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Projecting Pornography and Mapping Modernity in Mexico City

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Abstract

Drawing on Elizabeth Grosz's and Doreen Massey's insights that place and gender are mutually constitutive, this article examines the articulation among the embodied city, sexual desire, and changing gender norms in the wake of the Mexican Revolution. At this time, a newly governing revolutionary elite sought to reinvigorate and "civilize" Mexico City through a series of urban reforms and public works, partly in response to their concern over women in public as a social problem. By analyzing depictions of female nudity as conversant with urban landscapes in the banned magazine *Vea*, the author argues that pornography connected Mexico City to transnational ideas of the early twentieth century that held that sexually liberated women were part and parcel of cosmopolitan modernity. *Vea* exemplified and fueled concerns over "public women" and helps scholars understand larger debates on the gendered effects of revolution, urbanization, and transnational currents of global modernity.

I would kiss her mouth; and then, traveling to her throat, her firm, throbbing breasts; then our mouths would rejoin, gasping, wet, eager; our feverish kisses multiplying; our hands would run luxuriously over each other's fleshy contours, and finally, vanquished by our voluptuousness, we would surrender ourselves to each other in unparalleled ecstasy.¹

Vea: Semanario moderno (Look: The Modern Weekly) started its tenure as one of Mexico City's most risqué adult magazines in 1934 and ran until it was banned as pornography by president Lázaro Cárdenas in 1937.² In conjunction to its sexually explicit narratives such as the above-cited "La Cita" ("The Date"), each edition of *Vea* also contained a variety of photographs of scantily clad and nude girls. Among these, female bodies suggestively transposed onto cityscape, usually alongside important architectural markers of Mexico City, took up many pages in the magazine. Photos of young women in sexy undergarments or fully disrobed were placed onto the capital's important landmarks, such as Chapultepec Palace and the Palace of Fine Arts (Figures 1 and 3). These images of white and mestiza girls on Mexico City's streets today invite few, if any, comparisons. They seem out of place, especially when compared to the now familiar and much celebrated contemporary imagery of the age that accompanied the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution, such as the murals glorifying indigenas by Diego Rivera.

What does imagery of this kind, the layering of female bodies, national monuments, and urban space, teach us about "sex and the city" in postrevolutionary Mexico? Drawing on Elizabeth

Figure 1. *Vea: Semanario moderno*, November 2, 1934.

Grosz's and Doreen Massey's insights that place and gender are mutually constitutive, this article examines the articulation among the embodied city, sexual desire, and changing gender norms in the wake of both the Mexican Revolution and the advent of twentieth-century global capital.³ At this time, a newly governing revolutionary elite sought to reinvigorate and "civilize" Mexico City through a series of urban reforms and public works, partly in response to their concern over women in public as a social problem. The depiction of female bodies as sexualized urban landscapes in "men's magazines" such as *Vea* was conversant with the creation and regulation of space. *Vea* exemplified and fueled concerns over "public women" and helps us understand larger debates on the gendered effects of revolution, urbanization, and transnational currents of global modernity.

In exploring the relationship between the city and female sexuality through the discursive and visual materials that *Vea*'s readers were told constituted pornography, I argue that magazines like *Vea* connected Mexico City to transnational ideas of the early twentieth century that held that sexually liberated women were part and parcel of cosmopolitan modernity. *Vea*'s "nude" women in the city made Mexico City as beautiful, attractive, and especially as modern as any U.S. or European city. With its emphasis on eroticized, commodified nude female bodies as part of the city's built environment, *Vea* demonstrated how the visibility and invisibility of women in public space became itself a barometer of modernization of the capital. Yet, as the banning of the magazine also shows, *Vea*'s depiction of female mobility in the capital city clashed with

Figure 2: *Vea*: *Semanario moderno*, August 9, 1935.

revolutionary nationalism, the new state's project for women, and feminist aspirations. *Vea* linked female sexuality and civic space—especially Mexico City's monuments invested with ideas about Mexican national identity and State power—and, as a consequence, altered and subverted ideas about the public sphere and urban governance.

Projecting Pornography

From the standpoint of twenty-first-century sensibilities, and perhaps even those of some of its contemporary audience, *Vea* would hardly qualify as pornographic. Featuring short articles on sports, celebrities, theater, cinema, lifestyle, and other aspects of popular culture, it was presented as an entertainment magazine. Indeed, its emphasis was to be on “frivolity,” so explained the editors in the first issue, which would remain within the bounds of “discretion.”⁴ While this at times involved satire and caricatures of political figures, *Vea*'s humor mostly consisted of cartoons that revolved around sexy, young women—generally actresses—and played on sexual double entendres. Even if serious descriptions of steamy sexual encounters like “La Cita” composed much of *Vea*'s written material—evocative accounts clearly meant to arouse bodily passion—its overarching aim, and indeed the validation for its existence, was to be playful innocence.

Figure 3: César, “Arte Plástica,” *Vea: Semanario moderno*, February 12, 1937.

Considering the tension between *Vea*’s explicitly sexual narratives and its focus on frivolous entertainment, how can we read the images that often physically connected the two on the magazines pages? Representative of larger transnational distribution networks showing “sexy” women, it relied on stock imagery and narratives largely imported from the United States that were meant to titillate through the power of suggestion, rather than expose the public to shocking material. Indeed, *Vea*’s visual “pornographic” content could scarcely compete with the anonymous photos of prostitutes that circulated during the Porfiriato.⁵ Its lure often consisted more of what remained hidden and untold than what was actually revealed. Just like the editors of the U.S. men’s magazine *Playboy* less than a quarter century later, its editors pandered to (what they assumed to be) an all-male audience by showing an array of nude or seminude young women whose looks conformed to a new, transnational beauty ideal and whose attitude expressed a youthful, mischievous—but above all healthy—interest in heterosexual encounters. Like its U.S. 1950s counterpart, *Vea* maintained a remarkable uniformity in its choice of female bodies but showed little variety in the models’ portrayed occupations: all were showgirls.

The infatuation with showgirls was no surprise. A decade earlier, a variety spectacle from France, named *Voilà Paris: La Ba-ta-clán*, had introduced Mexican audiences to a brazen expression of female sexuality that came to be associated with a new ideal of feminine beauty and body type. The show, a hybrid of ballet and chorus-line Revue Theater, featured seminude and nude French actresses and was an instant box office hit. Its enormous popularity quickly produced Mexican copycat productions and culminated in a new entertainment phenomenon, *bataclanismo* (named

after the original production). Its female star, the *bataclana*, exemplified the more dangerous, overt sexual aspects of the *flapperista* in Mexico, and her body—what I have elsewhere referred to as a Deco body—became the site of contested and divergent notions of modernity.⁶

As classic *bataclanas*, *Vea*'s nude showgirls foreshadowed the popularity of 1940s pinups and, as seen above, 1950s Playmates. While their nipples and behinds were clearly visible, their pubic hair was conspicuously absent, or else their pelvic area remained hidden from view through the strategic use of covering or shadow or the particular angling of the hips. Beside photographs of showgirls clearly borrowed from U.S. publications, *Vea* introduced Mexican nudes as “artistic studies” by actual and hopeful art photographers. More than once, *Vea* showcased work by well-known contemporary art photographer Augustín Jiménez y Ortega, which closely resembled the images generated by house photographer “César.” Hence, *Vea*'s rendition of nude Deco bodies was safely anchored within the confines of contemporary notions of beauty and art (Figure 3).

What is particularly interesting, however, is how *Vea* both envisioned and produced female nudity in urban settings; the majority of women were depicted in fairly active positions, sitting, standing upright, or otherwise in motion (dancing, walking, strutting). The October 1934 and August 1935 editions clearly illustrate that *Vea*'s editors conceptualized the built environment of Mexico City in terms of feminized landscapes that adorned the “Cuidad de los Palacios” (Figures 1 and 2). In these images, the city becomes a stage where girls in suggestive underwear strike streetwalker poses and fully nude women dance energetically in front of famous landmarks such as the Palace of Fine Arts. The representation, which—according to the caption—invites readers to “contemplate the sumptuous Palace of Fine Arts in admiration of the *escultura* (sculpted) body of Irma,” not only suggests an intimate relationship between female bodies and buildings but also attempts to insert (co)motion into a rather static cityscape. Elizabeth Grosz states that “different forms of lived spatiality (the verticality of the city, as opposed to the horizontality of the landscape) must have effects on the ways we live space and thus on our corporeal alignment, comportment, and orientations.”⁷ *Vea*'s Deco bodies were the bodies of the *chica modernas* (the modern girls); they were not the “passive” female bodies that dominated much nineteenth-century art, such as the classic erotic figures of reclining Mayas and Odalisques or contemporary art photography by the likes of Manuel Álvarez Bravo.⁸

Beyond the irony implicit in positioning transgressive female nudes against the nation's foremost theater that staged nationalistic ballet folklórico, *Vea*'s editors also proposed a modern aesthetic of movement in embracing new visual techniques. The use of montage in what editors referred to as “graphic representations,” sandwiching multiple images of the same woman onto a postcard-like, bird's-eye view of the theater and adjacent streets, lends the image a cinematic allure that adds to the sense of movement and modernity. In embracing photomontage, an innovative technique championed by art photographers (such as Lola Álvarez Bravo) and political vanguard publications alike, *Vea*'s editors placed their nude girls squarely within the political and artistic landscape of modernity.⁹ *Vea*'s girls were in movement in more ways than one, and it was this movement that was understood, or that editors tried to communicate to the audience, as modern, positive, lighthearted, and thus nonthreatening.

Despite *Vea*'s focus on innocuous entertainment and desired modernity, it—like other magazines of its kind—faced tenacious resistance from Mexico City's morally minded inhabitants. During the mid-thirties, the capital saw a veritable wave of new publications that thrived because of the display of partially dressed bodies. Because weeklies such as *Vea*, *Forma*, *Malhora*, and *Detectives* openly sold seduction and sexuality, they provoked serious opposition from concerned citizens. Representing a broad ideological spectrum, women's groups were among the most vocal opponents of "pornographic magazines." Not only members of the powerful Damas Católicas (the conservative Catholic women's organization) but also women with vastly different ideological convictions deemed the magazine indecent and offensive. In the winter of 1936, the conservative Unión de Sociedades Femeniles Cristianas, but also the Unión Feminina Mexicanista and Unión Mujeres Mexicanas, petitioned president Lázaro Cárdenas in objection to the accessibility of *Vea* and *El Malhora*, which were sold "everywhere in broad daylight."¹⁰ As pornography constituted a crime, the president ordered Mexico City's governing body, the Department of the Federal District (DDF), to enforce the law after which the judicial police removed several publications from the street in February 1936. In June, however, renewed complaints about new copies of *Vea* and *Forma* inundating the streets and plazas of the *centro* pointed to the facts that the president's ordinances proved difficult to enforce and pornography was difficult to bar from the streets.¹¹

Later in the 1930s, revolutionary nationalism was often invoked in the fight against the depiction of uncovered female bodies.¹² The official party newspaper *El Nacional* started its own morality campaign that implicated foreign agitators and "socialists" in the perversion of children, especially through publications that dealt openly with sex. A subcommittee of Pro Derecho de la Mujer, the country's largest women's association at that time, asked for the cessation of entertainment weekly *Mujeres y Deportes* on similar grounds. Other concerned citizens opined that Mexico's popular magazines traveling abroad proved a great detriment to Mexico's national image.¹³ The Frente Unico de Padres de Familia went so far as to cite article 33 of the Constitution to hold foreigners accountable for the spread of moral decay in the capital.¹⁴

When analyzing *Vea* imagery that suggestively placed foreign-looking starlets in front of state monuments such as Chapultepec Castle, then the presidential residence and an enduring symbol of Mexico's struggle against U.S. imperialism (Figure 1), we are perhaps better able to grasp the political consequences of *Vea*'s "frivolity," and the nationalist sentiments it generated in the protest against "pornographic" magazines. By the end of 1937, the Legión Mexicana de la Decencia (Mexican Decency League) denounced the magazine at the Federal District Attorney's Office on "obscenity" charges because of its "photographic nudes."¹⁵ President Cárdenas banned *Vea*, and its editor in chief was imprisoned briefly.¹⁶ The revolutionary state bent on modernization thus emphatically deemed nude Deco bodies pornographic and unsuitable for public viewing, even if these bodies had signaled the advent of global modernity a decade earlier.¹⁷

While it is important to note that the reasons for the overt censorship of *Vea* are multiple and complex,¹⁸ the crossing of gender and class lines, I believe, constituted a crucial element in what

earned *Vea* its pornographic label. Its identification with that which was in “good taste,” decent, artistic, and subsequently of value certainly was meant to resonate with an upper- and middle-class, well-educated, white or mestizo male readership in the capital city. Yet the fairly low price of fifteen centavos an issue and the vending of copies on busy street corners in the city center (as the protest of concerned *capitalinas* informed us) would suggest that *Vea* was readily visible, if not available, to a larger audience, without discrimination on the basis of class, age, ethnicity, and gender.¹⁹ As Walter Kendrick and Lynn Hunt have demonstrated, the rise of pornography in Europe was closely linked to the realm of “forbidden knowledge,” whether contained in Enlightenment philosophy, secret museums, annals of prostitution, or medical manuals.²⁰ Pornography was linked to heresy, philosophy, science, and a search for individual freedom, especially in its political character when criticizing absolutism, such as the case of the infamous Marquis de Sade.²¹ In Mexico, political satire was interwoven with eroticism through *bataclanesque* theater that ingrained the idea that social criticism went hand in glove with female nudity.²² With its ties to dissent and iconoclasm, knowledge of sex was thought to be dangerous to the established order and hence was off-limits to the general public, especially the lower classes and women.²³

While deemed pornographic by the Mexican state, *Vea*’s depiction of modern female sexuality fit well within new, scientific discourses. In the early twentieth century, scientists such as Sigmund Freud appeared to make knowledge about sex respectable. By the 1920s, it had become acceptable and certainly modern to talk about sex in Europe and the United States, as long as the sex in question, such as that of a heterosexual married couple, was “healthy” and served pronatalist purposes.²⁴ Popularized notions of Freudian theories became commonplace in both European and U.S. scientific and popular discourses, which reached Mexico as well. Translated articles directly imported from the United States referenced and discussed Freudian ideas and framed women’s sexual liberation within a Freudian framework.²⁵ As we will see below, these notions clashed with revolutionary discourses that constructed traditional forms of femininity, including feminized landscapes, as a part of an appropriate national identity, with the result that modernity based on women’s sexual liberation became harder to place.

Camposcape: *Naturalizing Nudity*

By the 1920s, representations of female nudity were deemed acceptable, even aesthetically refined, when tied to the world of art and contemporary practices pertaining to the cultivation of physical health. To maintain respectability, however, artistic and athletic nude bodies had to be contained in their proper place. For art, athleticism, and nudism, this place necessarily was located outside the ideological, if not physical, realm of the city. Many artists and revolutionary ideologues proposed that *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) resided in what I name *camposcape*, a visual vocabulary of an anachronistic and often feminized and racialized countryside tied to ideas of national “authenticity.” From the perspective of debates over national identity, female nakedness embodied in modern, urban, androgynous-looking Deco bodies formed a stark contrast to the idealized, traditional female nudity tied to indigenous women embedded in *camposcape*.

Vea's depiction of urban female nudity differed strongly from modernist visual discourses inherent in Mexico's cultural revolution that valorized and idealized indigenous women as artistic *camposcape*. Much of the revolutionary didacticism of the muralist movement drew on a modernist nostalgia for shared origins that proposed a highly gendered configuration of space. Diego Rivera's artistic invocation of the tropical, indigenous south as a return to paradise, for instance, equated the female nude *indigena* with the campo.²⁶ While Mexico, as other countries, had a long-standing tradition of using female figures to symbolize the nation,²⁷ Rivera's nude *mestizas* and *indigenas* became central tropes within a new nationalist iconography that reinforced the stereotype of women as timeless nature.

Rivera's work at the Autonomous University at Chapingo, understood by most art critics as exemplary of the height of Mexican Muralism, celebrates the female form as an allegory of the earth, the nation, and timeless space. Symbolizing death and renewal of life in *Subterranean Forces*, *The Virgin Earth*, *Germination*, and *The Flowering*, Rivera repeatedly equates the female nude *indigena* with the campo. This allegorical depiction of women culminates in *The Liberated Earth with the Natural Forces Controlled by Man* (Figure 4), which showcases a nude *mestiza* whose bodily outlines vaguely correspond to those of Mexico's territory, "ingeniously" representing the nation as a space where "Woman" and the earth become one.²⁸ At the center, Lupe Marín—then pregnant with Rivera's child—reclines within the soil embodying the fertilized (and hence "liberated"?) earth, the archetypal mother who gives birth to life itself. In contrast, a male figure bequeathing the Promethean gift of fire actively climbs out of ancient volcano, ready to hand the torch of knowledge to an indigenous man who eagerly anticipates operating the elaborate machinery that controls the earth's forces. While he too is naked, he is rendered active, standing upright, muscles flexed, his muscular back defined by the bright light of the sun. Right to center, the earth's vagina appears penetrated by a hydroelectric, silver tube that, as a simile of a penis, elicits its life giving waters. Demarcated by long braids, indigenous women are passive spectators to this scene; they remain seated amid tropical fruit, gazing on the scene from dark places. Men, even indigenous, are the rightful heirs in wielding modernity's tools to dominate and make the female earth productive.

These types of artistic *camposcape* informed much of Mexico City's press coverage of nudism during the early 1930s. In many ways, the Mexican popular press's treatment of nudism functioned as a parallel discourse to pornography that established acceptable forms of visual nakedness that *Vea*'s editors believed they could safely draw on. While Mexican reporters did not clearly define nudism, their reports made clear they understood the practice to include sunbathing, conducting physical exercise, and generally taking in the "restorative effects" of nature, while nude. Various early articles described nudism as a modern, cosmopolitan, and above all healthy middle- to upper-class practice with origins in northern Europe and the United States. These early stories, while cautious in tone, portrayed nudism in a positive light,

Figure 4: Diego Rivera, *The Liberated Earth with the Natural Forces Controlled by Man*, Fresco (1926), Chapel, Autonomous University at Chapingo, Mexico

emphasizing the health benefits, high moral character, and physical and spiritual beauty of its practitioners.

Ideas of beauty that expressed a lack of emphasis on being naked did much to legitimize nudism's moral value. Reporters described the strange quality of sunburned skin as "a type of fabric covering the body," communicating that nudist—and, by inference, colored—bodies were not really naked. Instead, nudism elevated the beauty and harmony of the human form when positioned in nature. This beauty conformed to the aesthetics of classical art, in portraying nude bodies as statues devoid of sensuality: "I can attest that a prolonged gaze at the nude human body eliminates any sensual response," a journalist confessed.²⁹ Reporters proposed that stripped from eroticism, nudity was the vehicle to perfect physical and mental health and the only way to combat the onslaught of prohibitions, complexes, and clothes that were believed to deform the body.³⁰ Instead of an unhealthy, sinful, and pornographic desire for naked bodies, man was to "regard his nudity with the same indifference as do the animals."³¹

According to popular portrayals, this pure, harmonious state of nudity could only take place in the countryside. By the mid-thirties major Mexican newspapers reports invoked discourses of a pastoral utopia reminiscent of the Garden of Eden when describing nudist colonies in Mexico. Being nude, in "Adam's suit," certainly echoed the innocence of an earthly paradise.³² Nudists told the press that the movement represented an absolute return to nature to free the body of the

ailments that plagued modern society. All one needed was the curative workings of nature and “unlimited space to move in, free from society with its sophistication and decadence, its dark houses, tight clothes, and pessimistic and cowardly people who fear their bodies.”³³ Mostly because it was contained to the campo, social commentators cautiously supported the movement in Mexico. Reassuring readers that nudists neither advocated going to the theater or the cinema nor traveled on streetcars in the nude, famous writer and *cronista* Salvador Novo found the impetus to sunbathe and be closer to nature an understandable and even noble pursuit and nudism’s focus on “physical culture” unquestionably ethical.³⁴

Prominent Mexican nudists also argued that even if the movement had originated abroad, nudism was a practice in keeping with nationalist values and revolutionary *indigenismo*. Stating that the indios of Mexico were “natural nudists,” they echoed the nationalist tenets of *mexicanidad* that equated *indigenas* with “the most perfect moral and physical entity of our population.”³⁵ After all, these nudists concluded, in contrast to “the patron and the worker who go about covered from head to toe, the indigena works naked, or almost naked.”³⁶ Unlike *Veja*’s titillating urban female nudity deemed dirty and—as we will see—un-Mexican by its detractors, the nudity contained in *camposcape* was rendered gender-neutral, healthy, traditional, and productive and could easily be reconciled with nationalist sentiments.

Not surprisingly, nudism lost most of its innocent aura in the mainstream Mexican press as it moved closer to the capital, its female citizens, and the watchful eye of the national government headed by a president bent on establishing moral order through morality campaigns and censorship.³⁷ Women from Mexico City were described as eager to join the movement, which clearly undercut the nongendered reporting that had characterized earlier stories.³⁸ In San Rafael, a pueblo within the Federal District close to the city, female nudists—almost all single women—were said to greatly outnumber men, much to the surprise of a visiting reporter.³⁹ Within the discussions of the possible dangers of nudism, journalists used gendered bodies as spatial vectors on which to plot nudity’s movement from an idyllic, pastoral *camposcape* to the erotic and dangerous urban space of *pornotopia*.

According to Lawrence Knopp, cities were thought to foster the “eroticization of many of the characteristic experiences of modern life: anonymity, voyeurism, exhibitionism, consumption, authority (and challenges to it), tactility, motion, danger, power, navigation and restlessness.”⁴⁰ The Mexican popular press readily expressed these sentiments, albeit in a negative light. Pornography, reporters found, was difficult to resist when living in the modern city. First out of curiosity, then followed by “a real taste,” men found their way into the *teatros para hombres solos* (men-only theaters), where they came to see what they could not possess, “like those who frequent the cinema to see a beautiful house in which they can not live.”⁴¹ Equating the desire for sexually provocative women with a consumerist urge to own real-estate, spatial assessments of pornography foreshadowed a similar bourgeois condemnation of midcentury youth in Europe (thought to be lower-class males) who “had no taste for art, literature, or anything of social importance,” but instead chose to “dwell in the never-never land . . . of pornotopia.”⁴²

Mexico City's ultimate "never-never land" of illegitimate eroticism in the 1930s was Plaza Garibaldi, in the northeast of the city's historic district around the Zócalo, the city's main plaza and political center of the nation. Known for its burlesque theater celebrated in the neighboring zona libre (prostitution zone), Plaza Garibaldi used eroticized Deco bodies to sell sex. "Men-only" shows turned to titillating adult entertainment that stripped Deco bodies from their last vestiges of artful and artistic nudity.⁴³ Because of their popularity, and much like *Vea*, burlesque shows provoked concerned citizens to petition president Cárdenas to protect public decency. As in Europe and the United States, marginalized areas of the city associated with poverty and a failure on the part of the state to establish "the dominant order" were labeled erotic, especially in comparison to more affluent, desexualized, areas.⁴⁴ Theaters such as Lírico and Apolo situated in popular-class barrios of Tepito and Lagunilla close to Garibaldi increasingly faced government censorship and outright suppression of shows because of charges of pornography throughout the later 1930s. In 1939, concerned members of profamily organizations demanded the closure of Apolo, where, they believed, morals were compromised by "filthy and squalid ways."⁴⁵ Innumerable complaints, condemning both shows and audiences as immoral, led to its closure in 1942 despite the management's best efforts to stage magic shows for families as a wholesome break from its adult entertainment.⁴⁶

Vea was clearly aimed at light "adult entertainment." Indexing the city's desire for modernity by photographically inserting attractive Deco bodies into its most revered public spaces as if they were in artistic and nudist *camposcape*, it appropriated discourses of health, beauty, and Mexicanness associated with the countryside. Its use of healthy bodies as symbols of modernity, however, were in tension with imagery that marked naked urban female bodies as dangerous and were used to warn morally minded citizens from straying in "dirty" lower-class neighborhoods. *Vea*'s nude girls consequently marked a reversal of symbolic systems of representation that linked body and space. Henri Lefebvre argued that while the relations of reproduction are spatially produced through sexual symbols,

this is a symbolism that conceals more than it reveals, the more so since the relations of reproduction are divided into frontal, public, overt—and hence coded—relations on one hand, and on the other covert, clandestine and repressed relations, which precisely because they are so repressed, characterize transgressions related not so much to sex per se as to sexual pleasure, its preconditions and consequences.⁴⁷

Vea's editors inadvertently used the symbols of "covert, clandestine and repressed relations" to signal accepted spaces that were "frontal, public, overt." This representation clashed with perceived notions of space, where the countryside represented a safe space that could accommodate both indigenous nudity (as nationalist art) as well as nudism (as a middle-class search for health) and naked bodies of women in the city were coded as pornography.

Mapping Modernity: Mobility, Containment, and Female Space

Considered pornographic by many women's organizations, *Vea*'s use of visual discourse nonetheless articulated the city as female space. The magazine positioned cut-and-pasted publicity shots of nude to seminude starlets, usually imported from Hollywood, sometimes *mexicanas*, onto the capital's national landmarks such as the Zócalo, Chapultepec Park, the National Palace, and even the National Cathedral. Here, eroticized bodies of the night-time stage connected the broad daylight of Chapultepec Palace, the Palace of Fine Arts, and the first landmark Art Deco high rise El Nacional, named for the insurance company that was to occupy the city's first skyscraper. Depictions such as these might have represented the "frivolous element" hinted at by *Vea*'s editors, yet must have been understood within the context of changing gender roles and women's liberation of the 1920s and 1930s.

The violence of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), which claimed over two million lives and displaced many more, pushed many women from the countryside into the cities. In fact, the majority of migrants who reached Mexico City during the 1910s and 1920s were women.⁴⁸ Some hoped to escape the ravages of war in the countryside, while others sought refuge after losing male protection because of the death of their husbands, fathers, and brothers.⁴⁹ Yet in the face of food and housing shortages, complicated by sporadic incursions of revolutionary warfare, life in the city was not as stable and safe as many anticipated. Most of the poorer female migrants settled in crowded *vecindades* (slums) and *viviendas* (tenements) of the city center, and survived as beggars, factory workers, and servants.⁵⁰ For most disadvantaged women, the informal economy—street vending, domestic service, and especially prostitution—formed the only means of survival. Bourgeois views, including those of city administrators, held that women who sold goods and services, whether domestic or sexual constituted "public" and hence sexualized women.⁵¹

Concern over women in public places resonated strongly throughout the revolutionary period as political leaders linked nation building with family reform. Media representations of New Women such as the North American flapper that circulated in 1920s and 1930s Mexico City worried governmental officials, who equated "free women" with social disintegration, especially in light of growing women's activism. They feared the spectacle of "public women," especially prostitutes, actresses, and working-class women who occupied visible positions in social movements, as undermining their efforts to strengthen nuclear families where ideal female revolutionaries would fulfill their patriotic duty as mothers and wives.⁵² Acceptable women were considered "out of place" on the street, an idea that rendered all women in public as spectacle and objects of inspection.

With high levels of urbanization, the "spectacle" of female activity and incipient feminist activism proved difficult to contain, however. Mexico City shared in the transnational trend that connected urban modernity with female mobility.⁵³ The rise of consumerism, mass media, and greater opportunity for physical movement proved indispensable tools in women's search for equality and power during the 1920s and 1930s. Rural women who were swept up in the

revolution, whether by force or choice, became part of a transnational movement that connected them to both revolutionary politics and a nascent consumerism elsewhere. By moving through new physical places as well as social territories of the capital city, these women were exposed to novel ways of thinking, living, and self-expression, which also involved matters of sexuality. The revolution not only attacked social and economic inequality but also turned against the Victorian morality and sexual repression that had been an integral part of Porfirian life.⁵⁴

Vea's years of existence coincided with a tumultuous time in women's activism and, consequently, its depictions of scantily clad women on the city's streets were conversant with an increasingly visible women's movement. The 1930s saw enormous fervor in women's organizing and the visibility of women's political activities in the capital, when Mexico City was the stage for three feminist congresses. Sponsored by the official party, the congresses managed to draw a vast array of often-conflicting factions representing a large political spectrum.⁵⁵ While much has been made of the failure of the Mexican women's movement to secure voting rights at this time because of factional disagreements, the congresses did produce positive results; coverage in the press created a greater familiarity with feminist causes and drew attention to women's problems.⁵⁶ Despite the fact that most women supported the Catholic Church and conservatives rather than joining radical revolutionary causes, the fervor and visibility of progressive and radical women, especially among teachers, journalists, and government employees, helped to establish the image of "the modern woman" in connection to radical politics and her importance in revolutionary Mexican society.⁵⁷

Moreover, during the very years when *Vea* promoted a "pornographic" imagination of metropolitan modernity, the city underwent political reorganization that had tremendous consequences in terms of urban space. With the elimination of the municipal governments in 1928 and the transformation of democratic municipal power to a central government appointed by the federal executive, Mexico City was primed to inhabit the Federal District and occupy the entire Valley of Mexico. As the city expanded, its citizens faced stricter regulations, especially where "public women" were concerned.⁵⁸ Through the newly established DDF, the national government promoted the idea of gender-segregated spaces in the city. New city officials directly tied to the national executive sought to enhance the containment of female sexuality in prostitution zones, while its commissioned architects envisioned Deco bodies as blueprints in the quest for revolutionary architecture.

Urban reform in Mexico City proved daunting in the aftermath of the revolution. Municipal authority reemerged in 1917, when the city returned to the democratic system of separate municipal governments.⁵⁹ Despite the more favorable political climate for the participation of lower-class groups, these *ayuntamientos* did not furnish the poor *colonias* (emerging neighborhoods) with basic services, and many residents of "proletarian" barrios lived in abject poverty without either potable water or access to schools, hospitals, and public transportation.⁶⁰ Discontent over lacking or inadequate services and control over public space gave rise to intensifying battles over jurisdiction and administration between the central government of the city and its separate *ayuntamientos*. Despite legislation that made provisions for federally funded

public works, municipal governments shouldered most of the burden for the upkeep and development of the city.⁶¹ Whether the result of incompetence, unwillingness, or uncontrollable structural forces, it was clear to *capitalinos* by 1928 that urban reform in Mexico City had failed.

The start of the period referred to as the *Maximato* saw the beginnings of a state apparatus with the political consolidation of power over both the city and country at the federal level. Increasing anxiety over the growing political opposition in the municipal governments, the lack of unity among the seventeen *municipios*, and the control wielded by a corrupt labor leadership in the city, led national leaders to eliminate the democratic *ayuntamiento* system in favor of a centralized and federalized government of the Federal District. This decision had far-reaching effects on the development of urbanization and city planning. The reorganization brought the city directly under federal control and effectively ended citizens' access to local politics as a means to resolve urban problems.⁶² A direct consequence of the centralization of political power was that the federal government transposed national objectives, both economic and administrative, onto local problems and framed local problems in terms of national objectives.⁶³

Consequently, *Vea*'s feminized cityscape spoke to momentous changes in the city's political and social geography, particularly urban governance and aggressive urban reform efforts that explicitly evoked women. Hence, *pornotopia*—the poorer, disenfranchised, and sexualized urban areas—represented a place where postrevolutionary concerns about not only appropriate feminine behavior but also control over the city itself came into sharp focus. City administrators' preoccupation with what they identified as an underworld reflected the heady, insecure years after the revolution, when domesticating rebellious and wayward young men and women socialized within a wartime context of violence became an important objective of the new state. Establishing sexual governance in the capital city meant establishing proper gender boundaries and policing access to public space. Places of pornography, such as brothels, theaters specializing in burlesque, and other adult urban entertainment, aroused suspicion as spaces where overt female sexuality signaled the presence of drugs, disease, death, and decay.

The associations linking pornography to the vice and violence of the underworld had a venerable tradition, not only through prostitution but also through common understandings of urban topography that linked sex and dirt with both bodily infection and society's "underbelly."⁶⁴ Most of Mexico City's popular press described the underworld as a heterotopic domain dominated by darkness, danger, and especially deception in the heart of the city.⁶⁵ Sensationalistic articles portrayed cantinas and brothels as portals to the underworld and revealed how even dance schools and similar sites of daytime respectability changed in the face of darkness. Restaurants in the *centro*, where the "humble folk" broke bread during the day, hid their true identity as venues of crime and sex after the *gente decente* had gone home. Inconspicuous cafés might sell coffee in the morning but offered large quantities of marijuana for sale at night. Launderettes where Chinese men appeared to dedicate their time to washing clothes were nothing but cheap façades for opium dens.⁶⁶ The *centro*'s innocuous daytime roads shrank to dark alleys after nightfall, where whores and other double-crossing women in cahoots with thieves worked the streets.⁶⁷

The popular press thus depicted the underworld as a parallel city occupying the nether regions of metropolitan modernity, its geography a dark mirror that reflected what could not be shown and repressed that which could not be discussed in broad daylight. As a mental construct and nineteenth century invention, it not only embraced the nocturnal world of vice and violence but also functioned as a map to the newly discovered subconscious, the central locus of Freudian theory, that constituted an equally shady site of modern atavism.⁶⁸ It was a place where dark secrets hid, forbidden knowledge teemed, and the dangers of female sexuality ran rampant. Banned in polite society, “wishful impulses” of sexual desire freely roamed the underworld, and as such served as a place of escape from repressive bourgeois morality.⁶⁹

The Mexican state’s attempts to exert control over this underworld were quite extensive. Allowing for legalized prostitution as the most desirable option within the game of lesser evils, it equally sought to curtail and contain these activities. Sanctioning prostitution in what they euphemistically and ironically called *zonas de tolerancia* or *zonas libres* (toleration, or free, zones), officials envisioned order in the city by keeping especially female bodies in their right and proper places. The inception of these districts dated to 1912, the early years of the armed phase of the revolution when city officials created the first zone to combat the overwhelming presence of prostitutes in the Zócalo, who used the illustrious plaza’s then extant gardens to conduct their business.⁷⁰ This zone comprised the then largely undeveloped area around Cuauhtemotzín Street in the lower-class colonia Obrera where several madams had already established brothels; the second zone consisted of the area framed by Santa María Redonda, Comonfort, República de Ecuador, and Juan Alvarez streets, close to Tepito.⁷¹ While the *zonas libres* were confirmed by legislation in 1926, their boundaries were still not properly fixed by 1929 and “the issue was more tricky than a first visit to the area indicated,” according to a study carried out that year by investigators of both the Health Department and the DDF. An elementary school on Panama Street inadvertently had ended up in the second zone, and mounting traffic problems around the districts caused great alarm for neighboring residents.

These problems notwithstanding, investigators advised the departments in question to maintain the zones as they now operated, *consagradas por el uso* (blessed by use) and accepted by the larger public.⁷² They reasoned that “honest citizens” living in proximity to the zones were accustomed to the inconvenience and only protested in minimal ways, whereas prostitutes always resisted being moved for economic reasons. The authors feared that the zones’ sex workers would resort to drastic and vocal forms of protest in their attacks against the authorities, even press campaigns, as they had done effectively when the DDF had opened Netzahualcoyotl Street in the zone to traffic and public outrage, followed by a large scandal in the press, had ensued.⁷³

By the early 1930s, however, public concern mounted with regards to the contradictory governmental policies in designing and maintaining the zones. The “honest citizens” who lived close by were not as content as the investigators indicated. Members of the Junta de Obreros, Industriales, Proprietarios y Vecinos de las calles de Cuauhtemotzín y adyacentes (Assembly of Workers, Industrialists, Property Owners and Neighbors of Cuauhtemotzín and Adjacent Streets)

complained bitterly to the federal government. While they had protested against the existence and growth of the zones for years, they felt that the DDF's extensive work in paving and improving "little used and little known" streets to open them to motorized traffic, was the last straw. Appealing to officials' sense of the city's public image and quest for the tourist dollar, they appealed via the Comision Mixta-Pro-Turismo to the Department of the Interior to remove the zone altogether. Now that these streets had become major thoroughfares and "an obligatory road" to the airport, they stated, tourists had no other choice but to gaze on "the spectacle of immorality," which would form their first impression of the city, and—by extension—the entire nation.⁷⁴

Yet the instability of the zones' spatial boundaries was not the only cause for officials' intent on keeping everything, and especially every body, in its proper place. In fact, it was the increased physical and social mobility of women itself that compromised gender-segregated urban space and warranted concern. Here the confusion over the identity of both space and women often led to a collapse of the two into one category. Health Department officials found that reputable hotels outside the zones, "honorable establishments by outward appearance" continued opening their doors to prostitutes and their clientele despite sanctions.⁷⁵ Manuel Ruiz, manager of the Hotel Independencia, was called in by the judicial branch of the Health Department for allowing a prostitute and her client to take a room in his hotel. In his defense he stated they had registered as a married couple. Hotel owners like Ruiz protested the stricter laws that held them accountable for identifying and refusing prostitutes. They had no way, they said, of "distinguishing an honest woman from a *clandestina*, let alone a prostitute."⁷⁶

City officials, even with cooperation of police, were never able to enforce the measures that would aid them in mapping order onto the nocturnal city and keeping *capitalinas* in their proper places. In 1934, the year of *Vea*'s inception, the judicial division of the Health Department reminded that it was now absolutely forbidden for hotel owners to rent out rooms to unregistered prostitutes, "women whose conduct is notoriously immoral." If Fransisco Vázquez Pérez, head of the division, hoped to curb clandestine prostitution, he equated changing gender norms with women's "mala conducta" (bad behavior), and this with prostitution.⁷⁷ The fear of mistaken identities haunted revolutionary authorities, especially when faced with greater movement of women throughout the city and female behavior and appearances that they could no longer read.

From the perspective of revolutionary leaders seeking women's support in rebuilding the nation, it is not surprising that most of Mexico City's popular press depicted the presence of women other than prostitutes in this urban landscape of pleasure and sin as the actual elements of transgression. Not prostitutes but female visitors who transgressed perceived borders of "decency" and morality, and—like men—came looking for adventure were deemed the most dangerous women in the underworld. Motivated by a desire to get to know "lowly venues" and their own "unknown emotions," so reported columnist Armando Salinas, these women set out on adventures without realizing the "frightful consequences."⁷⁸ Unlike the heterosexual man who inhabited the condoned role as customer and the (ostensibly) heterosexual prostitute who sold her services, the *zonas libres* could not accommodate women outside the legitimized world of

monetary transactions. Hence, not the classified and contained women of the prostitution zones, but mobile women without an apparent identity—and, as we have seen, who were easily confused with prostitutes—appeared to cause unease. From the spatial flexibility of the *zonas libres*, the dangers of the underworld, and urban spaces filled with unidentifiable women, both city officials and the popular press made clear that female mobility presented dangers, and, consequently, should have its limits.

Vea did not equate sexual freedom with the vices of the underworld. Instead, it showed pretty young women who were healthy, fun loving, light skinned, and ready to act modern, their poses captured on the city's principal thoroughfares and between its most distinguished buildings in broad daylight. In doing so, *Vea* inadvertently echoed architectural debates that similarly intertwined women and urban space, health and urban reform, and—most of all—bodies and buildings. Architects who received commissions to design the buildings of the revolutionary era conceived of urban renewal in terms of engineering feminine beauty, where—like *Vea*—the seminude Deco bodies of the stage formed an aesthetic blueprint in creating a modern city.⁷⁹ Art Deco offered these architects new, simplified, elongated designs and sparse ornamentation that characterized the new ideals of feminine embodiment, through—as some stated—“nude” forms.

Along with urban reform, architecture was an important a tool in achieving the consolidation of the revolution in the capital city.⁸⁰ In the debates among architects during the late 1920s and early 1930s about what style would best exemplify a Mexican national character, Art Deco provided warring factions with a conciliatory position.⁸¹ Architects hired by the DDF to design large public works projects in Mexico City during the early 1930s, such as Antonio Muñoz García, used Art Deco to underscore the importance of female nudity in fashioning a new architecture: “We will undress architecture, but not until we are sure to have found beautiful lines, and beautiful forms so we can show them without offending good judgment and the right intent.”⁸² Much in the same way *Vea*'s editors promoted its use of sexy, beautiful, and, most importantly, healthy Deco bodies in the name of tasteful entertainment, Muñoz likened his buildings to fine lines of beautiful female bodies.⁸³ Silvano Palafox, architect of the first Deco structure “El Nacional” built in the city (featured in Figure 1), placed his architectural visions within the context of female theatrical performance. Arguing that an architect should design buildings to “satisfy man's need to enjoy a show at Teatro Lírico,”⁸⁴ he equated architectural design with “pornographic” spectacle. Lucy Fisher's apt observation that “a discourse on sexual difference” informed the Art Deco aesthetic certainly applied to Mexican architects who designed buildings modeled on female bodies.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Ultimately, what can *Vea*'s creation of desire, its depictions of feminized space, and the dialogue between the two tell us about the relationship among sex, the city, and gendered revolutionary subjectivities in Mexico City? On one hand, we find that the placement of women in urban landscapes reveals a fascination with female sexuality as conversant with a sophisticated, urbane femininity. In the production of feminine public space, the sexually active woman served as an

emblem of transnational modernity in terms of her participation and visibility within the city's growing networks of circulation and economic exchanges. Much like architectural visions that connected buildings, beauty, and Deco bodies, *Vea*'s girls made Mexico City into a bright space of transnational modernity, wrapping sites of tension and contestation, government and commerce, tradition and innovation in a seductive, feminine embrace. As such, the magazine signaled an acceptance of middle-class women in public and envisioned female mobility, both physical and social, as desirable. *Vea* showed that female sexuality made Mexico City beautiful, attractive, and—above all—modern.

On the other hand, *Vea*'s feminized cityscapes problematized the ideological messages concerning gender and space inherent in revolutionary reform, popular culture, and women's bid for political power. In contrast to *Vea*, most of Mexico City's popular press played out the tensions between the nude physiques of *camposcape* as natural bodies in an idyllic pastoral place outside of time, and the sexualized Deco bodies of the *pornotopic* underworld that represented the embodiment of deviant desires. *Vea* projected sexualized female cityscapes as healthy, artistic, and beautiful, whereas other publications condemned the vice, scandal, and sexual libertinage of the underworld. The relationship that *Vea* intimated between female bodies, historic landmarks, and the nation state was of an urban, subversive nature when compared to the pastoral, idyllic nudity inherent in the ardent nationalism of revolutionary art production. Consequently, *Vea*'s girls inverted and confused the underworld and *camposcape*, reversing representational categories of sexuality and, with it, the idea what constituted women's proper place.

By clearing *Vea*'s feminine sexual frivolity off the streets yet condoning other magazines' sensationalistic portrayals of prostitution, the Mexican revolutionary state affirmed its policy to contain female sexuality to either the *zonas libres* or the conjugal home. Governmental concern over female mobility came at a time when upper- and middle-class women ventured into lesser-known areas of the city, something that undermined leaders' reformist agenda that sought to return women to the home as revolutionary helpers. The movement of women, especially middle-class women into lower-class, sexualized parts of the city set as aside of areas of containment, confounded officials. Because of the Catholic conception of female honor that equated women with their bodies as well as women's bodies with private property, women who transgressed class lines tied to spatial boundaries were considered dangerous.⁸⁶ Female visitors in *pornotopia* added to the instability of female identities. There no longer was an easy way to discern "decent women" from prostitutes.

By claiming symbolic access to the male bastions of national importance in the capital city, *Vea*'s chicas modernas appeared to use seduction to as an attempt to subvert patriarchal power. Yet many women's groups who objected to the magazine as immoral did not experience *Vea*'s sexualized female space as either libratory or empowering. By what easily could be interpreted as reducing women's power once again to female sexuality and women's sexuality to "frivolity," *Vea* could have easily been construed as standing in the way of women's political agenda. In the throes of vying for suffrage rights, elite, white, middle-class, urban women might not have

wanted to be discredited by depictions of women like themselves as superficial girls interested only in posing as pinups, or have their access to urban space and, by extension, the public sphere hampered by something that they feared might weaken their bid for political power.

The magazine's prohibition shows that what is allowed and acceptable is as much about content (nudity) as it is about context (place). Even if *Vea*'s symbolism linking female sexuality and urban space invokes a multitude of readings—ranging from selling or beautifying the city, to feminizing or scandalizing it—all inherently contain the notion that the city now was women's public stage. *Vea*'s placement of female bodies in the city compromised what was already highly contested space. An uneasy mix of desire for modernity and progress, monuments and nationalism, and anxiety over women in public underpinned the agenda of revolutionary urban reform in Mexico City. *Vea*'s girls subverted ideas of gendered public space and sexual governance held by officials and reformers but also illustrated ideas connecting women, alternate femininities, and modernity.

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Notes

1. "La Cita," *Vea: Semanario moderno* (Mexico City), December 7, 1934, 24.
2. *Vea*, the imperative of the verb *ver*, to see, does not quite translate to "see" here. Rather, it indicates an active way of seeing in a manner of "taking in a scene"; therefore, it is translated as "Look."
3. Elizabeth Grosz, "City-Bodies," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Space, Time, Perversions: Essays on Politics of the Body* (London: Routledge, 1995), 108, 241-253. According to Grosz, bodies and cities do not constitute "megalithic total entities," but as "assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and

often temporary sub- or micro-groupings.” Also see Doreen Massey, *Place, Space and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 179.

4. “Palabras de Presentación,” *Vea: Semanario moderno*, November 2, 1934, 2.

5. See Ava Vargas, ed., *La Casa de Cita: Mexican Photographs from the Belle Epoque* (London: Quartet, 1986).

6. Ageeth Sluis, “Bataclanismo! Or, How Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City,” *The Americas*, 66, no. 4 (April 2010): 469-99. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/tam.0.0258>

7. Grosz, “City-Bodies,” 108.

8. For comprehensive discussions of the *chica moderna*, see Anne Rubenstein, “The War on ‘Las Pelonas’: Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,” in Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriella Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 57-80, and Joanne Herschfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917–1936* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822389286>

9. See, e.g., *Frente-a-Frente*, *Futuro*, and other leftist magazines.

10. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Administración Pública de la República, Lázaro Cárdenas (hereinafter AGN-APR-LC), vol. 704, fol. 31.

11. Ibid.

12. The entanglement of discourses on female sexuality and nationalism of the 1930s seems to have been a forerunner of more intense censorship efforts of the 1940s. Claire Fox argues that by the 1940s, there were established links that tied subversive female sexuality, in the form of the “exotica” female cabaret or nightclub dancer), to antiforeign political sentiments. She states, “The pun is more than coincidental, because ‘pornographic’ images of women were explicitly associated with ‘foreign’ ideas (i.e., undesirable political ideas) as the dual targets of censorship boards.” Claire F. Fox, “Pornography and ‘the Popular’ in Post-Revolutionary Mexico: The Club Tívoli from Spota to Isaac,” in Chon A. Noriega, ed., *Visible Nations: Latin America Cinema and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 143-173.

13. AGN-APR-LC, vol. 704, fol. 31.

14. Article 33 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution states in part, “Los extranjeros no podran de ningun manura inmiscuirse en los asuntos politicos del país” [nonnationals cannot interfere in the political matters of the country in any way].

15. Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, *Asamblea de ciudades: años 20s/50s*, ciudad de México (catálogo coordinación de textos Elsa Fujigaki Cruz, Ricardo de León Banuet) (Mexico City: Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, 1992), 150.

16. AGN-APR-LC, vol. 704, fol. 31.

17. Sluis, “*Bataclanismo!*,” 469-99.

18. Conservative women’s unified stance in condemning magazines like *Vea* has been explained as potentially the result of the failure to secure political rights. Carlos Monsivais believes that “[o]nce political defeat became inevitable, women on the right concentrated their efforts on practicing religious teachings and promoting censorship.” See Mary Kay Vaughan, Jocelyn Olcott, and Gabriela Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 14, 26, 30. Also see Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Cosmic Books in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). Rubenstein argues that, from the 1930s onward, popular culture represented a safety valve for the PRM/PRI regime in siphoning off the discontent of disenfranchised Catholic conservatives by allowing them to take an active role in social criticism concerning morality issues and consenting to their pleas to censor pornography.

19. *Vea* maintained this price until banned in 1938. Circulation rates are unknown. See James W. Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), for equivalency rates of Mexican peso in 1934. A contemporary story on minimum wages stated that, on average, cashiers started at fifteen pesos per month, and drivers averaged twenty pesos per month. Luis F. Bustamante, *Todo*, September 27, 1934, quoted in Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna*, 125.

20. Lynn Hunt, “Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800,” in Drucilla Cornell, ed., *Feminism and Pornography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 355-380.

21. *Ibid.*, 356.

22. Ageeth Sluis, “City of Spectacles: Gender Performance, Revolutionary Reform and the Creation of Public Space in Mexico City, 1915–1939” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2006). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10150/194775>. Political censorship was often articulated through the imposition of “public decency” and antipornography measures, as city inspectors faced less opposition censoring shows on the basis of immoral content than policing cultural products (plays, literature, magazines) for political messages.

23. Hunt, “Obscenity,” 357.

24. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault defies the prevailing perception of sex as silenced or repressed by implicating Freudian theory and practice in the rise of normalized sexuality (that of the heterosexual married couple).
25. Weekly magazines such as *Mujeres y Deportes* and *Detectives* regularly featured articles translated in Spanish written by U.S. authors. In these articles, authors would analyze the behavior of women, often Hollywood stars, in the context of theories by Freud and Adler.
26. For an examination of idealized indigenous women in Mexican Muralism, especially in Diego Rivera's work, see Aída Sierra, "The Creation of a Symbol," *Artes de México* 49 (2000): 84-85.
27. See Stacie Widdifield, *The Embodiment of the National in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexican Painting* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996).
28. Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralism: Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1998), 75.
29. Rafael Lopez, "El Apostolado de Miss Gay," *El Nacional*, September 24, 1933, 8.
30. Ibid.
31. "Piensase Establecer en Mexico la Primera Colonia Nudista Autorizada," *La Prensa*, December 7, 1938, 11.
32. Ibid.
33. Carlos del Rio, "Algo Mas Sobre el Campo de Nudismo que Hay en Mexico," *Grafico*, November 30, 1937, 12.
34. Salvador Novo, "Por La Desnudez Hacia La Perfección: El movimiento nudista en Alemania y Francia," *Resumen*, July 1, 1931, 17, 19, 43.
35. Carlos Marín Foucher, quoted in 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), 71-113. Foucher added that they were "almost perfect, biologically speaking."
36. L. F. Bustamante, "Los Nudistas de Mexico Proyectan su Unificación para Afianzar su Causa," *Grafico*, November 15, 1938, 12.
37. Early in his tenure as president, Cárdenas embarked on a morality campaign, which included closing casinos and brothels throughout the republic. See Vincent Cabeza de Baca and Juan

Cabeza de Baca, "The 'Shame Suicides' and Tijuana," *Journal of the Southwest* 43 (2001): 603-633.

38. "La Primera Colonia de 'Nudistas,'" *La Prensa*, January 11, 1932, 11; *Grafico*, November 9, 1937, 12.

39. Carlos del Rio, "Algo Mas Sobre el Campo de Nudismo que Hay en Mexico," *Grafico*, November 30, 1937, 12.

40. Lawrence Knopp, "Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework for Analysis," in David Bell and Gill Valentine, eds., *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1995), 136-149, 151.

41. Salvador Novo, *Excelsiór*, February 15, 1929, afternoon ed., 7.

42. Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), 208. Kendrick draws on Stephen Marcus's formulation of *pornotopia*, as a utopian fantasy where "space and time only measure the repetition of sexual encounters, and bodies are reduced to sexual parts and the endless possibilities of their variation and combination."

43. Artes y Historia México, "Historia de teatro en México," <http://www.arts-history.mx>.

44. Knopp, "Sexuality and Urban Space," 152-53.

45. "Mario Fuentes to Lázaro Cárdenas," April 7, 1939, in AGN-APR-LC, vol. 415.13, fol. 33.

46. Artes y Historia México, "Historia de teatro en México," <http://www.arts-history.mx>; also see Socorro Merlín, "La censura en las carpas de México," in *Vida Y Milagros De Las Carpas: La Carpa En México, 1930–1950*, 1st ed. (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes/Centro Nacional de Invest. y Document/Teatral R. Usigli, 1995) 50-51.

47. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991), 32-33.

48. Susie P. Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law': Class Conflict and Gender Ideology in the Public Sphere, 1880–1910," *Social Science History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 111-148.

49. Katherine E. Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 73.

50. Jonathan Kandell, *La Capital: The Biography of Mexico City* (New York: Random House, 1988), 448.

51. Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 33, 36.
52. On the role of prostitutes and lower-class women in social movements, see Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870–1927* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 2001), and John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).
53. Susan A. Glenn, *The Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). Susan Glenn argues that female performers became agents in changing gender relations. As the rise of entertainment was situated in a new urban environment—metropolitan life—female spectacle and urbanization went hand in hand.
54. Mary Kay Vaughan, “Introduction: Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the Modern Woman: Gender in the Long Mexican Revolution,” in Vaughan, Olcott, and Cano, *Sex in Revolution*, 24, 25. Also see the essays by Anne Rubenstein and Gabriela Cano in the same volume.
55. Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).
56. Anna Macías, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940*, no. 30 in *Contributions in Women’s Studies* (London: Greenwood, 1982), 114-15, 118, 129, 137.
57. Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 3. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822387350>
58. On the effects of these governmental changes on urban space, see Diane Davis, *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
59. Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 155.
60. Davis, *Urban Leviathan*, 25; John Lear, “Mexico City,” *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 4 (May 1996): 454-492. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/009614429602200402>; María Soledad Cruz Rodríguez, *Crecimiento Urbano Y Procesos Sociales En El Distrito Federal (1920–28)* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Azcapotzalco, Departamento de Sociología, 1994), 131-32, 133.
61. “Ley de organización del distrito y territorios federales,” (Tlalpam, D.F., 1925), Capítulo VIII: 41-42, in Fideicomiso Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanco, Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles, file 1, invent 1467, legajo 1.
62. Diane E. Davis, “The Social Construction of Mexico City: Political Conflict and Urban Development, 1950–1966,” *Journal of Urban History* 24, no. 3 (March 1998): 364-415. doi:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/009614429802400304>. Patrice E. Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution: Architecture, Society, and Politics in Mexico City, 1920–1940* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 47-74.

63. Davis, “Social Construction,” 378.

64. On the cultural meanings of dirt, see Mary Douglas’s classic work *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1966) doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203361832> as well as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

65. James A. Garza, *The Imagined Underworld: Sex, Crime, and Vice in Porfirian Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). For explanations of heterotopia, see Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” (1967), <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.

66. “Numerosas viciosos en el fumadero de opio,” *El Universal*, June 10, 1931, 9.

67. Armando Salinas, “Lacras metropolitanas en el mundo del hampa,” *Mujeres y Deportes*, February 26, 1938, 24-25.

68. Knopp, “Sexuality and Urban Space,” 152. According to Knopp, Henning Bech also credits modern medicine and psychoanalysis with sexualizing the urban experience.

69. Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (1909; repr., New York: Norton, 1961), 16.

70. Bliss, *Compromised Positions*, 65-66.

71. Archivo Histórico de Secretaría de Salubridad Pública y Asistencia, Mexico City, Salubridad Pública, Servicio Jurídico (hereinafter AHSSA-SP-SJ), box 17, file 19.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. “Junta de Obreros, Industriales, Proprietarios y Vecinos de las calles de Cuauhtemotzín y adyacentes and Comision Mixta-Pro-Turismo to Department of the Interior,” November 14, 1929, AHSSA-SP-SJ, box 17, file 19. The group again protested against the zone on February 20, 1930, and wrote President Pascual Ortiz Rubio on May 15, 1930.

75. “Department of Public Health, Judicial Division to Department of the Federal District,” October 10, 1929, AHSSA-SP-SJ, box 17, file 19.

76. "Report of Judicial Division to Department of Public Health, 1926–1929," AHSSA-SP-SJ, box 7, file 3. *Clandestina* signifies an illegal (unregistered) streetwalker.
77. "Reglamento hotels," September 25, 1934, AHSSA-SP-SJ, box 40, file 24.
78. Salinas, "Lacras metropolitanas," 24-25.
79. Sluis, "*Bataclanismo!*," 469-99.
80. Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, xiii-xiv.
81. Dirección de Arquitectura y Conservación del Patrimonio Artístico Inmueble, *Pláticas sobre arquitectura, 1933. Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 1 (Mexico City: Conaculta, 2001), 41.
82. *Ibid.*, 60.
83. *Ibid.*, 59-60. *Buena línea* translates literally as "a good line," meaning a good figure.
84. *Ibid.*, 82.
85. Lucy Fischer, *Designing Women: Cinema, Art Deco and the Female Form* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2003), 27.
86. Porter, "'And That It Is Custom Makes It Law,'" 112-13. Porter notes that traditional notions of female honor entailed that the female body in public functioned as a marker to measure property, family integrity, and class status.