

## Delaware Review of Latin American Studies

Vol. 13 No. 2 December 30, 2012

### Porfirio Díaz Under the Foreign Eye: The Representation of the President and his Government Years by American and British Writers (1901-1911)

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#### Abstract

Porfirio Díaz became the constitutional President of the Republic of Mexico after winning the 1876 election, remaining in office until 1911, at which time he resigned and went into exile in France, where he resided until his death in 1915. The period corresponding to his years of government is known as the “Porfiriato”. There is ample historiography on “Porfiriato”, from the period contemporary with Díaz’s presidency up until the present time. The aim of this paper is to discuss the depiction of Don Porfirio and his presidential regime by foreign writers contemporary with his government (XIX-XX centuries). Just as many Mexicans have written about the age in which they lived, many foreigners also took a stand on the events in Mexico. The works herein analyzed are: *Mexico as I saw it* (1901) by Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *Barbarous Mexico* (1911) by John Kenneth Turner, and *Díaz, Master of Mexico* (1911) by James Creelman.

**Keywords:** Mexico; Porfiriato; Historiography.

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Porfirio Díaz was born in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca in 1830. He became constitutional president of the United Mexican States after winning the 1876 election, remaining in power until 1911, at which time he resigned and went into exile in France, where he resided until he died in 1915. His years in government are known as the “Porfiriato”.

There is an extensive historiography on the “Porfiriato”, from the times of Porfirio Díaz’s presidency up until current times. The aim of this text is to discuss, based on specific literature regarding the issue and the analysis of Mrs. Alec Tweedie’s *Mexico as I saw it* (1901), John Kenneth Turner’s *Barbarous Mexico* (1911), and James Creelman’s *Díaz, Master of México* (1911), the representations of Don Porfirio and his presidential regime, as interpreted and analyzed by foreign authors contemporary to Porfirio Díaz’s regime (from the 19th to the 20th century).

The choice for the three authors discussed in this paper is justified by their recurrence in current historiography papers, besides being works that, in 1911, at the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, also had great circulation and repercussions in the countries where they had been written. The aim of the authors was to show what was happening in Mexico and, therefore, position themselves for or against the Díaz presidency.

The first literary work to be analyzed in this paper was written by a British traveler, Mrs Alec Tweedie, née Ethel Brilliana Harley. Among the several trips she had made around the world, in 1900 she was in Mexico and registered her impressions. Later, in 1904 she was back in Mexico and even got to know president Díaz.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we will analyze her work, *Mexico as I saw it*, written in 1901 and revised, by the author, in 1911. At the time of the Revolutionary Mexican Movement, the traveler added an appendix approaching the situation Mexico was going through. This paper will emphasize precisely those added chapters: “General Porfirio Díaz: President of Mexico” and “Díaz, the Maker of Modern Mexico”.

Another work that will be discussed is *Barbarous Mexico* by John Kenneth Turner. This was an American reporter who, in 1909, published a series of articles in the North American periodical entitled *The American Magazine*, whose subject would be the existence of slavery in some Porfirist Mexican states. In 1911 he gathered these articles that became the first five chapters of his book, published in April of the same year, under the title of *Barbarous Mexico*.

The last work to be discussed is *Díaz, Master of México*, written in 1910 by another American reporter, James Creelman. Creelman conducted the now-famous interview with Díaz in 1908 for the *Parson's Magazine* in which Díaz announced that he would not be a candidate in the country's next elections and that he would support the party organization in the political sphere. Creelman's book praised the image of the president and his government, besides responding to criticisms of the time of "Porfiriato" (such as the ones presented in the book written by John Turner).

As it can be noticed throughout this paper, the situation that Mexico was subjected to between 1876 and 1911 did not only mobilize the Mexican intellectuals' opinions. There was a "circulation of information" abroad about the situation in the country and many authors wrote not only praising Don Porfirio's government, but also criticizing it.<sup>3</sup> Identifying some critical historiographers of "Porfirismo" during the president's government is the scope of the paper. As it can be noticed in the end, before the explosion of the revolutionary movement of 1910, writers began to dispute the legacy of the Diaz government, polarizing the question: Was he a Mexican villain or a hero?

### **Mexico as I saw it: Porfirio Díaz and the legal government**

We will begin with Tweedie's book by analyzing the chapter titled *General Porfirio Díaz: President of Mexico*. From the very beginning of this chapter, the author wrote about the conflicting situation which the country experienced before Porfirio Díaz became president. Although she did not spend much time explaining what happened before 1876--be it foreign interventions<sup>4</sup>, civil wars<sup>5</sup> or the conflict between the state (temporal power) and the Catholic Church (religious power)--the author did not refer back to these issues. She wrote in the first paragraph:

I went to Mexico inspired with profound respect and admiration for General Porfirio Díaz, a man who ascended a throne – so to speak – when revolution was in the air, murder was a daily occurrence, property was unsafe, and universal riot reigned supreme. It was not, however, until I had met him and spent some time in his company, not until I had lived several months in Mexico, that I fully realized the extraordinary ability of its President. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 128).

The setting described by Mrs. Tweedie, while referring to Mexico from its independence until 1876, is chaotic. There were murders happening on a daily basis throughout the country, property was not safe, and an all-compassing universal disorder reigned. Throughout the chapter the author wrote that Mexico had conflicts with France, the United States and, internally, a great conflict between President Benito Juárez and the Catholic Church. People fought against each other, having had fifty-two presidents in fifty-nine years, a fact which, for Mrs. Tweedie, did not require explanations. The diagnosis the author arrived at was that the country was beyond being governable: "...the country was heavily in debt, and probably no land has ever been less safe for human life, or more unsettled than Mexico about the middle of the nineteenth century" (2011 [1911], p. 133).

Faced with such a situation, Díaz emerged more and more as a great soldier who fought the National Army to save his country and turn it into a safe place in which to live. The general gained space in Mrs. Tweedie's narrative and, for her, Mexico needed a strong individual who would guide the nation and lead it to a happy future. That man was Porfirio Díaz.

Unlike Turner and Creelman, Mrs. Tweedie did not describe the transition Díaz went through from soldier to president. She simply explained that, in 1876, the general entered Mexico's capital leading a revolutionary army (due to the "Tuxtepec Revolution" led by him) and later became the first magistrate of the country. The traveler emphasized that Díaz's popularity had been gained after his victory, in 1867, against the government of Maximilian of Habsburg.

While talking about Díaz's rise as first magistrate, we are able to notice how he represented the image of the great hero who led the nation. Mrs. Tweedie, in a poetic way, described in her book the president's entrance in the Mexican capital as soon as he ascended to the presidency of the Republic. Faced with his grand image as a ruler, the population was hypnotized and became his adherents, thus supporting his administration. According to the traveler:

The crowd cheered; the crowd hissed; the multitude fought amongst themselves, but on he rode, only pressing his lips closer together. His entry was so powerful, so masterful, that many who had previously been against him were hypnotized by the manner of the man, and from that moment became his devoted adherents. Thus on November, 23, 1876, General Díaz rode up to the Palace where he established himself for over thirty years. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 135).

In her description of the Mexican government, the traveler argued that, in the face of a disorganized Mexico, Porfirio Díaz needed to rule with an “iron hand” so as to generate stability for a devastated country.<sup>6</sup> In other words, as it has been noticed in the work of other authors who wrote at that time, in 1876 a strong government was needed to lift a nation from the rubble of a civil war.<sup>7</sup> For Mrs. Tweedie, the old general fought the bandits, and brought stability and peace to Mexico, as well as making it a modern country: “thus he started a new rule and a new life for old Mexico, the birth – so to speak – of Modern Mexico, of which he may well be proud” (2011 [1911], p. 134). As he wrote:

He has slowly and steadily risen to power and respect, risen from a country lad to be one of the greatest Dictators the world has known. As a soldier he has quelled war and established peace. As a ruler he has made a country – formerly insecure even to its own inhabitants – safe for all. As a diplomat he is at peace with the world. He has paid enormous debts, and created solvency – now even developing into wealth – in Mexico. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 136).

In the quote above, we can notice two important issues to be analyzed. The first refers to this very speech about the pacification of Mexico under the Díaz government. The topic of the country’s pacification during the “Porfiriato” recurs in the works of many authors--foreign as well as national--and it caused this turbulent image of Mexico prior to 1876 to influence the historiography production on the government of Don Porfirio. The second issue to be considered is the author’s reference to the president as a “dictator”. We believe the traveler used such a term in reference to the president precisely in order to advocate for the idea that Mexico needed leadership and in this way, with a firm hold, the president was able to yield stability, end internal debt and modernize Mexico.

As the author herself argued, under the general’s government Mexico saw the birth of its modern self. Anarchy belonged to the past, not of Mexico’s present any longer. Mexico’s future should be glorious due to the stability and peace achieved by the president. The nation then entered the world of civilized countries. When compared to great statesmen, Díaz emerged--in the author’s work--as the greatest man of the nineteenth century. What became truly impressive for the traveler was that Don Porfirio had come from a humble life in Oaxaca, acquiring prestige until becoming president of the United Mexican States.<sup>8</sup> Thus, she wrote:

Has any other man in the nineteenth century done as much? We have had Napoleon, no doubt a greater despot; a Moltke, a greater soldier; a Beaconsfield, a finer politician; a Talleyrand, a greater diplomatist; but has any man of humble origin, practically self-educated, raised himself to such a position, and brought his country from battle and murder to peace and prosperity, and still ruled? (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 136)

Thus, Mrs. Tweedie made reference to great world characters of the nineteenth century. The French examples were Napoleon, a great despot from the early eighteen hundreds, and the diplomat Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. Helmuth von Moltke, who took part in the Prussian War at the time of the German Unification, and Benjamin Disraeli (Count of Beaconsfield as of 1879), an important British politician, were also cited. But, as highlighted by the author herself, none of these great men had come from humble origins like Díaz, who, having educated himself, was able to, while being president, lift Mexico to a status of peace and prosperity. The author herself explained in other pages:

Díaz has been the architect and builder of modern Mexico, and so well has he done his work, it is extremely unlikely that anyone will undo it. The country has been at peace for over a quarter of a century, everything has improved, and the men who have helped the President have learnt from him the art of government. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 148).

In the quote above, Tweedie used the words “architect” and “builder” conveying the idea that Porfirio Díaz indeed built a modern country. Under his government Mexico made progress, industries and railroad lines were created, the balance of payments summed to zero and, more and more, the country gained international prestige: “Díaz has proved capable in every issue. The wheels of state are well oiled; his regime is acknowledged by the entire world to be a success.” (2011 [1911], p. 151).

Therefore, for Tweedie, Mexico was pacified. It was legitimate for Don Porfirio to rule with “iron hands” in the beginning of his government given the country’s internal situation. Afterwards, the writer argued that he went from “despot” to governing with a “silken cord”, implying that his strict attitudes were necessary until the country became stable and prospered<sup>9</sup>. The initial toughness of his government did not, according to the British writer, prevent the population from supporting his government. As written in the beginning of the chapter:

His [Díaz's] position is absolutely unique in the world's history, for although President of a Republic, he has reigned since 1876. His will is all powerful, as great, in fact, as that of a Tsar and Pope combined. He is a monarchical yet democratic ruler. He controls millions of people with a hand of iron, still they love him. He is a despot, but at the same time leads the unassuming life of a private gentleman. He walks alone in the street, cares nothing for pomp in his daily existence, and plays the role of a simple home-loving citizen to perfection. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 128-129).

The understanding of the depiction of the "Porfiriato" in Tweedie's work becomes complex at times. In this chapter, and as will be seen, the entire work, the British subject complimented Díaz's government but, at the same time, used terminology that presented conflicting meanings. She often referred to Díaz as a "despot" and, as seen in the quote above, wrote that despite his ruling with an "iron hand" the population loved and supported him. Thus, the author legitimized a strict attitude by the president in the early years of his government due to the chaotic Mexican past, from its independence to 1876.

### **Will history do justice to Díaz?**

As mentioned in this article's introduction, at the time of the outbreak of the armed movement against Porfirio Díaz's government in Mexico, the British traveler revisited her work and wrote an appendix to inform her country of the situation Mexico was going through internally. Under the title of *Díaz, the Maker of Modern Mexico*, Tweedie begins by proclaiming,

Díaz has been hurled from power in his eighty-first year!

When I left Mexico in December, 1904, all was peace.

General Díaz had just completed his sixth term of office. The country was in a most flourishing condition. Money was pouring in from England, Germany, and more especially the United States. The streets of México City were well paved, electric trams and electric light had taken the place of older methods. A splendid residential quarter had sprung up on the road to Chapultepec. All was serene. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 464).

The author stated that, when she left Mexico in 1904, the country was serene, in peace. There was progress and foreigners were investing in the country, amongst other things. So, what could have happened to bring about in Mexico a national movement whose main target for criticism was President Porfirio? <sup>10</sup> The author argued that, with all the material progress achieved in the country, making it more and more developed and prosperous, the president did not leave space for political opposition in the public sphere. As she wrote, "the man who made a great nation of safety and wealth out of chaos was so sure of his own position, his own strength, and, I may say, his own motives, that he did not encourage antagonism at the polls, and 'free voting', remained a name only." (2011 [1911], p. 465).

Referring back to a German writer, whose name was not mentioned, the English subject wrote that there had been statesmen--which could include Díaz, though not explicitly stated by her--who lost balance and focus and became "obsessed with the passion of rule" and "lose their balance, clearness of sight, judgment, and only desire to rule, rule, RULE!" (2011 [1911], p. 465). Perhaps staying in office for so many years was a mistake which became a fatal mistake responsible for ending his career in a not so magnificent way. As pointed out by Tweedie:

It was a fatal mistake [his holding the office for so many years], and it has shrouded in deep gloom the close of a career of unexampled brilliancy, both in war and statesmanship. The Spanish-American Republics have produced no man who will compare with Porfirio Díaz. Simon Bolivar for years fought the decaying power of Spain, and to him what are now the Republics of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru owe their liberation. But Díaz has been more than a soldier; and his great achievement in the redemption of modern Mexico from bankruptcy and general decay completely overshadows his successes in the field during the ceaseless struggles of his earlier years. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 466).

Furthermore, for the writer, Díaz reneged on his word, as he had said in an interview given to the American journalist James Creelman, in 1908, that he would not be a candidate in the following election. In 1909, the president once more became a presidential candidate. Added to this change in attitude, Don Porfirio chose Ramón Corral as his vice president, a candidate who, according to Tweedie, didn't have popularity nationwide.

The author's explanation for the president's change of mind regarding running for the presidency was the strength

and power of the “official group”, that is, the “porfirista” supporters, who depended on Díaz’s permanence in the presidency. According to the British subject, “the official group whose interests depended on the maintenance of the Díaz *régime* was for the moment too powerful, and it succeeded in inducing the President to accept re-election.” (2011 [1911], p. 470).

A reflection statement upon the role played by the “porfirista” supporters who governed alongside the president can be made. Tweedie believes this group is important because much of the criticism directed at the government had been prompted, mainly, by their stance in the country’s administration:

The attempt to perpetuate the Presidency in the hands of one man, and especially of one party, has been the main cause of the uprising. Originally the term of office was only four years without power of re-election. After the first four years of power Díaz altered this and made re-election possible. When I was last in Mexico in 1904 he went even further and instituted a six years term and a Vice-President; consequently the very man who had fought against the re-election of Lerdo de Tejada himself gradually assumed the continuous power he had once decried. He thought that his doing so was for his country’s good, which it most undoubtedly was at the time, judging by the stupendous results. But things move rapidly in these days, and Mexico caught the fever of unrest, and the longing for change. The President would have been all right without his following. The people had tired of repetitions of the same abuses by those in power, abuses which became more and more apparent with the President’s advancing years. A change was necessary; and they demanded that at least they should be allowed to have a Vice-President of their own choice. All concession was refused; and the disappointment embittered them not only against Corral, but against Díaz himself. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], pp. 470-471).

Therefore, for Tweedie, Díaz’s posture while making decisions was prompted by the well-being of the nation. The author did not argue that the president had a personal ambition for power. As made explicit above, “he thought that his doing so was for his country’s good”, but the people who supported him were abusing their power more and more. “The people had tired of repetitions of the same abuses by those in power, abuses which became more and more apparent with the President’s advancing years”.

According to the historian Paul Garner, Tweedie described Porfirio Díaz as:

(...) “el personaje más importante de la historia moderna” y lo comparaba con el zar de Rusia y con el papa: “sin embargo”, afirmaba en la misma página, con una comprensión no tan segura de la ciencia política mexicana, que él era “un dirigente democrático”. Su descripción de Díaz como un “hombre atractivo, fino y fuerte...con ojos oscuros, profundos y penetrantes” sugiere también que ella puede haber sido una de las tantas víctimas de lo que José Valadés describiría más adelante como la frondosidad sexual de don Porfirio. (Garner, 2003, p. 23).

Garner’s analysis of Tweedie’s book can be considered problematic in some aspects. The matter to be analyzed is not so much whether the traveler had or did not have a clear notion of “Mexican political science”, or if she was “a victim of Don Porfirio’s sexual exuberance” as stated by Valadés, but rather to reflect how her depiction of the “Porfiriato” was formed, that is, which were the arguments used to characterize the president as one of the greatest statesmen of the nineteenth century. Even though several nuances can be found in the British subject’s book, her characterization of Díaz being often contradictory, Tweedie clearly believed that the president was a good ruler for having pacified Mexico.

Looking at that chaotic past, as registered by her in the chapters of her book, she saw the general’s government as creating a modern, stable and prosperous country. As it can be seen, for the writer, Díaz may have made a mistake by staying in office for so many years and not retiring as he had stated in his interview to James Creelman, but her concluding assessment of the “Porfiriato” was that the president changed the country for the better and that, faced with the new internal picture (the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution), it was necessary for a historian to do justice to the government of a man who, in her eyes, was still the greatest man of the nineteenth century. She writes:

(...) Díaz returned to the Presidential chair on the 1st December 1884, and never vacated it until compelled. When his four years had expired, the country was under changed conditions; the immense reforms and works for the development of Mexico that he had set in motion were uncompleted: it was felt that any change in the head of the State would at that time be disastrous; and so, with substantially the universal assent of his countrymen, the Constitution was again altered, that Díaz might continue as President and carry on his labor. This was not his doing, he did not initiate it; but he

accepted the charge laid upon him by the nation. His work is imperishable. Mexicans, I am sure, will regret the pitiful circumstances under which his fall has come about, and he will live long in the hearts of his countrymen. (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 479).

### **Barbarous Mexico: the Diaz government and the altered peace**

It is important to point out that, up to now the topic has been a comparison between the Mexico of 1870 to 1876 and Porfirio Diaz's Mexico. As with Tweedie, such a comparison influenced many writers who examined the general's government and explained the situation to their contemporaries.

The book on this topic, written by the American journalist John Kenneth Turner, presents a proposition that differs from that of the other authors herein analyzed (Tweedie as well as Creelman, who will be discussed in the last part). As said by Aurora Gómez Galvarriato and Mauricio Tenorio Trillo (2006), the book by the American journalist is considered one of the landmarks of the orthodox historiography known as "anti-porfirist". This historiography matrix gained emphasis mainly during the heydays of the Mexican Revolution, although its outline could be seen during Porfirio Díaz's presidency.

Turner begins the 1911 book explaining his objective. He makes it clear that, south of the Rio Grande, a movement against the president had emerged and the author was afraid that the American government might intervene in the situation supporting the "Porfiriato," and he argued against taking action against said movement. The target audience of his work, therefore, was the American people who, having been informed, should pressure their government so that such measures in favor of Díaz were not taken.

The intention of the book was to show the *real* Mexico that existed between the years of 1876 and 1911. According to Gómez Galvarriato and Tenorio Trillo, the authors Luis Wistano Orozco, Andrés Molina Enríquez and John Turner "marcan y deciden el inicio y futuro de la historiografía del autoritarismo porfiriano (...)" (2006, p. 49). The governance of law under "Porfiriato" was, to Turner, a lie, not to mention his intentional disregard for the liberal Constitution enacted in 1857. The American author wrote:

¿Qué es México? Los norteamericanos comúnmente llaman a México "nuestra república hermana". La mayoría de nosotros la describimos vagamente como una república muy parecida a la nuestra, habitada por gente un poco diferente en temperamento, un poco más pobre y un poco menos adelantada, pero que disfruta de la protección de leyes republicanas: un pueblo libre en el sentido en que nosotros somos libres.

Algunos que hemos visto el país a través de la ventanilla del tren, o que lo hemos observado un poco en las minas o haciendas, describimos esta tierra al sur del Río Bravo como regida por un paternalismo benevolente, en el que un hombre grande y bueno todo lo ordena bien para su tonto pero adorado pueblo.

Yo encontré que México no era ninguna de esas cosas. Descubrí que el verdadero México es un país con una Constitución y leyes escritas tan justas en general y democráticas como las nuestras; pero donde ni la Constitución ni las leyes se cumplen. México es un país sin libertad política, sin libertad de palabra, sin prensa libre, sin elecciones libres, sin sistema judicial, sin partidos políticos, sin ninguna de nuestras queridas garantías individuales, sin libertad para conseguir la felicidad. (Turner, 2010 [1911], p. 11).

As can be noted by the example given in this quote, throughout the book Turner projected the idea of a "real Mexico" and an "apparent Mexico", the latter being what Diaz and his "system" (using the author's words, p.95), that is, his supporters, wished to show the world. Which was the real country under the general's ruling, in the author's opinion? According to the journalist, it was an administration that bore a legalistic rhetoric and followed a liberal constitution - which, in fact, was not observed. Turner argued in opposition to the impression of those travelers who enjoyed journeys on the plush trains built during Don Porfirio's government and then returned to the United States delighted by what they had seen and secure in their belief that the country had a good ruler who wanted to protect and take care of his nation, that what really existed was the great suppression of the Mexican people's individual rights, the absence of political parties active in the public scene, censorship of the press and, what was one of the main arguments of this work: that there was slavery in Mexico.

Up to chapter five of his book, Turner argued that there was slavery in Mexico during the "Porfiriato". The author focused on the states that had a high rate of slaves: Yucatán and the Valle Nacional. The qualification he presented for that matter was the very fact that he had traveled to the country and, once there, had seen and heard

about such labor practices. As such, according to the French historian François Hartog, the “seeing” and “hearing” something produce an “effect of belief” (1999, p. 274). Therefore, according to Turner, “cada uno de los hechos fundamentales apuntados respecto a la esclavitud en México lo vi con mis propios ojos o lo escuché con mis propios oídos, y casi siempre de labios de personas (...): los mismos capataces de los esclavos”<sup>11</sup> (2010 [1911], p. 13).<sup>12</sup>

Slavery for Turner meant the ownership an individual had of another person, being it possible to even transfer such ownership to a third party. Besides, he added, “propiedad que da al poseedor el derecho de aprovechar lo que produzca ese cuerpo, matarlo de hambre, castigarlo a voluntad, asesinarlo impunemente. Tal es la esclavitud llevada al extremo; tal es la esclavitud que encontré en Yucatán”. (2010 [1911], p. 16).<sup>13</sup>

The picture painted by Turner, in Yucatán as well as in the Valle Nacional, is one of people who worked in big farms without receiving proper payment, in precarious living conditions, where men and women shared the same sleeping quarters, which many times resulted in promiscuous relationships. Moreover, many of these slaves, in the author’s words, were punished and whipped, that being, for Turner, according to the explanation of a Mexican individual, “la filosofía del castigo corporal”<sup>14</sup> (2010 [1911], p. 21).

The depiction that Turner started constructing of the “porfirist” Mexico is established in comparison to the United States of America. In the following quote it is possible to see how the situation of these Mexican “slaves” (according to the words of the book’s author) is compared to that of the American workers of the time as well as the slaves in the south of the United States before the American Civil war. He writes,

El esclavo de Yucatán no tiene hora para la comida, como la tiene el obrero agrícola norte-americano. Sale al campo en la madrugada y come, por el camino su bola de masa agria. Agarra su machete y ataca la primera hoja espinosa tan pronto como hay luz suficiente para ver las espinas, y no deja para nada el machete hasta el atardecer.

(...)

Una y otra vez comparé, en la imaginación, el estado de los esclavos de nuestros Estados del Sur, antes de la Guerra Civil, y siempre resultó favorecido el negro. Nuestros esclavos del Sur estaban casi siempre bien alimentados; por regla general no trabajan con exceso; en muchas de las plantaciones rara vez se les pegaba; de cuando en cuando era costumbre darles algo de dinero para pequeños gastos y se les permitía salir de la finca por lo menos una vez por semana. (Turner, 2010 [1911], pp. 28-29).

Turner’s work, therefore, made analogies between Mexico and the United States. It is fundamental to point out, an issue which will be developed later herein, that Turner did not refer, while writing about the “Porfiriato”, to the civil conflicts that the country went through until 1876. Such matter, which was addressed by the other authors herein studied, was not discussed by the journalist. Turner thought the “Porfiriato” as the government itself and the basis used to arrive at his conclusions were these very analogies with the northern neighbor. For the journalist, faced with a federalist country, with a constitution truly in effect, individual freedom, etc., Mexico emerged as the antithesis of such matters. “To translate the difference, the traveler has at his disposal the convenient figure of inversion, in which the otherness transcribes as an anti-self” (HARTOG, 1999, p. 228). The Mexican workers were compared not only to the American workers contemporary with them, but also to the slaves prior to the American Civil War (1861-1865).

The aim of this topic is not to analyze the construction of the depiction of the Mexicans Who worked in the country’s big farms. What is important is to highlight that, for the author, the Mexican government had a role in the dealing of the slaves, being the one to blame for this situation the workers went through. As he wrote, this “barbaric” institution (2010 [1911], p. 88) that was slavery, something that was illegal in the Constitution, existed in Mexico and was supported by the porfirist government.

For Turner it was terrible to assume that Díaz’s government ignored the situation to which part of Mexican society was submitted. Moreover, it also stated that in addition to this awareness that slavery existed in the country, several state officials, and even federal, were involved in the transportation, sale and hunting of slaves, as were rural officers and other guards.

After explaining the internal situation in Mexico, it is noticed that Turner did not believe Mexico to be a country in the democratic, modern and civilized molds. As he described all these relationships of slavery, how they were constituted, among other aspects, in the end of the chapter the journalist asked who was to blame for all of it. In Turner’s opinion, it was President Díaz and his governmental supporters’ fault. Under such government the country

saw the prostration of the population. In the author's words, not even during the times of the Spanish conquest had the laborers and slaves been as "destroyed" and "reduced to shambles" as during the "Porfiriato"<sup>15</sup>.

Differing from analyses done by Tweedie and Creelman, who argued that the people yearned for the general in the presidency and that his attitude was a consequence of his patriotism, Turner wrote that Don Porfirio started the "Revolução de La Noria" and, later, the one in "Tuxtepec", precisely because he was ambitious and desired presidential power<sup>16</sup>. As can be read in the quote below, the analogy made by the American to build this image of a strong, central president, who held all the power in his hands – even though Turner believed he needed the people surrounding him in order to have strength in the authority –, was with Louis XIV who, during his reign, uttered the infamous phrase: "L'État, c'est moi" and was, at the time, the image of absolute power. As evidenced in the quote below,

Fue en este momento [the one of the consolidation of the liberal sector at the time of the Restored Republic] cuando el general Porfirio Díaz, sin ninguna excusa válida y en apariencia sin otra razón que su ambición personal, inició una serie de revoluciones que finalmente lo llevaron a dominar los poderes gubernamentales del país. Mientras prometía respetar las instituciones progresistas que Juárez y Lerdo habían establecido, instituyó un sistema propio, en el que su propia persona es la figura central y dominante; en el que su capricho es la Constitución y la ley; en el que los hechos y los hombres, grandes y pequeños, tienen que sujetarse a su voluntad: Como Luis XIV, Porfirio Díaz es el Estado. (Turner, 2010 [1911], pp. 95-96).

Considering such aspects, for Turner, in the year of 1876 a personalist government emerged in the country, characterized by the personal ambition of a person who, according to the writer, became the embodiment of Mexico, consolidating governmental powers in his hands. While Benito Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada were perceived as rulers who respected, truly, the liberal Constitution of 1857, the Díaz government was perceived as concealment, being democratic and liberal solely rhetorically.

One of the book's main issues is when Turner maintains that there was peace in Mexico prior to Díaz's government, he not being the one who consolidated it, but rather the one who changed it. According to the author, "la aparente tranquilidad de México es forzada por medio del garrote, la pistola y el puñal" (2010 [1911], p. 127). Comparing to the aforementioned authors, he stated that it was the Benito Juárez' government, starting in 1867, that promoted a peaceful environment in the country, in its relationship with the world.

The journalist said that, before the rise of Díaz, the country, seemingly constitutional and Republican, was at peace with the rest of the world. It had ended the French intervention initiated in 1864 and promoted political freedom and industrial prosperity. Even living in this peaceful situation Díaz opted to foment riots in order to take the first magistracy. For Creelman, the future president acted as a rebel for years, supported by bandits and soldiers opposed to the policy of antimilitarist Juárez.

The civil wars, both from before the Zapotec government and the Restored Republic were not mentioned in the book. The past observed by the journalist referred to the time of the French intervention on Mexican soil, the "Second Empire". The problem outlined by the Mexicans at the time, and also exposed by Tweedie and Creelman, of a chaotic post-independent past, fractionalized by internal wars, in which the Mexican people possessed a turbulent soul, were not mentioned by Turner.

In addition to this, the people did not want Díaz in the presidency. In Turner's view, the general rose to power by means of the revolution that had started against Lerdo, and supported by arms, not by the people, he became president. Hence, he stayed in office against the nation's will.<sup>17</sup> And, he added: "Como ningún hombre puede gobernar a un pueblo contra su voluntad sin privarlo de sus libertades, es fácil comprender qué clase de régimen se vio obligado a instaurar el General Díaz para asegurar su poder." (2010 [1911], p. 98).

According to the author, the ones who suffered the consequences of a personal ambition for power were the Mexican people. The author wrote that there was no political freedom in Mexico, there were no political parties active in the public scene, part of the population was enslaved by big landowners, the situation of laborers in the cities and rural areas resembled "al régimen de servidumbre en la Europa de la Edad Media." (TURNER, 2010 [1911], p. 88). In addition to these aspects, the government seized the people's land in order to make the upper classes wealthier. For:

En otras palabras, el general Díaz con su habilidad que nadie puede negar, se apropió de todos los elementos de poder que había en el país. Creó una maquinaria cuyo lubricante ha sido la carne y la

sangre del pueblo. Premió a todos excepto al pueblo; éste fue al sacrificio. Tan inevitable como la oscuridad de la noche, en contraste con la gloria luminosa del dictador vino la degradación del pueblo: la esclavitud, el peonaje y todas las miserias que acompañan a la pobreza; la abolición de la democracia y de la seguridad personal creadora de la previsión, del respeto a uno mismo y de la ambición digna y honrada; en una palabra, desmoralización general, depravación. (Turner, 2010 [1911], p. 98).

Therefore, according to Turner, Porfirio Díaz's Mexico was not modern and, the president was not the man who established peace in the country, He was the one who undermined it.

In his book, the journalist criticized those who maintained that the president was the Mexican peacemaker, that under his ruling there were no "insurgent movements". It is important to analyze that, as many Mexican intellectuals were concerned in portraying the country post-1810 until 1876 as chaotic, fractured by civil wars and foreign interventions, Turner stated that it was Díaz who had altered the peace in Mexico. It was a "sacrilege" (2010 [1911], p. 235), to maintain that Díaz was the country's peacemaker. Observe,

-¡Díaz, el pacificador, el más grande pacificador, más grande que Roosevelt!- exclamaba hace poco un político norte-americano en un banquete que se efectuó en la capital mexicana-. Estas expresiones, eran solo el eco de voces más altas. Recuerdo haber leído, no hace mucho tiempo, la noticia de que la *American Peace Society* había designado a Porfirio Díaz como su vice-presidente honorario en consideración a que este había establecido la paz en México. Tal teoría parece consistir en que la historia de México, anterior a Díaz, estuvo llena de guerras y de cambios violentos de gobierno, bajo Díaz no han ocurrido levantamientos violentos de largo alcance, por lo que necesariamente Díaz es una criatura humanitaria, semejante a Cristo, que se estremece ante la sola mención de derramamiento de sangre, y cuya bondad es tan ejemplar que ninguno de sus súbditos puede hacer otra cosa que imitarlo. (Turner, 2010 [1911], p. 232).

In the last chapter of the book, entitled "El pueblo mexicano", the journalist closes his argument by explaining about the situation of the Mexican people under the ruling of Porfirio Díaz. Before the conception of progress of civilizations, he affirmed that Mexico was "far behind the United States", but that it was necessary to understand this situation due to the historical facts the country experienced. If, before the American progress, the territory below the Rio Grande was lagging, such situation was accentuated by their living under the ruling of Porfirio Díaz. The author concluded:

Con seguridad México se encuentra muy atrás de los Estados Unidos en la marcha del progreso; muy atrás en las conquistas de la democracia; pero al juzgarlo, seamos justos y consideremos lo que la suerte histórica en comparación con que le ha dado a los mexicanos. Nosotros, los norteamericanos hemos sido afortunados al no haber estado dominados pela España durante 300 años; hemos sido afortunados al escapar de las garras de la Iglesia católica y al no haberla tenido aferrada a nuestras gargantas desde nuestra infancia; finalmente hemos sido afortunados al no haber sido dominados, en los momentos de debilidad que siguen a una guerra extranjera, por uno de nuestros propios generales, quien bajo el disfraz de presidente de nuestra Republica, quieta y astutamente, con la astucia de un genio y la falta de escrúpulos de un asesino, construye una máquina represiva, como ninguna otra nación moderna se ha visto obligada a destruir. Hemos sido bastante afortunados al escapar al reinado de algún Porfirio Díaz. (p. 257).

### **Turner and his criticism of the American government**

Turner's book did not enter into dialogue directly with the Mexicans, as it had as an objective to inform the American population of the oppression to which the nation below the Rio Grande was subjected to. Besides, the journalist wanted to make clear the role played by the American government in this situation. At the same time that the book criticizes the Mexican government, the reproach made by Turner to the United States itself cannot be ignored. Thus, he questions:

¿Por qué los ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos, respetuosos de los principios que defendieron sus ancestros del 76, que dicen reverenciar a Abraham Lincoln , más que nada por su proclama de Emancipación, que se estremecen al pensar en la forma engañosa de contratación de braceros del Congo, en los horrores de la Siberia rusa, en el sistema político del zar Nicolás, por qué tales ciudadanos disculpan y defienden una esclavitud más cruel, una peor opresión política y un más completo y terrible despotismo...en México? (Turner, 2010 [1911], p. 191).

Therefore, Turner made an allusion to the president in charge of the United States at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War and became known as “The Great Emancipator”, Abraham Lincoln. According to C. Sellers, H. May and N. McMillen “He presided over the country during the bloodiest war in all American history, preserving the Union as a land of freedom and the last and best hope for human kind.” (1990, p. 201). Besides the reference to the president, the journalist also mentioned the problem of the *braceiros* (farm workers) in the Congo, region which, in the nineteenth century, was under the ruling of King Leopold II, of Belgium; the Russian colonization in Siberia which, in the ninth century, became a place for the deportation of political exiles and; the government of the Russian emperor Nicholas II. These examples show the criticism made by the writer to the ways of imperialism and the government models that did not regard the freedom of their people.

It is worth reiterating that in the book Turner has direct dialogue with his own country. As we noted in reading the book, the author wove strong criticism of U.S. imperialism and its policy of aggression against the neighboring country (we can also remember the paradigmatic case of 1898, in which many American intellectuals and Latin Americans positioned themselves against the event in Cuba). The aim was to report the conditions under which they were submitted to the Mexican population, censoring, so much as Díaz, politicians and Americans capitalists, entrepreneurs, bankers, etc.. For the American journalist, Mexico needed a makeover and it fits in democracy and distribution of agricultural property.

Therefore, we cannot forget that, between 1900 and 1917, when Turner wrote the book, the United States passed the so-called "Progressive Era" movement which, while not having a homogeneous character, had a progressive ideal with economic, political and social scope **18**. Criticism was directed at large companies and their monopolies, which were increasingly rampant through the abolition of small farms. In this context, Turner witnessed an increase of U.S. companies operating on Mexican soil.

As Claudio Lomnitz wrote:

The consolidation of the border meant that the great American capitalists - the Guggenheims, the Rockefellers, Otis, Hearst, Stillman - now operated on both sides of it. It also meant that Mexican workers and welders, merchants and American engineers working in both countries. Dissidents Mexicans in the U.S. are faced with the same kind of harassment faced by members of international associations of workers [Wobblies] and the American anarchists, especially in the years that followed the assassination in 1901 of President William McKinley by a young anarchist, Leon Gzolgosz. Harassment combined with hardened racism against Mexicans that developed in the American Southwest (Raat 1981; Sandos 1992, Foley 1997, Leon 1983). (Lomnitz, 2009, p. 115).

Consequently, the criticism that Turner made about the United States of America was precisely the attitude of the government, of the journalists that complimented the “Porfiriato” and of the big landowners that had businesses below the Rio Grande, for accepting the situation which Mexico was going through. The journalist’s objective was to make it so that the American people would notice this support and criticize it, preventing the government from intervening against the Mexican revolution. The justification presented by the author, by landowners and editors of periodicals that condoned the porfirist government, was the financial interest they had in the country. There were commercial interests by the United States, as well as the wish to obtain land grants and privileges in Mexican territory.

On this issue we can ponder: to what extent, in Turner’s work, the Díaz government is seen as a strong, autonomous administration? Given the fact that the United States had interests in Mexico and believed it important to maintain Díaz in the presidency, in some parts the author went as far as writing that Don Porfirio stayed in office due to the American support. According to the passage below:

[The Americans] desean perpetuar la esclavitud mexicana, y consideran que el general Díaz es un factor necesario para ello; por esta razón le han otorgado su apoyo unánime y total. Mediante el predominio sobre la prensa han glorificado su nombre, que de otro modo debería repugnar a todo el mundo. Han ido mucho más lejos aún: por medio del dominio que ejercen sobre la maquinaria política norteamericana, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha mantenido a Díaz en el poder cuando debiera haber caído. El poder policiaco de los Estados Unidos se ha usado en la forma más efectiva para destruir el movimiento de los mexicanos destinados a abolir la esclavitud, y para mantener en su trono al principal tratante de esclavos del México bárbaro: Porfirio Díaz.

Todavía podemos dar otro paso en las generalizaciones. *Al erigirse en factor indispensable para la continuación de Díaz en el poder, por medio de la asociación en los negocios, de la conspiración*

*periodística y de la alianza político y militar, los Estados Unidos han convertido virtualmente a Díaz en un vasallo político, y en consecuencia, han transformado a México en una colonia esclava de los Estados Unidos.* (Our Highlight) (Turner, 2010 [1911], p. 196).

From this passage, we can infer that the United States of America backed, in Turner's opinion, the Díaz government, once they had commercial interests in the country. According to the journalist, the American government "kept Díaz in Power when he should have been taken down" (due to the revolutionary movement started in 1910). The main point is the assertion by the journalist that "the United States had virtually turned Díaz into a political liege, and consequently, transformed Mexico into an enslaved colony." To what extent, therefore, did the Mexican president hold so much power, or had he become a liege in the hands of the American government? Although we do not have the answer, it is interesting to think about the position of Díaz's government before the United States. In the same way that the book constituted open criticism to the porfirism, it also heaped reproaches on the United States. Turner's request to the American society was that it not allow the government to contribute to the "Porfiriato" in suppressing the revolutionary movement of 1910.

### ***Díaz, master of Mexico: James Creelman and the legitimization of the "Porfiriato" before the chaotic Mexican past***

The last intellectual production studied in this article refers to another American journalist, James Creelman, who, in 1911, published *Díaz: master of Mexico*. Creelman was the famous interviewer of the president when, in 1908, he conceded an interview to the American publication *Parson's Magazine*, explicitly informing that he would no longer be a candidate to the presidency of the country in the following elections.

The journalist's objective in writing his book was precisely to take a stand regarding the many works that were being produced in Mexico and abroad about the Mexican president. In the beginning of his work, still in the preface, he wrote: the object of this work is neither to attack nor to defend, but to explain, the most interesting man of the most misunderstood and misrepresented country in the world. (2011 [1911], p.VI).

The book, as it is going to be seen, had a dialogue with Turner's book, whereas Creelman adopted a stance of defense and legitimization of Porfirio Díaz's government. By referring to the author of *Barbarous Mexico* as a sensationalist who created facts about the government and the country (especially in what regards Turner's argument that there was slavery in Mexico), Creelman defended the porfirist government. Arguing about the existence of a chaotic past post Mexican independence, since it was subjected to various foreign interventions and internal wars, the "Porfiriato" was perceived as a moment of pacification of the country, as well as of prosperity and progress. The issue of the pacification of Mexico under Díaz's ruling, as seen, was also supported by Mrs. Tweedie:

Mexico was socially and politically disorganized, bankrupt, and lawless. All the highways were commanded by bandits, who invaded great cities and plundered even in the streets of the capital. The republican form of government had been saved, but life and property were everywhere insecure. Foreign capital had withdrawn from the country and commerce was paralyzed. (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 302).

From the passage above, due to all the historic facts that took place, according to Creelman the country was nearly ungovernable. Bandits looted cities, the territory was "socially and politically disorganized, broken and lawless", insecurity hung over Mexico. Faced with this past described by the author, it was necessary for a strong ruler to be able to turn the country into a peaceful territory, where public order and stability prevailed, not anarchy any longer. The problem with Benito Juárez's presidency, even though he had been a patriotic ruler, was to have governed the country too much under the constitutional law at a moment in which more rigor was necessary to change Mexico's internal situation. According to Creelman, before this unstable environment which the country was going through prior to 1876, Mexico needed a strong executive power.

Creelman, to talk about the transition of Porfirio Díaz-general who fought in the army, the President of the Republic, explained about the situation of the Mexican government in times of Juárez. This was the image of national stagnation. The victory of the principles of the independence process and achievement of autonomy were almost empty of meaning. Mexico needed at the time an initiative to modify the country's troubled past and create a future treading the path of prosperity.

No longer being in agreement with the zapotec's presidency, Porfirio Díaz decided to leave the national Army and return to Oaxaca. When in his hometown, hearing about what was taking place in the country, and faced with the proposal of Juárez's reelection, Porfirio Díaz forwarded a plan called "Plano de La Noria", whose main proposition

was the non-reelection for the country's presidency. The insurgency lost its purpose, once, in 1872, Benito Juárez died and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, then Supreme Court president, took over office.

President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada proved a bad ruler. As Juárez, he was more concerned with the abstract laws, that for the journalist, lacked effectiveness at the time. Mexico needed real and immediate action. Under its mandate, "justice was prostituted everywhere to politics. The elections were a farce. The Constitution was ignored. Public instruction was practically abandoned." (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 331). There was a great fear in the country that Mexico again passed through times of civil wars. It was against this that Díaz took the attitude of, for the sake of the nation, fight against Lerdo's government and rule the country. As he wrote:

Intoxicated by the theory that the printing of democratic principles can save all peoples in all conditions and at all times, he overlooked the tremendous fact that political institutions are powerful only to the extent that they express instincts and capacities of the people to whom they apply, and that government is an act, not a theory. (p. 330).

According to Creelman, while in the presidency, Porfirio Díaz had to rule with a "strong hand" so as to reestablish internal peace and incorporate Mexico within the group of civilized nations. Considering such aspects, the new president's attitudes in order to fight banditry were legitimized by the author. It was not possible to govern a country by theories; Mexico demanded order so that the laws would be effective. The journalist, when referring back to the previous governments of Juárez and Lerdo, named them "imaginative democracies". The president's stances were legitimized because he was acting on behalf of the public and not on personal ambitions<sup>19</sup>.

As head of the government, Díaz regenerated Mexico, that is, he made Mexico prosperous. In the words of the author: [Porfirio Díaz] "has made it possible to bring civic and social healing to México". (2011 [1911], p. 351).

Differently from what John Turner argued, for James Creelman the Mexican people wanted Díaz in the presidency. When he left the presidency in 1880, end of his first term of office, the journalist wrote that many were afraid that the environment of instability would return to the territory. In 1884, "from all parts of the country there went up a cry for the return of Porfirio Díaz to power. Not only were all classes beginning to feel the effects of extravagance and spoliation (...), but the very life of the republic seemed to be menaced." (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 375).

As he returned to power, his reelections were also explained by the writer as attitudes on behalf of the nation. "The subsequent reelection of President Díaz for four-year terms in 1892, in 1896, and in 1900, and his reelection for six-year term (...) are the result of a national determination to continue his great policy of peace and progress as long as he can be persuaded to serve." (2011 [1911], p. 380). Differently from Turner, Creelman justified the president's permanence in Power due to national desire.

While discussing the president's achievements, the writer emphasized the country's economic balance, the development of public education, the banking system, the rail system, among other factors. The point that Creelman highlighted the most was regarding the country's pacification under the "Porfiriato". As it will be noticed in the passage below, under the influence of the "Porfiriato", "the Mexican nationality emerged from the ashes of the past". That is:

The pomp and grace of the old Spanish aristocracy have vanished; the glory, mystery, and power of the privileged Church have disappeared; the dashing, jingling whiskerandos of the revolutions have gone; the picturesque excitements of brigandage, kidnapping, and rioting are no more; and the thrill of bankruptcy no longer adds its touch of tragedy to general ignorance and demoralization. Mexico has become a peaceful, prosperous, debt-paying country. Yet there is still to be found in the wild grandeur of her scenery, the romance of her ancient ruins, the picturesque and quaint characteristics of her lovable people, the indescribable interest of her cities and villages, and the almost staggering richness of her unplowed and undigged wealth – there is to be found in these and other things a charm not easily to be felt elsewhere in the world. But that which takes hold of the deeper imagination is the sight of a nationality rising bravely and steadily out of the ashes of the past. (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 389).

Therefore, even though there was still part of an untouchable Mexico for Creelman, "the picturesque and singular characteristics of its kind people, the ineffable commitment of its cities and villages, and an impressive wealth barely touched", and the country's nationality emerged from the "ashes of the past". Mexico was at peace, the country had hospitals, museums, schools.

In contrast to Turner's assertions, Creelman did not believe slavery existed in Mexico, but rather a system of peonage. Although the journalist did not openly mention Turner's book, he wrote that the claim that slavery existed in many parts of the country, and that it was recognized by the President and legitimized by him, was a lie maintained by opponents of the President. He concluded by stating that:

The truth is that the sensational writers and their revolutionary accomplices who have thrilled the uniformed American and British peoples with stories of slavery in Yucatan, and have pictured the capture of honest and patriotic Yaqui populations in oppressed Sonora and their deportation to Yucatan, where they were sold into slavery, to be worked to death among the trembling and beaten Maya slaves of the country, have mixed up two questions in their desire to wrong the Mexican name, and have invented much of the rest.

The Yaqui trouble is a military question pure and simple, while the so-called debt servitude practiced among the Mayas on the henequen plantations is a feature, not of slavery, but of peonage, the result of patriarchal conditions and habits many centuries old. (CREELMAN, 2011 [1911], p. 404-405).

Therefore, Creelman referred to Turner as one of the "sensational writers" who, "have mixed up two questions in their desire to wrong the Mexican name, and have invented much of the rest." For the first writer, there was no slavery in Mexico, but rather a peonage system that was "the result of patriarchal conditions and habits many centuries old."<sup>20</sup> The issue the Mexican government had with the Yaquis was due to their insubordination before the national administration, the wish to become independent: "in 1906 the situation in Sonora had become intolerable. The development of the great state was impossible while the Yaquis continued to assert their preposterous claim of independence and perpetuate a reign of murder, plunder, and incendiarism." (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 407). Creelman argued that what the "Porfiriato" did faced with this situation, taking them from Sonora to Yucatán, was an act of "mercy", between the two alternatives that the government had to solve the conflict, exterminating the indians or sending them to Yucatán. He explained:

President Díaz was confronted with but two alternatives: either the Yaquis must be exterminated or relocated to some other region. All attempts to conciliate the tribe had failed. Thereupon the president ordered 5,000 or 6,000 Yaquis taken by force to distant Yucatan, where labor was in great demand on the henequen plantations, and where they were distributed as labors among such planters as would be likely to prevent any of them from returning to Sonora. This stern, but comparatively merciful, policy has practically settled the fearful Yaqui question, and today a thousand new forces of productive civilization are at work in Sonora. (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 407)

The final conclusion that James Creelman reached about the government of Porfirio Díaz was that all of the president's stances were taken on behalf of the nation--even this issue on the Yaquis. For a long time, Mexico was pacified and the country prospered and moved forward. Trains connected the territory, telegraph lines were built, the financial sector was balanced ("Hacienda"). Up until the year of 1876, there was a serious problem with crime in the country, but Díaz was able to ameliorate it. In one of the last pages of the book he wrote,

It is undeniable that President Díaz has the power of an autocrat; but that power grew out of the necessities of the Mexican nation. His rule has not been always government by the people, but it has invariably been government for the people. He has made the executive authority supreme and practically irresistible in what is theoretically a government of balanced powers, and his astonishing prestige and popularity, both as soldier and statesman, have converted popular elections into virtual ratifications of his known opinions and wishes. Yet even his bitterest foes have not suggested that he has shown the faintest inclination to bring about the hereditary perpetuation of his rule. His son, Colonel Porfirio Díaz, Jr., an able and successful engineer-architect, earns his income tax as a private citizen, and has not been encouraged to seek political promotion; and his charming wife and daughters are among the most retiring of Mexican women. He has had to govern sometimes by sheer strength, but he has really governed – and he is still a comparative poor man; and he has kept the Constitution unchanged for the future, when the Mexican people will be ready for the heavy burdens of individual responsibility which it confers. (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. 419).

Therefore, according to the American journalist, Díaz had concentrated powers in his hands, the executive Power was strong, "the power of an autocrat". But it can be noticed that, for Creelman, such attitudes had been necessary. In the book, Díaz did not emerge as ambitious, he governed "on behalf of the people" and the nation wanted him in the Office. Faced with the memory of a turbulent past the Mexicans believed in Don Porfirio's government. And going back to the preface of the book, Creelman's idea was concluded, a "Latin-American leader", who "sits the

acknowledged of progress and comparative plenty”:

(...) In times of radical agitation, when sentimental democracy screams its epigrams against the hard, rough slow work that confronts organized society in all countries, there is much to be learned in the life of this greatest Latin-American leader, from his brilliant, fighting youth to his white old age, in which he sits the acknowledged of progress and comparative plenty. (Creelman, 2011 [1911], p. VI).

### Conclusion

As stated in the beginning of the text, the aim was to analyze three works by foreign intellectuals who wrote about the government of Porfirio Díaz. By the end of the work we realized many questions have been raised, requiring deeper research. However, from the discussions that took place, it was possible to notice how there were, during the government of Porfirio Díaz, historiography matrixes about the ‘Porfirism’. Understanding such evaluative outlines under the general’s government is important for the research about the historic period. Some authors praised the government, while others criticized it. In 1911 there was a search for an explanation to the revolutionary movement of 1910, books disputed a memory to be imparted about the Mexican government: had Díaz been a hero or a villain?

Moreover, the revolutionary historiography about the “Porfirism” (post 1911) was built to delegitimize Don Porfirio’s government. The authors that discussed and wrote about the “Porfiriato” were in dialogue with the work of John Kenneth Turner, an individual who, as it could be seen, even during the government of general Díaz, openly criticized the government, labeling it a tyrannous despotism.

The objective of the article was not to seek an answer, but rather understand how there were many representations about Porfirio Díaz. Turner, as explained by Aurora Gómez Galvarriato and Mauricio Tenorio Trillo (2006), was one of the writers who contributed to a new assessment of the government which, starting with the Mexican Revolution, consolidated as an, according to Paul Garner (2003), “anti-porfirist” historiography. However, we believe that the speeches about the country’s pacification under the general’s presidency, noticed in Tweedie and Creelman, also needed further studies. Mexican writers such as Bernardo Reyes who, in 1902, wrote *El General Porfirio Díaz*; Justo Sierra, who organized *México: su evolución social (1900-1902)* and, even Francisco Ignacio Madero with his famous *La sucesión presidencial de 1910 (1909)*, did not renounce discussing this issue. Before the memory of a turbulent post-independence Mexico, under the Díaz government the country earned pacific contours<sup>21</sup>. Reasoned the historian François-Xavier Guerra,

El porfiriato, antes de ser para los historiadores un período de crecimiento económico y de cambios sociales fue primero que nada, para aquellos que lo vivieron, la paz recobrada. La “perspectiva histórica” tan necesaria, falsea a veces la realidad; para nosotros y para los actores de la Revolución, la paz porfirista es a menudo un dato de base que sirve para explicar otros fenómenos de los que, efectivamente, fue el origen. Pero, ¿quién podría decir lo que la paz representó verdaderamente para los habitantes del México de fines del siglo XIX? ¿Y por qué y cómo se alcanzo esta paz? Para los mexicanos de la época, la paz fue el término de un período de disturbios en la historia del país, mientras que para nosotros no es frecuentemente, más que una premisa. (GUERRA 1991, p. 212).

Researching foreigners who wrote about Diaz’s government became a challenge. How did a person from another country depict Mexico? Even though it was made more explicit in John Turner’s book, Tweedie and James Creelman also made analogies with their own country in order to explain some Mexican situation. Although we did not move deeper into the subject, the authors compared the Mexican individuals and society, in a general way, to those from their native country. François Hartog’s ideas on this subject were important for us to understand these representations.

Finally, as seen, there was great circulation of information abroad about what was taking place in Mexico. Tweedie, for instance, quoted Madero’s work, *La sucesión presidencial de 1910 (1909)*, in his book. Even having been published months before, Turner already explicitly criticized James Creelman’s work. The article attempted to reflect the work of a few authors who contributed to the creation of historiography matrixes and nuances about the “Porfiriato”. Before such disparate representation there were political projects to be legitimized, as well as an ideal of government to be followed.

## Notes

- 1 Research funded by REUNI through research grant. REUNI its acronym in Portuguese to Plan of Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities [of Brazil].
- 2 Two of the examples of the writer's work when on her trips are *A Girls Ride in Iceland* (1894) and *Trough Finland in Carts* (1897).
- 3 It is difficult to explain the interest of many foreigners to describe and understand the internal situation in Mexico. However, we can infer two possible lines of argumentation. The first would be spraying a promotional literature of the Mexican government exported to countries both in Europe and America, whose content was material progress, political and economic clout. The purpose of this would attract investors to Mexico. Along with this laudatory literature also existed the great universal exhibitions. There, occurring in several countries throughout the Porfiriato, Mexico showed its progress, building the image of a peaceful, civilized nation, without violence and savagery. Therefore, the second line of argument would be grounded in the changes in Mexican foreign policy under the government of Don Porfirio. As we know, the economic relations with the U.S. have intensified during this period and large U.S. investments were made in Mexico. In this context, new advertising campaigns were also carried out in the country in favor of the Mexican government. Romero Rubio, the Mexican diplomat in the United States, for example, made major ad campaigns for his country in U.S. For a deeper discussion LOMNITZ, Claudio. "Cronótopos de uma nação distópica: o nascimento da dependência" no México porfiriano tardio". In: MANA, vol. 15, n.1, 2009, pp. 91-125; TENORIO TRILLO, Mauricio. *Artilugio de la nación moderna. México en las exposiciones universales, 1880-1930*. Cidade do México: FCE, 1998; YEAGER, Gene. "Porfirian Commercial Propaganda: Mexico in the World Industrial Expositions". In: *The Americas*, vol. 34, N. 2, out. 1977, pp. 230-243.
- 4 Natalia Priego researched these interventions suffered by Mexico in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to the author, in 1836 the country under the government of General and President Antonio López de Santa Anna, lost the province of Texas in 1845, was annexed to the United States. Moreover, "in the ensuing war of 1846-1848, provoked by US aggression on the border between Texas and México and by a naïve Mexican belief in the capacity of its army to resist an invasion from the United States, Mexico lost not only California but also New Mexico and Arizona, thereby concluding the process whereby its expansionist northern neighbor deprived it of half the nation's territory inherited from Spain in 1821." (PRIEGO, 2008, p. 474). About the French and British threat, she wrote: "In the same period the task of trying to construct a national identity was further complicated by the persistent fear of attempted re-conquest by Spain, and repeated interference in the country's international affairs by France and Britain, which would culminate in a large-scale invasion in 1861-1862 (initially supported by Spain and Britain) which turned into an alliance with conservative groups in 1863 to re-establish monarchy in the person of an imported European prince, Maximilian von Hapsburg." (PRIEGO, 2008, p. 474).
- 5 From 1821, with the proclamation of Mexican independence, the power of country was disputed by two major sectors, liberal and conservative. This sector mainly advocated a return to order in the country and the Spanish Catholic religion. According to Luis Gonzalez, "al contrario de los conservadores, los liberales negaban la tradición hispánica, indígena y católica; creían en la existencia de un indomable antagonismo entre los antecedentes históricos de México y su engrandecimiento futuro y en la necesidad de conducir a la patria por las vías del todo nuevas de las libertades de trabajo, comercio, educación y letras (...)." (1994, p. 110).
- 6 Tweedie wrote: "The new President soon swept out General Lerdo's troops; He shot outlaws, deserters and rioters whole-sale, and began his military sway with an iron hand, the only possible mode of governing such a country. He knew his people. Was he not one of them? He knew the way to rule was to clear the land of bandits and revolutionist, to sweep away the ringleaders, and then control the remaining populace. The people feared him, they knew his strength, and they felt his power. Only a quarter of a century later they had learnt to love him and were led by a silken cord." (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 135).
- 7 The Mexican intellectual Justo Sierra who, between 1900 and 1902 organized the book *México: su evolución social*, wrote about the country's situation after so many civil conflicts: "el país estaba desquiciado; la guerra civil había, entre grandes charcos de sangre, amontonado escombros y miserias por todas partes; todo había venido por tierra (...)." (SIERRA, 1940, p. 280).
- 8 The British traveler also clarifies: "He was bravery personified as a soldier, he is a politician and a ruler, and he has made himself all these despite his Indian blood and struggle for education. Díaz has climbed from the lowest rung of life's ladder to one of its topmost pinnacles. No one ever impressed me more than the President of Mexico. There is a reserved strength, a quiet force about him which commands respect, a kindly gentleness that wins affection. Each time I saw him I learned some new trait in his character, and felt how immeasurably above ordinary

mankind this self-made ruler undoubtedly was". (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 144).

**9** In this passage we can notice his argument that Díaz initially governed Mexico as a "military despot", but, afterwards, administered the country as a "diplomatic ruler": "Díaz was a soldier, living an arduous military life, at a time when Mexico had sixteenth century ideas, and was ruled by a Church despotism, reminiscent of the middle ages, but Díaz was a wonderful man. He shook himself free from the trammels of the past, and carved out a development for himself, and a future for his country. It was as a general of the army he declared himself President of the Republic, although of late year it is not, perhaps, so much as a military despot, but rather as a diplomatic ruler that he has reigned". (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], 150).

**10** It is important to highlight that the British traveler defended that, even though the movement had a revolutionary character and, that there was a body of public opinion who disagreed with Díaz's permanence in power, as contradictory as it seemed the revolution had a pacific character, since everyone acknowledged the achievements of the Mexican president: "Paradoxical as it may seem, his overthrow is the result of a revolution mainly pacific in its nature, and in substance a revolt of public feeling against abuses that have become stereotyped in the system of government by the too long domination of one masterful will. The military rising was but its head, spitting fire. It was a civil revolution. Behind was an immense body of opinion, in favour of effecting the retirement of the President by peaceful means, and with all honour to one who had served his country well." (Tweedie, 2011 [1911], p. 468).

**11** It is important to emphasize that besides having explained what he saw and heard about the Mexican slavery, John Turner, in the first six chapters, where he examined how slavery worked and what was the situation of the laborers in the cities, is all made of dialogues, which helped even more to create an effect of truth that the author tried to defend. The remaining chapters did not have the same structure, and the sources used by the journalist, were precisely the news from newspaper both from Mexico and the United States. What is interesting is that he repeatedly invited people to, by reading his work, ponder, imagine what was described and took a stand before the situation Mexico was going through. We believe that these factors of disposition and textual argumentation were also responsible for the great repercussion that *Barbarous Mexico* had in the United States at the time.

**12** When analyzing the work of Turner costing us the explanation of François Hartog, the "eye" is a sign of enunciation, an intervention of the narrator in the narrative to show I've been in this situation and saw what happened, proving thus what was told. Moreover, "[the term] see with your own eyes [is] more persuasive than the simple 'see', especially when it comes to some startling and wonderful phenomenon (thaumásion) (...)." (HARTOG, 1999, p. 274).

**13** It is important in addition to John Turner having explained what he saw and heard about the Mexican slavery, the first six chapters, where he talked about how it worked and how slavery was the situation of peon cities, is all composed with dialogues, which increasingly generated an effect of the fact that the author wished to defend. The remaining chapters have not had the same structure, and the sources used by the journalist were just the news from newspapers both in Mexico as the United States itself. Interestingly, all the time he was asking people, reading his work, to reflect, imagine what was described, and take an attitude toward the situation happening in Mexico. We believe it is also due to these factors and available textual argument that barbarous Mexico at the time possessed great repercussion in the United States.

**14** According to the autor, "La filosofía del castigo corporal, me la explicó muy claramente don Felipe G. Cantón, secretario de la Cámara. 'Es necesario pegarles; sí, muy necesario – me dijo con una sonrisa –, porque no hay otro modo de obligarles a hacer lo que uno quiere. ¿Qué otro medio hay para imponer la disciplina en las fincas? Sí no los golpearíamos, no harían nada'." (TURNER, 2010 [1911], p. 21).

**15** "No quiero ser injusto con el General Díaz en ninguna forma; pero a pesar de que los señores españoles hicieron del pueblo mexicano esclavos y peones, nunca lo quebrantaron y experimentaron tanto como se le quebranta y destruye en la actualidad. En tiempos de los españoles él peón tenía por lo menos su pequeña parcela y su humilde choza; pero hoy no tiene nada". (TURNER, 2010 [1911]: p. 95).

**16** The "La Noria" and "Tuxtepec" Revolutions were two movements led by Porfirio Díaz, the first in 1871, against President Benito Juárez, and the second, in 1876, against Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada whose main proposition was the non-reelection for the presidency in Mexico.

**17** However, he added further: "En contra de la voluntad de la mayoría del pueblo, él general Díaz tomó la dirección del gobierno hace 34 años; en contra de la voluntad de la mayoría del pueblo ha permanecido allí desde entonces, excepto cinco años – de 1880 a 1884 –, en que cedió el Palacio Nacional a su amigo íntimo, Manuel González, con el claro entendimiento de que al final de ese período se lo devolvería." (TURNER, 2010 [1911], p.98).

**18** On the subject see: CAMPOS ARIAS, Antonio. John K. Turner, "precursor radical" de la revolución ?. Dissertação de Mestrado. Cidade do México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, de fevereiro de 2011; Lomnitz, Claudio. "Cronotopos de UMA Nação distópica: o nascimento da Dependência" não porfiriano México Tardio ". Em: Mana, vol. 15, n.1, 2009, pp 91-125; MAIO, H; McMillen, N.; SELERS, C.. *Uma reavaliação da História dos Estados Unidos: de colônia à potencia imperial*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor de Ltda, 1990.

**19** On chapter XXX of the book, Creelman copied part of president Díaz's phrases while explaining the need for, in an initial moment, the government having to administer the country with a little more rigor, due to the existence of banditry in the country: "It is true that we were harsh. Often we were harsh to the point of great cruelty. Yet it was necessary then to the life and progress of the nation. The results that it was right that a little blood should be shed, so that much blood should be saved. The blood we shed was bad blood; the blood we saved was good blood. 'Mexico needed peace, even an enforced peace that the nation might have time to think and work. The army began the task; education and industry carried it on.'" (CREELMAN, 2011 [1911], p. 349).

**20** It is important to point out that James Creelman compared the situation of the workers in Yucatán to the ones in Pennsylvania (United States). According to the journalist, the situation of the American workers in this region was worse than that of the Indians in Mexico. By referring back to the two countries, the American withdrew the singularity of the Yucatán workers' situation, besides stating that the situation in Pennsylvania was worse. "It is undeniable that there are many evils attendant on this custom of allowing, or enticing, henequen workers to go heavily in debt to their employers, and that here and there a planter takes advantage of his power and isolated position to be cruel or unjust; yet taken large and small, the conditions of labor in Yucatan are not much worse than they were in some of the coal fields of Pennsylvania under the old company-store system." (CREELMAN, 2011 [1911], p. 405).

**21** FERNANDES, Luiz Estevam de Oliveira; BARBOSA, Fernanda Bastos. *Pacificar a história: passado, presente e futuro nas formas de pensar a política mexicana na transição do século XIX ao XX*. Revista História da Historiografia, Ouro Preto, número 7, nov./dez. 2011, pp. 90-112.

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