

C.M. MAYO  
[cmmayo@cmmayo.com](mailto:cmmayo@cmmayo.com)

**THE SECRET BOOK BY FRANCISCO I. MADERO,  
LEADER OF MEXICO'S 1910 REVOLUTION**

Edited and expanded transcript of C.M. Mayo's presentation of *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero and His Secret Book, Spiritist Manual* (Palo Alto: Dancing Chiva, 2014) at the Center for Big Bend Studies Conference, Sul Ross State University, November 11, 2016.

Mexico commemorates its Revolution of 1910 every November 20, that date enshrined by Francisco I. Madero's Plan of San Luis Potosí which called for citizens to "take up arms, overthrow the usurpers, recover your rights as free men."<sup>1</sup> In effect, however, Madero had launched the revolution nearly two years earlier with his book, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (the Presidential Succession in 1910). Dated 1908, but not in circulation until early 1909, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* was a liberal rendition of Mexican history and a ringing appeal for free and open presidential elections, effective suffrage, a free and open presidential election, and no reelection, in other words, nothing less than the retirement of Porfirio Díaz, who had held or controlled the presidency for over three decades. It was around the ideas and call to action in *La*

---

<sup>1</sup> *...tomad las armas, arrojad del poder a los usurpadores, recobrad vuestros derechos de hombre libres*" in Federico González Garza, *La Revolución Mexicana, Mi contribución político-literaria* (Mexico City: A. del Bosque, 1936), p.1.

*sucesión presidencial en 1910* that, with lightning speed, Madero built his Partido Antireeleccionista, or Anti-Reelection Party, and his own candidacy for the presidency.

Before the election of 1910, Madero was jailed in San Luis Potosí and, thanks to the customary ballot-stuffing, the elderly Díaz claimed another presidential term. But Madero escaped, and from the launchpad of Texas, he soared back onto the Mexican national stage as leader of the 1910 Revolution. The Díaz regime crumbled in a matter of months. By May of 1911 Díaz was on his way to exile in France. During that same month, after a wildly popular nationwide campaign, Madero won the presidency and went on to serve from November 1911 until his assassination in the coup d'état of February 1913.

Less known to scholars of the 1910 Revolution is Madero's subsequent book, *Manual espírita* (Spiritist Manual), written in 1909-1910 and published in Mexico City under a pseudonym, Bhîma, in 1911, when he was President-elect. The juxtaposition of these various dates—the circulation of *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* in 1909; the call for insurrection on November 20, 1910; the publication of *Manual espírita* and Madero's assumption to the presidency both in 1911—in itself strongly suggests the importance of *Manual espírita* in illuminating the political ideas, motivations, and actions of its author. A careful examination of *Manual espírita's* contents, together with Madero's other esoteric writings, mediumnistic notebooks, correspondence, and his extensive personal library, yields powerfully suggestive connections.

What is Spiritism? Or, more precisely, what is the Spiritism Madero espouses in *Manual espírita*? These are questions I address at length in *Metaphysical Odyssey*. In brief, the bulk of the somewhat tangled roots of Spiritism can be found in the works of the seventeenth century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, those of American seer Andrew Jackson Davis, and in

the sensational emergence of Spiritualism—in essence, a belief in the ability of oneself and/or of other living people to communicate with spirits of the deceased and other spirits—in the so-called "Burned-Over District" of Upstate New York<sup>2</sup> in 1848. One of Spiritualism's most famous adherents was the novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In *The History of Spiritualism* Doyle describes this first spark in the cottage of the Fox family of Hydesville:

...Finally, upon the night of March 31 there was a very loud and continued outbreak of inexplicable sounds. It was on this night that one of the great points of psychic evolution was reached, for it was then that young Kate Fox challenged the unseen power to repeat the snaps of her fingers. That rude room, with its earnest, expectant, half-clad occupants with eager upturned faces, its circle of candlelight, and its heavy shadows lurking in the corners, might well be made the subject of a great historical painting. Search all the palaces and chancelleries of 1848, and where will you find a chamber which has made its place in history as secure as this bedroom of a shack?

The child's challenge, though given in flippant words, was instantly answered. Every snap was echoed by a knock. However humble the operator at either end, the spiritual telegraph was at last working...<sup>3</sup>

Spiritism developed in France. A derivative of American Spiritualism, it was first codified by Allan Kardec in a series of books, including *Le Livre des Esprits* (1857) and *Le Livre*

---

<sup>2</sup> This term, coined by Charles Grandison Finney, refers to the western and central region of New York in the early nineteenth century where religious revivals and the formation of new religious movements of the Second Great Awakening took place.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism* (London: Cassell and Company, 1926), p. 59.

*des Médioms* (1861). These, as well as other books and articles by Kardec and his followers writing in the 1870s and 1880s, were the literature that Madero encountered as a student in France in 1891.

According to Kardec: "[T]he fundamental principle of the *spiritist theory*, or *spiritism*, is the relation of the material world with spirits, or the beings of the spirit world; and we designate the adherents of the spiritist theory as *spiritists*."<sup>4</sup>

Spiritists embraced belief in reincarnation; moreover, they proclaimed theirs as both a religion and a science for, postulating that just as scientist might peer through a microscope to perceive and explore the detail in a leaf, a scientist might employ a medium to see into and hear from and so explore the spirit world. After all, the Spiritists reasoned, this was a time of developments in radio, telephone, and other technologies that could receive and transmit waves imperceivable to normal human senses.

Madero provides this definition in *Manual espírita*: "Spiritism is the science concerned with investigating the powers of the human spirit, its past before arriving in this world, and its fortune upon abandoning it."<sup>5</sup>

But a careful reading of *Manual espírita* yields a broader set of ideas. In *Metaphysical Odyssey*, I summarize my understanding of Madero's credo thus:

We are not our physical bodies; we are spirits, and as such  
we are immortal and we are destined, lifetime by lifetme,  
not by any ritual intermediated by clerics, but by freely

---

<sup>4</sup> Allan Kardec, translated by Anna Blackwell, *The Spirits' Book* (Boston: Colby and Rich Publishers, 1893), p. i.

<sup>5</sup> Madero, in Mayo, p. 179.

chosen good works, to evolve into ever higher levels of consciousness and so return to God.<sup>6</sup>

For Madero, good works meant charity but also support for justice, freedom, and democracy under the law.

The rejection of the value of ritual intermediated by clerics (for example, the Mass) and belief in reincarnation are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church, an institution of then formidable influence in Mexico. Moreover, as we know from Madero's archive, which preserves his mediumistic notebooks, as well as his correspondence, and many of his pseudonymous writings, including *Manual espírita* with its elaborate detail on the nature and variety of mediumship, Madero was himself a practising medium. In other words, Madero believed he could channel communications from the spirit world—his specialty being automatic writing. For many people, then as now, entertaining such a belief could be considered *prima facie* evidence of mental illness.

Madero was keenly aware of this hostility towards his faith. Of his *Manual espírita* he wrote to the president of the Permanent Board of the Second Spiritist Congress, “it comes signed with an X. I ask you to please not reveal it to anyone, as you know how in the current political situation it would injure me enormously.” And to Antonio Becerra y Castro, his fellow Spiritist and the book's editor, Madero wrote: “keep it as secret as possible that I am the author.”<sup>7</sup>

But Madero's *Manual espírita* is more than a rehash of Kardecian Spiritism; it is a unique synthesis of traditional Catholic ideas (for example, the miracles of saints and the power of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Mayo, *op cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Yolia Tortolero Cervantes, *El espiritismo seduce a Francisco I. Madero* (Mexico City; CONACULTA-FONCA, 2003), p. 120.

Lord's Prayer), and the cutting-edge of well-established French Spiritist, Anglo-American Spiritualist, Buddhist, Hindu, and occult literatures. Among this bricolage of esoteric literature, the work with the most overshadowing influence by far on Madero's religious and political thinking was the Bhagavad-Gita.

From *Metaphysical Odyssey*:

The Bhagavad-Gita or "The Lord's Song" is a chapter added in about 200 BC to the possibly even more ancient Mahabharata, jewel of Sanskrit literature, a scripture of yoga, and the world's longest epic. Lord Krishna, the blue-skinned eighth incarnation of the god Vishnu, appears on a battlefield and reveals to the warrior Arjuna the true nature of reality, morality, and the need for calmness and courage. It was introduced to the West in an English translation in the late eighteenth century; French, German, and other languages quickly followed. [Theosophist] Annie Besant, who retranslated it into English, called it a "priceless teaching;" Henry David Thoreau, poet of *Walden Pond*, considered it his textbook. Introduced to it by English Theosophists, Mahatma Gandhi considered it his "infallible guide to conduct," and reread it while in prison in South Africa in 1908. Madero found it of such inspiration that he kept it with him during the Revolution and later, while in office as President of Mexico in 1912 and early 1913, he published his commentary as a series of articles "by an adept" in *Helios*, a Spiritist magazine.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

As Manuel Guerra asserts in the documentary *1910: La Revolución espírita* [my translation]:

“Historians cannot comprehend how a democrat would take up arms, that is to say, why would a leader like Francisco I. Madero, who supposedly promoted justice and liberty, decides to launch a revolution, knowing he would spill the blood of innocents? They thought, and they think, that Madero was motivated by power, and only power. But they are wrong.”

The piece that completes the puzzle is Madero’s ardent devotion to studying the Bhagavad-Gita. In this documentary [again, my translation], Guerra de Luna says, “The truth of all this, it is certain, is that Francisco I. Madero was inspired to launch the Revolution by the writings in the Bhagavad-Gita.”

The Bhagavad-Gita is a book about war. Lord Krishna teaches the warrior prince Arjuna that duty to justice matters more than life itself, or the lives of those we love, for we all have another life after this one, and an infinity of lives thereafter. In Madero’s library I found three different editions of the Bhagavad-Gita. The one translated into Spanish by J. Roviralta Borrell had Madero’s *ex-libris* stamped October 16, 1909, and nearly every page was filled with scribbles in his handwriting. On the flyleaf I found in Madero’s handwriting (my translation):

It would be good to do an edition of the Bhagavad-Gita that could be entitled Teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita or The Bhagavad-Gita in Western Language, writing in the same way Allan Kardec wrote The Gospels According Spiritism, that is to say, to organize the most important essays of the Bhagavad-Gita into different chapters

about [illegible text] and Reincarnation of the Soul, Existence of God [illegible text] moral, etc., etc.

Writing for the Spiritist magazine *Helios* in 1912—when he was President—Madero, aka Arjuna, says:

[T]he Bhagavad-Gita encompasses glorious conceptions and it is far indeed from recommending those superstitious practices so in fashion with the majority of religions, including those professed by civilized peoples and, according to which certain religious practices are given more importance than fulfilling one's duty, overlooking that, in fulfilling one's duty, one better aligns with a vaster and greater plan for humanity's progress and well-being.<sup>9</sup>

Bhîma, the pseudonym employed by Madero when publishing *Manual espírita*, is an especially blood-thirsty warrior in the Bhagavad-Gita.

*Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero and His Secret Book, Spiritist Manual*, is a two-for-one: it is my book about Madero and his secret book, plus my translation of *Manual espírita*—to my knowledge, the first.

I am not the first to write about Madero's Spiritism. Madero left a personal memoir of a few pages, first published in the *Anales del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía* in 1922, and reprinted in *Obras Completas de Francisco Ignacio<sup>10</sup> Madero*, edited

---

<sup>9</sup> My translation from "Comentarios al Baghavad Gita" in *Helios*, volume VII, 1912, pp. 8-10, the original reprinted in José Vasconcelos, *Estudios Indostánicos*, 1938, p.307 and volume VII of *Obras Completas de Francisco Ignacio Madero*, edited by Alejandro Rosas Robles (Mexico City: Clío, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> To this day, most biographies and reference works continue to mistake Francisco Madero's middle name as "Indalecio," however, both his birth certificate and baptismal records give his middle name as "Ignacio," after the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignacio of Loyola. See Alejandro Rosas Robles, "Francisco I. Madero con 'I' de Ignacio" in <



by Alejandro Rosas Robles (Clfo, 2000). Mexican newspapers and magazines published numerous caricatures of Madero as a conjurer of phantoms, and they did not stop once he assumed the presidency, as Madero was an enthusiastic advocate for free speech. José Juan Tablada's 1910 play, *Madero Chanticleer*, also portrayed Madero as invoking spirits. Indeed, it was widely rumored, especially in the capital among the supporters of the old regime, that this parvenu *norteño* had, as U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson so acidly put it, a "disordered intellect."<sup>11</sup>

When General Victoriano Huerta pulled off his coup d'état in 1913, his first communication was to Ambassador Wilson, asking him whether he thought Madero should be sent out of the country or to an insane asylum. Wilson replied that Huerta "ought to do that which was best for the country."<sup>12</sup> With shocking, thuggish casualness, Huerta had Madero shot.

With the fall of Huerta's usuper government in 1914, the Spiritism of Madero, Mexico's "Apostle of Democracy," became a taboo subject. Nonetheless, in recent decades pathbreaking research on Madero's Spiritism has been published by a small number of Mexican historians, among them, Enrique Krauze in his *Francisco I. Madero, Místico de la libertad* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987); Yolia Tortolero Cervantes in *El espiritismo seduce a Francisco I. Madero* (Mexico City: CONACULTA-FONCA, 2003); and Alejandro Rosas

---

[http://www.bicentenario.gob.mx/acces/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=264:revolucion--francisco-i-madero-con-qiq-de-ignacio-por-alejandro-rosas&catid=3:revolucion&Itemid=13](http://www.bicentenario.gob.mx/acces/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264:revolucion--francisco-i-madero-con-qiq-de-ignacio-por-alejandro-rosas&catid=3:revolucion&Itemid=13) > Mexico City: Secretaria de Educación Pública "México 2010" [the official Mexican government website celebrating and documenting the bicentennial of Independence from Spain and the centennial of the Revolution] Retrieved August 15, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Henry Lane Wilson, *Diplomatic Episodes in Belgium, Mexico, and Chile* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), pp. 284-285.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.

Robles, editor of the 10-volume complete works, *Obras completas de Francisco Ignacio Madero* (Mexico City: Clío, 2000)—of which volume VI includes transcriptions of Madero’s mediumnistic notebooks and volume VII the complete text of *Manual espírita*. Moreover, Rosas Robles and Manuel Guerra de Luna, archivist and biographer of both Francisco I. Madero and the Madero family,<sup>13</sup> co-authored the screenplay for the superb, if rarely screened 2006 documentary, *1910: La Revolución espírita* (1910: The Spiritist Revolution). Guerra de Luna also contributed “Semblanza de un adepto” (An Adept’s Appearance), the deeply researched prologue to volume VI of *Obras Completas, Cuadernos espíritas 1900-1908* (transcriptions of Madero’s mediumnistic notebooks).

That said, Madero’s *Manual espírita* merits a single sentence in a footnote in Stanley R. Ross’s classic biography, *Francisco I. Madero* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), and most other historians of the 1910 Revolution gloss over, misconstrue, or ignore Madero’s ardent Spiritism.<sup>14</sup>

Given the voluminous bibliography on the 1910 Revolution, the paucity of material on its leader’s Spiritism is remarkable. One hindrance for historians of this revolution has been the scarcity of scholarly works on the history metaphysical religion itself, in particular, of Spiritualism and its off-shoot, Spiritism. Fortunately, in recent decades historians of religion and social movements have begun producing a still small but vitally relevant literature. Outstanding works among them include: Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural*

---

<sup>13</sup> Manuel Guerra de Luna, *Francisco I. Madero* (Mexico City: Planeta, 2002) and *Los Madero, La saga liberal* (Mexico City: Tudor Producciones, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed overview of the treatment of Madero’s Spiritism in the literature on the 1910 Revolution, see C.M. Mayo, *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution* (Palo Alto: Dancing Chiva, 2014), pp. 35-38.

*History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); José Marino Leyva, *El ocaso de los espíritus: El espiritismo en México en el siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Ediciones Cal y Arena, 2005); and John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).<sup>15</sup>

Another factor that may help explain the scarcity of writing on Madero's Spiritism has been that apart from the 1911 edition in the Francisco I. Madero Archive in Mexico's Ministro of Finance, and another in the Francisco I. Madero Archive (Madero's personal library) in Mexico City's Centro de Estudios de la Historia de México, and the above-mentioned texts in *Obras completas de Francisco Ignacio Madero*, also available in select research libraries, until 2010, it was exceedingly difficult to find a *Manual espírita*.

We do know from Madero's correspondence that as many as five thousand copies may have been printed in 1911.<sup>16</sup> Another edition was published in Barcelona circa 1924,<sup>17</sup> another

---

<sup>15</sup> See Mayo, *ibid.*, for a more detailed bibliography.

<sup>16</sup> Cervantes Tortolero, *op cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> I found this edition when, after more than four years of persistent searching for a *Manual espírita*, both in bookshops and online, up popped a surprisingly inexpensive listing from a Spanish bookseller for a *Manual espírita* described only as "by Bhima, circa 1900." This turned out to have been published by Casa Editorial Maucci of Barcelona sometime after 1913 (the edition gives no date but advertises that the publishing house was awarded the gold medal in an exposition in Paris in 1913). I later learned that the National Library of Spain has two copies in its catalog, listed as published by Casa Editorial Maucci "between 1911 and 1936." According to a blog post at *Grupo Espiritista Isla de la Palma* dated January 13, 2014, the Casa Editorial Maucci edition is from 1924. Whether there were more than one Casa Editorial Maucci edition, and the size of print runs, is unknown.

came out in Mexico City in 1978<sup>18</sup> and a fourth with a print-run of 2,000 was published by the Government of the State of Quintana Roo, Mexico, in 2000.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, in my experience of persistent searching for several years beginning in 2008, both in Mexico City and online, it was nigh impossible to find a physical copy in any antiquarian or used bookstore at any price<sup>20</sup>. In 2010, along with uncounted other documents, a facsimile PDF was uploaded to [www.bicentennial.gob.mx](http://www.bicentennial.gob.mx), the official Mexican government website commemorating the bicentennial of the 1810 Revolution for Independence from Spain and the centennial of the 1910 Revolution.<sup>21</sup> Soon thereafter, that URL was captured by Google's and other Internet search engines.

While Madero hid his authorship of *Manual espírita* and Spiritist articles behind pseudonyms, he kept up a lively correspondence with fellow Spiritists, and sponsored and

---

<sup>18</sup> *Manual espírita* is reprinted in Francisco I. Madero, *El Espiritismo*, edited by Gustavo de Anda, Mexico City, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> *La Revolución espiritual de Francisco I. Madero, Documentos inéditos y poco conocidos* (Chetumal: Gobierno de Estado de Quintana Roo, 2000). Presentación de Lic. Joaquín E. Hendricks Díaz; Introducción de Dr. Jaime Muñoz Domínguez; Prólogo y comentarios de Manuel Arellano Zavaleta. In the year of its publication, Joaquín E. Hendricks Díaz was Governor of the State of Quintana Roo. This collection includes the complete *Manual espírita* as well as transcripts of Madero's mediumistic notebooks and his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita.

<sup>20</sup> More than a year after I had published *Metaphysical Odyssey*, in a Mexico City antiquarian bookshop, I found a first edition of 1911, foxed but in otherwise pristine condition, for about USD 200. When I opened the cover, on its title page I found stamped in lilac ink, "*Cortesía del Gral. Ramón F. Iturbe.* (Courtesy of General Ramón F. Iturbe). Iturbe (1889-1970) was a militant Maderista, fighting in 1911 in Durango and Sinaloa. After Madero's death, he joined the Army of the Northeast fighting for the Constitutionals. From 1917-1920 he was Provisional Governor of the State of Sinaloa. According to the *Enciclopedia de México*, 1996, which is mute on the question of General Iturbe's Spiritism, "In his later years... he established the Sociedad Familiar Amor and created several organizations to protect women and promote world peace" (my translation).

<sup>21</sup> < <http://www.bicentenario.gob.mx/bdb/bdbpdf/MANUAL%20ESPIRITA%20POR%20BHIMA.pdf> >

attended the Spiritist Congresses held in 1906 and 1908, in which he was counted as a delegate from San Pedro, representing Coahuila's Spiritist circle "Estudios Psicológicos." Madero also sponsored Spiritist publications, including the translation by "a Mexican statesman" (that was Ignacio Mariscal, Minister of Finance under President Porfirio Díaz) of Léon Denis' *Après la mort* (After Death) as *Después de la Muerte* in 1906, in an edition that recognizes its sponsors, Francisco I. Madero and his father, Francisco Madero, on its first page.<sup>22</sup>

Madero did not attempt to keep *Manual espírita* itself out of the public eye. It was meant not only for adepts, but also to evangelize. As "Bhîma" states on the first page:

By the author's express wishes this work is the property of the Permanent Board of Mexico's Second Spiritist Congress, which is now empowered to reproduce this work in whole or in part, or translations into foreign languages, on the sole condition that all reproductions be true to the text and the translations accurate. In this way the author's objective and the Committee's wish, that is, to make the most propaganda possible, will be achieved.<sup>23</sup>

The subjects are arranged in the Q-and-A style of a Catholic catechism using simple syntax and vocabulary. From *Manual espírita*'s introduction: "This work is intended for young people, workers, and the general population who have not yet felt materialism's devastating influence."<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Tortolero Cervantes, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> The original *Manual espírita* by Bhîma (Mexico City, 1911) is in the public domain.

<sup>24</sup> Francisco I. Madero, *Spiritist Manual*, in Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

An open question is whether further editions of *Manual espírita* were printed, and if so, by whom, and where. Beginning in the 1860s, numerous works by Kardec and other Spiritists appeared in Spanish in not only Mexico but Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and elsewhere in Latin America. Kardecian Spiritism also arrived in the Philippines with Spanish-language literature<sup>25</sup> and in that country today, a form of Spiritism that is a mix of Kardecian Spiritism and diverse indigenous folk and shamanistic practice is thriving. Various Spiritist mediums attract long lines of people who travel from as far as North America and Europe for mediumnistic healing known as psychic surgery. Madero himself neither practiced nor mentioned psychic surgery, but he did believe he could perform hands-on healing and, in my understanding, he would have seen himself as a healer of the Mexican body politic. One intriguing possibility is that there may have been an edition of *Manual espírita* circulating, and perchance reprinted, in the Philippines, and if so, this could suggest a wider role for Francisco I. Madero in the international history of metaphysical religion.

*Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution* is a peculiar title, and I am the first to admit that mine is an unusual narrative, for it is a species of literary chimera, at once a work of scholarship and of creative nonfiction/ personal memoir, and as mentioned, it is melded to my translation of Madero's *Manual espírita*.

Homer's *Odyssey* recounts the warrior king Odysseus' fantastic and labyrinthine journey home to Ithaca. In the case of *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution*, my Ithaca is

...to simply acknowledge that Madero was a Spiritist, to understand what that means, to appreciate the rich esoteric matrix from which his philosophy sprang, and why and

---

<sup>25</sup> See Harvey Martin, *The Secret Teachings of the Espiritistas: A Hidden History of Spiritual Healing* (Savannah, Georgia: Metamind Publications, 1998), p. 86 and p. 205.

how it informed what he did and did not do—and how some friends and enemies saw him—as leader of the 1910 Revolution and President of Mexico in that comet-like moment when he blazed into Mexican history and so profoundly changed it.<sup>26</sup>

My narrative—in essence, a book-length introduction to my translation of Madero’s *Manual espírita*—braids three odysseys into one: My own, from my first encounter with *Manual espírita* on a lark of a visit to his archive<sup>27</sup>; Francisco I. Madero’s odyssey from his *coup de*

---

<sup>26</sup> Mayo, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4:

Popular imagery of the Mexican Revolution usually features rustic characters in bandoliers and washtub-sized sombreros, such as smoldering-eyed Emiliano Zapata, with his handlebar mustache and skin-tight trousers, or Pancho Villa, who always seems to wear the smirk of having just quaffed a beer (though he was a teetotaler; more likely it was a strawberry soda). Less often are we shown Don Francisco, handsomely-dressed scion of one of Mexico’s wealthiest families—usually bareheaded, occasionally in a top hat—for he was and remains a confounding figure. He was a Spiritist, and what the devil is that? I had no idea. And until 2008, it had not occurred to me to wonder.

I had just finished writing *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*, a novel based on several years of original archival research into an episode during Mexico’s French Intervention of the 1860s, the so-called Second Empire under Maximilian von Habsburg. I mean to say, spending an afternoon delving into an archive, I am happier than a cat after mice. At that time, my husband was in Mexico’s Ministry of Finance, which has a number of archives, among them, Francisco I. Madero’s. His archive is available to the public, but thanks to my husband’s invitation, I had the immense privilege of viewing it in private with the curator, Martha López Castillo.

When we arrived, she had arranged a selection of the most outstanding items on a table that spanned nearly the width of the room: Madero’s masonic regalia; photographs; documents. We went down the table, as she explained the importance of each piece.

Years earlier, on a tour of the National Palace, in one of its parade of ornately decorated rooms (I couldn’t have told you which) I had seen the bureau that still bore the bullet hole from the shoot-out between General Victoriano Huerta’s men and the presidential guard that ended with President Madero and Vice President, José María Pino Suárez, taken prisoner. If I knew anything about Madero it was because I had been living in Mexico on and off for two decades, and in Mexico, Madero has a stature comparable to Abraham Lincoln’s—in the political-historical sense, not the physical, for Madero was short, with a balding pate and a neatly trimmed triangle of a beard. In portraits, Madero appears kindly yet dignified—one can easily imagine

*foudre* conversion to Spiritism in 1891; and finally, the reader's—the latter, in all likelihood, unfamiliar with Mexican history, Spiritism, or other concepts that Madero encountered them and sought to shape.

*Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution* builds on the foundational work of Guerra de Luna, Krauze, Rosas Robles, and Tortolero Cervantes. What I have been able to contribute is, firstly, the English translation of *Manual espírita*; secondly, a lyric narrative style and structure to my book that—I hope—may entice otherwise reluctant *aficionados* and scholars of the Revolution to make the journey to a fuller understanding of Madero's Spiritism and its context. And thirdly, I have been able to delve deeper into the history and nature of metaphysical religion and so identify more and clearer connections in Madero's *Manual espírita* with Anglo-American Spiritualists, Theosophists, and other Anglo-American and European occult philosophers and scientists.

---

him managing a prosperous complex of farms and factories (as he did). The few moving pictures of him reveal a theatrical, embracing energy. Madero was also distantly related to my husband's family: a paternal uncle had married a great niece of Madero. In sum, what I knew then about Madero amounted to little more than the barest gloss over the story Mexican schoolchildren learn, but certainly I was vividly aware of his transcendent and deeply respected role in Mexican history.

Not halfway through this presentation, my gaze fell on a little book, *Manual espírita* by "Bhîma."

"Who was Bhîma?" I asked.

"Madero himself," the curator answered.

I had picked it up and was already leafing through it... *Los invisibles*, *Christhná*, *Mosés*, *La doctrina secreta*... it seemed a farrago of the Bible, Madame Blavatsky, and Hindu whatnot.

"Really?" I said. "Bhîma was Francisco Madero?"

"Yes."

I knew, instantly and absolutely, that I had to translate this book into English. Had it been translated?

"No."

"Are you sure?" This, too, seemed too extraordinary.

"I assure you, it has never been translated."

Within the week, I had received a xerox copy of this strange little book, and I began my self-appointed task—which turned out to be a Mount Everest more than I imagined.



This latter contribution was made possible in large part by my ability to consult Madero's personal library, unavailable to most researchers until recent years, and, fortuitously for me, housed in the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, within walking distance from my house in Mexico City. The ability to make multiple visits over many months was a prodigious advantage, for it is a substantial library and many of the works in it—including such as “Maestro Huiracocha's” treatise on sexual magic, Dr. Peebles' *Seers of the Ages*, Édouard Schuré's *Les Grandes initiés*, and Ely Star's *Les mystères de l'être* with its diagrams of the Qabalah—would surely be as confounding to most historians of the Mexican Revolution as they were to me on my first encounters with them. In short, it is a corpus best taken in small bites, and with ample time in between to digest.<sup>28</sup>

### Afterword

Since we are gathered here in the Big Bend of Far West Texas, a region so essential to many of the movements and battles of the Mexican Revolution—including the Battle of Ciudad Juárez, just opposite El Paso, Texas, under Francisco I. Madero in the spring of 1911—I would like to leave you with an image of Madero here, as he was for some fleeting hours, on February 2, 1911.

To return to the juxtaposition of dates and context. On February 2, 1911, Madero, author of the sensational and incendiary *La sucesión presidencial en 1910*, and of the Plan of San Luis Potosí of 1910, calling for armed insurrection, was the embattled leader of this still fragile revolution. As Bhîma, he had written *Manual espírita*, although it was not yet published. Over

---

<sup>28</sup> I thank many people in my acknowledgments, but here I must especially thank Manuel Guerra de Luna for his advice and encouragement in this most challenging part of researching *Metaphysical Odyssey*.

the Christmas holidays, in the public library of New Orleans, he had spent long hours with the Bhagavad-Gita; the following year, when he was President of Mexico, writing as Arjuna, he would publish some of his commentaries on that holy text.

On that morning of Thursday, February 2, 1911, Madero was in Dallas, Texas.<sup>29</sup> Over the previous weeks, he had been in hiding in San Antonio, as his followers fought in Mexico and, in the United States, frantically worked to gather arms and ammunition. Some supporters advised Madero to lead his troops; others urged him to bide his time. But the time, Madero decided, had come. He had packed his Bhagavad-Gita, presumably in a knapsack, and to slip the political police and detectives, he had shaved his beard and traveled northeast, to Dallas. There, that February 2, 1911, he hopped on the Texas and Pacific train. That line runs a ways north from here, through Pecos, Texas, and Toyah, then on to Sierra Blanca and finally, El Paso. The Texas Almanac tells us that on that day the sun set at 5:32 pm. It was only two days past the new moon. The crack of February in Far West Texas. He was all of 38 years old, and he would depart this world almost exactly two years later: February 22, 1913. His bones rest in Mexico City's Monument to the Revolution.

# # #

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

C.M. Mayo is the author of *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero and His Secret Book* (Dancing Chiva, 2014); the novel based on the true story, *The Last*

---

<sup>29</sup> David Nathan Johnson, *Madero in Texas*. Edited by Félix D. Almaráz, Jr. (San Antonio: Corona Publishing Company, 2001), p. 117.

*Prince of the Mexican Empire* (Unbridled Books, 2009); *Miraculous Air: Journey of a Thousand Miles through Baja California, the Other Mexico* (University of Utah Press, 2002), and *Sky Over E Nido* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), which won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. An El Paso, Texas native and a long-time resident of Mexico City, Mayo is a noted translator of contemporary Mexican literature and the editor of *Mexico: A Traveler's Literary Companion* (Whereabouts Press, 2006), an anthology of twenty-four Mexican writers on Mexico, many of these works in translation for the first time. In 2017 she was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. Her website is [www.cmmayo.com](http://www.cmmayo.com)