

Rodrigo Massi
ILASSA
February 2007

The Virile City: Modernity, Masculinity, and the Dialectic of Performance in San Salvador, 1900-1940.

Founded in 1546 at its current site, the city of San Salvador has withstood countless earthquakes, eruptions, floods, and armed conflicts to survive past the four-hundred-year mark (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994). For the majority of its lifetime, though, San Salvador competed with neighboring Santa Ana for national dominance after living in the shadows of Guatemala City for the duration of the colonial period and subsequent experiment in federal governance. At the dawn of the twentieth century, however, the capital would awaken as a result of the confluence of various factors: an expanding nationally-based wealth derived from the highly lucrative exportation of coffee, the popularization throughout Latin America of liberal and positivist ideologies, and the technological advances of modernity. The period between 1900 and 1930 would comprise the most dramatic evolution the city had seen in such an abbreviated span of time.

The social organization of the city would therefore be of utmost importance to its inhabitants, especially the elite who would take charge of creating an urban landscape in the manner they saw fit. This paper seeks to understand how ideologies and cultural forms available to the citizens of San Salvador came to shape the interaction between classes and to articulate a performative economy of sorts. I employ the term performative economy in hopes of shedding light on the manner in which membership and participation in the new modern playground of the capital would be contingent upon

any given individual's success in reproducing morally and rationally sanctioned representations of the self. By focusing on the elite class, I take advantage of the rich resources available to study how entrepreneurs and professionals sought to portray themselves to each other and to greater society in general in order to secure their place in the rapidly evolving modern city.

At the same time, I would like to underline the fact that even though elites found themselves in an enviable position of dictating the pace of life and the construction of a functioning administrative, economic, and cultural center, they did not occupy the stage by themselves nor did they act at all times as a monolithic entity. The growing ranks of the working class and the small but deeply entrenched middle sectors, along with the gradually solidification of a viable military class would also exert their own influence in the habitation of the public and private spheres.

Given the wide number of actors playing their roles in San Salvador society, bringing to their performance a wildly divergent set of cultural expressions inherent in class and ethnic differences, I have chosen to isolate the concept of gender as an agent of social organization that manifests itself through all echelons of society and has the capacity to act as the discursive glue to broach experiences and engage all actors in the definition of modern urbanity. Though other social organizers enter my analysis accordingly, I hope to demonstrate how they act in unison with the performance of gender in a complex matrix of cultural signs.

What follows is an exercise to reconstruct urban life in San Salvador with a focus on the ways men and women tended to act out their gender and their modernity. I bring up the term dialectic to signal the ways in which certain performances come to shape and

engender new ones, or reactivate older ones based on the socio-political conditions of any given context. The period of time between 1900 and 1930 serves as the temporal setting for the simple reason that it represents a period of transition from the volatile, violent, and less urbanized 19th century and the subsequent militarization of the state from 1931 onwards. This time frame stands to highlight the cultural mechanisms that would set the stage for the Salvadoran experience in authoritarianism and, later, civil war.

Elite Cultural Production and Physical Space

As the conflictive long century of the 1800s drew to a close, and with the accession of a civilian doctor, Manuel Enrique Araujo, in 1911 to the presidency, the Salvadoran, elite class stood at the crossroads of modernity and at their fingertips were the various tools to mold society the way they saw fit. Enriched by the ever-growing cultivation and exportation of coffee and other agricultural goods, and acutely conscious of international currents in intellectual discourse and investment, this small class of urban citizens began the process of building the institutions to support the Liberal ideals overtaking much of Latin America at the time.

In *The City of Mexico in the Age of Díaz*, Michael Johns discusses the manner in which the Mexican capital underwent a transformation, albeit many times a cosmetic one, as part of the push by those in power to articulate a national identity capable of entering in dialogue with contemporary, Western ideals of progress. During the presidency of Díaz at the turn of the 19th century, Mexico City acquired a particular physical presentation, one that emulated the capitals of Europe for the elite enclaves expanding towards the western boundary of the city while the rest of the population continued to

live in questionable sanitary conditions and decaying infrastructure (Johns 1997). While San Salvador in no way matched the size and institutional viability of the Mexican capital, it did come to be viewed by the national elite as the proper site in which to forge a new semblance following the tenets of rationality, order, and artifice, and did so selectively and by carefully articulated cultural means.

Much like Mexico City, San Salvador underwent a considerable physical transformation as an expression of the burgeoning intersection of world markets and cultures that the elites experienced throughout their lives. Of particular importance to the Salvadoran urban experience, however, was the city's relationship to catastrophe and destruction. Beset by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and numerous fires, the city decidedly evolved through various cyclical patterns of destruction and renewal, and as such, perhaps its administrators showed a greater proclivity to manipulating the physical space on a more ready basis than elsewhere in the continent, especially in areas less prone to seismic events or built with sturdier materials. One of the major earthquakes to ravage the city in the 19th century, in April of 1854, prompted the relocation of the seat of government to the newly incorporated site of Nueva San Salvador, also known as Santa Tecla, to the immediate west. The resilience of economic and social networks, however, managed to resurrect the city, albeit with most of its colonial architectural legacy gone. A subsequent earthquake of similar scope in March of 1873 further deteriorated the historic record (Martin 1911, 257).

The traditional materials of adobe and bahareque eventually gave way to cement and iron as the city expanded both upwards and outwards, though the telluric realities kept buildings for the most part at one or two stories (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994, 98-

99). By the 1910s, San Salvador stood at the confluence of a robust elite with the funds to transform the city, and both a need and tradition to reconstruct. If earthquakes spared important public buildings for decades, then fires ensured that the pattern would continue, like those that destroyed the National Palace in 1889, the Casino in 1903, and the *Teatro Nacional* in 1910 (Urrutia Flamenco 1924). Needless to say, the push to modernize the state and the city, the economic and cultural wherewithal to do it, and the tradition of renewal in San Salvador coalesced to make the period of civilian rule from 1911-1931 one of massive physical and social restructuring.

But how to justify the erection of monuments and the architectural revision of the city in a decidedly foreign concept of positivist progress? While the elite class was small, the possibility existed that its members would perhaps not agree on the direction San Salvador and the state should take in the face of foreign ideologies of urbanity and nationhood. Social and political historians have noted the specific character of Salvadoran elites who effectively maintained production and distribution in their own hands rather than facilitating foreign investment to oversee a great deal of agricultural development, especially in relation to Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Dunkerley 1988, Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2004). Concurrently, the concentration in coffee production and exportation, as well as the eventual but definitive rise of San Salvador as the sole center of political and economic power, gave the Salvadoran oligarchy a more unified character, if not explicitly, then at least in practice. However, these characteristics, while creating the possibility for consensus regarding the reception of foreign advances and cultural forms, could also inhibit the successful implementation of modern tenets. Anti-imperialist tendencies in Salvadoran culture, not to mention in

political and economic practices, could engender a tension with outside influences (Schoonover 1989).

In *La Ciudad de San Salvador*, Carlos Urrutia Flamenco underlines the paradoxical relationship between the definition of an elite identity that at once renounces autochthonous cultural forms and a refusal the foreign. Published in 1924, the tome unsurprisingly preaches in favor of doing away with exoticism more suited to the countryside, but does so in contrast to unfavorably seen practices, like: “knowing foreign mercantile geography while ignoring the products of our own soil, the economic potentiality of the Republic, and what people are the more honorable and equipped for the exercise of public power” (Urrutia Flamenco 1924, 238). The ideal Salvadoran would balance the need to define himself in opposition to both popular, local culture and intrusive outside elements.

Here, I argue that maintaining this balance between tradition and modernity, autochthonous identity and cosmopolitan attitudes, rurality and urbanity, and retaining control of the elaboration of an increasingly modern sphere necessitated a reliance on a complex matrix of cultural forms and signifiers that could facilitate the transition from one era (the chaotic 19th century) to the next (the moral and ideal 20th century). A review of the literary production of the early 20th century yields various instances where modernization came to be framed within ‘universal’ signifiers in a differentiated hierarchy of class, race, and gender. The latter category, while also under revision given positivist, liberal attitudes of the time, proves useful as a lens in the Salvadoran elite context, given the general homogeneity of the group and the tendency to subsume racial

and class differences to the proclamation of equality and the reality of segregation of the time-space in question.

I have chosen the organization and deployment of gender propriety as the focus of this study for the explicit manner in which it facilitated the incorporation of modernist tendencies into the urban consciousness of San Salvador. At the level of discourse analysis, one can witness the various strategies deployed by those in power to maintain their position, push for international integration, garner support from within their class but not at the expense of vertical acceptance, and perpetuate hegemonic dominance over all classes in the capital.

One way to approach the attitudes of early 20th century elites is to scrutinize those sites where they monopolized cultural production and constructed a cohesive identity for themselves. The sites of male socialization in the city, at times liminal in the public/private sphere divide but decidedly non-inclusive of the majority of San Salvador's citizens, stand out as the arena in which the performative economy would be articulated and grafted onto existing cultural structures. During the first twenty-five years of the last century, the San Salvador upper classes had access to a wide variety of organizations and associations catering to their needs to socialize and build strong networks for their collective and individual advancement. Chroniclers and local writers have amply noted the prominence of the *Casino Salvadoreño*, the oldest surviving private club at the time, and the *Club Internacional* as the epicenters of elite socialization (Martin 1911, Ward 1916, Bermúdez 1917, Urrutia Flamenco 1924). Not until 1925

would there be another club to rival those institutions, the *Salvador Country Club*.¹ The elites did not focus all of their activities on leisure, but also joined any number of literary and cultural societies during the period, most notably the *Ateneo de El Salvador* and the *Academia Salvadoreña*.

Particularly tied to the dawn of modern expansion of the 1910s, the *Ateneo de El Salvador* published a journal serving as the forum for the city's intellectual class. Founded during the presidency of Araujo and eliciting his full support, the association set the tone for a wide range of publications designed to exalt the path the Salvadoran nation and its capital city were blazing through the new century. Its sometimes biweekly or monthly publication collected essays, poetry, and photographs from an expansive membership that transcended the country's boundaries (*El Ateneo de El Salvador* 1912, 1913). These same members were not precluded from joining other social organizations, and many of them held high posts on the boards of social clubs and contributed to other intellectual and entrepreneurial bodies.

During its first year of existence, the *Ateneo* displayed a consistent layout and contained various tropes and patterns that organized its consumption as a cultural product. To this effect, the manner in which the publication employed the concepts of urbanity, masculinity, and femininity served as a non-verbal and verbal language. Each issue featured articles mostly by male intellectuals exalting progress and reason, as well as aesthetic perfection and scientific advancement. The visual component of each text,

¹ The *Casino Salvadoreño* operated since 1880, though in different locations due to infrastructural damage from fire. The *Club Internacional* opened its doors in 1911. Both clubs were located in close proximity to the downtown plazas. The *Salvador Country Club* bucked this trend and occupied a sprawling property at the midpoint between San Salvador and Santa Tecla, echoing the westward expansion of elite interests starting in the 1920s.

however, had little to do with the subject matter at hand. Instead, photographs tended to either glorify San Salvador's modern architecture or the modern beauty of the wives and daughters of prominent citizens (*El Ateneo de El Salvador* 1912, 1913, 1914).

Under the headings of "San Salvador Moderno" and "Bellezas Salvadoreñas," prominent buildings and gracious ladies would promote the process of consuming the magazine, acting as the symbolic companions to the thoughts and ideas that were almost exclusively the territory of elite men. For extended periods of time, the cover of the publication either featured a prominent businessman's wife, a portrait of his family, or an important San Salvador monument. Rationality and civility were prized above all in the periodical, and one of the earliest issues devotes an article to the triumph of peace and the refusal of belligerence and war, mirroring the greater cultural climate in San Salvador, as I will deconstruct in my discussion of the refusal of caudillismo and the 19th century legacy of violence below. Through this and many other pacifist and enlightened pieces, the contributors of the *Ateneo* were making a case for the proper creation of a modern environment, and just as importantly, outlining the practices that would ensure a proper performance of modern gender roles (*El Ateneo de El Salvador* 1912, 1913, 1914).

Textually, the concept of virility makes repeated appearances in the literature of the time, not only in the *Ateneo*, but in the many monographies published both internally and those destined for foreign readers to promote cultural exchange and investment. One of the most desirable qualities to possess according to the biographical dossiers presented in books like *Libro Azul*, *El Salvador al Vuelo*, *San Salvador y sus Hombres*, *Salvador of the XXth Century* was for a man to perform his gender in a definitive and unequivocal way. However, the manner in which it was performed had as much to do with adopting a

modern presentation rather than merely proving bravery or patriarchal dominance. Throughout these texts, virility comes to be directly associated with business acumen, charitable involvement, entrepreneurial expansion, and infrastructural contribution to the city.

One particularly striking example, in the introductory biography of *Libro Azul*, is L.A. Ward's representation of the Salvadoran president of the time, Carlos Meléndez. Heavily exalting Meléndez's rational, analytic, pragmatic, and patriotic character, no mention is made of mindless bravery or belligerent heroics.² Most striking, however, is the heavy emphasis that the authors place on the role that the president and his administration play in the physical and infrastructural improvement of San Salvador and other urban centers. Throughout the eighteen pages dedicated to the head of state, there is but one photograph of the man in question. Instead, each page offers one or two depictions of important buildings in San Salvador or the various departmental seats throughout the country: the National Palace, the National Theater, the insane asylum, the School of Medicine, the Teacher's School, the National Press (Ward 1916, 9-27). Moreover, the text corroborates the idea that this man's success is to a large degree measured by the extent to which he can fulfill the goals of modernity and provide the physical space to demonstrate this achievement. Given the fact that Meléndez failed to

² Similarly, in *El Salvador al Vuelo*, Alejandro Bermudez characterizes Meléndez by modern and restrained qualities: "Don Carlos Meléndez, a modest gentleman, but undoubtedly a prestigious citizen, has not needed to reach the pinnacle he now finds himself on to acquire qualities and noble attributes by the consideration and gaze of the Salvadoran people. He took to the Presidency not an impulsive energy, recently victorious in a bloody sojourn, nor an improvised reputation in a chance moment, but rather the enormous legacy of a life dedicated to duty, dignity, private virtue, intelligent labor and conscientiousness, all which grows and assures his independence of character and the wellbeing of the family."

initiate any considerable public works project during his tenure, the authors dedicate some space to a defense of the president *even though* he has no buildings to show for himself; in mentioning that he oversaw the ongoing construction of many projects started during the previous administration, it seems as if though the authors felt the need to justify his worth by highlighting *any* connection to construction and urban development.

Far from an isolated incident, this tendency of intellectual authors at the time to measure a man's worth, to a great extent, by the houses they inhabited, the buildings they owned, or the constructions they initiated, appears throughout the majority of the documents encountered and with various historical subjects. The biographical sketch of prominent businessman Mauricio Meardi did not even include a picture of the man, unlike the rest of those included in *Libro Azul*. Photographs of his "precious residence" stand for one of his own, and the text goes on to proclaim: "Worthy of praise are the capitalists that guided by their good taste and their love of the arts contribute to the beautification of the city, like Mr. Meardi has done" (Ward 1916, 164).³

In a sense, this measurement of proper modern and masculine citizenship for the elite classes discursively situates the building as a symbol, an extension of the man in question that helps place him in the various hierarchies that constitute the performative economy of the city. However, physical spaces around town were not the only visual elements helping to construct the modern virility of 20th century urbanity. As mentioned earlier, publications like the *Ateneo*, as well as monographies like the *Libro Azul*, *La Ciudad de San Salvador*, *El Salvador al Vuelo*, *Directorio de El Salvador* all compliment

³ Interestingly, Mauricio Meardi's daughter was one of the featured "Bellezas Salvadoreñas" in the *Ateneo*, further demonstrating that the social perception of any prominent individual would be judged also by the measure of the symbolic extensions of his character and role as patriarch.

their stories and biographies not just with plates of the newest and most imposing buildings, but also portraits of elite women.

The Propriety of Gender and the New Modern Institutions

While elites undertook a redefinition of social life in the city through their internally produced and consumed cultural products like literary magazines and city directories, they also interacted on many different levels with the diverse social classes occupying San Salvador during the 1910s and 1920s. Inhabiting the traditional city center up until their definitive exodus towards the west (see below), they shared public space and infrastructure with a small middle class, the working class, and the urban peasantry. To promote the ideals of hygiene and order warranted by the modern way of life the elite and the authorities sought to modify the ‘ungainly’ characteristics of the urban classes, and teaching (or imposing) proper performances of class, race, and gender would facilitate the process.

Social order and the expression of class differentiation in the city intersected clearly with gender performances as evinced by the repressive policies employed by urban police forces in the early twentieth century. While the more commonly expected arrests of vagabonds, loiterers, and prostitutes were essential to the creation of the modern ideal of San Salvador, less common transgressions received notice from the authorities as well. Women wearing slacks, men preferring long-haired styles, and even entire groups of male youths staking out women’s schools come dismissal time all were subject to arrest from *la policía de línea* (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994, 55). Presenting San Salvador as a proper site for the formation of a modern consciousness not only

required a reevaluation of class and race divisions, but also the enactment of gender performances conducive to the overall direction the nation was to take.

Controlling *las malas costumbres* was indeed an essential part to the organization of San Salvador along the tenets of a properly functioning and expressed modern, urban center. In an urban world where elites circulated in more or less the same physical space as a widely diverse cross-section of classes, urban behavior and propriety represented a cultural expression to be promoted and exalted. Urrutia Flamenco noted the wide range of obstinate *malas costumbres* plaguing the capital, and it is interesting to note that many of examples cited revolve around the improper use of public space within the context of a privileged relationship with private space. Loitering on sidewalks, the carrying of bulky possessions atop individuals' heads (a practice more widely occurring among poorer women), transiting in the 'wrong' direction in the shade to avoid the sun when carrying heavy objects, blocking streetcorners, engaging in indiscrete conversations within earshot of others: the elite spectator had trouble accepting practices that could very well be avoided if they were taken elsewhere (Urrutia Flamenco 1924, 237-238). The proper functioning of the urban public space could not be ensured if streets, sidewalks, and streetcars served as sites of unseemly activities best kept behind closed doors.

Instead, the public space better served a modern purpose serving as a site for the performance of 'proper' urbanity. The above-mentioned citations of *malas costumbres* stand in contrast to elite ideas of ceremony and propriety, again articulated along the axis of proper class, racial, and gender expression. Urrutia Flamenco recounts:

There are in the parks a regular number of wooden and cement seats, as well as those portable rentals that an employee of the Asilo Sara exploits for that institution's benefit. Those people who choose not to sit stroll

around, with the women traveling along the interior of the street, and the men in the opposite direction along the park fence bordering the other path. Through the wide sidewalk two mixed rows also walk much like those who stroll inside; this gives rise to admitted flirting amongst the many pairs of supposed sweethearts that gather there to speak in all liberty of that which concerns their present and future, a thing not at all difficult to surmise, for that small defect we have pointed out elsewhere regarding the little discretion present in the tone of the conversation and the kind of topics developed in it, delivered with a slight libertine tone, that leaves a none-too-favorable impression of its authors (Urrutia Flamenco 1924, 236).

The author is of course referring to the urban ill of speaking too loudly about ‘improper’ topics. In this passage, we witness the tension created by a clearly, physically demarcated occupation of public space along gender lines falling victim to the ‘improper’ conflation of public and private space, as well as the decidedly transgressive opportunities in trans-gender socialization provided by the urban environs.

The indoctrination of suitable urban behavior followed not just an informal process of cultural and social diffusion, but was also addressed directly within the growing infrastructure of the educational system. The administrations of Manuel Enrique Araujo, Carlos Meléndez, Jorge Meléndez, Alfonso Quiñónez Molina, and Pío romero Bosque all took considerable steps in expanding and modernizing the educational system in the city and some parts of the national territory. By 1923, the city counted with one major university, one center of secondary education, at least forty mixed or primary schools, and at least three centers for adult education (Urrutia Flamenco 1924, 137-138). Needless to say, any curricular program would address the need to impart the modern mentality on the population.

By the beginning of the century, schoolteachers possessed the literature to instruct students not only on proper moral behavior, but also proper urban behavior. As the

positivist bent in the intellectual production of the era began to affect every-day discourse reception and formation, it should come as no surprise that both precepts, morality and urbanity, would form the bifurcated axes of a publication like Dr. Darío González's *Nociones de Moral y Urbanidad*, a tome that enjoyed multiple editions and printing runs. In its presentation, the handbook reads like a piece of legislation, complete with articles to abide by in order to act like a proper citizen. Geared towards primary school educators, *Nociones* sought to inculcate the values and goals of the emerging modern society. The most notable of these, the exaltation of hygiene, permeates most of the text, and González draws repeated parallels between the outward expression of cleanliness and its denotation of an upstanding moral character. Lack of resources or ignorance were no excuse for an unhygienic existence, and an abhorrence of such a state of being underscored a large number of the rules to follow in the contradictory articles that both ignore the inherent difficulty in enacting modernity by the poorer classes but also institutionalize and uphold 'superiors' and 'inferiors.'

Equally important, González employed not only the structuring potential of the hygiene signifier in *Nociones*, but also that of gender difference. Effectively, neither hygiene nor gender operate separately for one another, and the evocation by the author of the latter as a tool with which to organize a disciplinary discourse adds an important layer in the articulation of the performative economy of Salvadoran urbanity. In the performance of this proper urbanity, women are discursively required to go above and beyond the base suggestions of dressing properly, inhabiting physical spaces, conversing morally. For instance, González suggests that a variety of inurbane acts like trimming one's nails with one's teeth, blowing one's nose without the use of a handkerchief, and

wiping sweat off one's brow with bare hands, among others, are *more* indecent and disgusting if the perpetrator is a woman (González 1908, 38). The same goes for wearing dirty clothing and peering outside of the home in improper garb (González 1908, 39 and 41). This implies that while all city inhabitants would be judged and scrutinized on their levels of morality and urbanity by the same rubric, women would often times be evaluated more harshly and severely.

The highly scrutinized and symbolic nature of womanhood in the modern city would also demand certain behaviors from men. The suspected pleasantries of making way on the sidewalk for a female passerby, rising to greet female visitors and accompanying them to the door in seeing them out, and granting the more favorable offerings at a dinner tables to the ladies in attendance invariably complement the man's role as the active participant in enacting proper urban performances and maintaining the purported functioning of all performers. The confluence of these methods of social organization demonstrates an effort by the authorities to manage the tense balancing act between portraying the urban, public experience as the site in which modern nationhood would be assured with an incursion, and in many ways an invasion, into the private sphere of affairs. In many ways, this internalization of modern ideals in the everyday life of San Salvador's citizens may very well have been seen as a 'natural' part of the process of negating improper behaviors that would contrast with cosmopolitan modernity.

Masculinity and the Military

While the sources of the time imply a San Salvador free of major problems save for a few undesired remnants of ‘backwards’ culture, the reality is that the 1910s and 1920s saw an level of social agitation given the highly unequal distribution of wealth coupled with timid reforms aimed at opening up political life to some disenfranchised sectors (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994, Dunkerly 1988, 65-66). Consequently, the formation of a security apparatus capable of dealing with increasing upheaval had to form part of the new national project, even if it stood at odds with the rationality and pacifism expressed in the elite discourse.

During the period of civilian rule and general peace (1906-1931), the military apparatus was rigidly situated at the subservience of the modernizing and intellectual project. Nevertheless, this era witnessed the institutionalization of those organizations that would come to play a central role in the development of the authoritarian state beyond the coup that placed Maximiliano Hernández Martínez at the head of the government in 1931. Most notably, under otherwise reformist president Manuel Enrique Araujo, the government established the National Guard as a complementary body that would assist the Army in the defense of the nation’s sovereignty and the National Police in the insurance of social peace. In *El Salvador al Vuelo*, published in 1917, Alejandro Bermúdez inventively describes the place that the new national guard, modeled after the Spanish Civil Guard, would take in the modern polity, and in doing so demonstrates a great deal about the need to marry reason and morality, a least discursively, to a decidedly brute and forceful institution. He characterizes the Guard as:

a complicated mechanism of force and rationality, of sagacity and audaciousness, of moderation and energy, of gentility and fieriness, of discipline, abnegation, and morality, in which the detective’s astuteness,

the guardian of the public's order and honor circumspection, and the bravura of the soldier all coalesce into one (Bermudez 1917, 59).

The rulebook for the institution mirrors these qualifications, and here, the same scrutiny on hygiene and personal presentation dictate the performative requirements of the cadets that would conform the ranks of the Guard.⁴

Of equal importance was the fact that this hybrid institution that married modernity's rationality with the traditional exaltation of force as a means to an end also brought together the urban and the rural realms. This symbolic confluence of ideology and physical space would perpetuate the tension in preserving anti-modern institutions harkening back to the time of caudillos and rural armies as a necessary agent in solidifying a national discourse that sought to impose an urban, modern ideal on an otherwise agricultural and rural population.

The National Guard, though, was only an addition to the already established *Ejército Nacional* that to some extent had been in existence since the consolidation of the new republic in the latter 19th century. These two bodies would form the bases on which to build the authoritarian state in the mid-20th century. Throughout the 19th century, the Army was characterized as much by its particular composition as by the haphazard role it played in the convulsive transmission of power in the era of the caudillo (Bustamante 1935). However, by the 20th century, elite intellectuals like Bermudez and the authors of the *Libro Azul* could handily reconstruct the Army's past as an appropriate point of

⁴ The *Libro Azul* paints a similar picture of the National Guard, underlining the upstanding moral character of its members. Its treatment of the Army, however, provides a clear glimpse into the need of elites to reclaim the discourse of masculinity from patriarchal belligerence to one more firmly rooted in morality and honor.

opposition against which to define the new character of proper modernity, urbanity, and masculinity.

Of the typical soldier of the 19th century, Bermudez writes: “To be arrogant with the whole world, undisciplined in the barracks, ferocious in battle, cruel with the defenseless and screaming epithets as a sign of courage: such were the decorative attributes needed to earn the honor of a high military reputation” (Bermudez 1917, 101-102). He attributes this dismaying military culture to the general political climate of the antimodern Salvadoran republic with its disdain for democratic institutions. By the time of his writing, the Army had overcome these deficiencies in character according to Bermudez, and he stresses the fundamental change that allowed this to happen: rather than being defined in the trenches and the haciendas, the new generations of the armed forces would be defined by the military institutes and schools now situated in San Salvador and other urban centers. Their training would incorporate the most modern of ideals and the most moral of characters, and other than learning how to shoot rifles and ride horses, cadets would march down the streets of the great city in the perfection of a new and burgeoning military pageantry well suited to the urban environs.

As the image of the caudillo and the armies of eras gone by served as an oppositional point in the definition of the new direction the nation should take, elites were inadvertently taking on the challenging task of expanding the repressive apparatus the new state would need to ensure a successful realization of modernity while directly attacking the legacy of the past and a substantial component of the nation’s character. The image of the caudillo proved a suitable receptacle for the blame on the problematic process of modernization that El Salvador was undergoing in the early 20th century. Such

an assertion need not rest solely on printed accounts such as *El Salvador al Vuelo* or the *Libro Azul*, as much the same discourse infiltrated public speeches that were arguably more accessible to the general population of San Salvador. In his September 15th speech to the artisan union *La Concordia* commemorating the 99th year of independence, Alonso Reyes-Guerra, a doctor (once exiled, member of the Academia Salvadoreña and el Ateneo, along with Alberto Masferrer, Francisco Gavidia – also member of the Ateneo), readily invoked the belligerent caudillo as the “black seed” of the past and an obstacle to the ‘proper’ formation of the Salvadoran nation (Reyes-Guerra 1920, 20).⁵

Still, it is of great interest to note that while the discourse points to the fact that the male citizens of the new modern and decidedly urban nation would be judged on the basis of their morality, propriety, intellect, and entrepreneurial spirit, the well-entrenched tradition of bravery, prowess on the battlefield, and general patriarchal heroicism would scarcely subsume itself to a new order. The paradox infiltrates the very pages of a modern manual like the *Libro Azul*, and its format of showcasing the achievements and qualities of a litany of upstanding citizens lends itself to a comparison of the different standards by which civilians and military figures were to be judged. While entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, intellectuals, and public servants would warrant a profile enumerating their accomplishments as abiding husbands and fathers, wildly successful businessmen, and contributors to the glory of their city and nation, the profiles for

⁵ *La Concordia*, referred to as the oldest existing artisan society in Central America at the time, had been founded in 1872. Directly supported by the government, the association boasted the most centralized headquarters in San Salvador, its own library, its own pedagogic staff, and a mutual society for the benefit of its members (Bermudez 1917, 175).

generals, colonels, and other servicemen would predictably highlight their bravery, heroicism, physical appearance, and general belligerence (Ward 1916).

The Breakdown of Artifice and the New Authoritarianism

On December 2nd, 1931 after only nine months in power, Arturo Araujo, by most accounts the first democratically elected president of El Salvador, ceased holding the post after a cadre of mid-level military officials staged a coup that would install General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez as the first of a long line of military rulers. For the following fifty years the elites would control the economic and political destiny of the country but only through the direct rule of a constantly expanding armed forces with whom they established an uneasy and unspoken alliance (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994, 129).

Intellectual circles, once populated by the elites and undeniably the pillars of the positivist, modern state, would soon find themselves in the uncertain position of having to contend with a state apparatus and military class bent on consolidating its power through all means available to them, including ideological reconstruction.

The previous decade of the 1920s had not only seen an expansion of the Salvadoran economy and of the capital city, but also an exacerbation of social problems associated with the uneven distribution of capital typical of monocultural, oligarchical societies. While the governments of the Melendez-Quiñonez clan had discursively allied themselves with workers and artisans, and though the Romero Bosque administration had explicitly expanded the role of labor unions and mutual societies and instituted freedom of speech as part of his reformist tendencies, life in the city had markedly become more

agitated as strikes and demonstrations escalated in number and severity (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994).

As already mentioned, the police and armed forces serving the nation had undergone a more formal institutionalization from the foundation of the National Guard in 1912 and the subsequent formalization of academic militarism with the construction of various centers for the education of cadets and officers (Paredes 1930). Their success in maintaining order, duly noted as an important component of constructing a smoothly functioning modern state, would only expand successively as their service would be increasingly needed to squash workers' actions.

With international ideologies infiltrating the consciousness of urban Salvadoran's, including but not limited to the "Bolshevism" emanating from Europe, intellectual production would cease to demonstrate the homogenous character espoused in the 1900s and 1910s when most writers wholeheartedly supported the liberal modernization of the state. Some writers who were members of the *Academia Salvadoreña* and the *Ateneo*, most notably Alberto Masferrer, began to take a more critical stance against the policies aimed at modernizing the city and the nation. While based on the same tenets of liberal humanism and positivism found elsewhere in the urban discourse, these writers chose to focus on the poor distribution of the benefits that a cosmopolitan lifestyle offered in the highly diverse and hierarchized city of San Salvador (Masferrer 1950). The symbolic summary of this critical ferment, Masferrer's *El Mínimum Vital*, originally published in 1929 demonstrated the different direction that intellectual circles would take at the end of the first quarter of the 20th century as their ranks expanded beyond the traditional upper

classes and included a small but influential middle class of a socialist-democratic bent (Gould, Lauria Santiago 2004, 235).

I hope to draw light on the inherent tension in such a development, especially in relation to the manner in which intellectual prowess had been exalted as modern, urban, and masculine in the preceding twenty five years. The fractured and differential composition of San Salvadoran society could scarcely withstand further challenges from one of the ideological camps that had served to maintain the balance so cherished by the elites enamored of their worldly way of life. Interestingly, this shift in elite composition would follow close parallels to their physical placement and participation in the city as well, as I will show below.

Perhaps those responsible of constructing the image of Pío Romero Bosque foresaw the growing influence of the military institution only a few years prior to the forceful removal of Arturo Araujo, a man that rose to power only through the reforms that Bosque had championed during his tenure.⁶ In one of the last times where intellect would occupy such an elevated symbolic plane in the composition of a political leader's persona in Salvadoran history, Jacinto Paredes wrote of the presidential ideology in *Vida y Obras del Doctor Pío Romero Bosque* and his relationship to the university in 1930:

Only the men of an enlightened mentality could guide public opinion through the luminous path. Only through ideas and talent can one aptly govern the societies and peoples with the only authority man can hold over man: that of Science. The mastery of force is perishable and its rule ephemeral: only thought and ideas are immortal ... Only through study and education can one efficiently act on the soul of man. To that effect,

⁶ During his presidency (1927-1931), Pío Romero Bosque instituted democratic reforms that would make the 1931 elections 'open.' On a more practical note, his refusal to designate a successor challenged prevailing tradition among Salvadoran presidents (Grieb 1971).

may conscious governments lend their decisive support to educational establishments, the forgers of individual character.

It is the University, with its modern advances, its force of progress, and its indispensable role in social organization, the one that must receive the vigorous push and protection of the State (Paredes 1930, 31).

Only two years later, with an authoritarian military government in place, it would be the university where intellectual advancement would be stifled by repressive practices.

Luckily, it was also one of the only sites where this new method of imposing order on Salvadoran society would find itself in published discourse.

In the introduction to the 1932 issue of *La Universidad*, the Autonomous University of El Salvador's official publication, Secretary General Manuel Quijano Hernández directly addresses the effects that the installation of a repressive, military government had on the intellectual production of his institution. The termination of a sufficient endowment by the state, and both open and veiled attacks against freedom of expression by traitorous alumni serve as the framework for the discussion of the hardship the educational system endures in the face of economic and political turmoil. While he shies away from doling out names of conspirators against the academic institution, Quijano Hernández laments the manner in which modern scholarship cannot escape the violent upheavals of its environment. Indeed, the term autonomous would now seem an ironically false qualifier for the university (*La Universidad* Quijano Hernández 1932, 1-2).

As the dictatorship of Hernández Martínez consolidated itself, academic output from university intellectuals found small openings to proclaim oppositional stances in political affairs, going as far as enumerating the virtues of social democracy and the democratization of culture (*La Universidad* 1935). Gradually, though, the publication focused less on concrete issues regarding freedom of expression and political opposition

and more on literary issues either completely detached from a local context or theoretical constructs conducive to feeding the growing institutionalism of the expanding state apparatus. A sampling of further university publications from the 1930s and 40s demonstrates ample coverage of the concept of the State and philosophical ruminations on Descartes (*La Universidad* 1937, *La Universidad* 1940).

Intellectual life in the capital underwent a considerable shift from the robust and uncritical positivist and progressive stance proclaimed under the oligarchic governments, now relegated to a tense position of reconciling an appeasing tone towards the military government while nurturing an oppositional discourse rooted in rationality and democracy. No longer the bastion of elitism exemplified by the era of the literary societies like the *Ateneo*, and congealing into the mold of quiet dissent, intellectual cultural production ceased to hold the same place it had in the articulation of a modern San Salvador.

One could assume that elites no longer filled the ranks of academic institutions and intellectual think tanks as these sites ceased to neatly dovetail ideology and the maintenance of an artificial modernization project destined to exacerbate social inequalities. The turbulent end to the Liberal era transformed San Salvador from a place where elites could freely dictate the pace of life and proclaim universalist thought as the city swelled with ever-larger numbers of poor, working class denizens. In roughly two decades, the population of San Salvador had swelled from scarcely 35,000 people at the turn of the century to almost 100,000 inhabitants (Martin 1911, Meléndez 1921). Both the demographic evolution of the city and the concomitant ideological development of all classes prompted a fundamental change in hegemonic dynamics.

While elites symbolically departed from overt participation in the intellectual and political domains, their physical occupation of the city forever changed the geography and urban dynamics of San Salvador. The 1930s not only saw the repositioning of rationality and intellect in a subservient, oppositional role, and the occupation of political power in the hands of an expanding and decidedly non-elite military class, but also the exodus of the upper classes from the traditional city center. Beginning in 1928, the Western boundary of San Salvador expanded closer towards the San Salvador volcano and neighboring Santa Tecla. The definitive change occurred in 1932, when H. de Sola, a prominent member of the elite, began construction of an entirely new neighborhood, Flor Blanca, that by 1935 would house the vast majority of well-to-do Salvadorans. The new residential area boasted outside gardens and neo-colonial or Californian style of architecture that would definitively set it apart by the neo-classical buildings marking the city center (Rodríguez Herrera 2002, 76).

The upper classes exited the suite of political dominance in order to ensure a more steady hand in controlling the new, unruly urban landscape. In doing so, however, they acquiesced direct involvement in the articulation of national culture in an even more pronounced way than before, though arguably their separation from the masses had always prevented their hegemonic dominance from unequivocally setting the cultural pace of the city (Gould, Lauria Santiago 2004). As the new governors of the nation, the military filled the vacuum prompted by this shift in urban reality. Studying this phenomenon, and the way that the new military discourse would come to shape cultural forms, proves difficult given an obvious situation: How can historians study the effect of military culture on San Salvador's citizenry if its suspicion of intellectual production

would tend to limit literary output other than official, State-aggrandizing statistics and institutional histories, especially during the Hernández Martínez administration?

América Rodríguez Herrera has paid a great deal of attention to the effects that the installation of the military regime of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez had on the political and social organization of San Salvador in the 1930s. By focusing on the *fiestas patronales* as a dynamic site in which to study the capital's culture, Rodríguez Herrera has been able to note the considerable influence new social sectors had on the cultural expression and social interaction within the public sphere of the city. These sectors, namely the military class and the commercial and artisan circles catering to new bureaucratic infrastructures, has proved previously subjugated to the vibrant trans-class expression offered by the *fiestas* as a result of their traditionally held character revolving around neighborhood and parochial organizations.

At the dawn of the twentieth century and for its first three decades, *las fiestas patronales*, by and large, symbolized the ultimate expression of urban membership, and warranted the attendance of all levels of San Salvadoran society. Though still deeply rooted in religiosity and neighborhood solidarity, the main events and maximum participation drew all denizens to the *Plaza de Armas* in a civic, centralized celebration of national pride. However, even by 1924, new practices began to exist side by side with the tradition of congregating in the city's center. Expansions to the north and west provided new arenas for public confluence, and sites like the *Campo Marte*, *la Quinta Modelo*, and the railroad depot along *Avenida Independencia* offered simultaneous spaces for the yearly celebration. Concurrently, private gatherings to observe the festivities also flourished amongst the elite social clubs like the *Casino Salvadoreño* and the *Club*

Internacional, especially as locations to stage the introduction of foreign travelers and dignitaries to the peculiarities of *las fiestas patronales* (Urrutia Flamenco 1924, 218-219).

As the 1930s solidified the social segregation of the city, *las fiestas patronales* came under direct control of the new military government, even though they remained explicitly religious in nature. It is here that I wish to reinsert the performance of gender in order to bring the issues presented above to a close, as well as to propose future areas for research. The *fiestas patronales* had long been considered the one time of the year where all members of San Salvador society united to celebrate a unifying theme of the nation: its devotion to the patron saint that gave the country its name. The combination of pageantry and religiosity inevitably served as an inscription of idealized performances of self, where women participated as “beauty” queens, military marching bands reminded the population of the war-torn past, and modern styles of dress and behavior would meet face-to-face with tradition. In the span of one week, the different elements of urban society would culturally cross-pollinate in the always-updated city environs. ‘Correct’ notions of being male and female would set the pace for all of these interactions, and as long as elites participated, their version of the ideal would ‘appropriately’ breathe life into the modern city (perhaps mostly in their own minds, but always bearing directly on the interactions of all classes).

Once the elites no longer participated in the festivities, choosing rather to observe the holidays in private clubs or residences, their already minimized presence in the public sphere retracted further. Further changing matters, the organization of *fiesta* participation along the lines of neighborhoods also dwindled in the 1930s. Thus, the two elements

holding the institution of the religious holiday together were the church and the military. Effectively, their interpretations and performances of modern life and proper gender would set the pace for society to follow, not monolithically, but finding expression in the general population's own social performances that most closely mirrored their own.

Clearly, the *fiestas patronales* is but one arena where the military would come to bear more heavily on the performative economy of the urban citizen. My goal in this work is to establish bases from which to further expand this topic. What kind of masculine and feminine ideals did the military promote during its formative phase as the dominant class in the 1930s? To what extent did the heroic and unscrupulous images of the 19th century caudillo and soldier, demonized by the rational elites of the new century, reinsert themselves as an ideal to be emulated? Did this combative masculinity ever really subsume itself to the "man of letters" ideal? Relegated to an oppositional stance by authoritarian regimes, how would intellectual masculinity come to operate as a viable gender performance in subsequent political contexts? What other influences and archetypes competed with this binary model of masculinity? Would Hernández Martínez's adherence to theosophist beliefs affect gender performances in the new society?

In studying the 1930s equivalent of the biographical guidebooks to Salvadoran society popularized in the 1910s and 1920s, there is at least one clear distinction as to how men would be judged by their peers. Absent is the flowery language and exaltation of reason used to express the relative worth of one entrepreneur to the next. In its place, a dry, perfunctory listing of political, military, and civilian offices held follow the occasional picture and raw biographical date. No photographs of stately buildings or

bellezas salvadoreñas complement the layout. Only one man receives a full-page citation and a same-sized photograph: Hernández Martínez (Marchant 1937). Positioning himself as the “severe and authoritarian patriarch” (Lindo Fuentes, Walter 1994, 141), Hernández Martínez and the institution he represented stood to dictate the manner in which men were measured and judged, austerely and without undue appeals to intellect. San Salvador would enter a new phase in its social organization.

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