

died because J. F. K. wanted him dead.

This is a concise recapitulation of little-known events during the PRI's heyday. It is truly a myth-breaker. Rural Mexicans are not, after all, profoundly conservative; they embraced a variety of socialist operative structures from the Revolution to the 1960s and beyond. The PRI did not enjoy opposition-free reign from World War II to 1968. Quite the contrary: Mexico's history during that period is littered with rancorous and sometimes violent confrontations between the PRI-controlled government and groups dissatisfied with the Revolution's failure to deliver egalitarianism and universal prosperity. Hence Padilla argues persuasively that, rather than the watershed event that historians have claimed, the October 1968 massacre of protesting students at Tlatelolco was really a continuation of social movements and government brutality toward them over the preceding quarter-century.

She errs, however, in characterizing "the fall of Mexico's one-party system as a product of popular resistance." When the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) won the national election in 2000, it brought the former CEO of Coca Cola-Mexico into the presidency. This is hardly a manifestation of popular resistance. She correctly points out, however, that, by stealing the 2006 election from the Mexican people and the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, the PAN ushered in a new era in which the ruling party clings to power by any means necessary, legitimate or otherwise. Thus the struggle continues.

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Sabrina Jones, *Isadora Duncan: A Graphic Biography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), one of the icons of modern dance, has been the subject of several substantive biographies as well as *Isadora*, a 1968 biopic starring Vanessa Redgrave and Jason Robards. She also penned an autobiography, *My Life* (1927), which has been published in numerous editions and languages. Sabrina Jones joins the discussion with her informative graphic biography, which neatly encapsulates Isadora Duncan's hectic and arguably eccentric life story into 125 action-packed pages.

Isadora Duncan was the youngest of four children, and as a teenager she taught piano and dance to help support their impoverished family. In her twenties she toured the major cities of Europe, from London and Paris to Berlin and Budapest, seeking to promote her unconventional ideas about dance and movement through her performances and lectures. Scorning the rituals and protocols of classical ballet, she found inspiration in Greek art and mythology, advocating a more free-flowing and naturalistic approach to human movement.

Isadora Duncan danced, in her own words, “as woman in her purest expression, body and soul in harmony, emerging from centuries of civilized forgetfulness, no longer at war with spirituality – the highest intelligence in the freest body.” She spent almost two years in the new Soviet Union, from 1922-1924, and opened dance schools in Russia, the United States, Germany, and France.

Although she is mostly known for her contributions to twentieth-century dance, Isadora Duncan is sometimes remembered her tragic accidental death at the age of fifty – her neck was broken when her shawl was caught underneath the wheel of an automobile. “I’ve killed the Madonna!” cried the driver, and thousands turned out for her funeral at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Fittingly, “there were no religious rites, only the music of Beethoven, Liszt, and Bach,” (123) says Sabrina Jones. Gertrude Stein reportedly snipped that “affectations can be dangerous,” referring to Duncan’s exuberant fashion sense. Not surprisingly, the Soviet authorities soon seized control of her school in Moscow, shutting it down at the end of the 1940s. In Europe and North America, as Jones points out, “Isadora’s dances were passed on directly from student to student, preserved in living bodies” (125). Unfortunately, there is no surviving footage of her dancing, only stills, contemporary drawings and posters, and eyewitness testimony.

Sabrina Jones is one of a number of classically trained fine artists who have embraced comics as a narrative medium. While this is her first full-length book, her comics have appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines. She is a contributing editor to *World War III Illustrated*, and she co-founded *Girltalk* in the 1990s. Her work is featured in *Wobblies! A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (2005), as well as *The Real Cost of Prisons Comix* (2008). She cares about the world of dance and has a great fondness for her subject. On the other hand, Jones is smart enough to admit that Isadora Duncan had a tendency to embellish the facts, and that her passion-seeking bohemianism and broadly pro-Soviet radical politics were not without their hypocrisies and internal contradictions. At times Duncan comes across as thoroughly self-involved and without regard for the feelings or considerations of others.

Sabrina Jones has produced a sympathetic biography, but not a sycophantic one. It may well inspire some readers to pick up Duncan’s autobiography, or one of the biographies or collections of speeches and letters. In some ways Duncan embodies a certain kind of romantic yet tragic figure who devotes themselves to Art at the expense of more ordinary considerations such as relationships, parenting, and money. There will always be an audience, it seems to me, for accounts of such personalities, since most of us are unable to entirely avoid living mundane, prosaic lives, at least some of the time, and naturally find excitement in reading about those who worked without a net.

Jones wrote the text and drew the pictures, and designed the eye-catching cover. She is a capable artist, one whose bold black-and-white pages pay

homage to a lost world of recitals, champagne, and horse-drawn carriages. Rather than sticking to a rigid, grid-based format, her panels zigzag across the page, which she enlivens by way of inset panels and chapter titles. Her approach is neither sepia-toned nor photo-realist, but expressive and loose. The artist would like us to see, I think, Isadora Duncan as a landmark creative figure whose ideas and tropes remain relevant long after her interwar heyday.

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