

“Domestic Landscapes at War: Women Transforming Space During the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1917”

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the participation of women in the Mexican Revolution through their practices of transforming spaces. Started in 1910 and extending over a decade, the revolution drastically reshaped urban and rural areas of Mexico. My study focuses on women from different classes who took part in the struggle through diverse reconstructions of domesticity, and argues that they appropriated the intersections of war and home spaces to inscribe therein their revolutionary traces.

Soldaderas, the first group of subjects I study, were working-class women who followed troops and who brought the home to the space of war, in order to care for the daily necessities of cooking, laundry, and healthcare of soldiers from federal and rebel armies. Making use of the household objects they carried, these camp followers created temporary homes. In their revolutionary actions, they traversed geographies occupied by the men “leading” the war and projected onto male interests, creating spaces of discontinuity in physical, functional, and social architectures considered hitherto bounded and self-contained.

In the final part of the dissertation, I examine the spatialities of middle- and upper-class women, my second group of study. Apparently more fixed in cities and villages, they carried out their revolutionary efforts inside and across architectures that, on the surface, appeared to be disconnected from the armed struggle. In the view of the society around them, these women’s presences feminised domestic, public, work, and institutional buildings. Spaces and women gave one another an appearance of neutrality. Women drew from this shared meaning to secretly transform the functions of spaces and selves.

This work draws from the intersection of gender studies, architectural history, and military history. It uses a feminist perspective to look at architecture through the lens of war and to look at war through the lens of architecture. Its scholarly contribution is the use of architectural analysis as a framework to understand the agencies of gendered subjects in space during war. As it examines spatial practices throughout a conflict, my research reveals women’s engagement in war as imprinted onto the built environment—in this case, “moments” of this built environment or ephemeral architectures.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse porte sur la participation des femmes dans la Révolution Mexicaine à travers l'étude de leurs pratiques de transformation spatiale. Commencée en 1910 et s'étendant sur plus d'une décennie, la révolution a remanié les territoires urbains et ruraux du Mexique. Cette recherche s'intéresse aux femmes de différentes classes sociales qui ont participé à la lutte au travers de diverses reconstructions de la domesticité, et soutient qu'elles se sont approprié des espaces à l'intersection du foyer et de la guerre pour y inscrire leurs traces révolutionnaires.

Soldaderas, le premier groupe au centre de ma recherche, est constitué de femmes de classe ouvrière qui voyageaient avec les troupes et qui transportaient le foyer dans les espaces de la guerre pour s'occuper des nécessités de nourriture, lavage et soins de santé des soldats des armées fédérales et rebelles. Dans leurs voyages, elles emportaient des objets du foyer pour créer une domesticité mobile. Dans leurs actions révolutionnaires, ces femmes ont traversé des sites occupés par des hommes dirigeant la guerre, tout en créant des espaces de discontinuité dans des architectures physiques, fonctionnelles et sociales considérées cernées et contenues auparavant.

Dans la partie finale de la thèse, j'examine les espaces des femmes de classe moyenne et élevée, qui font partie de mon deuxième groupe d'étude. Apparemment plus fixées dans des villes et villages, elles ont conduit leurs efforts révolutionnaires dans et à travers d'architectures qui, au premier abord, semblaient séparées de la lutte armée. Aux yeux de la société qui les entourait, la présence de ces femmes féminisait les bâtiments domestiques, publics, institutionnels et de travail. Les espaces et les femmes accordaient l'un à l'autre une apparence de neutralité. Les femmes ont profité de ces présuppositions partagées pour recréer en secret les fonctions des espaces et leurs sujets.

Cette recherche se positionne à l'intersection des études de genre, l'histoire de l'architecture et l'histoire militaire. Par le biais d'une perspective féministe, elle observe l'architecture à travers le prisme de la guerre et la guerre à travers le prisme de l'architecture. Sa contribution scientifique porte sur l'utilisation de l'analyse architecturale pour comprendre les agentivités des sujets genrés dans les espaces de guerre. Explorant des pratiques spatiales pendant une révolution, mon travail révèle comment la participation des femmes dans un conflit armé a été imprimée sur le milieu bâti—précisément, sur des « moments » de ce milieu bâti ou des architectures éphémères.

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INTRODUCTION

1913 (during the Mexican Revolution), late afternoon: A military train prepares for departure. Its powerful locomotive waits for the last members of the contingent to board. Artillery and freight cars follow the heavy machine. In front of the passenger carriages, three stock cars keep their long sliding doors open for the last horses to be taken in. A solid iron frame supports the planks that envelop the boxes. One box is half empty. The openings between the pieces of wood allow the noise to enter. The walls, covered in dirt, work as strong containers of the beasts. All parts of the structure are connected; every single plank serves a purpose... all but one, probably found loose and now inserted horizontally into a corner. The hard surfaces of the inside of the car are interrupted by what is on the plank: wrapped inside rags, a child sleeps; a soft skin resting against walls meant to resist the kick of a horse. Adjacent is the mother, walling in the baby with her body. The authors of accounts of the civil war often erase or have trouble making sense of these subjects. These subjects are discontinuities in a landscape that traditional narratives trace through the actions, movement, and achievement of men: a landscape of war with gender boundaries firmly conceived to leave outside all traces of otherness.¹

This dissertation explores the participation of women in the Mexican Revolution through their practices of transforming spaces. This civil war was started in 1910 to overthrow President Porfirio Díaz, whose dictatorship had lasted more than thirty years.² Extending over a decade, the revolution drastically reshaped urban and rural areas of the country. My study focuses on women from different classes who took part in the struggle

¹ I describe this setting following Francisco Ruiz Moreno's testimony, interview by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/66, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

² Alan Knight, *La Revolución Mexicana: del Porfiriato al nuevo régimen consitucional* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 23.

through diverse reconstructions of domesticity, and argues that they appropriated the intersections of war and home spaces to inscribe therein their revolutionary traces.

Soldaderas, the first group of subjects I study, were working-class women³ who followed troops and who brought the home to the space of war, in order to care for the daily necessities of cooking, laundry, and healthcare of soldiers from federal and rebel armies. Making use of the household objects they carried, these camp followers created temporary homes in the battlefield. Women gave form to mobile domesticities through fluid spatial practices, reshaping the limits between the geographies of home and war.

In the final part of the dissertation, I examine the spatialities of middle- and upper-class women, my second group of study. Apparently more fixed in cities and villages, they carried out their revolutionary efforts inside and across architectures that, on the surface, appeared to be disconnected from the armed struggle. In the view of the society around them, these women's presences feminised domestic, public, work, and institutional buildings.⁴ Such places were believed by male war actors to only accommodate socially-

³ As I elaborate later on, in the case of women who had been independent peasants prior to the revolution, I situate my use of the term "working class" in the labour performed during the war. As they joined the struggle, they became part of a class that worked under a (military) authority. The definitions of "working class" and "middle class" that inform this dissertation follow Herman Strasser's "Stratum and Class Formation: Principles of a Theory of Social Inequality," which differentiates stratum from class by pointing to the latter as constituted out of asymmetric exchange relations within ownership of property (whereas stratum results instead from repetitive socialisation processes in institutional and social spaces shared by groups from similar lifestyles and strata). Herman Strasser, "Stratum and Class Formation: Principles of a Theory of Social Inequality," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 103–20. In the case of the Mexican Revolution, I consider it important to keep the "class" terminology because, even if the women I study shared a rebel agenda, a central aspect of this struggle was the antagonism of their class groups' interests.

⁴ Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas observe that many periodicals of the early twentieth century, published for a middle and upper-class audience, advanced the family home as the site of female achievement. The texts described women and homes as mutually shaping, as embedding one another with virtues and values. Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas, "La educación de la mujer mexicana en la prensa femenina durante el Porfiriato," *Revista historia de la educación latinoamericana* 17, no. 24 (January 2015): 217–42. I examine more examples in the subsequent chapters.

sanctioned feminine activities. This, in turn, rendered the image of the subjects inhabiting these sites as passive, neutral, and distanced from the armed struggle.⁵ Spaces and women gave one another an appearance of neutrality. Women drew from this shared meaning to secretly transform the connotations of gendered spaces and selves: for instance, they turned a family dwelling into a site of political dissent, or they transformed their supposedly passive bodies into agents carrying out rebel operations through space.

Predominantly, the revolutionary involvement of the two groups of women I study took place by means of their appropriation of roles and constraints that early twentieth-century patriarchy had imposed on them. These roles and constraints took form, for example, in the supposed belonging of women in domestic spheres and unbelonging in war spheres. If female subjects were not allowed to move into men's spaces of battle, they would *repeat* the gender performance expected of them from their marginal positions. Every repetition entailed consciously altering their feminine spatialities.⁶ I argue that women's inhabitation of and movement between architectures was a spatial reshaping and, as such, was an act of building.

Soldaderas reconfigured ephemeral sites, most visibly as un-walled homes in trains, camps, pathways, and even battlegrounds. A number of upper-class women altered the purposes of architectures meant to "contain" them. In their revolutionary actions, both classes of women traversed sites occupied by the war's male actors and projected onto male interests, creating spaces of discontinuity in physical, functional, and social architectures

⁵ This distancing was clearly a patriarchal ideal but, just like the separate spheres ideology behind it, it took a different spatial form in real life, showing porous boundaries between feminised (home) and masculinised (war/public) spaces.

⁶ On repetition as a subversive performance of gender, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41, 177-80.

considered hitherto bounded and self-contained. This short-lived, improvised reshaping of space allowed women to subtly reposition themselves across gender and social landscapes.

Scholars interested in women's participation in the Mexican Revolution often make use of textual and visual narratives in which female presences remain marginal to the "great" events considered to have shaped the civil war. *Soldaderas* are relegated to the space between the "passive" figure of the self-abnegating follower and the myths and icons built around a woman who fights.⁷

This dissertation engages architectural frameworks to study further the roles of revolutionary women. Its contribution is the use of spatial analysis to better understand how women made use of their positioning "inside" homes, to rewrite their own agencies as active social subjects in the revolution. Borrowing from Doreen Massey, Elizabeth Grosz, and Susana Torre, my research considers space and architecture as processes rather than as fixed containers of objects and relations. More specifically, the way I observe spatial transformations is influenced by Susana Torre's idea of a public realm that is not merely represented by buildings and spaces, "but rather is summoned into existence by social actions." Equally important is Elizabeth Grosz's notion of "architecture as a facilitator of flows."⁸

⁷ Although I do not necessarily agree with Daniel Avechuco Cabrera's assertion that the figure of the *soldadera* is to blame for obscuring the role of women soldiers, I suggest looking at his explanation of the divide in his article Daniel Avechuco Cabrera, "The Adventures of Lilith in the Mexican Revolution: Cultural Representations of the Soldier Woman (1911-1915)," *Mitologías Hoy: Revista de Pensamiento, Crítica y Estudios Literarios Latinoamericanos*, 18 (December 2018): 127-50.

⁸ See Doreen Massey, "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* (London: Routledge, 1993), 66-7; Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 165; Susana Torre, "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo," in *The Sex of Architecture*, ed. Patricia Conway, Leslie Weisman, and Diana Agrest (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 141. Likewise, Kim Dovey proposes an understanding of architecture beyond a built form whose "fundamental inertia ... 'fixes' and 'stabilizes' the world." Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 1999), xii.

At the centre of my argument is women's rewriting of hegemonic gendered spatial constructs both within and beyond the battlefield, as they displaced their "ideal" space in the domestic realm. This ephemeral rewriting, I contend, is architectural, and occurred through female movement at the intersection of the war front and the home.

The Mexican Revolution started on 20 November 1910 to overthrow President and Dictator Porfirio Díaz. During his three decades of power, a period known in Mexico as the *Porfiriato* (Porfirian times), the political class, the Catholic Church, aristocrats, foreign investors, and landowners held great power in a society where the poor majority lived under conditions akin to slavery. Dispossession of peasant lands and the misery of the general population, combined with discontent with Díaz's fake democracy, initiated an armed mobilisation.⁹ Before his final re-election, Porfirio Díaz had the leading candidate Francisco I. Madero arrested in order to claim his own victory. After escaping prison, Madero proclaimed in 1910 the Plan de San Luis, which called on the Mexican people for insurrection and declared Díaz's presidency illegitimate. The ensuing war lasted a decade. A new constitution was promulgated and signed by the triumphant carrancista army—led by General Venustiano Carranza. During this time, the revolution switched from a fairly unified effort to depose Porfirio Díaz to a series of power struggles among factions. Historian Susie S. Porter offers two ways of looking at the revolution:

From one perspective, the Revolution was a civil war, a political battle, and a violent adjustment in the way different sectors of society negotiated conflict and access to resources. From another perspective, revolutionary Mexico was an era of socioeconomic, political, and cultural change

⁹ See Knight, 23-250. See also Jesús Silva-Herzog, *Breve historia de la Revolución Mexicana* (México D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960/2011).

associated with larger historical processes of industrialization, migration, urbanization, expansion of the educational system, and shifts in commercial culture.¹⁰

As Porter notes, a series of simultaneous processes drastically reshaped the Mexican territory, which makes it difficult to trace an exact time frame of the revolution—especially its conclusion. Historians locate the end of the struggle between 1917, the year of the constitution that rules Mexico to date, and 1920, when the generalised violence wound down.¹¹ The process of institutionalising the revolutionary principles of land reform, health, and education extended well into the 1930s.¹² The period at the centre of my research concludes in 1917, when the work of camp followers disappeared as some armies banned them in 1915 and the Mexican military officially ousted them in 1916.¹³

Soldaderas played a vital role in the war by providing food, carrying weapons, advancing to prepare camp, giving comfort and healthcare to soldiers, and often fighting alongside the men they accompanied.¹⁴ They left their own homes and took on the task of creating a mobile domesticity that no longer relied on the walls of a building. In this process, the home of armies was de-materialised, and remained a moving, practised, ephemeral architecture.

¹⁰ Susie Porter, “Working Women in the Mexican Revolution,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, ed. William H Beezley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

¹¹ Walter César Camargo, “La construcción de la historiografía de la Revolución Mexicana: críticas y nuevas perspectivas,” *Algarrobo-MEL* 2, no. 2 (2013): 3.

¹² Porter, “Working Women in the Mexican Revolution,” 7-18.

¹³ Porter, “Working Women in the Mexican Revolution,” 4. Martha Eva Rocha, “Feminismo y Revolución,” in *Un fantasma recorre el siglo. Luchas feministas en México 1910 – 2010*, eds. Gisela Espinosa Damián, Ana Lau Jaiven (México D.F.: UAM/Itaca/ Conacyt, 2010), 37.

¹⁴ Andrés Reséndez Fuentes argues for the differentiation between camp-followers and women fighters as, he claims, women had diverse reasons to partake in the revolutionary fight. Elizabeth Salas, however, points to the porosity of both identities in the actions of *soldaderas*. Andrés Reséndez Fuentes, “Battleground Women: *Soldaderas* and Female Soldiers in the Mexican Revolution 1,” *The Americas* 51, no. 4 (1995): 525-53. Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican military: myth and history* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 44.

The other women I observe, mostly from the middle and upper classes, contributed to the fight from the “fixed” spaces where they supposedly belonged—like domestic and (feminised) work architectures in cities and villages. Moving through space and making unexpected use of its built forms, they changed its meanings. If visualised in their gendered architectures, women who did not follow armies seemed unrelated to the revolutionary fight. Upon first reading, their spaces hardly intersected those of the war, but these subjects took advantage of their marginal position to engage in the struggle in unsuspected ways. They drew upon the apparent stasis of their gendered buildings to write new spatial meanings only known to them. They secretly turned the homes they were supposed to care for, as well as their feminised labour and social spaces, into sites of political exchange and conspiracy. Likewise, they navigated public spaces pretending to run errands associated with a “passive” femininity, while carrying out concealed revolutionary activity.¹⁵

Class and race shaped the spaces from which Mexican women participated in the revolutionary war. Middle- and upper-class women inscribed their participation in professional spheres or in domestic settings profoundly connected to intellectual circles, whereas working-class women did so either in proletarian labour spaces, or in their permanent or travelling homes. Living in different spatial and social conditions, women from distinct classes were closely associated with domestic space, but the discourses upholding this association sanctioned varying degrees in which private and public realms

¹⁵ See for instance, Martha Eva Rocha, “Guadalupe Narváez Bautista (1881-1956): De revolucionaria a veterana,” in *De espacios domésticos y mundos públicos. El siglo de las mujeres en México*, ed. Anna Ribera Carbó et al. (México D.F.: INAH-DEH, 2010), 15-46. I analyse this use of space by other women in the final chapter.

could combine¹⁶—which does not necessarily mean that women always followed these spatial scripts. The most salient example of how gender discourse varied in its degree of rigour is the admission of working-class, mestiza or indigenous-mestiza women in agricultural, industrial, and service work spaces (since the nineteenth century). Ideologically, this admission inscribed their lives in a more public realm, as opposed to the more private, familial roles expected from privileged women.¹⁷

Examples in the following chapters show that the participation of affluent women in the struggle often received praise, as indicated in newspaper pieces of the time.¹⁸ This attitude contrasts with the contempt seen in descriptions of *soldaderas*, frequently described as cumbersome and unruly.¹⁹ Relatedly, a single page of the newspaper *The Mexican Herald* in 1912 illustrates these contradictory views on female agency as it celebrates the feminist struggle of the British suffragettes while, a few paragraphs apart, it scorns the behaviour of *soldaderas*.²⁰ A telling indication of the gendered discourses of the time, this

¹⁶ Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled* (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999), 47-8. See also Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 85-91.

¹⁷ Julia Tuñón provides a broad description of the lives of women in Porfirian and revolutionary society, but her portrait of gendered roles, in spite of a stated intent to include all social strata, more accurately fits the case of upper-class and educated individuals. This makes some sense if we consider that the gender discourse dictating the lives of women of all classes took shape with privileged subjects in mind, but Tuñón's texts do not adequately study the specific, lived conditions of a more modest population. See Julia Tuñón, "Mexican Women in the Nineteenth Century: Idols of Bronze or Inspiration of the Home?", "Peace in Porfirian Times: In the Maelstrom of "Progress," and "From Revolution to Stability," in her *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled* (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999). Susie Porter provides a condensed portrait of the situation of working-class women in her mentioned essay "Working Women in the Mexican Revolution," 2. For more detailed analysis, see her book Susie Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003); See also Teresa Rendón Gan, *Trabajo de hombres y trabajo de mujeres en el México del siglo XX* (México D. F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003); and Sonia Hernández, *Working Women in the Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2014).

¹⁸ See, for example, "Mexican Girls in Heroic Roles," *The Mexican Herald* (Mexico City, Mexico), Aug. 5, 1912: 6.

¹⁹ See "Cinematógrafo policial," *La Opinión* (Los Angeles, CA), July 22, 1911: 25.

²⁰ *Mexican Herald* (Mexico City, Mexico), March 28, 1912: 1.

publication shows how race and class influenced understandings of women engaging in war.

The different spaces from which the subjects of my study could access revolutionary participation come forth in the sections of this thesis, but explicit discussions of the intersection of class and race with gender appear in Chapters One and Five. In Chapter One I discuss how race and gender intersected in pre-revolutionary imagery, especially in the different treatment given to white Mexican women—who were celebrated as a class—and to mestiza and indigenous women—who were exposed as individuals in the othering practices of photographic collections. Hence, we get to see the different ways through which these subjects embodied domesticity in the eyes of patriarchal discourses. Chapter Five elaborates on the intersection between class and gender as it questions the privileging of archival materials of upper- and middle-class women over those of the working-class women who were their allies (it also questions the assumption that the former convinced the latter to join the struggle). This section suggests the need for future research into how this class divide has layered historical evidence of the roles of underprivileged subjects under the bulk of information focused on more visible figures.

Field of study, Research Questions and Contribution

This work draws from gender studies, architectural history, and military history. Its scholarly contribution (based on my position as an architectural historian) is the use of architectural analysis as a framework to understand the agencies of gendered subjects in space during war. Recent efforts of feminist academics have unearthed the actions of

women in architecture and military histories,²¹ but the grand narratives of these two fields continue to neglect female achievements. My research uses a feminist perspective to look at architecture through the lens of war and to look at war through the lens of architecture. To better understand women's changing roles during an armed conflict, it assesses their spatial practices.

Framing this project of strengthening the dialogues between feminist architectural and military historians is an invitation for the growing body of research on women during

²¹ Only to name a few in architecture: Hilde Heynen, "Modernity and domesticity: tensions and contradictions," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 1–29; Beatriz Colomina ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992); Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden, eds., *Gender, Space, Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000); Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Abrams, 1998); Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, 'Designing Women': *Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Tania Martin, "Housing the Grey Nuns: Power, Religion, and Women in Fin-de-Siècle Montréal," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 7 (1997): 212–29; Cynthia Hammond, *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765–1965* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012); Helen Hills, *Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth Century Neapolitan Convents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jessica Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco 1890–1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Rebecca Ginsburg, *At Home with Apartheid: The hidden landscapes of domestic service in Johannesburg* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2011); Despina Stratigakos, *A Women's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, "Domesticity in Emergency: Infrastructures of Solidarity and Intimacy" (paper presented at *Gender and Infrastructure: Intersections between Postsocialist and Postcolonial Geographies Conference*, The Bartlett School of Architecture – London, 2021).

Military history: Billie Melman, ed., *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870–1930* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War: The British Experience* (London, 1981); Margaret Darrow, "French Volunteer Nurses and the Myth of War Experience in World War I," *The American Historical Review* 101, no.1 (February 1, 1996): 80–106; Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: Angela Wollacott, On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley, 1994); Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: berg, 2002); Hagemann et al., eds., *Gender, War and Politics. Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775–1830* (New York: Springer, 2010); Mary Ann Tétreault ed., *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett eds., *Women, War, and Revolution* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980); Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 1998); Norma Chinchilla, "Mobilizing Women: Revolution in the Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 4, no.4 (October 1977): 83–102; Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story* (California: University of California Press, 1996); Margaret Higonnet, ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (London: Yale University Press, 1987); Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Françoise Thébaud, "Penser les guerres du XXe siècle à partir des femmes et du genre. Quarante ans d'historiographie," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, no 39 (June 1, 2014): 157–82.

the Mexican Revolution to include architectural analysis: because of space's fundamental function in shaping the agencies of men and women across the moving geographies of the fight. Often but not exclusively in the case of the Mexican Revolution, the narratives acknowledge the physical environment as little more than a backdrop, only a "witness" but hardly crucial in shaping the social processes of an armed conflict.²² The photographs of women creating domestic settings on trains, widely circulated in popular media and publications from the Fototeca INAH Archive, have not been examined through questions such as: Which conditions allowed and then emerged from women's transformation of the existing environment (walls, rooftops, and tracks)? What do the reconfigured spaces tell us today about women's place in Mexican revolutionary society? What does reading these emerging architectures teach us about gender and space more broadly?

Historians frequently overlook the physical environment, yet they recognise that revolutions like those in Russia, China, Algeria, Cuba, and Mexico took their unique forms because of their specific locations. If geography/site is considered fundamental in drawing the differences between such conflicts, why do the characteristics of a place and, more importantly, the relations between space and its revolutionary subjects remain marginal to the study of its social dynamics? Examples of more specific questions are: What spatial form did the hierarchical relations between participants take throughout the revolution? What were the characteristics of the site(s) that facilitated or hampered the movement of

²² Traditional histories follow the course of events without much regard to their spatial settings. Examples from the Mexican Revolution are Knight, *La Revolución Mexicana*; Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). On other wars: Mark Philip Bradley, *Vietnam at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Edgar O'Ballance, *The Algerian Insurrection* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967); Hugh Thomas, *The Cuban Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), among others.

insurgents? Which of these characteristics did insurgents reshape to facilitate their own trajectories?

This dissertation thus aims at advancing architectural analysis as a means to understand social relations during war: especially gendered experience and active involvement, harder to read in historical accounts considering only power dynamics, events, and long-term processes as independent from place. As it examines spatial practices throughout a conflict, my research reveals women's engagement in war as imprinted onto the built environment—in this case, “moments” of this built environment or ephemeral architectures. The focus on these “moments” of the built environment constitutes another contribution of this dissertation, which proposes expanding the strict definitions of architecture. Studying the temporary shaping of landscapes, pathways, and makeshift (spatial) artifacts as “fragments” of an architecture defined along a timeline, my work advances a definition of domestic space as a series of spatial and material practices no longer contained in a single site and moment.

My analysis of spaces produced through every day (war) practices by marginalised subjects draws from the theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau.²³ They have informed revisionist histories that switch the focus of historical events and social relations from the highest spheres of power to groups usually overlooked and considered powerless in the shaping of such events—such as women and racialised communities. Henri Lefebvre emphasises practised and lived spaces, pointing to a certain openness and reinterpretation of the ideas imposed by the government, religion, capitalism, and society itself (all of

²³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Wiley, 1992); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

which are power apparatuses). De Certeau suggests looking at the day-to-day, seemingly innocuous practices of people at the margins which can expose the fragility of oppressive systems of power. Key to this research on women from the Mexican Revolution is his notion of *making-do* as a space of action that those who seem disempowered create for themselves within a supposedly controlling system. That site of action emerges at the “gap” between the order imposed on a subject (by a cultural apparatus such as consumerism) and her response to such order.²⁴ De Certeau elaborates on these quotidian practices:

Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the “weak” within the order established by the “strong,” an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter’s tricks, maneuverable, polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries.²⁵

In their study of subaltern practices, Lefebvre and de Certeau hardly mention gendered subjects,²⁶ but feminist research projects have enriched the theories of these French philosophers by exploring forms of subversion of patriarchal discourses in apparently unimportant daily actions. The works of Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba and Tovi Fenster, or Andrea Cornwall exemplify this line of inquiry.²⁷ Key contributions of these feminist investigations include more nuanced notions of the binaries oppressor and

²⁴ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 32.

²⁵ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 40.

²⁶ Doreen Massey has famously criticised the universality of the subjects and their spatial experience as framed by theorists who expand on Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*. See Doreen Massey, “Flexible Sexism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 1 (1991): 31-57. Specifically about Lefebvre, she points to the way in which he attributes gender qualities to spaces based on parallels with an “exerting” masculinity and a “subjected” femininity. See Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 182-3.

²⁷ Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba and Tovi Fenster, as well as Andrea Cornwall, have conducted research that builds on de Certeau’s notions to examine the ways in which women develop tactics to create spaces for themselves in restrictive urban and economic settings. Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba and Tovi Fenster, “Tactics and strategies of power: The construction of spaces of belonging for Palestinian women in Jaffa-Tel Aviv,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 35 (2012): 203-13; Andrea Cornwall, “Of Choice, Chance and Contingency: ‘Career Strategies’ and Tactics for Survival among Yoruba Women Traders,” *Social Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2007): 27-46.

oppressed which make visible the subtler forms of resistance that can partially adhere to power-sanctioned practices while fragmenting oppressive structures.²⁸

Among the many feminisms that inform scholarly work and worldviews in general, my perspective positions itself within postcolonial and transnational feminisms. Fundamental to my understanding of agency is the work of Chandra Mohanty, Jacqui Alexander, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, who influence my reading of the micro-dynamics of power that emerge in everyday practices of classed and racialised women.²⁹ Such micro-dynamics are often left out of narratives that follow prominent revolutionary figures (in struggles around the world) while relying, again, on an oppressor-oppressed model of analysis. Mohanty, Alexander, Russo, and Torres highlight the ways in which the daily praxis of subaltern subjects creates fissures in systems of social control, an understanding on which I base my analysis of ephemeral architectures. In the discipline of architecture, the research of Anooradha Siddiqi provides a key model of intersectional analysis of ways subaltern subjects empower themselves by creating ephemeral spaces or ephemeral spatial conditions. Her questioning of the definitions of appropriateness,³⁰

²⁸ See, for example, Mona Domosh, “Those ‘Gorgeous Incongruities’: Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century New York City,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 2 (1998): 209–26.

²⁹ See, for instance, Chandra Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism” and “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” in Chandra Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Cultural Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1997).

³⁰ As in subjects occupying their “appropriate” places. Anooradha Siddiqi, “The United Nations Refugee Agency and the Architecture of the Camps” (Ph.D. dissertation, NYU, 2014); Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, “Domesticity in Emergency: Infrastructures of Solidarity and Intimacy” (paper presented at Gender and Infrastructure: Intersections between Postsocialist and Postcolonial Geographies Conference, The Bartlett School of Architecture – London, 2021); part of her upcoming book *Architecture of Humanitarianism: The Dadaab Refugee Camps and Emergency Urbanism in History*; Anooradha Siddiqi, “Humanitarian Homemaker, Emergency Subject,” (paper presented at *Situating Domesticities in Architecture Conference*, National University of Singapore, 7-8 December 2017).

separation and (extra)territoriality guides my reading of the spaces of *soldaderas*, who often empowered themselves by a liminal or ambiguous state of belonging.

I have pursued the reading of a “spatial story”³¹ in Revolutionary Mexico. During my research, studying spaces that left little evidence in the built environment became a significant challenge. The travelling homes built by *soldaderas* were temporary and left no physical trace, and the actions of women civic leaders relied on secrecy and erasure to be successful. This directed my attention to the work on landscapes of mostly ephemeral, almost immaterial creation, such as Lisa Law’s study of sensory geographies of Filipina workers in Hong Kong, or Susana Torre’s research on the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.³²

This dissertation aligns with scholarship that pursues more complex understandings of women as social subjects, not mere passive individuals positioned in space. *Soldaderas* and upper-class women were not only positioned in domestic and gendered spaces, but they embraced this position to reshape the revolution’s landscapes. The work of Annmarie Adams, Katarina Bonnevier, Rebecca Ginsburg, and Anooradha Siddiqi, among many others, examines the agency of users of buildings and landscapes. They have laid the groundwork for studying architecture beyond still pervasive readings of design intentions materialised in buildings.³³ I situate my research in the growing literature of subjects that

³¹ Another key concept advanced by de Certeau is *spatial story*: the account of a space based on the events that shaped the narrator’s experience with that space (or a collective experience), as opposed to a more “scientific,” all-encompassing delineation of the site. In the case of a visual account, such as a map, it involves written descriptions, for instance. De Certeau calls this an *itinerary* and argues that itineraries preceded maps. De Certeau, “Spatial stories” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

³² Lisa Law, “Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong,” *Ecumene* 8, no. 3 (2001): 264–83; Susana Torre, “Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.”

³³ Annmarie Adams, “The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1995): 164–78; Katarina Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007); Rebecca Ginsburg, *At Home with Apartheid: The Hidden Landscapes of Domestic Service in Johannesburg* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Anooradha Siddiqi, “Humanitarian Homemaker, Emergency Subject” (paper presented at Situating Domesticities in Architecture Conference, National University of Singapore, December 7, 2017).

remain invisible in traditional architectural history. Such literature is exemplified by the work of Dell Upton, María González Pendás, Cynthia Hammond, Alice Friedman, Ernestina Osorio, Gülsüm Baydar, and Francisco Quiñones,³⁴ just to name a few authors.

My research engages in the project of shifting the architectural imaginary which, to borrow Hammond's phrasing, "remains tethered to ideas of genius and authorship that tend to exclude women."³⁵ The spatiality of a revolution that aimed to reshape the relations between the urban, the industrial, and the rural is still mostly an account of the movement and territorial occupation of men.³⁶ My study sheds light on the spatial role of female subjects, moving beyond views of women as supporting actors and investigating their significant contribution in the rapidly changing landscapes of early twentieth-century

³⁴ Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Places* 2, no. 2 (1984): 59–72; María González Pendás, "Fifty Cents a Foot, 14,500 Buckets: Concrete Numbers and the Illusory Shells of Mexican Economy," *Grey Room* 71 (Spring 2018): 14–39; Cynthia Hammond, *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765–1965*; Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House*; Ernestina Osorio, "Unequal Union: La Casa-Estudio de San Angel Inn, 1929–1932," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 215–33; Gülsüm Baydar, "Tenuous Boundaries: Women, Domesticity and Nationhood in 1930s Turkey," *The Journal of Architecture* 7, no. 3 (January 1, 2002): 229–44; Francisco Quiñones, "Mi casa es mi refugio: at the Service of Mexican Modernism in Casa Barragán," *The Avery Review* 48 (June 2020): 1–11.

³⁵ Cynthia Hammond. *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765–1965*, 14.

³⁶ Renowned historians like Alan Knight, Werner Tobler, Luis González y González, James Cockcroft, Friedrich Katz, and Lorenzo Meyer have analysed the revolutionary decade mostly through masculinist narratives. These historians, while doing revisionist work at length, reproduced the masculine-centred perspectives of the very first accounts, written by participants of the struggle like Jorge Vera Estañol, Manuel Bonilla Gaxiola, Manuel Calero y Sierra, Alfonso Taracena, and Francisco Bulnes. See Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*; Luis González y González, *Así Fue La Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo, 1985); James Cockcroft, *Intellectual precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900–1913* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies by the University of Texas Press, 1968); Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*; Jean Meyer, *La segunda muerte de la Revolución Mexicana*; Jorge Vera Estañol, *La Revolución Mexicana: Orígenes y resultados*; Manuel Bonilla, *Diez años de guerra: Sinopsis de la historia verdadera de la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Impr. Avendaño, 1992); Manuel Calero y Sierra, *Un decenio de política Mexicana* (Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 2009); Alfonso Taracena, *La verdadera Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1963); Francisco Bulnes, *El verdadero Díaz y la Revolución de México* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2008).

Mexico. It also aims to develop a critique of the way in which architectural and social history construe power and agency.

Feminist geographer Lorraine Dowler points to the gap that exists in criticism of the separate spheres theory³⁷ within geographies of conflict.³⁸ She proposes a framework that questions “the centrality of the public arena as it relates to the private, not as a form of subversion of public space, but to demonstrate a deeper and expanded notion of domestic space.” Her work guides my intention to deconstruct notions of war as taking place in public spaces set apart from a “passive” domesticity.³⁹

³⁷ Which proposes that men and women inhabit different spaces, based on an idea of a feminised private space and a masculinised public space. The 1970s work of Western historians and social scientists who explored the spaces of women revolved, for the most part, around the separate spheres ideology. It later became challenged as scholars proved the permeable boundaries between domestic and public spheres, and the presence and mobility of women between them, but also as feminists recognised that race and class were as important as gender in the study of female spaces. Linda Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9–39; Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1984); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); in the Mexican pre-revolutionary context, see Susie Porter, “And That It Is Custom Makes It Law: Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, Mexico City, 1880-1910,” *Social Science History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 111–48.

³⁸ Lorraine Dowler, “‘And They Think I’m Just a Nice Old Lady’ Women and War in Belfast, Northern Ireland,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 1998): 160.

³⁹ I have found that military history has developed through stages that generally resemble the separate spheres theory from social and architectural histories. As Joshua Goldstein’s extensive study *War and Gender* suggests, female participation has been constant in all wars, but the association of warfare with manliness has shaped academia’s gendered understandings of the institution of war. The separate spheres ideology of military history has even borrowed spatial terms from architecture: as historian Billie Melman claims, “[b]oth the material experience of the war and its representation are still largely seen in relation to a divide between a war zone (forbidden to women) and its rear, or the home front.” So, an initial period of feminist work has either identified the anti-woman narratives of war or studied the “equivalent” to the male fighter: nurses, clerks, etc. A second period has questioned the “separate spheres” along with the definitions of the war experience, arguing both that women occupied roles not recognised in traditional accounts, and that the war experience included occupation, dislocation, and persecution. Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?: The Militarisation of Women’s Lives* (London: South End Press, 1983): 7; Billie Melman, “Introduction,” in *Borderlines: Gender and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 4; Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story* (California: University of California Press, 1996), 15.

From the field of queer studies, the theories of performativity advanced by Judith Butler provide a framework for my exploration of the self-empowering forms whereby women connect their bodies to spaces—and how these bodily performances subvert gender spatial dictates. Katarina Bonnevier has critically informed my architectural reading of these processes. Sarah Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenologies* provides a roadmap for my analysis of bodies positioning themselves in landscapes of Otherness.⁴⁰ As architectural historians have enriched queer studies through analysis not only of the built environment but also of the body, my research expands these explorations of bodily performance in space to an understanding of performing bodies as part of architecture.

Recent works like Tabea A. Linhard’s *Fearless Women* and Christine Arce’s *Mexico’s Nobodies* combine literary and social analysis to probe the myths and symbols occupying the now silent spaces that *soldaderas* used to occupy. Thirty years earlier, Elizabeth Salas brought academic attention to military camp followers,⁴¹ and opened research avenues to the work of historians like Anna Macías, Delia Fernández, Andrés Reséndez Fuentes, Shirlene Soto, Susie Porter, and Martha Eva Rocha Islas.⁴² Ángeles

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Katarina Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2007); Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴¹ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican military: myth and history* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

⁴² Anna Macías, *Against all odds: the feminist movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Andrés Reséndez Fuentes, “Battleground Women: Soldaderas and Female Soldiers in the Mexican Revolution 1,” *The Americas* 51, no. 4 (1995): 525–53; Shirlene Soto, “Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910-1940,” *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (1990); Susie Porter, “And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,” Martha Eva Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía. Veteranas de la Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1939* (México D.F.: INEHRM / INAH, 2016); Martha Eva Rocha, “Nuestras propias voces. Las mujeres en la Revolución Mexicana,” *Historias (México, D.F.)*, no. 25 (1991): 111–23.

Mendieta Alatorre,⁴³ later followed by Ana Lau Jaiven and Carmen Ramos Escandón, started unearthing the contributions of educated and mostly middle/upper-class women in the revolution. Studies on women from this more privileged social stratum outweigh the number of studies on *soldaderas*, but both these groups of individuals have been more broadly examined in historical, social sciences, and literary fields. As it traces female itineraries and spatial agencies, this dissertation addresses the need to examine the struggle from an architectural perspective. Its five chapters reveal women's participation in historical events as producing space.

Methods

In her book, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (2002), architectural historian Jane Rendell proposes a theoretical model for architectural enquiry beyond traditional analyses of form, style, spatial typology, and physicality. She examines rambling as a way in which men explored Regency London's sites of pleasure, probing the production of urban space by placing architectures in *temporal* and *sequential* relations. Architecture is no longer studied as a series of discrete, static built objects, but as social interactions—flows of movement relating spaces.⁴⁴ By tracing her research as a route itself (moving through and examining the pathway connecting the buildings on which she focuses), Rendell construes space as a story, and

⁴³ Angeles Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1961); Ana Lau Jaiven, "Las mujeres en la revolución mexicana. Un punto de vista historiográfico," *Secuencia*, no. 33 (January 1, 1995): 85-102; Carmen Ramos Escandón, "La participación política de la mujer en México: del fusil al voto 1915-1955," *Boletín americanista*, no. 44 (1994): 155-69.

⁴⁴ Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space & Architecture in Regency London* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 136-8.

introduces a trajectorial dimension to architectural history. As my research follows women who participated in the revolution, it also moves away from enclosed, defined typologies and pursues ephemeral configurations of the built and the unbuilt. It focuses on mobile, fleeting spaces: temporary dwellings at camps and impermanent, non-sanctioned uses of buildings. The configuration of camps, the activities carried out to support armies, and the traversal of gendered architectures and identities are crucial to revealing the new meanings that women gave to a social and physical space designed to confine them in socially scripted roles.

I have written the following chapters as itineraries, and in my analysis have drawn from archival material, print media, published testimonies, and oral history. *Archivo Casasola*, managed today by the *Sistema Nacional de Fototecas* (a national photographic archive), is the richest collection of photographs from the revolution, and its catalogue provided most of the visual evidence for my study. From the *Archivo General de la Nación* (General Archive of the Nation) I collected other images, as well as personal and official documents, for example, correspondence from participants and government records. Spanish and English newspapers from the *Hemeroteca Nacional* (a national archive of periodicals), provided valuable material for contextualising war and gender discourses. My oral history material comes from a project with the same name, *Programa de Historia Oral*, (Oral History Project) from the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, which interviewed survivors of the struggle since 1959. I also accessed the *Veterans Archives* from the *Secretaría de Defensa Nacional* (Secretary of National Defence) to reconstruct the itineraries of activists for the last chapter. The *Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de México*

(Historical Archive of Mexico City) provided plans of domestic and institutional buildings, as well as a Mexico City map created shortly before my period of study.

The oral account of *soldadera* Josefina Bórquez has given shape to the book *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, by writer Elena Poniatowska.⁴⁵ Poniatowska interviewed Bórquez and renamed her Jesusa Palancares in the narrative. For analysing the text, Latin American literature scholar Jean Franco proposes addressing “the problem of the hierarchical alignment of writer and informant, writing and voice” by considering *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* a compositely-authored work.⁴⁶ Despite the limitations of the narrative because of Poniatowska’s role as a mediator (a heavier presence than that of interviewers in the *Programa de Historia Oral*), the book offers a key insight into the itineraries of a camp follower. As mentioned above, *soldaderas* were often unable to read; therefore, primary sources allowing us to listen to their voices are nearly impossible to find.

I make use of another published text from a participant in the revolution: Brondo Whitt’s *La División del Norte, 1914: por un testigo presencial* (*The Division del Norte Army, 1914: by an eyewitness*).⁴⁷ Whitt was a medical doctor serving in the villista army. He kept a journal with valuable insights into details of *soldaderas*’ spatial practices that other accounts focusing on the lives of war leaders or on the broader movements of army crowds ignored. It is important, however, to point out that Whitt shared the sexist, classist,

⁴⁵ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1994).

⁴⁶ Unlike she did for her book on the murder of students in Tlatelolco (*La noche de Tlatelolco*), Poniatowska did not tape the words of Bórquez. As Jean Franco says, “Jesusa’s first long first person monologue only on rare occasions suggests the presence of a listener.” This all distances *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* from work engaging typical ethnographic methods, Franco suggests. See, Jean Franco, *Plotting women*, 177-8.

⁴⁷ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte, 1914: por un testigo presencial* (Mexico City: Lumen, 1984).

racist views on women prevalent in his privileged masculinist stratum. Hence, stereotyping, objectifying, and moralising annotations taint his daily entries.

In one of the testimonies from the *Programa de Historia Oral* (referred to henceforth as PHO), a veteran narrates the drowning of a group of *soldaderas* who attempted to cross the Lerma River during campaign.⁴⁸ Their death was left unwritten in the official documents of the troop they accompanied and, similarly, their bodies faded in a landscape where, within seconds, the flowing water took the shape it had before the women touched it. This dissertation required me to recognise the limits of such official documents. Women left traces in their sites of passage, and they built on this very transience to explore new possibilities of domestic and war space. Some of this evidence is visible in photographs, but an important part of it is not. Likewise, the printed and archival material, as well as the PHO interviews that I analyse contain layered and hidden traces of women. Following the itineraries of *soldaderas* and civic leaders and studying their relation to space demands close examination of the invisible, interstitial space between those pieces of evidence. As Tabea Linhard argues, women's stories, "marginalized from literary canons, official histories, and popular memories, come to us in fragments."⁴⁹ In this research, I read the space between those fragments in order to rebuild the architectures that women from different classes created during the revolution. When analysed with attention, the pieces I have collected speak from their sites of absence, and from architectures constructed in a kind of negative space amid the visual and the textual.

⁴⁸ Pedro Caloca Larios, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/35, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

⁴⁹ Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Fearless women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 9.

I have considered the set of texts, testimonies, but especially the photographs I assembled, in the light suggested by visual art and culture scholar Andrea Noble. She cautions us about taking representations of revolutionary women at face value⁵⁰ (in this case, as straightforward evidence of female engagement and agency):

When we look at photographs as illustrative, when we privilege the historical over the photographic, as so often happens with photographic images, we are not, I suggest, really looking at all. We are looking and not looking. But the double drama of looking and not looking provides us with a clue to help us see—not more clearly or transparently, but certainly more critically—the gender dynamics at play ...⁵¹

The link that scholars, writers, and popular media often make between an image and its objects “via a relation of physical causality or connection” suggests photographs of the era as evidence of women’s participation in the revolution.⁵² *Soldaderas* cooking, bearing arms, or sitting beside soldiers appear in images. Roland Barthes has named this “necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens ... the photographic referent.”⁵³ Andrea Noble warns us against a literal reading of this referent as direct evidence: “‘Look!’ these images proclaim, ‘women were there. . . . Look! They cry, these women also carried guns and they knew how to use them!’” As Noble explains, “viewed from a celebratory feminist optic as a form of reversal,” these pictures of feisty women underline their position as “aberrations whose acknowledgement simply reinforces the

⁵⁰Andrea Noble, “Gender in the Archive: Maria Zavala and the Drama of (Not) Looking,” in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, ed. Andrea Noble and Alex Hughes (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 146.

⁵¹ Noble, “Gender in the Archive: *María Zavala* and the Drama of (not) Looking,” 142.

⁵² John Mraz, “Más allá de la decoración,” *Política y Cultura*, no. 1 (1992): 155–90; Elena Poniatowska, *Las soldaderas* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1999).

⁵³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 76. Geoffrey Batchen calls this relation “photographic indexality,” cited in Noble, “Gender in the Archive: *María Zavala* and the Drama of (not) Looking,” 143.

dominant system of aligning sexual difference with a subject/object dichotomy.”⁵⁴ To study these images, Noble suggests moving beyond established analytical frameworks by means of a more sophisticated reading of how sexual difference actually builds narratives.⁵⁵

Tabea Linhard contends: “women’s stories of revolution and war always bear the mark of an absence.” Female bodies, she writes, “literally and figuratively disappear from the Mexican landscape during and after revolutionary struggle.”⁵⁶ An evidence of this erasure in images and texts is Gustavo Casasola’s *Historia Gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana* (1942), an encyclopedia-like collection that dedicates ten volumes to the narrative of male achievements but only five pages to those of women. It attempts to justify: “Narrating the great deeds of these courageous and self-abnegating women, who exposed their lives as much as men did, would be too long”.⁵⁷ The images and texts on women take their limited space among 3,500 pages detailing the revolution through the eyes and “great” deeds of men.

As a photojournalistic project, the *Historia Gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana* has attempted to build a historical account of revolutionary Mexico based on the photographs held by the Casasola Archive; i.e., the narrative follows directly (indexically) the content of

⁵⁴ Mary Anne Doane, quoted by Andrea Noble in “Gender in the Archive,” 141. Moreover, use of images of fighting women often bear messages beyond female contribution. In wars around the world, the “symbolic and iconographic presence [of women] suggests a transcendental and inspirational presence,” as historian Siân Reynolds points out. Siân Reynolds, “Introduction,” in *Women, State and Revolution: Essays on Power and Gender in Europe since 1789*, ed. Siân Reynolds (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), xv. In the case of the Mexican Revolution, Tabea Linhard claims that the apparent break with traditional feminine images was in reality an allegory addressed to men, and that women’s presence in the militia reflected the “extreme” where *everybody* had to be in the militia. Linhard, *Fearless Women*, 52-7.

⁵⁵ See also Gillian Rose, Chapter 6, “Discourse analysis I: text, intertextuality and context” in her *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: Sage, 2001).

⁵⁶ Linhard, *Fearless Women*, 6.

⁵⁷ Gustavo Casasola Zapata, *Historia Gráfica de La Revolución Mexicana, 1900-1960* (Mexico City: Editorial F. Trillas, 1960), 262.

these visual materials. Cultural historian Caroline Brothers investigates the relationship between war and photography. Supporting more recent critical views on the use of photographs as historical evidence, she states:

The contents of a photograph can offer only two-dimensional information about the past, what its surface looked like, the faces perhaps of its actors. Its focus is selective, its vision is blinkered, its opinion always subjective.

[. . .]

Never evidence of history in terms of providing incontrovertible proof of what they literally depict, photographs *are* yet evidence precisely of the interplay of historically rooted power relations which generate such images and make use of them. The conditions of their production and the context in which they are used determine the meaning they transmit.⁵⁸ [Emphasis in original]

These power relations become visible in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, as they examine the patriarchal terms in which predominant narratives of the revolution include *soldaderas*. Photography has been a crucial part of the system that produces the image of the camp follower as a support for soldiers worth some appreciation, yet never a crucial subject who *made* the revolution. I found in the *Fototeca Nacional* two images that were strikingly similar: **Figures I and II**. Upon close inspection, I noticed that the second one is a retouched version of the first. It not only removes the crack on the bottom right and other imperfections of the print, but adds a *soldadera* on the foreground of the image. The photo editing was meticulous enough to size the figure to a scale similar to that of the first man at the bottom right—because, situated where she is, the *soldadera* would be at the same depth as he is in the perspective. To make her “domestic” presence

⁵⁸ Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London; Routledge, 1997), 17.

even more convincing, the photo editor included a basket. The intended deceit cannot be missed, since part of the woman's outline protrudes from the original white frame. The question that this photograph raises is: if there were women with household items, children, and even a dog in the picture, why was there a need to render the scene even more "domestic" and to add another woman (with a basket)? Were the producers of this second version worried that the two men on the foreground diverted attention from the *soldaderas* captured on the second and subsequent planes?

The most obvious fact that this quick analysis shows is the unreliability of photographs as evidence of historical events—as is the case with non-edited images. Another less obvious fact is the process, arguably ongoing, in which the visual artifact itself helps produce or reinforce a social relation—a patriarchal one that keeps women "in their place." The archive itself, where the editing hand worked at some point, becomes part of the apparatus shaping both this power relation and the idea of the battleground as a masculine space.⁵⁹ Even if the newspapers of the revolution often mentioned camp followers, there was little recognition of how the roles of *soldaderas* could easily flow from home-making to arms smuggling or to fighting. Any action by a woman that the press considered too masculine or war-like was described as unusual or even delineated as a desperate, self-abnegated effort to protect or aid the male soldier.⁶⁰ Such behaviours then appeared as aberrations, to borrow Noble's term. The very titles of the photographs from

⁵⁹ As Christine Arce elaborates: "All forms of cultural production romanticized the *soldadera*, and although much was based on the lives of real people (whose histories are all subject to contention), it does not represent the *soldadera* movement in general. In this way it fails to recognize those women who participated in what was considered the more 'masculine' realm of active war." Christine Arce, *México's Nobodies: The Cultural Legacy of the Soldadera and Afro-Mexican Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 61.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, "Junto a su 'Juan' Carmen Saucedo, heroica soldadera, combatió y salió herida en Ayotzingo," *El Imparcial*, 12 December 1913, 1, 3.

Figures I and II⁶¹ attest to the gendered division between a male military role and a female supporting role (with women seen as incompatible with war): *Federal soldiers on military train*, with no mention of the *soldaderas*; and *Revolutionaries and soldaderas on the top of a train*, with no consideration of *soldaderas* as revolutionaries.

“Art, in all its forms and figurations,” asserts Christine Arce, “has been instrumental to remembering these women at the same time [as] it has deformed their legacy.”⁶² Just like texts, photographs have simultaneously concealed and exposed revolutionary women. I was surprised to see that some *soldaderas* from PHO (interviewed more than three decades after the end of the war) never identified themselves with that term, but did use it to refer to other women. There is a possible influence here of the contempt that existed at the time towards the figure of the camp follower or even the association of *soldaderas* with prostitutes.⁶³

In the years that followed the end of the revolution, these female revolutionaries conceivably shaped their perception of the gendered work that they did under heavy influence of how Mexican culture construed this work. The figure of the *soldadera* was sometimes celebrated and sometimes reviled during the war; it was then discarded as an encumbrance by the armies who increasingly banned her presence; it was unacknowledged

⁶¹ Also part of the archive’s editorial work.

⁶² Christine Arce, “Soldaderas and the Making of Revolutionary Spaces,” in her *Mexico’s Nobodies: The Cultural Legacy of the Soldadera and Afro-Mexican Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 41.

⁶³ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Revolution*, 44. Brondo Whitt uses the pejorative name of *ametralladoras* (machine guns) to denote *soldaderas* who prostituted themselves: “The loose women, who abound, are called ‘machine guns’ by soldiers. The nickname is so common that a conversation often runs into serious misunderstandings. With these ‘machine guns’ men end up as badly as with the others.” Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 306. Translation by autor.

by the 1939 decree that sought to recognise veteran women⁶⁴ (solely considering acts of battle and civic leadership certified in writing by other veterans while ignoring domestic war labour); finally, the *soldadera* was sexualised in movies and novels (especially during the 1960s).

Here is where I consider it important to return to the photographs. While agreeing with arguments that regard them as insufficient proof of historical and spatial events, I suggest we consider Christine Arce's caution: "[T]o dismiss the photographs would be to neglect that they nevertheless reveal a presence, a reality that existed, and which permits these women to constitute themselves in the many roles they incarnated."⁶⁵ Along the time line which has seen the meanings of the labour of *soldaderas* change, the images remain a somewhat stable referent, even in the midst of changing interpretations. The female presence in the civil war *is* there. Among the thousands of photographs, posed scenes are mixed with spontaneous ones, in many of which *soldaderas* are part of a background. Altogether, they confirm the presence of women in the revolution, a presence long obscured by academic research and popular texts. Many of the images match the scenes described in oral histories of survivors and often are casually presented as mere backdrops of stories centred on the "real" protagonists and action.⁶⁶

Two important points emerge here. First, I suggest that an increasing interest in and circulation of these images has served as a prompt for women revolutionaries to tell their own stories, in an environment that more recently questions the erasure of their crucial war

⁶⁴ Martha Eva Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 13.

⁶⁵ Christine Arce, *Mexico's Nobodies*, 68.

⁶⁶ As is the case with the textual account of Brondo Whitt.

roles.⁶⁷ A case in point is the narrative that Josefina Bórquez shared with writer Elena Poniatowska since 1964.⁶⁸ Is it not possible to argue that widespread interest in the female figures at the margins of photographs paralleled that decade's interest in "representing the powerless, marginalized, and oppositional members of society who lack[ed] access to self-representation in print and the media"?⁶⁹ In many ways, the photographs were constant reminders of a presence that remained unacknowledged, and I contend that they partly encouraged women revolutionaries to tell their stories.

Second, and closely related to this, I propose that, while remaining cautious of literal readings of the photographic referent, we regard images as part of an archive where we can find (and critically interpret) the presence of *soldaderas*: an archive that, in a way akin to oral history or personal journals, has been often ignored by traditional historical accounts. Relying on more "official" registers where *soldaderas* were never a subject worth documenting, such traditional accounts have long ignored female participation in the revolution. These dimensions of viewing and exposing inform the method through which I read the photographs. I elaborate below.

As Arce argues, some photos are evidently staged, but others candidly caught camp followers in the background, "underscoring the diverse ways in which they participated, and in which their presence was to be interpreted by those who observed them—both in

⁶⁷ Ironically, an important vehicle through which the photographs of *soldaderas* started circulating widely was the very *Historia Gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana*. The book ignored women's work in most of its text, but showed many camp followers both as focus and as background subjects of photographs. Its 1942 publication started the popularity of the images of *soldaderas* throughout Mexico.

⁶⁸ Cynthia Steele, "Testimonio y autor/idad en *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, de Elena Poniatowska," *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 18, no. 36, 1992: 159.

⁶⁹ Cynthia Steele, *Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel, 1968-1988: Beyond the Pyramid*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 11.

real life and as a photographic image.”⁷⁰ I approach the photographs bearing in mind a possible manipulation. As further explained in Chapter Two, I propose that we make that scenario part of our reading. How does the visual material help us read the textual (the survivors’ descriptions) and how does the textual, in turn help us read the visual?⁷¹ Here, I do not merely propose one as supporting the other, but I suggest that, bearing in mind that the scene might or might not be staged, we start by disarranging the elements of the visual artifact while remaining attentive to the oral history and written descriptions—**Figures 2.5** through **2.7** from Chapter Two explain better this approach. In one of them, a woman is surrounded by a group whose members partake of the meal that, the image suggests, she prepared. I propose that we disarrange the elements, including bodies, that give form to the portrayed space. We know that they can be in different positions but, according to the descriptions, they are all organised around the woman and her kitchen set-up.

For the dis-articulation, I produce a visual resource that connects the photograph and the text: a plan that disarranges and re-arranges the elements of the images and descriptions. It shows different possibilities of their arrangement in and of space. The plan starts from what the texts and the photographs have in common, which is women as pivots and their items spread out as definers of space. This architectural representation, then, departs from the “faithful” depiction of the photograph, showing that the position and relation of elements can have infinite variations. The variations do not distort the chapter’s

⁷⁰ Arce, *Mexico’s Nobodies*, 69.

⁷¹ My reading draws on material culture methods, especially those advanced by Elizabeth Edwards, which read the contents of images as well as the images themselves as cultural artifacts. In her paper “Photography and the Material Performance of the Past,” she proposes photographs as “material performances that enact a complex range of historiographical desires... [.] made in certain ways to fulfill the social and cultural expectations regarding them.” Elizabeth Edwards, “Photography and the Material Performance of the Past,” *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009): 130–50. See also Annmarie Adams and Kevin Schwartzman, “Pneumothorax Then and Now,” *Space and Culture* 8, no. 4 (November 2005): 438–48.

argument of the woman as an organiser of space; they actually reinforce the contingent process that such argument advances. Unlike a regular architectural drawing, this plan goes beyond the intention of grounding *one* single reading, one spatial arrangement suggested by the photograph. It does not attempt to illustrate, but to dis- and re-articulate. Hence, it plays with the multiple spatial possibilities, and the few variations shown demonstrate an open-endedness that further reinforces the argument of women as an organiser of space—in its multiple forms.



Figure I. *Soldados federales sobre ferrocarril militar. Fototeca INAH* [Federal soldiers on military train]. 1914. Item number 8349.



Figure II. *Revolucionarios y soldaderas sentados en el techo de un ferrocarril* [Revolutionaries and soldaderas on the top of a train]. Fototeca INAH. Item number 68180. Same image as Figure I, but edited to include a woman and a basket on the foreground.



Figure III. Image from which, I suggest, the woman was cropped and added to the photograph. *Soldadera sentada en el suelo* [Soldadera sitting on the ground]. Fototeca INAH, 1915. Item no. 186635.

Chapter outline

The organisation of the chapters of this dissertation corresponds to my interest on examining *soldaderas* on two dimensions: buildings and bodies. The first and final chapters (One, ‘Homes’ and Five, ‘Back to buildings’) engage with architecture in its more traditional understanding—solid structures built on traditional materials. These chapters act as anchoring pieces or bookends connected by a series of essays that examine spatial relations further de-materialised, or architecture as process. As the “vehicle” tracing the line between these anchoring pieces, the body becomes the second axis along which I have organised the thesis. ‘Bodies’ (Chapter Two) and the subsequent chapters explore the different scales of spaces through which women engaged in the revolutionary war. The body, as the most immediate site of experience, serves as the basis to navigate the other spaces—such as trains, camps, pathways, and buildings. Its spatial practices run through different scales of architecture and landscape. The body also becomes a site of intersection, carrying practices from one place to another and testing affordances of these practices. “Contained” in the broader, often nesting, architectures, the body runs as a thread through

the ‘**Trains**’ and the ‘**Camps and Pathways**’ chapters, all the way to ‘**Buildings.**’ The chapters at both ends of the dissertation analyse buildings meant to contain or accommodate bodies.

Chapter One, ‘**Homes,**’ introduces elements of analysis for the subsequent chapters, offering an overview of the domestic architecture that preceded the forms configured by women during the revolution. It explores the early twentieth-century dwellings of the Mexican working class, populations of indigenous and mestizo origins from which most members of the armed forces of the struggle arose. Notably, among them are the *soldaderas*. The chapter, divided in two, examines the predominant forms of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century urban and rural housing in Mexico, and the symbolic relation between women and domesticity. In the first section, it surveys the forms shared by most dwelling examples of the popular classes before the revolution and traces many of these architectural features as precursors of the spatial arrangements created by women during the struggle.

The second part examines how images of that period reflected the gender values that the Mexican print media (and, in many ways, the intelligentsia) promoted, specifically the association of women and domesticity. Looking at the symbolism and circulation of photographs of indigenous and indigenous-mestiza women in *cartes de visite*,⁷² this section argues that this feminisation of the home influenced the role of women as builders of the travelling homes of the revolution. Between Chapters One and Two, the “Stopover” introduces the notions of smooth and striated space as conceptualised by Gilles Deleuze

⁷² Exchangeable cards with images that preceded postcards. Complete explanation in Chapter One.

and Félix Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*).⁷³ Subsequent chapters build on these concepts in order to explore how *soldaderas* introduced contingency into military landscapes meant to be stable, organised, and controlled.

Chapter Two, ‘**Bodies,**’ returns to the relation between femininity and domesticity analysed in Chapter One to observe how *soldaderas* transported homes into war sites so as to carve their place in the civil war. In this chapter, I initially address the general argument on women’s appropriation of the overlap between domestic and military spaces. I do so by exploring how constructs fixing woman in the home contributed to her rejection from the battleground. Thereafter, I look at women engaging in tactics⁷⁴ that ran against these ideas and practices of unbelonging as they carved their own place in war spaces.

The second part of the chapter examines the appropriation of sites by *soldaderas* and the positioning of their bodies and items to create ephemeral homes. By placing themselves as organising elements of these transient domestic settings (along with the items they carried), camp followers transformed their bodies into part of the temporary architectures: like walls or columns, they organised the space around. Attending to the cyclical creation of these dwellings (constructed, used, dismantled, carried away, and reconstructed) also reveals the home’s existence as fragmentary. Its “rooms” were events in space that “happened” at different sites and times of the day: no longer existing in a single space and time, the home of the revolution left its unifying, monolithic qualities. This section also analyses bodies as spatial articulations on three levels: between home and

⁷³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁷⁴ In the sense proposed by Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). See his definition of tactics and strategies.

landscape, between regular (permanent) homes and travelling homes, and between possibilities or affordances taken from one site to another. A parallel argument threaded through the text and emerging in diverse sections of this chapter claims that, while building their temporary housing, the spatial practices of camp followers created subtle fissures in the construct in which woman and home anchored one another and remained outside the realm of war.

Chapter Three, ‘**Trains**,’ takes us to the temporary homes set up in the train cars that transported the revolutionary armies across the country. Here I observe the transformation of what appear to be rigid architectures (wood and metal train boxes) into more plastic, dislocated sites for dwelling. *Soldaderas* made use of existing architectural surfaces—like walls, floors, rooftops, and ironwork of trains—to redefine the architectural, material, and functional terms of domesticity. Such new functions and meanings, along with the relation that the inhabitants of the moving homes established with the spaces inside and around trains, changed under conditions of movement or stasis. The chapter looks at these contingent shapes in relation to the housing types explored in Chapter One to demonstrate that the forms and uses of the pre-revolutionary homes of the popular classes influenced the mobile dwellings. It acknowledges that the spaces that camp followers and soldiers occupied on trains were almost never their choice, but, with great ingenuity and resourcefulness, women claimed these sites. Behind the rigid architectures of the revolution’s trains that we see today (in photographs), lay domestic forms that invited less rigid forms of inhabitation. Women’s emerging relation to the built environment brought about new inscriptions on the meanings of gender, home, and builder.

Chapter Four, ‘**Camps and Pathways,**’ consists of two parts. Part I starts by comparing the permanent homes of the working class and the camp dwellings. Thereafter, it discusses the attachment of war camps to the permanent infrastructure of cities, villages, and haciendas. Later, by observing how women’s household labour traditionally connected the dwelling, the surrounding geography and the gendered subject, I suggest that the gendering and domestication of this practice influenced the role of *soldaderas* as home-makers in the revolution. This part ends with an analysis of visual and textual materials whose portrayals of camps relegate *soldaderas* to the background—associating them to a domesticity and labour taken for granted. I then observe that many of these materials, produced during revolutionary times and afterwards, show that military and social discourses would acknowledge women’s presence in camps when framed in the patriarchal terms which associated femininity and domesticity.

Part II moves on to the spatial analysis of the architectures built at camps in order to expand the limited understandings of women’s roles. First, I examine the position and action of *soldaderas* as the most immediate connection between armies and the surrounding geographies: specifically, in the marching dynamics where the women generally overtook the military column to prepare the camp, but where they remained at the back during battle. Second, I look at the ways in which their labour blurred the boundaries of homes and pathways. Third, I study their deep knowledge of and engagement with landscapes and the micro-dynamics of power that their actions spatialised.

In this section, I focus on slowness as a form of connecting with the landscape of travel. The part of a moving army where equipment and women travelled was often called *impedimenta* (‘luggage’ or ‘baggage:’ literally “that by which one is impeded”). Leaders of

armies, hence, considered the crowd of camp followers an encumbrance because of its slow pace. Here I explore how this slowness, coupled with women's constant active engagement with sites to set up camp, resulted in a deep knowledge of and attachment to place. If men directing a troop were to know a landscape for successful military moves, women were to connect with it through ways of interacting with and *being* in that landscape. Women had to build homes where fighters could afford a restful *dwelling* in space, even if short-lived. This required a fine knowledge of the material qualities of a place: wood, rocks, soil, water, topography, or the physical features of a city/village. I argue that, by blurring the boundaries between homes and landscapes, women themselves became profoundly connected with that landscape, which strengthened their role of place-making during the war.

Finally, Chapter Five, '**Back to buildings,**' follows the itineraries of a more affluent class of women who participated in the revolution. Most of them were educated. I examine the efforts of these individuals inside and across architectures that, on the surface, seemed disconnected from the armed struggle. It complements the main argument of this dissertation concerning women's revolutionary agencies in space by extending the analytical scope to institutional and work spaces—starting from the home. While some of these subjects travelled, many of them contributed to the fight from the spaces that the gendered ideal of passive femininity prescribed them to inhabit at the time. These women built on the perceived fixity of their gendered architectures to transform spatial meanings. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, they would transform a family house into a site of political activism, or their perceived passive bodies into agents carrying out rebel operations through space.

To those attempting to track down insurgents, it was unclear whether the presence of these women in space was to run domestic errands associated with their gender or to secretly support a war group. These women manipulated their relation to buildings based on gender expectations. While feigning to use their spaces as expected (living rooms, classrooms, work places), women gave them new functions and meanings, establishing new relationships between architecture and identity. Women trusted that, just as their own presence supposedly feminised a building (a home, a gendered work space), buildings in turn rendered them as subjects acting out their expected “feminine” passivity. Thus, being ‘at home’ would set them apart from suspicions of conspiracy and revolutionary action.

Moving through and manipulating their relationship to architecture, these women “shared” façades with buildings: in the eyes of society, buildings accommodated feminine, “war-neutral” activities because of the presence of women in them; and women, in turn, appeared to carry out inoffensive, “innocent” actions while occupying their socially-sanctioned gendered spaces. I argue that, in their secret revolutionary actions, these civic leaders moved through the city while carrying a façade of their own, one that remained symbolically connected with the façade of their buildings. For instance, in a civic leader’s travel between her house and a girls’ school, the seemingly innocuous, feminised character of each of those buildings tainted her path with an appearance of neutrality.

In closing, I bring attention to the spatial story told through the photographs by Sara Castrejón. The first of them (**Fig. IV**) is taken from her home in the village Teloloapan. The date in which the image was shot (April, 1911) supports Samuel Villela’s claim about Castrejón being the first woman photographer of the revolution and John Mraz’s notion that

“she may have been the first woman in the world to photograph war.”⁷⁵ Documenting the war through her female eyes was a kind of appropriation of the space of the revolution.

Castrejón established a spatial relationship with the streets of her native Teloloapan which resembled the relation that *soldaderas* frequently established with their spaces of travel (familiarisation and cognitive advantage). As she clicked her camera, Castrejón drew on a cognitive advantage, a prior knowledge of the place. She shot the image from the window of her house as revolutionary leader Francisco I. Madero’s troops entered the village. She dominated from a vantage point the avenue that the parade probably just began to recognise. Michel de Certeau describes the people traversing the ground level of a city as “bodies who follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it.” He qualifies their knowledge of these places as blind, in contrast to the observer’s vision of the “whole” as she stands on the heights.⁷⁶ Sara Castrejón could *shoot* the parading army from her emplacement. Not only positioned above, but deeply familiar with a setting these revolutionaries likely stepped into for the very first time, Castrejón captured with her camera their movement into her territory.

⁷⁵Samuel Villela Flores, *Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de La Revolución* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 50. The earliest images known by American photographer Esther Eva Strauss were taken fourteen days afterwards, in Ciudad Juárez. See John Mraz, *Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 116.

⁷⁶ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93.



Figure IV. Castrejón, Sara. *Entrada de Maderistas a Teloloapan, Gro.* [Arrival of maderistas in Teloloapan, Guerrero. My translation]. Photograph, taken from Villela, Samuel. *Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución*, 51. First image that Sara Castrejón took from her window.

The subsequent photographs tell us a bit more about her path. Following that first image, another picture documents the same army settling on the outskirts of the city (see **Fig. V**). The space here suggests that Castrejón revealed herself to the photographed subjects, no longer behind the window of a building, but standing at their level. In an open-air setting, a low wall physically separated the photographer from the army's crowd, but now she was visually exposed. Her exposure as a female photographer visibly increases in the subsequent images, where she took professional portraits of troop members. Their spatial relation is still defined as observer (photographer) and observed (subject). The difference with **Figure IV** is that, gazing back at the camera, the portrayed soldiers are aware of the presence of Castrejón. Another group portrait is taken inside Castrejón's house-studio, through an action where she has arguably rendered her path visible: from the

outdoors of the camp photograph to the interior of her own home (**Figure VI**). Read in sequence, the images show the path of a woman observing at the beginning the revolution while remaining unseen, then connecting to it while rendering herself visible to participants, and then finally bringing the revolution into her home, in a professional activity that continued well past the struggle.



Figure V. Castrejón, Sara. *Campamento de maderistas en Teloloapan, Guerrero, en abril de 1911.* [Maderista camp in Teloloapan, Guerrero, April 1911]. Photograph, taken from Villela, Samuel. *Sara Castrejón: Fotografía de la Revolución*, 52. Through its perspective, the image reveals that Sara Castrejón stood at the same level as the army she depicted.



Figure VI. Castrejón, Sara. *Jefes que tomaron Teloloapan en abril de 1911, en el interior de la casa-estudio de Sara Castrejón* [Chiefs who took Teloloapan in April 1911 inside Sara Castrejón's house-studio]. Photograph, taken from Villela, Samuel. *Sara Castrejón: Fotógrafa de la Revolución*, 53.

While Castrejón could afford to make visible her pathway as a woman involved in the revolution, the active participation of many other women relied on the clandestine nature of each of their own steps. In a way, they followed Castrejón's pathway in reverse, actively engaging in the struggle at first and then observing the fight from a space where their participation was no longer visible.

One event that contributed to the fame of General Francisco ("Pancho") Villa was the Battle of Ciudad Juárez, in 1919, when the now iconic revolutionary introduced into the federal army's territory a train thought to carry ammunition, in Trojan horse-like fashion.⁷⁷ In their revolutionary paths, women similarly entered spaces which often read their

⁷⁷ Gonzalo Márquez González, "Francisco Villa, La División Del Norte y los trabajadores del riel," *UPN Revista Universitaria* 5 (2010), 10.

presence as embodying a “passive femininity”. From the margins, women carried out missions that remained, even to historians, hidden until today within their Trojan-horse shape. Because their pathways relied on self-erasure, following these itineraries provides only a hint of the unseen battles undertaken by *soldaderas* and civic leaders. Much of their work to build the revolution involved un-building their own paths, the cost of remaining safe after having transgressed gender boundaries. The roads they had traced, although rendered invisible, resonate to this day in the spaces of absence shaping the history of the revolution. A close reading of these spaces will reveal the gender constructs that women transformed as they carried out their insurgent labour.

CHAPTER ONE: HOMES (Before the revolution)

This initial part of the dissertation explores the homes of the working class, a populace of indigenous and mestizo origins who constituted most of the armed forces of the revolution.¹ Notable among them is the group of women who would become the builders of the travelling homes for armies. This chapter is a necessary introduction to the domestic architecture existing prior to the revolution. It will allow readers to understand the basic housing forms that *soldaderas* both emulated and departed from in the temporary dwellings they built. In order to study late nineteenth and early twentieth-century urban and rural homes in Mexico and the symbolic relation they maintained with the figure of woman, the chapter has two parts. In the first part, I use secondary sources to survey the forms shared by many domestic spaces of the working stratum in the years leading up to the revolution. I advance these forms of indigenous and mestizo homes as precursors of the spatial arrangements of the mobile homes of war contingents. In the second part, I explore how the figure of the Mexican woman was associated with domesticity, first in texts published at

¹ Jean Meyer, “Grandes compañías, ejércitos populares y ejército estatal en la revolución mexicana (1910-1930),” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 31 (1974): 1019-24. It is important to note here that both terms, but especially the categorisation of “indigenous” was externally imposed—by the Spanish creole and mestizo elite. As Alan Knight explains, while profoundly aware of the racism they suffered, indigenous groups before and after the revolution did not necessarily feel identified with one another. So, grouping them as an indigenous “block” was a colonial legacy that continued in the discourse and policy of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation-state. The political and military organisation of indigenous peoples before and during the revolution responded more to their common struggle as peasants. Such struggle and organisation brought them together with mestizos and other racial groups. For further discussion of the understanding of indigeneity and race, see Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940” in Richard Graham (ed.), *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 72-113. In the case of the groups who had been independent peasants prior to the revolution, I justify my use of the term “working class” based on the labour performed *during* the war. As they joined the struggle, they became part of a class that worked under a (military) authority. Also, my use of the term selectively encompasses positions of agency and mobility as articulated by scholars such as Susie Porter, especially in her “Working Women in the Mexican Revolution” and “And That It Is Custom Makes It Law: Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, Mexico City, 1880-1910.”

the time and, then, in photographs of dwellings produced before and during the revolution. I then argue that such association shaped her role as a builder of the mobile dwellings.²

By the turn of the century, a great diversity of housing types occupied the Mexican territory, from its Northern deserts to the central woods and the Southeast tropical forests. Indigenous construction culture and techniques varied widely throughout the country. Uses and meanings of domestic life also differed depending on the region. These techniques and ideas combined in varying degrees with Spanish tradition, which further multiplied the number of forms. Instead of attempting to cover all the dwelling layouts throughout the territory,³ here I focus on features shared by a significant number of them, like a single room layout, the extension of the household to the exterior, and the blurring of private and public spaces. Through the subsequent dissertation chapters, I will compare the ephemeral housing forms of the revolution to the ones studied here.

Before I describe the rural and urban homes of the working class, I will outline the conditions of pre-revolutionary Mexico to offer a general image of the population and its distribution between the countryside and cities. As Carmen Ramos Escandón says, Porfirian times were characterised by a tension resulting from a process of economic development “based on the attraction of foreign capital that privileged the urban sector and

² As discussed in the Introduction, in their daily practices, women (especially those of the working class) subverted the gender constructs that saw domesticity as their sole sphere of action and identity. Even if they led a life with strong connections to public space, upon return to the family space, domestic chores fell heavily on the shoulders of women.

³ Architectural historian Francisco J. López Morales, in his book *Arquitectura vernácula en México* (1993), offers an extensive survey of dwelling types until the late twentieth century. Francisco López Morales, *Arquitectura vernácula en México* (Mexico City: Fondo Internacional para la Promoción de la Cultura, Unesco, 1987). See also Gerardo Torres Zárate, *La arquitectura de la vivienda vernácula* (Plaza y Valdés, 2000).

agriculture for export at the expense of rural areas.”⁴ Combined with the ambitious development of transport lines (train lines, roads, and ports) during Díaz’s three-decade regime, this led to some migration from the countryside to cities.

The Mexican population grew 61.5% between 1877 and 1910, from around 9.4 to 13.6 million by 1900, and then to 15 million by 1910.⁵ Despite the onset of urban migration, most of the population was concentrated in rural areas. Anna Macías suggests that the 1910 census underestimates the number of women among the economically active population. As she explains, the directors of the survey imagined “that a clear-cut division of labor between the sexes existed in Mexico, that men were the providers and women, the homemakers.”⁶ With about 80% of the population not benefitting from the pre-revolutionary modernisation process (in fact, they were exploited for its sake), Mexico, like other preindustrial societies, had women act as “economic providers through the multitude of goods and services supplied by home industry.”⁷ Macías then points to how the 1910 census overlooked women’s work outside of the family dwelling in the countryside.

⁴ Carmen Ramos Escandón, “Señoritas porfirianas: Mujer e ideología en el México progresista, 1880-1910,” in *Presencia y Transparencia: La Mujer En La Historia de México*, ed. Carmen Ramos Escandón, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 1987), 144. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

⁵ Carmen Ramos Escandón, “Señoritas porfirianas: Mujer e ideología en el México progresista, 1880-1910,” 144.

⁶ This points to the fact that surveyors did not consider domestic work as such. Anna Macías, *Against all Odds*, 31.

⁷ Mirra Komarowsky cited by Anna Macías in *Against all Odds*, 31.

Part I. House forms

1.1 Rural house forms

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most people in Mexico lived in rural areas. In 1878, 200,000 people lived in Mexico City. Other “dense” municipalities of the country did not have more than 15,000 inhabitants. By 1900, 350,000 people lived in Mexico City and 1,400,000 in the other urban centres, still a minor portion of a population totalling 13,500,000 in the whole country.⁸

Having limited resources, agricultural workers, live-in peons, and small landowners or co-proprietors across the territory lived in buildings of similar “modesty and relative technical simplicity.”⁹ Architectural historian Guillermo Boils provides a detailed description of these homes in his book, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*. He identifies similar floor plans among a significant number of these buildings despite the vastly different construction systems, which were adapted to specific weather and humidity conditions.¹⁰ Boils and Francisco López Morales estimate an average of four to six people living in single-room houses rarely built larger than 8x12 metres (in most cases, the area was less than half of that).¹¹ The more a family was influenced by urban culture, the larger they built their house and adopted more Hispanic construction technologies—such as brick, plastering, paint, doors, etc.¹² Over 50% of the dwellings in 1910 Mexico were compact structures built of short-lasting materials. **(Figure 1.1)**. Domestic life in them expanded

⁸ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato* (Mexico City: Martín Casillas / SEP, 1982), 16

⁹ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 20. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

¹⁰ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 24.

¹¹ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 24; Francisco López Morales, *Arquitectura Vernácula en México*, 161.

¹² Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 28, 30.

beyond the compact spaces within the walls and was deeply connected with the exterior—this outside terrain was either part of their formal property, “borrowed” from the lands of a hacienda (a large estate), or was the site of informal settlement. A majority of rural homes consisted of a single room, used for sleeping, cooking, and eating alike.¹³ Boils explains that, in spite of having extensive lands, peasant families would opt for compact interiors because their “vital spaces expanded beyond the built area.”¹⁴ They used the outside surface of their plot or even the street space for working, resting, and sometimes eating.

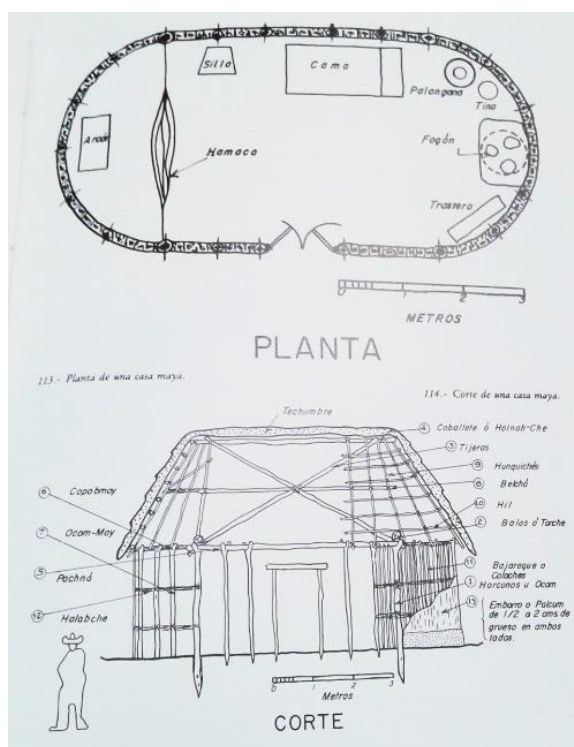


Figure 1.1 Plan of a hut, from Víctor José Moya Rubio. *La vivienda indígena de México y del mundo*. UNAM, Mexico City, 1982, 79.

¹³ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 26; see also Daniel Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna de México: El porfiriato, la vida económica* (Mexico City: Hermes, 1965).

¹⁴ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 32.

A feature of European architectural culture brought by the Spanish conquest was the subdivision of space.¹⁵ Houses in zones inhabited predominantly by indigenous or “indigenous-mestizo” people seldom used interior walls. Boils points to the hearth as the core element organising life inside.¹⁶ The central position of this element evoked its fundamental role in the cooking and heating needs of families¹⁷ (especially in households from the cooler central highlands of Mexico). Peasant houses during the *Porfiriato* did not have washing areas: “Personal hygiene practices took place outside of the building, at a river or lake close-by” or people would bring water into the house.¹⁸ The homes with interior walls frequently had the sleeping and food-preparation zones separated. Boils observes that, in this type of dwelling, spaces communicated through openings which rarely had doors. The separation of space, he suggests, responded to function, rather than to a need for privacy. The presence of doors indicates yet another aspect of assimilation of Hispanic and urban culture.¹⁹

In their modest lifestyles, rural people owned little furniture. Tables were uncommon since tortillas and other types of food were prepared on the floor near the fire. Many peasants crouched down or sat on the ground to eat.²⁰ Beds were also rare. In warm climates, hammocks proved to be fresher and more practical. In cool climates, families often slept on *metates* (bedrolls) at ground level, closer to the hearth. Chairs, stools, and an

¹⁵ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 36.

¹⁶ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 36.

¹⁷ This was similar in western homes until the end of the nineteenth century. See Sandy Isenstadt, “Four Views, Three of Them Through Glass,” in *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision*, ed. Dianne Harris and Ruggles Fairchild (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Boils mentions the existence of the *temazcal* in certain regions—a steam lodge of pre-Hispanic origin which used stones heated with fire and later immersed in water. This small, masonry structure, however, served a medicinal, magical or religious purpose. Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 38.

¹⁹ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 38.

²⁰ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 60.

occasional chest or a wardrobe completed the interior. The inhabitants themselves made many furniture items.²¹

As mentioned previously, the plots on which peasants lived were either their formal property, the sites of informal settlement, or were “borrowed” from the lands of a hacienda.²² Haciendas were large self-sufficient farming estates created on lands that the government had expropriated from indigenous and peasant communes since the seventeenth century²³—the Porfirian government intensified this dispossession in the eighteenth century.²⁴ Haciendas were among the most important worksites in the countryside, because the voracious expropriation had created the conditions where owners could exploit the cheap labour of the dispossessed communities.²⁵

Boils points out that most of the rural lands in Mexico were at the time owned by a reduced, highly affluent population in the form of haciendas.²⁶ If live-in peons and their kin did not dwell in an individual piece of land designated for them, they were grouped in multi-family units of up to two levels. The name of these structures was *calpanes* or *calpanerías*. Here, family cells were called “casillas,” which gave origin to the name in

²¹ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 62.

²² Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” in *Casas, viviendas y hogares en la historia de México*, ed. Rosalva Loreto López (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 2001), 266.

²³ Although some were territories that the Spanish Crown had given to high-ranking military officers since the sixteenth century: these lands were called *encomiendas*.

²⁴ Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 1 (1974): 1–47.

²⁵ Hence, among these dispossessed communities were indigenous, indigenous-mestizo, mestizo, and Afro-descendant peoples. They passed from being peasants who worked on self-subsistence territories that they or their community owned to being peons working for a landowner. Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies,” 1–47.

²⁶ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 28.

Spanish of live-in peons, “peones acasillados.”²⁷ The nineteenth-century expansion of haciendas increased the demand for workforce and the need to accommodate labourers, no longer in a few sheds attached to the main building of the property, but in a designated place for clustered dwellings.²⁸

Porfirian *calpanerías* varied in their layout, some with a wall at the perimeter, some without a clear delimitation. A central patio was a common feature.²⁹ Some of these ensembles aligned living units in rows and others in a grid-like array of streets (**Figure 1.2**).³⁰ Urban historian Guadalupe de la Torre explains that individual dwellings generally consisted of two rooms: a large one for multiple uses and a smaller one for the fireplace.³¹

²⁷ Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 269.

²⁸ “Offering the peon a place to live became, during the nineteenth century, a sort of benefit to which every permanent worker had ‘a right’. . . . Housing became, in fact, a type of unsalaried payment, along with the ration of corn and the *pegujal*” (small plot). Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 276. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

²⁹ Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 266.

³⁰ Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 270.

³¹ Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 269-73.

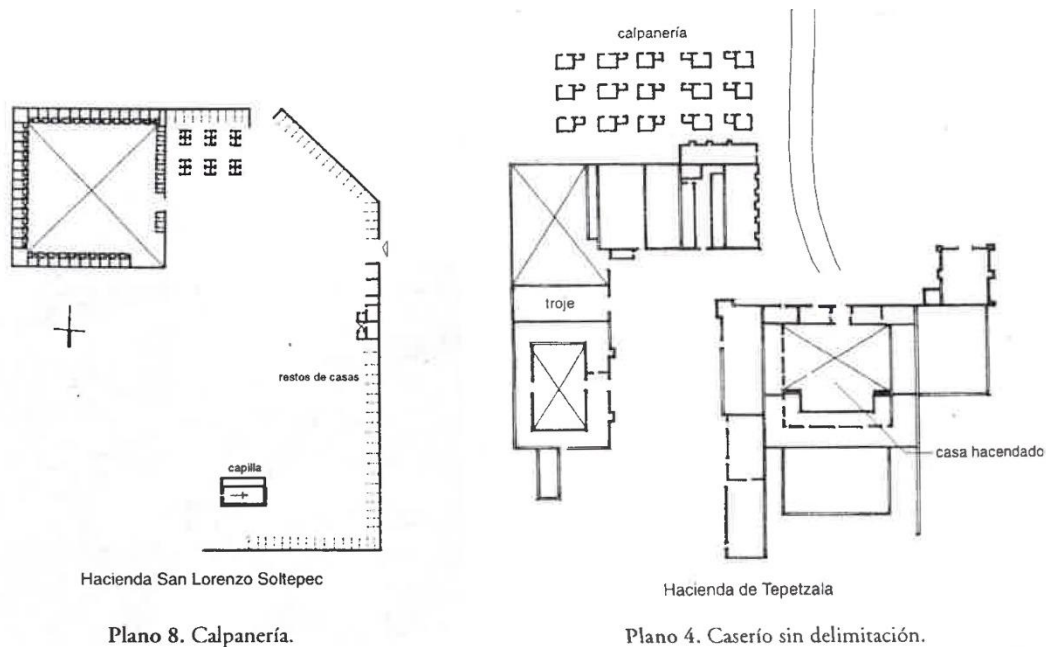


Figure 1.2 Calpanerías, from Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 282, 284.

As de la Torre suggests, the peon’s individual dwelling differed very slightly from the independent peasant’s dwelling, as both were compact, enclosed constructions with only one access door.³² Although the cluster of dwellings for peons resembled a village within the hacienda, it behaved less like a village and more like a housing complex.³³ As mentioned, independent peasants connected their home with its exterior during daily activities such as working under the shade of a tree. This indoor-outdoor connection took a slightly different shape in *calpanerías*, where inhabitants of different units shared the use of the open areas of the ensemble; examples of this use are sites for collective laundry and water provision.³⁴

³² Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 273.

³³ Guadalupe De la Torre Villalpando, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 277.

³⁴ De la Torre Villalpando, Guadalupe, “Los caseríos de peones de las haciendas en el Estado de Tlaxcala,” 278.

1.2 Urban house forms

In early twentieth-century Mexico City, the most impoverished members of the working class lived in modest dwellings at the city's outskirts.³⁵ Families that migrated from the countryside constituted a large part of this population. Their homes were, hence, very similar to rural structures, where a compact space accommodated diverse activities, and where the sleeping habits of family members did not take into consideration age or sex segregation. Like in the *calpanerías*, the surrounding space was limited and shared with the neighbouring dwellings.³⁶ Like in most rural dwellings, the lack of divisions reveals that privacy among family members was not prioritised (or spatially afforded) in the "European" way.³⁷ An average of five to six people lived in each of these structures.³⁸

1.2.1 *Vecindades*

People from the popular class with slightly more financial means could afford renting a room in a *vecindad*. *Vecindades* were blocks for collective housing that accommodated the underprivileged urban majority since the seventeenth century. Many of these buildings were first erected and owned by the Roman Catholic Church, which got revenue from renting out the living units.³⁹ In its basic form, a *vecindad* was structured around or aligned by a patio.⁴⁰ In some cases, the complex accommodated additional patios.

³⁵ Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981), 99-100. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

³⁶ Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 99-100.

³⁷ Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 101.

³⁸ Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 101.

³⁹ Enrique Ayala Alonso, *Habitar la casa: Historia, actualidad y prospectiva* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2010), 23.

⁴⁰ María Teresa Esquivel, "El uso cotidiano de los espacios habitacionales: de la *vecindad* a la vivienda de interés social en la Ciudad de México," *Scripta Nova: Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales* 7

The common names for these open areas reflected the relationship between the “public space” of the ensemble and the surrounding urban space: the “first” patio was the city street which the building’s entrance faced and the “second” was the main patio inside the construction. If a “third” or more of them existed, they were secluded inside the block, away from the main access. The units opening to these last patios were the humblest, and were sometimes shelters improvised with poor, perishable materials (repurposed from other buildings).

Other *vecindades* were the manors left by bourgeois families who moved from the city centre to residential areas on the outskirts. The new owners subdivided these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings into dwelling units for rent.⁴¹ Both in repurposed manors and in purpose-built *vecindades*, the bathrooms and washing areas were located in the patio or the roof terraces and were shared by the numerous apartments of the cluster. The humblest but most common living units had no ventilation, and their only opening was the doorway. The continuity of blind walls evoked some sort of ring, which gave these quarters the name of “cuartos redondos” (round rooms).⁴² A less common type of apartment from a *vecindad* had two or three rooms.⁴³

(2003). See also Moisés Quiroz Mendoza, “Las vecindades en la ciudad de México. Un problema de modernidad, 1940-1952,” *Historia 2.0: Conocimiento Histórico en Clave Digital* 3, no. 6 (2013): 33-4.

⁴¹ María Teresa Esquivel, “El uso cotidiano de los espacios habitacionales.”

⁴² Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 101; Gerardo Torres Zárate, *La arquitectura de la vivienda vernácula*, 140. Use of the same name for this room elsewhere in Latin America is shown in Rodrigo Hidalgo Dattwyler, “La política de casas baratas a principios de siglo XX. El Caso Chileno,” *Scripta Nova: Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales*, no. 4 (2000): 55–78.

⁴³ María Teresa Esquivel, “El uso cotidiano de los espacios habitacionales: de la vecindad a la vivienda de interés social en la Ciudad de México.” See also Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 102.

Besides the use of a single space for cooking, eating, and resting, another feature that “round rooms” from *vecindades* shared with rural dwellings was the appropriation of the exterior grounds, as a space for expanding domestic life.⁴⁴ Thus neighbours carried out personal grooming, the washing and hanging of clothes, and other activities in the shared patio. This made it commonplace to see homes with open doors, with the family space connected to the public area during the day.⁴⁵ Vicente Martín Hernández describes the courtyard as a constantly animated space, occupied by women and children among clothes lines, flower pots, and other objects that families kept outside their dwellings.⁴⁶ Lined or enclosed by the one or two-storey structures of *vecindades*,⁴⁷ the patio fulfilled a central role of circulation, common services, and collective activities. The shared use of the patio by the different homes brought about vital connections between families, and it offered a broader, shared space for communal celebrations, many of which were religious. Vicente Martín Hernández highlights the importance of reading the communal structure of *vecindades*, rather than the unit of single apartments. As he explains, a *vecindad* is a world of its own, with its public space creating a certain privacy against the streetscape.⁴⁸

The 1907 plan in **Figure 1.3** shows a *vecindad* within a block from Mexico City. It shows a self-contained layout, with none of its contours facing the street directly. The outer constructions of the city block, towards the street, are retail spaces that prevent a person on the exterior from noticing the existence of this *vecindad*. Only the opening granting access to the ensemble offers a glimpse of the complex array of dwellings, common areas and

⁴⁴ Guillermo Boils, *Las casas campesinas en el porfiriato*, 32.

⁴⁵ María Teresa Esquivel, “El uso cotidiano de los espacios habitacionales: de la *vecindad* a la vivienda de interés social en la Ciudad de México.”

⁴⁶ Vicente Martín Hernández. *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 113.

⁴⁷ Vicente Martín Hernández. *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 104.

⁴⁸ Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 109-12.

circulation inside the block. **Figure 1.4** exemplifies the seclusion of another *vecindad*. A partial view from the entrance can offer but a hint of its volumetric richness.

As the plan from **Figure 1.3** shows, all the living units from the ground floor share a simple “round room” layout.⁴⁹ The common laundry areas occupy the central patio, flanked by the bathrooms, and the broad, open space at the centre invites us to imagine the lively landscape of children playing and women washing among clotheslines in this collective space—as described by Vicente Martín Hernández.

⁴⁹ There is no second-floor plan available at the archive, but the structure of the ground floor points to that.

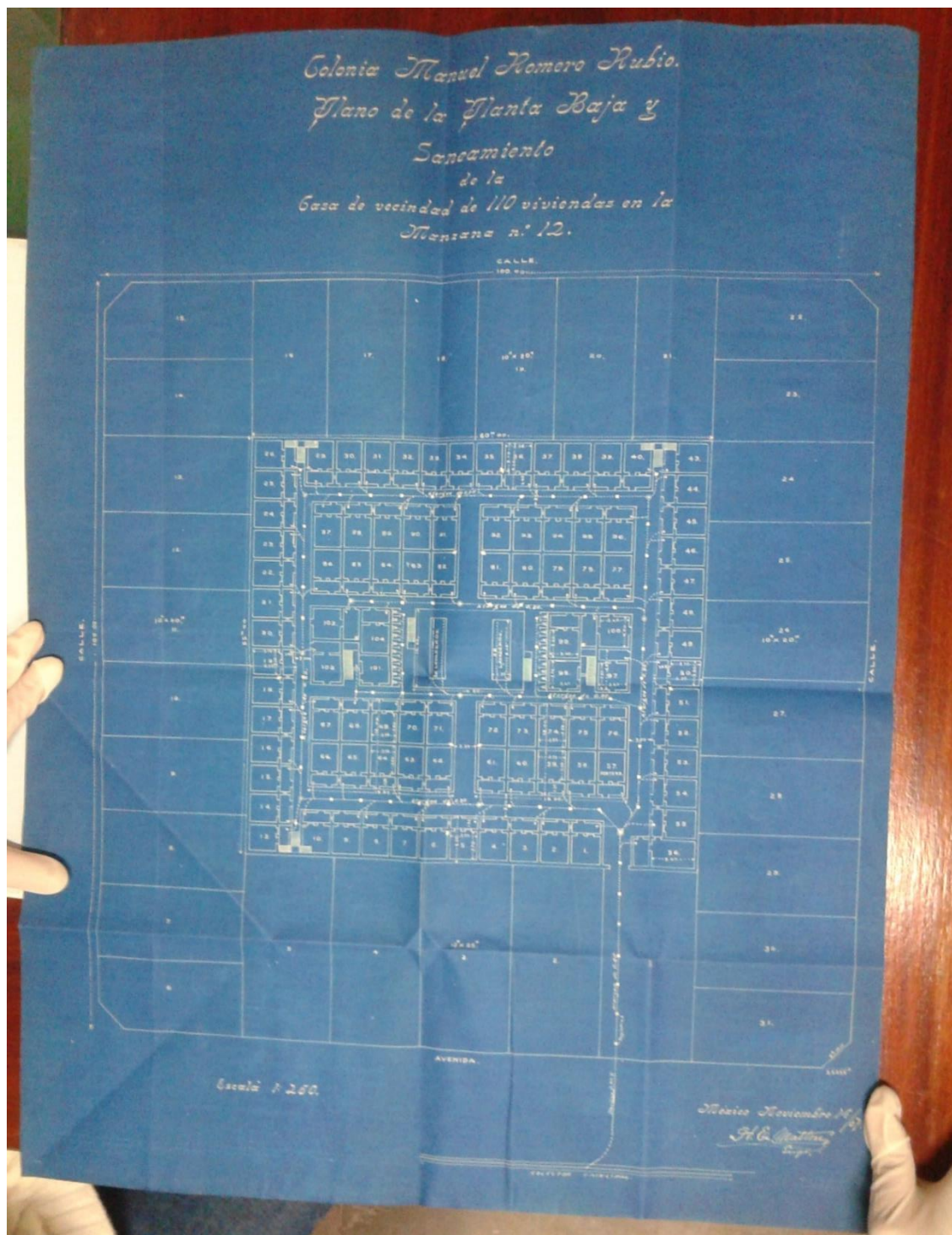


Figure 1.3 Plano de la planta baja y saneamiento de la casa de vecindad de 110 viviendas en la manzana no. 12, Colonia Manuel Romero Rubio, 1907. R. 2.32, File 3, Box 35, Fondo Planos y Proyectos 1861-1992, Planoteca, Archivo de la Coordinación de Monumentos Históricos, INAH, Mexico City, Mexico.



Figure 1.4 Vecindad de condición humilde, interior, Item no. 160854. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. View from the street that offers only a glimpse of the rich domestic landscape of a *vecindad*.

Figure 1.5 is the plan that the owners of a Mayan *bahareque*⁵⁰ and masonry dwelling allowed me to draw in July 2019.⁵¹ This building is located by Uh May, between the cities Felipe Carrillo Puerto and Pedro Antonio Santos (State of Quintana Roo). The photograph (**Figure 1.6**) and the plan illustrate how, even if the envelope of this house is very similar to its century-old predecessors, contemporary lifestyles and technologies have produced a slightly different layout—from Moya Rubio’s plan in **Figure 1.1**, for instance. As the bathroom remains in another structure, the kitchen has recently become a space separated from the main building. Unlike the main building, the kitchen’s walls use *bahareque* without masonry.

⁵⁰ Building technique in which canes or sticks support a mass of clay.

⁵¹ I greatly appreciate the chance that the dwellers gave me to draw a plan of this structure. I could see the volume of the kitchen and bathroom from the doorway directed at the backyard but was not allowed to step past the main building.

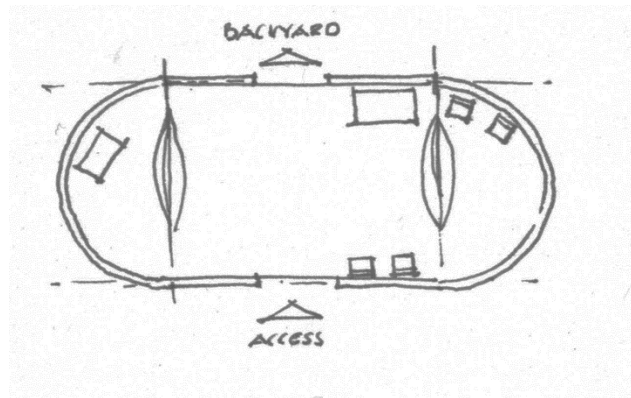


Figure 1.5 Floorplan of a contemporary Mayan house by Uh May, between the cities Felipe Carrillo Puerto and Pedro Antonio Santos (State of Quintana Roo). Drawn by author.



Figure 1.6 Exterior of the house

In the image, the central opening is the building's main entrance, which the wall across the enclosed space mirrors to provide access to the back patio and the kitchen. These are free-standing structures (not visible in the image). The main building, known as

estancia,⁵² preserves its long-time function of accommodating diverse activities. When no one is sleeping or resting, the residents attach the hammocks to the beams in order to free the space for its daytime use. There, the woman weaves shawls that her nieces will sell outside. Today, the *estancia* features more pieces of furniture than it did in Moya Rubio's scheme, which shows the increasing influence of urban typologies.

All these turn-of-the-century domestic buildings bore important differences with the living spaces of the (mostly white and mestizo) privileged class. Following a European domestic culture, this elite class kept strict divisions of space, based on gender and age, and on private and public activities.⁵³

The descriptions have given an idea of shared understandings of privacy and interior-exterior connections in working-class Mexican homes, especially in those with a less visible influence of Hispanic building traditions. In many ways, the single-room layout and the flowing of the family space between the inside and the outside, as well as the changing uses of the interior space—which constantly redefined personal and shared activities—anticipated the form of the travelling homes created later during the revolutionary struggle. As Chapters Two to Four from this dissertation will show, the domestic structures improvised in camps, trains, and streets consisted of envelopes with surfaces that proved unstable, both physically and functionally. People's use of space in

⁵² See Aurelio Sánchez Suárez, "La casa maya contemporánea. Usos, costumbres y configuración espacial," *Península* 1, no. 2 (2006): 81–105.

⁵³ See Gladys Arana López, "Espacios, sujetos y objetos del habitar cotidiano en el México de entre siglos: Mérida la de Yucatán, 1886-1916," *Memoria y sociedad* 17, no. 35 (2013): 236–61; and Gladys Arana López, "Los espacios intermedios y la definición de una arquitectura regional. Una breve historia de la vivienda y la domesticidad en el sureste mexicano," *Revista de Estudios do Departamento de Historia da Arte*, no. 12 (2013): 69–87; Vicente Martín Hernández, *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*; Saira Villarreal Vaca, "La arquitectura habitacional del porfiriato en la Colonia Reforma de Guadalajara, Jalisco: Análisis e interpretación de los modos de vida en la configuración del espacio interior," *Antrópica: Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 3, no. 5 (2017): 13–31.

their permanent, pre-revolutionary homes informed the optimal operation of these ephemeral dwellings. The “articulators” of the spatial possibilities between the permanent and the ephemeral were women:⁵⁴ their role as builders came from their connection to domesticity, both because women’s occupations were socially constructed in the realm of the home and because they were figures representing the domestic, as the following section will show.

Part II. Women and the home: Spaces of Representation⁵⁵

Part Two looks at textual documents to show how gendered narratives translated visually into photographs of women and their dwellings. By examining the gender-segregated roles dictated by society, it provides the reader with the tools to “place” women in the spatial settings described above. In the open, fluid, but also very material layouts that this chapter surveys in the first part, how did female social and family roles unfold? What was a woman’s physical and symbolic position in these architectures? As I observe here, the explicit imperatives of texts and the placement of women in photographs both reflected and shaped the close association between women and domesticity.

The absence of dividing walls at the home did not mean that all the members of a family living in it had the same relation to its architecture. Historian Julia Tuñón highlights

⁵⁴ Texts by scholar Elizabeth Salas and writer Elena Poniatowska mention the role of women as creators of the travelling homes of soldiers during the revolution. See Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) and Elena Poniatowska, *Las soldaderas* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1999).

⁵⁵ I borrow the term in which Henri Lefebvre shows a convergence of material, practised, and representational qualities of sites. Representational space is “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols.” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Wiley, 1992), 33-9.

the strong relationship between women and the home at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ The Porfirian period brought about quick and, as stated before, unequal economic development. Despite the increased involvement of working-class women in industrial and agricultural labour following this development,⁵⁷ the domestic settings of the less privileged stratum were still feminised in the social imaginary.⁵⁸ The gendering of domesticity in indigenous and indigenous-mestizo communities took shape in different practices, but I suggest we briefly look at an example that used spatial terms to symbolise the connection between women and the architecture of the home: the burying of the umbilical cord.

Geographer and anthropologist Soledad González Montes and historian Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta examine how the lives of peasant women unfolded between 1880 and 1910 in Tenango, a district in central Mexico. They mention how families gave a symbolic delimitation to the sphere of action of men and women since the moment of birth. The umbilical cord of a girl was buried under the hearth (the *tlecuil*), a ritual seeking “for her to find pleasure in domestic chores and not to leave the house much” in the future. The cord of a boy, on the other hand, was buried in a hill, in order “for him to grow brave, as well as to enjoy travel and work at the field.”⁵⁹

This practice, still present in diverse indigenous communities, was also documented by Catholic monks in the sixteenth century in the midst of the Spanish colonial period.

⁵⁶ Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled* (Austin: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999), 47.

⁵⁷ Shirlene Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910-1940* (Denver, Colorado: Arden Press, 1990), 3. Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 74-5.

⁵⁸ Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 74.

⁵⁹ Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta, “La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: el Distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910,” in *Presencia y transparencia: La mujer en la historia de México*, ed. Carmen Ramos Escandón, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 1987), 113–44, 129.

Aztec tradition, which serves as another example from central Mexico, dictated how to “cultivate,” literally into the ground, the gender roles that were expected to flourish in adult life. Historian Louise Burkhart examines how the family would bury the umbilicus of a female newborn inside the house, by the fireplace and close to the grinding stone. The midwife recited this prayer during her birth: “You shall be the heart of the house, you shall never go elsewhere. You will be a person who travels nowhere. You will become fire, ember, the heart of the home. Here our god seeds you, here he buries you.”⁶⁰ The umbilicus of a male baby, on the other hand, was given to warriors and buried by them in a battlefield.⁶¹

Cultural anthropologist Felipe González Ortiz examines the present form of this practice in another indigenous community: the Mazahuas, also from central Mexico (State of Mexico). This ritual, González Ortiz states, evokes the gendered tasks of providing and caring throughout the adult life of a Mazahua. The umbilical cord of a male newborn is buried in one of the corners of the house and the cord of a female newborn under the fireplace. The boy’s association with the corner denotes, according to González Ortiz, his role as a pillar, the support of the home. The girl’s association with the hearth signifies her role as the housekeeper. Her rooting to the family space extends into her adult life as she and most women stay in the village, whereas many men emigrate.⁶²

⁶⁰ Louise Burkhart, “Mujeres mexicas en el ‘frente’ del hogar: trabajo doméstico y religión en el México azteca,” *Mesoamerica* 13, no. 23 (1992): 26-7. Author translated all quotations from this source.

⁶¹ Louise Burkhart, “Mujeres mexicas en el ‘frente’ del hogar: trabajo doméstico y religión en el México azteca,” 26-7.

⁶² Felipe González Ortiz, “Mujeres que cuidan. El ciclo de vida de las mujeres en las comunidades indígenas en el Estado de México,” in *Género y poder: diferentes experiencias, mismas preocupaciones*, ed. Ivonne Vizcarra Bordi (Toluca, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 2005), 191. It is important to note here the symbolic relation between everyday spaces, bodies, and meaning, studied notably by Pierre Bordieu in the Kabyle house. Pierre Bordieu, “The Berber House or the World Reversed,” *Social Science Information* 9, no. 2 (April 1970): 151–70.

Within the single room layouts of urban and rural dwellings of the turn-of-the-century working class, the spaces took on different meanings for each family member. The burying of the umbilical cord is an example of practices that spatialised gendered roles long before the Porfiriato and that suggested monolithic views of women staying home and of men venturing out.⁶³ Below I show photographs that, taken at face value, evoke a lived space that mirrored social expectations.⁶⁴ In such written and visual accounts, female figures are passively positioned—which, as I later suggest, is comparable to the symbolic role of human scales in an architectural drawing. **Figure 1.7** shows a pre-Hispanic drawing kept by the *Fototeca Nacional* of a woman at the entrance of a hut. Its archival record says that it was created between the years 900 and 1200. From almost a thousand years earlier, this gendered representation of domestic space sets a precedent for the images analysed in this section.



Figure 1.7 *Mujer afuera de vivienda prehispánica* (Woman outside a pre-Hispanic dwelling), between 900 and 1200. Item no. 5624315. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.

⁶³ Even homes distanced from a pre-Hispanic cosmovision took on the essentialist views of Catholic tradition, which modelled femininity after the Virgin of Guadalupe, a figure heavily associated with the home. See Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, xv. Elizabeth Salas elaborates the way in which the indigenous Earth Mother converged with the Lady of Guadalupe. *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 24.

⁶⁴ This evocation does not necessarily mean that the lived reality separated hermetically men's and women's spaces, but I am interested here in the gender discourse that attempted to realise such division.

It is important to note that the femininity constructs upheld by early-twentieth Mexican society and publicised in the mass media were based on gender ideals of middle- and upper-class female identities.⁶⁵ Working-class women carried out spatial practices that extended beyond the limits imposed by these constructs, but gender discourses were meant to address them as well, idealising a single, “respectable” way of being a woman.⁶⁶

The positivists or *científicos* (scientists), a group of elite male academics who supported and who were benefited by Díaz, promoted discourses that, in their opinion, would bring Mexico to modernity. These discourses reached the population through channels such as periodicals and books. According to the positivists, the family was the basic unit in which citizens would learn nationalist, modern, and moral values. The latter meant the gender-laden principles considered to be the base of a functional, respectable family. The positivists often voiced a position that excluded women from politics, claiming that the only sphere of feminine contribution to society was the private.⁶⁷ Historian Ana Lau Jaiven points at the paradox of the discourse of these male “scientists” as they supported, for the sake of economic development, the transgression of such norms by working-class women—employed at factories and workshops, or at informal jobs like domestic service.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Which does not mean that upper and middle-class women always adhered to these ideals either.

⁶⁶ See Susie Porter, “‘And That It Is Custom Makes It Law:’ Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, Mexico City, 1880-1910,” *Social Science History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 111–48.

⁶⁷ Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 90-1.

⁶⁸ Ana Lau Jaiven, “Las mujeres en la Revolución Mexicana. Un punto de vista historiográfico,” *Secuencia*, no. 33 (1995): 85–102, 89.

The construct that illustrates more clearly the strong association between femininity and domesticity is the figure of the “angel of the house.”⁶⁹ Nancy Lagreca points out that it was the domestic ideal for women in the Hispanic world and in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. “It portrayed the perfect woman as the Christian, chaste, maternal guardian of the happiness and success of her children, husband, and other family members.”⁷⁰ The angel of the house was a model that influenced Latin America, promoted by positivists, Catholics, liberals, conservatives, and society in general.⁷¹ Lagreca shows how its gendered discourse was furthered in sermons, religious decrees, positivist journals, women’s periodicals, nationalist essays, and novels.⁷² The images I observe in what follows also promoted the ideal of women as the symbol of the home.

It is interesting to note that, when shaping the ideal images of woman, family and the home, Latin American gendered discourses⁷³ excluded in their descriptions “las masas de color” (“the coloured masses”), delineating a national model of a family of European descent.⁷⁴ However, the widely circulated photographs of women and the home that I examine here portrayed mostly indigenous and indigenous-mestiza women. The domestic

⁶⁹ Joan M. Hoffman identifies figures of angelic women in literature such as a 1583 manual for wives written by a Spanish friar (Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada*), but the formal use of the term is attributed to British writer Coventry Patmore in the mid-nineteenth century. Heavily influenced by Evangelical thought, the figure of the angel of the house embodies the ideal Victorian wife. Joan Hoffman, “‘She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire’: The Image of the Angel in the House across Cultures and across Time,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 42, no. 2 (2007): 264–71.

⁷⁰ Nancy Lagreca, *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 5.

⁷¹ Joan M. Hoffman points to María del Pilar Sinués de Marco’s 1874 conduct manual *El ángel del hogar* as example of the influence of this Victorian figure in Spain. Joan M. Hoffman, “‘She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire,’” 264. As explained below, Porfirian society promoted European ideals throughout Mexico.

⁷² Nancy Lagreca, *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903*, 11.

⁷³ Such as those of policy makers.

⁷⁴ Nancy Lagreca, *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903*, 5. As Alan Knight explains, the racist attitudes of the elite towards the indigenous population long predated the Porfiriato, but they became rationalised in racist pseudo-scientific thought in the late nineteenth century. Alan Knight, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 31-2.

construct in verbal and textual forms of the discourse took as its model an upper- and middle-class femininity. It celebrated its mostly white, affluent subjects in the images of the society section of periodicals. But the visual materials meant to circulate (domestically and internationally) in the form of postcards depicted mostly the non-white underclass. I see in both the written and iconic representations an objectifying action, an intent to dictate and “contain” the definition of womanhood. Each form of representation, nevertheless, approached a different subject: while the affluent, white woman was the model idealised in written and verbal descriptions (and in images of domestic circulation), the indigenous or indigenous-mestiza woman was the model more easily portrayed—being underprivileged, she was paid to pose in front of the camera.⁷⁵

An important factor here is the further objectifying action of the picturesque *costumbrista* photography, a genre fascinated with images of poverty and stereotypes of the poor and the indigenous (I describe it in more detail below). Whereas feminine self-abnegation and dedication to the home was an imperative across all classes,⁷⁶ it is not hard to notice that Porfirian gendered discourses celebrated privileged women as a *class* (in texts and selected images) but exposed the underprivileged as *individuals* (in photos meant to circulate abroad in the form of postcards).

To further probe why textual and oral narratives of the woman and the home delineated white subjects while the images of postcards focused on non-white subjects, I suggest looking into the notion of the dwelling as a means to ensure protection and

⁷⁵ Benigno Casas, “Charles B. Waite y Winfield Scott: Lo Documental y Lo Estético En Su Obra Fotográfica,” *Dimensión Antropológica* 48 (2010): 221–44.

⁷⁶ Nancy Lagreca. *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903*, 30.

seclusion of feminine virtues. According to Nancy Lagreca, when it came to bourgeois, female individuals of European descent, the family house “ensured chastity and the selection of appropriately white reproductive partners.”⁷⁷ Religious discourses, on the other hand, did prescribe protecting the virtue of non-white Mexican women.⁷⁸ In the social imaginary, domesticity was less permeable when it came to safeguarding feminine virtues of the affluent (white) while showing more permeability in the case of underprivileged women—which does not mean that seclusion imperatives were completely nullified for them.

This takes us back to the discourse of positivists, who “accepted” that working-class women venture outside the family home for work. The different understandings of “protection” are visible as well in Susie Porter’s account of working-class female vendors resisting Porfirian attempts to remove them from public view.⁷⁹ These government attempts were influenced by middle-class ideals of confined, unexposed femininities⁸⁰ and followed the discourse described above.⁸¹

It was, hence, feasible to represent affluent women in textual narratives and domestically-circulated images that celebrated them as ideals of femininity and propriety,

⁷⁷ Nancy Lagreca. *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903*, 6.

⁷⁸ The most salient example is the sixteenth-century figure of Virgen de Guadalupe, created under the image of a non-white Mexican woman and said to have communicated solely with a man of indigenous origin. She was a model of abnegation with whom indigenous-mestiza and indigenous women could identify. I talk about this figure again in the next chapter. See Jeannette Favrot Peterson, “Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?,” *Art Journal* 51, no. 4 (1992): 39–47.

⁷⁹ Susie Porter, “‘And That It Is Custom Makes It Law’,” 111–48.

⁸⁰ Chapter Five will show that privileged women resisted this seclusion too but had to do it in secret to succeed in their political agenda.

⁸¹ But, as Porter shows, working-class women resisted these ideals, ensuring to make the layers “protecting” them more permeable: as they claimed their right to be in public space, they defined respectability in their own terms.

and as models of a desirable Mexican identity (based on whiteness). But the less permeable layers protecting their virtue most likely prevented the portrayal of these women in photographs of a less controlled, wider circulation. Even if profoundly associated with the home, there was most likely no “safe” or “virtuous” space in which privileged women could be captured in the fashion in which *costumbrista* photography did with working class women and peasant: at the entrance of the house. This would mean exposure on the street in front of a wall, next to the door—easy to associate with the position of a prostitute.⁸² A picture inside the house was somewhat more common for national periodicals but, as mentioned, it would have been a problematic subject for postcards. Their distribution abroad would likely strip away the affluent home’s private character and the virtue of the woman photographed, believed to take spatial form in the family dwelling. As Roland Barthes writes: “The age of Photography [capitals in original] corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public [...]: the private is consumed as such, publicly.”⁸³ What made it possible to portray a woman of modest means by her home was, as I have mentioned, the payment that she received to pose. The subject and space also pandered to the *costumbrista* fascination with images of poverty (see explanation below).

How did the texts celebrate middle-class femininity and associate it with the home? The title page of the 1896 weekly newspaper *Periódico de las Señoras* (*The Madams’ Periodical*) uses a spatial trope to situate its target audience, illustrated as three sophisticated white women sitting comfortably in the living room of a luxurious house while reading the publication (**Figure 1.8**). A column about women and marriage describes

⁸² Adela Pineda Franco mentions the relationship between visibility in urban space and prostitution in texts of the time like the novel *Santa*. Adela Pineda Franco, “La Que Mata y Muere Por Segunda Vez: Algunas Escenas Del Imaginario Amenazado Del Porfiriato,” *Revista Iberoamericana* 71, no. 210 (2005): 87.

⁸³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 98.

the feminine duty of creating a home that is a paradise, within which the woman must cultivate everybody's happiness.⁸⁴ An article from an earlier issue, "Consejos al sexo femenino: A las madres de familia" ("Advice for the female sex: to family mothers"), talks about the crucial home-making mission of women.⁸⁵ A text from another issue dedicates two pages to the story of the tragic love of an indigenous woman who was in charge of the family home and who patiently kept this space while waiting for her lover (a lieutenant) to become a part of it upon his promised return.⁸⁶ This piece of prose shows that, even if a woman of European descent was the ideal figure of feminine domesticity in Mexico, the discourse carrying such ideal "trickled down" to the underclass. The periodical claimed, however, that it intended to reach a "cultivated" readership that could afford paying a subscription.⁸⁷ In all likelihood, the indigenous population represented in the piece of fiction never got to read it.⁸⁸

Trinidad Orcilles, a teacher who wrote a column in *El Periódico de las señoras*, articulated the need for a woman's education that would prepare her to run the family dwelling.⁸⁹ One of her columns describes women's duty to save the home, to imbue it with

⁸⁴ Libélula, "Importancia del matrimonio: Deberes de la mujer como esposa," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 22 December 1896, 12-13.

⁸⁵ "Consejos al sexo femenino: A las madres de familia," *El Periódico de las señoras*, 15 June 1896, 6-7.

⁸⁶ José H. de Pérez, "Amor de india," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 15 November 1896, 11-12.

⁸⁷ "Primero lea Ud. aquí. No hay nada que desagradarse," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 22 December 1896, 2.

⁸⁸ As Judith de la Torre Rendón shows, the contents of the printed press hardly reached the popular sector in the 1895 Mexico in which 86% could not read. Judith De la Torre Rendón, "Las imágenes fotográficas de la sociedad mexicana en la prensa gráfica del Porfiriato," *Historia Mexicana*, Las imágenes en la historia del México porfiriano y posrevolucionario, 48, no. 2 (1988): 354. It is also important to mention the objectifying and stereotyping perspective of the story, which describes indigenous women as superstitious and which underlines the need for the government to contain the advance of a "savage" indigenous group from the mountain. José H. de Pérez, "Amor de india," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 15 November 1896, 11.

⁸⁹ See also Nancy Lagreca. *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903*, 31-4.

sentiments and happiness.⁹⁰ In another piece, Orcilles expresses concern at what she sees as the increasingly lax tendencies of the late nineteenth-century family home, proposing an institution that conducts women in the restoration of domestic values.⁹¹



Figure 1.8 Title page of *El Periódico de las Señoras*, 22 December 1897. The periodical situates its target audience by depicting three well-dressed (white) women sitting in the living room of a luxurious house.

⁹⁰ Trinidad Orcilles, "Utopías ventajosas," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 31 December 1896, 3

⁹¹ Trinidad Orcilles, "Una opinión," In *El Periódico de las señoras*, 30 November 1896, 10.

In what follows I examine how early twentieth-century *costumbrista* photographs reinforced the association between femininity and the home by using the racialised and classed figure of the indigenous-mestiza and indigenous woman. I chose eight pictures from the hundreds existing in several collections with the same theme and motif. These collections were meant to show “typical” Mexican life to foreign audiences. Their origin and themes, their intended image (through posed characters and items), and their circulation make these artifacts relevant material for a study tracing how women and the home were used to signify each other. Widely circulated in the form of postcards, these images, I contend, worked in synergy with the discourses and publications mentioned above in an attempt to show ideals of femininity.

Often, international photographers were more prolific in this type of material vis-à-vis their Mexican counterparts.⁹² The producers of these images not only acknowledged, but actively based their motifs and intentions on the fact that the postcards/photographs would be viewed abroad. Hence, curating the image of Otherness for curious Europeans and Americans became a core objective. Whereas the presentation of the visual content cultivated that sense of folkloric Otherness, the images strove to show gender codes that not only prevailed in Mexico, but that were also legible and sanctioned elsewhere. For example, within the portrayed “strangeness” of native attire and “exotic” settings, it was important to show women in identifiable, gendered activities and places: like cooking at or cleaning a house. Presumably, when depicting Mexican dwellings, the knowledge that the photographs would be viewed from “abroad”—a very public space—motivated

⁹² Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein points to the anthropologist from developed countries as carrying a colonial gaze. Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, “La vida de un archivo. México indígena y la fotografía etnográfica de los años cuarenta en México” (PhD Dissertation, Mexico City, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003), 15, 25.

photographers and printers to depict an unmistakable “home sense.” Here, then, the movement of the images (captured in rural Mexico and later transported and viewed outside of the country) becomes important too: as I argue, the travelling artifact needed an “anchoring” content, which in many cases became the home and the woman.

The eight photographs were published as postcards. They are pictures of *costumbrismo*, “a genre of imagery and literature that focused on traditional customs and dress [and which] emphasized the peculiar flavor offered by an otherness.”⁹³ Images of this type were initially circulated in the form of *cartes de visite* (precursors of postcards) all over the world since the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁴ Collectors swapped cards and travellers mailed them in envelopes. By the end of that century, these picturesque images were published instead in postcards,⁹⁵ which ultimately replaced the *cartes de visite*.⁹⁶

Photographers tried with their work to “delineate the essence of a country.”⁹⁷ In Mexico, the *cartes de visite* first appeared during the 1860s invasion of the French army. Featuring “Mexican types,”⁹⁸ these cards became popular among the French, who considered the images useful to get acquainted with the Mexican society.⁹⁹ Visual means

⁹³ John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 28. See also Mey-Yen Moriuchi, *Mexican Costumbrismo: Race, Society, and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Art* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2018).

⁹⁴ Among other themes in *cartes de visite* were landscapes, archaeological sites and famous people.

⁹⁵ Postcards were first used in Germany and Austria in the 1860s with no illustration. Jean-Louis Guereña, “Imagen y memoria: La tarjeta postal a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX,” *Berceo*, no. 149 (2005): 40.

⁹⁶ Jean-Louis Guereña, “Imagen y memoria: La tarjeta postal a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX,” 46.

⁹⁷ José Antonio Rodríguez, “Construir identidades,” *Alquimia* 51, no. 17 (August 2014): 5.

⁹⁸ A subgenre of *costumbrismo*. María Esther Pérez Salas, *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: un nuevo modo de ver* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005), 18. See also Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, “Los tipos populares en México entre 1859-1866,” *Alquimia* 51, no. 17 (August 2014): 8. José Antonio Rodríguez, “Construir Identidades,” 5.

⁹⁹ Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, “Los tipos populares en México entre 1859-1866,” 7. As Aguilar Ochoa states, image producers sought content that contributed to the idea that Mexico was an exotic land, rich in natural and cultural resources, but backwards and barbaric, in order to justify its occupation and “saving” by the Napoleonic army.

seemed necessary to approach this Otherness. Photographers interested in showing “what Mexicans looked like” tended to prefer depicting indigenous subjects over others.¹⁰⁰ In the states accounted for during the 1878-1889 census, indigenous and mestizo populations were the most numerous.¹⁰¹

French archaeologist and photographer Claude-Désiré de Charnay captured in his work architecture, landscapes, and archaeological sites. He produced one of the first series of “Mexican types” known, which he included in an album of cities and ruins. Charnay’s subjects were predominantly street vendors (men and women) and his work was heavily influenced by lithographs from Mexican publications like *El Museo Mexicano* or *La Ilustración Mexicana*.¹⁰² Since the indigenous and indigenous-mestiza women from the images at the centre of this chapter were sought after as “Mexican types,” there is an important thing to consider: the racial stratification that was evident in photography was less evident in non-visual forms of racial discourse, especially because *indigenismo* and the project of mestizaje were ideologies where positivists advanced the notion of a Mexico unified by its (past) native roots, yet only possible through assimilation of the (then present) indigenous communities.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ José Antonio Rodríguez, “Construir Identidades,” 5.

¹⁰¹ It is important to bear in mind omissions in the census. Asian- and Afro-descendants, for instance, are not considered. They were either included within the *mestizo* population or left out of the account. In the State of Mexico, 59.59-57.67% of the population were identified as indigenous, a 34.58-35.95% were mestizo, and 5.83-6.41% white. In Michoacán, 24.22% were indigenous, 75.74% were mestizo, and 0.04% were white. In Oaxaca, 77.97% were indigenous, 15.22% were mestizo, and 1.79% were white. In Veracruz 40.32% were indigenous, 54.49% were mestizo, and 5.19% were white. Dirección General de Estadística, *Estadísticas Sociales del Porfiriato: 1877-1910*, México City: Secretaría de Economía, 1956, 119.

¹⁰² Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, “Los tipos populares en México entre 1859-1866,” 10.

¹⁰³ Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” 76-78.

Visual media historian José Antonio Rodríguez states that ideology seeped into images.¹⁰⁴ As these images show, however, ideology *produced* images. Observing hundreds of postcards featuring “Mexican types” in the AGN and INAH archives, I noticed a pattern: the images try to show racialised, Othered subjects in their purportedly huge differences with turn-of-the-century modern Western identities;¹⁰⁵ however, the gendered activities portrayed remain legible to that Western gaze (they use figures identifiable by Western culture). Images of vendors include both men and women, but images of practices associated with masculinity like riding a horse or holding a weapon only show men. Likewise, feminised activities such as weaving and home or street cooking only show women. Upon a closer look, the depictions of homes seem to call for the presence of a woman. But before I discuss this female presence, it is important to consider the series of travels involved in the production of the photographs, which directs us to the domestic content that interests me.

Following the travel of the camera and the travel of the image opens up a way of seeing that makes intentions and symbolism more legible. Shortly before and during the early years of the Porfiriato (around the 1860s and 1870s), photographs of “Mexican types” required subjects to pose at professional studios—often in exchange for a sum of money.¹⁰⁶ Later in the Porfiriato, fewer limitations related to time exposure, development of negatives, and the weight of cameras allowed photographers to travel to and capture the living and working spaces of the protagonists of their images.¹⁰⁷ Here, the homes gained

¹⁰⁴ José Antonio Rodríguez, “Construir Identidades,” 5. Translation by author.

¹⁰⁵ Jean Franco points at the tone of condescension, distance, and superiority that characterised *costumbrismo* in literature. Jean Franco, *Plotting Women*, 91.

¹⁰⁶ Casas, Benigno, “Charles B. Waite y Winfield Scott: Lo documental y lo estético en su obra fotográfica,” 221-44.

¹⁰⁷ Arturo Aguilar Ochoa, “Los tipos populares en México entre 1859-1866,” 19.

prominence both as objects and settings of photographs. The trajectories followed by photography producers and tools shaped significantly the ways in which the homes were portrayed. At the photographers' studios, the settings of their depicted subjects needed to be replicated. The subject was meant to "convince" viewers that the staged space was a home—in the same way as the spectator at a play knows that a stage is a stage but allows the performers to convince him/her that it is the "true" setting for the duration of the piece.

But the real homes that the new photography technologies allowed to visit seemed to need this convincing too. They, too, needed a gendered subject. If the camera was travelling, photographers probably wanted to convince the audience of the authenticity of their journey to the place, the subject, and his/her "true" setting: in other words, they aimed to convince viewers that the depicted subject was indeed a "Mexican type" in the true environment where he/she worked or lived.

The travel of the image itself was another important shaper of intentions and symbolism. The picture was meant to be viewed abroad, so, when it came to depictions of houses, the domestic feeling was crucial. Here I suggest that the two meanings of the word "domestic" intersected: the one in relation to the home and the one in relation to the national. The image originated in the domestic/home space and later travelled from the domestic/national sphere to an international one. The domestic, homely feeling had to "survive" the travel across scales. As shown by the massive number of dwellings with women, for a home to be believed as a home, the cameraman¹⁰⁸ seems to have felt the need of depicting in it a woman. The association between her and domesticity was at work here. The symbolism of the photographs ensured that she grounded the definition of the home

¹⁰⁸ I have only encountered the work of men capturing "Mexican types."

both in the staged setting (the studio) and in the “real” one (the building). This could also be seen as woman and home grounding each other within a hegemonic, feminised notion of domesticity, which, nonetheless, required folkloric, stereotypical forms to satisfy a foreign fascination with Otherness.

The pictures seldom captured men in dwellings, focusing instead on documenting their activities in urban or rural outdoor settings. When the revolution started, the battlefield was an extension of this public realm of imagery. But, if photographed in proximity to a house, a man’s relation to it was construed to be very different from the case of a woman. I exemplify this briefly with an image from the Casasola Archive before going to the “Mexican types” pictures. **Figure 1.9**, a 1908 image, shows a couple posing in a courting scene. Susie Porter describes how the traditional practice of courtship played with the boundaries of public and private: “A young woman would appear at the window of her house—creating a clearly illusory publicness—in essence to highlight her seclusion and thus desirability as a woman to the prospective suitor.”¹⁰⁹ In the photograph, the man stands close to the opening of a house: his position, rather than connecting the viewer to the interior of the home, remains anchored to the outside. The woman leans on the shutter, with her upper body acting as a continuation of the vertical surface of the wood—as if she were part of the building (part of the door). She, rather than the man, articulates the viewing space with the inside of the dwelling. As in other courting images, her acceptance of the man’s romance symbolises the opening of the door to the interior of the home.

¹⁰⁹ Susie Porter, ““And That It Is Custom Makes It Law’”:” 124.



Figure 1.9 *Hombre canta a una mujer* (Man sings to woman). Item no. 120164. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1907. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.

The sample of images comes from the collections of American photographers Charles B. Waite and Winfield Scott, as well as of Mexican photographer Agustín Casasola. The government of Porfirio Díaz encouraged national photographers to focus on depicting a Mexico that appeared to keep up with the development of European and North American countries.¹¹⁰ Lenses of official photographers were thus often directed away from rural, indigenous settings, and from the lives of common people. Casasola, however, produced images of “Mexican types” amidst his other work.¹¹¹

Benigno Casas says that the work of Waite and Scott aimed at reinforcing stereotypes of the indigenous population,¹¹² an intent that we can see in the work of Casasola as well. As John Mraz describes, this iconography, which contributed to the

¹¹⁰ Judith de la Torre Rendón. “Las imágenes fotográficas de la sociedad mexicana en la prensa gráfica del Porfiriato,” 345.

¹¹¹ As stated before, here I show material that remains in his archive and is attributed to him but that was probably taken from other photographers.

¹¹² Casas, Benigno, “Charles B. Waite y Winfield Scott: Lo documental y lo estético en su obra fotográfica,” 221-44. For an analysis of racial thought and visual technologies, see Deborah Poole’s work: “An Excess of Description: Ethnography, Race, and Visual Technologies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34 (2005): 159–79; “Photography in the History of Race and Nation.” *Latin American Studies*, Oxford Bibliographies Online, Ed. B. Vinson, 2012.

idealisation of a picturesque Mexico, “played off of the country’s ‘natural’ exoticism and must have provoked a certain voyeuristic interest among the accommodated members of the class that bought them.” The subjects of these photographers were portrayed as a “clean and never-emaciated” underclass.¹¹³ The mining and rail industries brought Waite and Scott to document the conditions of the national countryside in order to “inform potential investors and tourists about the accessibility of a strange and different land.”¹¹⁴ While aiming at celebrating a diverse Mexico and “entic[ing] visitors to exotic (but safe) locales, their photographs were also indexes of the crushing poverty and underdevelopment under which so many Mexicans lived.”¹¹⁵

Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein points out the metonymic function that the photographed figures took on in the “Mexican types” genre. In it, “one marker of ‘ethnicity or indigenesness’ [was] taken as iconic of the whole subject’s culture.”¹¹⁶ Dorotinsky Alperstein specifically elaborates on women’s attire and hair, which were the focus of photographers seeking to portray what, for them, looked like markers of ethnicity.¹¹⁷ Little has been mentioned about a similar signifying relationship between the subject and the architecture in which she was captured, but I claim that there existed as well a metonymic intent.

Women appear in a vast majority of rural homes captured by Casasola, Waite and Scott. In a few of the pictures, they are in the company of children. Female figures were the

¹¹³ Mraz, John. *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity*, 32-33.

¹¹⁴ Mraz, John. *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity*, 32-33.

¹¹⁵ Mraz, John. *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity*, 34.

¹¹⁶ Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, “Del registro a la creación del cuerpo indígena: el archivo México Indígena de la UNAM,” *Alquimia* 51 (August 2014): 19. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

¹¹⁷ Deborah Dorotinsky Alperstein, “Del registro a la creación del cuerpo indígena: el archivo México Indígena de la UNAM,” 19.

visual markers of a home in the work of these photographers and served as signifiers of domesticity (i.e., an image of a home could dispense with other members of a family, but absolutely needed the woman).

The visual language of **Figures 1.10, 1.11, and 1.12** is not hard to compare to an architectural elevation with a human scale drawn alongside: the photographers' depiction resembles the intent of an architectural drawing (**Figure 1.13** helps visualise this similarity). Here I mean the intent of idealistic, hegemonic views placing in architectural representation "appropriate" subjects. Architectural historian Alex T. Anderson, for instance, celebrates how (canonical) drawings from Renaissance architects up to Le Corbusier "demonstrate not only how people might occupy the building, but also help to elucidate its functions and its character."¹¹⁸ Elaborating on Marco Frascari's idea of the represented body as "reference for architectural metonymy,"¹¹⁹ (the human scale as synecdoche of the drafted building), Anderson urgently calls for human figures in contemporary drawings to go back to practices that, in his view, represented more reliably how buildings are perceived and inhabited.¹²⁰ Needless to say, Anderson and Frascari fail to acknowledge how human scales in architectural representation are actually idealised figures that, instead of revealing a building's "true" character and meaning, are telling examples of the biases and exclusions ingrained in architectural thinking.¹²¹ The authors of

¹¹⁸ Alexander T. Anderson, "On the Human Figure in Architectural Representation," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 4 (May 2002): 241.

¹¹⁹ Marco Scarpa, "The Body and Architecture in the Drawings of Carlo Scarpa," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 14 (Autumn 1987): 124.

¹²⁰ Alex T. Anderson, "On the Human Figure in Architectural Representation," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no. 4 (May 2002): 238–46.

¹²¹ On architectural representation's racist, sexist and ableist exclusion, see Diana Agrest, "Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex," *Assemblage* 7 (October 1988): 28–41; and Lance Hosey, "Hidden Lines: Gender, Race, and the Body in Graphic Standards," *Journal of Architectural Education* 5, no. 22 (November 2001): 101–12.

the collections containing the images in **Figures 1.10, 1.11, and 1.12** worked under biases and stereotypical views comparable to those of canonical architectural drafting. They both used subjects standing in or by architecture as signifiers: as metonyms of the buildings.



Figure 1.10. C.B. Waite. *Mujer en entrada de vivienda de adobe, retrato* [Woman at entrance to adobe house. My translation]. Photograph, 1904. Fototeca INAH. Colección c.b. Waite / W. Scott. Item No. 120033.



Figure 1.11. Waite, Charles B. *Actividades domésticas 10* [Domestic activities. My translation]. Photograph. Archivo General de la Nación. Colección Propiedad Artística y Literaria. Item No. 3055.



Figure 1.12. *Mujer de condición precaria ante la puerta de la entrada de su humilde vivienda* [Woman of humble condition by the entrance of her dwelling. Translation by author]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1905-10. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 165963. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 17th, 2017).

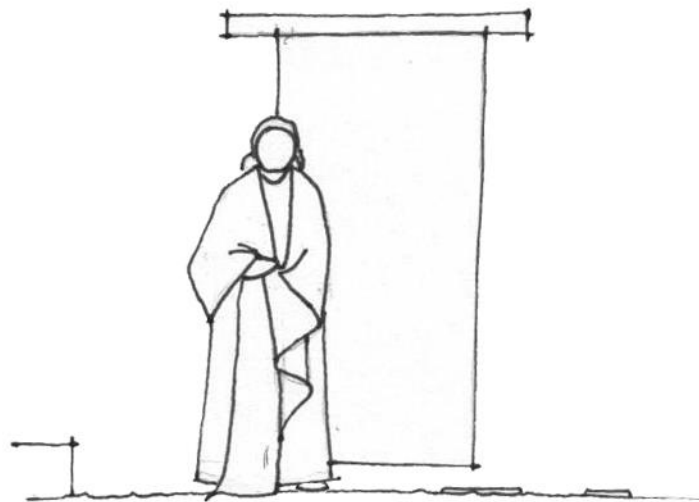


Figure 1.13 “Translation” of Figure 1.12 as an architectural elevation. Drawing by author.

In the photographs, women stand at the entrance of a dwelling. The reasons to photograph mostly the exterior could relate to the lack of windows to provide natural light for images of the inside.¹²² Also, the photographers' interest to portray the rural background of the house conceivably responded to the growing demand for visuals from the Mexican countryside. What is significant in the three photographs is the position of women in a particular side of the envelope: the threshold. Arguably, imprinting the "family look" on the home is not the only function of the female figure. Her position by the entrance turns her into a connection between the photographer/viewer and the interior of the home, which remains out of the range of vision. As the one member of the family depicted, the woman becomes the part of the invisible inside to which observers now have access. As Gillian Rose points out in her analysis of the 1930s photography of London slums, women's bodies are positioned at the boundary between the street and the house.¹²³ This boundary, she contends, does not divide public and private space; instead, it separates the viewer—who stands on the street—from an unknowable space: the interior space. Rose states that, beyond the London streets that the series of photographs have "ordered" or domesticated by portraying (mapping) maternal bodies, there is the space not reached by the lens: "That maternalised fictive space ends, all too in/visibly, at the walls, the doors, the windows of these photographs' streets."¹²⁴ In the case of the three images, I argue, the woman figure is a way of bringing the unknown interior of the home towards our view. But, of all the

¹²² I have mentioned photographers' early practices in studios. The advance of camera technologies allowed image creators to eventually capture visual content outside, but the technologies of photographic flash did not evolve as quickly. Without portable tools for artificial light, it was hard to take pictures in interior spaces that were not the studio. Alma Davenport, *The History of Photography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

¹²³ Gillian Rose, "Engendering the Slum: Photography in East London in the 1930s," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 4, no. 3 (1997): 277–300.

¹²⁴ Gillian Rose, "Engendering the Slum," 297.

members of the house, it needs to be her, because the photographer is still interested in the connection, not only with the “shell” but with the character of the building as a home.

The woman’s role in bringing out the invisible interior becomes more evident as we observe the need to portray her holding a household item. The association of the object with the woman and of the woman with the object is a gendering process that ultimately genders the photographed (exterior) space. In **Figures 1.13, 1.14** and **1.15**, we can observe the connection between the objects and feminine tasks: sweeping, carrying water, and weaving. A fourth photograph (**Figure 1.16**), taken by C.B. Waite inside a studio, depicts a girl with a vase and a plant in a pot. Better than the backdrop, which appears cropped in the frame, the artifacts and the child herself “complete” the inexistent domestic architecture. In this case, she becomes this mentioned “entrance” to the home.



Figure 1.13 C.B. Waite. *Mujer joven con traje regional y escoba de pasto, retrato.* Photograph, 1905. Fototeca INAH. Colección C.B. Waite / W. Scott. Item No. 457859

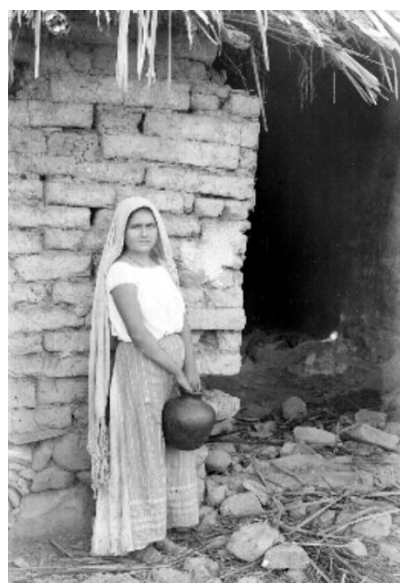


Figure 1.14. *Mujer con olla de agua en la puerta de su vivienda.* Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1908. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Colección C.B. Waite / W. Scott. Item No. 606467

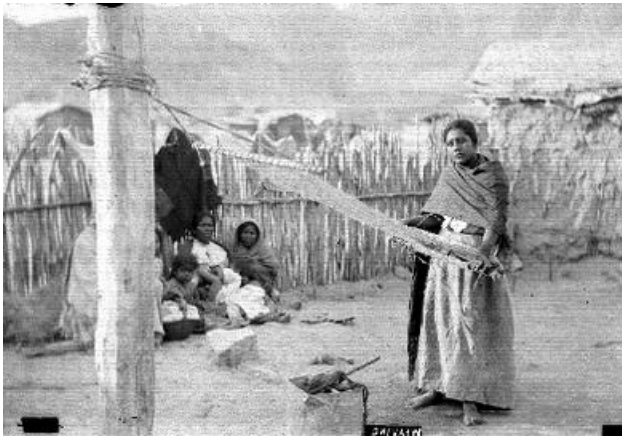


Figure 1.15. Scott, Winfield. *Tejeduría, "Weaving"*. Photograph. Mexico, 1904. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 120009. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).



Figure 1.16. Scott, Winfield. *Niña indígena con cántaro y maceta, retrato*. Photograph by C.B. Waite. Mexico D.F., 1905. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Item No. 120032

Coming back to the connection between the three exterior images and the metonymic function of human scales in architectural drawings, I suggest looking at another 1910 interior photograph (**Figure 1.17**). Attributed to Agustín Víctor Casasola, it shows a woman in a kitchen, standing close to the fire. The brazier fan in her hand belongs with the objects that hang in a traditional Mexican kitchen and that visually become part of the wall. The cooking task in which the camera purposefully captures the woman requires her to take these items from the built surface and to put them back on it after use. With this, the image emphasizes her spatial performance (also a gendered one¹²⁵) as materially related to the architecture: she takes a “piece” of the wall to fulfill her domestic activity.

¹²⁵ The feminised activity of cooking. See María Elisa Christie, “Kitchenspace: Gendered Territory in Central Mexico,” *Gender, Place & Culture*, no. 13 (2006): 653.

If we then look at the exterior images of subjects sweeping, carrying water, and weaving, the objects seem to have left the fixity of their walls. They are used to stage the domesticity that Casasola, Waite and Scott strive to create outside. The vehicle for this transfer is, again, the woman, whose presence “completes” therein the domestic architecture where the items belong: here she becomes the interior wall. Read together, the two pictures suggest an exchanging of surfaces between the woman and the domestic architecture, because, indoors, the woman takes “parts of the wall” for her gendered spatial performance and, outside, she gives these objects the domestic meaning sought by the portraits. She also holds the items as does the wall. This connection between the woman, the wall, and the items directs a key argument of Chapter One, which examines how the bodies of *soldaderas* functioned as moving walls that carried domestic objects to the war, making use of the shawl.

In its final part, this chapter has examined the association between the figure of woman and popular-class dwellings of early twentieth-century Mexico. Whereas women actively carved spaces for themselves in other spheres, such as working and political spheres, this association with domesticity shaped their role as builders of the mobile dwellings on which armies depended during the revolutionary war. As the following chapters will show, camp followers gave shape to the ephemeral homes of soldiers in ways that reproduced the housing forms they were familiar with, but that also reinvented domestic practices. Making inventive use of found materials and fleeting conditions, they created settings that resembled the types of dwellings explored here in trains, pathways, and even battlefields, while inscribing new meanings on built surfaces and on their gendered selves.



Figure 1.17 Agustín Casasola. *Mujer humilde junto a un fogón, retrato*. Photograph. Mexico City, 1910. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Item no. 165211

STOPOVER

To prepare the subsequent chapters' analysis of architectural forms considered fixed, but later transformed by women, I briefly allude to the concepts of smooth and striated, by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. These terms help us understand space in its fleeting and its more stable or controllable forms, as well as the passage from one to the other.

To define smooth space, Deleuze and Guattari use as an example a desert, or a sea: "It is in principle infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction; it has neither top nor bottom nor center."¹²⁶ To become comprehensible, the smooth calls for striations of our surrounding smooth space, elements with which we produce "order and succession" and which organise it in lines and planes.¹²⁷

Striated space is, thereby, orderly, oriented, divisible, bounded, measurable, and enclosed by defined lines. The tracing of maps and architectural design are striations, and so is the material form of this design: once built, a bedroom and a kitchen dictate use and dynamics through their furniture and distribution. The home, as per its traditional definition—the family spatial referent, an environment designed according to an architectural brief—is a striated space. In its programmatic and hierarchical design, its compartmentalisation of activities, and the cultural constructs tracing a somewhat cohesive image (with material variations according to social class), the home of the period at the

¹²⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 475-6.

¹²⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 478.

centre of this study was also striated. As this chapter has examined in representations of *costumbrismo*, the figure of woman served as yet another striation, a fixing and fixed reference to domesticity. Her presence grounded the definition of the family dwelling in a way in which no other figure living therein did.¹²⁸

In striated space, “forms organize a matter,” while smooth space is amorphous, shaped by events, “occupied by intensities.”¹²⁹ This research proposes the architectures produced by women during the revolution as smooth, since female spatial practice turned the home into a less controllable and disorganised, always emergent setting. Both the homes built by *soldaderas* and the buildings with a function and sense transformed by activists (see Introduction and Chapter Five) became smooth spaces. In its “continuous variation, continuous development of form,” the home of moving armies spilled out, proliferated, and gave new shapes and meanings to its own contours and those of its surrounding space.

Smooth space, contend Deleuze and Guattari, relates more to deterritorialization than the striated.¹³⁰ In the fleeting conditions of the war landscape, the home-making practices of camp-followers and the negotiated spatialities of activists changed the meanings of home and woman. It was almost like by taking and shedding layers of domesticity—picking up and disposing materials along the way, or sharing surfaces with a building—women reconstructed their own layers, as well as the layers of the home. They changed their relation with the home and the (im)mobility typically associated with

¹²⁸ In the words of Giuliana Bruno, “the distinction between woman and home is collapsed so that woman becomes home. Superimposed, the two are equally static.” Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso Books, 2018), 80.

¹²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 479, 485.

¹³⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 480.

femininity and domesticity. The constructs dictating intimacy in the home and its interiority/exteriority were also transformed.

I contend that the association between the woman and the home is at the origin of her role as builder of dwellings during the early twentieth-century struggle. As Julia Tuñón suggests, Mexican society defined maintaining the home, the place for the man of war to return to, as an essentially female role.¹³¹ The chapters of this dissertation argue that, to participate in the revolutionary war, the woman drew from the gender and spatial constructs that saw her as a signifier of the home: she built her agency as a social subject at the intersection of war and domestic spaces.

As the following pages will show, many characteristics shared among popular-class pre-revolutionary homes anticipated the layout of the ephemeral dwellings that women built during the civil war. The single room layout, the changing surfaces, the negotiable privacy, as well as the interiors “spilling out” of *vecindades*, *calpanerías*, and detached dwellings in urban and rural areas, took form in the travelling homes for armies and *soldaderas*. Women were familiar with the functioning of homes, and acted in many ways as “translators” of spatial practices into the travelling dwellings. They made use of the unstable envelopes of these latter to test new spatial and social configurations (often unintentionally).

The next chapters propose a vision of the female subjects placed in *costumbrista* domestic photography as actively defining their own position. Positioned in imagery in the way human scales are in architectural drawings, they traced their own contours and

¹³¹ Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 47.

established new relations with their created domesticities. They smoothed what were until then striated spaces, drawing new lines that, while keeping some references, departed from their rigid initial shape onto often foldable forms and contents.

CHAPTER TWO: BODIES

The central focus of this chapter is women's bodies. It builds on the relationship between the figure of woman and domesticity discussed in Chapter One in order to examine how *soldaderas* "carried" homes into the war in order to carve out their place in the revolution. This part of the dissertation is one of the building blocks of the general argument on the use of the overlap between family and military spaces by women. It analyses the appropriation of sites by *soldaderas* and the positioning of their bodies and items to create ephemeral architectures. I look at three ways in which women's bodies worked as spatial articulators: between home and landscape, between regular (permanent) homes and travelling homes, and between possibilities or affordances taken from one site to another. Another argument threaded through the text and emerging in diverse sections of this chapter claims that, while building their temporary dwellings, the spatial practices of camp followers created subtle fractures in the construct in which woman and home anchored one another and remained outside the war realm. This reveals the fragility of narratives that construe the revolution as a masculine endeavour.

After some details about *soldaderas*, the first part of this chapter takes as a prompt Chapter One's analysis of the relationship between woman and domesticity in order to look at a notion that has similar spatial qualities: the feminised nation/homeland. I examine how this ideal worked alongside the predominant view of the female figure as a homely referent to whom soldiers would return from battle to perpetuate the belief that women did not belong in warfare. These reflections on unbelonging direct the exploration to the tactics that

soldaderas developed to access the spaces of the Mexican Revolution, which often entailed the manipulation of clothes (layers connecting the body with its environment) and strategic navigation across war landscapes.

In the second part of the chapter, I study the domestic practices through which women were afforded access to the battlegrounds. My spatial analysis shows women as builders and their bodies as part of the built and surrounding environment. Following the cyclical creation of these dwellings also reveals the existence of the home as fragmentary. No longer existing in a single space and time, the home of the revolution leaves its unifying, monolithic qualities behind as well. This part of the chapter reconnects with the argument on women's bodies as spatial articulators and ends with a reflection on the *smooth* spaces created by *soldaderas* in the middle of the *striated* military geographies of the revolution.¹

Soldaderas

As mentioned in the introduction, *Soldaderas* performed crucial work in the revolution by providing food, carrying equipment, setting up camp in advance, giving comfort and healthcare to soldiers, and often engaging in battle themselves. These working-class women took part in the revolution from its onset for various reasons. They travelled with military groups either for interest in the promise of social change, for the desire to follow a family member fighting with one of the factions, or for the payment for their services to soldiers.² As historian Elizabeth Salas shows, many of these women were

¹ I borrow the concepts of smooth and striated space from Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Stopover.

² Virginia Ávila García, "Los escenarios de las mujeres de la revolución al presente," *The Latin Americanist* 54, no. 4 (2010): 106.

unattached to one man and charged various members of an army for cooking and laundry services, as well as for the provision of goods.³ The women who travelled with armies were present in large numbers throughout the struggle. However, the only space accorded to them in history is the one behind masculinities in action, like that of a shadow.⁴

Impedimenta, the name both for the equipment carried at the rear and for the group of camp followers, describes the subservient space in which historical accounts have positioned women.⁵

As Susie Porter claims, women contributed to and became affected by the revolution as well as the longer-term processes by which it unfolded.⁶ To situate the work of women within the diverse factions, I roughly depict the main armies in the following lines. In the early stages of the civil war, the groups that fought to depose Díaz constituted or fought in parallel with the maderista army (led by Díaz's opponent Francisco I. Madero). Among them, the most representative were villistas, orozquistas, and zapatistas. The last two groups disagreed with Francisco I. Madero after he assumed the presidency in 1911 and became independent groups which fought against his now official (federal) army. A coup d'état where Madero was murdered enabled General Victoriano Huerta, his once loyal high-ranking officer, to sit in the presidential chair (1913). Villistas and zapatistas then fought alongside a general named Venustiano Carranza to defeat the traitor Huerta (see **Figure 2.1** for a visual of armies' occupied territories)⁷, but once Huerta was successfully

³ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 33-6, 44.

⁴ See examples in the Introduction.

⁵ Jean Meyer, "Grandes compañías, ejércitos populares y ejército estatal en la revolución mexicana (1910-1930)," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 31 (1974): 1010.

⁶ Susie Porter, "Working Women in the Mexican Revolution," 2.

⁷ <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4411sm.gct00282/?sp=7&r=-0.017,-0.023,1.142,0.702,0>

Atlas of the Mexican conflict: containing detailed maps showing the territory involved, pertinent statistics of Mexico and the United States, summary of recent events in Mexico, Chicago and New York: Rand McNally &

ousted, the factions were divided again in 1914: villistas and zapatistas constituted the Convencionista Army, whereas Carranza led the Constitutionalista Army, which emerged victorious from the struggle and signed the 1917 Magna Carta.⁸

Co., 1913, 7. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu, Control number 2012589700.

⁸ Alan Knight, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 124, 367-70, 403-15, 660-4, 706-10, 723, 736-9, 878-80, 884, 984-8, 996-7, 1031, 1045, 1075. See also María Teresa Fernández Aceves, *Mujeres en el cambio social en el siglo XX mexicano* (Mexico City: CIESAS, 2015), 42-5. Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "Rutas vitales en el desierto: la importancia militar de los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana," *Mirada Ferroviaria, Revista Digital*, no. 12 (2010): 64-74.

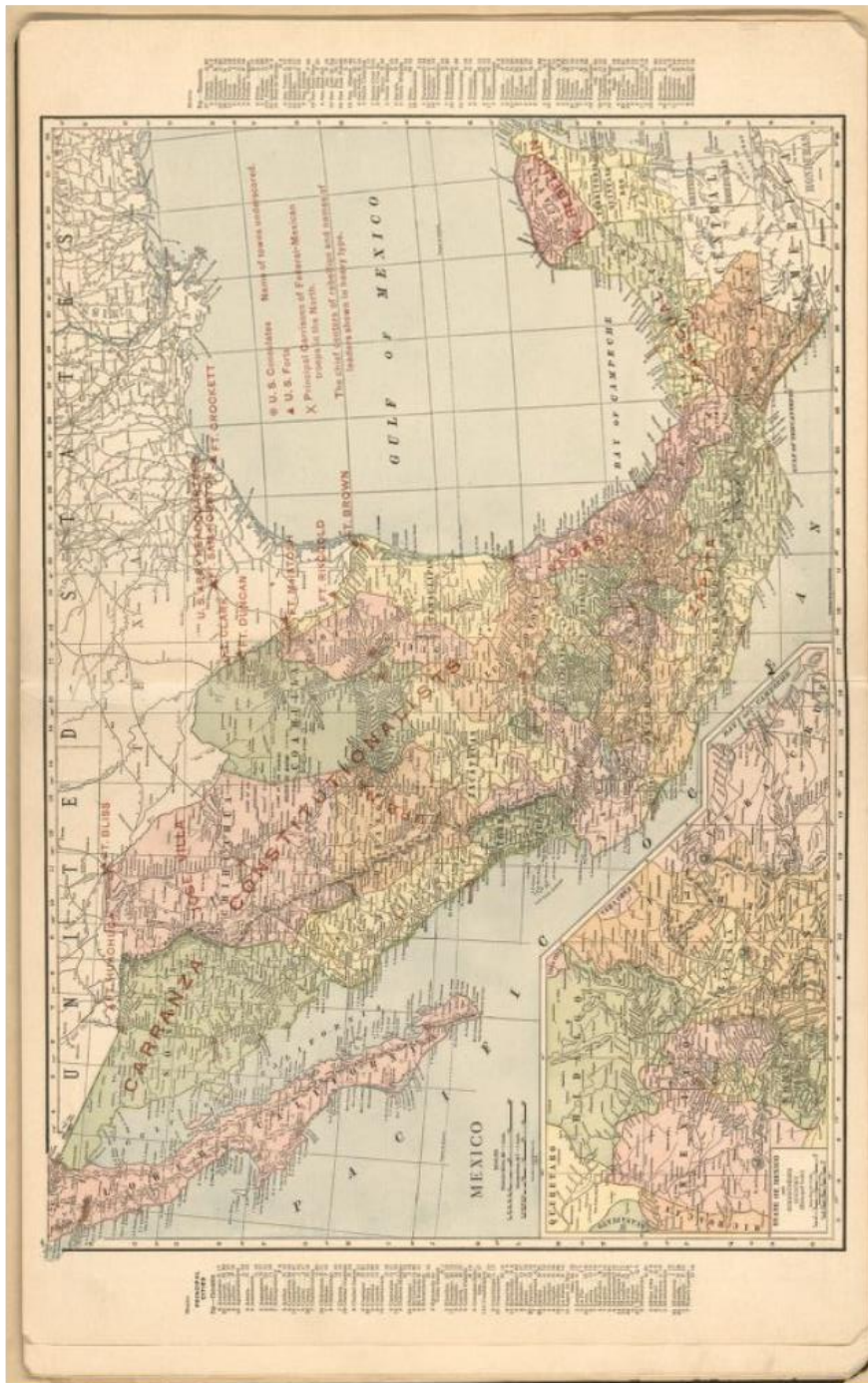


Figure 2.1 *Atlas of the Mexican conflict: containing detailed maps showing the territory involved, pertinent statistics of Mexico and the United States, summary of recent events in Mexico, Chicago and New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1913, 7. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. The map shows the occupation of different territories by armies.*

Part I. Unbelonging Negotiated

Parallel to the figure of the “angel of the home” discussed in the previous chapter, early twentieth-century Mexico’s feminine ideal found its origin in a combination of pre-Columbian tradition and Catholicism. Examples of this are Coatlicue (an Aztec goddess who cared for the land and family) and the Virgin Mary (whose motherhood was a model of abnegation and immobility).⁹ The figure of woman was often used to signify stasis or passivity. For example, the lyrics of the 1853 national anthem used the parallel between women and the home to inspire Mexicans to defend what sounds like a passive motherland from invaders.¹⁰ Also, as shown in **Figure 2.2**, from a 1910 series of postcards that commemorated the one-hundredth anniversary of the Independence War, women became visual metaphors of the country.¹¹



Figure 2.2. Paulat, J. *Mujeres que simbolizan a México* [Women who symbolise Mexico. Translation by author], Postcard. May 1910. Archivo General de la Nación. Colección Propiedad Artística y Literaria, Postales Históricas. Item No. 2441.

⁹ Elizabeth Salas. *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 2-35.

¹⁰ The poem by Francisco González Bocanegra (with music adapted a year later by Jaime Nunó Roca) addresses a motherland whose children swear under oath that they will die to protect her. Miguel Ángel Porrúa (Ed.), *Himno Nacional Mexicano*.

¹¹ Non-visual language used this simile too. Edith O’Shaughnessy recalls an American minister telling her that nations are like women: “nervous and inconsistent.” Edith O’Shaughnessy, *A diplomat’s wife in Mexico: letters from the American Embassy at Mexico City* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916), 225.

These constructs of a passive, static femininity worked in tandem with the notion of the home as a woman's place, and gained traction in Mexican society during times of conflict. Julia Tuñón observes that, since nineteenth-century war-torn Mexico, women's role "was precisely defined: to maintain the place where the warrior could rest from warfare."¹² This narrative mirrors the one that sociologist Philomena Goodman has observed in other examples of conflict, where women (mothers, spouses, lovers) take on the symbolic function of the home as the place where fighters return. The close association of woman and home becomes "especially poignant and comforting during wartime," and altogether, the two concepts represent a site of stability.¹³ Goodman cites Doreen Massey's description of woman's role: a "stable symbolic centre—functioning as an anchor for others,"¹⁴ which suggests that domesticity and women frequently hold a mutual signification.

Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas point to numerous newspapers of the Porfiriato which defined the woman as the priestess or the angel of the home. Her function as such consisted of actions to "repair fractures and losses" of the family space. Also, the beauty of the domestic environment was strongly related to the beauty of the woman inhabiting it.¹⁵ These ideals built upon the metonymic relationship between women and homes analysed in Chapter One. During the Mexican Revolution, the "disintegration" of the home was lamented both in its physical destruction (an upper-class house

¹² Julia Tuñón, *Women In Mexico: A Past Unveiled*, 47.

¹³ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, 19.

¹⁴ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 180. See also Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, 19.

¹⁵ Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas, "La educación de la mujer mexicana en la prensa femenina durante el porfiriato," 226, 9, 32-5.

unsurprisingly creating a deeper reaction¹⁶) and in the noted absence of women from family dwellings after they departed with military contingents.¹⁷ Violence and colonisation have similarly connected domestic space and femininity. Ruth Seifert points to the relationship between violence against women and the conquest of a territory as one of the man-made rules of war.¹⁸ Many *soldaderas* joined the armed struggle after, or in anticipation of assault and displacement by armed forces.¹⁹ The notion of the family home as a shelter changed throughout the conflict²⁰ as it suddenly became a built structure advertising itself to war contingents as sheltering women that they could freely assault.²¹ As in most armed conflicts, in the eyes of attackers, assaulting the house and assaulting women became

¹⁶ Depicting the drama of the destruction of houses that resulted from the violence across the territory, photographers and the media drew on more images of homes of the affluent population than of the underclass. The images held in the Fototeca Nacional show only war-torn opulent houses.

¹⁷ See “Pensamientos de F. Nietzsche,” *El Pueblo*, 13 July 1915, 8, for a column expressing a deep grief for the departure of women. Alison Blunt traces this symbolic connection in discourses of war as women and houses have been used almost metonymically to speak of conflict. Through this association, they both embody the level of destruction with which war is represented to society. As her study shows, the severity of the Indian mutiny against British rule was measured in publications of 1857 on the fate of English women in the colonised territory, and read in architectural terms through the damage made to their houses: images from newspapers depicted Indian rebels entering British homes, where “the presence of a defenceless British wife and mother embodie[d] the severity of this threat to domestic, national, and imperial power, honour and prestige.” In other images, murdered women were absent and their fate was depicted through the ravages committed to dwellings, which became a metaphor of the domestic crisis that the uprising meant to England. Alison Blunt, “Embodying War: British Women and Domestic Defilement in the Indian «Mutiny», 1857–8,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 26, no. 3 (July 1, 2000): 407.

¹⁸ Ruth Seifert, “War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis,” in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 58.

¹⁹ In numerous interviews, *soldaderas* describe having been kidnapped and forced to mobilise by revolutionaries whom they had to marry in the end. In other cases, women were sexually attacked and left. Leonor Alfaro, Viuda de Mejía, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda and María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/100; Alberta Galindo Mantilla, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69. Josefina Bórquez speaks of women having fled towns before the arrival of zapatistas. Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*,

²⁰ Although, as feminist historians have pointed out, accounts of domestic violence have shown the fragility of the ideal of the home as a shelter during so-called peaceful times (for women and children). Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, 8.

²¹ Alberta Galindo narrates getting her mother’s help to hide and to avoid being kidnapped at her house. This did not prevent the man whom he followed later in the camps to find her and abuse her. Alberta Galindo, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69.

equivalent: often bearing the marks of spaces occupied, women were treated as these spaces. Their bodies were turned, as Susan Brownmiller says, into battlefields.²²

Texts from the print media, as well as political discourse and imagery of the time, reinforced the idea that battlegrounds were landscapes of exclusive masculinity.²³ Such omission of female figures is perpetuated to this day in the archival organisation of material from the revolution, but also in the way of obtaining information from survivors of the struggle. Arguably because of the structure of the PHO interviews and other forms of recording, the testimonies of these informants have been shaped as men-centred accounts. The number of images of *soldaderas* in archives like Casasola (now part of Fototeca Nacional) and *Archivo General de la Nación* is a reflection of the marginal space ascribed to women's histories. These images inhabit archives as an exception, an aberration similar to the female presence in the conversations of PHO (*Programa de Historia Oral*). These interviews focus on masculinist narratives of war through pages where the mandatory question "Did you get to see any *soldadera*?" is included just to prompt a curious anecdote. This is easily interrupted in order to move on to the 'heart' of male achievement: "Now, could you tell us *more* about the combats in which you collaborated with Francisco Villa?"²⁴

Likewise, the few interviews of women centre on questions about their relationship and experience with renowned men. The textual space afforded to feminine action and

²² Susan Brownmiller, "Making Female Bodies the Battlefield," in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

²³ Jean Franco, *Plotting Women*, 90-1.

²⁴ Along with Emiliano Zapata, Francisco Villa was probably the most popular general of the revolution. I mention the mediatisation of his career in the following chapter. See Trinidad Vega, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/26.

experience is as limited as the visual. Presumably, much of the design of the 1950s questionnaire (used until the 1980s) hardly focused on women as subjects worth documenting during the revolutionary war. Like cameras solely recording the traces left by men, the accountants of the revolution read and organise their sources in the masculinist terms that have always given war its definition.²⁵ *Soldaderas* appear only as side stories. The archival and oral history spaces given to them have replicated the discourses that excluded women from the battleground for more than a century.

In the revolution, *soldaderas* were heavily needed for provisions and *womanpower*, a reality denied by statements of high military commands but acknowledged by the decision to include them in travel plans. The chief of a regiment forbade women from boarding a train from Mexico City to Chihuahua in December 1910 (just a month into the revolution), arguing that “women were useless in military campaigns.” However, the Ministry of War overturned his order and did not hesitate to pay for a second train in which the women finally joined the troop.²⁶

The presence of women in camps and battlefields is vividly remembered by many of the survivors of the revolution, or forgotten and overlooked by others. “*Soldaderas* are just

²⁵ This is to be expected in a field notably dominated by men scholars looking at institutions identified as masculine. Since her 1983 book *Does Khaki Become You?* political scientist Cynthia Enloe has observed how the military presented itself, “even more than other patriarchal institutions, [as] a male preserve,” inaccessible to and never in the need of women. This gendered discourse has continued to shape a significant portion of military studies, a discipline which, not unlike architecture, has a tendency to leave feminist work as a space apart instead of incorporating gender as a fundamental category of analysis. Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives*, 7. Still, feminist and intersectional analysis continue developing in the field, destabilising masculinist monolithic accounts. Just to name a few: Billie Melman, ed. *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*; Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story*; Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Eds.) *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*; Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett (Eds.), *Women, War, and Revolution*; Cynthia Cockburn, *The Space Between Us*. Norma Chinchilla, “Mobilizing Women: Revolution in the Revolution:” Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (London: Verso, 1984).

²⁶ “*Soldaderas rumbo a Chihuahua*,” *El Tiempo*, 16 December 1910, 7.

tales that people like to tell,” a general interviewed in PHO claims.²⁷ As Tabea Linhard argues, not only did women remain untracked “in official records that eventually became part of historiographies or archives,” but the meaning of what constitutes participation in war has remained contested.²⁸ The narrative which seems to have forgotten women has forced their presence onto the background. This narrative has taken for granted, and thus, overlooked, the subjects tending to the domestic needs of armies, while remaining focused on the violent action (in Chapter Three I talk about the disappearance of women from written stories of the revolutionary camp).

“*Los hombres en la guerra, la mujer en la tierra*,” the rhyme of a *corrido* (folk song) from the civil war which translates “Men in war, the woman in the land,”²⁹ further illustrates the place of women as constructed by a social milieu that resisted the idea of female war participation. In collective imaginaries of the time, the more a space gravitated towards a centre of battle, the stronger female unbelonging became.³⁰ Visual and oral accounts of the war detail the confrontation dynamics, in which contingents would send women to the rear,³¹ always guarding the equipment, and giving men “space” for their combat performance. Miriam Cooke speaks of the importance of this separation to protect patriarchal structures:

²⁷ Jesús Arias Sánchez, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer PHO/1/33, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City,

²⁸ Tabea A. Linhard, *Fearless Women*, 31.

²⁹ “Las soldaderas,” *corrido* composed by Cecilia Rascón.

³⁰ Numerous accounts from the Programa de Historia Oral stress how *soldaderas* were kept away from spaces of confrontation. Chapter Four examines these dynamics. See interviews to Ignacia Peña, PHO-Z/1/18; Jesús Hurtado Ramírez, PHO/1/108; Trinidad Vega, PHO/1/26; Eulalio Mendoza, PHO/1/30; Apolonio Gómez, PHO/1/58 and Constantino Caldero Vázquez, PHO/1/110, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

³¹ “Las posiciones zapatistas en Santa María en poder de los federales,” *El País*, 21 February 1912.

The mere presence of women's bodies in combat space complicates the connections that previously were so easy to make between bodies and the ways in which they are expected to behave. The biological and the social then slip into new connections between the space and the way that those who function in that space are supposed to behave.³²

In the patriarchal discourses of the Mexican Revolution, female bodies would “unsettle the space where only heroes and martyrs tread.”³³ Paradoxically, a presence that many contingents brought to the battleground was that of the Virgin Mary—her full-body depiction in banners that the infantry would carry at the front.³⁴ Whereas many men considered the real corporealities of *soldaderas* an encumbrance, the revered, immaterial corporeality of the Virgen de Guadalupe was believed to belong in and to sanctify the space of confrontation.³⁵

The ideas against female presence in war gained strength, but they did not necessarily translate into lived spaces and practices. Women took part in the geographies of violence of the decade-long conflict. As previously mentioned, *soldaderas* came mostly

³² Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story*, 295. Annmarie Adams directs attention to white men establishing a similar relation of power with women or racialised individuals through architecture and visibility. She states that early twentieth-century Montreal elite men's clubs positioned and directed women in ways that resembled the segregationist treatment of black people: “[T]he white masculinity of users often depended not on the absence of black masculinities per se but on their presence and subjugation. Architecture was particularly complicit in this campaign of separation.” Adams adds the example of Viola Desmond, a black Canadian businesswoman asked to sit in the balcony of a cinema because of her race. Her refusal thwarted the staff members' intention to put her in a subjugated position of (in)visibility in relation to the spaces occupied by white moviegoers. Annmarie Adams, “The Place of Manliness: Architecture, Domesticity, and Men's Clubs,” in *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities Across Time and Place*, ed. Peter Gossage and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2018), 119-20.

³³ Tabea A. Linhard, *Fearless Women*, 7.

³⁴ Photographs from the Casasola Archive testify to the devotion of zapatistas towards Virgin Mary. Irene Copado and Juan Olvera describe soldiers carrying images of the Virgen de Guadalupe, pinned onto clothing, wallets and hats. Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10; Juan Olvera, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer, PHO/1/28. Many villistas claimed not to have catholic beliefs, but Justino López Estrada gives detail of members of the villista army who brought images of Virgen de Guadalupe along. Justino López Estrada, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/49.

³⁵ A century earlier, leader of the independence struggle Miguel Hidalgo famously carried a banner with the Virgen of Guadalupe.

from the popular classes. Gendered ideals of domesticity were directed at women of all social strata but, as discussed in the previous chapter, the feminine containment that these ideals promoted showed “thinner” layers when it came to underprivileged women. Just like their impoverished condition forced them to venture out in search of work during peaceful times, their departure from the family home to participate in the revolution found a certain justification. This did not mean that society and its gendered discourses embraced the idea of these women in the battlefield, as the pejorative descriptions of *soldaderas* in publications show. Pointing to them as the sources of disorder and inefficiency in armies,³⁶ a deep sexism tainted society’s acquiescence to having women in the revolutionary spaces, which, I suggest, reveals a persisting resistance to see them “out of their place.”

These views were unsurprisingly shared by military authorities, as exemplified by the mentioned banning of *soldaderas* from a departing train. Women had, thus, to find practical ways to ensure their belonging. They negotiated the possibility of occupying a site among contingents in at least three ways: by manipulating corporeal layers, like clothes and gear for carrying; by taking up arms; and the most common one, by the home-making performance associated with her gender. Many women navigated a combination of these three modes.

Soldaderas used in different forms the elements clothing/cladding their bodies, depending on the spaces and situations. Layers like clothes or shawls not only connected physically the body to its surroundings, but established the terms in which it moved through these surroundings; for instance, a shawl in which a woman carried the equipment of an

³⁶ *Mexican Herald*, 28 March 1912, 1. “Relatos de cosas graves que hacen las soldaderas,” *La Opinión*, No. 25, 22 July 1911, 3. See also Christine Arce, *Mexico’s nobodies*, 92.

army allowed her to also pass as an innocent civilian in the eyes of enemies.³⁷ Furthermore, the adhesion to feminine or masculine identities (again, through the textiles wrapping her body) helped her navigate the pathways of the revolution.

Military contingents frequently left *soldaderas* behind.³⁸ A 1911 newspaper narrates how four women decided to dress up in men's clothes to be able to leave the city along with a men's-only army. When discovered, they were accepted on the trip, but forced to put on "the garments corresponding to their sex," in the words of the reporter.³⁹ The reshaping of these women's clothing allowed for strategic navigation. So, when thought to be disposable by military authorities, some *soldaderas* negotiated their belonging by switching their clothes (bodily layers) to those that fit in the restricted space "of men." Their transgendering presence was often unsettling to men who, until then, remained assured of the exclusivity of "their" sites of masculinity.⁴⁰ Negotiation to stay required the cross-dressing individuals to take back the layers in which once again they would embody a "non-threatening" femininity.

The (gender) switch points were significant in these spatial practices as active, performative manipulations of *being in space*. As women became confusing presences in landscapes that the collective imaginary depicted as masculine, their gender-transgression (in space) revealed the fragility of the binary sexual system. Almost like Judith Butler's

³⁷ "Cartuchos para zapatistas," *El Pueblo*, 9 November 1917.

³⁸ Frederick Turner, "Los efectos de la participación femenina en la Revolución de 1910," *Historia Mexicana* 16, no. 4 (1967): 606; Edith O'Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*, 58, 124-5.

³⁹ "Cuatro mujeres disfrazadas," *Iberia*, 14 February 1911, 2.

⁴⁰ Eulogio Salazar Villegas narrates the moment when he was about to board a stock car occupied by whom, he thought, were male soldiers. His friend tried to prevent him from doing it, unsettled by the presence of women dressed as men. Eulogio Salazar Villegas, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO/1/37. See also Apolonio Gómez, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/58. Brondo Whitt also narrates his encounter with a transgender soldier, to whom he speaks in a contemptuous way.

much-evoked drag figure,⁴¹ through cross-dressing women could no longer be positioned in the two spaces of differentiation built by heteronormativity. These now-placeless bodies then turned their unbelonging into a vehicle for spatialising identity resistance. Their presence invested new meanings into coded, gendered architectures (architectures of war such as barracks, occupied buildings, and camps). Also, as described above with the shawl, women could switch from belonging to unbelonging in order to travel alongside an army, and to later detach from it and melt into the crowd of a town. Thus, the layers (of clothing) added to the body worked at times to connect while at other times to separate female subjects from the space around.

Women also made use of the unbelonging of their bodies in war to infiltrate spaces assumed under the control of men. They turned their spatial condition as part of an army's visible crowd into that of a presence dispersed and invisible in enemy space. Embodying a passive and submissive femininity—for which their “original” civilian dresses provided identity cloaks—they traversed sites as spies or messengers.⁴² With their bodies physically present in the spaces on which they spied, women manipulated the assumed dissociation between themselves and any possible power over those spaces. Journalists often expressed their surprise about “women being implicated in numerous plots.”⁴³

Women's second tactic to negotiate their place in armies involved using or carrying weapons. At times, their use of armament was a means for getting into the battleground, at times it was an outcome. Firearms were a fundamental component of the war space which

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 174-5.

⁴² As a case in point, see “¿Una mujer fue quien guió a los zapatistas?”, *El País*, 11 January 1913, 7.

⁴³ “Las mujeres conspiradoras serán remitidas a las Islas Marías.” See also *El País*, 27 August 1913; “La Rodríguez es Revolucionaria,” *El Diario*, 15 March 1914, 10.

continually strove to reject female subjects. Bearing them was associated with the practices in which soldiers proved their manhood. A portrait of two men and two women depicts the idealised images of gender at the time (**Figure 2.3**). Whether they are actual members of an army or not is hard to determine, but the intention of the image is what is important here. These individuals are portrayed as bearers of a material culture shaping and shaped by sex. The “carrying” garment crosses the chests of the four figures: in the form of shawls for women, and in the form of bandoliers for men. Shawls are used to carry children and domestic items, and bandoliers ammunition.⁴⁴

Again, these layers bore an architectural function as they determined men and women’s travels across the spaces of the revolution in their duly embodied roles. In the second part of the present chapter, I will mention the shawl and its manipulation by women in their war roles and space-making practices. For now, I suggest that camp followers either subverted the gender ideals dictated by this image or they combined adherence to them with other possibilities, such as bearing arms or crossdressing.

⁴⁴ Edith O’Shaughnessy and Brondo Whitt describe in their memoirs this function of the shawl. *A Diplomat’s Wife*, 144; *La División del Norte*, 247-8. See also Christine Arce, *Mexico’s Nobodies*, 74. In her review of the 2014 Fashion and Textile Museum in London exhibition “Made in Mexico: The rebozo in Art, Culture and Fashion,” Hilary Davidson wrote: “The *rebozo* [Mexican shawl] is a bag, buggy, beauty aid and garment in one.” Hilary Davidson, “Made in Mexico: The Rebozo in Art, Culture and Fashion,” *Textile History* 46, no. 1 (May 2015): 121–23; Fashion and Textile Museum in London exhibition “Made in Mexico: The rebozo in Art, Culture and Fashion.” Fashion and Textile Museum, Bermondsey, London, 6 June – 31 August 2014.



Figure 2.2. *Revolucionarios y soldaderas, retrato* [Revolutionaries and soldaderas, portrait. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico, 1915. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Security film negative, Item No. 186449. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017). Gendered pieces of material culture: shawls cross the chests of women whereas bandoliers cross the chests of men.

Although the commonplace tactic was to keep camp followers as a group behind—away from the sites of violent confrontation—the uncontrollable dynamics of war forced many of these women to take up arms.⁴⁵ Being there to load the rifles and cannons of artillerymen, *soldaderas* often stepped out of their supporting role and engaged in fight.⁴⁶ Celebrated as they were, these women eventually saw the narratives that outlived them

⁴⁵ Carrancista veteran Antonio Cardona López describes female participation in combat missions in the states of Guerrero, Morelos and Sonora. Interview by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/13. See also Gregorio Godoy García, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/6.

⁴⁶ Justino López Estrada provides a detailed description of *soldaderas* pulling out ammunition from satchels during fights, often participating in shootings and getting killed. Justino López Estrada, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/49. See Rafael Mora Valades, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer, PHO/1/103.

domesticate their performances, described as devoted actions to aid their “Juanes.”⁴⁷ Many women became *coronelas* too and led important military moves.⁴⁸

What did it mean, then, for female bodies to bear firearms? It arguably disturbed the constructs fixing bodies as sites that men were to defend from war, or even colonise.⁴⁹ These bodies no longer occupied the “ideal” place of a passive and defenceless motherland. They often moved along the frontline, past the boundaries essentialised by gender constructs. Trading the shawl for an ammunition belt across their chests meant a different way to *be* in space. This is not to say that carrying gun belts prevented women from being the victims of aggression. In fact, the revolution saw a sharp rise in gender violence.⁵⁰ But what is significant here is the changing relationship between a female body and its surrounding space by carrying a masculinist artefact. Did weapons articulate space and women in a manner different from the shawl? The answer does not point readily to an instrumentalised and instantaneous belonging, but at a moment in space where patriarchy saw its compartments transgressed. This moment was real, and fears of what it meant resulted in the subsequent increase of measures to get women “back in place,” like the 1916

⁴⁷ Male soldiers from the revolution were called “Juanes,” from the common name in Spanish Juan. The gendered pseudonym worked specifically to refer to the men that *soldaderas* followed, as in “a *soldadera* and her Juan.” Some examples of these narratives on feminine devotion are: “Una medalla de plata a la valiente soldadera Carmen Saucedo,” *La Patria*, 21 January 1913, 1; “La condecoración de la soldadera,” *El País*, 30 January 1913, 3.

⁴⁸ Zapatista Lieutenant Simón Pineda Barragán remembers rebels taking a municipal building in Ecatzingo, led by a female captain in 1911. Simón Pineda Barragán, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/61.⁴⁸ Antonio Cardona López mentions Amelio Robles and Rosa Bobadilla. Interview by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/13.

⁴⁹ As a case in point, Chapter Five refers to a woman named María Arias who was not a *soldadera* but a civic leader. General Álvaro Obregón ceremoniously offered her his gun, which earned her the pejorative nickname *María Pistolas* (María Guns) because of the social rejection of a female figure bearing arms.

⁵⁰ In numerous testimonies from PHO, *soldaderas* narrate their engagement in the war because of kidnapping by those who would later become their husbands. “Women abandoned or abducted and raped by soldiers had little choice but to become *soldaderas*.” See Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 40-1.

Secretary of War order to nullify military appointments to women.⁵¹ As a consequence, many women whose achievements had awarded them the rank of colonel were denied access to veteran pensions in the years that followed.⁵² Revolutionary authorities then marked female spatial traces as the product of male battles and, just like the feminine icons and myths from the ensuing cultural production, women in combat were reconstructed in the terms dictated by patriarchy.⁵³

Occasionally, women combined the two ways mentioned to navigate the spaces of war. They made use of the dissociation between their gender and the war front to create a space—layered literally inside their dress—to participate in the war in unexpected ways. They could, for example, use their feminine clothing to embody the passivity expected from them while hiding armament inside their clothes and packages. Baskets and bags, assumed to contain objects from the home, lent their mobility to equipment from war space.⁵⁴ This transfer not only followed, but directed key trajectories of the struggle and, in its most invisible form, it happened through the bodies of *soldaderas*. For example, a 1913 article exposes the government's discovery of rebel zapatistas having access to weapons

⁵¹ Martha Eva Rocha Islas, "Feminismo y Revolución," in *Un Fantasma Recorre El Siglo: Luchas Feministas En México, 1910-2010*, ed. Gisela Espinosa Damián and Ana Lau Jaiven, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: UAM-X/CSH/Relaciones sociales, 2011), AHSDNV, Exp. María Teresa Rodríguez, 37.

⁵² In 1939 the government expressed its willingness to restore women's right to pensions and called for applications. See Martha Rocha Islas, *Rostros de la rebeldía*, 83-4.

⁵³ They were sexualised; turned into sexist caricatures of an uncontrollable, fierce, woman; or celebrated as subservient women fighting for their lover. For an analysis in to the emergence of such tropes, see Delia Fernández, "From Soldadera to Adelita: The Depiction of Women in the Mexican Revolution," *McNair Scholars Journal* 13, no. 1 (2009): 53-62.

⁵⁴ The view of women carrying packages could be related to displacement, which was very common in those days as entire families fled from spaces of violent confrontation or were forcibly moved by armies. See Ignacia Peña, Viuda de Fuentes, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/18, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

thanks to women who smuggled them out of military quarters.⁵⁵ The authorities immediately strove to appropriate this invisible space and tried to negotiate possession of retailers' entire stock of weapons. They also apprehended women and men who held unregistered weaponry.⁵⁶ Eventually realising that these measures failed, authorities published a warning where they claimed that they could "see" this invisible pathway of weapons, and threatened the troop members who sold ammunition to zapatista enemies through "the bosom of *soldaderas*" with the hardest punishment.⁵⁷

The third way in which women negotiated a place in the revolutionary landscapes was by building the mobile domestic spaces of armies. No commissary department existed either in federal or rebel armies, which meant that supplies, laundry and healthcare were in the hands (and travelling feet) of *soldaderas*.⁵⁸ I argue that *soldaderas*' practical action of carrying objects and practices from domestic space brought about a symbolic shift in the architectures that the revolution's gendered discourses had denied to women. The practical, object-carrying action initially opened up a space for women's presences and operations; its ensuing symbolic shift resulted in a blurring of boundaries between home and war landscapes.

Myriam Cooke explains the attitudes of the men leading wars as a forceful attempt to fix women's position within a site of otherness: segregated from the highest levels of

⁵⁵ "El parque de los zapatistas provenía de los cuarteles," *El Imparcial*, 27 June 1913, 2, 8; "Un comerciante de abarrotes está preso," *El País*, 15 July 1913, 4. A zapatista captain also testifies for female mediation in how his army got weapons. Justino Morales Campos, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/39.

⁵⁶ "El gobierno pretende comprar toda la existencia de armas y parque," *El Imparcial*, 27 June 1913, 2, 8; "Un comerciante de abarrotes está preso," *El País*, 15 July 1913, 4.

⁵⁷ The publication said that, when a member of the military provided ammunition to rebels, the bullets travelled in a loop that took them to end up hurting the body of this selling traitor. "Cartuchos para zapatistas," *El Pueblo*, 9 November 1917.

⁵⁸ PHO interviews and Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 36.

organisation. Keeping these levels exclusionary, men can guarantee that their ‘aggressive,’ ‘courageous’ and ‘heroic’ roles place their identities as distant as possible from what they consider the “dreaded feminine.”⁵⁹ Authorities of revolutionary and official armies, supported by the printed press, used the association of women and the home to try to contain femininity where it would not threaten the revolution’s spaces of manliness.⁶⁰ They stated that a woman’s place was in the home, and that she did not belong in campaign, yet they acknowledged that armies needed the domestic care that camp followers offered.⁶¹ In Part II of the chapter, I look at the architectural shape of this home-building activity and the ways in which it displaced gender and spatial constructs.

Part II: Mobile Homes

Soldaderas walked alongside cavalries and travelled by train with troops while carrying children, baskets with food, blankets, kitchenware, and basic first-aid kits. Upon arrival at villages and campsites, they would forage and utilise any material they found to cook,⁶² assemble shelter, and wash clothes. Numerous images and testimonies of the time depict the ways in which women transformed fields, pathways, buildings, streets, and even

⁵⁹ As Miriam Cooke argues: “We might say, it is not that men are aggressive, courageous, and heroic because they were born with a pair but rather that, if they wish to be clear about an identity that will distance them from the dreaded feminine, they must strive to be aggressive, courageous, and heroic. The arena that allows them to affirm these qualities without threat of the emergence of the feminine is one that traditionally excludes women’s bodies, except in their role as other: present as nurses or camp followers, women are the noncombatants, and men must be the combatants.” Cooke, *Women and the War Story*, 295.

⁶⁰ Cynthia Enloe examines the military’s institutional investment in shaping the space of validation of a masculine identity, in essentialist terms. Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, 15.

⁶¹ “If you wanted soldiers, then you needed *soldaderas*,” says Mayor Constantino Caldero Vázquez, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/110. See also notes in periodicals such as “Las Soldaderas,” *La Opinión*, January 1st, 1913, 3.

⁶² See personal chronicle of Rosa E. King, English owner of a hotel in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Rosa E. King, *Tempest over Mexico; a Personal Chronicle* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), Chapter XII.

trains and tracks into homes. As shown below, *soldaderas* carried across war spaces a domesticity no-longer enclosed by walls but “unfolded” at the sites to which armies travelled. Women transformed the notion that attempted to contain them in houses, reshaping the relation between domestic and war architectures, as well as between masculine and feminine agencies in violent times.

“La Cucaracha” (“The Cockroach”), a folk song of Spanish origin which goes back to the nineteenth century, became immensely popular in revolutionary Mexico⁶³ (see the 1915 print version of the *corrido* [folk song] sold at newspaper stands in **Figure 2.4**). The revolutionary version related the cockroach to the figure of the *soldadera*, as *cucaracha* was among the names given to camp-followers.⁶⁴

La cucaracha, la cucaracha
Ya no quiere caminar
Porque no tiene, porque no tiene
Dinero para gastar⁶⁵

The cockroach, the cockroach
Cannot walk anymore
Because she doesn't have
Any money to spend⁶⁶

⁶³ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 89.

⁶⁴ *Galletas* or cookies was another nickname given to *soldaderas*.

⁶⁵ “Corrido de la Cucaracha,” Antonio Vanegas Arroyo (Publisher), Collection: Popular Graphic Arts, Item No. 99615844, Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99615844/>, accessed 28 February 2017. The version of this song mentioned by Salas, Christine Arce and Anita Brenner switches the part “she doesn’t have money to spend” for “she doesn’t have marijuana to smoke.” Christine Arce, *Mexico’s nobodies*; Anita Brenner, *Idols behind Altars: The Story of the Mexican Spirit* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 209. Arce contrasts the figure of the *cucaracha* against the *adelita* (another name for *soldadera*) as it “became the model for the camp slut who entertained the troops even when she caused a little mischief,” 92.

⁶⁶ Translation by author.



Figure 2.4. Posada, José G. *Ballad of la cucaracha who hasn't been out because she doesn't have money to spend.* Online image. Mexico City: Antonio Vanegas Arroyo (Publisher), 1915. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington. Caroline and Erwin Swann collection of caricature and cartoon. Control No. 99615844. <https://www.loc.gov/item/99615844/> (accessed date February 2017).

In this particular version, the lyrics speak of a *soldadera* whose ability to walk is thwarted because of the lack of spending money. The word *soldadera*, as described by Elizabeth Salas, comes from the male soldier's pay, the *sold* or *soldada*, usually exchanged with women who sold food and supplies.⁶⁷ The view that the resources of women always came from a man presumably shaped the song's notion that the *cucaracha*'s mobility

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 11.

depended, not on the possibilities of her body, but on the financial support of the soldier. Like many other *corridos*,⁶⁸ “La Cucaracha” served the purpose of fixing feminine identities in sexist terms: domesticated in these cultural productions, camp followers were “neutralized in such a way that coincided with males’ expectations of women,” as Delia Fernández says.⁶⁹

As I stated earlier, the masculinist narratives of dominant culture delineate the spaces kept in the histories of the revolution. Women have been grudgingly admitted into these spaces provided that they fit into these subordinating constructs. To enter the spaces of the revolution historically documented, the feminine figure gets edited as per the patriarchal discourse of the mainstream narratives in literature and imagery. Tabea Linhard claims that “women’s roles were so new and, to an extent, challenging, that female revolutionaries were assimilated into literary historical or popular discourse through preexisting discursive conventions.”⁷⁰ I contend, however, that women also shaped their own participation in spatial terms, often beyond the *cucaracha*’s limited affordances. In what follows I examine how, by exploring their own spatial possibilities and belongings, women appropriated certain spaces. Therein, they layered their revolutionary traces by creating temporary architectures.

⁶⁸ Such as “Adelita,” “La Valentina,” “La rielera” and Cecilia Rascón’s “Las soldaderas,” mentioned earlier. See Posada, José G. *Valentina Nuevo Corrido*. Online image. Mexico City: Antonio Vanegas Arroyo (Publisher), 1915. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington. Caroline and Erwin Swann collection of caricature and cartoon. Control No. 99615897. <https://www.loc.gov/item/99615897/> (accessed July 31, 2020); José G. *Adelita: Canción Tapatía*. Online image. Mexico City: Antonio Vanegas Arroyo (Publisher), 1910. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington. Caroline and Erwin Swann collection of caricature and cartoon. Control No. 99615837. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsc.04485/> (accessed July 31, 2020).

⁶⁹ Delia Fernández, “From Soldadera to Adelita: The Depiction of Women in the Mexican Revolution,” 62.

⁷⁰ Tabea A. Linhard, *Fearless Women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War*, 3.

With the items that they carried, *soldaderas* built temporary domestic architectures (in the form of improvised kitchens, living and sleeping or washing areas). I argue that this process became an architectural negotiation of women's place in the revolution. The domestic objects that they transported afforded women access to spaces formally denied to them: in the end, the purpose that military authorities acknowledged in *soldaderas* was providing domestic care, as previously mentioned.

In each setting where troops arrived and in the very travelling spaces (like train cars), *soldaderas* built sites to cook, eat, sleep, rest and do laundry. These scenes were the frequent subject of the revolution's photographers (see **Figures 2.4** and **2.5**) and were described by survivors of the struggle, some of whose testimonies I examine below.

Soldaderas carried with them objects that would serve the domestic needs of armies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, hotplates, brazier fans, baskets, pots, and pans were traditionally hung in kitchens and visually became part of the walls of a popular Mexican house. When they followed camps, women transferred these items from the surfaces of dwellings to the surface of their own bodies: besides the baskets or bags that they hung on their arms,⁷¹ *soldaderas* used the shawl to secure objects to their bodies, which facilitated carrying them.⁷² Layers of the home, hence, left the fixity of their walls and cladded women's bodies during revolutionary times. Travelling through the space of war, these layers were still part of architecture, but an architecture no longer defined by enclosing walls.⁷³ Delineating a traditional view of domestic space, Michel de Certeau states that the

⁷¹ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 65-6.

⁷² Elena Poniatowska, *Soldaderas*, 13; *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

⁷³ This architecture that travelled consisted of the objects packed together, which I advance as a domestic space "folded" (like clothes folded for travel). The woman would carry this folded architecture. Also, as explained below, the architecture "unfolded" upon arrival, as its domestic events did.

home is “constituted on the basis of the wall” since its sheltering qualities separate the inhabitants from the outside.⁷⁴ *Soldaderas* shifted this definition by enabling parts of domestic architecture (the objects that were part of walls) to take up a form that left behind the fixity and enclosure of walls: layers of the home clad mobile bodies during travel only to take back their architectural, space-defining function upon installation and “unfolding” at camping sites.⁷⁵



Figure 2.4. *Revolucionarios villistas salen rumbo a León, Guanajuato* [Villista revolutionaries set off to León, Guanajuato my translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1915. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 37886. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017)

⁷⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 123.

⁷⁵ I analyse further on how objects became parts of architecture by taking up the function of defining space, like the setting for a meal that a *soldadera* organised around the objects.



Figure 2.5. *Rurales comen en compañía de mujeres y niños en el exterior de una casa* [Rural people eat in the company of women and children outside a house. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1910. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 5708. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

Dwelling on this idea of architectural and bodily layers a bit longer, we can see the crucial role of the shawl in the creation of temporary architectures. In her exploration of queer architecture, Katarina Bonnevier builds on Gottfried Semper's theory of architectural cladding to propose buildings as dressing the body (by enclosing it). She also advances the idea of clothes as links between architecture and its inhabitants,⁷⁶ and directs attention to

⁷⁶ Specifically, she speaks about masks, costumes and disguises as connections between architecture and performing subjects. Katarina Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains*, 375; Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

tents, with their textile constitution, as “direct examples of buildings dressing the body”⁷⁷—I assume, too, that she considers the tent’s scale and immediacy to the corporeal here.

I propose that we view the shawl as a key mediator between bodies and spaces. Its aforementioned role as a travelling wall for “hanging” objects, transported by the body of the *soldadera*, is only one example of this role of articulation: specifically as it related the space of departure, the space of travel, and the space of arrival. In the latter, a new domesticity emerged as the shawl and its contents unfolded in space (see discussion in what follows). In relation with Bonnevier’s idea of an architecture dressing the body, it is important to note that the shawl was often taken off of the body that it clad to become a tent itself, taking the enveloping function of a wall or rooftop and dressing/sheltering other bodies. It, however, organised space more loosely than suggested by de Certeau’s definition of a home’s wall, which separates an inside and an outside. This use of the shawl becomes evident in the recollections of Brondo Whitt, a doctor who narrates his days serving with the villista army in the book *La Division del Norte (1914) por un testigo presencial* (*The División del Norte Army (1914) by an eyewitness*). The present chapter and subsequent ones draw heavily from Whitt’s published memoirs. He describes camp followers improvising dwellings by hanging shawls in a tent-like shape on short trees:

By our train car a family arrives: a man, a woman, a boy... and a donkey. The woman extends over the many branches of the *gobernadora* a protecting textile (the rag) and under the exiguous shade enhanced by the textile the family settles, like gypsies.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Katarina Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains*, 375.

⁷⁸ *Gobernadora* is the name of the short tree. Not without some classist scorn, Whitt often calls women’s shawls ‘rags.’ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 248-9. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

The shawl had a relationship with domesticity that changed dramatically during the struggle. Textiles were among the objects handcrafted by working-class/peasant mestiza and indigenous women at home. They would weave shawls both for themselves and for selling.⁷⁹ If we go back to the previous chapter's **Figure 1.15**, we can see that one type of hardware for weaving was a post to which the waist loom was attached—let us recall how the photographer's work shows a gendering intent to link visually a subject, an activity, and domesticity. Such photographic work attempts to illustrate the feminised task of fabricating shawls in homes of the popular strata. Before mass-production, the tradition of making shawls linked this garment to the domestic setting through the work of women. The shawl was a product *from* the home that later on, during the revolutionary war, became a tool *to produce* the home.⁸⁰

Another key source is the story of former *soldadera* Josefina Bórquez, which she shared with writer Elena Poniatowska. Together, they created the narrative in the book *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*. As part of her experiences serving in the carrancista forces, Bórquez recalls:

⁷⁹ Julia Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 77. Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta describe the role of Porfirian peasant women in supplementing the family's finances by weaving and making handcrafts at home. "La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: el distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910," 123. Neither the shawl (*rebozo*, *ruana*, *jorongo*) nor this use for carrying are unique to Mexico. Women in many Latin American countries have worn the garment, arguably a variant of the Arabic veil brought by the Spanish conquest. See Martha Alfaro, "Utilización del rebozo y el mecapal para el transporte de objetos durante el período virreinal. Estudio de caso de cuatro mujeres de la colección de San José de los Naturales," in *Memoria del VII Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Antropología Biológica*, ed. P. Hernández, C. Serrano, and F. Ortiz, vol. 507, Colección científica (Mexico City: INAH, 2006), 56–64.

⁸⁰ Christine Arce describes the shawl's function during the revolution: "This humble article of clothing cum domestic tool is transformed into a weapon, and not just a symbol of resistance in the metaphoric sense, but rather as another manifestation of resistance, an actualization of struggle and war. The rebozo carries that which will nourish the soldiers, that which transforms products into sustenance, and the progeny who represent both the soldadera and the soldier's immortality, as they in turn, will continue the fight." *Mexico's Nobodies*, 75–6.

My dad travelled by foot and I would follow alongside the infantry. I carried a basket with kitchenware and walked in high heels; not those bayonets people use these days and that just pierce the ground, but good heels. My dad had my footwear made with shoemakers from Acapulco: black shoe, brown shoe, and tights. . . . I walked only with a basket on my arm: plate, cup, jug, a pot for making coffee or frying something that he would eat.⁸¹

In a number of her recollections, Bórquez narrates how she and other women would comb the sites where armies arrived in search of materials and food.⁸² Newspapers, too, describe the foraging mission of *soldaderas*.⁸³ Women combined the gear that they brought with the materials available in each new place, which entailed a constant exchange of the layers they carried with those from the landscape. They placed, mostly on the ground, the items that they brought (like braziers and grinding stones to cook, or blankets and packages),⁸⁴ and, often, they would buy, find, and steal additional materials.⁸⁵ As the mobile home unfolded, the travelling layers merged with those from the landscape. By leaving behind objects⁸⁶ and picking up new ones, women set off an ever-changing practice of homebuilding. This action destabilised in turn constructs of a domesticity once believed fixed and anchoring. More importantly, women, initially carrying and then organising

⁸¹ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 65-6. The novel renames Bórquez as Jesusa Palancares. Author translated all quotations from this source.

⁸² Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66-7.

⁸³ “El General Angeles ordena que salgan las tropas.” *El País*, 3 September 1912. “Zapatistas envían a sus soldaderas antes a saquear: Sta Ma Yanquitalpan, Edo. Mex.” *El País*, 16 August 1913. Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

⁸⁴ For descriptions, see Ignacio Herrerías, “Desde el campo revolucionario,” 17 April 1911 (mentioned in Chapter Four); and Josefina Bórquez’s testimony in Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

⁸⁵ “Federales envían a sus soldaderas antes a saquear,” *El País*, 16 August 1912, 3; “El General Angeles ordena que salgan las tropas,” *El País*, 3 September 1912, 8.

Irene Copado, viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil and Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/10, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

⁸⁶ Brondo Whitt describes a landscape covered by shawls (“rags”) abandoned by a passing army, 248.

spatially, became articulators: on the one hand, between permanent and mobile homes, and on the other, between these mobile homes and the geographies that armies inhabited.

To elaborate on this female role of articulation, I want to return our attention to the folded/compacted domestic space that *soldaderas* transported. This folded domestic space was constituted by the objects used to configure and operate the travelling homes, either carried in a basket, in a shawl, or in the *impedimenta* carts that women were meant to safekeep.⁸⁷

Brondo Whitt describes an episode in which women were forced out of the villista train in which he travelled, taking with them their packages and pots.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, in a maderista camp, Ignacio Herrerías, a reporter from the newspaper *El Tiempo* (1911) describes the heaps of serapes, items, and clothes lying at a military campsite.⁸⁹ American journalist Edith O'Shaughnessy, who travelled with her diplomat husband through revolutionary Mexico between 1913 and 1914, describes the *soldaderas* whom she saw: "Having no homes, these women are wont to take all their possessions with them."⁹⁰ **Figure 2.6** helps visualise some forms of these travelling packages—even if staged, this photograph is but a visual reference that supports the descriptions of the packs of items provided by Bórquez, Whitt, Herrerías, or O'Shaughnessy. In the course of travel or at stopovers, the clustered objects simultaneously held, within their layers, mobility and stasis. That *soldaderas* took them away upon departure or spread them on the ground determined

⁸⁷ See "Las tropas federales se proponen asestar un golpe terrible a los revolucionarios," *El Imparcial, diario ilustrado de la mañana*, 19 May 1912.

⁸⁸ Whitt, 245.

⁸⁹ Ignacio Herrerías, "Desde el campo revolucionario," *El Tiempo*, 17 April 1911.

⁹⁰ O'Shaughnessy, 245.

the condition of the space around the packages: as a site of passage or settling. The folded, travelling home articulated domestic spaces and the landscapes of travel, and so did the woman carrying, organising, and operating this home.



Figure 2.6. *Soldaderas con utensilios propios de la vida revolucionaria en estación de ferrocarril* [Soldaderas with household items from revolutionary life at train station, my translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 292490. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

In what follows, I propose viewing *soldaderas* not only in their action of unfolding domestic settings, but in the action of turning their own bodies into architectural elements. While a camp follower organised space, her body and the layers cladding/clothing worked in combination to shape the ephemeral architectures. But unlike the role of a wall in conventional architecture,⁹¹ this shaping “moved away” from the function of enclosing. These domestic settings got diverse layouts in which women were functionally and

⁹¹ Especially the perimetral wall described by de Certeau.

physically part of architecture. Shown below to become themselves pivots of the ephemeral living sites, bodies merged with the environment that they reshaped.

Veteran Justino López Estrada talks about women arranging an eating space around planks and braziers. Their “Juanes” gathered around and López Estrada was invited to share the meal.⁹² Brondo Whitt observes in his memoirs similar settings.⁹³ He describes one by the site where soldiers wait to receive their weaponry:

Soldiers gather in groups or families to eat. Every *soldadera* feeds several men. ... A young woman makes flour tortillas using a bottle to flatten the dough on a plank. The bottle comes and goes, it rolls and presses; the dough gets thinned, rounded, and outspread... Thereon, it goes on the “comal” [hotplate; quotes in original] to get fire-cooked, and then comes another. At a distance, a girl watches over a pan splashing hot oil, where pieces of meat and potatoes emit Olympic smells.

A third woman cuts a hen into pieces with a double-edged bayonet, helped by a fourth one who prepares a chili *molcajete*. The three-legged *molcajete* is a mortar made in raw clay. The chili is a red-coloured pepper of visible fire-like spiciness. The *soldadera* beats and shreds the pepper in water inside the *molcajete*, takes it and squeezes it with the fingers (which I want to assume are clean); in this way she detaches the tasty pulp of the *capsicum* [genus of pepper; italics in original] and separates the skin and the seeds, which she discards towards the ground.⁹⁴

Photographs from the Casasola Archive illustrate similar scenes. Cautious of using photographs as evidence and acknowledging how their content, edition, and message can be manipulated by producers (see Introduction), I suggest we turn back to this plausible manipulation: the pictures resemble the descriptions of Whitt, Bórquez and Herreras, so,

⁹² Justino López Estrada, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/49.

⁹³ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 121.

⁹⁴ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 286, 269. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

they strive to remain “faithful” to the gendered image of women during the war. In many ways, they reproduce the gendered narrative held by PHO today and by newspapers of the time, one that frames women in their war effort as exceptions that must be contained into a legible representation of femininity. In other words, these women are portrayed as exceptions in war space (a masculine space) but they remain as the norm in the domestic work that they carry out in such space.

This possible manipulation—that the meal during the war was staged—is actually part of my reading. How does the visual material help us read the textual and how does the textual, in turn, help us read the visual? Here, not only do I see one as supporting the other, but I propose that, bearing in mind the probable manipulation of the image, we start disarranging (disarticulating) its visual elements while remaining attentive to the descriptions by Bórquez, Whitt, and Herrerías: for example, **Figure 2.5** shows women by a building, facing a group of men and a child who consume the meal. The photograph suggests that the meal was prepared by the women. If we start disarranging the elements, including bodies, which give form to the depicted space, we know that they can all be in different positions, but always organised around the *soldadera* and her cooking set-up: the textual descriptions testify to this central, organising role of women.

As a visual resource that works through my suggested dis-articulation, I have drawn a series of plans that disarrange and re-arrange the elements of the images and descriptions (**Figure 2.7**). They show different possibilities of their arrangement in and of space. These architectural representations start from what the texts and the photographs have in common: women as pivots, their items spread out as definers of space. The representations, then, depart from the “faithful” depiction of the photograph, showing that the position and

relation of elements can have infinite variations, but still building on the argument of the woman as an organiser of the site. Unlike regular architectural drawings, these plans forego the intention of grounding *one* single reading, one spatial arrangement suggested by the photograph. They, instead, play with the multiple spatial possibilities, and the few variations that they show attest to an open-endedness that further reinforces the argument of women as articulators or enablers: the woman is an organiser of space in its multiple forms. She both arranges space and becomes a part of the arrangement, while her objects help shape the limits and distribution of the temporary architecture.

The architectural function of the body of a camp follower becomes evident in the interlocking and mutual disarrangement of the textual and visual materials. In them, we see soldiers sit or stand around a woman and the kitchen/diner that she set up. Men define the perimeter of the eating space while the woman's body becomes the pivot. Her body thus becomes the wall (or column) organising the unbounded site—and later taking it away. It is possible to see here the corporealities of *soldaderas* at the centre of the production of space. To borrow the words of Susana Torre: “bodies produce space by introducing direction, rotation, orientation, and occupation, and by organizing a *topos* through gestures, traces, and marks.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Susana Torre (paraphrasing Henri Lefebvre), “Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo,” 249.

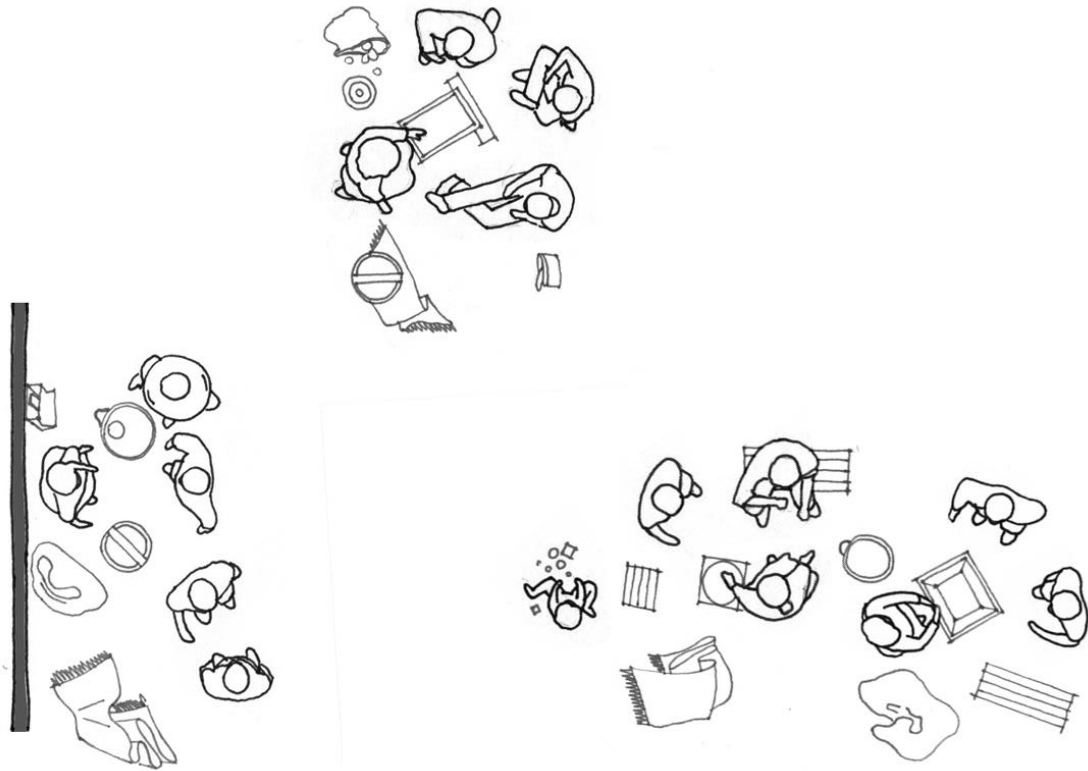


Figure 2.7. These plans disarrange and re-arrange subjects and elements from descriptions and images of the revolution. They show the role of women as pivots of the temporary architecture, which is also defined by the cooking set-up, other artefacts, and even the position of men and children. Drawing by author.

Whitt also narrates an episode in which his column and its *impedimenta* occupied Avenida Juárez in Chihuahua. It resembles a setting described by veteran Juan Arellano Aguilar, where he grouped with his fellow soldiers to eat outside the houses of villagers.⁹⁶

Figure 2.8 (in a similar scene in San Diego, Mexico City) illustrates a group of soldiers and camp followers installed on a street, leaning against continuous walls of buildings to rest and eat. Again, I propose reading the image and descriptions while considering the

⁹⁶ Juan Arellano Aguilar, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/7.

disarrangement suggested above. Gathered around the woman, travelers use the vertical surfaces to define an outdoor space. In this case, the walls originally built to enclose a traditional domestic space have their function turned outwards. Mirrored by other walls across the street, they all “contain” the space of the temporary, outdoor home inhabited by revolutionary travellers.

As testimonies from PHO reveal, women’s role of home-making often went beyond the physical arrangement and extended into a social task. To improve their fleeting domestic setting, they negotiated with town dwellers so that the travelling group could eat by the houses.⁹⁷ The space inside the walls provided food, water, or instruments to cook. The village inhabitants opened-up their homes, which not only supported, but became physically and functionally connected with the improvised site outdoors. Both domesticities, the ephemeral and the contained, became, altogether, a temporarily expanded dwelling. This socio-spatial configuration showed an additional change: homes now accommodated individuals not necessarily sharing family ties. The lived space in the permanent building, thus, exceeded, as well, its definition as a monolithic, intimate, familial venue.



Figure 2.8. *Revolucionarios descansan en el callejón de la rinconada de San Diego, Ciudad de México* [Revolutionary people rest on alley of San Diego Ranch, Mexico City. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1910. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 33493. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

⁹⁷ See Jesús Chávez, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/99; Domingo Yedra Islas, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z-1-15. Brondo Whitt, 265.

The articulation of body, dwelling, and site paradoxically happened in the dis-articulation of the construct of the home as a monolithic space—believed to be unified immaterially by socio-familiar practices and materially by brick and mortar (or wood, *bahareque*, and other materials). The cycle in which women arrived, manipulated layers, built the dwelling, inhabited alongside soldiers, dismantled, took off, and built anew turned domestic architecture into what I propose we see as an *aggregate of events*. Instead of being defined by fixed spaces, the home's existence extended along fragments—i.e. events that displaced the home's monolithic qualities. The activities/events of cooking and eating, resting, setting up, and sleeping unfolded serially along time and space: morning at a certain place, afternoon at another, and evening elsewhere. The events no longer took place: they took *places*. Traced as an itinerary, such places were altogether the home. The home was *one* (the one lived at a specific “present”), but also *multiple* (its many versions along the timeline of an advancing troop). Domestic space became its fragments, which consisted of spatial and material practices no longer contained in a single space and time. Brondo Whitt offers an example of such home(s) existing outside of notions of fixity and unity.

By carefully reading one of his itineraries, we can see that the day's home of his army unfolded beyond a single space or time: the morning kitchen *happened* at a train car before departure; the afternoon kitchen and laundry *happened* outdoors at a stop a few hours later; even some form of patio or play area *happened* further ahead when a group of soldiers playfully captured a snake; the evening kitchen(s) *happened* at empty houses that women occupied in a village at the next stop; here, the living room and bedroom also *happened* at the end of the day of travel.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Brondo Whitt, 268-74.

According to Irene Copado, a woman revolutionary interviewed in PHO, some women sold food and services to armies, either travelling along with them or visiting the site where they camped to offer their goods.⁹⁹ Josefina Bórquez narrates episodes of vendors coming close to their troop.¹⁰⁰ **Figure 2.9** allows us to picture this strategic approach in what looks like a food-vending setting located somewhere visible and accessible to the potential customers¹⁰¹—the members of a travelling army. In it, soldiers gather around a woman and her space of preparation. Her body, overlooked by the caption from the Casasola photograph, is hidden behind a soldier who sits on a sack, and her veiled head barely projects to the right, beyond his helmet.

The image helps visualise the strategy of a vendor: her decision to sit by the wall that runs along a road shows an intention to connect with the linear space of passage, to somehow borrow from the transience of that space, and to sell to passers-by her products and services. The image can be compared to a scene where the federal army boards a train, described by Edith O'Shaughnessy. In it, “venders of fruits, highly colored bonbons, and still more highly colored sweet drinks” offered their products to soldiers by the long lines of wagons.¹⁰²

By marketing their home-cooking, sellers brought a part of domesticity out to the public space. The definition of the home as an aggregate of events becomes evident as the food vendor/cook transforms the transit space into a kitchen. The central area, an

⁹⁹ Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

¹⁰⁰ See also Edith O'Shaughnessy, 145, 245.

¹⁰¹ Anna Macías speaks of the workers of this informal sector offering their products at stations. *Against all Odds*, 31-2.

¹⁰² Edith O'Shaughnessy, 245.

organising element that in the regular home is the cooking- or fireplace,¹⁰³ emerges alone here. Even without the adjacent rooms/spaces that “complete” a regular house, the contingent space created by the woman is still a domestic one—a space-event, part of the series of *moments* that configure the domestic architectures of this war. The woman cooking creates a kitchen, and maybe another one selling blankets creates the sleeping area, while a third one vending alcohol creates a salon or a social outdoors.¹⁰⁴



Figure 2.9. *Constitucionalistas preparan alimentos en una calle* [Constitutionalists prepare food on a street. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 38101. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

¹⁰³ See Chapter One, 1.1 Rural house forms.

¹⁰⁴ In a stretch of her time as a camp follower, Josefina Bórquez sold alcohol to passing soldiers. *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*.

What made these ephemeral space-events more domestic than a vendor's setting regularly used by city dwellers instead of by revolutionary travellers? I contend that an important part of the travelling home was its cyclical life in relation to its users or enablers: the mobile home left behind the anchoring qualities of a regular home but was still installed, operated, used, and dismantled by a group travelling together. Here, individuals not necessarily united by kinship built a form of connection that resembled one or many families, or even a "domestic group."¹⁰⁵ As this research has shown thus far, the woman was frequently at the centre of domestic work, but also of connection and collaboration. Mayor Constantino Caldero Vázquez states: "If you wanted to have soldiers, you needed to have *soldaderas*."¹⁰⁶ Brondo Whitt describes the contradictory position of General Francisco Villa with respect to the need for women in military camps:

Villa himself hesitates when it comes to feminine participation. You see him very angry, and in the middle of "toads and snakes" [curse words], he states in front of the army rabble that "viejas" [pejorative for women] are not going anywhere near combat. But there you have him, past the tantrum (that fury of Villa that makes men tremble), conceding that a *vieja* means life to a soldier in

¹⁰⁵ It is harder to see the entire group journeying together as one big family than as several family nuclei. In the account of Josefina Bórquez, we can see members of her army forming close communities, especially when it came to support networks of women. Some *soldaderas*, for instance, grouped to defend her from abuse by a lover of his father—Bórquez started following him to the revolutionary war as a child. Years after that, the occasion of her husband's death saw a number of women come together to pay for Bórquez's bus ticket back home. Poniatowska, 65, 68, 132-4. Among many scenes of "social salons" and togetherness of travellers, Brondo Whitt describes a moment in which *soldaderas* bond while combing and cleaning one another's hair, to which he adds narrations of social practices of women taking up spaces such as the tops of trains. See Chapter Three. Whitt 98, 144, 245, 297. Besides the creation of these family nuclei, there were, naturally, many "real," kinship-connected families (Bórquez, for instance, belonged to different family nuclei, some connected by kinship and some not). Anthropologists and sociologists propose the term "domestic group" as an alternative to existing notions for the term family (which has so far remained patrilocally-based). This group includes members who can or cannot be related by kinship either sharing a dwelling or dispersed in different geographies but with a social connection of some kind. Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary K. Vaughan, *Mujeres del campo mexicano, 1850-1990* (Mexico: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2003), 24.

¹⁰⁶ Constantino Caldero Vázquez, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/110.

campaign: she gives him food, offers him a clean shirt, sews his breeches, and brightens up with her songs those merciless nights of rain and cold wind, spent on the top of train cars.¹⁰⁷

Outside a city, a non-war-related camping activity might seem similar in its cyclic creation and in its existence along a series of space-events, but I argue that such kind of camp does not necessarily seek the domestic qualities pursued by the war camps that engaged *soldaderas*. In other words, when camping recreationally, any participant can set up the tent, build a fire, and cook,¹⁰⁸ whereas, in the revolutionary camps, the women “had to” carry out the same activities. The words of Whitt evoke the need for a domestic “feeling” (attributed to the gendered work of women) so that soldiers would not abandon the years-long, perilous war encampments. Leisure camping arguably relies on a home to return to, even if the intention is a temporary escape from it,¹⁰⁹ but war camps seldom offer the same certainty: their undefined duration and hardship foreshadow the possibility of dying and never returning home. Brondo Whitt describes the exodus of entire families from Northern villages, all of them following the army: “No one speaks of heading back, except

¹⁰⁷ Brondo Whitt, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Abigail Van Slyck shows, however, that American modern summer camps had strict prescriptions for the roles of participants in camp-building. These roles were often gendered, but I contend that they were so more as a means to instruct children into social models of adulthood and citizenship than as prosthetic homes (because they were seen as escapes from the home, as the following note explains). Abigail Van Slyck, “Connecting with the Landscape: Campfires and Youth Culture at American Summer Camps, 1890-1950,” in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children*, ed. Marta Gutman and Ning De Coninck-Smith (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Even if hardly mentioning a home to return to, Charlie Hailey’s description of “breaking” camp implies the same certainty. *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and Place*, 221-32. Charlie Hailey, *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and Place* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008). Abigail Van Slyck examines the intention of temporally removing children from the family home in 1890-1960 North-American summer camps in order to shape childhood according to modern principles. Whereas such removal was often meant to “protect” the young from the perceived dangers of home and city raising, there was indeed a home where they would return and put to practice the values learned. Abigail Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960*, Architecture, Landscape, and American Culture Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). See also Jonathan Clark and Hyman Kempler, “Therapeutic Family Camping: A Rationale,” *The Family Coordinator* 22, no. 3 (October 1973): 438, 40.

one or two afflicted by chickenpox (which exists in the encampment); no sad eyes look back. The encampment is all. Therein one lives, thrives, falls ill, recovers, dies.”¹¹⁰

Arguably, refugee camps, rather than recreational camps, better embody a search for domesticity parallel to that of military camps.¹¹¹

Besides articulating spaces, bodies became themselves sites articulating spatial affordances: through the possibilities of their bodies, *soldaderas* tested if they could take a practice that they normally carried out at home to the mobile dwelling. It could be as simple as using a street for cooking, a lake for washing, or an empty house for occupying,¹¹² or taken to the extreme of stealing a material or a good.¹¹³ That train tracks could transform into a baby’s cradle or cooking setup,¹¹⁴ or that a diner could *happen*¹¹⁵ at the patio of military quarters were possibilities that *soldaderas* opened up by testing out practices

¹¹⁰ Brondo Whitt, 221. Kenny Cupers examines interwar youth camps in Germany and the United States. These examples are more profoundly connected to war and masculinity, especially in their notions of citizenship and a young man’s relationship with his homeland—a lot of this is analysed as well by Van Slyck. But, again, the intention to separate the children from the city and domesticity speaks more to the certainty of a home awaiting their return than to a total, permanent disconnect from the family space. Cupers and Van Slyck provide examples where the preparation and operation of camps were not carried out just by “anyone,” but perfectly scheduled and assigned to figures both exerting and obeying authority (camp organisers and participants). In these camps that sought for wild settings to foster the development of children’s “raw” skills, there was little intention of re-creating the same domesticity as the Mexican Revolution’s camps, and even the instances of the home-making training of girls point to the need for them to return home to put those skills to practice, as mentioned above. Kenny Cupers, “Governing through Nature: Camps and Youth Movements in Interwar Germany and the United States,” *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 173–205. Abigail Van Slyck, “Connecting with the Landscape: Campfires and Youth Culture at American Summer Camps, 1890-1950.”

¹¹¹ See Anooradha Siddiqi, “Architecture Culture, Humanitarian Expertise: From the Tropics to Shelter, 1953-93,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 76, no. 3 (September 2017): 367–84. Other examples include temporary hospitals and fairgrounds.

¹¹² Brondo Whitt, 274, 428.

¹¹³ For example, *soldaderas* were seen taking apart the walls of boxcars to use the wooden planks as fuel, which resembles their home practice of going outdoors to collect logs. It did not take long for authorities to issue a warning against this tested and testing practice. “Serán castigados los soldados que destruyan los carros del ferrocarril,” *El Pueblo*, 13 November 1916, 6.

¹¹⁴ Testimony by Justino López Estrada. Justino López Estrada, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/49.

¹¹⁵ A diner as a space that could happen, as argued earlier.

through their own bodies—their bodies “carried” each practice from place to place and acted as part of the unfolding architecture.

Accessing the spaces of confrontation and then improvising home sites therein enabled *soldaderas* to connect domestic and war landscapes. Josefina Bórquez narrates episodes where she and other camp followers created settings to cook in an open field.¹¹⁶ While they worked, they could see the smoke from the adjacent battle. Together with the previous descriptions, this reconstruction by Bórquez can help the reader see that *soldaderas* articulated in their actions and movement the spaces of the home and the front. The sites that emerged at the intersection between military and domestic spaces, discontinuous and contingent, had some surfaces left for women to re-create. As camp followers materially and functionally reconfigured places, they layered new meanings into the public and domestic realms of the revolutionary war. Upon the overlap of these realms, they traced sites where the lived reality became discontinuous with the discursive space created in patriarchal imaginaries.¹¹⁷ For example: first, in the battlefield, women inscribed a female subjectivity that produced its own agency and belonging, instead of just being positioned by the war’s male actors; second, while domesticity was considered to never touch the grounds of violence,¹¹⁸ the homes built for armies created a site of intersection between family and military spheres, one that did not fit the spatial binary imagined by

¹¹⁶ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

¹¹⁷ Inspiring to this idea of discontinuity has been Katarina Bonnevier’s reading of a built space that can depart from a “static precondition” established by gender discourse, in her analysis of architecture and performativity. See Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains*, 372.

¹¹⁸ Here I bring attention back to the feminine role of keeping the home as a site of respite for the soldier returning from war. See Chapter One.

society and by the men directing the war; third, women sidestepped their (assumed) place as passive inhabitants of homes and became builders.

The discursive boundaries keeping female bodies out of war seemed as solid and static as the walls of traditional dwellings. Considering the body and its gendered performance as constrained by “available historical conventions,” Judith Butler, nonetheless, describes bodies as “continual and incessant materializing of possibilities.” She further explains that, as corporeal matter and action carry out a gendered performance, they bear meaning, which can be done “differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well.”¹¹⁹ *Soldaderas* moved through and gave a new shape to the space around them. By so doing, they displaced gendered constructs that influenced the creation of hard layers in the built environment—constructs like the mutual fixing of the woman and the home. Moreover, transporting domesticity and bearing its objects on herself was a spatial action in which a woman used her body to *repeat* the societal prescription of house-caring/carrying. But as Judith Butler says, more important than whether to repeat is how to repeat, “and through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself.”¹²⁰ Hilde Heynen brings Butler’s idea of practices of identity inscription into architecture, and proposes that spatial set-ups (and practices) “refuse simply to reproduce received patterns.” Architecture, she contends, “can contribute to that end by mimetically displacing domesticity.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 521.

¹²⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 189.

¹²¹ Hilde Heynen, “Modernity and domesticity: tensions and contradictions,” in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 25.

Soldaderas took their dwellings with them. Fulfilling their scripted home-making role, they created through mimicry a space where an apparent submission veiled an active resistance.

Temporary houses, layers of items and clothes, and landscape were integral with the movement of female bodies in space. Women “subtly and unconsciously alter[ed] the character” of the built environment, “the configuration of gender relations”¹²² and the inscriptions on bodily and physical surfaces. Chandra Mohanty says:

Movement *between* cultures, languages, and complex configurations of meaning and power have always been the territory of the colonized. . . . It is this process, this reterritorialization through struggle, that allows me a paradoxical continuity of self, mapping and transforming my political location. It suggests a particular notion of political agency, since my location forces and enables specific modes of reading and knowing the dominant.¹²³

Soldaderas, homes and battlegrounds drew on their presumed incompatibility to redraw physical and conceptual meanings. They tested the elasticity of discourses that considered them contained in discursive and physical spaces. The ephemeral architectures that resulted from this are not necessarily argued as liberating from gender oppression, but as factors altering—even if temporarily—the spatial form of that system.

As Barbara Cooper says, women did not have to actively resist or “see themselves as being party to the reconstruction of gender relations . . . underway.”¹²⁴ Their movement and actions, however, made them active agents in their surrounding space. The reshaping of war sites by building domestic architecture awarded women sometimes more visible,

¹²² Barbara Cooper, “Gender, Movement, and History: Social and Spatial Transformations in 20th Century Maradi, Niger,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 1997): 195.

¹²³ Chandra Mohanty, quoted by Barbara Cooper in “Gender, Movement and History: Social and Spatial Transformations in 20th Century Maradi, Niger,” 198.

¹²⁴ Barbara Cooper, 199.

empowered positions (like those of *coronelas*), and sometimes modest material improvement or social mobility. These new articulations teased the fragility of gender constructs and their spaces. The often-inadvertent agency of women in fluid architectures shaped them as social subjects who contributed importantly to the changing environments of the revolution.

The “Stopover” (preceding this chapter) has introduced the argument that *soldaderas* transformed the striated, controlled architectures of the home and war sites into smooth, contingent architectures.¹²⁵ As this chapter demonstrates, these women created material and immaterial conditions that exceeded the spatial organisation and hierarchy (striations) intended by builders and military authorities.¹²⁶ A home was defined—or striated—by permanent walls and anchoring qualities. I have discussed in Chapter One how the female subject symbolised such anchoring qualities. Women introduced continuous emergence and exchangeability in the definition of the home by building mobile domesticities during the revolution. They also destabilised their imagined role as anchoring subjects or striations.

Similarly, the spaces where armies settled were originally meant to translate military hierarchies and organisation: for instance, members of different ranks occupied specific positions (to settle and rest, to train, to perform),¹²⁷ which depended on the control and division of space. These rigid practices striated the sites of settlement, making them measurable and strictly regulated. Military dynamics, subjects, and activities also served as

¹²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

¹²⁶ I borrow the word exceed from Katarina Bonnevier, who says: “When the performative act is reiterated there is always an excess that is non-controllable, the repetition changes it, it exceeds our control.” *Behind Straight Curtains*, 49.

¹²⁷ Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

striations. Women were meant to serve that purpose, but, instead, their presence destabilised many of the striations. Their spatial practices stretched the “rigid” architectures of war beyond their masculinist definitions. Arguably, a way in which the war narratives resisted this destabilisation was by erasing the traces of domesticity and women in the conflict’s physical environments.

In the smooth spaces that reveal themselves, we see the bodies of *soldaderas* not only unfolding the temporary domestic architectures, but acting as architectural elements themselves. As this chapter has shown, women made strategic use of their garments (layers gendering bodies) in these architectural practices. The shawl is the most telling example. It allowed women to secure, carry, and organise objects that defined domestic settings, as well as serving as a spatial envelope at times—because it worked as a tent.

As the following chapters further explore the intersection of domestic and war landscapes, I want to conclude with a reflection on how the shawl itself became part of this space of intersection: its textile layers transported both the domestic objects that earned women a place in the revolution’s battlegrounds and the firearms that masculinist discourses resisted associating with women.¹²⁸ I suggest we consider this space of secrecy/ambiguity in the next stages of analysis. Attached to women’s bodies, the shawl as a space where war and home intersected remained invisible.¹²⁹ This invisibility was crucial for its practical function as much as it was for allowing the gender performances that

¹²⁸ Patricia Vilchis Bernal and Ana María Enríquez Escalona, “Importante papel de la ‘Adelita’ en la Revolución,” in *Ensayos críticos sobre literatura femenina: Miradas al margen*, ed. Alma Corona Pérez et al. (Puebla, Mexico: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2017), 94.

¹²⁹ Moreover, the shawl was also seen as a garment protecting the modesty and virtue of women. See Mónica González García, “Revolución, Una Tragedia de Masas. Mito, Cristiandad e Industria Cultural En Las Mujeres Del Cine de Emilio Fernández,” *Mapocho: Revista de Humanidades*, Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional, 2017, 112–29.

women deliberately adhered to or contested.¹³⁰ Therein lay its power. To many, a *soldadera* was a body clad with a shawl. To those who decide to see it, the garment and the body worked to create architectures onto which women layered different meanings of the revolutionary fight and of their own identities.

¹³⁰ Rosa E. King narrates having seen women use the shawl to haul the ammunition cart to soldiers for recharge during battle. *Tempest over Mexico*, 60.

CHAPTER THREE: TRAINS

This chapter examines the experience of women in trains and the appropriation of these spaces in their practices of home-building. The railroad played a fundamental role in the Mexican Revolution. Both the rebel and federal armed forces relied on it to mobilise at long distances. As members of these forces, *soldaderas* developed a significant part of their war labour on sites along the rail lines. Focusing on the ephemeral homes that these women built inside and outside of trains, this chapter argues that their actions brought about a transformation of the seemingly rigid architectures of train cars into more plastic, dislocated dwelling sites. The rigid commands of military authorities would limit the spatial affordances of camp followers, but the actual occupation by these women often exceeded/overflowed (functionally or symbolically) the domestic space envisioned as ordered and hierarchical by these authorities—but also by society at large.

Soldaderas had limited choice with respect to the spaces where they would dwell and configure the dwellings of others, but they made use of the physical set-up of wagons to redefine the architectural, material and functional terms of domesticity. The new functions and meanings given to built surfaces, as well as the relation that women and other inhabitants of mobile homes established with the spaces inside and around trains, depended on the conditions of movement or fixity. I examine the ever-changing shapes of these spaces while bringing attention back to the housing types explored in Chapter One and demonstrate how, as that chapter anticipated, the forms and uses of the working-class homes influenced the travelling dwellings. When building these dwellings *soldaderas* both

borrowed spatial practices from the permanent forms with which they were familiar and tested new practices—as outlined in Chapter Two.

The three-decade presidency of Porfirio Díaz focused on the industrialisation of Mexico, for which extending the rail lines became a core endeavour, one that called for foreign and domestic investment. The construction of train tracks started in 1850 and continued during the years preceding the Porfiriato. In 1876, during the administration of his predecessor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, rail lines across the country ran 700 km and connected the centre of the country with the Gulf of Mexico from Mexico City to the Port of Veracruz. In 1880, during Díaz's first term in office, the lines reached 1,000 km.¹ Manuel González succeeded him as president, running an administration known to have continued under the control of Díaz.² These years brought about a significant expansion of the rail network, which reached 5,700 km. Afterwards, with Porfirio Díaz officially back in power, the most important trunk lines grew to a grid of 9,500 km of tracks—around 1890. Porfirio Díaz ended his period in office having attained 19,300 km of railroads, which became essential to the nation-wide operations of most armies.³

Guillermo Treviño, a railroad union militant of Puebla, stated: “The revolution was made on rails.”⁴ Undoubtedly, trains were responsible for the triumph of the most powerful

¹ Francisco Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2010), 16-20.

² Silvestre Villegas Revueltas, “Un acuerdo entre caciques: La elección presidencial de Manuel González (1880),” *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 25 (June 2003): 119.

³ Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 20-7. It is also important to mention the role of the railway workers' movement in the revolution: many of their protests between 1901 and 1909, first repressed by the army and later negotiated with the government, joined the grievances of labourers from other industries (like textile and mining), as well as those of dispossessed and exploited indigenous communities. The railway blue collars took longer than other, more violently suppressed rioting groups, to join the revolutionary ranks, but often sympathised and worked along with rebels. Ibid. 55-63.

⁴ John Mraz, *Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons*, 144.

armies. John Mraz states that the train was a weapon itself.⁵ It became the means for armed forces to gather strength in numbers and to quickly reach sites of occupation. This also made it the target of enemy attacks.⁶ **Figure 3.1** shows the railroad network towards the end of the revolution.

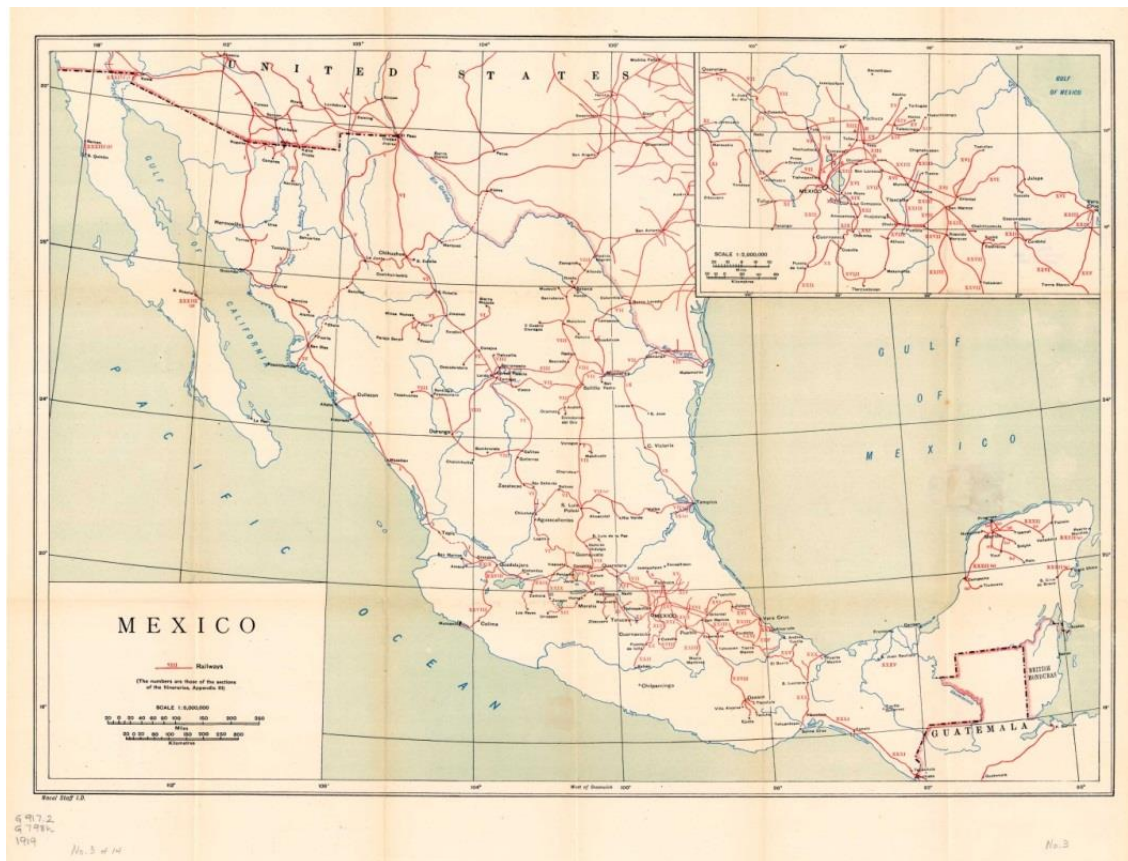


Figure 3.1. *Railway map Mexico*. 1919. *A Handbook of Mexico*. Perry Castaneda Library. Map Collection. University of Texas Library.
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/mexico_handbook_1919/txu-oc-7643168-portfolio-03.jpg (accessed July 2017).

As armies mobilised, large groups of officers, soldiers, and *soldaderas* occupied spaces in trains and created therein their ephemeral homes.⁷ Travelling along the railroad

⁵ John Mraz, *Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons*, 148.

⁶ See Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 9-10.

⁷ See Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 10.

called for constant improvisation. The frequent movement and accommodation of crowds allowed for the woman builders/home-makers to configure a dwelling that gave distinct uses to existing surfaces, envelopes, openings, and interiorities. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter, the home lost its unity and found a new, fragmentary shape, which is also visible in the homes constructed on train cars.

Most of the locomotives used at the time in Mexico were manufactured in the United States and Germany, and were acquired in the late nineteenth century (**Figure 3.2**).⁸ Platform cars and *gondolas* (open-topped wagons with low-side planking for transporting bulk materials) were solid wrought-iron structures usually attached behind the engine.⁹ During an offensive, however, platforms carrying artillery were attached to the front and pushed by the engine.¹⁰ Freight boxes were created some years after *gondolas* to provide the additional protection from the weather that some transported materials required. In their early construction, wood was the most common material, but was gradually replaced by metal (both for the frame and paneling) around 1875.¹¹ American and European-made carriages running in Mexico were made of both wood and steel. In the case of stock cars, louvered wooden walls that allowed ventilation for horses and mules wrapped a metal framework—although the oldest models featured a wooden skeleton.¹² The first- and second-class passenger wagons, mostly fabricated by the famous U.S. Pullman Car Company, had a metal frame with wood or iron cladding, pierced by windows. Many of them were armoured. These carriages had built-in seats, washroom areas, and upper railings

⁸ Jorge Gómez Pérez, “Catálogo de Equipo Rodante de IMNFM Locomotoras,” *Mirada Ferroviaria, Revista Digital*, no. 6 (2008): 81–84.

⁹ Anthony Bianculli, *Trains and Technology*, vol. 2: Cars (Delaware: University of Delaware, 2002), 98-9.

¹⁰ Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 651.

¹¹ Anthony Bianculli, *Trains and Technology*, Vol. 2: Cars, 101-2.

¹² Anthony Bianculli, *Trains and Technology*, Vol. 2: Cars, 102.

for luggage.¹³ The caboose at the end of the train accommodated members of the crew.

Built of iron and wood, it had sleeping, washing, cooking, and office spaces.¹⁴

Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez contrasts these trains with the ones where generals and chiefs of staff traveled, which usually had sleeping and dining cars, and wagons with offices and telegraphic equipment, armament, and munitions.¹⁵ Travelling armies would combine different types of carriages in the same convoy. Brondo Whitt recalls that the army in which he served (*División del Norte*) would reorganise and switch the wagons of different trains arriving at its occupied sites.¹⁶



Figure 3.2 *Carrancistas junto a una locomotora del tren utilizado por Venustiano Carranza, durante su campaña del norte; retrato de grupo.* Item no. 188764. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1915. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.

Figure 3.3 shows a wagon preserved at the Museo Nacional del Ferrocarril, in Puebla, Mexico. It was built in 1882 and was in use during the Mexican Revolution, although there is no information about whether it was used by an army. Still, the plan of

¹³ Departamento de Curaduría de Colecciones, “Coches de pasajeros,” *Mirada Ferroviaria, Revista Digital*, No. 7, January-April 2009: 80. Brondo Whitt describes this type of wagon on a train operated by the *División del Norte* army. Brondo Whitt, 86.

¹⁴ Departamento de Curaduría de Colecciones, “Coches de Pasajeros,” *Mirada Ferroviaria, Revista Digital*, no. 8 (2009): 75.

¹⁵ Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 10.

¹⁶ Brondo Whitt, 374.

this wagon (**Figure 3.4**) is useful to visualise a type of car available to military leaders who appropriated full convoys of the state company Ferrocarril Central Mexicano. The plan shows from right to left that this particular carriage has an observation room and office, a sleeping area with a sink, a bathroom, a dining room, a living-turned-sleeping area, a full kitchen, and storage. Whereas an architectural drawing such as this shows an interest to document the temporary dwelling of a certain stratum (whether it be railway managers or military officers), the spaces occupied by privates and *soldaderas* were not prioritised in visual and textual accounts.



Figure 3.3 Coche especial NdeM – 3519
“Superintendencia regional fuerza motriz.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Departamento de Curaduría de Colecciones, “Coches de pasajeros,” *Mirada Ferroviaria, Revista Digital*, no. 7 (2009): 81.

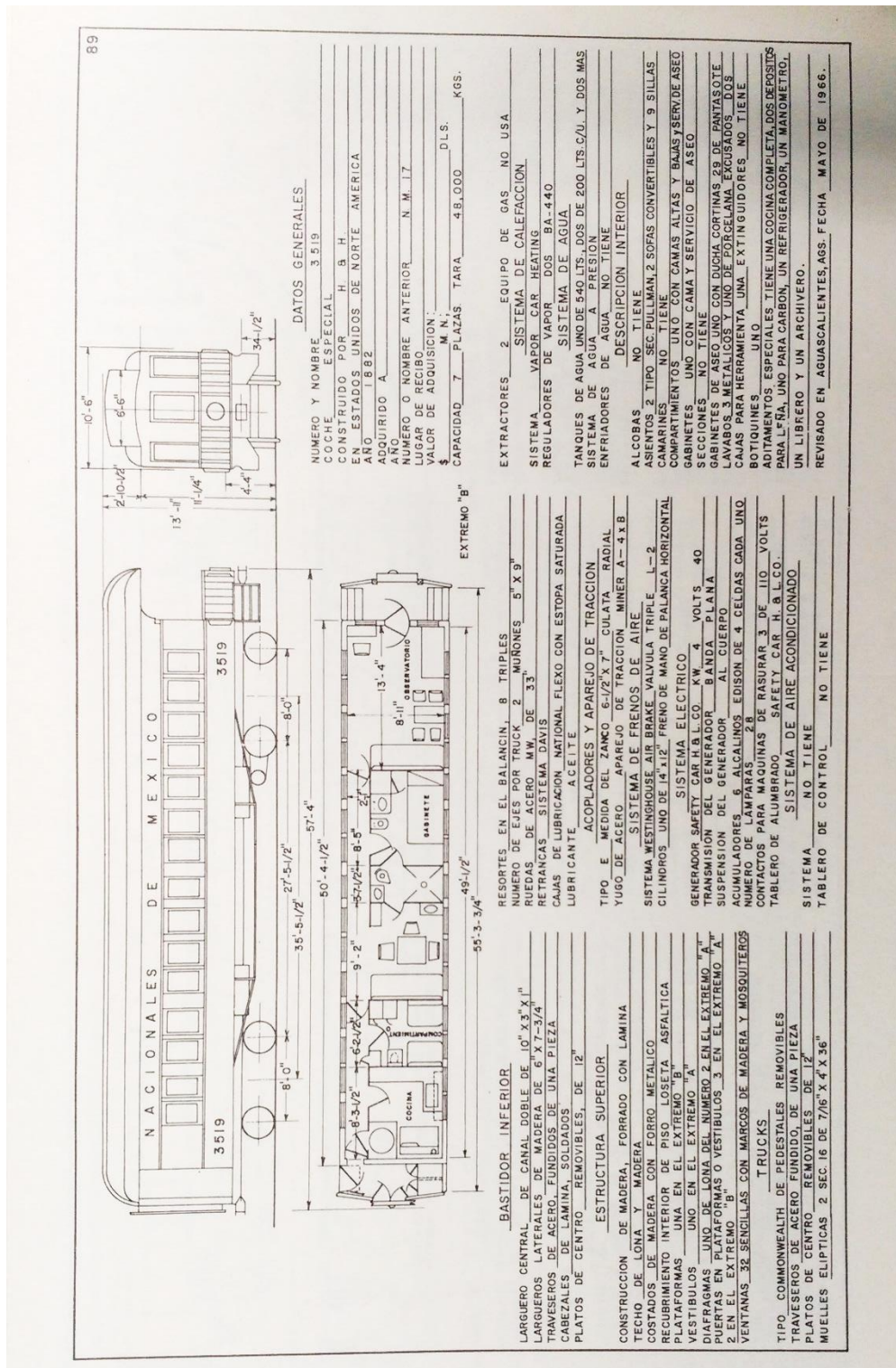


Figure 3.4 Plans and data sheet of wagon used during the revolution. Sección de coches y carros, Libro de datos de coches dormitorios, dormitorio-buffet, observatorios, comedores, comedor-observatorios, bar-observatorios, bar-salón, especiales y autovías (Mexico: Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México, 1970), 81.

As the Casasola collection shows, hundreds of images of the revolution were taken at train stations, where photographers could document the moments of arrival or departure. Stations were sites of both connection and separation because there camp-followers waited for and joined their troops,¹⁸ but it was also at stations where they were often discharged.¹⁹ As exemplified in Chapter Two, the presence of women in armies was underestimated, often deemed unnecessary or cumbersome.²⁰ Armed forces at times left behind this component of their corps, allegedly “in order to advance at a faster pace.”²¹

During train travel, women had no choice of where to sit or stand. Newspapers of the time provide snapshots of the spatial distribution of members of federal forces in departing trains: a March 1912 train travelled to Orizaba with a stock car and three second-class wagons, two with 152 soldiers and one with 30 *soldaderas*;²² another convoy a few days later left Buenavista Station (Mexico City) with a water tank, six freight cars (three of them fully occupied by *soldaderas*), four second-class and two first-class coaches (with infantry and officials, respectively), and a caboose.²³ **Figure 3.5** shows newspaper images of the boarding process. Soldiers took horses into boxcars similar to those that *soldaderas* wait to board in the rectangular frame at the centre.²⁴ A few months later, a ten-car train also took off northbound. In it, six boxcars accommodated *soldaderas*, provisions and

¹⁸ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 214.

¹⁹ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 245.

²⁰ Statements about *soldaderas* being a burden were more often made by members of the villista army. See examples in: Colonel Roberto Sánchez, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/38; Francisco Muro Ledezma, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/97.

²¹ See Ernesto Ríos, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer, PHO/1/96. Women were seldom given horses, so they were believed to slow the cavalry. They were also in charge of and considered part of the *impedimenta*, the equipment transported on carts that was understandably slower to move than marching columns.

²² “Fuerzas federales rumbo a Orizaba,” *La Opinión*, 30 March 1912, 2.

²³ “Con el ánimo muy levantado salió para el norte la brillante columna del Gral. Victoriano Huerta,” *El Diario*, 11 April 1912.

²⁴ “Con el ánimo muy levantado salió para el norte la brillante columna del Gral. Victoriano Huerta,” *El Diario*, 11 April 1912, 1.

equipment. The troop also took two stock cars and a platform carrying two machine guns.²⁵ Another news report describes a collision in the municipality of Jiménez in June 1912. It saw the death of two camp-followers as the machine of one train impacted the stock car at the end of another, where the women travelled.²⁶

What newspapers of the time tell us about the linear array in general is that first-class coaches for officers and second-class wagons (which occasionally accommodated *soldaderas*) were at the end of the train, preceded by freight wagons and stock cars. These last two were the most usual space for women (**Figure 3.6**). When the space inside was insufficient, soldiers and camp-followers travelled on top of the trains. Christine Arce underlines the alienation of these popular-class members of armies from the “modern experience” associated with the train. Unlike the bourgeoisie which celebrated and promoted such “modern experience,” soldiers and *soldaderas* “would be *outside* of the train traveling on its roof, or in a windowless car with the livestock, or underneath its bowels perilously tied to a plank.”²⁷

At first sight, the solid structures of the carriages shown in photos offer little evidence of their reshaping into a home. Women’s agency and experience in the revolution seems invisible in them. However, upon a closer look into the patterns of use legible in other sources, we see in the cars the transient material and immaterial conditions that enabled *soldaderas* to turn their spaces into ephemeral homes. On these apparently solid, hardly negotiable surfaces, camp followers traced, even if impermanently, their revolutionary actions. Christine Arce states: “Soldaderas had no official texts: the trains

²⁵ “Marchó Blanquet al norte,” *El Tiempo*, 16 May 1912.

²⁶ “Hasta el último momento,” *El Imparcial*, 3 June 1912, 5.

²⁷ Christine Arce, *Mexico’s nobodies*, 45.

were one of their texts, their ‘practiced places.’ [... They] turned the *primum mobile* [de Certeau’s term for the travelling machine] into a home.”²⁸



Figure 3.5. *Las abnegadas soldaderas esperando su turno para embarcarse* [The self-sacrificing soldaderas waiting for their turn to board. My translation], from “Con el ánimo muy levantado salió para el norte la brillante columna del Gral. Victoriano Huerta,” *El Diario*, 11 April 1912, 1.

²⁸ Christine Arce, *Mexico’s nobodies*, 43, 45. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 113.

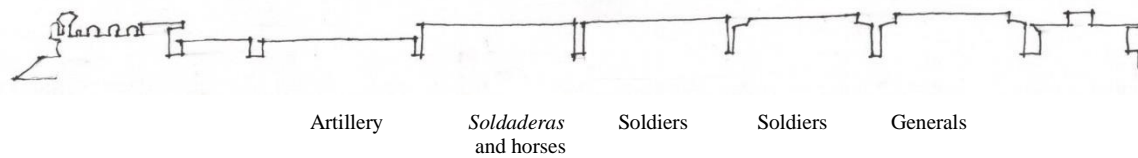


Figure 3.6 General distribution of train passengers and cargo. Drawing by author, following descriptions of newspapers detailed in chapter.

This dissertation opens with a description of the scene of a train before departure:²⁹ the linear array following the locomotive has platforms and freight wagons preceding three stock cars into which horses are taken. In one of these cars, a mother and a child rest safely. The baby sleeps on a plank inserted in a corner.³⁰ The need to sleep on trains during long journeys domesticated these vehicles, with camp-followers, soldiers, and high-ranking officers finding accommodation in strictly differentiated places in the cars.³¹ In some, the domestic function is underscored by the arrangement and decoration: for instance, the coaches that chiefs of staff used (commercialised as palace cars) featured a design evoking the interior of a luxurious house³² (See **Figure 3.7**). Contrastingly, *soldaderas* occupied the stock and freight wagons, which lacked furniture and décor.

²⁹ See Introduction.

³⁰ See Francisco Ruiz Moreno's testimony, interview by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/66.

³¹ As argued in the previous chapter in the case of camps, in their military travels, trains differed from regular, overnight trains in the need for the encampment and its members to create a domestic feeling. Unlike regular travel, the long and dangerous war journeys offered little certainty of returning home. See discussion about the domesticity created by a group travelling together, Chapter Two.

³² Brondo Whitt describes the charming draped beds, dining table, sinks, storage of culinary delights, and cutting-edge water closet. *La División del Norte*, 86.



Figure 3.7. Room inside General Carranza's "Golden Train", from Cuéllar, Mireya, "Un ruidoso y humeante anacronismo." *La Jornada*, 1 December 2000. <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2000/12/01/056n1con.htm> 1 (accessed February 2017).

Needless to say, the domestic interior of the palace cars was not exclusive of war trains. Existing passenger trains were merely appropriated by armies. But even in their use preceding the war, when travel did not necessitate the strong, anchoring feeling of a home,³³ the décor of trains strove to produce an ambiance that evoked a certain level of domesticity, one that offered comfort for travellers to enjoy during their brief passage. This was similar to how a hotel room welcomes guests into its homely atmosphere but does not necessarily invite them to spend their entire stay inside—suggesting places to visit outside of the staged domestic setting in brochures and travel guides laid on the furniture. As historian Emma Robinson-Tomsett observes, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century trains and ships—such as those imported to Mexico—sought to re-create a domestic environment, in both their spatial layout and interior design.³⁴

³³ See discussion of war camps and domesticity in Chapter Two.

³⁴ Emma Robinson-Tomsett, "'So Having Ordered My Berth I Lay Me down to Rest;' Ships and Trains: Travelling Home," in *The Domestic Space Reader*, ed. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 273-7. See also Amy G. Richter's "At Home Aboard: Railway Travel and the Rise of Public Domesticity," in her book *Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 59-85.

To advertise their services, railway companies used this domestic appearance in the representations of their spaces of transport. Train travel needed a publicity that would balance the attraction of venturing far away with the promise that passengers would feel as comfortable as they did at home. In the representation that served those commercial purposes, the domesticity of trains was often symbolised through femininity, but a femininity that was far from the figure of the working-class camp follower of the revolution. International publications on railways often centred their images and texts on the engine's power, the strength and capacity of wagons, the technical developments of cars and rails, and on celebrating the globally extending network.³⁵ On the other hand, however, it remained important to portray the comfort of the coaches in order to promote travel by train, for which the media representing the domestic-shaped interiors used figures of women—absent in the technical and progress-focused imagery described previously: see **Figure 3.8**. Unlike the pages showing construction details and technical information, **Figure 3.10** highlights instead the homely atmosphere that sleeping cars offered as it carefully delineates comfortable, high-class domestic furniture.

Switching the attention away from the details of strong ironwork and connections, towards soft, velvety surfaces, these drawings solely “succeeded” in representing domesticity by having women inhabit these cozy interiors. **Figure 3.9** adds to the comparison a series of drawings of a locomotive that contrasts with the lined-up section drawings that needed a female human scale to give a “domestic character” to the sleeping cars. Unsurprisingly, the woman figures “completing” the home environment in these

³⁵ See, for instance, the nineteenth and early twentieth-century periodicals: *Railway Gazette* (named *Herapath's Railway Journal* until 1905), *The Railway Magazine* (UK), *Railway Age* (US), *Engineering* (UK).

North American and European publications never looked like *soldaderas*, but, instead, were well-dressed, white, affluent subjects.³⁶

³⁶ This dissertation is interested in the agency that camp followers developed as they shaped their spaces of travel and revolutionary participation, which does not allow me to elaborate on the practices with which the mentioned affluent subjects re-created their own forms of domesticity in the train spaces that they occupied. For such an account regarding travelling British women, for instance, see Emma Robinson-Tomsett, "Ordering the Berth, Spaces of Journeying," in her book *Women, Travel and Identity: Journeys by Rail and Sea, 1870-1940* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2017), 94-119. Brondo Whitt narrates the arrival of a train at a place occupied by his army and makes of the privileged woman travelling inside the comfortable cars subjects "whose mission is no other than making a magnate happy and caring for a plant or a cage with birds, with the minstrel parrot that squawks and pirouettes by the curtained window." Whitt, 219. Robinson-Tomsett's approach would allow Whitt's limited account to read in these women's occupation of wagons more active spatial roles. Perhaps such agency (which the women in Whitt's account most probably had but was overlooked) is legible in Rosa E. King and Edith O'Shaughnessy's travel memoirs. Rosa E. King, *Tempest over Mexico*; Edith O'Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*.

quent, but apparently no greater than under any single car. The wave under the car is higher, not from the heavier loads on trailing, but from there being a long back before and behind, each of which tends to lift the car. This upward curving of the rail is due to the elasticity of the supports.

On the bridge, the rail rests on blocks of gum wood 8 in. thick, which are held between 19 in. channel bars as shown in Fig. 1. These pillow blocks are 17 in. long with projecting spaces of 19 in. The elastic action of these blocks gives the rail a wave motion independent of the deflection of the channels. In the approach the rail rests on a 2 in. wide plank laid longitudinally; this plank resting on cross-ties 6 in. wide, with spaces of 10 in.

On both the bridge and approach the rails are left free to move, being held together by the Hansen roller, a split spine-bar without flanges.

Whenever the summer of the action is explained, the cause

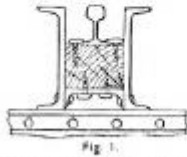


Fig. 1.

follows very naturally. The rail is held fast on the ties on its *retained* side. This causes the rail to measure its length across the bridge on its extended flange. If but one wave of this sort passes over the bridge, the effect is cumulative, and the movement increases with the length of the bridge. If a series of waves pass, the effect will be cumulative to a constant quantity. A detailed explanation may be given by the aid of Fig. 2.

For simplicity let the depression be caused by a single wheel at *P* moving toward *p*. Let *pp'* be a vertical section parallel to *PP'*. In account of the deflection of the rail, the normal section *pp'* is at the lower flange, being extended from *Pp'* for a horizontal position to *pp'* for the deflected position. In other words, the point *p* has moved forward from *p'* as a result of the deflection, the point *P* being fixed by being held fast to the support by the load. As the load moves toward *p* the depressed portion of the wave moves with it, and when the load reaches *p* the normal section *pp'* has come to coincide with the vertical section *pp'* by revolving about *p* on the fixed point.

From the above reasoning it is evident that if the rail were supported at a point where the normal axis, as under the hand, for instance, there would be a tendency to creep backward, as against the direction of the traffic, from the compression of its upper side. There would still be a forward tendency, however, due to the wave motion of the rail, inasmuch as the normal line of the rail, when struck from below, is longer than the corresponding linear distance. If the rail be supported from the upper surface, as has been done in the model to be exhibited, then the backward motion due to the compression of the upper flange would more

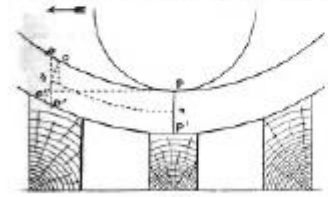


Fig. 2.

than counterbalance the forward action due to the wave in the normal axis, and the rail would actually move backward.

If three separate actions can be shown to occur, as here described, then there is evidently a point of suspension somewhere between the normal axis and the upper surface, from which, if the rail be suspended, there will be no tendency to move either forward or backward.

Since English rails are supported from the lower side of the upper flange or head, and it is said their tendency to move forward is much less than that of the American rail.

It may be objected to this theory that this action obtains on the ground as well as on bridge and trestle. True, it does; and there is also a strong tendency to creep on the ground, but not so strong but it can be resisted. This is an account of the yielding nature of the rail and bed. If the ties were fastened as rigidly to the ground as they are to bridges, and if the wave action were so great, the tendency to move in the direction of a continuous traffic would be quite as great.

It is evident that it is not the absolute deflection of the rail that is significant, but the wave motion of the rail independent of the motion of the supporting track system. If the rail were fastened down along the supports, so that they deflected with them strictly, the rail would have no tendency to creep upon the supports. In the case of the Transylvania bridge at Harrisburg, the spine-bars (it was under the head and not on the ties, as suggested by the rail, at the ends at least, above the neutral axis. Each set of spikes is also held in place by four spikes, making four spikes to each rail that would have to be started off in order to move the rail. The rail would certainly slip on the ties, with its load on, before it would do this. When the attempts were made to hold the rails on the St. Louis bridge, the bridge was concentrated at isolated points on the line, so that the preceding action was suggested for a considerable distance, and the bridge gave way before this longer reach of rail would slip on the supports with the load on. If each rail were held independently, as is done on the Harrisburg bridge, the coupling could probably be dispensed with both the bridge and approach, but it is feared that this might be too great a strain on the ties overhead. The solution offered above, of supporting the rail under its head, would be a more satisfactory method of treatment, inasmuch as it would entirely destroy the tendency to move, and hence there would need be no strain introduced by taking it fast.

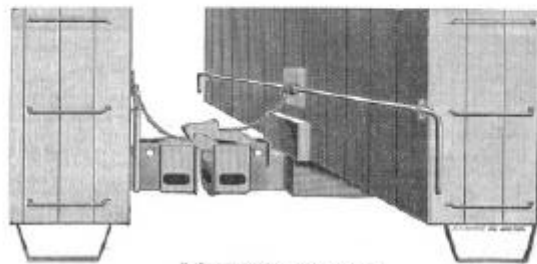
From the above explanation, one can understand the moving pawlock, that the rail does a back, and yet do not move forward, and that the rail is held in position when supported by the Hansen roller, which is made

to slip on the ties when the load is on, and the force necessary to cause them to do this is the measure of the force required to hold them in place.

A model was exhibited at the time of the reading of the paper, showing the effect on the coupling of changing the support of the rail from above to below, and vice versa.

The Hilliard Automatic Car Coupler

The accompanying illustration represents the Hilliard Car Coupler, which was one of the couplers recommended by



THE HILLIARD CAR COUPLER.

the Railroad Commissioners of Massachusetts in their recent decision on this subject.

The coupling is effected by means of hooks, which work in a vertical plane, and engage with one another. Their line of draught is considerably above that of the ordinary draw-bar and nearly coincident with the center of the axle. The lifting strains are taken by the lower part of the draw-bar, which much resembles the ordinary draw head. An ordinary link and pin can be used should circumstances render it desirable. We understand that this coupling is used to a limited extent on the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf, the New York City & Northern, and the Chicago & Grand Trunk.

Contributions.

The Cost of Rear Collisions.

CHICAGO, Dec. 25, 1884.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

I beg leave respectfully to protest, in the name of the operating department of railroads, against any such low estimate of the cost of rear collisions (which you have, with little to designate by the slightest form of tail-enders), such as appear in your number for Dec. 19, when it is probable that by a sufficient amount of energy you could arrive at quite accurate knowledge of their cost. Suppose, for instance, that you were to station competent reporters upon any of the trunk lines which do not use the block system, with instructions to report to the agents and gather all particulars; they would not have to wait long during this season of the year, and you would soon have a large number of presidents

and a transcript of it? If the damage based on the road at the same time could be known, if only approximately, it would be a most valuable item of statistics. Any road could thus calculate for itself the value of safety, almost to a nicety. Excuse the freedom of these suggestions, which I venture upon in behalf of a thanksgiving class of railroad men; to whom I think you have done some injustice. It is probably quite easy for some of them to show



Fig. 3.

by exact figures how much your figures vary from the truth, and I will be much obliged to any one of them who will come to my aid and give the facts.

Yours for the right,

AMANDA HERRICK.

The Cowell Freight Car Coupler

CLEVELAND, Dec. 25, 1884.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE RAILROAD GAZETTE:

So much publicity seems to have been given to a letter published in your column some weeks since, and also read



Fig. 4.

upon which to base a quotation estimate. It is well known that the men who are generally killed in these rear collisions are either employees or drivers, and it is hardly that a company can be compelled to pay the full sum of \$5,000 for the life of an employee; if he is married, and can appear in a



Fig. 5.

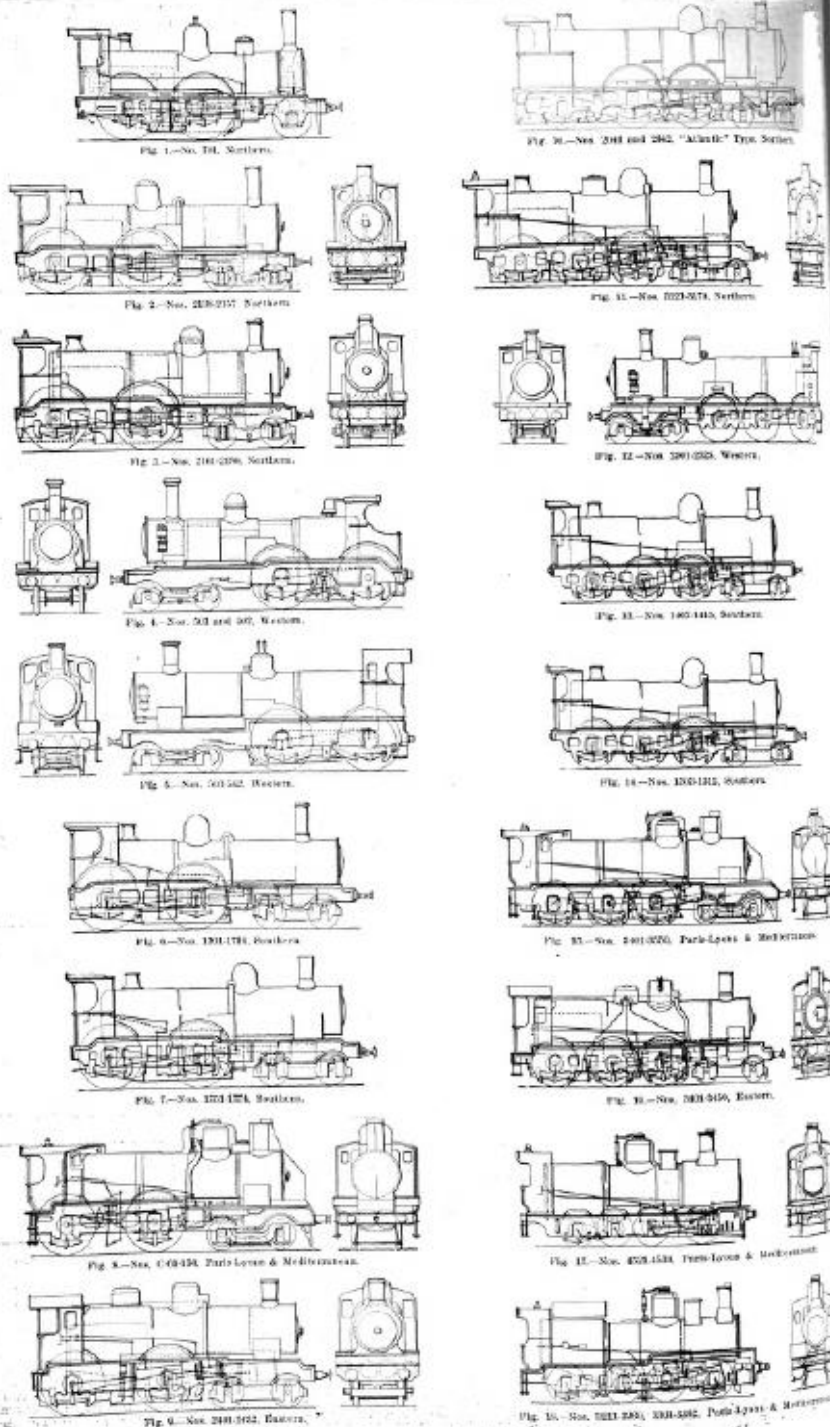
helpless condition before a jury, he can often collect more than that. As for drivers, many of them have no families who would be entitled to the damages, and in likely they are generally entitled for damages. So I think on the whole that your estimate of the cost of a human life to a railroad company is too high, so say nothing about its cost. I do not object to the charge of \$300 each for injured persons;

before the New York Railroad Club in November, that I beg to correct one glaring error stated in it, respecting the Cowell freight car coupler.

The statement in said letter is this: "The Jersey is manifestly more dangerous to the brakemen than the coupling of two common drawbars; the Cowell and the Miller are equally, if not more dangerous, than the coupling of two common drawbars," etc.

Now, closing the Cowell and the Miller together in that way showed that the writer had no acquaintance with the daily improved Cowell freight coupler. The accompanying sketches show the Cowell as recently improved for freight cars, which the writer of that letter had probably never seen. It is the combination of a hook with a regular link coupler in the same device. Fig. 1 shows a link coupler; Fig. 2 shows the manner of its coupling with the ordinary link coupler now in use, while Fig. 3 shows it as a hook coupler. A glance at these cuts makes it manifest that there is no more danger in coupling the Cowell freight coupler to an ordinary link coupler than coupling two link couplers together. Indeed, it is the same thing, and one with which all brakemen are familiar.

What we claim is: 1. That the Cowell freight coupler works with common link couplers with no increased danger over the coupling of two link couplers together. 2. That in coupling freight cars equipped with the Cowell all danger is removed, because as a safety device for getting between the cars in coupling or uncoupling.

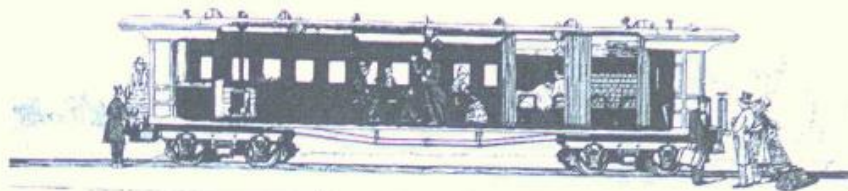


Some Recent Types of Locomotives Used on French Railroads.

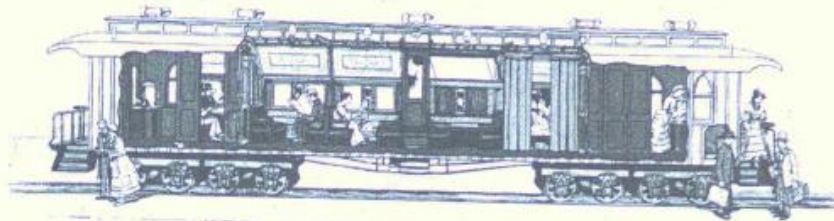
Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Figure 3.9. Page 630 of *The Railroad Gazette*, 30 September, 1900. Original held by University of Minnesota. Digitised by University of Michigan



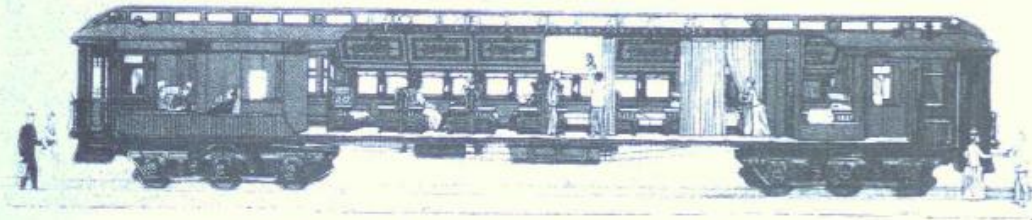
a) Chicago and Alton Railroad number 9, after conversion into a sleeping car, built in 1859.



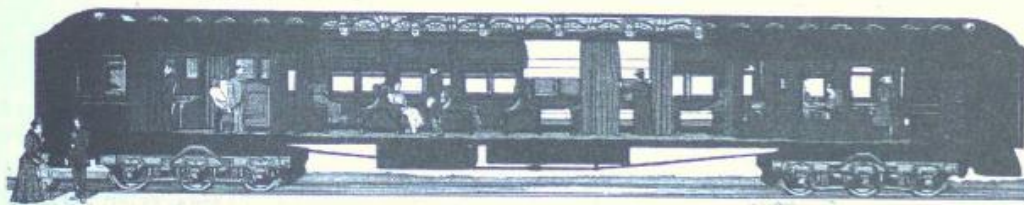
b) Pullman's famous sleeping car *Pioneer*, built in 1865.



c) Pullman sleeper built by Pullman during the Centennial Year, 1876.



d) Pullman car with Sessions-designed vestibule, 1887.



e) Seventy five foot long Pullman sleeper with anti-telescoping construction, built in 1891.

Figure 1.47: Nineteenth-century Pullman sleeping cars. (Author's Collection)

Figure 3.10 Nineteenth-century Pullman sleeping cars, from Anthony Bianculli. *Trains and Technology: The American Railroad in the Nineteenth Century*. Vol. 2: Cars, 55.

As mentioned above, revolutionary chiefs in Mexico appropriated these so-called “palace cars” and their domestic comfort. Even if viewed as home-makers,³⁷ *soldaderas* inhabited spaces in trains that were very different from the representations of the homey images promoted by the print media through the figure of a white higher-class female subject. Far from the décor and comfort of the sleeping cars of high-ranking officers, the stock and freight wagons in which camp followers often travelled featured the hard surfaces and right angles of the non-domestic technical drawings of trains.

The *impedimenta* occupied crowded boxcars. In them, women carried their domestic items, which were supplemented with findings from the spaces of stations and informal stops. This allowed creating many of the temporary homes of the revolution. In the travelling boxcar, *soldaderas* transported with them the “folded home” described in the previous chapter: a home compressed into layers and packages to be unfolded at train stops. Upon arrival, the train connected its own spaces and surfaces to those existing at the stopovers. A new set of relations evolved as the wagons opened up, with the outdoor sites connecting to the once enclosed spaces of the train and, more importantly, with the dynamics of people bringing together the spaces of the convoy and the surroundings.³⁸ Brondo Whitt describes women getting off at the stations to immediately set up their open-air kitchens, which he calls ‘mandatory’—meaning that kitchens were *de rigueur* features at a camp.³⁹ He details one scene at a station: “On the rails there is a cluster of train cars, an entire, fickle, portable city: constituted by soldiers, *soldaderas*, vendors, suppliers [...]”

³⁷ In the article “Las soldaderas,” they are described as a “symbol of the mobile home.” *La Opinión*, 1 February 1913, 3.

³⁸ Whereas this connection of travelling and static surfaces and spaces happens in the case of all trains, I am interested in the interlocking of all these elements giving shape to a “communal” home.

³⁹ Brondo Whitt, 219, 269.

The spaces that flowed between the interior and the exterior of trains unfolded under very diverse conditions—of the place, of the timing, of the weather. They, hence, acquired a flexibility that stands in sharp contrast with the contained and unchangeable layout of the sitting areas in the passenger wagons, used on very rare occasions by the popular-class women I study. As **Figure 3.11** shows, the furniture of the male-occupied Pullman and private coaches dictated the ways of using the rest spaces (the plan from **Figure 3.4** shows similar rigid dictates). In contrast, the side-opening of the freight and stock cars where camp-followers travelled allowed expanding the “living” spaces to the grounds of the station (as I examine below). In **Figure 3.12**, people pose by the sliding door of a train car, a threshold that proved to be crucial in this described spatial connection.



Figure 3.11 *Carro comedor del tren presidencial de Porfirio Díaz (Dining car of Porfirio Díaz's presidential train, my translation).* Item no. 202363. Photograph. México D.F. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.



Figure 3.12. *Soldados federales a bordo de un vagón de ferrocarril* [Federal soldiers aboard a train wagon, my translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Cellulose nitrate negative, Item No. 32480. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 12th 2017).

Veteran Justino López Estrada describes the scene by an idle train: “Women placed planks and braziers on the tracks. There, they prepared food for their ‘Juanes.’⁴⁰ I would often eat with them.”⁴¹ The home that the *soldaderas* carried, having switched from its original containment inside a building (the family dwelling) to containment inside a train, had its components dislocated when arriving at the station: the practices of cooking, sleeping, and resting were more randomly distributed in a space that flowed between the train cars and the station. As discussed in Chapter Two, domestic space no longer consisted of the house as a single unit, but of modules created by practices in space. An instance of one of these modules is the mentioned act of cooking that, in its setup and action, created a temporary kitchen, which replicated itself elsewhere later on. The modules functioned with

⁴⁰ See Chapter One on the use of the name “Juan” to talk about the gendered relation of a soldier and the *soldadera*. Her role was often explained as following a man in war.

⁴¹ Justino López Estrada, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/52.

more flexibility and left behind many of the strict divisions created by the envelope of a traditional house. Another variant of these elastic modules of domesticity is the officers' dining car in the train where Brondo Whitt travelled, which became at night the sleeping quarter of Doña Patrocinio, the cook, and of Aída, a nurse romantically involved with Whitt. Using the same qualifier that he used with the "portable city," Whitt calls this a "fickle dwelling."⁴² Moreover, the carriage serves as an illustration of the domestic space flowing between the interior of the train and the surrounding landscape as the indoor diner extended its space after dinner towards the outside: satisfied by the meal prepared by Doña Patrocinio, Whitt sat with Aída and other men to smoke and sing at the door (see **Figure 3.16**).⁴³

Another occasion sees campfires that act as "living rooms" where men and women gather to enjoy taking turns to sing *corridos*, all arranged in vicinity to the boxcars. Shortly after, most of them fall asleep and spend the night therein.⁴⁴ Days later, at a stop ahead, passengers disembark and

spread out to form an encampment. Some soldiers have lit a huge fire out of a *gobernadora* (a high-resin plant that is very flammable, even when green), and by the flame or smoke they dry the blankets drenched in the rain [from the day before]. Women have set up their open-air, *de rigueur* kitchen and they prepare coffee.⁴⁵

Instances of these fleeting forms of occupation show that the flow of space extended beyond the domestic realm and its surroundings. A sequence narrated by Whitt reveals that

⁴² Brondo Whitt, 244-5.

⁴³ Brondo Whitt, 144.

⁴⁴ Brondo Whitt, 234-5.

⁴⁵ Brondo Whitt, 269.

the encampment and the occupied city of Silao (Guanajuato) blurred their boundaries. Leaving the station and approaching the city centre, Whitt sees that some inhabitants confine themselves at home “in the face of soldiers and *soldaderas* filling the streets and markets, invading all, in at atmosphere of headquarters or military encampment.”⁴⁶

The practices of occupation of space that turned events into components of the home—a kitchen that *happened*, a living room that *happened*⁴⁷—made use of both the space of the stops and the interior of train cars. As shown on images, the built surfaces of these cars reveal little of that occupation. Accounts like Whitt’s help us mentally populate these empty boxes with *soldaderas* and their different forms of inhabitation. Whitt sees a man and a woman installed on the ground by a train, using the tracks as a headrest, “cushioned” by a blanket and a rifle.⁴⁸ **Figures 3.13** and **3.14** show similar scenes, with people on the ground using packages and baskets to configure the areas that they claim for rest.

I propose the plan of **Figure 3.15** to dis- and re-arrange the elements and subjects from the photographs⁴⁹ and to observe how the possible configurations support the argument of the informal events giving life to the dislocated home. We can see in the plan that both where the photographs resemble and where they differ from Whitt’s description, the spatial possibilities shape (and are shaped by) a loose sequence of informal spaces.

⁴⁶ Brondo Whitt, 432.

⁴⁷ See Chapter Two.

⁴⁸ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 213-9, 268-71.

⁴⁹ Method rationale explained in Chapter Two.



Figure 3.13. *Soldado federal con su familia* [Federal soldier with his family. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico, 1915. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 5015. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).



Figure 3.14. *Tropas federales en la estación de Buenavista antes de salir a combate* [Federal troops in Buenavista Station before heading to combat. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F, 1913. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 5075. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

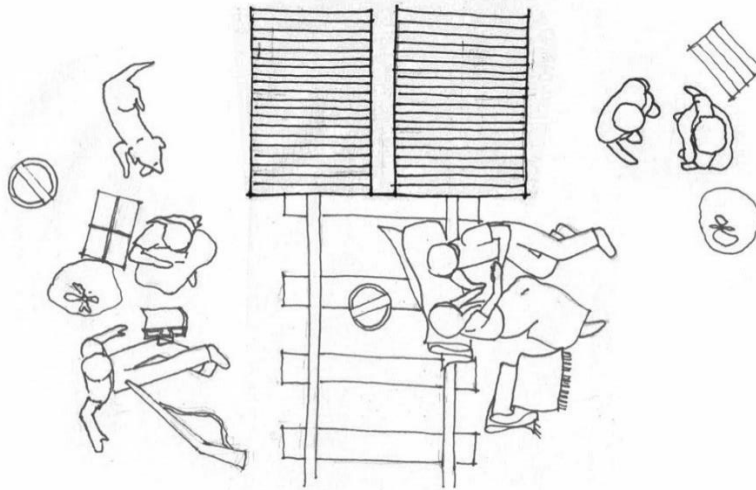


Figure 3.15 Informal events giving life to the dislocated home by a train car. The drawing (by author) dis- and rearranges elements from photographs and written descriptions.

The spatial arrangements also inform us that the home's flowing from the inside to the outside of trains and the blurring of boundaries did not mean that the function of walls—organising space—was nullified. In fact, *soldaderas* utilised walls when reconfiguring the architectures for dwelling. Here, I contend that women also changed the original function of the surfaces of trains: in this case, the original function was protecting the train's contents and passengers from the outside as the train advanced. In the practices of *soldaderas*, spaces folded and unfolded with new meanings (shown below). En route, the transient homes, enveloped in boxes of wood or iron, sped through the changing landscape. There was no integration between indoors and outdoors: Whitt recalls the officer's dining car where, on one end, a group of female and male cooks work by a woodstove and, on the other end, the hungry diners sit by a table for ten—all of this while the train travels at night. The movement of a waitress connects the two parts of the room, bringing and taking away plates.⁵⁰ After dinner, some officials are attracted by the spectacle offered by the bright

⁵⁰ Brondo Whitt, 209, 130.

moon, so they sit by the lateral doors of the carriage (which we understand are partially open). Under a lamp that swings from the ceiling, a man turns the table talk into a group song.⁵¹

This is the same carriage that elsewhere, at a stop, has opened its doors to extend the after-dinner conversation towards the landscape cradling the dining space. The degree to which the doors are opened defines the connection between an interior and its surroundings—the closed doors, during train travel, nullify the connection between a “static interior” and its moving exterior; whereas the open doors, during a stop, strengthen the connection between the interior and the landscape around (**See Figure 3.16**).⁵²

In the latter case, the doors and walls could serve as the means through which the home is both inside and outside. This happens as well with an improvised bedroom in a train car, which expands towards the surrounding grounds as a group of women take over both the indoor and outdoor space to sleep (**Figure 3.17**).⁵³ The openings make possible this integration of spaces. The grounds on which soldiers and camp followers settle are not set apart from the interior of the coaches, but rather continue reaching back inside through the openings, always in use by the people coming in and out while the train is stopped. This is also exemplified by the social spaces around campfires by boxcars, mentioned above. The interiority created by the wall of a wagon, clearly defined when closed off (and especially when the train advanced), is negotiated and expanded by the home builders and

⁵¹ Brondo Whitt, 209-10.

⁵² Making a similar point, Christine Arce directs attention the limited ways in which hegemonic understandings of train travel construe a bourgeois traveller who experiences the outside moving space from the vessel. As she rightfully points out, *soldaderas* and soldiers established a relation with the changing landscapes of travel past the separation of a window as they journeyed on the rooftops of trains. Christine Arce, *Mexico's Nobodies*, 43-5.

⁵³ Scene narrated by Brondo Whitt, 397.

inhabitants during the stops. The inner and outer surfaces are at that moment hardly distinguishable and give form to a home that flows past this division. Domestic life takes shape using architectural elements (grounds, floors, walls, openings, layers) that profoundly link home and landscape (as well as the public and the private).

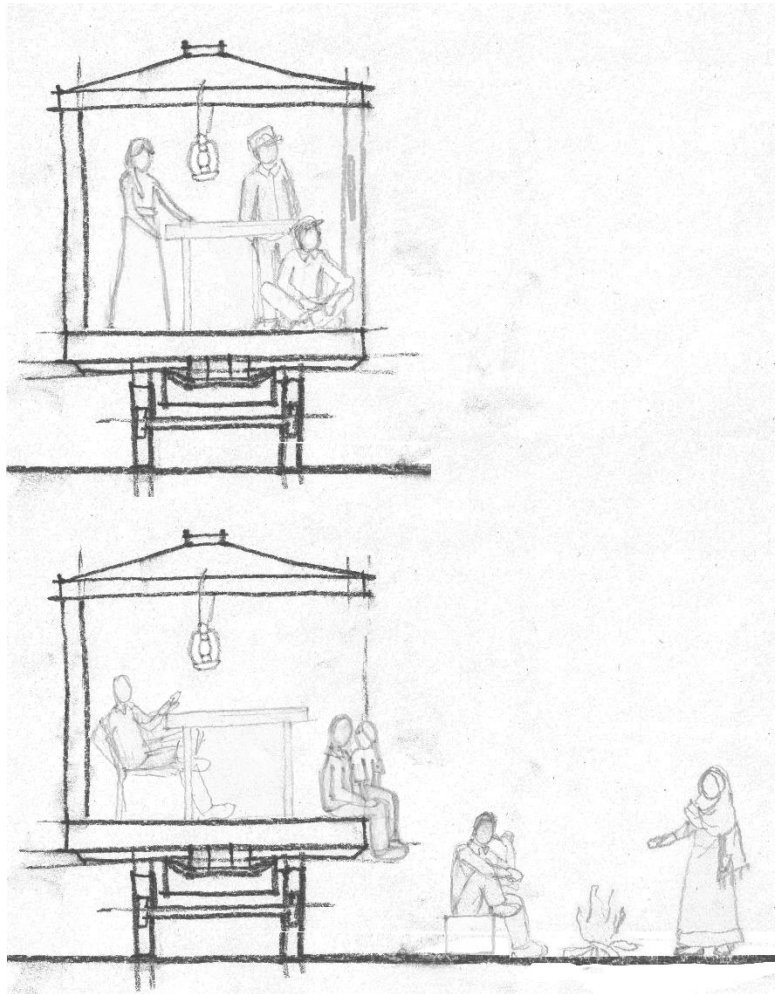


Figure 3.16 Dining car as per Brondo Whitt's descriptions. The upper drawing shows an interior space only visually connected to the outside, as the train is in movement. Passengers have opened the door to contemplate the moon. The lower drawing shows the interior space expanding towards the surrounding landscape at a train stop. Drawing by author.

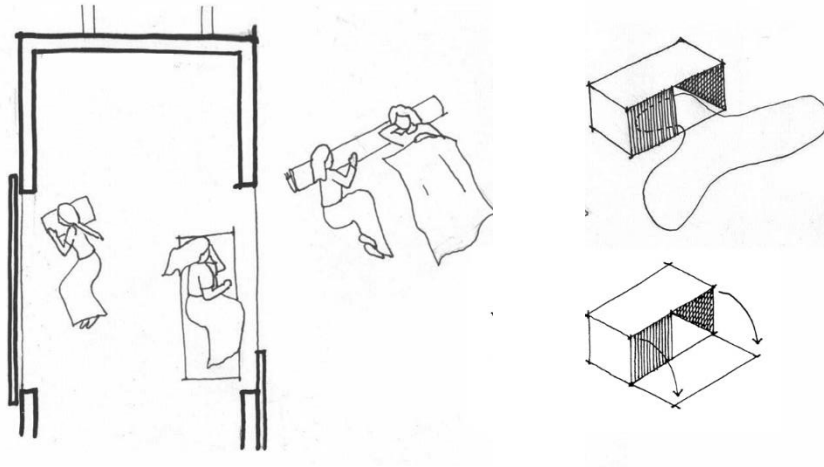


Figure 3.17
Floorplan of
sleeping space
occupying inside of
boxcar and outside
space. Drawing by
author.

Many of the spatial forms described resemble the working-class dwelling examined in Chapter One, as shown in the plans. As **Figure 3.18** shows (in this case, an example of a city dwelling), the multiple variations in the urban and rural forms of this type often featured a single-room layout. Within the same space, families would cook, sleep, rest, and work (when unable to labour outside). One of the arguments of Chapter One is that the examined housing forms anticipated a number of configurations and practices of the revolution's travelling homes. At a campsite very close to the Battle of Torreón, Whitt narrates having seen a group of camp followers "transform a *gondola* into a dwelling:" on one end, some of them cook on small, smoking braziers, and on the other end, the others build a toilet area covered by branches and 'rags.'⁵⁴ One of the women leans on a wall close to an inner corner of the gondola and falls asleep in that position while stroking a weapon.⁵⁵ **Figure 3.19** shows an example of a *gondola*. Its characteristic open top would vent the smoke out and allow the *soldaderas* from the described scene to cook. The plan from

⁵⁴ Throughout his account, Whitt refers to shawls using the word rags.

⁵⁵ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 121.

Figure 3.20 follows Whitt's account. The *gondola*'s rectangular space resembles the mentioned city dwelling while its occupation by the women parallels the multiple uses given to a quadrangular building undivided by walls.

This and other examples show that women improvised, in the undivided space of the wagons, dwellings that were strongly connected to the exterior—just like the urban and rural single-unit homes studied in Chapter One. Whitt describes geographies connected along diverse sites on which women created eating, resting, and washing or bathing spaces. These extended all the way from where the train was stopped to a river.⁵⁶ This shows a home constituted by multiple places and with undefined boundaries.

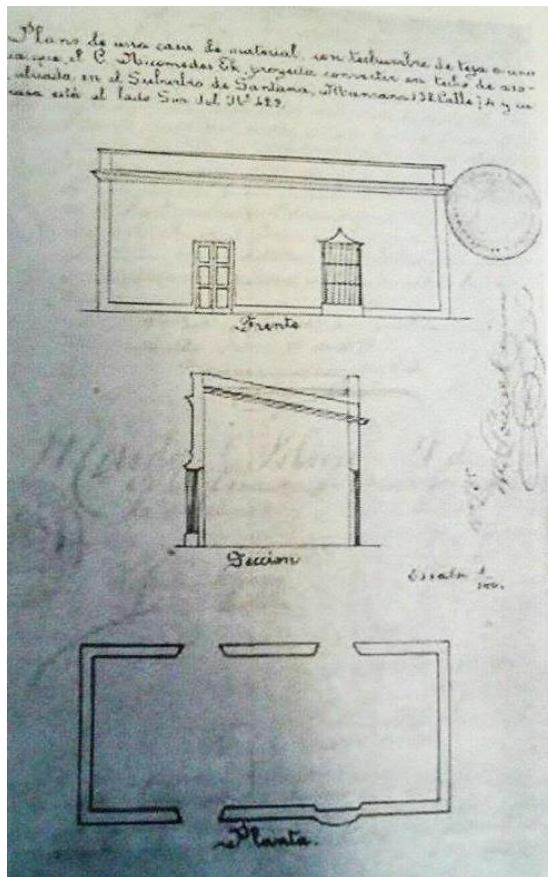


Figure 3.18. *Ocurso o permiso de construcción de vivienda popular de la época porfiriana* [Porfirian-time building permit for popular-class dwelling], from Arana López, Gladys. “Espacios, sujetos y objetos del habitar cotidiano en el México de entre siglos: Mérida la de Yucatán, 1886-1916,” *Memoria y Sociedad*, No. 17 (35), July-December 2013, 243.

⁵⁶ Brondo Whitt, 397.

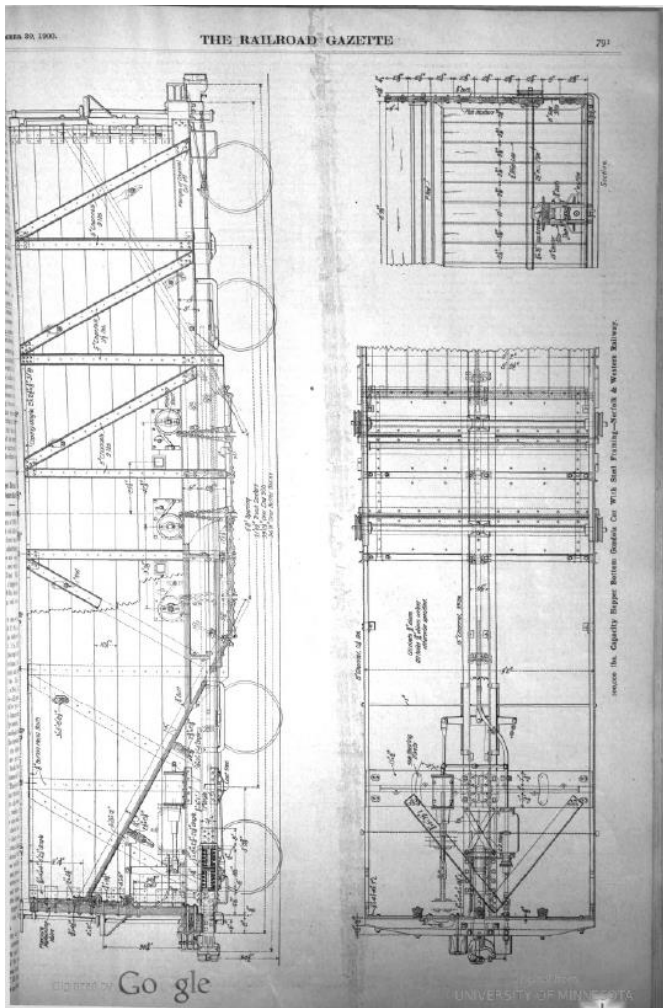


Figure 3.19 Gondola car similar to those used in Mexican trains. *The Railroad Gazette*, 30 September, 1900, 791. Original held by University of Minnesota. Digitised by University of Michigan.

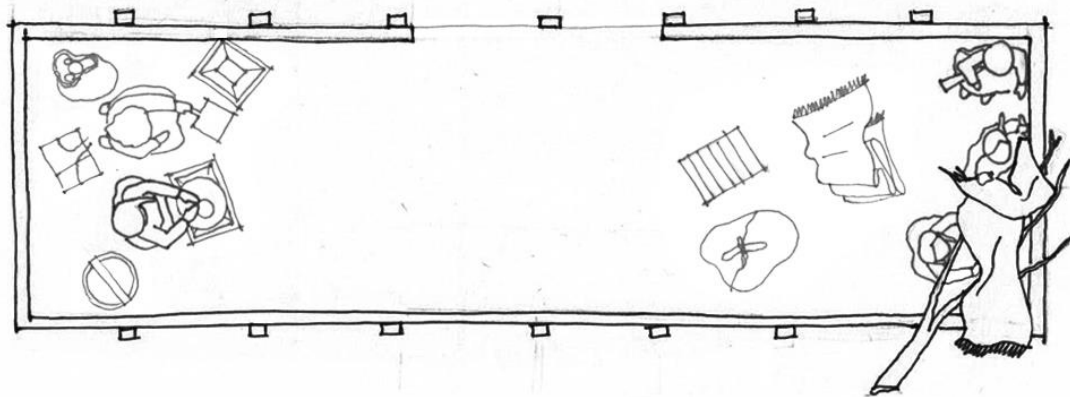


Figure 3.20 Women transform a *gondola* into a dwelling. The multiple activities taking place in the undivided space resemble the “regular” use of dwellings such as the one shown in **Figure 3.18** and discussed in Chapter One. Drawing by author.

The home, dislocated as described in Chapter Two (an aggregate of events, a series of dis-aligned space-events), was subject to the dynamics of the train. Women repurposed the surfaces of carriages (walls, floors, roofs) creating spatial “folds” that, depending on the different needs, times, and spaces, created “room” for the series of events that constituted the home. The spatial folds consisted of changes in the function and enclosure of these surfaces of trains, which resulted in different arrangements of privacy, connection to the exterior, and usefulness of spaces.

An example of this repurposing of walls, rooftops, and spaces of train cars is the changing form of a “bedroom,” this time from the account of Josefina Bórquez. She narrates that, during travel, the sleeping spaces of soldiers and *soldaderas* were on the rooftops of trains. When the train stopped, however, these travellers made a bedroom for themselves in the box car after the horses transported therein were taken out, closing off these spaces for some moments of couple intimacy.⁵⁷ During these stopovers, the very public “bedroom” area that people had shared on the top of trains was transferred below, now using the vertical surfaces of the cars to offer privacy to its dwellers. When the train was speeding along the tracks, these vertical surfaces were meant to physically protect users inside from falling off the car (ironically, in this case, horses). At the station, the same surfaces took on the function of protecting, now visually, the new users of the space: those who travelled on top and appropriated the space for having sex. The reader will recall another, even more fleeting stage of the bedroom in Whitt’s description of a couple lying down by a train car and using the tracks as a headrest (see **Figure 3.21**). In this description, the fold becomes evident when a wall that is meant to enclose a car switches its direction

⁵⁷ Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 94-6.

(of use) and functionally integrates with the adjacent ground: the “L” shape that they form creates the ephemeral bedroom/sleeping area. This outer wall of the train car becomes an inner wall of the space for romance and rest.

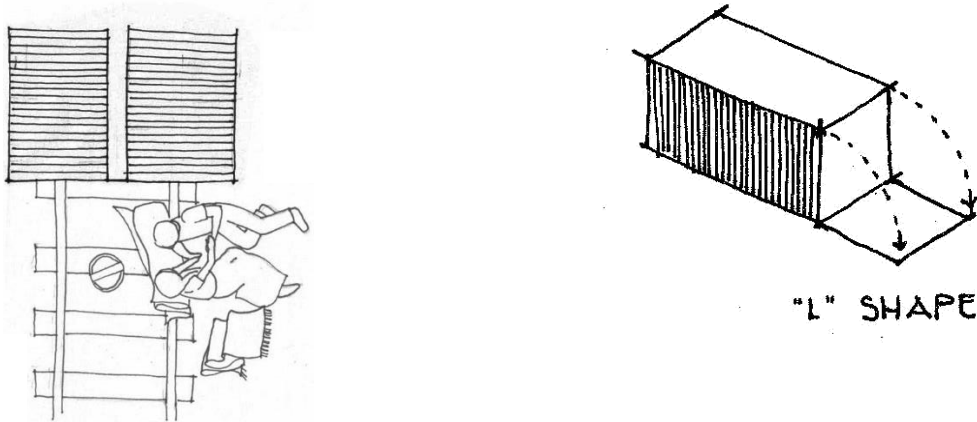


Figure 3.21 Wall of train car functionally turns outwards. In the “L” shape formed between the wall and the ground, an ephemeral “bedroom”/sleeping area emerges.

I have mentioned that, at night, some travellers slept outdoors, while others slept inside a wagon—the latter option could have people sleeping in a closed-off car or in a car that kept the sliding doors open, expanding the bedroom space. **Figure 3.17** sketches the (un)folding of that wall, which, I argue, was a functional fold. The wall was unmoveable, so there was no physical folding or unfolding possible, but, as the drawing shows, the integration of spaces worked as though the wall had unfolded outwards. A similar process is legible in the earlier description of an officers’ dining car expanding its social space outdoors: the home-box unfolded outwards—see **Figure 3.22**. Likewise, the ‘*de rigueur*’ outdoor kitchens of *soldaderas* described by Whitt show that, by bringing together the transient, material conditions of a home to the ground outside, women operated the spatial folds that, altogether, constituted the home. Women’s placement and spatial practices gave

definition to the home that expanded and dislocated⁵⁸ from the travelling boxcar. The domestic site was a) at the wagon (during travel and when occupied at stops); b) on the walls that functionally turned outside to define a domestic space adjacent to the train; and c) on the sites arranged away from the train.

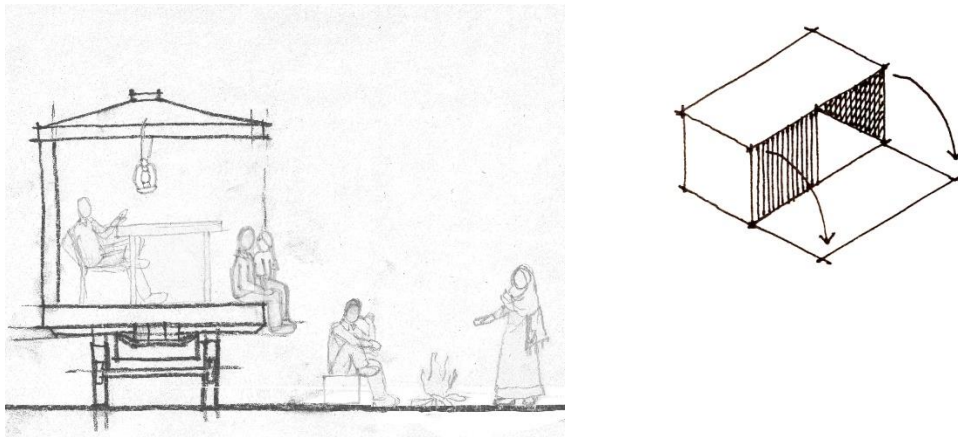


Figure 3.22. Space unfolds and the kitchen expands to space outside the carriage. Drawing by author.

The items transported by women were crucial for the folding and unfolding spatial practices. I briefly examine how this connection between objects and surfaces gave form to the fleeting domestic spaces. First, I suggest we connect two fragments: a photograph in which five men pose around a woman by a train car (**Figure 3.23**) and an excerpt from Josefina Bórquez's memoirs, after a battle in which she fought. This excerpt reads:

A downpour made us return to the station where we had left the *impedimenta*. We were all covered in mud. . . . The following day, at the station, I just saw that the women had hung our clothes to dry on cables.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ It relocated but as separate components.

⁵⁹ Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 111.

It remains unclear in the text whether the cables themselves hung from train cars like they do in the picture or if they hung from another prop or surface. In these two possibilities, however, the unfolding of space is legible: the “L” shape formed by the vertical support of clothes and the ground in front (where women stood to hang and take down the clothes) created “room” for the domestic activity. The unfolded surfaces could belong either to the train or to the station’s building or infrastructure. The objects that *soldaderas* hung, spread, and prepared on these surfaces functioned as built-in cues for the type of activity required: laundry,⁶⁰ cooking, sleeping.

The second part of this brief analysis advances the plan in **Figure 3.24** to connect the information from a photograph depicting a setting created by a *soldadera* (**Figure 3.25**) with Brondo Whitt’s description of open-air kitchens: at a stop suspected by the travelling crowd to last long,⁶¹ everyone hopped off and dispersed, creating an informal camp. Men built a fire while women set up their traditional open-air kitchens and made coffee. In the photograph of the setting created by a *soldadera*, the “path” of the home is legible from the open wagon to the ground beside it. The likelihood that the photograph is staged leads us to question the ways in which arrangements such as the one described by Whitt worked, because he provides little information about the position of the kitchens with respect to the convoy. Can we trust the photograph in the proximity that it depicts between the tent and the train? Even if the visual information is hard to trust, the picture helps us visualise the “path” of the home, from its “folded” state inside/on top of the train car to being spread out

⁶⁰ Whitt also offers an example of surfaces occupied for washing as he viewed *soldaderas* washing clothes in a lake in which soldiers bathed. Whitt, 428.

⁶¹ It is easy to imagine that military leaders cared little about informing the entire corps about the reason or length of a stop. Even if they wanted to, the separation of the cars made it very difficult to communicate details of plans to all passengers as the train sped along the tracks. Whitt, 268.

on the ground. I have mentioned that the transfer of these items from the walls of the house to the changing surfaces of travel brings about a mobile, refigured domesticity. The train is a near or distant background. Domestic life unfolding outwards shows a practice borrowed from the compact, working-class permanent dwellings, which connected with their surroundings in the daily activities of families. As shown in Chapter One, the living units of the social stratum of most of this travelling population were compact (like boxcars), which called for quotidian use of the space beyond the shed.



Figure 3.23. *Tropas federales del Gral. Lucio Blanco toman descanso* [Federal troops of General Lucio Blanco take a break. My translation]. Photograph. Jalisco, Mexico, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Cellulose nitrate negative, Item No. 6086. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

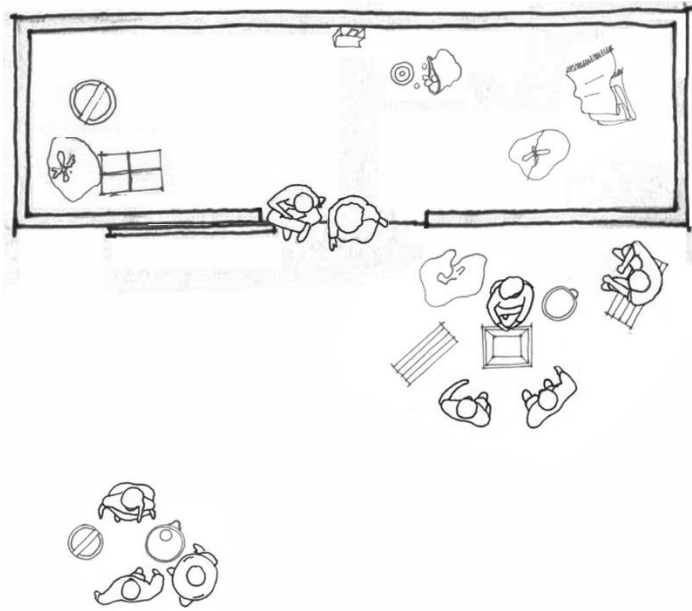


Figure 3.24 Open-air kitchens by boxcar. The “path” of the home is legible from the open wagon to the ground beside it, with the objects (and people) spreading from the inside of the enclosed space.



Figure 3.25. *Revolucionarios en un campamento a las órdenes de Lucio Blanco* [Revolutionary people at a camp under command of Lucio Blanco. My translation]. Photograph. Monterrey, Mexico, 1913. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 32646. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

Josefina Bórquez indicated that priority was often given to horses inside boxcars, so camp followers and soldiers would travel on the rooftops.⁶² Walking along the speeding line of train cars was dangerous, and many *soldaderas* fell to their deaths.⁶³ It is difficult to imagine the hardship of this accommodation as the free choice of members of armies, but, in what follows, I draw attention to the subtle ways in which these “top-floor residents” appropriated such spaces and turned them into platforms for revolutionary action and everyday collaboration.

Bórquez recalls travelling on the roof through inclement weather with other men and women. They had to sit or squat to avoid falling. She says that they used *mangas de hule*⁶⁴ to protect their belongings from the rain. Bórquez and her companions cooked as the train moved along the railway:⁶⁵

We would eat up there, on top of the train. We brought a brazier that we kept lit as we covered its opening, preventing air from entering underneath and from making the sparks jump above.⁶⁶

Some of the most widely-circulated images of women in the revolution depict these rooftop kitchens. The images suggest one of the many forms that kitchens could take. They also serve as an aid to visualise the scenes from Bórquez’s recollections (**Figures 3.26 and 3.27**).⁶⁷ Brondo Whitt’s memoirs reveal that *soldaderas* often appropriated the rooftop as a social space during halts in their journey.⁶⁸ His description of the ease with which they

⁶² Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 94. See also Constantino Caldero Vázquez, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/110. Brondo Whitt, 158. Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, “Rutas vitales en el desierto: la importancia militar de los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana,” 71.

⁶³ Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 43.

⁶⁴ Also called *lorongos*: ponchos for horse riders made of oilcloth.

⁶⁵ She clarifies that a convoy with numerous cars moved slowly.

⁶⁶ Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 94.

⁶⁷ Josefina Bórquez in Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 94. See also Whitt, 223.

⁶⁸ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 306.

climbed up and down the challenging ladders reminds us of the owner of a home who can run through its staircase with a familiarity and speed that outsiders cannot match.⁶⁹ Women also stood together on cars to watch battles or events nearby.⁷⁰ **Figure 3.28** shows how the living area of the boxcars doubled upwards with the tents built on a “second floor.” However, as Whitt states, there could or could not be tents.⁷¹

As aforementioned, this upper space was also a bedroom/sleeping area. Women even gave birth therein.⁷² Whitt, narrates:

Walking along a military train prior to departure, one can see the cars crowned by masses: men and women spend the night ‘à la belle étoile,’ sleeping rough, wrapped in their serapes. . . . On these men’s way to battle, a car’s interior is full of officers, and its top is crowded with privates who defy the weather, sleeping on the wet surface and covering themselves with a *four-thread* [meaning frayed] blanket. And there they go, undaunted and still cheerful, with their *vieja* [pejorative for woman] alongside, so that she softens the cold-air nights with her presence and songs.⁷³

⁶⁹ On women’s embodied knowledge, see Iris Marion Young, “Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality,” *Human Studies* 3 (1890): 137–56; Shogo Tanaka, “The Notion of Embodied Knowledge and Its Range,” *Encyclopaideia* 17, no. 37 (2013): 47–66; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1944).

⁷⁰ Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 108.

⁷¹ Whitt, 222-3.

⁷² Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 317.

⁷³ Whitt, 222-3.



Figure 3.26. *Soldaderas preparan comida en el techo de vagón de tren* [*Soldaderas prepare food on train top*. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Cellulose nitrate negative, Item No. 6388. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).



Figure 3.27. *Soldados federales sobre ferrocarril militar* [*Federal soldiers on military train*. My translation]. Reprography. Mexico, 1913. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Security film negative, Item No. 8349. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

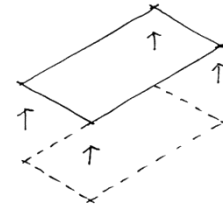


Figure 3.28. *Embarque de tropas constitucionalistas rumbo al sur* [Boarding process of constitutionalist troops headed south], from Francisco J. Gorostiza Pérez, *Los ferrocarriles en la Revolución Mexicana*, 185.

Installing themselves on the rooftop, travellers kept a somewhat controlled connection with the space of stop while positioned at a vantage point. This site was visually connected to the surrounding landscape, while keeping some level of privacy. From above, the space where the train stopped was visible, but not all that was happening on the tops of trains could be seen from the ground. **Figure 3.29** shows how such visibility depended on the angle, but was definitely more advantageous from above: the height difference regulated visual access in the same fashion as did the walls of a closed-off car. It was as though the walls folded invisibly upwards to keep providing a privacy now negotiated through people's position. Thus, privacy would no longer depend on an interior being closed off, but on an exterior where elevation was used to control visual and physical access. Constantino Caldero describes camp followers claiming the space of rooftops with their children: "A real headache! . . . What a drag, handling women. They were so unruly!"⁷⁴ As a deputy chief of staff of the Villista army, Práxedes Giner Durán found that

⁷⁴ Constantino Caldero Vázquez, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/110.

soldaderas hid weapons even from the officers of the troop they travelled with in the train tops that they took over. This is an example of *soldaderas*' spatial strategies to create their own privacy.

In a renowned episode in Camargo, Chihuahua, General Francisco Villa was barely missed by a gunshot from the rooftop of a train where a group of *soldaderas* stood. Again, the higher position allowed the sniper to watch Villa on the ground without being noticed, and being among this crowd on the boxcar granted her anonymity. Willing to face collective punishment, the women never revealed who among them fired at the rebel leader. José María Jaurrieta, secretary of Francisco Villa at the time, wrote in his *Memorias de Campaña* that the general ordered the execution of all the women, and officers Práxedes Giner and Silvestre Cadena Jaramillo say that they witnessed the episode.⁷⁵ Giner also narrates a safe retreat of his military corps from Aguascalientes, made possible by women who shot from the rooftops against enemies who attempted to block the advance of the train.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ José María Jaurrieta, *Con Villa, 1916-1920: Memorias de campaña*, 76. See also Práxedes Giner Durán, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/75 and Silvestre Cadena Jaramillo, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/93. Jaurrieta describes the event as having taken place in December 1916. Interestingly enough, a newspaper narrates a very similar incident in 1920 (also in Chihuahua), which supposedly ended with Villa granting pardon to the group of women. "Una soldadera a punto de matar a Villa," *El Informador*, 18 June 1920, 1.

⁷⁶ Práxedes Giner Durán, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/75.

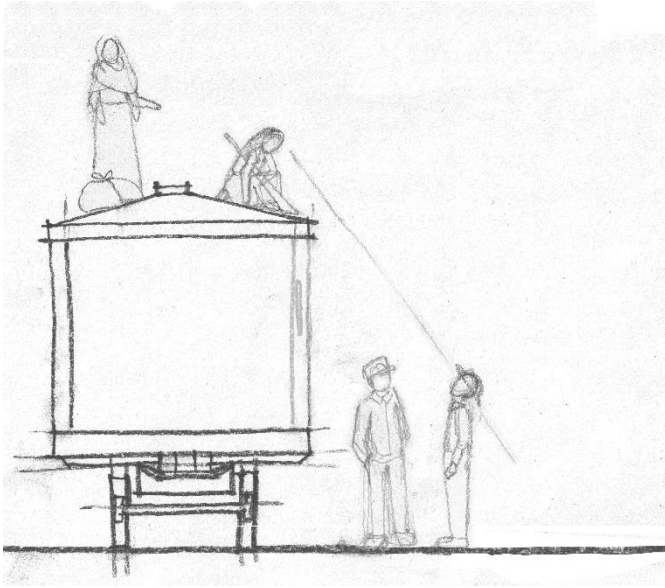
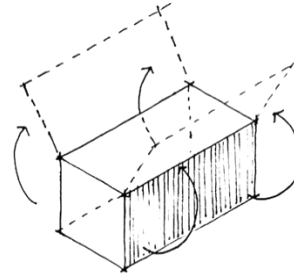


Figure 3.29 Section showing vantage point of people positioned on top of a train car with respect to subjects on the ground



Domesticity was not only dislocated into “units” (or space-events) between an inside and an outside, but also between a ground and an upper level. In what follows I compare the spatial forms adapted in trains with the collective housing of the *vecindad* and the *calpanería*. As an extension of the argument in Chapter Two on the travelling crowd organising itself into *domestic groups*,⁷⁷ I contend that these groups shared living practices and settings in ways that shaped the spaces of the train as moving *vecindades* or *calpanerías*. In other words, even if the domestic architectures that they created were ephemeral, the togetherness of this group in the month- or year-long travel developed social and spatial dynamics similar to those of a *vecindad*: military encampments (travelling by train or not) could be seen as though the dwellers of a *vecindad* were journeying and settling in different places—they remained neighbours all the while. After all, the word *vecindad* literally means vicinity.

⁷⁷ A term I find more useful here than *families*. See Chapter Two.

The temporary homes in trains also resembled *vecindades*. As shown in Chapter One, the dwelling units of a *vecindad* usually lined or surrounded a patio and were, for the most part, one-room apartments (called *cuartos redondos*)⁷⁸ meant for all domestic uses. *Calpanerías*, housing for workers of haciendas, shared a number of features with *vecindades*, like the serial array of family units—also, consisting of a single space—and communal service areas. The empty boxcar of a train, with its single opening and multiple uses, behaved like a mobile *cuarto redondo*/round room. **Figure 3.30:** Aligned in the same fashion as the units of *vecindades* or *calpanerías*, the boxcars allowed domestic life to expand to the station's grounds: it is easy to compare the campfires by the train described by Whitt with the convivial atmosphere of a *vecindad* patio during a *posada*—a festivity preceding Christmas organised by the neighbours as a community. Mentioned in Chapter Two, Whitt notes in his journal the episode at a station in which *soldaderas* bond as they comb and clean each other's hair.⁷⁹ This reminds us of the animated space of the *vecindad* courtyard, occupied by women and children among clothes lines and flower pots, described by Vicente Martín Hernández (Chapter One).⁸⁰ It is important to recall that the patio's central role included not only circulation, but also collective activities and common services. The grounds adjacent to the revolutionary train resemble the patio or the common spaces of a *vecindad* or *calpanería* in the shared use for laundering and cooking by women.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Round rooms.

⁷⁹ Whitt, 297.

⁸⁰ Vicente Martín Hernández. *Arquitectura doméstica de la ciudad de México (1890-1925)*, 113.

⁸¹ Whitt, 219, 428.

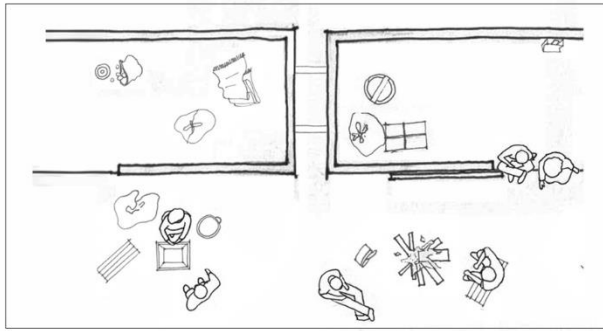
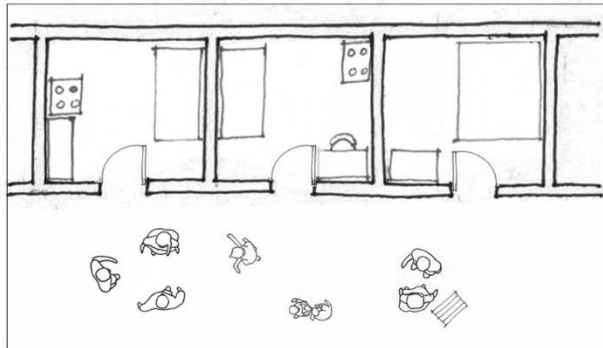


Figure 3.30 Living units extending activities outdoors, comparison. Drawings by author.

Train cars: Their interior spaces connected towards the landscapes of passage.



Round rooms in *vecindad*: The living spaces of each unit expanded towards the shared patio.

Needless to say, these home spaces worked differently depending on whether the train was in motion or at rest. When the train stopped at a station, separate interiors (of its wagons) were accessible from the ground: its floor plan reminds us of the layout of a *vecindad* or a *calpanería*, with the corridor along the aligned rooms resembling the series of boxcars opened towards the station grounds. After examining two mid- 1900s *vecindades* in Mexico City, anthropologist Oscar Lewis describes how, besides sharing bathroom and washing services, people would “drift easily in and out of each others [sic] rooms” to ask for items to borrow.⁸²

⁸² Oscar Lewis, “The Culture of the Vecindad in Mexico City: Two Case Studies,” in *33rd International Congress of Americanists, Seminar on Urbanization Problems in Latin America*, 1958,” 14. Lewis’ work brought academic attention to *vecindades*, and his ethnographic studies of the Mexican underclass first gained the appreciation of scholars. However, his somewhat distanced and condescending position as an observer gave origin to his theory of a “culture of poverty” which received heavy criticism. This theory considers that attitudes of the urban underclass are at the origin of their lack of opportunities. See Jean Franco, *Plotting*

A similar flowing of indoor and outdoor space emerges in these trains: for instance, in the living unit devised by a group of women in the *gondola* described earlier; in the indoor/outdoor bedroom; on the rooftops which women came from and went to all day, etc.⁸³

These conditions of openness, on the other hand, changed when the train was moving, with each carriage shut off from the outside and disconnected from the contiguous wagons. The running train, thus, behaved in a way similar to the nighttime shift of *cuartos redondos*: these contiguous spaces also closed themselves off both to one another and to the corridor towards which their daytime activities had previously flowed.

But if the train in motion had its wagons shut off from each other, in its informally-arranged and occupied upper level, the dwelling spaces preserved the free flow of the connecting grounds of the station. The tents and occupied spaces, in their linear array, kept a connection stronger than the closed-off wagons did, thanks to the continuity of the train's backbone. Unlike the spaces encapsulated inside, these homes had less defined boundaries. In many ways, they became a continuous, shared, domestic landscape that resembled the spaces of the corridors linking individual units of *vecindades*. Here, however, the corridor and the family space merged—see **Figure 3.31**. The social space of *soldaderas* (and sleeping space of travellers) on rooftops, with its vantage position with respect to the ground is relevant here as well, as it resembles the way in which the upper levels of a *vecindad* afford a privileged view towards the common areas. The vantage point is not only

Women, 159-62, and Emilio De Antuñano, "Mexico City as an Urban Laboratory: Oscar Lewis, the 'Culture of Poverty' and the Transnational History of the Slum," *Journal of Urban History* 45, no. 4 (2019): 813–30.

⁸³ Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte*, 121, 306, 397.

visible in the episode in which a *soldadera* shot Villa, but in other accounts by Whitt in which people stood on wagons to get a better view of a neighbouring battle.⁸⁴

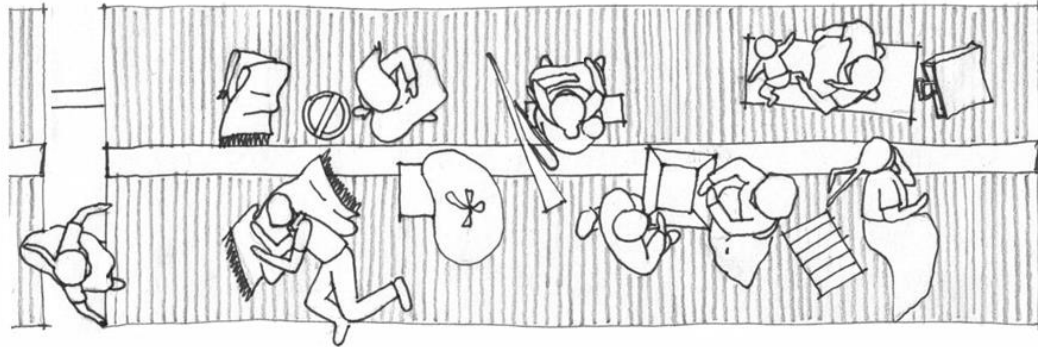


Figure 3.31 The tops of travelling trains resembled the spaces of the corridors linking individual units of *vecindades*. The corridor and the family space merged in a way that was impossible between closed-off wagons.

On the way from Fraustro to Paredón (North of Mexico) Whitt speaks of Francisco Villa's order in May 1914 to leave women behind. First protesting but obeying the command, *soldaderas* slowly realised that they could follow the train, which was slowed down by the need to repair the tracks blown up by enemies. At some point, he narrates, they headed in advance to the army's destination and set up camp. Here, the women gave form to the home at the stop before the arrival of the train. The train eventually inserted itself as the missing piece in the now domestic, collectively-shaped landscape.

I see in the similarities between the spaces of trains and their own dwellings evidence that women in the revolution adapted their space-making practices to the material and temporal conditions of travel. The *vecindades*, *calpanerías* and the individual popular-class homes shared features with the sites adapted for collective, ephemeral use during the war. When building mobile homes, *soldaderas* often reinforced patterns of use from urban

⁸⁴ Whitt, 108.

and rural dwellings in order to give shape to more knowable living spaces. For instance, while almost any ground could be adapted as a kitchen, it needed the familiar layout with a central preparation spot and the recognisable form given by the items carried. In this translation between the regular and the travelling home, fleeting conditions opened the possibility to redefine domestic spaces, nevertheless. This often involved testing the elasticity of boundaries between the indoors and outdoors, between the public and the private, the familial and the social, and even between the woman and the builder.

The women who did not travel alongside armies also played an important role in the recasting of domestic architectures. As mentioned in Chapter Two, a number of female vendors approached the camps, connecting with the linear space of movement in order to market their home-cooking. Many of these kitchens, built with commercial purposes by the train tracks,⁸⁵ created an ephemeral domesticity shared by soldiers, one that (as seen in Chapter Two) overturned the notion of the home as belonging to a single family. Unlike the space described above, this domestic site did not expand from the interior of the trains, but from the houses of villagers who sold their services. These ephemeral, informal, domestic settings became a connecting ground between the train homes of the armies and the fixed homes of villagers. The space that allowed these transactions gained importance in the development of the war because it was a connection between fixed and mobile spaces.

As mentioned earlier, the controlled and designed setting of the train prescribed uses and more often than not imposed conditions of hardship. But, with great ingenuity and resourcefulness, home-makers and inhabitants could appropriate space to inscribe therein actions as heroic as shooting enemies (from a rooftop). The hardware of a train either could

⁸⁵ Brondo Whitt, 269.

prescribe clear uses for its spaces or could be subject to changes—by its movement or by the dynamics of the travelling people. Its transformation into a home could follow the codes of its walls, openings, furniture and directed paths, or could make room for an organic unfolding of domestic life and functions. Again, I bring attention to the concepts of smooth and striated space, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (see Stopover).

Striations help organise space, whereas smooth space is amorphous, always changing, “occupied by intensities.”⁸⁶ The revolution made use of the trains as a mobile surrogate to the homes of the people needed by armies in different locations. The military institution pursued functionality and organisation, but in the liminal space beyond its prescriptive reach, the creation of mobile homes developed in a *smooth* way. Members of contingents were organised hierarchically in space,⁸⁷ and the assigned boxcars were striations through which high military commands provided an order to bodies and spaces: “this is the place to build your dwelling and these are the limits to do it.”⁸⁸ Through female agency, however, the home became a less controllable, disorganised setting. Smooth space, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, is defined by vectors instead of lines (movement instead of measurement) and calls for the nomadic:⁸⁹ like the vast, baffling landscapes of the conflict where large groups of people were mobilised. The homes built by *soldaderas*, subject to improvisation, unfolding hitherto-enclosed surfaces, and challenging the inside/outside division, were transformed into smooth spaces. This domestic form subverted ideals of feminine containment and, again, reversed notions of the man as builder

⁸⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 479, 485.

⁸⁷ Whitt, 222-3; “Con el ánimo muy levantado salió para el norte la brillante columna del Gral. Victoriano Huerta,” *El Diario*, 11 April 1912, 1. “Marchó Blanquet al norte,” *El Tiempo*, 16 May 1912.

⁸⁸ Brondo Whitt, for instance, describes the train as a mannequin which, lifeless and lacking a will of its own, moved following the orders of the highest-ranking officers. *La División del Norte*, 140.

⁸⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 410, 474, 478.

and the woman as inhabitant of the private. This is important to point out as there is an ongoing tendency to label *soldaderas* as mere figures of emotional support, following men into war spaces and hardly as active creators of them.

The train hardware was hard to reshape, but the smooth space of the home, in its “continuous variation, continuous development of form,”⁹⁰ refigured the codes for dwelling. Deleuze and Guattari claim that, in smooth space, the line of movement becomes more important than the points connected. The revolution, as it unfolded, also gave primacy to the trajectory:

In striated space, lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another. In the smooth, it is the opposite: the points are subordinated to the trajectory. This was already the case among the nomads for the clothes-tent-space vector [...] The dwelling is subordinated to the journey; inside space conforms to outside space: tent, igloo, boat.⁹¹

This chapter demonstrates a house-building process in which the day-to-day spaces of the revolution flowed between the striated and the smooth. Whereas new spatial forms and gender roles emerged, the new configurations only worked as long as they did not completely subvert existing ones. They worked out as a fairly organic process while accommodating some of women’s expected roles and some known housing forms. Smooth and striated spaces “in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space.” Different conditions allow the passage from one to the other. They exist as mixed and simultaneous.⁹² The mobile home of *soldaderas* tested shapes past

⁹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 478.

⁹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 478.

⁹² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474-5.

some boundaries but kept spatial cues that still referred to the knowable built family dwelling.⁹³ It drew on the contingencies of wartime mobilisation but it also kept its meaning as a site for respite and gendered work. Gender and spatial metaphors drew on their traditional striations—the home as a shelter for the feminine and the feminine as a stable entity in the home—but in their new form they afforded women access to the masculinised war landscapes. Likewise, the modules where people slept, prepared food, ate and rested were at times freed from contained spatial units and at others came back to the anchoring, solid rooms of train wagons.

In the homes created on trains, the smooth and the domestic came together in a folded space. Henry Urbach draws on the Deleuzian notion of the *pli* to describe a space of self-representation that arises “within and against social relations.”⁹⁴ As Deleuze notes, when the relations of the outside are folded, the doubling originates a relation to oneself, which “develops its own unique dimension.”⁹⁵ Influenced by the social norm, the *pli* still allows room for negotiation. Urbach’s example is a (contemporary) home’s ante-closet, a site where constructs of self can be prescribed by socially-sanctioned images, but also where the very elements of these images can be used to reimagine one’s identity.⁹⁶

Soldaderas were given spaces in rigid, seemingly unchangeable structures. Their ephemeral, improvised set-ups functioned as foldings which reproduced home architectures as dictated by the social norm. They often managed, nevertheless, to fold and unfold spaces and to (temporarily) reinscribe on the surfaces of the *pli* their subjectivities and those of the

⁹³ Christine Arce makes a similar argument by saying: *Soldaderas* “made and unmade the train as a place by defying its ‘proper’ function but also by simultaneously domesticating it.” Christine Arce, *Mexico’s Nobodies*, 43.

⁹⁴ Henry Urbach, “Closets, Clothes, Disclosure,” *Assemblage*, no. 30 (1996): 70.

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, quoted by Henry Urbach in “Clothes, Closets, Disclosure,” 72.

⁹⁶ Henry Urbach, “Clothes, Closets, Disclosure,” 72.

domestic architectures associated to them. *Soldaderas* built the spaces that patriarchy associated with them but, in their action of doubling, they also re-created these spaces in a subtly changed form.

The first image that anyone interested in *soldaderas* will most likely encounter is the one known as “Adelita” (see **Figures 3.32** and **3.33**). According to John Mraz, it was taken by Gerónimo Hernández and first appeared in the 8 April 1912 cover of the newspaper *Nueva Era*. Today it illustrates the cover of Elena Poniatowska’s book *Las Soldaderas* and welcomes guests to the popular Mexico City restaurant *La Soldadera*, framed and printed at actual scale. This famous photograph exists in its complete version, as well as in a cut-out one in the Casasola Archive. As John Mraz observes, the section of it which has been reproduced with more frequency is the one with most of the women cropped out, centring attention solely on the one who leans out while holding on to the rails. Mraz’s understanding being that the strict spaces of travel of *soldaderas* were the rooftops and undersides of trains—contradicted, as we have seen, by newspapers and witnesses testifying that women sometimes used carriages—leads him to suggest that these subjects are not *soldaderas*, but prostitutes. To him, this explains their position at the site of embarking and disembarking. Mraz attempts to fix the identities of these women in a way that evokes architectural drawings defining the type of human scale that “belongs” in the building.⁹⁷ In them, the space fixes women.⁹⁸

But as this chapter has proposed (in a discussion continued by the following ones), we must pay attention to the evidence that points at women as agents and builders. Mraz

⁹⁷ See this discussion in Chapter One.

⁹⁸ Christine Arce also raises this question about Mraz’s guess of who these women were based on the particular place where they were standing. *Mexico’s nobodies*, 73.

states that the space defines the identity of the woman. Yet we have learned that the mission of *soldaderas* was to transform space. In the sites intervened by them we can see the folding (*pli*), with the “side” following patriarchal dictates and the “side” testing their elasticity touching on the same plane.⁹⁹ Prostitute, mother, camp-follower, vendor, lover, spouse, sister, daughter, fighter are identities that folded and unfolded¹⁰⁰ in sequences that also transformed architectures. The *pli* merged these women’s surfaces with those of the space that they re-created. The wagons themselves kept little material evidence of these changes. But, connecting the fragments of evidence, we visualise the rigid surfaces gaining movement thanks to the dynamics of women during the revolution, slowly revealing the gender discontinuities that trains and other spaces accommodated. All we need is to see the spatiality and agency in the practices so far denoted by historians and popular narratives as “supportive” and “self-abnegated.” Subtly, the traces of women’s architectural creation become visible in those images of rigid train cars.

⁹⁹ Almost like a Mobius strip.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Josefina Bórquez embodied all but the first two.



Figure 3.32. *Soldaderas en el estribo de un vagón en Buenavista [Soldaderas on running board of a wagon in Buenavista].* Photograph. Mexico, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Security film negative, Item No. 6349. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).



Figure 3.33 *Soldadera en el estribo de un ferrocarril [Soldaderas on running board. My translation].* Photograph. Mexico, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Security film negative, Item No. 644016. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed October 2020).

CHAPTER FOUR: CAMPS AND PATHWAYS

This chapter examines the relationship *soldaderas* established with pathways as they created campsites. As indicated previously, the ephemeral homes of these women developed cyclically, in a process of arriving, building, inhabiting, dismantling, leaving, and building anew. The chapter examines this cycle in its profound connection to the landscapes of war, still related to the agency that women built for themselves. It is divided into two parts.

Part I (Tradition and Representation) starts with a brief comparison between the regular homes of the popular class and the temporary homes in the war camps. After discussing the attachment of the latter to the permanent infrastructure of cities, villages, and haciendas, this part shifts the focus to the subject traditionally mediating dwelling and landscape: the woman. I observe that her task of connecting the regular home with its surroundings influenced her task of building and maintaining war dwellings. Traditional customs of sending women outside—to do laundry or in the search for food and water—prior to the revolution, had shaped feminine roles that “extended” domesticity from the family home to the encompassing landscapes. I see these practices as fundamental in the connection that camp followers established with the geographies they traversed.

This first part also discusses the frequency with which visual and textual materials portraying camps relegate *soldaderas* to the background, associating them to a domesticity

and labour taken for granted.¹ Some examples of these materials, both produced during revolutionary times and afterwards, show that military and social discourses would acknowledge women's presence in camps when framed in the gendered terms which associated femininity and domesticity: specifically, a subject occupying her "rightful place" in a functional and organised army. Even if these discourses tangentially recognise the home-building task, they show a short-sighted approach towards women's complex participation in the revolutionary camps, which involved coordinated and profound engagements with the lands traversed by armies.

Part II (Women's Landscapes) seeks to expand this limited understanding by drawing attention to the spatial practices of *soldaderas* in camps and pathways: firstly, examining their position (and action) as the most immediate connection between armies and the surrounding geographies; secondly, looking at the ways in which their labour blurred the boundaries between homes and pathways; and, thirdly, studying women's deep knowledge of and engagement with landscapes. In this third section, I observe the slow interaction of camp followers with their surrounding geographies (vis-à-vis the reliance of armies on swift moves). This part will show how the practices of *soldaderas* blurred the boundaries between dwellings and landscape, which turned home-making into place-making. As mediators between home and landscape, women reinforced their own connection as dwellers and travellers with the geographies of the war.

¹ Gustavo Casasola Zapata, *Historia Gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana*; Ignacio Herreras, "Desde el campo revolucionario," *El Tiempo*, 17 April 1911; and even the collection of the INAH Archive, among others.

Part I. Tradition and Representation

This exploration starts with a parallel look at two visual materials. The first is **Figure 4.1**, a picture catalogued by the Casasola Archive as two different items, whose captions locate the camp in Celaya or Xochimilco, circa April 1915. The campsite and the village nearby are surrounded by the wilderness that, in all likelihood, the army traversed to get there. The shot offers an angle that appears like an isometric drawing showing two spaces clearly separated by a city wall: a permanent, orthogonal organisation of buildings above and an impermanent, contingent cluster of tents below. This dividing line is bordered by a street, as the upper façades and sign boards of commercial buildings suggest. Below the line, the spaces between the apparently disorganised tents evoke the grid of streets from the township (even if in a less regular geometry): the gaps among city constructions are areas for circulation which connect the commercial, institutional, and residential spaces in the same way in which the spaces between the tents strive to constitute an ever-connected, functional “urban” tissue.

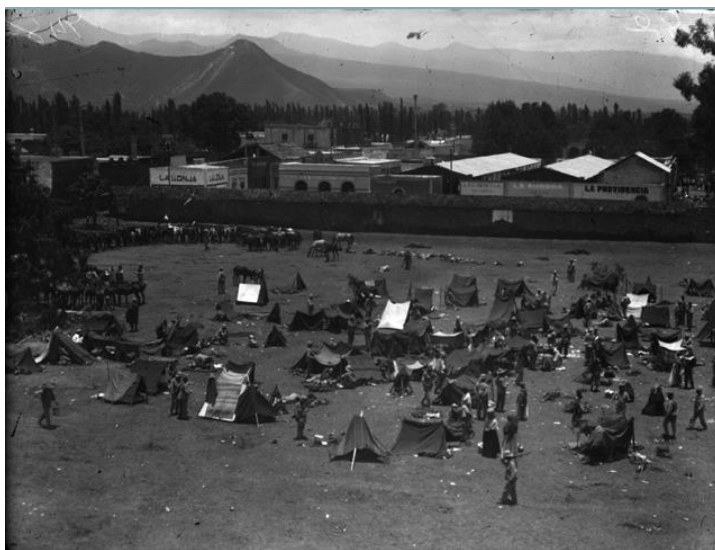


Figure 4.1 *Tropas obregonistas acampando antes de la batalla de Celaya.* Item no. 41497. 1915. Guanajuato, México. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

The second image is the war map from **Figure 4.2**, kept in the Map Archive (*Mapoteca*) *Manuel Orozco y Berra*. Instead of an image of the “complete” geography that normally fits within a map’s rectangular frame, the representation here is only concerned with the areas touched by a linear path: as its name implies, it is an itinerary. In it, the unknown author has little interest in the *totalising*² gaze of map makers, providing only the visual, narrowed-down information of the sites that the army crosses. In this linear path, the “Itinerary from Fresnillo to Hacienda Porfías” details the contour lines of the topography traversed,³ sliced by the line connecting the points of travel—villages and *haciendas*. These villages and *haciendas* work as the vertebrae of the itinerary’s backbone: the sites where the army strategically stops to get resources on its way.

Supported by the accounts of Brondo Whitt and Josefina Bórquez, as well as reporter Ignacio Herrerías, I suggest that this map, together with the photograph, shows how campsites would append themselves to more permanent structures in villages, haciendas, train stations, etc.⁴ By so doing, encampments forged the links between “fragment and site.”⁵ Referring to “fragment” as the items carried to build a camp, Charlie Hailey adds that, when camping, “an incomplete home negotiates an unfamiliar zone.”⁶ In

² Word borrowed from Michel de Certeau when he explains the difference between the broad representation and accuracy of maps and the tracing of itineraries. This tracing is based on the events that define the travellers’ relationship with a place. I come back to the notions of the map and the itinerary at the end. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 121.

³ Or planned to traverse. Its uncertain whether the plan is a documentation of a past itinerary or a planned one.

⁴ Brondo Whitt describes the arrival of the villista army at the Hacienda Jiménez, where they used the facilities to lodge wounded soldiers. Whitt, 99-100. As shown below, Ignacio Herrerías describes that the maderista army occupied a hacienda in the early months of the revolution. Ignacio Herrerías, “Desde el campo revolucionario,” *El Tiempo*, 17 April 1911. Josefina Bórquez also speaks of her carrancista troop both taking supplies and making use of buildings from an abandoned village. Josefina Bórquez in Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 67.

⁵ Charlie Hailey points out this articulation at an interview by Lauren Mitchell, RCID, 25 January 2010. <http://laurenmitchell.org/POSTreviews.pdf>. Accessed 1 May 2018.

⁶ Charlie Hailey, interviewed by Lauren Mitchell, RCID, 25 January 2010. <http://laurenmitchell.org/POSTreviews.pdf>. Accessed 1 May 2018.

the revolution, camp builders supplemented the home space by setting their ephemeral structures adjacent to permanent ones. As shown in Chapter Two, women were often the mediators between the mobile and the fixed structures, negotiating with villagers the dependence of the travelling dwellings of armies on the resources of permanent houses.⁷ I will later discuss this relation in closer connection to architecture, but, in what follows, I draw from these reflections on the camp and the permanent site to compare regular dwellings with travelling dwellings.

What were the shared forms between permanent (pre-revolutionary) and temporary (travelling revolutionary) structures? Huts from the countryside and tents share features in terms of shape, scale, and cyclical use of materials (**Figure 4.3**). Inhabitants of both types of dwellings would carry out their daytime activities outdoors, which explains the need for a compact built shelter. Like huts, tents are organised in close association to other tents, and in positions that are not necessarily orthogonal. Instead, they respond to specific characteristics of the site.

⁷ See Domingo Yedra Islas, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z-1-15.

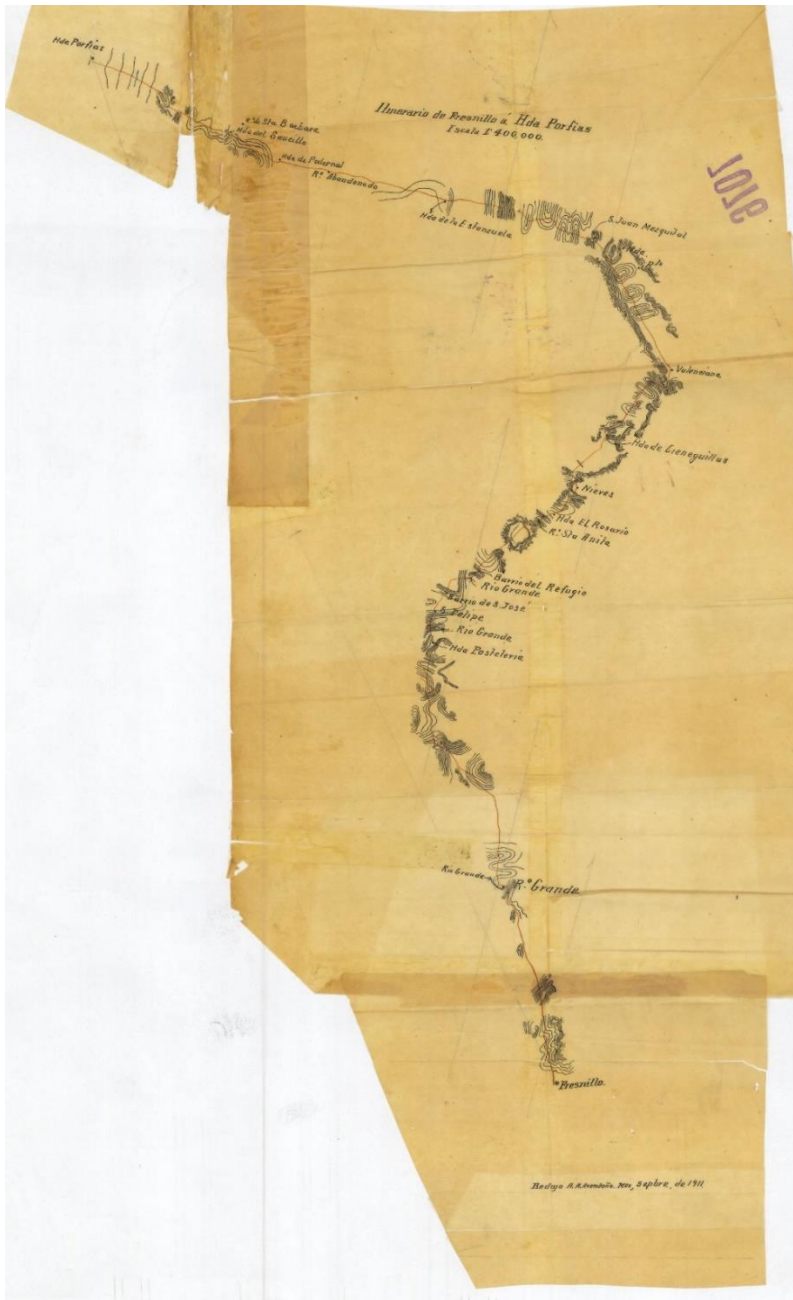


Figure 4.2 *Itinerario de Fresnillo a Hacienda Porfias* (Itinerary from Fresnillo to Hacienda Porfias). Hand-drawing on tracing paper. September 1911. 47 x 23 cm. Zacatecas. Mapoteca Manuel Orozco y Berra. Colección General. Rod number CGZAC01. Item number 7076-CGE-7241-A.





Figure 4.3 *Chozas alrededor de un árbol*. Item no. 120353. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.

Comparing the living units when grouped together reveals other functional similarities, like the connection to a surrounding landscape shared with other people. The multi-family housing of *calpanerías* is an appropriate example (see Chapter One). At first glance, this kind of dwelling located in a hacienda seems very different from the revolutionary home. It is also easier to associate the *calpanería*'s linear array of cells to the grid of a city (see **Figure 1.2**). However, looking beyond the form, we find a significant spatial feature that camps, *calpanerías*, and individual rural houses share: *calpanerías* are established near the fields of production of haciendas (their objective is keeping the workers nearby); rural houses are located by the land that the inhabitants work; and tents settle near sites of supply, collection and, naturally, warfare work. In these cases, the

proximity between the dwelling and the labour field results in labour and domestic space having more porous divisions than they have between the buildings of a city.

As shown in this dissertation, the women of the revolution remained functionally connected to the home, but they often stepped onto the overlaps of home and war spaces. This space of intersection was indeed their work realm. The experiences of former *soldadera* Josefina Bórquez, as well as the testimonies from PHO, attest to the labour that women performed between domestic and war space. Not only did they inhabit the overlap but, with their work of providing and home-making, they created the overlap. But how did these subjects transition (as builders and keepers) from the permanent to the temporary architectures? As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, the 1910 census overlooked economically-active women because their work, performed inside or around domestic space, remained invisible.⁸ To claim that this female work is a crucial connection between *soldaderas'* regular homes and the mobile homes that they built during the war, I discuss the relationship between domestic outdoor activities, women, and their geographies.

Most *soldaderas* came from rural areas.⁹ Before the civil war, domestic tasks traditionally connected women to the landscape surrounding their dwellings: they would have to go out of the home to collect water or supplies, as well as to do laundry and to buy and sell goods. Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta state that, between their 1880-1910 period of study in Tenancingo (a district from the central State of Mexico), “the daily chores of a peasant woman took her continuously outside of the limits of her

⁸ Or not described as work. Anna Macías, *Against all Odds*, 31.

⁹ Mary K. Vaughan, “Introduction. Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the Modern Woman: Gender in the Long Mexican Revolution,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, ed. Mary K. Vaughan, Jocelyn Olcott, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 24.

home to search for firewood and water, to wash clothes or to buy or sell.”¹⁰ González Montes and Iracheta Cenegorta add that the boundaries between domesticity and work in rural life became blurred.¹¹ Piedad Peniche Rivero states that, in *henequén* (agave plant) haciendas prior to the revolution, women cared for the stock and crops, as well as for the water and wood supply of their domestic unit.¹²

Building on Marcela Ballara and Ninoska Damianović’s report on women and agriculture in contemporary Latin America today,¹³ Violeta Martínez Zepeda points to the crucial relationship between women and *agrobiodiversity*: women’s role of cultivating the grounds surrounding the family home and their expertise in handling seeds and plants prove to be vital for the thriving of families in the municipality of San Juan Cancuc (Chiapas, Mexico). In the *tzeltal* community that Martínez Zepeda studies, women have developed and handed down through generations the knowledge needed to grow and preserve species vital for the community. Here, the familiarity with space is crucial. The fields and mountains, sources of this centuries-old knowledge, are appropriated by women, both in the cognitive and in the pragmatic:¹⁴ they know and work the lands. We can see in Martínez Zepeda’s research that, being key figures in the relationship of the community with the

¹⁰ Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta, “La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: el Distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910,” 131. Carlos Pérez-Ramírez, Lilia Zizumbo Villareal, and Sandra Miranda Contreras, “Incorporación al Turismo Rural y Transformación Del Habitus En La Mujer Campesina de San Pedro Atlapulco, México,” *Rosa Dos Ventos* 4, no. 2 (2012): 158–77.

¹¹ Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta, “La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: el Distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910,” 131.

¹² This was a regular aspect of rural life across Mexico. Piedad Peniche Rivero, “Mujeres, matrimonios y esclavitud en la hacienda henequenera durante el porfiriato, 1870-1915,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 15, no. 1 (1999): 130.

¹³ Marcela Ballara and Ninoska Damianović, “Políticas Para Fortalecer La Contribución de Las Mujeres a La Agricultura y La Seguridad Alimentaria” (Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura, 2010).

¹⁴ Violeta Martínez Zepeda, “Mujer, manejo de la agrobiodiversidad y su relación con los medios de vida en dos localidades del municipio de San Juan Cancuc, Chiapas, México” (Master Thesis, Turrialba, Costa Rica, Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, 2012), 71.

broader ecologies,¹⁵ women themselves become strongly connected with the geographies on which their dwellings sit.¹⁶

In this discussion of women's connection with the surrounding geographies, it is important to look closely at the "place" of domesticity. Needless to say, the gendered responsibility of stepping out of the house to search for food, water, or firewood or to do laundry is not unique to Mexico.¹⁷ Sociologist Carolyn Sachs draws attention to how rural women, in mostly developing countries, "interact heavily with the natural worlds in their efforts for subsistence needs for water, fuel, and housing."¹⁸ Like Martínez Zepeda does in her work in Mexico, Sachs underlines how rural women around the world "thoroughly know and interact with their local environments," developing expertise in seeds and in farming practices adapted to ecological conditions.¹⁹

In its connection between geography and woman, this gendered activity relates to the practice of burying the umbilical cord (introduced in Chapter One), which numerous places in Mexico have in common. As mentioned earlier, this ritual (with documentation dating as far back as colonial times) has long given a symbolic delimitation to the sphere of

¹⁵ Violeta Martínez Zepeda, "Mujer, manejo de la agrobiodiversidad y su relación con los medios de vida en dos localidades del municipio de San Juan Cancuc, Chiapas, México," 77.

¹⁶ The knowledge, transmitted from mother to daughter, is at odds with the local patriarchal system that makes formal ownership of land difficult to female members of the community. Pushing through these challenges, women create vital resources for the food security of families as the earnings of the male heads of households are often insufficient. Violeta Martínez Zepeda, "Mujer, manejo de la agrobiodiversidad y su relación con los medios de vida en dos localidades del municipio de San Juan Cancuc, Chiapas, México," 79-80.

¹⁷ See Janet Momsen, *Women and Development in the Third World*, Routledge Introductions to Development (London: Routledge, 1991), 38-9.

¹⁸ Carolyn Sachs, *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture, and Environment*, Rural Studies Series (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁹ Carolyn Sachs, *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture and Environment*, 6. Arguably, small-scale hunting is also a fundamental activity to consider. This will become visible in the testimonies of *soldaderas* below.

action of men and women since the moment of birth.²⁰ Women's chores in gendered discourses are, hence, related to domesticity even when these chores entail leaving the house—real daily practices disprove this, however, since women have a clear public presence as they carry out these very tasks or as they step out and create alternative spatial identities.²¹ But to the gendered constructs that associate femininity to domestic life (such as burying the umbilicus), women somehow “turn” the geographies that they traverse in their outdoor activities into part of the home. Searching for water, wood, and food, or laundering at nearby lakes (or creeks, streams, rivers) remains a task at the core of domestic life—it sustains domestic life. In gender-essentialist worldviews, this task of venturing out arguably imbues the land that women traverse with domesticity. In many ways, the movement of women keeps the land “connected” to the home: departing from it, female subjects work as extensions of the home.

As shown in Chapter One, these gendered outdoor activities fascinated pre-revolutionary photographers like C. B. Waite and Winfield Scott. They often depicted women outside the family house, engaging with the surrounding geographies in their traditionally-assigned labour (**Figures 4.4 and 4.5**). The understanding of these geographies as part of the home is legible in a collection of hundreds of images by both photographers

²⁰ As detailed in Chapter One, the umbilicus of a girl is buried under the hearth in order to get her attached to the house in her adult life, while a boy's is buried out of the house. Growing up, she is expected to stay anchored to the family home, while he is expected to venture out as the breadwinner (or even emigrating). Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta, “La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: el Distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910,” 129. Louise Burkhart, “Mujeres mexicas en el ‘frente’ del hogar: trabajo doméstico y religión en el México azteca,” 26-7. Felipe González Ortiz, “Mujeres que cuidan. El ciclo de vida de las mujeres en las comunidades indígenas en el Estado de México,” 191. Outside Mexico, the umbilicus is buried in a similar ritual by the Nasa community, in Colombia, which points to a practice extended beyond the South limit of Mesoamerica. See Luis Alberto Escobar, “La Casa Nasa Cosmocentrada,” in *Memorias, Conocimientos y Cambios En El Diseño y Construcción de La Nasa Yat, Cauca-Colombia*, ed. Jairo Tocancipá-Falla (Popayán, Colombia: Colciencias / Universidad del Cauca, n.d.), 58–78, 65-6.

²¹ See Susie Porter, “And that it is custom makes it law.”

(in *Archivo General de la Nación*) called “Actividades domésticas” (“Domestic activities”), which show women carrying out tasks such as laundering in settings which do not show a domestic building.

The women testifying in PHO and Josefina Bórquez often set off from their camps to provide for their group, to search for food and water or to do laundry. As was the case at the family dwelling, women were given this mission at the war dwelling. Arguably, this transition took place because venturing out for supplies that sustained the home was a domestic activity that women “had to” undertake as much in regular homes as in the temporary homes of the war. The subject, the activity, and the place (the surrounding landscape) somehow became interlocked and gendered one another as feminine and domestic.



Figure 4.4. Waite, C.B. and W. Scott. *Mujeres lavan ropa en bateas sobre una acequia* [Women wash clothes on trays over a stream. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico, 1904. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 120211. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).



Figure 4.5. *Actividades domésticas*. Waite, Charles B. *Actividades domésticas 10* [*Domestic activities*. My translation]. Photograph. Archivo General de la Nación. Colección Propiedad Artística y Literaria. Item No. 3048.

After the war started, the (popular) print media continued to emphasize the association between women and a supply-seeking task celebrated in the photography of Waite and Scott. This not only happened to *soldaderas*, but also to women who remained in villages and cities. The armed conflict brought about great scarcities across the country²² and numerous photographs show a mostly female population awaiting food supplies,²³ which underlined the ideal of the woman as a nourisher. The art of renowned engravers such as José Guadalupe Posada also made these expectations visible: “Los lamentos de las tortilleras” (“The laments of tortilla makers,” **Figure 4.6**) narrates and illustrates the

²² David Lafrance, *Revolution in Mexico's Heartland: Politics, War, and State Building in Puebla, 1913-1920* (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 2003), 126-30. “Los artículos para alimentar al pueblo no saldrán más del país,” *El Pueblo*, 3 July 1915, 1; “El Señor General Aguilar tiene imitadores,” *El Pueblo*, 28 July 1915, 5; “El Ayuntamiento pondrá pan a la venta,” *El Pueblo*, 24 July 1915, 1; “Se sembrará maíz en el vivero de Xochimilco,” *El Pueblo*, 5 January 1918, 4; María Eugenia Rodríguez, “Simposio: México en 1915. Epidemias, hambre y asistencia médica,” *Gaceta Médica de México*, 2016, 252–74.

²³ Alberto del Castillo Troncoso points to the crucial role of imagery in the Mexican media's early twentieth-century outreach when framing social discourse. As he elaborates, in the 1890s, newspapers were redesigned to accommodate graphic material that not only illustrated but was substantial part of the social and political discourse. Alberto Del Castillo Troncoso, “Entre la criminalidad y el orden cívico: imágenes y representaciones de la niñez durante el porfiriato,” *Historia Mexicana* 48, no. 2 (1998): 280-1.

challenging pathways that Mexican women traversed across cities and villages to get food.²⁴

Sold in street gazettes during the early twentieth century, Posada's prints also feature *calaveras*, skeletons or skulls representing Mexican characters or figures. Across this vast iconography, portrayals of food—either being collected, prepared, or served—use the presence of a woman, as illustrated in “Gran mole de Calaveras” (“*Calaveras*’ great mole”, **Figure 4.7**).²⁵ Likewise, **Figure 4.8** depicts a woman as a providing figure within the space of war. Despite the presence of a majority of men around her in the foreground and on top of a train in the background, the picture focuses on the woman distributing bread from a basket. The *calavera* and the flesh-and-blood woman are visually used to reinforce a nurturing role, and they are both the walkers of the supply-seeking path pictured in the verses of the “Tortilleras.”

²⁴ See the Blastein collection available online at <http://museoblaisten.com/Obra/7751/Los-lamentos-de-las-tortilleras>.

²⁵ See Ilan Stavans, “José Guadalupe Posada, Lampooner,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 16 (1990): 59-62. Posada's prints consulted at Roberto Berdecio and Stanley Appelbaum, eds., *Posadas' Popular Mexican Prints: 273 Cuts* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972); also at the vast catalogue from the online Andrés Blastein Collection: <http://museoblaisten.com/Artista/375/Jose-Guadalupe-Posada>. Accessed 11 May 2018.



Figure 4.6 *Los lamentos de las Tortilleras*. José Guadalupe Posada. Engraving on wood. See the Blastein collection available online at <http://museoblaisten.com/Obra/7751/Los-lamentos-de-las-tortilleras>.



Figure 4.7 *Gran Mole de Calaveras*. José Guadalupe Posada. Engraving on wood. See the Blastein collection available online at <http://museoblaisten.com/Obra/7702/Gran-mole-de-calaveras>



Figure 4.8 *Militares recibiendo granos*. Item no. 451162. 1915. Guanajuato, México. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

Other accounts of the revolution treated women as a backdrop or simply ignored their presence. Ignacio Herreras, a reporter from the newspaper *El Tiempo*, recorded his visits to the maderista campsite at the beginning of the revolution in a section called “Desde el campo revolucionario” (“From the revolutionary camp”). After a detailed narration of his trip from Mexico City to Bustillos (Chihuahua), he wrote on 17 April 1911:

I stepped off the train, taking in the peculiar spectacle: 1,500 or 2,000 men were standing individually or in groups along the train track. They held their rifles close to them, wearing on their chests medallions with saints and cardboard religious images. They kept their saddles, serapes, and clothes in multiple heaps, as though they would mobilise at any moment. It was already six in the evening and, since the temperature was cold, they had lit fires around which some men gathered.

Others lay sprawled, sleeping like logs, and many women kept them company while preparing food. Typical folk songs from the border could be heard playing. . . .

From a distance I could discern a huge paddock improvised with sticks, inside of which numerous horses ate.

The mobilisation was massive, like a populous village on a fair day; but everybody moved around holding the Winchester or the Mausser [sic]—always with a fully-loaded cartridge belt.²⁶

Herrerías and other visitors headed to the main building of the hacienda by coach and met the revolutionary leader, Francisco I. Madero. After interviewing him, the journalist briefly returned to Mexico City, only to head back north to Ciudad Juárez to document the negotiations with President Díaz's emissaries. Aside from the lines just transcribed here, the 29 issues of Herrerías' "Desde el campo revolucionario"²⁷ make no further mention of the role of *soldaderas* or the domestic space where soldiers stayed during the months of camping.²⁸ The absence of women illustrates how their care-giving presence, while fulfilling a fundamental role, was taken for granted; hence, ignored in narratives. We can explain this omission by carefully observing space, as women's presences were embedded in both the domestic and the broader landscapes of military camps. Associated with the home and its geographies, *soldaderas* became part of the backdrop.

²⁶ Ignacio Herrerías, "Desde el campo revolucionario," *El Tiempo*, 17 April 1911. Author translated all quotations from this source.

²⁷ Ignacio Herrerías, "Desde el campo revolucionario," *El Tiempo*, 11 April 1911 to 6 March 1912.

²⁸ Later in his weekly column "Desde el campo revolucionario," other occasions in which Herrerías mentions women include a contemptuous description of a woman dressed as a man whom he encountered while travelling; a moment in which he flirted with American women interested in the war; and the lines in which he expresses admiration towards Madero's wife Sara, willing to follow her husband to dangerous sites. His last reference to a camp follower cites her as the cause of an unexpected, but later famous, combat. The Battle of Ciudad Juárez, which had Madero and his generals disagreeing on whether or not to attack the federal army in the midst of negotiations, had at its origin, according to Herrerías, the movement of a *soldadera* between the spaces of the two confronting groups. Herrerías' likely fictional account explains that the female partner of a rebel soldier ventured to the city to get food and found a field of onions. On her way back, as she carried the onions on her shawl, she encountered federal soldiers who opened fire at her. This brought rebel soldiers to also shoot at the *federales* stationed in Ciudad Juárez, purportedly starting the three-day battle which brought about the Maderista victory.

As stated in the Introduction and Chapter Two, this tendency to overlook women's presence in camps has continued to the present in the writing of the revolution's history. To start unearthing female war roles, we must study the texts and images through the questions: What form of women's presence in the conflict was considered acceptable and, thus, made visible in the print media of the time? How did this editorial work relate women and the spaces or architectures depicted? Imagery of revolutionary armies suggests that the war participation of *soldaderas* became visible when underlining a female nurturing role, as was the case in the popular images shown above. The description of a company of *soldaderas*, carrying suitcases, bedrolls, and blankets appears in the 1913 column from the newspaper *La Opinión*. It portrays them as a "symbol of the mobile home."²⁹

I observe that the media used the woman figure to frame how society viewed certain troops: specifically, how "successfully" well-organised armies had men and women occupy their duly assigned roles (and sites). This is noticeable in two photographs that visually arranged gender and space (**Figures 4.9** and **4.10**), guided by an intention we are now familiar with: the depiction of domesticity by means of a female presence (see Chapter One). **Figure 4.9** shows a troop camping on its way to Mérida. Covering the horizon, male soldiers stand among trees at the back. In the foreground, a woman sits on the ground, under a canvas sheet folded as a tent. Sitting at the entrance of the temporary home, the *soldadera* is depicted in the close association to domesticity that we have seen in the pre-revolutionary photography of Waite, Scott, and Casasola. Here, too, the photographer aims at showing her as the threshold to the home. In the same plane as the sitting woman, we can see domestic objects spread on the ground, a bit far from the tent. There is an intention to

²⁹ "Las soldaderas," *La Opinión*, 1 February 1913, 3.

represent this space as an anchoring home. Furthermore, the woman's position under the "triangle" of the entrance of the home not only parallels *costumbrista* photography, but also the intention of human scales drawn in architectural elevations: as mentioned in Chapter One, the figure is meant to translate the character and function of the building—in this case, a tent.



Figure 4.9 *Campamento constitucionalista*. Item no. 38060. Photograph. México D.F. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH.

Figure 4.10, captured in 1914 by German photographer Hugo Brehme, depicts members of the villista army at a tent in Guadalupe. The space is shared by women and men, including three boys. It is important, however, to note the position of one of the two women: one of them, again, looks like a threshold to the domestic, like a gate keeper. The other woman tends to the brazier at the centre of the picture—a core component of the home mentioned in Chapter One.

The contrived scene raises the question of the possible influence that General Francisco Villa's fame in international and domestic media³⁰ had on Hugo Brehme's work. Villa capitalised on an international fame that exploded after he took Ciudad Juárez (1913) and signed in January 1914 a contract with the U.S.-based Mutual Film Corporation, which would document his activities.³¹ His military campaign was "meticulously inventoried by U.S. photographers and cameramen."³² Initially treated like a bandit by the Mexican media, Villa quickly gained recognition as a revolutionary leader in domestic newspapers, thanks to a growing international interest in his trajectory.³³ From 1914 on, national and foreign photographers followed his path and publicised villistas as a functional, efficient, and highly organised army. In the staged photograph, this intention is evident in the careful arrangement of the tent, and in a layout composed for portrayal—like a movie set, with one of the four sides open for the camera to reach the inside with its posed inhabitants. Depicted at the entrance and core of domestic space, the women are part of a visual message characterising the villista army as ordered and hierarchical, with each of its members in his/her proper place.

³⁰ See Alan Knight, *La Revolución Mexicana*, 1024.

³¹ John Mraz, *Photographing the Mexican Revolution*, 168. Interestingly, Brondo Whitt recalls seeing a wagon at the villista camp with the English sign: "Mutual movies make time fly." Other cars of the Associated Press were also present. See Brondo Whitt, 220-1.

³² Aurelio de los Reyes, quoted by John Mraz in *Photographing the Mexican Revolution*, 168.

³³ John Mraz in *Photographing the Mexican Revolution*, 169-70.



Figure 4.10 *Villistas en Guadalupe*. Item no. 450287. Photograph. Mexico, unknown date. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate

The images and texts in which women and domesticity are an overlooked background as well as those which make them visible in their socially expected role have informed significantly the existing accounts of women in the revolution. We must contest the view of space and *soldaderas* as a background, as well as the idea of women as contained within the mobile home. By so doing, we can adduce the contribution of *soldaderas* to the Mexican Revolution. Looking at the spaces with which women established profound connections as they performed their work (both in city homes and in revolutionary camps) will elucidate their presence and action in the armed conflict.

Part II. Women's Landscapes

A newspaper expresses concern about women's experience during revolutionary travel and invites readers to visualise (not without a tone of compassion) the ever-changing roofs under which these camp followers will sleep: the vaults of barracks, a canopy of stars, or the foliage of a tree.³⁴ It reads as though the columnist laments the sense of loss that *soldaderas* might get when seeing themselves in relation to the "roofs" sheltering them: How tiny and lost they must feel under the vast starry sky, or under an unknown garrison! How can they find their own place covered by but never touching those overarching surfaces? The attention on the "ceilings" of the places that they visit suggests a literal framing of *soldaderas* into spaces that afford them little agency, that "contain" them—almost like the human scale positioned under a door frame or an arch in a drawing.

A change of perspective is necessary here. I suggest visualising the agency of the user in a space by focusing on her connection with a surface that she can touch and reshape: for instance, the ground instead of the canopy.³⁵ To really understand the itineraries and agencies of camp followers, we must remain critical of the belittling perspective of the columnist. We must turn away from the upper surface at which he points and look down on the surfaces with which *soldaderas* were in touch: the ones they furrowed in their walking, the ones that their job required them to learn and to interact with.

The involvement of the *soldaderas* with these grounds started long before settling, in the movement from place to place. Their position and action among the moving crowd teach us a lot about the relationship they established with pathways and sites, and is the first

³⁴ "Las soldaderas," *La Opinión*, 1 February 1913, 3.

³⁵ "Under" makes the subject sound less in control than "on."

form of agency and connection to the landscape that I examine. Women in armies would often travel by foot. Very few of them were given horses or were allowed to ride on carts.³⁶ Veterans Pedro Romero Cortés and Trinidad Vega recall that women walked alongside the horses during military mobilisations.³⁷ Viewed as an impediment, *soldaderas* had to avoid the centre of the road, pushed to the edges by the military columns and the cars transporting armament and goods.³⁸

Positioned at the perimeters, the group of camp followers became the moving army's primary connection with the surrounding space. This was evident in the choreographed moves of contingents (**Figure 4.11**). If they went towards a battle, the group of women were ordered to stay at the back,³⁹ caring for the loads of supplies and the horses;⁴⁰ however, if they approached a village, *soldaderas* moved ahead to investigate whether other troops were in the area, and to prepare the camp for arrival.⁴¹ "Women came

³⁶ Luis García Monzalve, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/101; Trinidad Vera, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/26; Justino López, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/49. "Pensamientos de F. Nietzsche," *El Pueblo*, 13 July 1915, 8. "Hoy es el segundo día de la marcha a pie de cuatro mil soldados mexicanos entre Presidio y María," *El País*, 15 January 1914.

³⁷ Pedro Romero Cortés, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/139; Trinidad Vega, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/26, Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

³⁸ See description in "Las tropas federales se proponen asestar un golpe terrible a los revolucionarios," *El Imparcial*, *diario ilustrado de la mañana*, 19 May 1912.

³⁹ Again, this pattern was broken often for women to collaborate in battle, illustrated in the testimony of Constantino Caldero Vázquez. Interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/110. Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

⁴⁰ Apolonio Gómez, interviewed by América Teresa Briseño, PHO/1/58; Jesús Hurtado Ramírez, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/108; Ignacia Peña Viuda de Fuentes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/18. Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. See also Bórquez's description in Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

⁴¹ Trinidad Vega, Interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/26; Eulalio Mendoza, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/30; Manuel J. Celis, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/2; Jesús Chávez, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/99. Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

in the rearguard,” Eulalio Mendoza says. “They moved to the vanguard when we advanced towards a town. They went ahead to get us food.”⁴²

The front position also served the purpose of reconnaissance. It was crucial that women observe whether the territory towards which the column advanced was occupied by enemies. As the main connection with the space around an army, *soldaderas* ventured ahead and visually appropriated territories (carrying a mental image with them). This was possible because of their ambiguous identity: unlike soldiers wearing a uniform, a camp follower who saw an enemy and was seen in turn could pretend to be a civilian. Her appearance as a regular (understood then as passive) woman concealed her identity as member of a faction. Josefina Bórquez and fellow *soldaderas* would be mistaken for villagers by a rival army when they were sent ahead by fellow carrancistas to do a reconnaissance on the way to Puente de Ixtla (State of Guerrero):

We, women, were sent to the vanguard. We all wore long dresses and all, except for me, carried a palm hat. I only wore my shawl. If we encountered the enemy and were asked how many people we had seen marching in the carrancista columns, or whether they were heavily armed, we would say: ‘Carrancistas were few and carried few weapons.’ If there were two or three-thousand, we would say there were only one thousand. We described things wrong and they wouldn’t know. They warned us then: ‘Move ahead because we will attack the carrancistas here.’⁴³

The rival zapatista army used the same strategy. Lieutenant Colonel Simón Pineda mentions the mission of camp followers who went to spy on carrancistas, as part of the zapatistas’ plan to attack Tlaxcala while settled in Apasco. The zapatista *soldaderas*

⁴² Eulalio Mendoza, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda, PHO/1/30. Archivo de la Palabra, Dirección de Estudios Históricos, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

⁴³ Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

travelled ahead and returned to inform their peers that very few carrancistas guarded the site, which made the attack seem possible. Nevertheless, after a second look, they came with news of the arrival of two trains full of troops. The attack was cancelled and the zapatista group avoided an encounter that would have decimated its ranks.⁴⁴ In these examples, women traced a path where their mission was invisible to outsiders. They cognitively appropriated the site occupied by their enemies and shared with fellow revolutionaries this spatial information.

This manipulation of identity and spatiality (in the sense of such identity's connection to the sites it traverses) afforded women key positions in the thresholds to camps. Added to these examples of the peripheral position of women in a moving crowd are instances of women not only traversing strategically the thresholds, but defining in this action the relationship between an established camp and its outside. *Archivo General de la Nación* keeps letters to rebel leader Emiliano Zapata in which subordinates express anxiety about women of dubious identity entering and leaving their camp. Two of the letter writers suspect that the women, in the guise of civilians, deliver information to rivals in the cities of Tlaltizapan and Cuernavaca (in the State of Morelos).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Simón Pineda Barragán, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/61.

⁴⁵ "El Coronel Alfredo Serratos remite a una mujer sospechosa." *Archivo General de la Nación*. Cuartel General del Sur/Caja 4/187765/31; "Denuncia a una mujer llamada Agripina Cabrera de ser carrancista." *Archivo General de la Nación*. Cuartel General del Sur/Caja 10 / 187771 / 52.

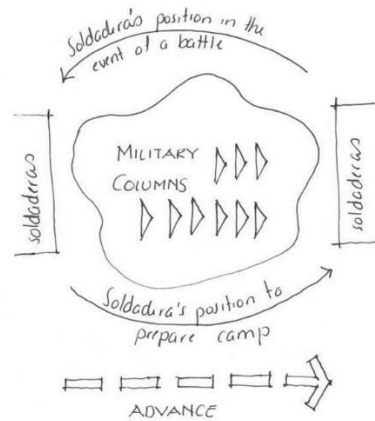


Figure 4.11 Diagram of army's advance, based on dynamic described in PHO testimonies. Drawing by author.

Brondo Whitt speaks of the camp as a site spanning a lifetime: “Therein one lives, thrives, falls ill, recovers, dies⁴⁶... In the latter case, one finds a place for one’s own grave by a road, close-by, to avoid all hassle.”⁴⁷ As Charlie Hailey explains, the process through which camps come into existence is cyclical: leaving home, arriving at site, clearing the area, making camp, and breaking camp before departing.⁴⁸ The shawl emerges in Whitt’s accounts as a symbol of this cycle. After an almost poetic description of the marching caravan as a shawl, (“Camping for a week, a day, or an hour, the multitude looked like a shawl extended on the ground”) Whitt concludes: “When the crowd took off, the field was left covered in abandoned ‘rags’.”⁴⁹ First utilised as key components of dwellings (as argued in Chapter Two) and later discarded among other items, shawls revealed, in Whitt’s depiction, the footprint of what was once a revolutionary encampment. More importantly, they were tell-tale signs of how exactly the passing homes had connected to the landscape.

I suggest we connect this passage with other fragments: a) descriptions by Whitt of women improvising homes—like the one in the *gondola* or by a tree (Chapter Three); b)

⁴⁶ This first part of the quote has been included in chapter two.

⁴⁷ Brondo Whitt, 221.

⁴⁸ Charlie Hailey, *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and Place*, 171.

⁴⁹ Brondo Whitt, 248.

the plan from **Figure 2.7** (Chapter Two); and c) images such as **Figure 4.12**, which shows heaps of objects similar to those described in Herrerías' visit to the maderista campsite. Altogether, these many fragments make us reflect on questions of agency, matter, and the process of camping during the revolution. In all of them, we see or read about patches of domesticity inserted into the space of war:

Charlie Hailey describes campsites as architectures of the incomplete.⁵⁰ The dwellings of the revolution reveal themselves as mobile fragments of homes which found fleeting completion at every site of arrival. The clustered or carried objects, with their potential unfolding and operation, worked in combination with the spatial performance of the men and women to constitute the camps and their domesticity. Like a regular (permanent, city) dwelling, a camp's dwelling relied on matter. But the regular one counted on the solidity and stasis of its building materials, whereas the camp one depended on materials that could be left behind or substituted. Its physical openness evoked the functional openness of imminent departure. Camps, then, transformed the home into a process. The artifacts on the ground from these descriptions and images introduced a patch of domesticity into the war landscape.⁵¹ But there are key questions we must ask. If the meaning of home that these items carried vanished once they were left behind by a contingent, then how was domestic space dependent on the subject carrying them? How was domestic space created by a performance of building and upkeep? How did these architectures of event transform in turn the agencies of the women

⁵⁰ Charlie Hailey, *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and Place*, 5.

⁵¹ Beyond the practical items, this domesticity also introduced a "moral/spiritual" ambiance, as the woman carried religious practice and discourse along with her physical home. This is visible all along the religious-charged account of Josefina Bórquez. Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*. Chapter Five will further discuss the relationship between spirituality and women.

builders/carriers/caregivers in the Mexican Revolution? What happened to these agencies in the changing phases of each building cycle? These questions are not meant to get to a concrete answer, but to suggest we see the homes as more dependent on the spatial practices of women than on concrete yet exchangeable matter. By doing this, we begin to understand the way in which these architectures of the incomplete (to borrow Hailey's words) shaped *soldaderas* as the articulators between home and site.



4.12 *Soldado con su familia en campamento militar.* Item no. 63942. Mexico City, 1915. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 5149. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed June 2019).

Josefina Bórquez says that, most frequently, the last thing *soldaderas* thought of was the unfolding battle as they hurried to the place where they would wait for the fighters. Despite seeing the smoke and hearing the shooting cannons and bullets, they were preoccupied instead with what they would find to prepare the meal.⁵² They were busy foraging, finding materials, and learning the features of the land. They had to transform the

⁵² Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 66.

unknown into a home. To borrow the words of Hailey, *soldaderas* operated “between home and someplace else.”⁵³ Hailey adds: “camping works between mobility and fixity” and between “temporality and permanence.”⁵⁴ In these in-between spatial conditions unfolded the actions of travel and settling that allowed camp followers to expand their domestic agencies towards the places that accommodated their camps.

The warfare occupation of *soldaderas* charged them with the task of turning pathways into homes for the travelling armies and for themselves. What, then, did it mean for the home to be on the road? Did it borrow anything from its impermanence? How did this impermanence connect camp builders to their ever-changing whereabouts? How profoundly did women engage with a place that they would eventually leave? Home-building relied heavily on the resources available along the way. Each new setting had challenging features that required encampments to adapt to—like the hot, dry deserts of the Northern states, or the rich greenery in the South—and different material possibilities for women to construct the mobile domestic space. Also, the advance of *soldaderas* to prepare the ground for settling often entailed looting towns, as both PHO testimonies and newspaper articles reveal.⁵⁵

As mentioned above, constructing the homes was a process in which builders combined items carried with existing materials and spatial conditions. In this improvisation, the space of pathways would merge with the space of domesticity. Josefina Bórquez narrates the arrival of her army at Agua del Perro (Guerrero), a village abandoned by

⁵³ Charlie Hailey, *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and place*, 10.

⁵⁴ Charlie Hailey, *Campsite: Architectures of Duration and place*, 1.

⁵⁵ “El General Angeles ordena que salgan las tropas.” *El País*, 3 September 1912. “Zapatistas envían a sus soldaderas antes a saquear: Sta Ma Yanquitalpan, Edo. Mex.” *El País*, 16 August 1913. Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

inhabitants who feared looting and plundering. Her group got installed in a building that became simultaneously an architecture of passage and an architecture of dwelling: a home hurriedly left by its residents offered the travellers a meal almost ready to eat—greased casseroles, nixtamal dough readily flattened, recently killed chickens, and beans still boiling—as well as a space of respite. There, Bórquez details how she and other women prepared *gorditas* (thick tortillas); skinned and cleaned the fowls; boiled them with garlic, vinegar, pepper, and salt from the dwelling; and then savoured the tastiest meal.⁵⁶ For these squatters, the camping action entailed occupying a building as a shell for their temporary dwelling needs. Similarly to how camps appended themselves to villages, the “dislocated homes” (or aggregates of events) made use of the hard surfaces of built structures to create ephemeral dwelling sites, negotiating temporality and permanence.

Figure 4.13 is one of many images from the revolution that show architecture acting as a shell for space-events: in it, a convent accommodates a passing army. Again, there is the possibility that the photograph is staged, but I suggest using it as a starting point to examine the many uses that could be given to architecture and the way in which spaces could have their original designation changed. The image shows part of the colonnade that lines the corridors of a convent. This corridor, which leads to a wide door visible at the background of the image, serves as a mediating space between the central courtyard and the enclosed rooms of the convent—in this case, these enclosed rooms or spaces lie behind the wall that runs parallel to the colonnade. Here is a form of spatial appropriation worth pointing out: the corridor, a space meant for circulation is transformed by the sitting occupants into some form of living room. The space meant to accommodate movement

⁵⁶ Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 67.

turns into a space that accommodates stasis. The stone flooring is visible in part of the corridor, but as the viewer's gaze moves away towards the vanishing point of this perspective, the circulation surface disappears, blocked by sitting or standing individuals—who seem aware of being photographed. This “blocking” of the corridor fixates the space, which turns into a site for dwelling instead of for moving. The transformation is possible thanks to the position of bodies, as well as on the placement of baskets, blankets, and shawls.

In such an occupation, we can speculate that the army has gained access to both the indoor and outdoor spaces of the convent. Yet, we can only see the occupants of the corridor. As part of this same speculation, I would say that high-ranking officers have appropriated the interior of the building while the “leftover” spaces are meant for privates and the *impedimenta*. My hypothesis finds support in Ignacio Herreras' account of his visit to revolutionary leader (and later president) Francisco I. Madero, mentioned earlier—a scene very similar to what the convent photograph shows. In the description quoted earlier in this chapter, Herreras sees men and women occupying outdoor spaces, both through the position of their bodies spread over the site—standing, sitting, lying down—and through the multiple heaps formed by their saddles, serapes, and clothes.⁵⁷ Herreras goes on to narrate his passage to the place where Madero is while observing the dwellings of the workers and the beautiful chapel, finally to get to the hacienda hull inside of which Madero and his high-ranking officers stay:

We had just walked through the threshold of the building, when the anti-reelection leader appeared on the left.

⁵⁷ Ignacio Herreras, “Desde el campo revolucionario,” *El Tiempo*, 19 April 1911, 1, 3.

—Do you all carry luggage? Have you eaten anything? Get them some food—Madero ordered—
These gentlemen must be hungry.

...

On the table

We moved to a large and glaring dining room, at whose table Captain Cárcamo and other two individuals were eating, making themselves at home.

Madero sat at the head of the table, Sommerfield settled on his right, and I did on his left. On my left, there was Pascual Orozco, followed by Steep.

...

[During the conversation, Herrerías addressed Pascual Orozco Jr., who participated in the war alongside his father:]

—Your mother must suffer greatly for you. She must be scared.

—Her? She encouraged me to get into this. We had coordinated, more than thirty of us, to take up arms in Ciudad Guerrero; but many backed off last minute. Having learnt that, my mom called me and said: “Don’t even think of doing the same as those rascals. You remain true to your word or you never say again that I am your mother.”

Such supreme gesture of a woman from Chihuahua, humble and self-abnegated, will go down in history, a woman who did not hesitate to sacrifice her husband and son for the sake of a patriotic ideal.

Steep and Madero started talking. Steep took notes and, at the end of the meal—which consisted of soup, meat, and beans—we all got up, making our way to the first patio of the building.

The interview

Mr. Francisco I. Madero took off the serape that wrapped him [it protected his wounded arm from the cold], uncovering his half-bald, straight-haired head, and invited me into the room that served as his bedchamber. He offered me a chair that, with great difficulty, he picked up with the left hand.

[Herrerías then interviewed Madero at length]

It should be noted that, during my interrogation, two or three revolutionaries gatecrashed the room where we talked on several occasions and, unceremoniously, brought their complaints to Madero:

—Sire, I'm here to tell you that this individual has taken my horse.⁵⁸

The spaces occupied by army members of distinct hierarchies are clearly defined in the excerpt from Herrerías: chiefs and high-ranking officers have appropriated the main building of the hacienda, whereas privates and *soldaderas* are settled outdoors, awaiting orders from those inside the building. A similar form of occupation is arguably legible in the photograph. We see soldiers and women installed outside whereas the occupants of the interior as well as their activity remain out of the reach of the camera—this invisibility is, conceivably, another sign of their upper hierarchy.⁵⁹ The passage narrated by Herrerías underlines unbelonging in signs also legible in the photograph. First, only having traversed the entrance, corridor, and dining room of the entire building, Herrerías assumes that the mother of Pascual Orozco Jr. is not there—but never asks. To the journalist, the mother does not belong in the war spaces and, here specifically, she is definitely not in the hacienda building occupied by Madero and his immediate subordinates. And second, the soldiers who “gatecrash” the room where Herrerías interviews Madero do not belong either.

⁵⁸ Ignacio Herrerías, “Desde el campo revolucionario,” *El Tiempo*, 19 April 1911, 1, 3.

⁵⁹ Their privilege affords them privacy.

This class and gender exclusion is emphasized in the photograph, with the described outdoor emplacement of privates and *soldaderas*.⁶⁰



Figure 4.13. *Campamento federal establecido en un convento* [Federal camp settled at a convent. My translation]. Photograph. Mexico D.F, 1914. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate, Item No. 5149. <http://fototeca.inah.gob.mx/fototeca/> (accessed February 2017).

There were other examples of appropriation of the shells of buildings—part of the pathway—through which travellers created the temporary homes. Brondo Whitt details a sequence in which he walks from the train station of Calera (Zacatecas) to the city. He sees the war-ravaged urban space where *soldaderas* occupy the empty houses. There, under canopies or in patios, families travelling—some of them with dogs—settle to “cook, wash,

⁶⁰ I thank Tanya Southcott for pointing at how, reappropriating these spaces, leaders of armies rely on different, existing architectural qualities to communicate gender and class difference.

groom, and love one another.”⁶¹ As the existing buildings help complete the home, dwelling and passage intersect. In another scene in Gómez Palacio, a city near Torreón, Whitt describes other war-torn streets, where he curiously peeks through the iron windows of ‘nice-looking’ houses: “Therein, one would imagine young women looking out or the strains of a piano coming through. On a closer look, however, one finds the buildings turned into barracks or stables.”⁶²

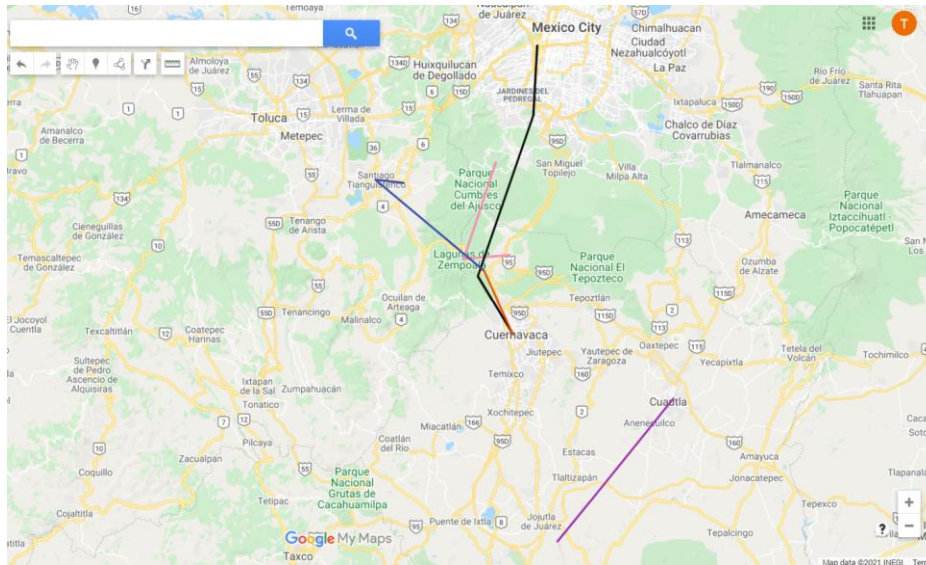
Scale of Women’s Actions

In her research on women suffragists in Bath (UK), Cynthia Hammond creates maps that register their actions and outreach, in order to comprehend their work and influence. As she studies the remarkable pathways of these activists (1909-1914),⁶³ Hammond uses spatial analysis to unearth rich evidence and to provide a new, much-needed angle for feminist research on the achievements of women. Inspired by her method, I have traced on a Google map (**Figure 4.14**) the sphere of action of the *soldaderas* who provided details of their whereabouts and war labour in the PHO interviews.

⁶¹ Brondo Whitt, 274.

⁶² Whitt, 140.

⁶³ Cynthia Hammond, “Suffragette City: Spatial Knowledge and Suffrage Work in Bath, 1909-14,” in *Bath History*, ed. Graham Davis, vol. XIII (Bath, UK: Bath Spa University, 2013).



Pathways of women by colour:

Pink: Irene Copado

Black: Petra Martínez

Blue: Ignacia Peña

Orange: Juliana Flores

Purple: Leonor Alfaro

Figure 4.14 Map with trajectories of *soldaderas*, based on their PHO testimonies

The map shows female movement connecting natural and urbanised spaces (i.e. sites of rebel camps and cities or villages). Upon visualising the trajectories of women, questions arise regarding the masculinist discourse told by the extant maps of the revolutionary war, which render female presences and action invisible—like the one shown earlier in **Figure 4.2**. Irene Copado, Petra Martínez, Ignacia Peña, Leonor Alfaro, and Juliana Flores followed their partners and camped in wooded landscapes. Alfaro, Flores, Peña, and Martínez were left therein, waiting sometimes for years for the return of their armies. The pathways that they traced (either for military moves, errands, or personal affairs) connected rebel camps with cities during revolutionary times. Martínez, Peña, and Flores separately narrate having remained at some point in the zapatista campsite of Huitzilac, in the forested landscapes of the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt. Their trajectories through and out of this site traced connections between Mexico City and the states of Morelos and Mexico. Copado’s pathway shows the zapatista occupation of a part of the mountain range connecting Ajusco and Lagunas de Zempoala.

For better understanding *soldaderas*' engagement with homes and landscapes, I propose we reverse Hammond's direction of looking. We can certainly use the map as a starting point for the panoramic view of the war territories where women worked. The reader/viewer can then follow, in the paragraphs below, the "smaller" spatial practices of *soldaderas*, which take them into a different scale. My intent is to direct attention to the minute-scale actions through which *soldaderas* wove their agencies in the war spaces. This reveals that their profound connection to the broader geographies that we see in the map depended on small (but not unimportant) domestic activities, often invisible in the accounts of the revolution that rely on the war documentation and its masculinist narratives. For this switch in the direction of looking, I draw on Mariana Mora's focus on the everyday practices of women from Indigenous communities today in the State of Chiapas. Informed by Chandra Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander's work, Mora's method unearths the political significance of day-to-day actions and habitus as creators of deep fissures in hegemonic forces (micro-dynamics of power).⁶⁴ In what follows, I propose considering a spatial dimension in this form of analysis.

Armies, especially those which carried out guerrilla strategies, made vital use of natural settings. Mountain ranges provided lines of high terrains for settling, which turned them into ideal places for campsites: secluded in the wild but connected to the cities and villages on both sides of the sierras' ridges. *Ejército Libertador del Sur* (zapatista army) was mostly in the territories of the Southern Sierra Madre and the Trans-Mexican Volcanic

⁶⁴ Mariana Mora, "Repensando la política y la descolonización en minúscula: Reflexiones sobre la praxis feminista desde el zapatismo," in *Más allá del feminismo: Caminos para Andar*, ed. Mágina Millán (Mexico City: Red de Feminismos Descoloniales, 2014), 155–82. See also Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade 1955- Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Belt, and *Ejército del Noroeste* and *División del Norte* (villistas) by the Western Sierra Madre (see **Figure 2.1**). Most of them travelled extensively. While some contingents kept active camps on the mountains, some of them left members there—mostly camp followers—and moved ahead. This meant that life in the forest for women unfolded in, at least, two ways: they remained attached to armies installed there (carrying out duties of home-making), or they kept camp in the wild, waiting for the return of their troops.⁶⁵ In the constantly changing spaces of war, this latter possibility shaped *soldaderas*' role of anchoring the home of those travelling.

Mountains had physical features that made them advantageous for military occupation. Zapatistas and villistas were the main armies using the thickets and the caves, as well as the irregularity, seclusion, and elevated views of mountain ranges for their guerrilla strategies: always in close connection to villages and counting on the natural hideouts for successful attacks and retreats. Josefina Bórquez narrates the difficulties that she and her carrancista comrades faced when confronting zapatistas, who, she said, “climbed up trees, covered themselves in branches and leaves, and became a walking forest.” She adds: “All of a sudden, bullets rained down from who knows where! Like a hailstorm.”⁶⁶ Her encounters with that army took place in the State of Guerrero (in the cities of Chilpancingo and Mochitán), a geography which zapatistas were very familiar with, as she recalls.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Leonor Alfaro, Viuda de Mejía, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda and María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/100; Irene Copado, Viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

⁶⁶ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 77.

⁶⁷ Elena Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, 77.

The war forced Leonor Alfaro to leave the home she and her husband had in Cuautla. For years she fended for herself, living in the caves of Cerro Prieto.⁶⁸ In cases like Alfaro's and Juliana Flores', the "breaking" of camp (if we use Hailey's term) was only partial, with the troop departing and leaving members at the site. "Remaining" meant, to these nomadic inhabitants, staying anchored in an area but keeping the encampment on the move.

Unlike permanent architecture, natural settings lacked the inscription on buildings that dictates the position and affordances of users of space. In other words, there was no built form (striation⁶⁹) indicating how different subjects should inhabit space—in the way the furniture of a kitchen or the divisions of a military complex prescribe the movement and flow of activities of their users, for example. Yet without a permanent architecture that armies could use as a shell for their transient activities, the occupied landscapes were quickly adapted so that they reflected hierarchies and social roles. Irene Copado offers an example of this as she describes the sleeping sites of infantry soldiers, installed on spaces separated from where generals spent the night.⁷⁰ Also, the practice of ordering women to stay tending to the camp while men took off to fight was itself a form of this spatial division.⁷¹ These two examples show forms of class and gender segregation similar to the one pointed out in the photograph of the convent corridor and in the account of Herrerías.

⁶⁸ Several mountains are called "Cerro Prieto" in Mexico but I located Alfaro's camp, which she recalls under the name of Tres Piedras, two kilometers south of Tlaquiltenango (Morelos). This was possible thanks to the reproduction of primary sources (letters from officers) in Donald Hodges' book *Mexican Anarchism after the Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 72.

⁶⁹ To borrow again from Deleuze and Guattari.

⁷⁰ Irene Copado, Viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

⁷¹ Irene Copado, Viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

Whereas the testimonies of the PHO survivors provide little detail about the spatial arrangements, we can surmise that the domestic groups travelling together continued shaping the environments they encountered as moving *vecindades* or *calpanerías*, as argued in the previous chapter. Even without the hardware of train cars, it was possible to informally divide the natural settings occupied to carry out different activities—such as the preparation of tortillas, which Alberta Galindo narrates to have directed in her military corps.⁷² Maintaining the encampments called for an efficient use of the resources available, which was only possible through collective and organised work.

Building camps, Charlie Hailey claims, necessitates the negotiation of detail and territory. Travelling mostly on foot, the crowd of camp followers was part of the *impedimenta*. As mentioned in the Introduction, it was considered an encumbrance to moving armies because of its slowness. But I argue that the slowness of these women, coupled with their constant engaging with sites to set up and keep camp, resulted in a deep knowledge of and attachment to place. If men directing a contingent were to know a landscape for successful military moves, women were to connect with it through ways of *being* in that landscape. The recollections that I examine below show that *soldaderas* had to build homes where contingents could afford a restful—even if short-lived—*being/dwelling* in space. The familiarity needed for this was practical, a connection that entailed a fine knowledge of the material qualities of a place: foliage, trees, rocks, soil, water, topography, food sources. Beyond merely reading place morphologies that facilitated a troop's movement, women learned these material qualities to shape architectures for dwelling: homes built to rest, to spend time with partner and offspring, to eat, and to organise.

⁷² Alberta Galindo Mantilla, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69.

Moreover, such detailed knowledge of a land was crucial for the women left by armies to safeguard an encampment—not only did the survival of the camp followers depend on that, but so did the protection of the equipment left in their hands.⁷³

The vivid testimonies of *soldaderas* show that, despite often forgetting the names of places, they could describe in detail their relation with the sites where they encamped during the years of the struggle. Recalling both revolutionary events and their challenging everyday experiences, they reconstructed, almost in a Proustian manner, the places that the war forced them to memorise.⁷⁴ Women's roles as home builders and providers demanded that they engage with the changing geographies of armies through an iterative task of reconnaissance and appropriation. Camp followers worked on a practical and cyclical relation between site and home that, then, attached them profoundly to place. Prior to the revolution, feminised work had women connect their regular homes to the surrounding geographies (as seen earlier in this chapter). Similarly, the war labour of *soldaderas*—also a feminised domestic labour—turned them into articulators between the mobile home and the landscapes of travel.

The war experience of former *soldadera* Alberta Galindo provides an example. At the encampment, one of her duties was to provide food. To find the raw materials to sustain her mobile home/community, she had to learn the land in detail. She acquired a thorough knowledge of the types of edible plants available and where they grew, as well as the animals that they could hunt: “In the wild you won’t starve: there are mushrooms, amaranth, pigweed and other edible weed, . . . rabbits, deer. There, on the mountain, one

⁷³ In the interview of Héctor Reyes by América Teresa Briseño, we learn that the carrancista army hid weapons in caves. PHO/1/52.

⁷⁴ A shown in their PHO interviews.

finds anything to eat,” she says.⁷⁵ The experience of Juliana Flores provides another example. She describes her days on a mountain with a zapatista contingent which camped for no more than eight days at a time as a safety strategy before moving to a new position.⁷⁶ The home seemed unstable, perennially on the run. But on many occasions, this meant that the forest as a whole became the home.⁷⁷ As time passed, the nomadic inhabitants gained vital familiarity with the characteristics of the lands sheltering them.

The women survivors from PHO recall how important this was both for finding resources and for being able to hide during their days in the wild. They all describe how camp followers were in charge not only of cooking, but also of seeking food when generals did not send (for) it,⁷⁸ which required them to be very familiar with the sites. As mentioned, Alberta Galindo oversaw the preparation of tortillas. She also narrates that women had to wash the clothes of soldiers, which meant becoming familiar with the bodies of water in the area.⁷⁹ Using trees and bushes as materials for building homes proved crucial, but so was learning their exact location and qualities when still rooted, as Juliana Flores testifies. She describes a midnight attack by carrancistas on the Huitzilac campsite where she worked. “They were chasing and shooting at us. . . . [My husband and in-laws] took one way and I took the other. . . . I managed to hide among branches.” In the dark, she survived thanks to

⁷⁵ Alberta Galindo Mantilla, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69. Along with the described dynamic of women venturing ahead of military columns to prepare the settings for eating, these expectations of a nurturing figure shaped camp followers as extensions of the home space themselves—as was the case of villagers in urbanised areas.

⁷⁶ Juliana Flores, viuda de Bolaños, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z-1-19.

⁷⁷ It was crucial to keep the connection between the ephemeral dwelling and the pathway, as narrated by the zapatista *soldadera* Alberta Galindo. While settled in the mountain, she positioned the horses in the area of the camp connecting to an escape route, which meant that the pathway remained physically inserted into the living space.

⁷⁸ “El General Angeles ordena que salgan las tropas.” *El País*, 3 September 1912. “Zapatistas envían a sus soldaderas antes a saquear: Sta Ma Yanquitalpan, Edo. Mex.” *El País*, 16 August 1913. Irene Copado, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

⁷⁹ Alberta Galindo Mantilla, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69..

her knowledge of the surroundings of the camp, visually turning her body into a part of the physical milieu.⁸⁰ In another interview, Veteran Francisco Muro Ledezma mentions women villagers temporarily attached to his camp near Parral (Chihuahua). Arguably more knowledgeable of the site than the (travelling) members of his army, these villagers negotiated the land's features, crawling to bring water, bread, and cheese to the villista soldiers in the midst of an armed confrontation.⁸¹

The wild settings that women describe in PHO had contrasting qualities that related them both to pathways and to homes: they became fixed, knowable spaces for their revolutionary inhabitants, while remaining transient and unknowable to passersby. Copado narrates having outrun an enemy raid in the early morning by climbing up a crag. Noticing the imminent approach of invaders, her group picked up most of the kitchenware, but left buckets and other pieces of the camp behind. They fragmented the domestic setting that they had built, taking one part with them and leaving another attached to the site. By stopping to inspect the remaining bits and pieces, the invaders unwittingly gave Copado and her peers time to flee. From their higher vantage point, the inhabitants of the forest watched the enemy occupy their site. They moved using their cognitive advantage while outsiders only began to get acquainted with the space. They also turned the home that they had built into a sort of spatial decoy that the invading party had to decipher while they moved into and blended with the place known only to them.⁸²

Another example of this negotiation between the knowable and the unknowable of a place involves a subject who worked outside of the home-making labour: Colonel Amelio

⁸⁰ Irene Copado, Viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

⁸¹ Francisco Muro Ledezma, interviewed by María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/97.

⁸² Juliana Flores, interviewed by Laura Espejel, PHO-Z/1/19.

Robles.⁸³ He successfully prepared an ambush against the federal army thanks to his knowledge of a ravine in Huamuchilito de Tixtla. The enemy, lacking Robles' familiarity with the physical form of the place, walked into it unaware of the spots where the ambushers were hiding. Upon passing from one side of the cliff to the other, the federal soldiers were caught and stripped of their weapons by a revolutionary who used his familiarity with the landscape as an advantage of position and navigation.⁸⁴

These are but a few examples of the knowledge of space and resources that revolutionary women developed. Taking a step back and looking again at the map renders the minute, "small," day-to-day appropriations of place visible in a broader scale in some instances. I mentioned earlier the fundamental role of women in negotiating the connection with urban centres. We can see this connection by looking in depth at the details of the everyday use of space, which both enabled the camp to survive and engaged the seemingly static city spaces into the movements of the war. Irene Copado describes the work of *soldaderas* travelling with her and a zapatista troop in the mountains. This group of women showed a remarkable knowledge of the bypaths that led to Mexico City. They brought provisions from Mexico City, Tlalpan and Xochimilco on donkeys, which allowed the rebel camp to survive for long periods of time.⁸⁵ In other camps, members of the army brought money and goods from elsewhere, and women travelled to the city to exchange them for

⁸³ Colonel Amelio Robles made use of the passage through sites out of his hometown (the place where he had been identified as a woman from birth) to take the masculine identity he wanted. Gabriela Cano defines Robles' trans-becoming in terms that involve movement: "Amelio Robles transited from an imposed feminine identity to a desired masculine identity." She describes this masculinisation having taken place in the midst of forced displacements and the war's social upheaval. Gabriela Cano, "Amelio Robles, andar de soldado viejo. Masculinidad (transgénero) en la Revolución Mexicana," *Debate Feminista* 39 (April 2009): 20.

⁸⁴ Joaquín Bello, interviewed by Citlali Marino, PHO-Z/1/46.

⁸⁵ Tlalpan and Xochimilco are now boroughs (*delegaciones*) inside the area of Mexico City. Irene Copado, Viuda de Reyes, interviewed by Alicia Olvera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/10.

food and supplies, establishing a trade flow between the urban and the (rebel) rural—between the fixed and the nomadic. Veteran Jesús Chávez talks of how often *soldaderas* built social networks with women from adjacent villages to get food into the campsite.⁸⁶ Petra Martínez, who was settled in the woods in Huitzilac, collected logs of Montezuma pine to exchange for corn and tortillas down in the city of Cuernavaca.⁸⁷ Juliana Flores, also serving on the hills of the State of Morelos, narrates having sold Montezuma pine in Cuernavaca to purchase rice, beans and corn. The spatial relationships that these women's actions created are visible in the above map (**Figure 4.14**).

Acting as articulators of home and landscape, women reinforced their own connection with both of them. Bringing their supply-seeking traditional duties to the front, *soldaderas* connected, through spatial practice, permanent and travelling domestic architectures. As this chapter has shown, women's fundamental role demanded building and upkeeping mobile homes that called for inventive and discerning use of the resources and features of the landscapes they traversed. Camp followers carried out the legwork that would transform a changing surrounding into a familiar site. Their knowledge of place deepened all the while. As they (perhaps unknowingly) strengthened the relationship between dwellings and geographies, they turned the action of home-making into place-making. Here, I understand place: 1) in its more traditional definition that involves a subject who experiences it or appropriates it by dwelling in it;⁸⁸ and 2) in the sense that considers

⁸⁶ Jesús Chávez, interviewed by María Alba Pastor, PHO/1/99.

⁸⁷ Petra Martínez de García, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z-21.

⁸⁸ Edward Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (December 2001): 683–93; Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, *Research in Planning and Design* 1 (London: Pion, 1976); Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

the complex, outreaching relations that constitute the site and the multiple forms of apprehending it.⁸⁹ In many ways, *soldaderas* established a relationship with places that kept them unbounded as well as subject to multiple readings, which rendered their camping site illegible to enemies. *Soldaderas* knew the places well, but left little trace of their presence in them as part of their war strategy. The oral histories presented here give testimony to *soldaderas* having established connections to place that ran deeper than mere passage through space.⁹⁰ Whereas the descriptions above show inventive interactions with wild, rural, and urban spaces that created conditions of appropriation and dwelling,⁹¹ *soldaderas*' place-making actions also align with Doreen Massey's definition of place: with a specificity not so much fixed into an unchanging shape and inward-looking history, but "constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus."⁹² As shown in this and previous chapters, the relations created by *soldaderas* extended beyond any boundary imagined in the place or camp: they acquired resources, cemented communication, and kept practical connections between their camp and beyond.

⁸⁹ Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," in her *Space, Place, and Gender*. Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*.

⁹⁰ Here I have no intention to embrace the idea that there is a clear-cut difference between the notions space and place. I understand them as existing in a continuum and actually propose that the spatial practices of *soldaderas* are one of many examples bringing together these notions. Michel de Certeau differentiates them by stating: "Space is a practiced place," where a certain fixity in the term *place* seems opposed to the mobility and change of the term *space*. As suggested in the following lines, *soldaderas* both profited from the changing spatial conditions that war travel offered (or imposed) and shaped homes connected to their landscapes, configured to have users be or dwell in those landscapes. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

⁹¹ Similar actions of appropriation and place-making are visible in architectural research such as Katarina Bonnevier's dissertation and book *Behind Straight Curtains*; Anne Troutman, "The Modernist Boudoir and the Erotics of Space," in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005), 296–314; and Susana Torre's "Mothers of Plaza de Mayo."

⁹² Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," in her *Space, Place, and Gender*, 15.

Michel de Certeau celebrates the practice of tracing itineraries, which he considers long gone. According to him, itineraries, unlike maps, do not strive to capture the colonising view of a whole, but rather trace “spatializing practices” and present a travel story—where “stories of journeys and actions are marked out by the ‘citation’ of the places that result from them or authorize them.”⁹³ In other words, every site delineated in an itinerary includes a story, an explanation of its relevance, a narrative of how the traveller’s path touched the drawn line. Absent in de Certeau’s essay, gender identity (as well as race and class identity) arguably determines this encounter with space. The “itinerary” presented at the beginning of this chapter (**Figure 4.2**) is indeed concerned only with the points and topographies that a military path touches, but lacks a description or a spatial story. In that, it resembles more of a map. Its practical, colonising purpose⁹⁴ gives away the masculine gaze of its creators,⁹⁵ only interested in the geometry and texture of the drawn geographies. *Soldaderas* never drew or wrote the itineraries of their travels,⁹⁶ but their actions, more connected to minute and slower interactions with space than those of military strategies, help us reconstruct an itinerary that makes their revolutionary work legible. Whereas war maps omit their participation, itineraries tracing their day-to-day actions reveal agencies in space that extended beyond the contours of the travelling home. Their actions become visible through another concept by de Certeau: *tactics*. As opposed to *strategies*, *tactics* are quotidian ways of operating that are not supported or calculated by power or its institutions.

⁹³ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 120.

⁹⁴ Related to military occupation.

⁹⁵ Clearly, this is not only a masculine gaze, but a racist, classist, and colonialist one. The male indigenous and mestizo soldiers at the bottom ranks of any army, having little to say in the creation of a map like this, most likely never got to see it. Brondo Whitt insinuates this lack of communication: “Suspecting that this stop will last several hours, all passengers get off the wagons and spread out to form an encampment,” 268—also paraphrased in Chapter Three.

⁹⁶ In Chapter Three I have cited Christine Arce, who says that *soldaderas* have no official texts, but “practiced places.” *Mexico’s nobodies*, 43.

They are subtle forms of resistance practised by individuals or communities Othered by power structures.⁹⁷ In this context, strategies are easily legible in the masculinist apparatus of war (and in the focus and intent of a war map), whereas tactics become visible when the attention falls on the camp followers' seemingly innocuous spatial practices. As described in the Stopover, women were assigned striated spaces that they smoothed in their home- and place-making activity: they gave a new definition to domesticity, to war landscapes, and to their female agency. Feminist scholars Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba and Tovi Fenster, as well as Andrea Cornwall, have conducted research projects that build on de Certeau's notions to examine the ways in which women develop tactics to create spaces for themselves in restrictive urban and economic settings.⁹⁸ Traditional glances at (or complete omission of) *soldaderas*' tactics have left female contributions out of the revolution's histories: they have been shaped as merely curious anecdotes that spice up the meat of male achievement. My attention to *soldaderas*' tactics proposes reversing the direction of looking, turning away from the totalising view of the map and to the minute-scale everyday spatial practices. In the itineraries of these women, I study home-making in close relationship to the place accommodating it.

While I examine and celebrate the way in which the openness of pathways offered women opportunities to spatially trace their revolutionary agencies, I want to conclude this chapter by acknowledging that the same transience and fleeting conditions led to the abuse of women as well. In numerous interviews, *soldaderas* describe being kidnapped and

⁹⁷ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

⁹⁸ Hanaa Hamdan-Saliba and Tovi Fenster, "Tactics and strategies of power: The construction of spaces of belonging for Palestinian women in Jaffa-Tel Aviv," 13; Andrea Cornwall, "Of choice, chance and contingency: 'Career strategies' and tactics for survival among Yoruba women traders," 27-46.

forced to mobilise by revolutionaries whom they had to marry in the end.⁹⁹ In other cases, women were sexually attacked and discarded immediately or after months of marching in unknown places.¹⁰⁰ The contingency of this pathway-building and inhabiting opened at times opportunities for women to participate in the war outside the formal geographies keeping them out, but at other times it created grounds that brought about abuse by men. Paths of suffering like these seem retraced repeatedly in conflicts around the world. The pattern of inscribing victories and subjugation on female bodies (associated with the colonising of territories, see Chapter One) continues at an alarming rate up to the present time.¹⁰¹ The revolution only exemplifies the exaggeration at war times of the gender violence already existing during times of peace, which calls for urgent, further deconstruction of codes translated into day-to-day practices of gender equity.

⁹⁹ Leonor Alfaro, Viuda de Mejía, interviewed by Ximena Sepúlveda and María Isabel Souza, PHO/1/100; Alberta Galindo Mantilla, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/69.

¹⁰⁰ An entire corps of *soldaderas*, kidnapped by General Huerta's troops in the State of Morelos, was abandoned on the beach of the remote Veracruz—with many of them pregnant. Frederick C. Turner, "Los efectos de la participación femenina en la Revolución de 1910," 606; Edith O'Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*, 58, 124-5.

¹⁰¹ In June 2019 three indigenous women protested outside a military facility in San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas, Mexico) for the neglect upon the sexual abuse they suffered at the hands of soldiers twenty-five years ago in Chiapas. In 2018, eleven women sued the state for being gang-raped by police officers in San Mateo Atenco, State of Mexico. <https://www.infobae.com/americamexico/2019/06/04/tres-mujeres-indigenas-violadas-hace-25-anos-por-elementos-del-ejercito-protestaron-por-la-falta-de-justicia/>; <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-45319762>.

CHAPTER FIVE: BACK TO BUILDINGS

This final chapter examines women's revolutionary efforts inside and across architectures that appeared on the surface to be disconnected from the armed struggle. It changes the focus to the (often educated) women from the middle and upper class, in order to explore a layer of participation that involved permanent buildings, while still examining impermanent uses of their spaces. This part of the research builds on the argument of a female participation in the revolution that intersected domestic and military spaces, and expands the scope of study of women's actions towards public and work spheres. Some of the protagonists of this chapter travelled with armies, but the majority of them contributed to the fight from the city architectures where they lived or worked. Just as *soldaderas* relied on the ephemerality of their mobile homes, many women who did not follow camps relied on their permanent homes (and work spaces) to contribute to the efforts of the revolution. Moving through their daily spaces, these women changed the meaning of these spaces. I argue this inhabitation and traversal of architectures as a spatial reshaping and, thereby, an act of building.

The end of Chapter One provides a base for Chapters Two, Three, and Four in its analysis of the association of women and the home.¹ This final chapter delves into women's labour spheres—many of them feminised as extensions of the domestic space of care and familial education. Increasingly since the nineteenth century, blue- and white-

¹ See also Martha Eva Rocha, "Los estudios de género en el Centenario de la Revolución Mexicana (1991-2010)," *Historias. Revista de la Dirección de Estudios Históricos* 78 (2011): 129.

collar women accessed such work spaces.² As mentioned in the first chapter, academic and popular media reproduced the nationalist, gendered discourse of positivists or “*científicos*” (“scientists”), the intelligentsia group of men who supported and were favoured by Díaz’s dictatorship before the revolution. Striving to guide Mexico to modernity, the *científicos* paid special attention to the family as the basic unit in which people supposedly learnt nationalist, modern, and traditional values. Increasingly worried about gender relations, they rejected the presence of women in politics, claiming that the only sphere of female contribution to society was the private.³

Ana Lau Jaiven remarks on the contradictory discourse of these male intellectuals, who “tolerated” the transgression of their separate spheres ideology by working-class women.⁴ Whereas it is impossible to say that women from other social strata inhabited the “separate spheres” as prescribed, working-class women occupied work spaces more extensively and made up one third of the employees in manufacturing in Mexico between 1895 and 1910.⁵ Since the Porfiriato, women from the middle and upper classes had access to work spaces such as the classroom, the hospital, and the office⁶—in the latter, most often as clerical workers.⁷ The years preceding the revolution also saw the first few women

² After the 1888 creation of the Women’s Teaching School, female representation among teachers increased significantly. By 1900, 67% teachers were women, which rose to 78% in 1907. Martha Eva Rocha, “Presencia de Las Mujeres En La Revolución Mexicana: Soldaderas y Revolucionarias,” in *Memoria Del Congreso Internacional Sobre La Revolución Mexicana* (San Luis Potosí: Gobierno del Estado de San Luis Potosí / Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1991), 182–97. Susie Porter also examines the segregation and gendered-wage differentials of labour during the late nineteenth century. See her piece “Working women in the Mexican Revolution.”

³ Franco, *Plotting Women*, 90-1.

⁴ Jaiven, “Las mujeres en la revolución mexicana,” 89. I briefly address the separate spheres theory in the Introduction.

⁵ Like elsewhere in the world, this had at its origin the lower wages that companies would pay them, which subjected female workers to an even greater situation of abuse and exploitation than men. Shirlene Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, 12-3.

⁶ Carmen Ramos Escandón, “Mujeres Trabajadoras En El Porfiriato,” *Historias* 21 (1989 1988): 113–4.

⁷ Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, 12; Jaiven, “Las mujeres en la Revolución Mexicana,” 89.

obtain a professional degree.⁸ In its exploration of female labour spheres, this chapter follows the spatial practices that allowed a number of women from the upper and middle classes to take active positions in the revolution.

Whereas public spaces were masculinised and domestic spaces were feminised in the time's gender ideology, the boundaries between men and women's "separate spheres" were porous. Spatial practices of individuals transgressed these boundaries frequently. However, society expected the built environment to materialise this ideal separation by means of its built surfaces⁹—I show below, for instance, the plan of a building in which women's bedrooms on the ground floor are "protected" from the street by retail spaces and then the masculine study and lounge rooms.

If visualised in their gendered spaces (their assigned domestic and work spheres), women who did not travel with armies seemed unrelated to the revolutionary fight. Viewed from the outside, it looked like their spaces hardly touched those of the war. These women, however, made use of their peripheral position to engage in the struggle in unsuspected ways. They drew on the apparent stasis of their buildings to write new spatial meanings only known to them. For example, they could turn the family dwelling expected to be under their care into a site of political dissent, or their feminised work and social spaces into sites of political exchange and conspiracy. On many occasions, they navigated public spaces while pretending to run errands typically associated to a passive femininity, while carrying

⁸ Margarita Chorné became the first female dentist in 1886, Matilda Montoya graduated in medicine in 1887, and María Sandoval de Zarco succeeded in becoming a lawyer in 1889. Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, 12.

⁹ Jean Franco examines the shape of this separate spheres discourse by the Mexican intelligentsia and the printed press in *Plotting Women*, 90.

out covert revolutionary activity. By doing this, they transformed their supposedly passive selves into agents carrying out rebel operations through space.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, to a great extent, women's involvement in the revolution took place in the appropriation of the roles and the limitations that the early twentieth-century patriarchy had imposed on them:¹⁰ if they were not allowed to move into a masculinised war space, they would repeat the gender performance expected of them from the positions assigned to them.¹¹ With every repetition they consciously altered their female spatialities. Whether their visible presence in space—public or private—was the performance of domestic chores associated with their gender or the covert activity supporting a war group was unclear. Feminist historian Barbara Cooper explains:

Women are structured by the spaces available to them, but they are also actively recasting those spaces through their own activities and movements. ... Women both consciously and unconsciously alter the sociocultural field of possibility for themselves and for other women when they struggle to move beyond their inherited 'locations' and into strategically chosen 'positions.'¹²

This part of my research contributes to the growing efforts to construct architectural histories beyond narratives centred on (usually male) builders and owners.¹³ It observes women's reshaping of houses, schools, stores, offices, and public space through practices of political exchange and warfare organisation. Following the pathways of these women opens access to an unwritten story: the story that tells what such buildings were transformed into

¹⁰ First introduced in Chapter Two, these practices were also at the core of Chapters Three and Four.

¹¹ On gender as an act of repetition and on subversive repetition for gender transformation, see Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution."

¹² Cooper, "Gender, movement, and history," 196.

¹³ To cite only a few examples: Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House*; Adams, "The Eichler Home;" Martin, "Housing the Grey Nuns;" Hammond, *Architects, Angels, Activists*; Bonnevier, *Behind Straight Curtains*; Quiñones, "Mi casa es mi refugio: at the Service of Mexican Modernism in Casa Barragán;" González Pendás, "Fifty Cents a Foot, 14,500 Buckets."

by the users—a *re-building* probably left undocumented because of architecture's supposed permanence upon the solid,¹⁴ but just as important as the origin (construction) of any space. In what follows, I examine women's relationship with buildings and how space transformed as a consequence of their unexpected uses of them.

Homes¹⁵

Located in buildings that appeared to have fixed uses, domestic spaces during the revolution provided settings that facilitated not only women's participation, but also the reshaping of gendered roles and identities. Besides providing sustenance and hiding equipment for rebels, houses protected the activity of opponents to the regime under the guise of feminised, family-centred spaces.¹⁶ Women would pretend to be going about their "feminine" lives in and out of these built structures. They operated with and within buildings, and their spatial performances entailed the repetition that, as Judith Butler describes, reinforces the notion of gender¹⁷—thus creating in the observer who tried to identify insurgents the illusion that they were uninvolved housewives whose only occupation was giving appropriate use and care to their family spaces. Mimicking their feminine roles and spatialities as prescribed at the time,¹⁸ they actively and invisibly

¹⁴ "[Architecture is] the most conservative of practices. This conservatism stems from the fundamental inertia of built form as it "fixes" and "stabilizes" the world—space is deployed to stabilize time." Dovey, *Framing Places*, xii.

¹⁵ Exploring the sexist origin of architectural gendered practices in the West, Mark Wigley looks into Leon Battista Alberti's description of the home (in *The Art of Building in Ten Books*) which suggests the enclosure of women in the home as "located within some pre-architectural domain of social order." Mark Wigley, "Untitled," 332-3. Jean Franco examines how, in the nineteenth-century Mexico, "the intelligentsia continued to 'teach' women how to be domestic" as part of the project of a nation. Franco, *Plotting Women*, 90-1. See also Chapter One.

¹⁶ "The distinction between woman and home is collapsed so that woman becomes home. Superimposed, the two are equally static." Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 80.

¹⁷ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution."

¹⁸ On mimicry as a way to subvert gendered architectures, see Heynen, "Modernity and domesticity" in *Negotiating Domesticity*, 23-5; also Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 76.

engaged themselves and their architectures in the struggle. Cynthia Hammond further explains Luce Irigaray's notion of mimesis in a way that reminds us of Judith Butler's idea of subversive repetition: "Mimesis contains within it the potential to disturb, distort, and even disengage, perhaps only slightly, from convention, and, in so doing, to enter into the possibility of a questioning or critical distance."¹⁹ Both mimesis and subversive repetition are legible in the actions through which women related to their homes during the revolution.²⁰ The spatial practices of these civic leaders built on the idea of a feminised home to secretly change the purpose of that home. Giuliana Bruno would call this process a *traveling domestic*: women's "remapping [of self] in different notions of the home."²¹

Working-class dwellings, in both rural and urban areas, offered secret passage and shelter to rebels.²² In many ways, these apparently immobile feminised spaces had a significant influence in the revolution's military manoeuvres (and movement), especially in the territory of the peasant zapatista army. Zapatistas' dependence on the help from non-travelling women often determined their sites of settlement, always in close but invisible connection to villages: Zapatistas concealed their camps in adjacent wooded areas.²³ A

¹⁹ Both Heynen and Hammond speak of mimesis in spatial practices performed within or with respect to the home, only in contexts very different from the subjects of this chapter. Hammond talks about the female readership of the *1953 Canadian Home Journal* who arranged domestic spaces while encountering, on the one hand, heteropatriarchal discourses of domesticity and, on the other, feminist texts questioning women's place in the home and in society at large. Heynen talks about women situating themselves in the sexist constructs of modernist architecture. Cynthia Hammond, "I Weep for Us Women: Modernism, Feminism and Suburbia in the *Canadian Home Journal*'s Home '53 Design Competition," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850-1970*, ed. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 9. Heynen, "Modernity and Domesticity: Tensions and Contradictions," in *Negotiating Domesticities*.

²⁰ In Irigaray's specific terms, mimesis holds a more revolutionary potential than repetition, which is why the term resembles more closely Butler's subversive repetition.

²¹ Bruno explains: the home "location is grounds of departure." Giuliana. Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 163.

²² Juventino Pineda Enríquez, interviewed by Carlos Barreto Marck, PHO/4/10; Jesús Arias Sánchez, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer, PHO/1/33; Juan Arellano Aguilar, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/7.

²³ Reséndez Fuentes, "Battleground Women," 534.

1911 newspaper describes the way in which zapatistas freely walked in and out of towns like Amatepec, Tlatlaya, Texcaltitlán and Pilcaya, (Estado de México) without military occupation.²⁴ Women supported other armies as well, as General Jesús Arias Sánchez narrates. Between 1914 and 1915, his villista division settled in different sites of Durango and Chihuahua, tended by women along the way.²⁵

The involvement of domestic space in the war by women (by actions such as hosting soldiers) also resulted in towns becoming sites of intersection for rival armies. Much of this tense, invisible coexistence relied on female secrecy and support. For instance, during the carrancista occupation of San Gregorio Atlapulco (Xochimilco, today part of Mexico City) women fed and provided lodging for rival zapatistas who entered and hid in the township.²⁶ As they did so, their houses not only participated in the fight, but also moved along with it, remaining physically grounded, but accommodating mobile subjects: houses functionally became pathways.²⁷ Their floors (and maybe other surfaces) were part of the paths traversed by travelling revolutionaries.

Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas observe that many periodicals of the early twentieth century, published for a middle and upper-class audience, claimed that the sole place of female achievement was the family home. The texts repeatedly stated how a woman's life in its entirety revolved around this place.²⁸ *El Mundo Ilustrado*, a magazine

²⁴ "El zapatismo en el Estado de México." *El País*, 11 November 1912.

²⁵ Jesús Arias Sánchez, interviewed by Eugenia Meyer, PHO/1/33.

²⁶ Juan Arellano Aguilar, interviewed by Alicia Olivera de Bonfil, PHO-Z/1/7.

²⁷ This argument runs parallel to the one from the previous chapter, where the mobile homes became part of the pathways themselves.

²⁸ Torres Aguilar and Atilano Villegas, "La educación de la mujer mexicana en la prensa femenina durante el Porfiriato."

printed in Puebla, suggested in a December 1901 article that the woman “symbolise[d] the structure of the house” and elaborated:

Like a protecting godmother, she gifts her time to guard the order of the home, her offspring’s health, her husband’s content. . . .

In the governance of the house, the woman is the fundamental element under whose influence losses and sorrows are repaired; the fortune is preserved; ideas of morality are instilled; each individual has his/her obligations traced. All of this without the use of force; instead, within the gift of love, since the woman of the home rules over souls.

We admire her efforts to prevent violence from settling in the family.²⁹

The last line underscores the non-violent character of the home as a result of the woman’s doing—we could also read the non-violent qualifier as “distanced from war.” Julia Tuñón further observes that the role of women was to preserve the family dwelling as the much-needed site of respite for the “man of the house” at his return from fighting in wars.³⁰

In Chapter One I examine how, in the eyes of the society and intelligentsia of early twentieth-century Mexico, the figures of the woman and the home were understood as carrying a mutual signification. In the next section, I want to direct attention back to the metonymic relation constructed (by the same gendered discourses) upon the subject and the space:³¹ I contend that women activists drew on this connection to conceal their insurgent use of spaces. They took advantage of widely-held ideas about women and their spaces imbuing one another with gendered qualities like passivity and neutrality—as shown in

²⁹ “La mujer en la familia,” *El Mundo Ilustrado*, 29 December 1901, 17. My translation.

³⁰ Tuñón, *Women in Mexico*, 42.

³¹ See Chapter One, Part II.

both the examples above and in those discussed in Chapter One. In the view of the society around the civic leaders whom I follow, their womanly presences feminised domestic, public, work, and institutional buildings. These spaces, believed by male war actors to only accommodate socially-sanctioned feminine activities, subsequently shaped the image of the subjects inhabiting them as passive and neutral, distanced from the armed struggle.³² Spaces and women shaded one another behind an apparent neutrality.³³

During the regimes of Porfirio Díaz and Victoriano Huerta, the Narváez sisters, Guadalupe, Rosa, and María, ran in their middle-class house a private school for young women who had concluded their elementary studies, in the city of Puebla. The building, originally designed as a domestic space, secretly held clandestine political activity against the regime before the war started—which remained compatible with its teaching and housing use. In it, the Instituto de Clases Especiales y Corte Universal (Institute of Special Classes and General Tailoring), directed by Guadalupe, held classes on tailoring and hat-making; feather, muslin, and velvet dyeing; stenography and typing; piano playing; and cooking.³⁴ These lessons cloaked the Narváez's *instituto* more convincingly behind a feminine character, distanced from the space of politics and dissent masculinised in narratives like that of the Mexican *científicos*. Latin American historian David LaFrance explains that, along with renowned insurgent Carmen Serdán (mentioned below), the

³² Again, this separation was only an ideal and took a different spatial form in real life. As this dissertation shows, the supposedly feminine private sphere and the supposedly masculine public/war sphere overlapped just like they did during peace times.

³³ This is not hard to connect to the domestic connotation that rural women's pathway gave to spaces beyond the home in their daily chores, discussed in Chapter Four.

³⁴ From Guadalupe Narváez's testimony in "La mujer poblana en la revolución," 1950. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 1-7. See also Martha Eva Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 123.

Narváez sisters “played a key role in the principal revolutionary junta that coordinated military and political activity in opposition to Díaz and Huerta.” Guadalupe and Rosa were later described by their peers as having acted “like ‘*hombres valientes*,’ not ‘*señoritas*’” (“‘brave men,’ not ‘young ladies’”).³⁵ The suggested opposition between bravery and femininity in these praises further illustrates how much women—and, conceivably, their architectures—were considered detached from the actions and spaces of “courage.” Serdán and the Narváez tactically used this notion in favour of their undertakings.

The Narváez sisters were part of the subversive *Luz y Progreso* Club, directed by Aquiles and Carmen Serdán before the onset of the revolution. Along with the Serdán house, the *Instituto de Clases Especiales y Corte Universal* was a crucial site in Puebla for organising the revolution called by Francisco I. Madero after the July 1910 electoral fraud.³⁶ The social network born in it and “the feminine world of clients and comrades from the sewing and teaching activities” made it possible for the sisters to successfully run risky commissions.³⁷ This politically charged space alternated between two feminised masks: that of an educational space for young women and that of a middle-class domestic space. Women’s relationship to the building, specifically the image of them entering and exiting (their movement in relationship to the envelope), was key to the success of these façades of passiveness and neutrality. As mentioned earlier in this section, architecture and women shaded one another behind an image of neutrality, which makes me contend that feminine

³⁵ David Lafrance, *Revolution in Mexico’s Heartland: Politics, War, and State Building in Puebla, 1913-1920* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2003), 101-2. Evidence for these meetings is available in a minute signed by Carmen Serdán on 27 December 1910 at Calle Iglesias No. 9, the same address of the institute in Puebla. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folio 19.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 138.

identities thus functionally merged with architectural façades. I further develop this argument at the end of the following spatial analysis, which traces the tactics of Carmen Serdán.

Another domestic space that made use of the apparent neutrality of its envelope was Carmen, Aquiles and Máximo's Serdán's upper middle-class house (See **Figure 5.1**). As the map shows (**Figure 5.3**), the two buildings were only four blocks away from each other. The Serdán building was organised around two courtyards and different parts of it housed other three families—including the housekeepers' family—who paid rent to the Serdáns (see **Figure 5.2**). The Serdáns lived within the ground-floor section on the west of the building. Their dwelling consisted of a series of rooms that ran perpendicular to the street. As the photograph of the façade shows, two openings welcomed the public into retail spaces on each side of the central entrance. Back at the time, these would mediate between the street and the dwellings of families. The ground floor dwellings were located behind the retail spaces and the upper floor dwellings (from which the balconies protruded) were located above them. Once in the first patio and observing the Serdán dwelling on the west, visitors would notice that its most "public" rooms remained the most exposed: the study room and the lounge. This is worth noting because, as shown below, at some point Carmen relied on the privacy and gendering of her bedroom to seem disengaged from the rebellion. Adjacent to the room and lounge, the north-east corner of the patio was framed by the walls of two bedrooms.



Figure 5.1
Fachada de la
Casa de los
Hermanos
Serdán [*Façade*
of the Serdán
house]. Item
 number 34423.
 1910-1911.
 Puebla, Mexico.

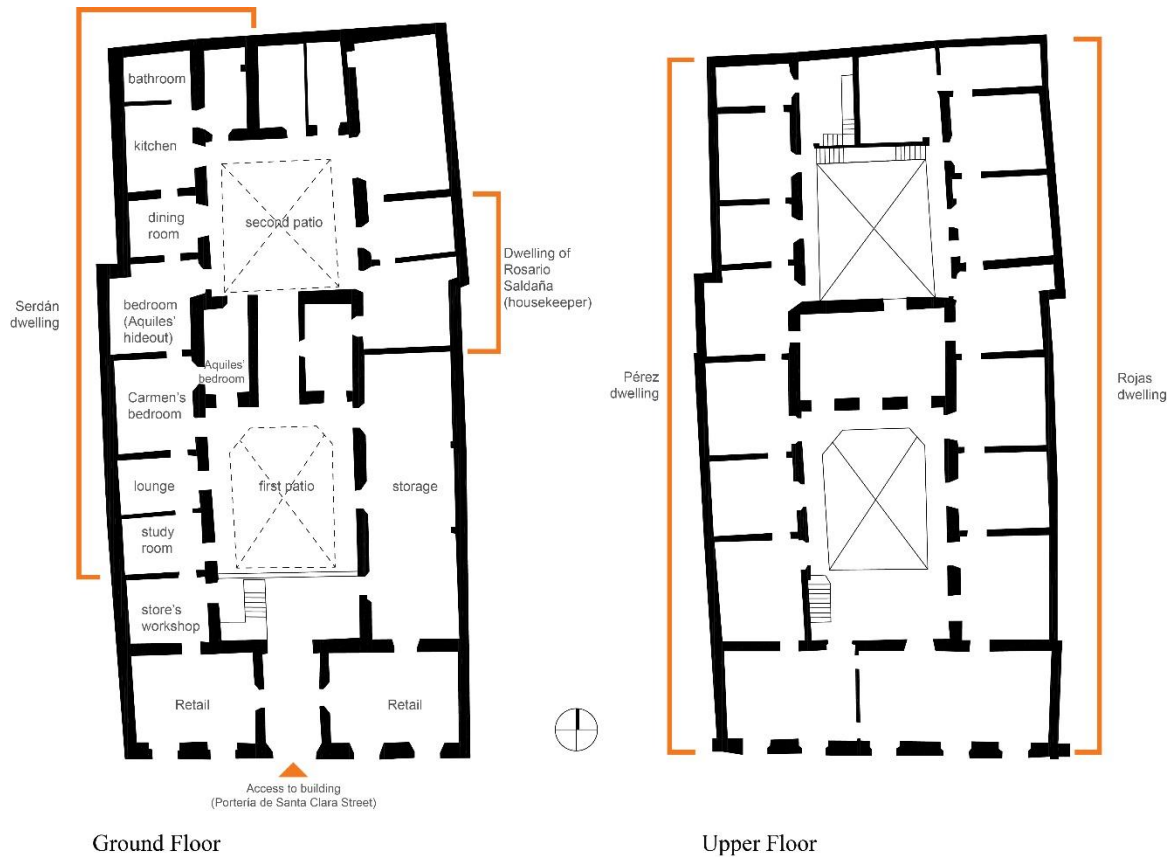


Figure 5.2 Serdán building. Drawing by David Jaime Ruiz.

In the years preceding the revolution, the lounge accommodated the Sunday *tertulia* (social circle). After attending mass in the neighbouring Santa Clara Church—see **Figure 5.3**, Carmen and her mother headed to the market to buy foodstuff for the gathering at which Carmen or the Narváez sisters would play the piano.³⁸ The dominical *tertulias* started as the musical, literary, and entertainment *soirées* long organised by elite Porfirian families. According to Martha Rocha, the Serdán's lounge was one of many that saw its social events turn into political meetings as the abuse of power of President Díaz increasingly alarmed progressive social circles.³⁹ Supported by the Narváez *instituto*, the Serdán house became the seat of the Luz y Progreso Club, the Maderista branch in Puebla until December 1910.⁴⁰

Carmen Serdán's bedroom was the space adjacent to the lounge. Aquiles' was located in front of it. The plan shows an intention to keep the bedrooms somewhat private in relation to the patio by means of two design features: their location at the corner and their interior being only partially visible. From the patio, half of the inside of Carmen's chamber remained concealed by the wall that it shared with Aquiles'. His room had arguably an interior partly "protected" from view (or at least shadowed) by its depth. There were no corridors in the house, so the rooms lent part of their space as a passage/corridor which was only defined along the doors connecting rooms. This tells us something: a use of space not necessarily expressed in architectural plans connected Carmen's bedroom with the political space of the lounge. In other words, circulation along the house allowed the

³⁸ Martha Eva Rocha, "Guadalupe Narváez Bautista (1881-1956): De revolucionaria a veterana," in *De espacios domésticos y mundos públicos. El siglo de las mujeres en México*, ed. Anna Ribera Carbó et al. (México D.F.: INAH-DEH, 2010), 22.

³⁹ Rocha, "Guadalupe Narváez Bautista (1881-1956)," 22.

⁴⁰ The Narváez *instituto* later became the seat of the club, renamed "Carmen Serdán" during Madero's government. Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, Colección Documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez – La mujer poblana en la Revolución. Exp. 6/1, Folios 1-30. Caja 1.1.

“private” space of bedrooms and the “public” space of the lounge and study room to flow into one another (at least when the doors were left open). This does not mean that proximity to the lounge was the reason of Carmen’s activism, since she was a leader of the Maderista movement from the onset, but it evokes the strategic use that she made of interstitial spaces. She occupied and transformed these interstitial spaces both within and beyond her family home.

In the Serdán house, the siblings and Aquiles’s wife, Filomena del Valle, kept armament and munitions for the 20 November 1910 insurrection. Suspecting the concealed operation inside the building, a law-enforcement chief directed a siege by police and military forces on the infamous morning of 18 November. Aquiles and Máximo were killed after the long hours during which the family attempted to repeal the attack. Carmen actively participated and got arrested together with her sister-in-law and mother.⁴¹ The correspondent for the newspaper *El Diario*, Ignacio Herrerías (mentioned in the previous chapter as the author of the weekly column “From the Revolutionary Camp”), claims to have seen two women taking part in the confrontation, and states that witnesses pointed at Carmen as responsible for the shot that killed the police chief.⁴² In a book that Herrerías published later, he maintains to have seen himself a woman on the balcony, rallying the Puebla inhabitants to join the revolution in the midst of the violent confrontation.⁴³ I will

⁴¹ Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 48, 49, 50.

⁴² “Las mujeres combatiendo,” “Una mujer mató a Cabrera,” *El Diario*, 19 November 1910, 1, 5. The story remains unsigned in this issue but, in the following day’s print, Herrerías clarifies that he wrote it. “Relato de un testigo presencial sobre los graves sucesos de Puebla,” *El Diario*, 20 November 1910, 1.

⁴³ Ignacio Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla (18 de noviembre de 1910)*, Biblioteca de “La Ilustración” (digitised by the Internet Archive, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Mexico, 1911, 45. <https://archive.org/details/sucesossangrient00herr>. Accessed 23 July 2018.

analyse the most likely use of space during the attack shortly but, first, I want to draw attention to the case that Carmen's uncle made to contest her arrest together with her mother and sister-in-law, building on the presumed dissociation between women and spaces of conflict.

In a letter to Porfirio Díaz, the siblings' uncle, Baraquiel Alatraste, denies the accusations that Carmen Serdán got involved in the fight and that she summoned passers-by. His writing is a plea to release her, as well as her mother and sister-in-law (Carmen Alatraste and Filomena del Valle), from of the Prison of Belén.⁴⁴ Baraquiel Alatraste makes a case for the dissociation of the three women from the rebel space where the men in the house fought the government forces: he argues that having been found in the building does not prove the women's participation in the rebellion.⁴⁵ The memorandum attached to the letter carefully explains the position of Serdán, Alatraste, and del Valle as the events unfolded, attempting to chart their pathway across spaces of the house that were far from where authorities and insurgents exchanged fire. The text explains that the three women were together in a bedroom, "passively waiting for the end of the hostilities." Its spatial description insists on their disconnection from the fight, attributing a bullet wound in Carmen's back to the assault: the police and military shooters, situated on the street and the neighbouring rooftops, aimed at the house in its entirety. This, the memorandum elaborates,

created a rain of bullets in all directions, out of which many pierced into the interior of the bedchambers. One of them reached and wounded Miss Serdán. ... All of the rooms in the house bear

⁴⁴ "Carta de Baraquiel Alatraste a Porfirio Díaz fechados en México el 13 de diciembre de 1910." Universidad Iberoamericana, Colección Porfirio Díaz: Legajo 35. Caja 40. Documentos 19515-19518.

⁴⁵ "Memorándum de Baraquiel Alatraste a Porfirio Díaz fechados en México el 13 de diciembre de 1910." Universidad Iberoamericana, Colección Porfirio Díaz: Legajo 35. Caja 40. Documentos 19515-19518.

traces of bullets. There was, hence, no need to be outside of the rooms and among the combatants to get shot.⁴⁶

Both the letter and the memorandum conclude with a plea to transfer the women from the prison to Baraquiél Alatríste's house, in consideration for the age of Carmen Alatríste and the condition of Carmen Serdán and Filomena del Valle,⁴⁷ as well as for their upbringing and social status. The writing tacitly emphasises that it is unacceptable for women of their kind to stay in jail,⁴⁸ and that it is urgent for them to be re-located in a domestic space—where the letter seems to argue they belong. Moreover, the text promises that a man will ensure their confinement therein. If it is not Baraquiél Alatríste's home, the plea suggests that any other home with a male head to fulfill this task of surveillance will be as suitable.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “Memorándum de Baraquiél Alatríste a Porfirio Díaz fechados en México el 13 de diciembre de 1910.” Universidad Iberoamericana, Colección Porfirio Díaz: Legajo 35. Caja 40. Documentos 19515-19518. My translation.

⁴⁷ Del Valle being pregnant and Serdán wounded.

⁴⁸ When Guadalupe Narváez narrates the episode, she refers to the prison where they were kept as “filthy dungeons for drunkards and thieves.” She, notably, uses the masculine gender in Spanish. Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/9, Folios 1-7.

⁴⁹ “Memorándum de Baraquiél Alatríste a Porfirio Díaz fechados en México el 13 de diciembre de 1910.” Universidad Iberoamericana, Colección Porfirio Díaz: Legajo 35. Caja 40. Documentos 19515-19518.

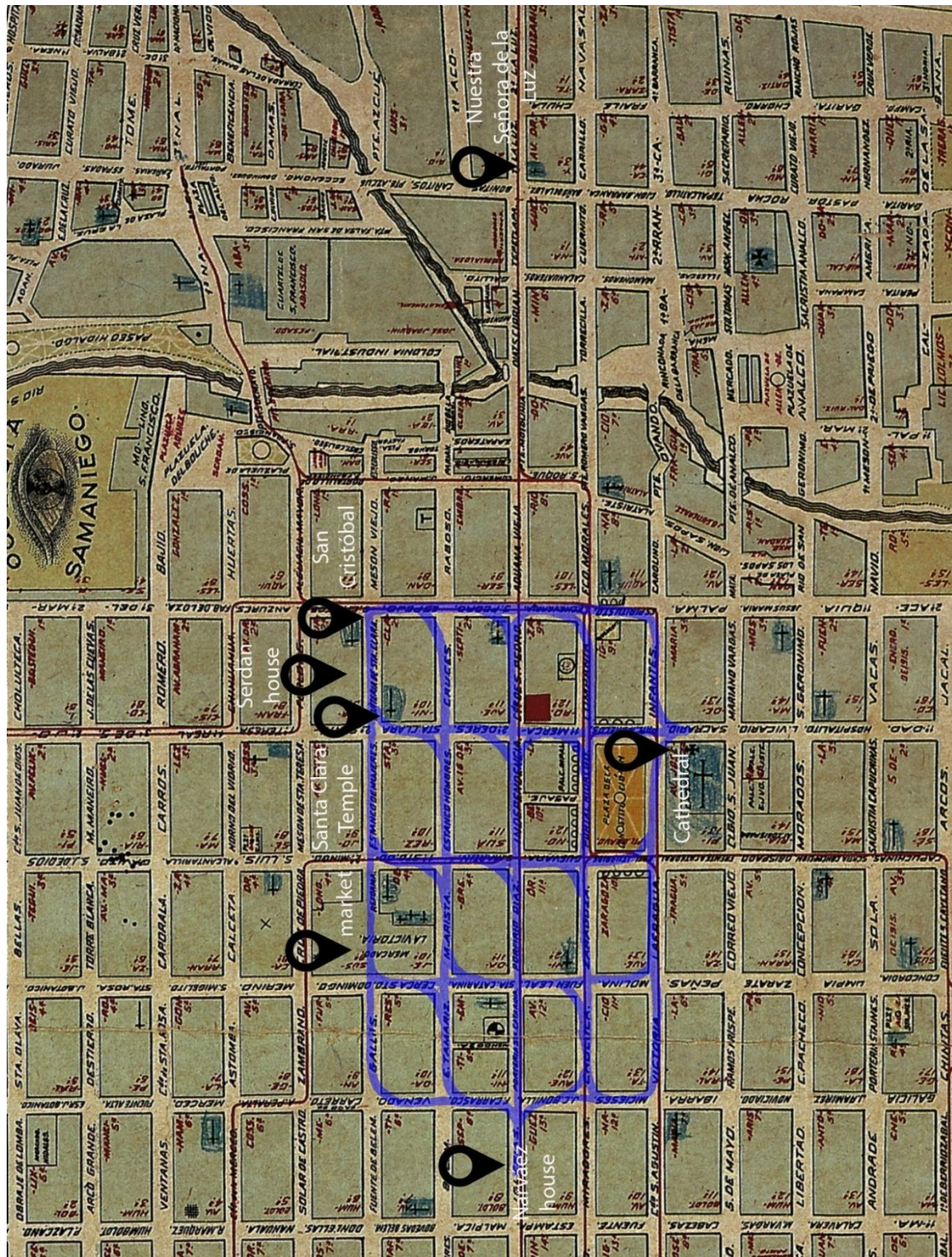


Figure 5.3 Possible pathways traced by Serdán, the Narváez, and their collaborators in the city of Puebla. These only indicate the possible shortest routes between the mentioned strategic points, yet rebels might have taken longer, convoluted paths to mislead observers. Note the key position of the market and churches (feminised spaces) in the urban tissue connecting the dwellings. The passage through the block of the market was pedestrian-only. The city Cathedral was another space that concealed rebel operations.

During the morning search of the 18 November, the police chief and an agent were allowed into the *zaguán* (vestibule) of the building only to be shot dead from somewhere within. The reporter Ignacio Herrerías witnessed the violent confrontation that ensued after a few hours, upon arrival of police and military reinforcements. He “completed” his narrative of the events by interrogating bystanders who were in different positions.

As mentioned, Herrerías documented his reconstruction of the events in a book called *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla: 18 de noviembre de 1910* (*The bloody events in Puebla: 18 November 1910*).⁵⁰ Herrerías writing never shied away from supporting Díaz’s regime and from advocating the detention of all rebels attempting a revolution. The chronicle is an important piece for our spatial analysis and I suggest reading it in parallel with the architectural plan of the Serdán house. I pay special attention to how the reporter’s view of gender and war spaces shapes his narrative because, even when the facts that he states contradict Baraquiel Alatríste’s allegations, Herrerías’ story ends up confirming the dissociation of women from spaces of violent confrontation as argued by Alatríste. The ninety-five-page text details the events before and after the battle, even describing at length the origin of Aquiles Serdán’s opposition to Díaz, his seditious actions, and his relationship with rebel leader Francisco I. Madero. About the women around this preparation for the uprising, he writes:

And the women, how could the women calmly witness all those sinister preparations? Did the Serdán’s mother, regardless of her courageous lineage, not feel maternal love take over so that she

⁵⁰ Herrerías’ story was contested in court by the Serdán family, especially because of his allegations of female participation in the violent episode. “Controversia histórica por el libro de don Ignacio Herrerías,” *El Tiempo*, 23 January, 1911, 2.

could prevent her children/sons⁵¹ from leading an enterprise that was assuredly going to cost their life? Who knows... Maybe her advice was futile in that memorable day... Maybe she, the venerable old woman herself, encouraged them enthusiastically, throwing them into the abyss, rushing them to murder and [their own] death.⁵²

Unsurprisingly for a publication of the time (and the type produced by Herrerías⁵³), the actions of men take up most of the volume's text. The cover of the book, however, features the drawing of a woman (**Figure 5.4**). Here I stop briefly to examine it as a window into the gendered spatial constructs that shaped Herrerías' descriptions of places and events. As I discuss below, Herrerías repeatedly expressed his surprise at the sight of female participants in the uprising. We should then ask whether this woman is supposed to embody the "treason" or deceit that, in the reporter's eyes, were at the root of the insurgents' actions. It is also pertinent to enquire if there is a relation between his sensationalist title (*The bloody events in Puebla*) and the drawing of the evil-looking woman. Her dark-delineated, squinting eyes look in the direction towards which she advances—towards a space or subject that remain a mystery to the reader because of being outside of the frame. Her right hand presses a dagger onto her chest, as if ready to attack, and her left hand carries a skull. It is not hard to contrast her with the peaceful-looking women from **Figure 1.8** (Chapter One). Unlike them and other images of women idealised in periodicals, her hair does not appear "tidily" fixed into a bun; instead, it is loosely held by a handkerchief. She does not sit in the passive position of the *señoras* reading the

⁵¹ It is uncertain here whether the Spanish word *hijos* means in this excerpt "sons" or the more inclusive "children".

⁵² Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 58. All quotes from this source are my translation.

⁵³ Chapter Four addresses his neglect of female presences in the revolutionary camps that he visits and chronicles about.

newspaper, but advances threateningly. Among the battling protagonists of Herrerías' epic text, the few women mentioned are Carmen Serdán and Filomena del Valle. If the portrayed woman is supposed to be one of them, the drawing has a clear intent of translating the deviation from gender norms that Herrerías saw in their actions—his narrative seems obsessed with this deviation, as exemplified below. The cleavage of the rendered woman separates her from the prudish ideal imposed on the social stratum of Serdán and del Valle,⁵⁴ and the skull, the unruly hair and even the cloak might relate her symbolically to a witch or a gypsy. I suggest that the cloak is there to symbolise the fear that male war leaders (and authorities before the war) had against the unknown things that women could carry underneath a textile that wrapped their bodies—in the same unknown space that the shawl created (see Chapter Two⁵⁵). The backdrop of the woman and the title is a black area easily associated with the dark, mysterious spaces traversed by the “witch” and the revolution's insurgency. This black-shaded area even seems to strike through the lines defining a now invisible background (a few of these lines are visible on the margins of the cover of the book).

Herrerías points to Serdán and del Valle as active participants in the fight. As mentioned before, someone (argued first by Herrerías to be del Valle, later, Serdán) shot the police chief from an unknown space in the house.⁵⁶ When the army arrived later, the troops started firing and throwing explosives at the house from street level. Positioned at the corner of the streets of Santa Clara and Espejo, Herrerías claims to have seen Carmen

⁵⁴ A prudish ideal visible, too, in **Figure 1.8** and associated in popular culture with the angel of the home discussed in Chapter One.

⁵⁵ Especially the mention of weapons being transferred via the “bosom of *soldaderas*” in the newspaper article “Cartuchos para zapatistas,” *El Pueblo*, 9 November 1917.

⁵⁶ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 39-40. “Relato de un testigo presencial sobre los graves sucesos de Puebla,” *El Diario*, 20 November 1910, 1.

Serdán address bystanders on Santa Teresa street from the main balcony of the building, rallying them on to support the besieged rebels and the revolution about to erupt.⁵⁷ Serdán waived a rifle as she rallied the people, but no one came forward.

The illustration of this episode (**Figure 5.5**) might confirm that the woman from the book cover evokes Carmen Serdán. The illustrator makes sure that both face profiles and unruly hairdos look similar. The two individuals each hold a weapon on the right hand and a mystery object on the left: a skull and what looks like a package. But unlike in the cover of the book, Serdán's backdrop is clear. The space against where her figure rises is a white sky that contrasts with the black area behind the "witch." Below and beyond lies the city that until that tragic day has remained unaware of Serdán's political activity. She holds a rifle, but, the fact that she frankly detaches it from her body while extending her arm arguably shows the illustrator's attempt at depicting her as less evil than the "witch." Like her background, Serdán's actions want to look legible, "honest:" in the end, she is finally revealing to her surrounding space (which remained deceived until then) that she is an insurgent. While she is still involved in the fight, she does not look like she is about to deliver a betraying blow/stab, but actually offering to pass on the weapon to a new comrade—in Herrerías' masculinist view, probably a man. The shift between the characters of the two women as rendered by the writer and illustrator—both of them men⁵⁸—is legible in the mixed feelings expressed by Herrerías:

I confess that such act of courage in a woman who, I later learned, was Carmen Serdán, filled me with enthusiasm, with admiration, and with sadness, as I thought how her heroism would be in vain.

⁵⁷ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 46-7.

⁵⁸ Most drawings, including the rallying woman on the balcony, are signed by Ernesto García Cabral, an anti-maderista illustrator.

... She remained on the balcony, her magnificent figure outstanding; her unkept hair, pale face, sunken eyes, nervous body language. Then, the officers fired several shots . . . towards the void. She refused to hear the shots and cared little about life at that moment. She continued shouting, gesturing, until a hand and robust arm held her by the clothes and pulled her into the chambers, closing off the balcony.

How insignificant I considered myself at that moment! How must members of the police have felt as they contemplated such a brave woman! Maybe Aquiles himself felt insignificant and cowardly before this extraordinary event!

I, an individual whom nobody regarded as a shooting target, hid behind a wall and feared death; whereas, few feet apart, exposing her chest to the weapons of the enemy and defying the world, a grief-stricken and rail-thin woman set a rare example of courage: fanatic about a cause that many condemned.⁵⁹

It is important to point out two things in the illustration: one, there is a woman behind Serdán who remains unmentioned in the text—she might either be her mother or del Valle; two, the building edge from which both women stand and from which Serdán addresses the city dwellers does not look like a balcony of her house (see again **Figure 5.1**). It resembles more a rooftop parapet. Herrerías' article of the 19 November issue describes rebels rallying the people and offering arms and munitions from the top of the building. There is no mention of the women in such excerpt, but Herrerías later writes having seen del Valle and Serdán shooting from a balcony.⁶⁰ How Serdán would have positioned herself on the balcony remains a mystery, since the top-floor apartments were occupied by tenants who, according to the chronicle, locked themselves up during the shooting. If by “main

⁵⁹ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 47.

⁶⁰ “Las mujeres combatiendo,” *El Diario*, 19 November 1910, 1.

balcony” Herrerías means “central balcony,” we are to understand that Serdán stepped out from the dwelling of the Rojas family (see **Figure 5.2**). The balconies on the east side of this central one also belonged to that household. If, instead, she was seen on one of the west balconies, she would have needed to first traverse the Pérez apartment.

Further into the book, Herrerías mentions the two renting families as vehemently claiming no relation to the plot of the Luz y Progreso Club. That they cautiously left their homes on the eve of the 17 November points to them as the likely informants who directed the government to the Serdán building—at a moment in which the Serdáns were gathered with other insurgents. Probably thinking that the police search was over, the Rojas and the Pérez families came back in the morning of the 18th and were caught in the ensuing crossfire within their dwellings.⁶¹



Figure 5.4 Ernesto García Cabral. Cover of Ignacio Herrerías’ book, *Sucesos Sangrientos de Puebla*, 1911.

⁶¹ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 58, 73-8.

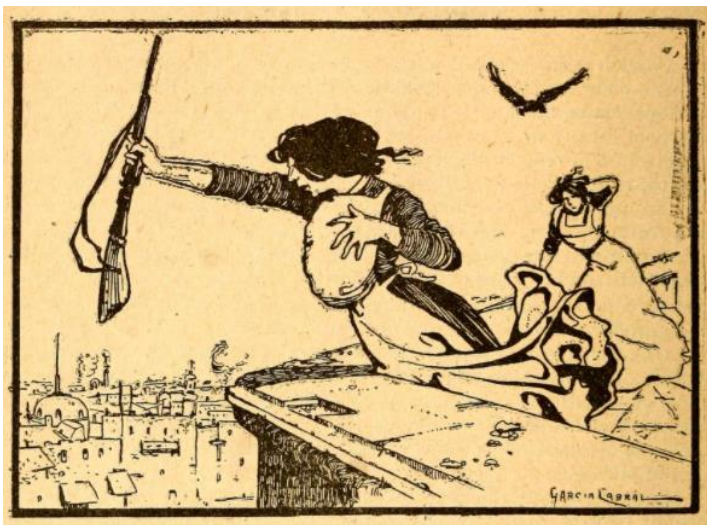


Figure 5.5 Ernesto García Cabral. Illustration showing Carmen Serdán and woman at the back, *Sucesos Sangrientos de Puebla*, 1911.

Around twenty *rurales* (military troopers) entered the scene and positioned themselves on the rooftops of neighbouring buildings, both on the same block as the Serdán house and across the street. These buildings included the almost adjacent San Cristóbal Church and the Santa Clara Church right across the street. Access to the roof level was possible through the street doors of both the churches and houses within the block.⁶² The rebels exchanged fire with the police and the *rurales* all the while. Whereas the rebels resisted from the rooftop of the Serdán building at first, the officers and soldiers eventually took over this surface (see **Figure 5.6**). Having done so, they tried to reach the retreating insurgents by firing down at the walls that enveloped the courtyards.

Herrerías condemns Aquiles Serdán for having hidden when the assailants took over the building, abandoning the women out to be discovered as the troopers searched the rooms.⁶³ He also struggles to understand the decision of del Valle, Alatríste, and (Carmen)

⁶² Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 47-55.

⁶³ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 64-5.

Serdán: “The women refused to hide!” Aquiles crawled inside a hole in the floor of the bedroom between Carmen’s bedroom and the dining room. He conceivably used the help of his sister, wife, and mother to place back on the floor the wooden planks that concealed his body. The women waited for the incoming officers at Carmen’s bedroom, where they were finally arrested.⁶⁴ Baraquiel Alatríste argued that they were in that space all the time and, as mentioned, that Carmen’s bullet wound was the result of the space of violence reaching out towards the women rather than the women being active participants within such space. Their exact movement during the attack is impossible to know, but their strategic use of space can point to some things. In the final moments of the confrontation, most of their male comrades were dead⁶⁵—and now Aquiles remained invisible. Del Valle, Alatríste, and (Carmen) Serdán awaited the impending arrival of the enemy in a woman’s bedroom. Here we can infer a conscious decision to place themselves in a space that looked distanced from the fight. If the process of the defeat of the insurgents took place “vertically”—i.e., with troopers first taking possession of the rooftop and then moving downwards—not only were the Serdán’s bedrooms the safest spaces (on the ground floor), but also the ones that, in the eyes of the enemy, would look like a probable shelter for those uninvolved: secluded below, almost crushed by the expanding war space.

The survivors’ final decision was probably based on one hope: just like the floor planks would visually protect Aquiles in his room, the womanhood of the others would

⁶⁴ They were arrested and taken away. After many hours, Aquiles was caught leaving his hideout and was shot dead by the troops left to surveil the building. Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 64-5.

⁶⁵ Whereas Herrerías claims that all the rebel men in the building died, Carmen Serdán, Rosa, and Guadalupe Narváez, among other members of the *Junta Revolucionaria*, signed a letter attesting to the participation of Martín Pérez Sánchez, who survived the episode. 7 May 1916. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folio 35.

protect them if they convincingly argued that they were never involved in the battle. A feminised space—Carmen’s bedroom—was the key piece of the alibi. But the architectural plan reveals more. While physically distant from the incoming assailants, the sleeping chamber made it possible for those inside to continue shooting towards the courtyard and the spaces around it. The interior passage that connected all the rooms of the Serdán dwelling arguably had a crucial role in allowing del Valle, Alatríste, and Serdán to navigate the entire home to fire outwards⁶⁶ and to quickly head to the room for the moment of surrender. “With all due consideration, the women were taken out,” Herrerías concludes in this section of his story.⁶⁷

Carmen, her mother, and Filomena were imprisoned for six months until the triumph of Francisco I. Madero.⁶⁸ Before and after the violent episode, Carmen endeavoured to coordinate the revolutionary movement in and out of the city of Puebla. In the months leading to the day on which Madero called for the start of the civil war (and to the attack on her home), Carmen travelled to meet him in San Antonio, Texas, where he took refuge after escaping imprisonment by President Díaz. She delivered documents from rebel groups that supported his movement in the centre of the country and then headed to the city of Monterrey to receive money for weapons from his brother, Gustavo Madero. Carmen and her brother Máximo bought and carried the firearms to their house. The

⁶⁶ Guadalupe Narváez states that the three of them participated in the fight. Herrerías saw Filomena and Carmen fire at the invading troops. Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 48, 49, 50. Ignacio Herrerías, “Las mujeres combatiendo,” *El Diario*, 19 November 1910, 1.

⁶⁷ Herrerías, *Sucesos sangrientos de Puebla*, 65.

⁶⁸ Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 48, 49, 50.

government was informed of this and conducted the search of the 18 November.⁶⁹ Madero's presidential victory did not mean the end of Carmen Serdán's secret endeavours, since, after his assassination, she had to reach out to zapatistas further south and to carrancistas on the north to coordinate the revolt against the new dictator Huerta.⁷⁰

In her navigation within and across buildings, Serdán carried a political mission that relied heavily on façades. The façades of buildings "spoke" a language of domesticity that, rebels hoped, conveyed the image of a neutral, (politically) immobile home inside. Likewise, Serdán constructed a façade for her identity as civic leader by signing her correspondence with fellow activists under the male name of Marcos Serrato.⁷¹ She negotiated her participation in the revolution by strategically using façades of architecture and identity.⁷² When she was in the rebel space enveloped by her dwelling, she relied on the built façade's pretence of housing her in her "passive" feminine identity: incapable of belligerent action while anchored in the home. As mentioned in an earlier description of the front of her house, on both sides of the central entrance, the spaces that opened towards the street on the ground floor served as buffers between the city space and the domestic spaces

⁶⁹ Statement by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, La mujer poblana en la Revolución, Exp. 6/9, Folios 1-7, Caja 1.1.

⁷⁰ Letter by Carmen Serdán; Document signed by rebel leaders. Guadalupe Narváez, Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 1-30.

⁷¹ She took up this pseudonym after the events of the 18 November. Guadalupe Narváez, Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 12-15. See also María Teresa Martínez Ortiz, "Carmen Serdán: La invisibilidad histórica de las guerreras de la Revolución Mexicana frente a representaciones culturales del mito de la soldadera," *Revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*, 2018, 48.

⁷² In architecture, the term façade does not necessarily entail an untruthful outward aspect. However, as I talk about a façade's relationship with the secret practices of the revolutionary leaders behind it, I intentionally draw a connection with the meaning of the term façade as 'un-/less reliable' when applied to a person's appearance or identity: according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *façade* can mean "a false, superficial, or artificial appearance or effect." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/facade>, accessed 12 October 2020.

behind and above. Whereas the Serdán living unit (behind one of the retail spaces) did not face the street, the Rojas and the Pérez dwellings (above the two retail spaces) constituted the building's "domestic front" towards the public spaces of the city. On this front, the two west balconies belonged to the lounge of the Pérez household and the other three belonged to the lounge of the Rojas family. Similar to the function of a *piano nobile* in palazzo buildings, this level of the envelope, with its wrought-iron guardrails and uniform-looking doors, was meant to translate the domestic character of the building.

When Serdán physically traversed the building's façade towards public space—through the central entrance—she relied on her own façade as a regular upper-middle class woman, running errands of pious and gendered work. The previously mentioned Sunday trip to the church and the ensuing visit to the market to buy foodstuff for the evening get-together exemplify the concealment of revolutionary activity behind feminised activities. When Serdán sent letters, she "travelled" in her writing—out of the building's envelope—bearing the identity façade of a man, a "more fitting" (expected) individual in the politically mobile, public environment. Using architectural façades as turning points for their dual identities, individuals like Serdán and the Narváez sisters made crucial contributions to the rebellion.

The anti-Díaz club *Luz y Progreso* became the *Carmen Serdán* club in December 1910 while she was in jail. A letter written by her shows that she remained closely involved during imprisonment.⁷³ The seat of this new association was the Narváez institute.⁷⁴ The

⁷³ Letter signed by Carmen Serdán, Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folio 19.

⁷⁴ Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista; letter signed by Carmen Serdán. Colección Documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez – La mujer poblana en la Revolución. Exp. 6/1, Folios 1-30. Caja 1.1.

map in **Figure 5.3** shows how the paths of women connected the two buildings with their urban space. Serdán's Sunday pathway from her home to mass at the Santa Clara Church, and then to the Victoria market worked as a performance. In this performance, Carmen's traversal of feminised spaces (the feminised home, the feminised space of piety, and the feminised space of grocery shopping) strove to get from these settings a neutral appearance that Carmen hoped to "carry" all the way to the ensuing political meeting—which appeared to outsiders as the weekly *soirée sociale/tertulia*. Key to Carmen's performance was the image of her entering and exiting the buildings. As the thresholds to buildings, the façades themselves became crucial in this performance: being the buildings' "faces," they communicated to street observers the supposedly feminine character of the activity within.

As shown on the map, the Victoria market was situated halfway between the Serdán and the Narváez house. Depending on the route that the Narváez or Carmen Serdán took to visit each other, there were three catholic churches that could arguably "purify" the image of their pathways—as, we know, the Santa Clara Church did on Sundays. The prominence of religious buildings in the residential landscape inhabited by the Narváez and the Serdáns is visible in **Figure 5.6**,⁷⁵ where the photographer made sure to capture the San Cristóbal Church. The foreground of the image is the rooftop of the Serdán building and the distant background shows the Iglesia de la Señora de la Luz (Church of Our Lady of the Light).⁷⁶ Rosa Narváez extended this pathway towards the city Cathedral, where she secretly carried materials (provided by an uncle of the Serdáns) that another woman would take to the hills

⁷⁵ Many religious buildings are also visible in the map from **Figure 5.3**.

⁷⁶ Naturally, access the rooftop of the house (now museum) is not allowed, but I was able to confirm that the space captured is indeed the Serdán building. I thank David Jaime Ruiz for his help in finding the exact angle of the photograph and the temples visible on the 3d view of Google Maps.

on the city outskirts to produce explosives. Ángeles Mendieta Alatorre further details: “The operation was camouflaged by an order of needles, buttons, barrettes, and other articles.”⁷⁷

The mention of the female courier brings up two aspects to consider in this analysis of building and identity façades. The first of them is her role as a highly plausible connection between the subjects whom this chapter follows and the *soldaderas*, and, hence, between the revolutionary architectures of the city and the camps. Unlike the way in which the official records of armies keep track of collaboration between men of different ranks, the coordinated efforts of women from different social backgrounds have hardly found their way into archival documentation.⁷⁸ The second aspect to consider is that the primary sources mention only in passing the domestic employees (many of whom were women, like this messenger). Rosario Saldaña lived with her children at the apartment that lined the second patio of the Serdán house on the east. The current administration of the building (now Museum of the Revolution) keeps record of Saldaña as an employee of the Rojas family. The employees of the Serdán household (who would arrange the snacks for the political *soirées* according to historian Martha Rocha) might have lived elsewhere. It is hard to determine whether they participated in the revolutionary actions. Given the gender etiquette of the time, it is likely that women from the social stratum of the Serdán and the Narváez families needed chaperones to walk through the city. Again, the missing information on revolutionaries from the working classes obscures the search for answers,

⁷⁷ Angeles Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1961), 55.

⁷⁸ Yet, as mentioned in the introduction, the unofficial, secret character of this female collaborative work was most likely the key to its success. Even if not explicitly attempting to draw connections between these different socioeconomic spheres of rebel female work, the research of Martha Rocha in the veterans' archives sheds light on some of this collaboration across class strata. Hence, architectural research further interested in the spatial form of this connection might find an avenue in the primary sources used by Rocha at the Secretary of Defense. Martha Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*.

but I find it credible that employers often worked alongside the workers whom they trusted. It is even possible to surmise that employees raised awareness about the hardship lived by the Porfirian underclass among an elite who could not grasp such reality otherwise. A document in Guadalupe Narváez's file in the national archives attests to the participation of workers from her household: Concepción and Piedad García, as well as Ignacio García are mentioned as key messengers.⁷⁹ However, the assumption in the document is that the Narváez sisters persuaded their employees to become revolutionaries with no question on whether this persuasion occurred the other way around.

We know that a female courier took the materials for explosives outside of Puebla, but with her name left unsaid, her trajectory will never be as legible as that of Carmen Serdán, for example. This scarcity of information and forms of inquiry on revolutionary subjects from the underclass challenges the claim of scholars like María Teresa Martínez Ortiz and Daniel Avechuco Cabrera that working-class women, especially through the figure of the *soldadera*, have monopolised the attention of research projects on female participation in the revolution.⁸⁰ Whereas these historians might be right in asserting that, as a figure, the *soldadera* has been easier to frame into patriarchal, romanticised, popular and academic narratives, the names of celebrities such as Serdán and the Narváez have received more attention than less affluent subjects who fought the same war. This raises questions

⁷⁹ "La mujer poblana en la revolución," 1950. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 1-7.

⁸⁰ María Teresa Martínez Ortiz, "Carmen Serdán: La invisibilidad histórica de las guerreras de la Revolución Mexicana frente a representaciones culturales del mito de la soldadera," *Revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*, (2018): 44-57; Daniel Avechuco Cabrera, "The Adventures of Lilith in the Mexican Revolution: Cultural Representations of the Soldier Woman (1911-1915)," *Mitologías Hoy: Revista de Pensamiento, Crítica y Estudios Literarios Latinoamericanos* 18 (December 2018): 127-50.

about class and, very possibly, on race as factors that impact the level of visibility of historic subjects both within and beyond the revolution.



Figure 5.6 Rooftop of Serdán building with San Cristóbal Temple on the second plane (centre). On the third plane, the *Iglesia de la Señora de la Luz* is also visible. The image shows the two openings that frame the patios of the Serdán building. The one whose corner we can see on the right (below the man on the right of the image) is the south patio, closer to the *Portería de Santa Clara* street.

Other examples of the use of identity and façades appear among the still understudied narratives of the Veterans Archives, in the Secretary of National Defense. In order to gain official recognition as veterans, many of the female participants of the revolution provided proof of their revolutionary itineraries, which they had kept secret for their own safety.⁸¹ One of these stories, as I found in the archives, took place also in Puebla, and the protagonist was a collaborator of the group of Serdán and the Narváez sisters: at the dawn of the movement, Cruz Mejía Vda. de Pérez turned the access space of her house into a shop which she attended to.⁸² Her home (assumed to be private) opened onto the public in the shape of a retail site, which served to mask what was in reality a resistance courier

⁸¹ Martha Rocha Islas examines both the process of obtaining official status, and the collective and individual actions with which almost five hundred women gave shape to the revolution. *Los rostros de la rebeldía*.

⁸² File D/112/154, Cruz Mejía Vda. de Pérez, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

centre, and to justify the continuous arrival and departure of messengers.⁸³ Unbeknownst to the society around, Cruz's dwelling was a venue of exchange of information with rebels from other cities. She made her house look like a place where the private opened up to a local public space only for commercial purposes while it actually opened up to a broader national space for political purposes. The constant movement of people and goods in and out of the shop also concealed the storage of armament and munitions for the uprising—especially after a police search made it impossible to keep this equipment at the Narváez house.⁸⁴ In many ways, Mejía's presence at the entrance of her house/shop fulfilled the visual role of the women from the photographs of Waite, Scott, and Casasola (see Chapter One). In this case, however, she actively positioned herself in this threshold, instead of being positioned.⁸⁵ Mejía was, on the one hand, the shop (public space) attendant; on the other, she was the female figure who gave meaning to the space behind her and inside of the built structure as an “innocent” home. In her feminine presence and identity, she worked in the same way as did the women from the *costumbrista* portraits posing in front of their rural houses, and even as the architectural human scales that are supposed to symbolise the “character” of a building—as discussed in Chapter One.

Cruz's constant position at this particular edge (between the private/domestic and the public/commercial) exemplifies a strategy to use a female presence in, around, and across buildings in order to represent domestic, i.e. ‘non-war,’ space. The aforementioned spatial practices of Serdán illustrate, however, other instances where architectural and

⁸³ Letter by Carmen Serdán, Rosa Narváez, and Guadalupe Narváez, File D/112/154 Cruz Mejía Vda. de Pérez, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos, Folio 2.

⁸⁴ This happened prior to Porfirio Díaz being overthrown, in preparation for the 20 November uprising. Letter by Carmen Serdán, Rosa Narváez, and Guadalupe Narváez, File D/112/154 Cruz Mejía Vda. de Pérez, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos, Folio 2.

⁸⁵ By a photographer, an architectural drawing, or a gendering discourse.

identity surfaces (façades) exchanged and reinforced this representational function in ways less evident than the always visible figure of Cruz attending in her shop. In cases like Serdán's, the tactics of groups opposing the regime also drew on the gendered language of photographers and postcard publishers of the early twentieth century: a woman positioned at the threshold (the façade) served as a way to visually bring out the interior of a family home onto the outdoors to which a viewer had access. But unlike Cruz, that woman did not have to stand still on this indoor/outdoor edge. Instead, she took on the purpose of representing a domestic space while moving in and among buildings. While in motion, she relied on the socially-constructed surface of her identity (an "innocent-looking" woman) and on the materially-constructed surface of her house (a façade conveying a building's "character"), which worked together to mimic the nurturing, "passive" qualities expected from her feminised space and self.

Luz Betancourt de Huacuja gave crucial support to the Narváez and Serdán's campaign after Victoriano Huerta's coup d'état—and killing of President Madero in February 1913. She turned her house in Puebla into a *Centro Revolucionario*, a venue for exchanging correspondence and distributing the subversive newspaper *El Renovador*.⁸⁶ When she left her domestic space, she virtually "cloaked" herself in its façade, taking its meaning along in her travels to Mexico City. In other words, as she was seen walking out of her house, she pretended to leave a feminine space only to fulfill a "feminine task"—observers assumed that she headed to the capital to shop or to visit friends. Carrying these

⁸⁶ File D/112/2209 Luz Ma. Betancourt de Huacuja, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

identity and architectural surfaces, Betancourt concealed her revolutionary activity: picking up in Mexico City the newspaper copies to distribute in Puebla.

A similar example is the case of María Martínez de Molina. Her house in Mexico City became a centre of exchange of subversive propaganda after Huerta's coup d'état. Like Luz Betancourt, she crossed the city to pick up *El Renovador*, always in the company of another woman. The city itineraries of these revolutionaries unfolded along a pathway that functioned on two levels: the visible and the invisible. On the visible level, these travels seemed only to connect women's spaces (homes) and the spaces of "women's errands"—deemed not worthy of the authorities' attention. On the invisible one, their pathways created a crucial network of communication and support among opponents to Huerta's presidency.

In Sofía Dorantes's file in the same archive, three veterans attest to her revolutionary activities. She and her husband made use of her house in Puebla as a depot for ammunition and supplies before the November 1910 insurrection.⁸⁷ One of the testimonies describes her revolutionary service as one of great "abnegation:" a feminised trait which reflects that, even by rebel peers, the participation of Dorantes and other women was seen in gendered terms. Conceivably, she drew on this part of her identity and on her image as a typical housewife to secretly turn her home from the expected space "of affection, feelings, and moral values"⁸⁸ into the secret arsenal of insurgents. As a home

⁸⁷ The police discovered the secret store, confiscated the material, and arrested Dorantes's husband. Letter from Centro Antireeleccionista de México. File D/112/8 Sofía Dorantes Vda. de Ledesma, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

⁸⁸ Rocha, "Los estudios de género en el Centenario de la Revolución Mexicana," 129.

keeper, she moved in and out of a building which was to blend into the surrounding domestic landscape which imaginaries of the time kept apart from the struggle.

A “passive,” immobile physical component of the urban/residential tissue and society’s presumed seat of the family, the family home functioned as a vessel for material and immaterial tools that the revolutionary tide needed and that greatly impacted a broader space. As the spatial stories of Dorantes, Serdán, the Narváez, and Mejía show, buildings and subjects exchanged façades, identities, and functions to accomplish revolutionary missions. Here it is important to recall the blurred boundaries between pathways and homes analysed in the previous chapter. In this case of immobile architectures, homes became pathways or channels of communication while conveying, through its envelope, an image of stasis.

Other examples include the pathways of Adriana Martínez Mera, Celia Martínez Cedillo, and Josefina Contreras de Juárez, who, besides working as messengers, accommodated maderista, villista, and zapatista rebels in their houses. Like the working-class women helping zapatistas mentioned at the beginning of this section, these mostly middle-class women connected their homes with the spaces of war in urban centres like San Luis Potosí and Mexico City. As argued in Chapter Four, this intersection transformed their dwellings into parts of the pathways of the revolution: domestic spaces, meant by sexual discourse to anchor women while remaining immobile themselves, became engaged in the motion of rebels.

Institutional space

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, a job usually associated with women was nursing. Many veterans performed this work, in urban or rural clinics and travelling with armies. At age 16, Aurora Medina viuda de Palafox trained to be a nurse in a hospital in Mexico City, where she distributed propaganda and encouraged political conversations, at the cost of receiving threats from co-workers. A veteran under whom she served describes Medina's contribution to the armed struggle, along with that of her sisters, as "virile."⁸⁹ This choice of word by a fellow participant in the revolution illustrates how rarely political activism was expected from women, and therefore, from their work spaces.

The case of Maria Valentina Barrueta provides another example of women carrying out revolutionary activities in institutional spaces. During the years when she worked as a postal employee, Barrueta facilitated communication between members of the carrancista faction. Using the spaces and means of communication of Huerta's regime (the buildings and services of the national mail), she ensured the safe transfer of propaganda and information between subversive groups throughout the country. Her efforts extended beyond the architecture where she was employed and, like many others, she made use of her identity as a woman and as a postal employee to safely carry missives: she transported messages without raising suspicion from authorities. Her work adds to the list of women who "brought" their workspace onto their revolutionary pathways—i.e. any material she carried looked like part of her job and the path she transited looked like an extension of her workspace.

⁸⁹ File D/112/C-1349 Aurora Medina viuda de Palafox, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

Other work spaces were broadly accessible to middle-class women in places like schools and offices. These settings provided, on the one hand, public venues that enabled the creation of networks and, on the other, private (enclosed) spaces for political organisation masked as work meetings. Martha Rocha Islas explains that Porfirio Díaz's educational project engaged numerous women in teaching positions. The discourse that pointed to women as the ideal subjects to educate children—regarding this as a motherly duty—“feminised” the spaces of instruction, which helped conceal activism in the classroom and in the work sessions of these subjects. Among the 432 women who obtained status as a veteran due to work as propagandists, 172 were teachers, from Mexico City and other states. Many of them were school directors.⁹⁰ Like Rocha Islas says,

The teaching instruction of most propagandists responds to the feminine image associated with the career as educator. Nevertheless, their professional practice taking place in public space acquainted them with the social reality of the country, because therein took place the political events that resulted from the excesses that transformed a promising government into a dictatorship. The stories of these women break the stereotype of weakness and home seclusion.⁹¹

Paulina Maraver Cortés, fervent supporter of the maderista cause, was discharged from her position as subdirector of the State Teachers' School in Puebla by the government of Díaz.⁹² She then founded the private school *Enrique Pestalozzi*. There, she created the *Precursores de la Revolución de 1910* Club, which greatly influenced the Narváez institute and which in turn faced closure by the Porfirian government.⁹³

⁹⁰ Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 125-7.

⁹¹ Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 127-8. Translation by author.

⁹² Angeles Mendieta Alatorre, *Carmen Serdán* (Puebla, Mexico: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2010), 85.

⁹³ Mendieta Alatorre, *Carmen Serdán*, 85.

Ángela Cruces Vázquez worked at a school located by a highway in San José de las Cabras (Distrito de la Luz), in the state of Guanajuato. The school where she taught, turned into a site of passage, allowed her to assist travelling members of revolutionary factions. In the school building, Cruces Vázquez offered them food, lodging, and healthcare. The space was “feminised” by Cruces and her colleagues’ gendered work. It successfully cloaked her labour of support until the Huerta regime discovered it. Interestingly enough, she used an institutional mask to veil a domestic use (for rebels) that the government considered illegal. In time, authorities found out and burnt the school, forcing Cruz to escape to Silao, Guanajuato.⁹⁴

A building that housed an important revolutionary activity in the capital was the state-run Teachers’ School for Women (**Figure 5.7**). Once in office, Francisco I. Madero designated fellow revolutionary María Arias Bernal as its director. Immediately after his February 1913 assassination, Arias Bernal coordinated insurgency against Huerta among educators. María Concepción Chávez Coronel collaborated in these efforts, transforming the teachers’ school into a venue to engage colleagues in the revolutionary fight. Therein she disseminated the “Plan de Guadalupe,” the manifesto of the carrancista forces, which were to finally defeat the usurping regime.

⁹⁴ File D/112/3738 Ángela Cruces Vázquez, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

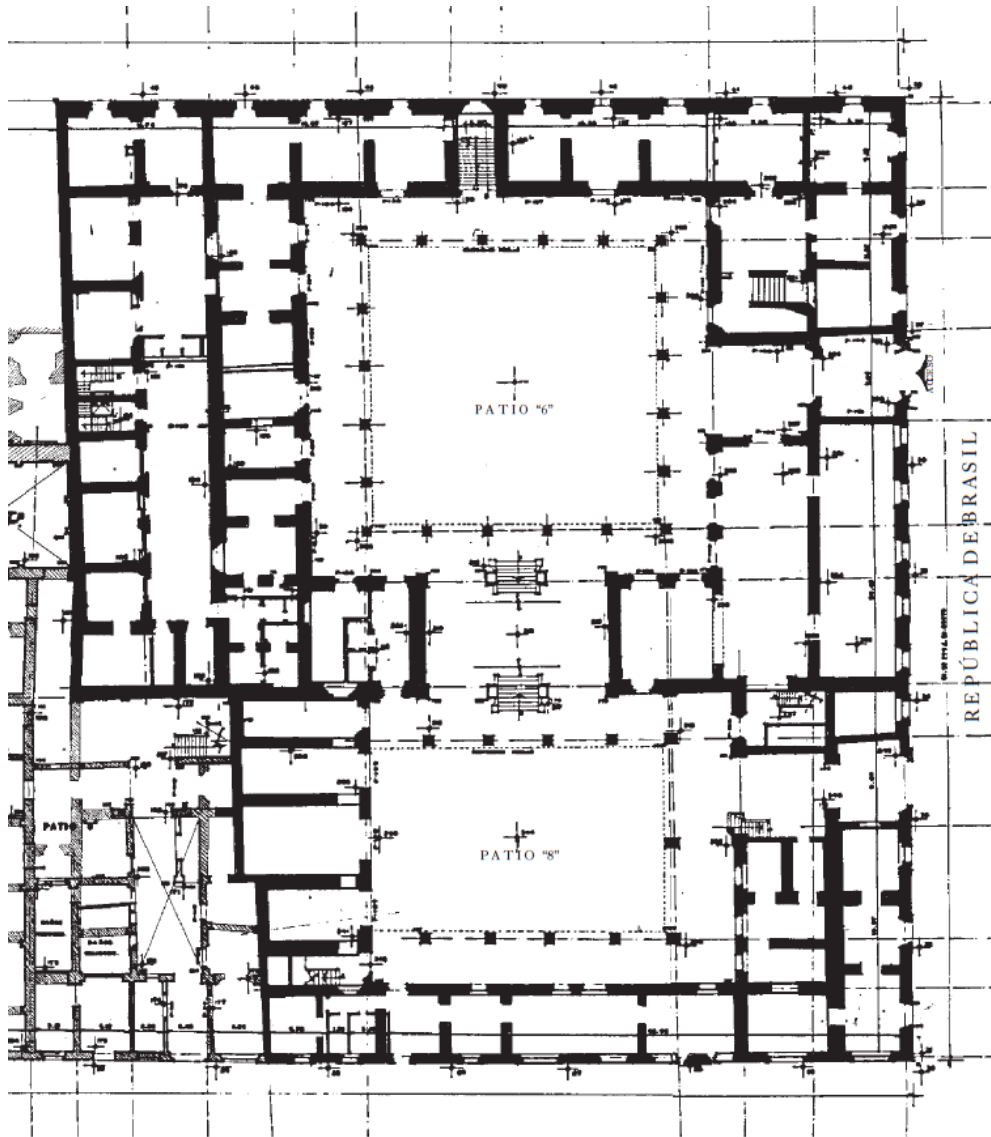


Figure 5.7 Teachers' School for Women floorplan. Subdirección de Salvamento Arqueológico. Plan: Subdivisión del predio 2a mitad del siglo XIX. From Carlos Salas Contreras, "Crónica de la ocupación del predio sede de la Secretaría de Educación Pública: Siglos XVI-XX."

The architecture of the Teachers' School for Women was originally the mid-sixteenth century Convent of the Incarnation, in the centre of Mexico City. During the mid-nineteenth-century expropriation of estate owned by the Catholic Church, the property

became a secondary school for girls (1869).⁹⁵ A 1888 decree by President Díaz ordered its transformation into the Teachers' School for Women, which opened its doors in 1890.⁹⁶ The organisation of the building did not differ greatly from the 1878 Men's Teachers' School, also a former convent, where classrooms and corridors surrounded a courtyard (see **Figure 5.8** and **Figure 5.9**). But, whereas the men's and the women's buildings looked alike, it is important to read how the latter continued carrying a feminised spatial connotation in the "same" type of courtyard arrangement. The very fact that in 1910 President Díaz opened a new Teachers' School for Men with a layout that broke the built volumes free from any central patio (see **Figure 5.10**) shows that, most likely, the self-contained structure of a convent was not considered ideal for masculine spaces. Even more revealing is that the site of the brand-new ensemble was a former military college.

Around the same time, the only adjustment carried out at the Teachers' School for Women was the renovation of its façades, suggesting that the inward-looking layout was considered more adequate for female pedagogues. So, a bare look at the floorplans of the two former convents tells us little about the gendering of their spaces as teachers' schools, but close attention to their historic use leads us to significant discoveries. The building housing the Teachers' School for Women was an exclusively female space for more than four hundred years.⁹⁷ Stakeholders mentioned the structure's adequacy for becoming the

⁹⁵ In 1878 it got its official name, *Escuela Nacional Secundaria de Niñas* (National Secondary School for Girls). Luz Elena Lafarga Galván, "Los inicios de la formación de profesores en México (1821-1921)," *História da Educação* (Porto Alegre), Vol. 16, No. 38, September-December 2012, 48.

⁹⁶ "Se faculta al Ejecutivo para transformar la Escuela Nacional Secundaria de Niñas en la Escuela Normal de Profesoras de Instrucción Primaria." Sección Tacubaya, serie Bandos, caja 28, exp. 14, fs. s/fs. Año: 1888. AHCM. Luz Elena Lafarga Galván, "Los Inicios de La Formación de Profesores En México (1821-1921)," *História Da Educação* (Porto Alegre) 16, no. 38 (2012).58.

⁹⁷ Carlos Salas Contreras, "Crónica de la ocupación del predio sede de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, siglos XVI-XX," *Arqueología* 34 (2004): 101-22.

Teachers' School for Women in these words quoted by Carlos Salas: "The very useful building housing the Secondary School for Girls is perfectly suited"⁹⁸ to house the Teachers' School for Women.⁹⁹



Figure 5.8 *Patio del Convento de la Encarnación* [Patio of Convent of the Incarnation]. Later, Teachers' School for Women. Fototeca INAH. Mexico City, 1880. Item no. 427123



Figure 5.9 Old building for Teachers' School for Men, which housed the Santa Teresa convent before becoming a teaching space (Now *Palacio de la Autonomía*). IISUE/AHUNAM/Colección Universidad. Mexico City. Item no. 2651

The introverted architecture that once accommodated cloistered nuns arguably carried its "protective" function onto its subsequent uses as a school for girls and then a school for female teachers. This ideal of protection is visible in ideas produced within the

⁹⁸ Contreras, "Crónica de la ocupación del predio sede de la Secretaría de Educación Pública," 110.

⁹⁹ Tracing the same argument along a slightly different line, I would say that, even if the layout of the Teachers' School for Women resembled that of the Men's, the consistent designation of its spaces for female inhabitants gendered the space by means of 'repetition.' Here I borrow the use of the term proposed by Judith Butler: 'repetition' as the reiterated practices and discourses that cement the gendering of selves—and, hence, of spaces.

very Teachers' School for Women. An announced reform to its program of study stated an intention to have classes arranged without intermediate breaks. The schedule laying out classes back to back would allow students to spend their off-class time at home. This, the newspaper article announced, would "prevent young women from being outside their home all day; [...] from using attendance to school as an excuse to elude filial or fraternal obligations." According to the article's author, the proposed schedule would allow the students to spend their free time inside domestic space, "as it should be."¹⁰⁰ The sixteenth-century design's intended "protection" of the cloistered nuns finds an echo in these new measures to "protect" the female teachers, who were to inhabit only the spaces of the college or the home.

For the argument of this chapter, a crucial aspect about this announced reform is that it was promoted by María Arias Bernal herself. As the director of the school, she was in a position in which she could shape discourse not only within but also around the institution. It is likely that she took advantage of the idea that "the place of (women) teachers was in the home or in the school" in order to veil the participation of these very teachers in political spaces. The article described other parts of her proposal as follows: "Miss Arias strives to bring more substance to the teaching of domestic economics and feminine chores ... [s]ince the purpose of this instruction centre is to prepare more women dedicated to the home."¹⁰¹ There is a possibility that, even if Arias Bernal personally held some traditional beliefs of a "woman's place," she purposefully reinforced the conceptualisation of the Teachers' School for Women as a space of femininity (a space of

¹⁰⁰ "Nuevo Plan de Estudios," in *El Demócrata, Paladín revolucionario*, 30 October 1914, 7. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

¹⁰¹ "Nuevo Plan de Estudios," in *El Demócrata, Paladín revolucionario*, 30 October 1914, 7.

production of womanhood) in order to keep the political activity within the building invisible to society and the authorities. The article was published a few months after Huerta's July 1914 resignation from the presidency, but even if it fell outside of the period in which she was actively opposing the dictator, the piece illustrates the gendered discourse that, possibly, Arias Bernal continuously promoted in an attempt to veil the insurgent space into which she and her colleagues had transformed the school. On the other hand, if her discourse was more strongly motivated by a real belief in the need to educate "homey women" than by a conscious attempt to masquerade insurgency, she still made use of the school's feminised appearance to safely carry out activism in the institution where she worked.

Figure 5.10 Teachers' School for Men inaugurated in 1910. *Funcionarios públicos y comitiva durante el recorrido en el nuevo edificio de la escuela Normal*. Fototeca INAH. Coloidal silver plate. Mexico City, 1910. Item no. 5212.



Figures 5.11 and **5.12** show the façade designs for the 1910-11 renovation of the Teachers' School for Women: these are the North façade and a central detail of the basement of the East façade. An earthquake that coincided with Madero's triumphal entry to Mexico City, on 7 June 1911, damaged the renovation taking place, which was to implement those designs in the building's envelope.¹⁰² Although the significant damage to

¹⁰² "Hundreds Rush to Street at Coming on First Shock. New Building Damaged," *The Mexican Herald*, 8 June, 1911, 5.

that part of the ensemble was not repaired until after the revolution ended,¹⁰³ it is important to observe that, as was the case with the Serdán house, the uniform-looking façade meant to communicate visually the “character” of the building—in this case, an “institutional character.”¹⁰⁴ Like the Serdán house façade, behind lined-up identical windows lay distinct spaces—in this case, classrooms and offices (see **Figure 5.7**). Perhaps Bernal, Chávez Coronel, and other colleagues made use of this ambiguity. They relied on a façade which conveyed the image of an institution, but which obscured for street viewers the actual use of each one of the spaces behind that front. Their actions as women within a profoundly gendered architecture worked in ways akin to the façade: their appearance as public servants concealed the activity behind. The path of these revolutionaries and their peers connected the school with other spaces in the city, as the map from the next section will show.¹⁰⁵



¹⁰³ Contreras, “Crónica de la ocupación del predio sede de la Secretaría de Educación Pública,” 113.

¹⁰⁴ On the institutional and public character of buildings from the Porfiriato, see Arnoldo Moya Gutiérrez, “Historia, Arquitectura y Nación Bajo El Régimen de Porfirio Díaz: Ciudad de México, 1876-1910,” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 3, no. 5 (2007): 159–82.

¹⁰⁵ File D/112/4497 María Concepción Chávez Coronel, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

Figure 5.11 Teachers' School for Women, North Façade. AHCM, Planoteca, Módulo: 2, Planera: 2, Fajilla: 79. Clasificación: 415.2(073)/31. Fecha: s/f. Título: Proyecto de escuela Normal primaria para maestros, proyecto de fachada a la Calle de la Perpetua.



Figure 5.12 Teachers' School for Women, North Façade. AHCM, Planoteca, Módulo: 2, Planera: 2, Fajilla: 79. Fecha: s/f. Título: Proyecto de escuela Normal primaria para maestros, proyecto de fachada a la Calle Catalina de Sena. Basamento del cuerpo saliente central.

Public/Military Space

In various ways, the Teachers' School for Women worked as the headquarters of the movement that María Arias Bernal started with Adelaida Mann and Dolores Sotomayor in the country's capital after Huerta's coup. The Mexico City map in **Figure 5.18** makes visible the outreach of the political activity organised from this point, as well as how multiple everyday and seemingly trivial actions created a network of revolutionary efforts that shaped the civil war at local and inter-urban scales. These "minor" actions collectively had an impact in broader urban tissues.

An anchoring point for insurgents was *La Piedad* French Cemetery, where Francisco I. Madero was buried. One month after Madero's assassination, Arias Bernal and her colleagues founded the *Club Lealtad* (Loyalty Club), which held its meetings at his gravesite. Guadalupe Narváez also attended Madero's funeral, which started coordination of Huerta opponents between Mexico City and Puebla.¹⁰⁶ Madero's grave was the site of political meetings that soon caught the attention of Huerta. Here, again, women operated gender and architectural façades. As historian Françoise Carner shows, femininity and religion were considered to be closely connected at the time.¹⁰⁷ Feminine religious devotion served as a way to connect the real and the spiritual worlds through practices like praying and mourning (see **Figure 5.13**). Women who resisted the coup made tactical use of the role of mourning expected from them. This gendered role put them in a more "passive" position assumed to be feminine, as opposed to the "active" state of fighting in war and potentially becoming the subject to grieve for. While grief is a shared condition for women and men, mourning was (and arguably still is in many places) a highly gendered practice. Unlike men, women had a more prominent role in burials and vigils, since their performance and appearance were carefully prescribed in early twentieth-century Mexico. Observing these practices historically, Luis Alberto Vargas says: "Women express pain, while men appear serious or indifferent."¹⁰⁸ Vargas even mentions a practice common in

¹⁰⁶ Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 48, 49, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Françoise Carner, "Estereotipos femeninos en el siglo XIX," in *Presencia y transparencia: La mujer en la historia de México*, ed. Carmen Ramos Escandón, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1987), 99–112, 100.

¹⁰⁸ Morelos Torres Aguilar and Ruth Atilano Villegas specify that magazines guided women to choose an adequate mourning attire according to age, marriage status, and other factors. Torres Aguilar and Atilano Villegas, "La educación de la mujer mexicana en la prensa femenina durante el Porfiriato," 232. Luis Alberto Vargas, "La muerte vista por el mexicano de hoy," *Artes de México*, no. 145 (1971): 58.

rural Mexico, which lasted until the 1970s. In it, the organisers of a wake and funeral would hire professional female “weepers.”¹⁰⁹



Figure 5.13 *Gente a la entrada de la capilla del Panteón Francés durante los funerales de Francisco I. Madero* [People by the entrance to the French Cemetery chapel during Francisco I. Madero’s funeral]. Fototeca INAH. Attributed to Casasola. Gelatin dry plate. Mexico City, February 1913. Item no. 37369.

Rallied by María Arias Bernal, numerous women met in the burial site with the pretext of paying homage to Madero. They concealed the subversive intention of their meetings through their identities of mourning individuals and through the ceremonial traversal of the cemetery. The plan in **Figure 5.14** shows the pathway from the main entrance to the site of Madero’s tomb. From this point, they coordinated the anti-Huerta

¹⁰⁹ Writer Lorenzo Orihuela mentions this practice during revolutionary times. Lorenzo Orihuela Flores, *Se Fueron a La Bola... Rosa Bobadilla Viuda de Casas: La Coronela* (Capulhuac, Mexico: Tequiliztli, 2015); Luis Alberto Vargas, “La muerte vista por el mexicano de hoy,” 58; On the early modern death ritual as a gender-specific performance, see Allison Levy, *Framing Widows: Mourning, Gender and Portraiture in Early Modern Florence, Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Routledge, 2017). A renowned figure in Mexico whose grief has been translated as insanity by a widely-held sexist, likely fictional narrative is Archduchess Charlotte of Austria. She accompanied her spouse Maximilian of Habsburg when Napoleon III imposed him as the emperor of Mexico during the French intervention in 1864. Defeated by the liberal forces of Benito Juárez, the reign of Maximilian I came to an end and he was executed in 1867. The existing works on Charlotte of Austria’s state of mind fail to engage feminist analysis, which makes them accept uncritically the prevailing views of her alleged insanity. See Andrea Paulina Castillo Moreno, “La locura de Carlota de Habsburgo desde una perspectiva Lacaniana” (Master Thesis, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, 2015); and David Salinas, “Realidad y ficción en el diálogo interno de Carlota: Una aproximación comparativa entre *Noticias del Imperio* (1987) de Fernando del Paso y *Una emperatriz en la noche* (2010) de Laurence van Ypersele” (Master Thesis, Arizona State University, 2015).

movement, both within and outside the city. For instance, they organised how and when to communicate with carrancistas in the North of the country.¹¹⁰

Women's activism in this cemetery setting is another example of how women merged architectural and identity façades (the environment built for grieving and their black female attire). They aimed to taint sites and selves as feminised and neutral: it was important that the watchmen dispatched by an increasingly suspicious Huerta see the black-clad women traverse the “sea” of tombstones. Along their path, they would merge their feminine, mourning identities with the marble or stone human-sized angels watching over the dead (**Figures 5.15** and **5.16**).

¹¹⁰ Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 179.

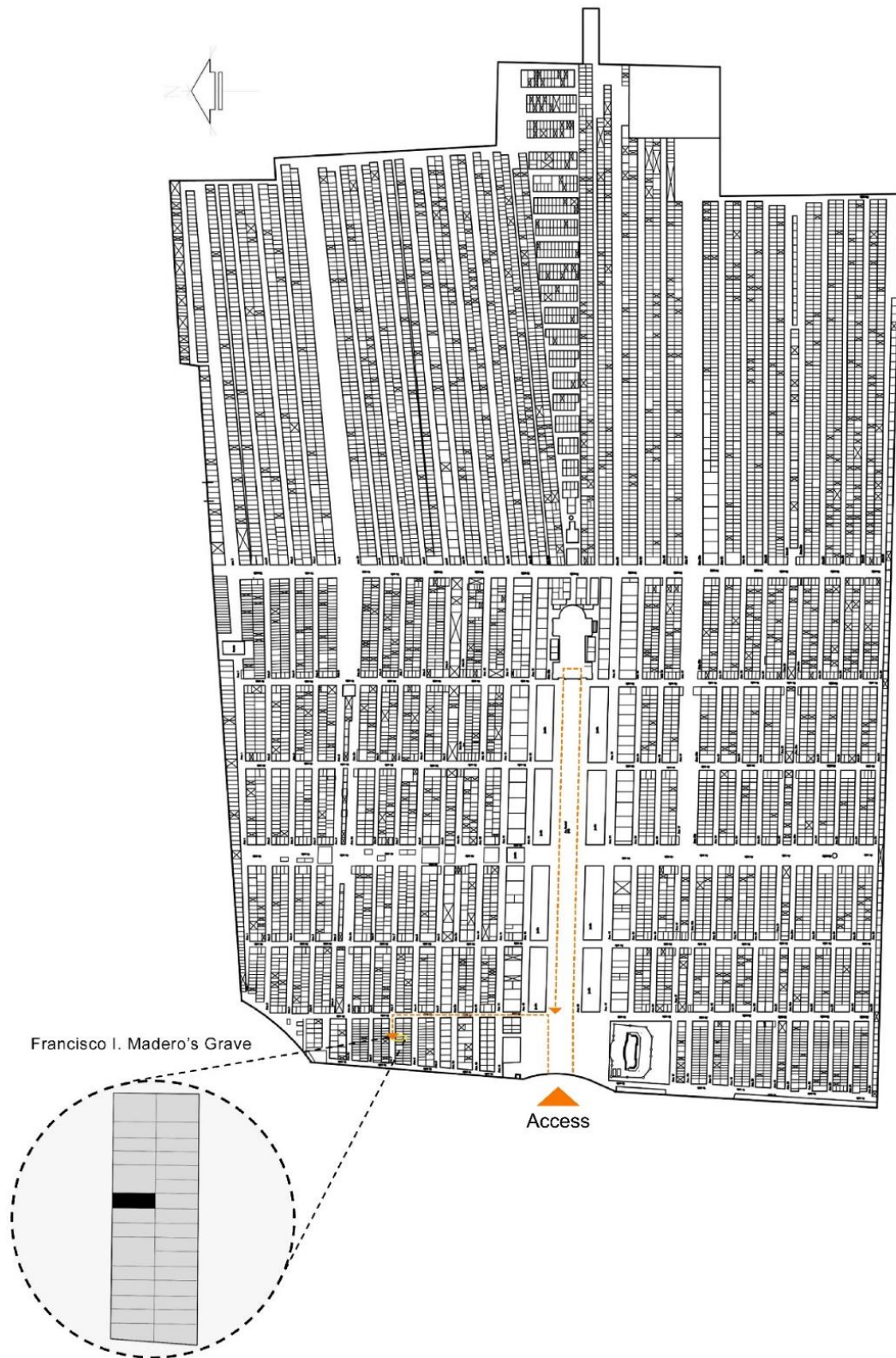


Figure 5.14 Pathway from access to Madero's grave, French Cemetery. Plan originally drawn by architectural historian Ethel Herrera (shared as courtesy). Arrows and annotations by author.



Figure 5.15 Angel sculpted before grave on Fourth Street of the French Cemetery. *Tumba adornada con flores en el panteón Francés-Piedad [Flowers decorate grave in La Piedad French Cemetery]*. Archivo Casasola. Nitrate film negative. Mexico City, 1905. Item no. 89504.¹¹¹



Figure 5.16 Figures of saints guard the Díaz family mausoleum. *Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz visita la cripta familiar en el Panteón Francés [Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz visits the family mausoleum at French cemetery]*. Archivo Casasola. Colloidal silver plate. Mexico City, 1911. Item no. 35464.

Part of the feminine performance of these civic leaders entailed leaving flowers for Madero, an activity that eventually authorities found suspicious and persecuted. Arias Bernal continued claiming the neutral intention behind her visits to the grave even after Huerta was ousted. General Álvaro Obregón (carrancista at the time) went to pay homage to Madero in August 1914 in an event that gathered crowds, drawing great attention from the media. Arias and Obregón followed the trajectory that, while vehemently persecuted, she and other opponents to Huerta had followed many times months earlier. Arias gave a

¹¹¹ For more examples of religious sculptures in the French Cemetery, see Éthel Herrera Moreno, “El Panteón Francés de la Piedad como documento histórico: una visión urbano arquitectónica,” *“Patrimonio”: Economía Cultural y Educación para la Paz (MEC-EDUPAZ)* 2, no. 16 (September 16, 2019): 417–29.

speech that narrated the difficulties faced by the women who tried to honour Madero, adding: “We do not know how to take up arms, but this mausoleum never missed our sighs, our tears, and our flowers.”¹¹²

These words show that she continued claiming a passive, feminised role well past the days of Huerta’s close surveillance. I suggest that her words read as another attempt to render her relation with that space in gendered terms that obscured her political activism: she was there *only* to cry and to honour the grave with flowers. Obregón added to her gendered speech by saying, as he handed his gun to Arias: “Acknowledging courage where courage exists, I hand my weapon to this brave woman, a weapon that has served me to defend the cause of the people and that, here in Mexico, can only be entrusted to the hand of a woman.”¹¹³ The choice of Arias as a protagonist at that event makes evident that she was widely known as an important insurgent. However, both in Obregón’s words and in the gesture of ‘handing the woman a gun,’ he seemed to take part in the performance. Andrea Noble remarks the gendered roles of each:

On the one hand, the woman activist who has no more weapons than those conventional to her sex: sighs, flowers and, notably, tears. On the other, the man of action who hands his gun, masculine symbol *par excellence*, to the activist, highlighting the lack of manliness in the homey, privileged men from the capital.¹¹⁴

¹¹² “Grandioso homenaje de los vengadores al mártir de la democracia,” *El País*, 18 August 1914, 8. Author has translated all quotations from this source.

¹¹³ “Grandioso homenaje de los vengadores al mártir de la democracia,” *El País*, 18 August 1914, 8.

¹¹⁴ Andrea Noble, “El Llanto de Pancho Villa,” *Archivos de La Filmoteca* 68 (October 2011): 51. This paper examines a performance that was very similar to Obregón’s emotional visit to Madero’s grave. A few months later, in December 1914, Francisco Villa paid homage in another event that gathered crowds and the media. Noble examines Villa’s exaggerated tears and calculated reactions as a deliberate attempt to “appropriate the memory of the revolution’s apostle.”

In her actions, Arias clearly reached beyond the domestic, teaching, and mourning spheres thought to be women's places, but her performance tried to obscure this. She framed her spatiality/agency as feminine and passive, which proved convincing in the end: she was mockingly nicknamed *María Pistolas* (María Guns), which poked fun at the idea of a “fragile” woman holding a gun.¹¹⁵ Here, the setting for the gesture of giving the weapon was crucial. If Arias was known to be a revolutionary leader, her pejorative name was arguably a reaction to the idea that she ever held something other than flowers in the space of the cemetery (see **Figure 5.17**).



Figure 5.17 *María Arias entre la gente, retrato*. Item no. 287466. Photograph. Mexico D.F., 1913. Sistema Nacional de Fototecas, Fototeca INAH. Gelatin dry plate.

Other sites that female civic leaders transformed were the heavily “masculinised” public and military spheres. In them, women's strategies were even more subversive because they appropriated space from the margins and managed to transform, even if temporarily, spatial meanings and power relations. The sisters Josefina and María de Jesús Contreras, in their task of distributing propaganda, ventured into the headquarters of the federal army. Again, their female presence looked unworthy of the attention of military

¹¹⁵Carmen Ramos Escandón and Ana Lau Jaiven, *Mujeres y Revolución* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1993), 33.

authorities and they drew from this neutral appearance to transform the government-controlled site into a site of dissent. Not only did they instigate a political conversation, but they also bought ammunition from federal soldiers in this highly surveyed area while passing as *soldaderas* of the federal army.¹¹⁶ Josefina and María de Jesús made use of the then familiar image of camp followers carrying their paraphernalia to safely transfer weaponry out for the zapatista forces.¹¹⁷

As suggested, in the passage of revolutionary women through space, identities and the built environment worked to reinforce on one another gender notions that were key to carry out political endeavours: a) when moving through spaces feminised by society, the women trusted on the expected neutrality of these architectures in order to secretly run their commissions; b) when moving through spaces that the collective imaginary dissociated from femininity, they relied on their own gendered identities to taint their spaces of action in the same “neutral” shade. These pathways became, through the activities of the women tracing them, spatial articulations which tested (often unsuspected) affordances from one site to another. The most evident example of this articulation happened when propagandists, who met and discussed with peers in spaces unknown to authorities, took to the streets to test the possibility of expanding this communication. They posted messages on the city surfaces and spoke publicly.

In spite of looking mute and neutral, the surfaces of public space were politically charged. Not only did government forces watch over public venues, but also the built form

¹¹⁶ This illustrates another instance in which the work of *soldaderas* and civic leaders was connected.

¹¹⁷ File D/112/2158 María de Jesús Contreras viuda de Morales, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, Veteranos.

often helped the state symbolise its authority—particularly in public buildings and urban infrastructures.¹¹⁸ Individuals opposing the regime could read on the built environment the control of public space by the government: plaques, monuments, and even the presence of the police or army gave form to these architectural “texts.” Women could read the added message of rejection of their presence by the public realm.¹¹⁹ Yet they actively recoded these spatial writings which were initially meant to convey an idea of power, control and authority. Temporarily inscribing new meanings on surfaces, female propagandists transformed public space: they “stretched” its public, apparently hard and immobile surfaces into their sites of political conversation in the simple act of putting up (and out) their revolutionary proclaims, against the intent of the government. These women, hence, articulated the secret sites of rebellious organisation with those operated by a powerful, authoritarian state, as they tested affordances such as “writing” on the materials that gave form to public space (such as walls or lamp posts). By doing so, they struck up political dialogue therein.

Dolores Castillo Lara, a teacher who worked alongside María Arias Bernal, put up anti-Huerta posters in Mexico City, particularly in the neighbourhoods of Santa Julia, Tacuba, and La Ronda (see **Figure 5.18**). Her messages summoned the members of civil society to take part in the fight. She ventured into public space to recruit civilians willing to join the forces organised by the *Junta Revolucionaria de Puebla*,¹²⁰ recruiting four or five

¹¹⁸ See Kim Dovey, *Framing Places*, 12.

¹¹⁹ As examples we can think of the more limited hours in which they could walk outside of the home to be considered respectable, or even the lack of representation of female subjects as historical shapers of cities in the form of the mentioned plaques and monuments. All of this added to the gendered discourse where, as mentioned above, positivists dissociated women from the public sphere.

¹²⁰ Revolutionaries in Puebla named their group *Junta Revolucionaria de Puebla y Tlaxcala* (1913) after Huerta rose to power. Preceded by the 1911 Carmen Serdán Club (founded by Guadalupe Narváez), it soon became the *Junta Revolucionaria Centro Sur* in its aim to bring together opponents to Huerta from the centre

volunteers every week. In Santa Anita and Ixtacalco, Castillo formed groups of soldiers who would later join the ranks of Emiliano Zapata (bound South East, towards the states of Guerrero, Michoacán and Mexico). In these traversals, engaging crowds into a political conversation as she distributed copies of “El Renovador,” “Regenerador,” “Plan de Guadalupe,” and “El Constitucionalismo” was key to her recruitment mission.

Her sister Isaura, who was also a teacher, took on a similar propaganda mission in the streets of Mexico City. She walked through the neighbourhood of Lomas de Tacubaya, giving speeches and written proclaims against both Díaz and Huerta. After Madero’s assassination, the brochures she carried were signed by the group *Labor Femenil de Lucha contra el Huertismo*, which was organised by María Arias Bernal and other renowned opponents of Huerta such as Adelaida Mann, and Dolores Sotomayor.

Isaura Castillo daringly infiltrated into the “Chivatito” federal headquarters (see map), where she formed groups loyal to the revolutionary cause. Federal soldiers then would switch sides and join the zapatista, carrancista, and obregonista armies. Besides the sphere of action visible in the map, it is important to note the transformation of space at an architectural level through immaterial interventions like giving a speech: women were expected to remain silent when it came to politics,¹²¹ in private as well as in public spaces, but Isaura Castillo’s words pierced through the thickness of hostile military settings, opening up a radical transformation of the spaces that operated in alignment with Díaz and Huerta. A crucial part of her work took place on the streets and the federal headquarters,

and South of Mexico. Signed testimony by Guadalupe Narváez Bautista, 14 March 1940. Archivo General de la Nación, Colección documental del INEHRM, Documentos históricos, Archivo Guadalupe Narváez, Actividades revolucionarias 1910, Exp. 6/1, Folios 10-15.

¹²¹ See, for example, a condemnation of women’s political speech in “La misión de las mujeres,” *El Tiempo Ilustrado*, 11 February 1912, 17.

where she engaged with many individuals unable to read the printed brochures, but motivated by Castillo's political discourses. Her pathway through public and military spaces strengthened the revolutionary cause, both in number of affiliates and in area of influence.

The final site to note in the map is the Federal Prison, a frequent destination for teachers helping those among them who were jailed. They would bring food, messages, or judiciary protection orders obtained as they operated their social and political networks.¹²² María Arias Bernal visited this place several times, but she was unfortunately imprisoned when she carried the order to free her colleague Inés Malvárez. Due to her continual arrests, she developed a chronicle (and fatal) respiratory illness.¹²³

¹²² Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 183.

¹²³ Rocha, *Los rostros de la rebeldía*, 184.



Figure 5.18 Mexico City plan with author's annotations for locating women's insurgent work. AHCM, Planoteca. Dirección General de Obras Públicas, 1907. Item no. M8P1F10.

Outside of Mexico City, Atala Apodaca de Ruiz Cabañas, a teacher from the State of Jalisco opposing Victoriano Huerta, also infiltrated federal headquarters to post subversive propaganda on the walls. Her actions also became a conspicuous rewriting of the military architecture's surfaces. Meant to house together soldiers with the common mission of suppressing the rebel mobilisation, the physical walls of these barracks became the media to summon its users to break with their collective goal and to join that rebel mobilisation. By posting these printed messages, not only did she articulate the spaces of dissent with those controlled by the regime, but she also started a transformation of façades. Such built surfaces, hostile as most military spaces are to a female presence, became literal supports for her political speech. Furthermore, Apodaca's subversive writing transcended her space of physical action, which earned her the position of spokesperson of the carrancista army. Her writing promoted significantly the revolutionary cause throughout the country.¹²⁴

Within the visible pathway that women traversed, they forged an invisible one for messages, ammunition, weapons and propaganda. Parallel to the female presences that moved visibly to outsiders, secret military missions advanced on their own path. Examples in the previous chapters bring forth *soldaderas*' "edge" condition, which depended on an appearance that reflected both the work of following camps and the identity of a regular villager. The more privileged women from this chapter shared this liminality and transformed the feminine spaces, behaviours, and appearances imposed on them into opportunities to carry out rebel actions that the patriarchal society considered out of their sphere. They rendered their pathway indiscernible, harder to track than the trails that "men

¹²⁴ See letter to General Agustín Olachea, Atala Apodaca Ruiz de Cabañas file, D/112/5036.

of war” were trained to recognise: train, horse, cart and crowd trails. Space displayed the tell-tale imprint of women’s steps on its surfaces in confusing terms, which spoke of the passing of either “regular,” innocent women or of agents carrying out an invisible mission.

In the home, institutional, public, and military architectures, women challenged the surfaces built to endure and to accommodate “static” forms of inhabitation. Connected by the often-obsured actions of these heroines, we can visualise how these surfaces (the floors mainly but not only) became, altogether, a giant pathway, articulated by the dynamics of the revolution. Cemented or carved into matter, these surfaces had their immobility subverted, moving along with the subjects traversing them. It was crucial, however, that these surfaces preserve their apparent fixity to the vigilant eyes of cities, roads, and villages. As these examples show, women and buildings functionally exchanged façades. The civic leaders and propagandists mimicked the nurturing and family-raising roles associated with their domestic or work roles. They re-tooled the built environment in this mimicry to finally transform or rebuild these spaces: they turned their homes and employment places—architectures meant to house their feminine activities—into sites of dissent; they did the same to public and military sites which were unwelcoming to them; and finally, they transformed their gendered selves with new, daring forms of interacting with their built environment.

CONCLUSION

This research stemmed from the general dissatisfaction I felt about the existing narratives of the Mexican Revolution. I noted that academic and popular histories have often traced the timeline of this major, decade-long event as defined and directed by renowned battles in places all over Mexico. Not only do these accounts overlook the larger processes of migration and industrialisation framing the revolution, but they also neglect the hard work that took place between each of those battles—labour that sustained those major processes and that was performed by subjects afforded less visibility than the male generals of armies.

Looking into histories of conflict and revolutions around the world led me to notice that same trend which, unsurprisingly, produces accounts that erase the contributions of women—especially because military histories have defined “participation in war” in gendered terms that leave out most forms of female agency.¹ I then thought that architectural analysis could open up a new perspective, a reading of women and their relation to space that could unearth forms of war participation not considered in traditional frameworks. Hence, the Mexican Revolution is the case study for the method or way of looking that I propose, which advances understandings of the home and the front as profoundly connected.

¹ Political scientist Cynthia Enloe contends that military history has continuously re-shaped the meaning of participation in conflict so that this meaning keeps women’s contributions outside. Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki become You?*, 15. Middle East and Arab Literature scholar Miriam Cooke points out that historians have “forced a grid” in the study of the military by arranging “aggression and defense, war and peace, front and home, [and] combatant and civilian” into neat pairs. Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story*, 15.

Spatial analysis offered fundamental tools to be able to read the space between the fragments offered by the extant archival, textual, and visual material. The central argument of my research is that, during the Mexican Revolution, women of the working, middle, and upper classes appropriated the intersections of war and domestic spaces to develop therein their revolutionary work. The chapters of my dissertation have taken readers through examples of spatial transformation that involved: 1) physical reshaping that subtly changed gendered spatialities; 2) mutual shaping between subjects and the built environment; and 3) strategic manipulation of façades and identity camouflage. In the majority of the cases the changes were ephemeral, but on that very condition depended the possibility of spatial rewriting, i.e., the opening of new spatial forms from the margins.

As my analysis has revealed, race and class (as well as conditions of urban or rural life) played key roles in the opportunities that women claimed for themselves. What these subjects shared, for the most part, was domesticity as a site from which they reached beyond, or within which they established different forms of building or inhabiting. I have traced the architectural possibilities through which women embedded the domestic sphere in the war sphere. My observation of the many instances in which these two distinct realms shared a space has been influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the smooth and the striated, which exist in combination. The inventiveness of both *soldaderas* and civic leaders allowed them to harness the contingency of this mixture so that they could perform their active roles and find in architecture new forms of reshaping their actions and selves. These diverse forms of reshaping constitute the secondary argument of my research, which advances women as articulators of the spaces traversed: by testing out possibilities and affordances between one architecture to another, women behaved as one of the fundamental

connections between the landscapes of the revolution, as well as between the home and the battleground.

The scholarly contribution of this thesis is the use of architectural analysis to deepen our understanding of the participation of gendered subjects during wartime. It proposes a method of study that imbricates military and architectural histories which continue considering each other only as part of a background. This method uses a feminist lens, which proves to be key in deconstructing the paradigms that frame wartime subjects in space. My research also contributes to knowledge by calling for the expansion of strict definitions of architecture. In it, landscapes, pathways, and makeshift (spatial) artifacts enable architectures that take form as a series of spatial and material practices no longer contained in a single site and moment.

A tense point of discussion while writing this thesis has been a possible inadvertence of the architectural processes set off by the women whom I follow. Here I want to consider Tabea Linhard's position. She posits that, even in the case of a non-verbalised agenda, it is "still possible to read the challenges to dominant narratives in the interstices of the discursive battlefields"² of the armed conflict in which they took part. *Soldaderas* and civic leaders identified and made use of the spatial resources existing within a territory controlled by patriarchal discourses. They navigated new spatial possibilities in order to support the war efforts as well as to achieve a certain mobility. Perhaps unknowingly, while creating space for themselves, they have created openings for us to revisit war spaces and architecture. Additionally, we get to understand gendered

² Tabea A. Linhard, *Fearless Women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War*, 30.

subjects in new ways by seeing how they claim their own agency and how they begin to consciously move, even if subtly, instead of being positioned in space.

How the forms of building and inhabiting explored in this research had an impact in subsequent ways of dwelling is hard to tell. The work of *soldaderas* was so underappreciated that many of the women interviewed in PHO speak of others as *soldaderas*, but describe themselves differently. We have seen that their work was crucial for the survival of armies, but a pervasive misogynistic narrative of the revolution overlooked the contribution of women (especially from the working class, which reveals added classism and racism to said misogyny). On the one hand, women were ousted from the army. On the other, the revolution, like all wars, rewarded the efforts of leaders only. Even the call for veteran documentation left out the everyday practices that would not fit into the rigid definition of “war labour.” Many of the former *soldaderas* and war participants lived in crushing poverty in the aftermath of the revolution. They saw the end of the war far from their hometowns, but such physical mobility did not translate into social mobility. Unsurprisingly, the Mexican Revolution ended with a lack of recognition to women, because even figures such as Carmen Serdán are still subordinated to the men with whom they worked.

But even if the architectural and gender reshaping (in the form of housing in the case of *soldaderas* and of navigation in the case of civic leaders) existed ephemerally, we must look into the lessons of this ephemerality. Most likely these forms of reshaping afforded the subversion of gendered and military values because of their fleeting conditions. Studying these forms can change not only our ways of studying war histories, but also our understanding of architecture. Expanding the notion of architecture beyond its

canonical understanding,³ we will see that temporary forms offer a site for exploring both resistance strategies and historical contributions of subjects hitherto overlooked. In the end, my core intention of studying space as a process will hopefully prompt us to better understand (military) histories and architecture as imbricated. The study of their space-events will hopefully enable us to tell the stories of those groups that canonical histories ignored because they were “out of place.”

³ Structures defined by walls, columns, rooftops, floors, doors, windows, and other elements considered to shape “actual” architecture.

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