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A Bloody Memory: Tlatelolco (1968) in Mexican Pop Culture

ABSTRACT: *This article examines Mexico's Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968 in the country's collective memory through the lens of popular culture. Referencing posters, poems, literature, films, theater performances, and monuments, the author argues that, over the past fifty years, the memory of the Tlatelolco Massacre has changed from that of an incident primarily affecting the young and privileged middle class, via the notion of yet another cycle in the country's history of bloodshed, to the collective understanding that Tlatelolco was a national injustice that affects all Mexicans.*

KEYWORDS: *1968; Mexico; Tlatelolco; popular culture; collective memory; activism; remembrance; nationalism*

Introduction

The 1968 Olympics, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* ("Square of the Three Cultures"), and Tlatelolco: people outside of Mexico might not see the connection between these words. They might not be aware that Mexico hosted the Olympics in 1968, that President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz held office (1964-1970) during the Games, and that the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* is a town square, rich in history and located in an area of Mexico City known as Tlatelolco. But for Mexican people since 1968 these words synchronize and reflect an infamous stain on the country's history: the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968. In that year, a student movement publicly protested the social injustices that were tolerated by the government and periodically held demonstrations.[1] The government, run by the undefeated party *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* ("Institutional Revolutionary Party," abbreviated "PRI"), strove to depict Mexico as a "modern nation" worthy of holding a global event like the Olympics. The two sides clashed on October 2, 1968. The military and police in disguise shot at thousands of students and sympathizers gathered at the *Plaza de Tres Culturas*. The number of casualties remains unknown, yet citizens at the time and ever since have condemned the government for refusing to take responsibility.

Perhaps due to the lack of attention from the government at the time, as well as its successors, Mexicans took matters into their own hands and fashioned a

[1] Elena Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," in *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson (London: Duke University Press, 2002), 555-569, here 562-564. As of 2018, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, abbreviated "PRI") has not issued a statement claiming responsibility of the Tlatelolco Massacre. Government documents revealing the exact number of casualties from the shoot-out on October 2, 1968, have yet to be released. The Administration of President Díaz Ordaz claimed that the number did not exceed 75, while other sources estimate 200 to 300 casualties. See Julio Scherer García and Carlos Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra, Tlatelolco 1968: Documentos del General Marcelino García Barragan: Los Hechos y la Historia* (Mexico City: Nuevo Siglo Aguilar, 1999), 142.

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culture of remembering the tragedy through visual and performing arts. Known as the *Generation of 1968*, intellectuals and artist activists kept the memory alive by creating a *Tlatelolco '68* genre to remind other Mexicans of their duty to demand justice from the government. This produced an "us vs. them" structure that separated the victim (Mexican-ness) from the oppressor (the non-Mexican). Initially, this approach isolated certain people. So, in response, the movement stretched the "us" identity to include all Mexicans within the country's national borders, both past and present. Expanding the national identity to relate the massacre, the movement evolved in tactics and mediums to deliver a national collective memory. The core theme shifted from focusing on testimonies from the survivors to establishing the massacre as part of Mexican history—to presenting it as a tragedy for all corners of the nation and not just Mexico City. Over the last fifty years (1968-2018), paintings, cartoons, poems, novels, films, documentaries, memorials, and songs have come to form a Tlatelolco artistic tradition which successfully situates the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre in the Mexican national consciousness. The memory of the Tlatelolco Massacre has become part of the Mexican identity as popular culture has portrayed the event as a national injustice that affects all Mexican citizens.

I. Written Still Images: Early Cartoons, Poems, and Testimonial Literature

The birth of *Tlatelolco '68* in pop culture happened shortly after the massacre, because the government tried to diffuse the attention paid to the event. Silencing and dismissing the carnage prevailed even on the same day, October 2. An hour after the massacre had ended, the military took away dead bodies, cleansed the street of spilled blood, incarcerated surviving student activists, and—most importantly—forced media outlets to reduce the attention paid to the massacre and focus more on the Olympics that would take place ten days later. Mexican author Carlos Monsiváis (1938-2010) described 1968 under Díaz Ordaz as "everything [is] government and almost nothing is opposition."[2] Logically for the government, and more precisely the PRI, Mexico had everything to lose should a public disturbance affect the international community, particularly the image of a modern government that was increasing domestic production and attracting foreign companies to invest in the country.[3] Collaborating with the federal government, newscasts like *Telesistema* omitted or diverted attention from the student movement both before and after the massacre. When newscasters mentioned the students, they portrayed them as violent collaborators with international Communists. Channel 4's *Noticieras Novedades* warned parents to

[2] Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra*, 61.

[3] The PRI was in power from 1929 until 2000. In each presidential election, held every six, a PRI candidate always won the vote. The party used its name as a legitimacy leverage, reminding the country of the Revolution that had overthrown the dictator Porfirio Díaz. The PRI claimed that it was implementing "postulates and principles emanating from the Revolution." See Poniatowska, "Student Movement," 557.

"keep [their] children away from participating in other student activities."[4] After the massacre, televised broadcasts and newspapers excluded accounts from bystanders or the students themselves. Attention shifted to the Olympics, celebrating Mexican athletes as national heroes. The government-backed mainstream media ostracized and silenced the student movement and its sympathizers from the very beginning.

As public outlets were dismissing the student movement, the student activists and their sympathizers took matters into their own hands and established the blueprints for the *Tlatelolco genre* in pop culture. Survivors of the massacre gave performances in the streets and printed their own propaganda, depicting the government as murderers, silencers, and manipulators of the media.[5] The Mexican Autonomous National University/*Universidad Nacional de Autonoma Mexicana* (U.N.A.M.) offered a platform for the student movement to express its discontent with the government's authoritarian retaliation, as well as President Díaz Ordaz, the Olympics, and the military *granaderos* ("grenadiers" or riot police). The school helped create cartoons that parodied the Mexican Olympics' ring logo as military equipment and portrayed the press as politically-bribed puppets regurgitating political agendas.[6] The artists of these works implied that the Olympics and the Mexican government were collaborating to create a façade of the country at the expense of the well-being of the people. With such images, *the Tlatelolco '68* movement established its first spatial barriers between "us/students" and "them/politics/press." Although the movement emphasized student victims and survivors as the "us" group, they also implied that their group represented the true essence of Mexico, while the government and press stood for the anti-Mexico side, for corruption, greed, and power.

During the first few years after the tragedy, the *Generation of 1968* included not only the survivors and family members of the Tlatelolco victims, but other sympathizers as well. The country's Ambassador to India, Octavio Paz (1914-1998), resigned two days after the massacre in response to the government's failure to take action and assume responsibility.[7] Paz then composed and shared a poem, "Mexico: Olimpiada de 1968," with the Poets' Global Encounter (*Encuentro Mundial de Poetas*), condemning the state: "An entire nation is

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[4] Celeste González de Bustamante, "1968 Olympic Dreams and Tlatelolco Nightmares: Imagining and Imaging Modernity on Television," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 26, no. 1 (2010): 1-30, here 17; Victoria Carpenter, "'Y El Olor De la Sangre Manchaba El Aire': Tlatelolco 1521 and 1968 in José Emilio Pacheco's 'Lectura De Los "Cantares Mexicanos"'," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 95, no. 4 (2018): 451-474, here 452.

[5] González de Bustamante, "1968 Olympic Dreams," 4, 24.

[6] Ester Montero, "Mexico 68" and "Prensa Corrupta," image 538 and 539, Mexico City (Mexico), U.N.A.M. (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), Archivo Histórico, Ester Montero, Mexico 68, poster, accessed April 29, 2019, and Ester Montero, Prensa Corrupta, poster, accessed April 29, 2019.

[7] Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra*, 135.

ashamed [...] municipal employees clean the blood in the Sacrifice Plaza. Look now, stained before I said anything worthy" ("una nación entera se avergüenza / [...] los empleados municipales lavan la sangre en la Plaza de los Sacrificios / Mira ahora, manchada antes de haber dicho algo que valga la pena").[8] Paz channeled his frustration and disappointment with the government in literary and artistic form. For the former ambassador, the PRI government had audaciously covered the incident, had washed their hands, literally and figuratively, and used additional methods to erase the massacre from history instead of taking responsibility and issuing an apology. Other poets composed similar poetry condemning the state and sending their condolences to the victims and survivors. The Mexican poet Jaime Sabines (1926-1999) wrote that "the crime remains there, hidden in newspaper articles, televised broadcasts, radios, with Olympic flags" ("El crimen está allí, cubierto de hojas de periódicos, con televisores, con radios, con banderas olímpicas").[9] Sabines accused the government of selling out for profit. The tragedy had been covered up so quickly that not even those responsible knew the number of casualties. Other poets, including José Emilio Pacheco, Héctor Manjarrez, and David Huerta wrote poems on similar topics: the corrupt government, the unknown death toll, and the silent conspiracies, and that "October 2 is never forgotten." It seemed that the movement of student survivors and artists would not stop publishing art and literature until the government would pay for its alleged crimes and release information on the whereabouts of the missing bodies.

Other types of literature also emerged on the topic of the Tlatelolco Massacre. In 1971, Elena Poniatowska, the most influential author on the topic, published a signature work, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* ("The Night of Tlatelolco"). Using her background as a journalist, Poniatowska collected interviews, chants, slogans, and banners from student movement survivors. Her book is divided into two sections, before and after October 2, with only a short introduction from the author to set the tone.[10] An example of Mexican oral history, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* further distinguished the Tlatelolco movement, defining its literature as part of the *novela testimonial* ("testimonial literature") genre. The writing style synchronizes "concrete experiences of a living person," the facts, with the "author's fictional approach."[11] The book allows the raw material to speak for itself and abstains from interpreting the Tlatelolco Massacre. The accounts create a still image of the event, frozen in time, for others to travel to the night of the

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[8] Scherer García and Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra*, 135.

[9] Jaime Sabines, "Tlatelolco, 68," in *Poemas y narraciones sobre el movimiento estudiantil de 1968*, ed. Marco Antonio Campos and Alejandro Toledo, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1998), 48-51, here 48.

[10] Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral* (Mexico City: Ediciones ERA, 1971), 13.

[11] Mary Ellen Kiddle, "The 'Novela Testimonial' in Contemporary Mexican Literature," *Confluencia* 1, no. 1 (1985): 82-89, here 82.

massacre and live or relive it. This medium provided another platform for those affected by the tragedy to demand the truth to be exposed or to release their frustrations. Other authors at the time wrote novels with fictional characters, using the Tlatelolco Massacre as a theme and as background. These, too, served as foundational material for subsequent authors and researchers on Tlatelolco. Above all, works like Poniatowska's *La Noche de Tlatelolco* aimed at shattering the mythical image of a "modern" and corruption-free Mexico.

The movement faced challenges to deliver a national message, as some people could not relate to the first wave of *Tlatelolco '68*. Because of the politically-driven press, those who remained outside of the movement and its circle of sympathizers interpreted the massacre as a class struggle and not as a Mexican struggle. Televised broadcasts and newspapers speculated that Communist espionage had corrupted the minds of the youth.[12] Especially to the older generation such conspiracy theories explained what they viewed as an artificial problem during prosperous times: Why would Mexico be suffering when it was hosting the Summer Olympics? Other communities—workers for example—viewed the massacre as a result of what privileged, middle-class, juvenile misbehavior had brought upon itself. Early literature did not help embed *Tlatelolco '68* as a national concern either. The *novela testimonial* genre, including Poniatowska's publication, meant to freeze images of Tlatelolco to prevent the injustice from fading into the abyss, yet it also placed the event into the past without any narrative relating the topic to the present. Samuel Steinberg argues that the raw sources of the 1968 massacre, presented as written still images, remain "only imaginable" and "hold the viewer at a critical distance."[13] Thus, in its early years, the *Generation of 1968* did not persuade the nation that the Tlatelolco Massacre was a tragedy that affected the country as a whole.

II. Tlatelolco '68 and the Cycle of Mexican Historical Tragedies

Subsequent decades helped the *Generation of 1968* to reinvigorate the memory of Tlatelolco as an injustice to the nation as it applied to Mexican history. A 1985 earthquake that damaged Mexico City, including Tlatelolco, brought back images of the massacre that had taken place only seventeen years earlier. The earthquake left almost 2,000 buildings destroyed and an estimated 7,000 people dead.[14] The devastation and government negligence upset the survivors. The

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[12] Kiddle, "Novela Testimonial," 83.

[13] Samuel Steinberg, *Photopoetics at Tlatelolco: Afterimages of Mexico, 1968* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 2. Steinberg is a Professor of Spanish and Portuguese and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California.

[14] Liliana López Levi and Alejandra Toscana Aparicio, "Vulnerabilidad en Tlatelolco a tres décadas de los sismos de 1985," *Política y cultura* 45 (2016): 125-152, here 143; Amanda Ledwon, "Let Us Weep Among the Dust: Recycled Poems of 1968 and Operas of Earthquake," in *Mexico in Verse: A History of Music, Rhyme, and Power*, ed. Stephen Neufeld and Michael Matthews (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 298-336, here 307.

state did not help residents before or after the earthquake. Some buildings had already shown poor construction, and national aid arrived late, leaving locals to form their own communities to rescue trapped survivors. Soon people began to notice the similarities between the devastation and state response after the 1985 earthquake and the bloody massacre of 1968. Both tragedies happened in the same place, many perished or remained missing, and the Mexican government failed to respond in time, or at all, to aid its citizens. *Déjà vu* lingered in the minds of not just the residents of Mexico City and Tlatelolco, but the artists and intellectuals of the *Generation of 1968*.

The state attempted to make amends by remembering the victims of the earthquake with an artistic vigil that ironically did more harm than good to the government and strengthened the Tlatelolco Massacre as an immortal collective memory. Under the leadership of the Secretary of Public Education, Miguel González Avelar, the PRI hosted a *Día de Los Muertos* ("Day of the Dead") festivity to honor the victims and invited poets to compose new works or recite works already published. The authors included Tlatelolco Movement veterans like Carlos Monsiváis, José Emilio Pacheco, Octavio Paz, and Jaime Sabines.[15] While the government had intended the poets' and writers' pieces as a means to strengthen fraternity, solidary, and nationalism among all Mexicans, the result excluded the government. Pacheco's *Our Endless Night* ("La noche nuestra interminable") related 1968 and 1985, stating "how many disasters have I already survived, how many dead friends, how much pain" ("Cuántos desastres ya he sobrevivido, cuántos amigos muertos, cuánto dolor").[16] The poem reflected the feelings of those who had witnessed the massacre and the earthquake as a vicious cycle due to political impotence. Contrary to the government's intent, the poems recited in 1985 opened communication and common experiences across classes in the Tlatelolco region. The wider community ceased to associate the student massacre of 1968 with incidents in Paris or Berkeley, and began to view it as a stain on Mexican history now echoed by the 1985 earthquake. And since the government offered limited communication, poetry and other forms of Tlatelolco popular culture became the medium for the frustrated citizens.

With the parallel image of the student massacre of 1968 and the 1985 earthquake in mind, new mediums of art experimented with elements of time. Cinematography strengthened the notion of the massacre as a cause for the wider community with a style that shortened the gap of time that had passed. For example, director Jorge Fons's 1990 film *Rojo Amanecer* ("Red Dawn") interprets the Tlatelolco Massacre at the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* from the residents' perspective. The majority of its plot takes place inside a family's apartment home in the Chihuahua building, one of the structures near the student protest on October 2 that the military used to prevent escape. Each family member of the

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[15] Ledwon, "Let Us Weep," 300.

[16] Ledwon, "Let Us Weep," 317.

different generations symbolizes different eras of modern Mexican history.[17] The grandfather represents the Revolutionary period, being a veteran himself; the father represents the post-Revolution institutional era as he works for the state, and the older sons are student activists, thus representing the student movement's youngest era. The film ends with the *Batallón Olimpia* ("Olympic Battalion") killing the family, except for the youngest child who hides during the raid.[18] While Fons relates the tragedy to all walks of life, the film also embeds the element of movement in time. Thus, as *Tlatelolco '68* art shifted from still images to motion, it created a narrative that delivered its message more effectively. *Rojo Amanecer*'s script and visuals detached the massacre from 1968 and moved it into the view of people in 1989. Unlike Poniatowska's *Noche de Tlatelolco*, modern cinema offered a more well-rounded story, including sound, facial expressions, and dialogue that made viewers "relive" the massacre of 1968.

Art in motion extended beyond film into live performance. The original Tlatelolco movement had already staged reenactments of the massacre within days of the incident. As each subsequent president offered a more tolerant public spectrum of diverse perspectives, plays about the Tlatelolco Massacre, known as *Teatro del '68*, blossomed in the years prior to the new millennium. Stage representations provided a therapeutic element not found in poems, images, or even film. According to Virginia Tech Spanish Professor Jacqueline E. Bixler, stage productions create an "eternal present, social immediacy, and direct link with the audience."[19] Playwrights and performers applied that methodology to themes of the massacre. The reshaping of the event connects the audience in a form of knowledge, rather than just collective "memory." In the play *Conmemorantes* by Emilio Carballido (1925-2008), a mother returns to the *Plaza* years after the massacre to commemorate her dead son alongside other characters on stage. The mother pleads with them to not forget her son, but she also directs the line to the audience to take that as a lesson.[20] When performed, the play took advantage of where it was staged to increase a feeling of sadness or oppression. In a 1997 production, a prison served as the theater for the audience to relate to the victims' despair. For many people, the close proximity between art and viewer made the memory more vivid than ever before.

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[17] Samuel Steinberg, "Re-cinema: Hauntology of 1968," *Discourse* 33, no.1 (2011): 3-26, here 15-16.

[18] A military squadron, the *Batallón Olimpia* hid among the crowds on October 2, wearing civilian clothes but either white gloves or white bandages on their hands so that the military could identify them. They shot at the crowd from the Chihuahua Building and rounded people up who were hiding in the same and other buildings near the *Plaza*. They helped to either apprehend or kill people who sought refuge.

[19] Jacqueline E. Bixler, "Re-membering the Past: Memory-Theatre and Tlatelolco," Latin American Research Review 37, no. 2 (2002): 119-135, here 124.

[20] Bixler, "Re-membering the Past," 128.

This new wave of the Tlatelolco movement did not just establish a link between the earthquake and the student massacre; it also connected them to Mexican history dating back to pre-Columbian and colonial times. Tlatelolco, in particular the *Plaza de Tres Culturas*, reminded artists of the location's notorious bloody past and thus they applied it to convey the relevance of *Tlatelolco '68* as part of a cycle of murder and injustice dating back centuries. A market and center of wealth during the Aztec Empire, *Tlatelolco* means "the place of the heap of sand" in Nahuatl.[21] The *Plaza de Tres Culturas* derives its name from the three cultures represented at this site: Aztec ruins (pre-colonial/Indigenous), the Cathedral of Saint James/*Catedral de Santiago* (colonial/Spanish), and residential buildings (post-Revolutionary/Mexican). Each period reminds one of blood and sacrifice. The Aztecs had performed sacrificial rituals to appease the gods, and their ruler Cuauhtémoc had surrendered to the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés at Tlatelolco, which then paved the way for the genocide of the Indigenous by the Spanish.[22] Thus, the massacre of 1968 now reminded Mexicans that the spilling of blood was part of their country's foundation. To convey how the past affected the present, the site became the embodiment of Mexican blood sacrifice that had always involved victims and oppressors.

Periods of blood and sacrifice throughout Mexican history also began to infuse *Tlatelolco '68* visual art. In 1989, the Canadian-Mexican artist Arnold Belkin (1930-1992) painted a mural titled *Tlatelolco, lugar del sacrificio* ("Tlatelolco, the place of sacrifice"). The mural portrays the 1968 massacre with elements of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and the 1985 earthquake. Crumbled buildings appear on the right side. In the center, the military and student movement collide on a platform that resembles the top of an Aztec pyramid. Belkin also compares the student movement to indigenous people and the military to the Spanish conquistadors. The army wear helmets that resemble those worn by the Spaniards in 1521. One of the students lays dead with his torso slit open, and two Aztec figures on the far left side kneel near him and treat him as an offering as they look to the heavens.[23] To officially include the student massacre in the pantheon of Mexican blood sacrifices, a memorial stele was erected in 1993 at the *Plaza* next to the *Catedral de Santiago*. The surface features the names of some of the people who had lost their lives on October 2, 1968. Toward the bottom, there

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[21] David Conde, "October 1968 Ushered in a New Mexican Political and Literary Generation," *La Voz Bilingüe* 24, no. 40 (1998): 6; López Levi and Toscana Aparicio, "Vulnerabilidad en Tlatelolco," 140. Nahuatl was the language of the Aztecs. See Carpenter, "'Y El Olor De la Sangre'," 459.

[22] Conde, "October 1968," 6. The last Aztec ruler, Cuauhtémoc II, surrendered to the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortez in 1521, thus bringing an end to the Aztec Empire and transforming the region into a colony for Spain. Many indigenous groups perished due to disease or were killed by the Spaniards.

[23] Arnold Belkin (1930-1992), *Tlatelolco, lugar del sacrificio*, 1989, mural, Toluca (Mexico), Centro Cultural Mexiquense (CCM), Biblioteca Pública Central, vestibule.

is an excerpt from a poem by the Mexican author Rosario Castellanos Figueroa (1925-1974), the full-length version of which concludes with the verse, "Recuerdo, recordemos. Hasta que la justicia se siente entre nosotros." ("I remember, we remember. Until justice feels among us."[24] The Tlatelolco movement reached a wider range of supporters and members of Mexican society to recognize the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968 as a scar with regard to Mexican history and national identity.

III. Tlatelolco '68: Beyond the Plaza de Tres Culturas

Despite the progress that the Tlatelolco pop culture had made to present the massacre of 1968 as a national outcry, the nation as a unified community still could not relate or pay attention to the historical tragedy, let alone seek justice for its victims. Film, theater, art pieces, and literature had removed the massacre from an isolated time period irrelevant to the Mexican identity. Nevertheless, *Tlatelolco '68* remained a collective memory mostly in Mexico City, the location that had experienced the actual bloodbath. Survivors and sympathizers were facing two obstacles: how to make Tlatelolco relate to contemporary issues, and how to make those issues speak to all Mexicans. Whether one lived in Mexico City, Jalisco, Chiapas, Chihuahua, or Veracruz, art and literature had to show how the massacre, even though it had taken place decades earlier and in one particular region, was still affecting the Mexican identity.

Filmmakers transformed the image of Tlatelolco with the element of space. Similar to how preceding artists had projected the massacre from a certain point in time into other periods in Mexican history, a particular director now took Tlatelolco to various parts of the country. In 2008, cinematographer Ximena Labra made a documentary, using replicas of the memorial stele at the *Plaza de Tres Culturas*. The idea had come to her when she had seen the original stele neglected and portions of it deteriorated. Thus, she determined to bring the memory of the Tlatelolco Massacre literally out of the Tlatelolco region. After making the replicas, Ximena placed them in several places in Mexico City, including U.N.A.M., the *Monumento de la Revolucion* ("Monument of the Revolution"), and the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* cultural center.[25] She then filmed the locations where she had placed the replicas, including the way people reacted or treated them, hoping to create a collective, daily, and ubiquitous memory of the Tlatelolco Massacre. Her film only lasts fifteen minutes, but it makes a strong statement on the importance of remembering Tlatelolco. Labra incorporates Richard Strauss's music, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to convey a long-lost artifact in

[24] Arnulfo Aquino Casas, *Memorial a las Victimas del Masacre Estudiantil*, stone stele, Mexico City (Mexico).

[25] Christian Wehr, "La matanza de Tlatelolco en la memoria pública: Carlos Mendoza y Ximena Labra," *A Contra corriente: Una revista de historia social y literatura de América Latina/A Journal on Social History and Literature in Latin America* 12, no. 1 (2014): 229-242, here 235.

need of recognition.[26] Her message is clear: the memory of *Tlatelolco '68* is in danger of extinction. Interpreting the tragedy as a mere repetition of bloodshed in Mexico fails to bring national attention to its full potential. Activists and artists need new methods of utilizing space to make *Tlatelolco '68* a household name across the country. Ximena Labra's work marks a new phase of Tlatelolco art that strives to include people from all over Mexico.

Artists and intellectuals in the new millennium continued to present their work as a cry for justice to the nation well beyond the location of the 1968 massacre. Their predecessors had established the *Tlatelolco '68* movement in response to one of the many dark incidents in Mexican history—the sacrifice of the innocent by the oppressors—to keep the memory alive in hopes of one day bringing justice to the victims. Past and present collided to achieve that, but the generation after the initial *Tlatelolco '68* artists strove to implant the message in a fashion similar to Ximena Labra's documentary, namely by experimenting with space. More fictional interpretations of the massacre were created in the early twenty-first century—more art pieces, songs, and films like director Carlos Bolado's 2013 feature *Tlatelolco, Verano del '68* ("Tlatelolco, Summer of '68").[27] The memory prevailed, at least among the creative, intellectual, and activist side of the Mexican population. On the other hand, the rest of the population still needed to come together in large numbers and demonstrate that the memory of *Tlatelolco '68* extended beyond the middle-class youth, beyond Mexican time, and beyond Mexican space—that it affected anyone with a Mexican identity.

The most recent prominent expression of the *Tlatelolco '68* movement occurred in 2018, the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre. After decades of manifesting the memory of Tlatelolco in literature, film, theatrical performances, and images, it seems that the artistic and literary movement was finally achieving its long-awaited goal and including the entire nation. Mexican citizens were honoring the site of the massacre. At the *Plaza de Tres Culturas*, poems, speeches, and even Indigenous dances brought communities together, similarly to the 1985 artistic event after the great earthquake. Yet the anniversary also reached places outside of Tlatelolco. In Mexico City, marches began from Tlatelolco and other locations and made their way across the city, all ending at the *Plaza de la Constitución* ("Square of the Constitution"), also known as the *Zócalo*."[28] Other marches followed elsewhere, like in the state of Quintana Roo in

[26] Wehr, "Matanza de Tlatelolco," 238.

[27] Carolina Rivera, Luis Felipe Ybarra, and Carlos Bolado, *Tlatelolco, Verano del '68*, DVD, directed by Carlos Bolado (Mexico City: Eficine Productions, 2013).

[28] Julio Hernández López, "2-0: Lo oficial y lo popular/Ceremonias y discursos/Demanda de cambios reales/Barros Sierra, en Lugar de GDO," *La Jornada Maya* (October 3, 2018): 16, Hernández López, 2-0: Lo oficial y lo popular, article, accessed April 29, 2019. The *Plaza de la Constitución* in Mexico City features several governmental buildings, such as the National Palace and other federal buildings, a flagpole and a very large Mexican flag in the center of the open space. The *Plaza* serves as a gathering place for national ceremonies as well as protests.

the Yucatán Peninsula and in Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico. Participants were not just college students or young people, but Mexicans from all walks of life. Individual testimonies spoke of the massacre in a national, not class-related tone. The former chancellor of U.N.A.M. recalled the student movement as another [Mexican] revolution of "love, happiness, [and] celebration" that spoke to all [national] social movements for justice and democracy."[29] The 1968 bloodbath at the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* had begun the march toward democracy for all citizens. According to people in 2018, the movement just happened to have started with college students from the central region.

The Mexican population not only kept the memory alive but also understood the key players: the heroes/martyrs and the antagonists/oppressors of the story. The masses associated the student movement with the heart of the country and the Díaz Ordaz administration with an unwanted tumor, thus eliminating emblems celebrating the former president and other personnel working under his leadership. A Díaz Ordaz iconoclasm swept the nation. Local residents and activists in states like Baja California and Chihuahua advocated to rename monuments, streets, and other public spaces that had originally been named to honor Díaz Ordaz.[30] Even cities miles away from the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* refused to associate themselves with a leader who had performed his duties not in the nation's best interest, but his own. The nation cleansed itself from the negative elements of the massacre, no longer celebrating the political leadership of the time but condemning President Díaz Ordaz as an oppressive force outside of the Mexican identity, even if that same entity had once held the title of president of the nation. The movement and memory of *Tlatelolco '68* did not achieve justice, for example in the form of legal action against those involved who were still alive in 2018, such as Díaz Ordaz's Secretary of the Interior, Luis Echeverria. Nevertheless, the movement has won the hearts of the nation entirely through art and literature, and has embedded Tlatelolco as a national icon in Mexican popular culture.

Conclusion

Over the past fifty years, artistic representations of the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre have gone through many stages and assimilations. Images and literature evolved to extend to Mexicans from all walks of life and regardless of their places of residence to keep the memory alive and bring the political perpetrators to justice. Since the very beginning, images served as the foundation of the artistic *Tlatelolco '68* movement. Because national news channels and printed press were siding with the government, whether voluntarily or not, the student movement and its sympathizers took matters into their own hands. The

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[29] Armando G. Tejeda, "Con el movimiento estudiantil nació una revolución que se quedó para siempre," *La Jornada* (October 3, 2018): 8, Tejeda, Con el movimiento estudiantil nació una revolución, article, accessed April 29, 2019.

[30] Hernández López, "2-0: Lo oficial y lo popular."

early stages of the movement established the foundation for Tlatelolco art. Cartoons, poems, and groundbreaking publications like Elena Poniatowska's *La Noche de Tlatelolco* revealed the true side of the Mexican government and the innocence of the student movement.

The great earthquake of 1985 revived the memory, showing once again how the government failed to protect its citizens in times of distress. Film and theatrical performances, utilizing the technique of movement in time, informed viewers that the Tlatelolco Massacre reflected a Mexican history of bloodshed. Finally, in the last decade, demonstrations and films striving to bring awareness of *Tlatelolco '68* beyond the *Plaza de Tres Culturas* have successfully established the event as an injustice for all Mexicans. Consequently, Mexicans have changed their impression of the incident from a movement exclusive to the young and privileged middle class, via the notion of yet another cycle in the country's history of blood and massacre, to the collective understanding that Tlatelolco was a national injustice that affects all Mexicans and that, should such injustice continue, the nation's democracy would fall short and the oppressing regime's threat to the masses prevail. As a result, the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968 has found its permanent place in the Mexican psyche and artistic expression.

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