

SEX IN REVOLUTION: GENDER, POLITICS, AND POWER IN MODERN MEXICO

Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan,
and Gabriela Cano, Eds.
Durham: Duke University Press,
2006

REVIEWED BY CRISTINA SANTOS

With a cover consisting of a family portrait of Frida Kahlo dressed in men's clothing, the editors of this collection of essays cleverly set the tone for this volume on women, gender, and the Mexican Revolution.

The book consists of four main sections dedicated to Mexican women's embodiment of and into revolutionary culture; the redefining of women's place in the domestic sphere and in the workforce; as well as their participation in emerging post-revolutionary politics. Regardless of this physical division in the organization of the essays the editors have succeeded in presenting a volume in which some of the contributions are connected by their considerations of how the government and Catholic Church had been the dominant factors leading to the Mexican Revolution, while also pointing out that the ground gained against these institutions by the revolutionaries did not necessarily apply to women. As a result, modern Mexican women found themselves obliged to undertake a second wave revolt (in their own unique ways) in post-revolutionary Mexico in the attempt to obtain some of the same rights and privileges granted to their male counterparts. In essence, even in post-revolutionary Mexico women found themselves, both in the private

and public sphere, defined by the gaze of their sexual, ethnic or social Other. Fernández-Aceves summarizes eloquently the true nature of women's struggle in Modern Mexico vis-à-vis the CFO (Círculo Feminista del Oriente) as: "...a New Woman, a politically informed, revolutionary citizen, antithetical to the stereotype of the submissive, religiously obsessed Catholic female prevalent in the rhetoric of male revolutionaries."

Another unifying characteristic to the essays is their depiction of Mexican women's struggle against the well-established Mexican patriarchal icons of womanhood—be they cross-dressing (or not) *soldaderas* to labour union organizers to working mothers. It becomes obvious that these classic Mexican icons of female virtue (the Virgin of Guadalupe, La Malinche and La Llorona) remain the defining ideals for the modern Mexican woman. This is evident in society's valuing of self-sacrificing mothers who stay at the home to keep house and raise their children (the Virgin of Guadalupe); whereas the women who choose to work or organize labour unions are depicted as whorish or prostitutes and are at times victims of assault, rape or torture (La Malinche); and those mothers who take on the iconic value of La Llorona because they "choose" to abandon their children (either at home or to the streets) in order to work in the labour force.

As Carlos Monsiváis introduces in his foreword to this collection: "These militants (and martyrs) were feminists in the full sense of the word: workers, educators, and political activists who combined their demands with professional duties." In *Sex in Revolution* Olcott, Vaughan, and Cano succeed in compiling a group of scholars and their essays that reflect the sociological and cultural contributions of this generation of women who fought on the battle-

field of the Mexican Revolution (the *soldaderas*) and those that continued the battle for equal rights for women, irrespective of race or social status, in the social and political arena (e.g. *las pelonas*). If the editors were to do a follow-up study to this volume it would be interesting to see the inclusion of women journalists of that period and other contributors to the defining of the "new" Mexican woman. *Sex in Revolution* will undoubtedly interest scholars not only of Latin American history and cultural studies but also feminist researchers looking for a concise yet detailed account of modern Mexican feminist accounts.

Cristina Santos is Associate Professor of Spanish at Brock University. Her current research and scholarship reflects an interest in investigating the monstrous depictions of women as aberrations of feminine nature. She is the author of Bending the Rules in the Quest for an Authentic Female Identity and co-editor of Defiant Deviance: The Irreality of Reality in the Cultural Imaginary.

LA EXPLOTACIÓN SEXUAL COMERCIAL DE NIÑAS, NIÑOS Y ADOLESCENTES. UNA APROXIMACIÓN SOCIOLOGICA, 2ºED¹

Erick Gómez Tagle López
México: Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, 2007

REVIEWED BY MARINETTE BRICARD GONZÁLEZ

Commercial sexual exploitation harms millions of girls, boys, and teenagers around the world, but especially exposed are girls living in

underdeveloped countries. Although over the last few years its international legal protection increased, the phenomenon keeps rising due to globalization, poverty distribution, infant labour, and organized crime. Professor Erick Gómez Tagle López, current investigator of the National Institute of Penal Sciences, presents his two years of work around this theme through an interdisciplinary and exceptional focus dealing with the study of the conceptual framework, the psychoanalytical and psychological explanations of the possible causes of sexual pathological behaviours. He examines the international treaties adopted in the past two centuries, a comparative penal law study related to the eradication of the problem, as well as the analysis of the criminal as a social actor and his relationship with globalization and organized crime.

The author approaches the special victimization of under age girls that characterizes this felony due to their inferior power status inside their families and society. Trying to understand the reasons of the inefficiency of the international treaties on commercial sexual exploitation of children, he studies the causes explaining its subsistence to conclude that an offer exists whenever a demand for a certain service is externalized.

I strongly recommend this inquiry as it provides a comprehensive perspective of commercial sexual exploitation of children, not only for its unique content but also for the fluidity and clarity that characterize it.

Marinette Bricard has a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Film Studies from the University of California Santa Barbara, and is currently completing her sixth semester of law school at the Universidad Pontificia de México. From 2006 to the present she has been research and legislative affairs' coordinator at the Colegio de Abogados Católicos de México, A.C. (College of Catholic Lawyers of Mexico). Currently she labours at Fuerza del Tepeyac

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'The English title is "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and Teenagers. A Sociological Approach."

WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTION #11: YOUR BODY, YOUR HEALTH, YOUR CHOICE

Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network
Santiago, Chile: LAWHN, 2006

REVIEWED BY MAY BLETZ

The Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LAWHN) was created in 1984 during the First Regional Women and Health Meeting held in Tenza, Colombia. At this event, over 60 women from 13 countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean gathered to propose a new vision of women's health based on their different realities and experiences.¹

The collective publish the *Women's Health Collection* and the 2006 issue is subtitled *Your Body, Your Life, Your Choice*. Sadly enough, journals like this are more necessary than ever since women worldwide are still "disputed territories" who are not allowed to make the transformation from being "body for others" to being a "body for themselves," as the editors put it.

Your Body, Your Life, Your Choice contains accessible yet informative articles and fragments of articles, many translated into English for the first time. The journal contains useful information helpful for policymakers, people who educate women about their health issues and sexual and reproductive rights,

as well as for academics and students of women's studies. The first part contains excerpts of bills of rights on for instance contraception, abortion, and homosexuality as well as a fact sheet of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on violence against women and girls. Throughout the volume we find brief testimonies of women's personal experiences with losing their virginity, rape, prostitution, and domestic abuse, among others, forcing us to remember that behind each statistic there is a human being with an individual story to tell.

The selected readings in the second part of the volume are more academic in nature. For instance, "Lesbians in Latin America: From Inexistence to Visibility," by Alejandra Sardá, Rosa María Posa Guinea, and Verónica Villalba Morales is a much needed English language review of lesbian activism in Latin America that many scholars will find useful, and Ester Moncarz's "A Stranger Among Us" is a thoughtful mediation on women, aging, and social and economic consequences. A concise bibliography with works in Spanish and English at the end provides useful information for the reader who wants more information.

The appendix that accompanies this issue contains articles from the declaration and programmes for action from the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), as well as the complete texts of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

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