927-1929
Reception at Soviet Embassy, 1927

1927 Figures

Labor 1 or Hands Washing, c. 1927
Hands Resting on Tool, 1927
Hands on Shovel (Cropping variant, vertical format), 1927
Mexican Girl, c. 1927-1928
Mexican Girl with Pail, c. 1927-1928
Two Children, Mexico, c. 1927-1928
Campesinos Reading El Machete, c. 1927
Campesino Reading El Machete, c. 1927
Woman with Flag c. 1927
Boy with Straw hat or Agrarista, probably 1927
Building Construction (Workman with Girders), 1927
Tank, No. 1, 1927
Worker at Stadium, c. 1927
Construction Workers, c. 1927
Unskilled Labor (Man Carrying Beam) 1927-1929
Loading Bananas, Veracruz I, 1927-1929

Loading Bananas, Veracruz II, 1927-1929
Fishermen Mending Nets, 1927-1929
Campesino with Hay, 1927-1929
Mexican with Basket on Head (torn shirt), 1927-1929, prob 1929
Man Carrying Bundles (Tobacco), 1927-1929
Men with Palm-leaf raincoats, 1927-1930
Mexican Child and Cactus, c. 1927
Man and boy Campesinos, 1927-1929
Campesino Meeting, Jalapa (with speakers) (December) 1927
Campesino Meeting, Jalapa (with speakers) (December) 1927
 Variation of above
Campesino Meeting, Jalapa (view of audience) (December) 1927
Mexican Family, with Corn, (December) 1927
National League of Peasants on Parade in Jalapa, Veracruz, (December) 1927
Partito Duranguense (with banners), 1927
Partito Duranguense (seated at table), December 1927
Federacion de Juventudes Comunistas de Mexico, 1927
Pestkowski Lecturing, 1927
Oaxacan square with fountain, 1927-1929, c. 1929
Oaxacan Square, Peasant Gathering, 1927-1929, c. 1929
Oaxacan Market Scene, I, 1927-1929, c. 1929
Oaxacan Market Scene, II, 1927-1929, c. 1929

1928 Still Life

Bread of the Dead, published 1928
Untitled (Little Pig), published 1928
Untitled (Four Toy Wood Birds), published 1928
Untitled (Four Mexican Toys), published 1928
La Técnica or Mella's Typewriter, 1928

1928 Portraiture

Julio Antonio Mella (facing left), 1928
Julio Antonio Mella (facing forward), c. 1928
Antoinette Bourcart, 1928
Marianne Bourcart (Cunningham), 1928
Hands of Nicaragua Committee - Comitato Manos Fuera Nicaragua, 1928
Fifth National Conference, 1928

1928 Figures

Misery, c. 1928
Elegance and Poverty, (photomontage), published 1928

1929 Still Life

Corn, c. 1929
Sugar Cane, 1929
Palm Trees, c. 1929
Palm Tree, c. 1929
Yank and Police Marionette, 1929
Marionette in Top Hat, 1929
Five Marionettes (from "Hairy Ape"), 1929
Marionette: Aboard a Ship, 1929
Four Marionettes (from "Hairy Ape"), 1929
Stage Set with 4 Marionettes (above is detail), 1929
Police Marionette, 1929
Reclining Marionette (Yank), 1929
René D'Harnoncourt Puppet (bowing), 1929
René D'Harnoncourt Puppet (with a bird), 1929
Marionettes in front of a Pulquería, 1929
Marionette and Modern Stage Set I (Yank), 1929
Marionette and Modern Stage Set II (Yank), 1929
Marionettes in front of a Pulquería, 1929
Código Federal del Trabajo, 1929

1929 Architecture/Landscape

House in Tehuantepec (in distance), probably 1929
House in Tehuantepec, (close-up of above), probably 1929

1929 Portraiture

Mella Dead, 1929
Benvenuto Modotti, 1929
Carolina Amor de Fournier, 1929
Carolina Amor de Fournier, 1929
Louis Bunin (puppet in lap), 1929
Louis Bunin (puppet dancing), 1929
Ione Robinson with Abstractions, 1929
Ione Robinson (leaning forward), 1929
Ione Robinson (leaning backward), 1929
Ione Robinson (in front of brick wall), 1929
Joseph Freeman (against brick wall) I, 1929
Joseph Freeman (against brick wall) II, 1929
Joseph Freeman (against brick wall) III, 1929
Joseph Freeman, in hat, I, 1929
Joseph Freeman, in hat II, 1929
Double portrait: Robinson and Freeman (Robinson's hand showing), 1929
Double portrait: Ione Robinson and Joseph Freeman, 1929
Freeman, Vidali, unknown man, 1929
Freeman, Vidali, unknown man, with Rivera drawing, 1929

1929 Figures

Hands of the Puppeteer, 1929
Hands of the Puppeteer (cropping variation: vertical and reversed), 1929
Woman's Hands with Marionette (Daughter of Ship Owner in "Hairy Ape"), 1929
Man's hands with Marionette (Yank from "Hairy Ape"), 1929
Diego Rivera at a Red Aid Rally, Mexico, c. 1929
Red Aid Rally, Mexico, c. 1929
Mother and Child, Tehuantepec, 1929
Tehuantepec Type, Mexican Girl, 1929
Tehuantepec Type (woman smiling), prob 1929
Woman from Tehuantepec (Jicapexle on head) prob 1929
Tehuantepec Girl (on steps), 1929
Tehuantepec Girls going to Market (on steps) 1929
Tehuantepec Woman, profile (with Jicapexle on her head), 1929
Tehuantepec Woman, frontal (in front of stick wall), 1929
Two Mexican Woman with Baskets (wind blowing skirts) 1929
Mexican Woman & Girl with Pots (with pig), 1929
Woman Bending, 1927 or later, possibly 1929
Tehuantepec Woman with Boy by the River, 1929
Woman Washing in River (vertical), 1929
Woman Washing Clothes in River (horizontal), 1929
Children in River (vertical format), 1929
Children in River (horizontal format), 1929
Woman at Market, with Black Robozo (columns), 1929
Woman at Market, with Basket, going up stairs, 1929
Woman at Market, with White Robozo, going up stairs, 1929
Two Women on a Porch, 1929
Woman at Market with Child, going up stairs, 1929
Woman at Market with Child carrying Basket, 1929
Woman at Market, with Basket (naked child standing), 1929
Woman with Basket by River, 1929
Market Scene (dentista), c. 1929
Woman in Black with Basket (with donkey), 1929
Two Women in Black with Baskets (on street), 1929
Two Women in Street with Jars (in distance), 1929
Alley with Steps in Mexico, 1929
Girl and Woman at Market, 1929
Baby Nursing Bottle, c. 1929
Oxen Team, 1929

1930 Architecture/Landscape

Berlin Landscape (?)

1930 PortraitureCarlos Vidali, on Ship, 1930**1930 Figures**Ventriloquist, c. 1930Schon Wieder (Yet Again), 1930Pregnant Woman with Child, 1930Young Pioneers, 1930Street Scene, Berlin, 1930Couple at the Zoo, Berlin, 1930**UNDATED**Roofs of Mexico CityRoofs with Sky ("Architectural Study, Mexico"Landscape: Mountain and RoofsConvent & Church of San Agustín (Tlalpan)Landscape with ChurchRural Street Scene, with Children, Dog and ArchLandscape: La MalincheJacobo Hurwitz and othersTeresa PomarBertha SingermanXavier VillarretePortrait: Four ChildrenPortrait: ChildPortrait: BabyOrozco working on a Mural

PLEASE NOTE

Materials in this document have not been filmed at the request of the author. They are available for consultation, however, in the author's university library.

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