Drinking the Nation and Making Masculinity: Tequila, the Revolution, and Mexican Identity

Marie Sarita Gaytán

"Tequila makes a man confess even the most profound reaches of his machismo," writes Douglas Menuez in Heaven, Earth, Tequila: Un Viaje al Corazón de México (A trip to the heart of Mexico) (2004, 1). Using evocative language, the author associates tequila with romantic configurations of manhood and describes it as an essential element of Mexico's spiritual landscape. According to Menuez, although the book "started as a quest to explore the mysterious traditions from which tequila was born…it offers the reader something more--the intense pride and passion of the Mexican people…" (1). Visualizing Mexico's "national drink" through a nostalgic and timeless lens, the author's perspective is only one of many that are produced, circulated, and consumed within global popular culture. For instance, in contrast to inspiring notions of collectivity and patriotism, in the United States, tequila is more likely to conjure images of wild parties, excessive drinking, and heavy hangovers. Reflecting its close ties to intemperance and abandon, American pop cultural ephemera including posters, t-shirts, and bumper stickers proclaim, "One tequila, two

tequila, three tequila, floor!" and "Lick it, slam it, suck it!" Television and film also commemorate tequila's role in narratives of overindulgence and pleasure, as reality programming like *Girls Gone Wild* and *The Real Cancun* document its centrality in the highly sexualized exploits of spring-break revelry. While on the surface it may appear that these representations have little in common, I argue that they emerge from interrelated political struggles that together shape and are shaped by the formation of national and social identities.

This chapter provides an alternative framework for understanding the multiple productions of Mexican identity and masculinity from a transnational perspective through the realm of material culture. While the discipline of sociology has focused on how the nation is formulated economically, it has shown little interest in how it is expressed culturally within and across geopolitical borders (Barnes this volume; Gómez-Barris this volume). When cultural approaches are integrated in sociological studies of the nation in general, and Mexico in particular, conversations tend to focus on questions regarding underdevelopment, dependency, and authoritarianism. Concerns cohere forcefully around issues of identity, whereby expressions of culture and the circulation of national symbols remain deeply rooted in debates over civil society's weakening or strengthening outlook within globalization (Bartra 2002). What is less known is how cultural commodities are mobilized to produce representations of the nation that reflect multiple articulations of struggle, desire, and subjectivity.

Analyzing tequila as a contested terrain and unfinished signifier of Mexican identity,

I look at political relations within Mexico and the United States in the years proceeding and following the Mexican Revolution as a means of exploring how structures of feeling (Williams 1977) function at an "individual micro level" and as "part of macro sociocultural operations" (Harding and Pribram 2004, 878). Positioning commodities and their consumption as vital not only to the transmission of emotions and allegiances, but as significant to the discursive deployment of particular ideologies, I seek to add a critical piece to our understanding about the everyday production of identity, national belonging, and oppositional discourse. With this in mind, instead of promoting the notion that there is something inherently special about tequila, I use it as an optic through which to observe how different struggles spill over onto traditional media spaces and play out in commercial, economic, and political realms. Because Mexicans experience themselves "as national through public sphere accounts of what is important about them," I engage "ordinary" forms of communication that citizens use to express connections and experience linkages to one another (Berlant 1997, 10). These diverse sites enable a closer look at the salience of cultural commodities at the level of ideology and understanding; at the same time, they provide a context for conceptualizing the relevance of commodities at the level of feeling and emotion. Drawing on the resources of multiple archives, including song lyrics, tequila labels, and newspaper articles, I analyze how tequila, as a "master symbol" of Mexican

identity, sheds light on the interactions between material objects and social relations (Flores 2004). With this in mind, I ask: How did tequila become closely associated with particular expressions of Mexican commensality in Mexico? Why is it often related to notions of indulgence and vice in the United States? How do these social conditions together structure meanings about Mexican masculinity and national identity across borders?

Negotiating Mexican Nationalism

Early twentieth century Mexico was marked by widespread concern regarding the progress of the nation. While the vast majority of people continued to suffer at the hands of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial hold of the country, politicians sought to implement innovative measures to support his regime and promote fiscal development. Central to these discussions were the ideas of positivist writers such as Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin. Relying on the strict application of scientific method, positivists maintained that societies, much like animal species, were subject to the laws of evolution. According to this formulation, only "those societies that adapted to their historical circumstances, human resources, and material necessities survived and progressed" (Benjamin and Ocasio-Melendez 1984, 328). Científicos (positivist public intellectuals) such as Justo Sierra published works that praised President Díaz positivist path and called for the continued incorporation of European scientific principles and models of economic expansion. For writers such as Sierra, what

Mexico needed, and had found in Díaz, "was a strong and just ruler to build the economic foundation necessary for the true realization of liberty" (329). The concept of race was central to the administration's quest for prosperity. Specifically, the mestizo, "the product of two races, two cultures, and two histories" was promoted as "the great unifier of ethnic, ideological, and class contradictions" (329). Positioning himself as representing the interests of all Mexicans, Porfirio Díaz heralded the mestizo as the prototype of Mexican progress. In reality, however, Indians and the rural masses were seen and treated as obstacles to modernization.

In the years following the Mexican Revolution, public intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos, and artists such Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, and Frida Kahlo sought to break free from the domination of European standards that characterized life under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (also known as the Porfiriato). Among the various intellectuals that contributed to the development of a more inclusive collective conscience and the advancement of a renewed Mexican national identity was noted Mexican anthropologist, Manuel Gamio. Interested in creating a Mexican nation based on a model of cultural integration, Gamio sought not to exclude indigenous cultures from the new approach to nationalism, but rather, like many anthropologists of that era, he promoted social policy that would assimilate them into "mainstream" Mexican society.

The state-sponsored Indigenismo movement endorsed by Gamio set out to create a more inclusive national identity. This controversial approach was criticized and praised--

criticized because of its assimilative focus that promoted mestizo identity over indigenous identity-- praised because it recognized and extolled Indian arts, crafts, and architecture. As Dawson (1998) described it, the movement "not only celebrated the ancient Indian past as the source of the Mexican nation, but also connected living Indians to that past, and acclaimed them for the first time as an integral part of the…nation" (280). However, in the end, Gamio's effort to create "a powerful patria and a coherent, defined nationality" failed to incorporate modern Indian social, political, or economic contributions (Gamio 1960, 177). As historian David Brading (1988) explained,

> The all-important fact that contemporary Indians in Mexico preserved in their daily lives the essential configuration of pre-Hispanic civilization was not for Gamio a cause for national exaltation…but rather embodied an obstacle to mestizaje, and signified economic backwardness and cultural stagnation (83).

Although Gamio's approach had progressive elements, it was unable to break-free from the traditional liberal ideology that Indians obstructed efforts aimed at "forjando" (forging) a homogenous Mexican identity.

Manuel Gamio's attempt to establish a collective conscience that commemorated Mexico's indigenous past, while entangled in ideological inconsistencies pertaining to the indigenous present, reflected a major shift in Mexican nationalist thought. Widely regarded as "backward" under the Díaz regime, indigenous contributions were now celebrated in art,

literature, music, and other aspects of Mexican cultural life. The concepts of mestizaje and Indigenismo were commonly used by government officials to promote a new Mexican nationalism rooted in the idea of spiritual and racial homogeneity--a raza cósmica (cosmic race) (Vasconcelos 1925) that would allow mestizos to "build a future society based on Latin civilizations" (González 2004, 143). The phrase of "lo Mexicano," a notion of self-awareness in which beliefs about racial equality were embedded into the foundation of nationalism, became equally popular during the post-revolutionary period. More broadly, lo Mexicano was seen as an "authentic" expression of Mexican character that reflected the rise of a shared understanding that "transcend[ed] the nationalistic-cosmopolitan conflict in Mexican history" (Schmidt 1978, 165). Novelists were among the many intellectuals that aligned themselves with new literary forms that highlighted Mexico's revitalized nationalism. Oftentimes, storylines featured peasants and Indians as protagonists and emphasized their newly-valued place in the nation.

Such is the case with Jaliscan-born writer Mariano Azuela's (1915) famous novel about the revolutionary movement, Los de Abajo (The Underdogs). Considered the "quasi-official text of the revolution" and credited as the "first 'novel of the masses,'" Los de Abajo is loosely based on Azuela's combat experiences during war (Parra 2005: 23-24). Starting off with honorable intentions, the central character, Demetrio Macías, together with a small band of revolutionaries, become corrupted by the war and lose their ideals. Standing in contrast to the literary norms of the Porfiriato, the story unromantically illustrates the

brutal and self-serving conduct of the army. Described as "the organic intellectual of the revolutionary struggle," Macías is portrayed as having a preference for Mexican-origin products during a time when foreign goods were considered symbols of power and mobility (Parra 2005: 23-24). For instance, in one scene the narrator notes, "To champagne that sparkles and foams as the beaded bubbles burst at the brim of the glass, Demetrio preferred the native tequila, limpid and fiery" (84). Tim Mitchell (2005) explains that Demetrio Macías' partiality for tequila over champagne revealed "his purity of heart and st[ood] the Porfirian taste system on its head" (11). In the pages that follow, Macías' troops boast of the cruelty they inflict as they make their way through the houses and haciendas of the rich. Commenting on their plunder, Azuela writes, "Bottles of tequila, dishes of cut glass, bowls, porcelains, and vases lay scattered" (93). Littering the home of a wealthy family with tequila bottles suggests a figurative and literal assault against the upper classes who favored cut glass, porcelains, and vases--affluent furnishings that were most likely imported. More importantly, however, it demonstrates how as an emergent cultural symbol, tequila visually enabled the lower classes to convey their allegiance to the nation, while at the same time it allowed them to express their sentiments about pervading class inequalities. Therefore, tequila symbolically provided a means through which members of the lower classes could assert new national identities, marking their transition from disrespected citizens to acknowledged citizens.

Despite the emergence of figures, symbols, and expressions that were seen as

embodying Mexican values and the new national identity, no one ideology or faction dominated the social or political sphere (Benjamin 2000). For example, while the Indigenismo movement gained steadfast momentum, it never achieved complete hegemony. Hispanistas, or intellectuals and politicians who maintained that Spanish attributes (e.g., Catholic doctrines and the colonial system) were the "authentic genesis of the national spirit," continued to powerfully challenge Indiginistas (Orozco 1998, 51). Fredrick Pike (1971) describes Hispanismo as resting "on the conviction that through the course of history Spaniards have developed a life style and culture, a set of characteristics, of traditions and value judgments that render them distinct from other peoples" (307). In particular, they held that the population that best represented the ideals of Hispanismo came from the tequila-producing region of Los Altos, in the state of Jalisco. As Orozco explains,

> This proposition was bolstered through the creation and propagation of a region creation myth (what E.J. Hobsbawm (1993) calls a 'suitable past'), in which racial and cultural contact between the Spaniards that colonized the region and Indians that inhibited it is minimized, controlled, and or excised (52).

Rooted in the conviction that the Los Altos region was divinely inspired because of its spatial segregation from indigenous populations and supposed European genetic purity (a result of the effects of the Mixtón War (1540-1542)), the myth of Alteño exceptionalism

affirmed the region's symbolism as "a source of national redemption" amidst the "racial dilemma" of post-revolutionary efforts to construct a homogeneous national identity (53).

According to Orozco, Hispanista claims regarding the Los Altos region's ability to represent an "appropriate" Mexican identity failed to achieve widespread popular acceptance in the period immediately following the revolution. Specifically, he maintains that is was not until the advent of the Mexican movie and music industries (1930s-1950s) that Alteño exceptionalism, uniquely embodied as the image of the charro (Mexican cowboy), became fully integrated in the Mexican popular imaginary. While the Mexican media of this era contributed considerably to the production and diffusion of this image, anthropologist Olga Nájera-Ramírez's (1994) research on the charro and Mexican nationalism proposes that it was during the Porfirato (1876 to 1910) when the charro emerged as an "invincible national hero" and "became thoroughly integrated with the ideas of manhood, nationhood, and power." (4). Thus, this suggests that elements of Hispanismo, in general, and Alteño exceptionalism, in particular, were not only in circulation before the Revolution, but were among the ideological discourses that survived and flourished in spite of it. In other words, while Indigenismo did indeed become a popular force, we cannot dismiss the ongoing influence of Hispanismo in the formation of Mexican nationalism during this period of time.

Cultural symbols (original and recycled) became increasingly important in the effort to reconstruct the image and psyche of post-revolutionary period. As noted cultural theorist,

Carlos Monsiváis (1999) put it, “This was the great moment of Mexican nationalism, and in both natural and induced ways as many emblems and signals of national identity as possible were sought to parade” (15). Although Mexico had a long history of articulating its early history through female symbols (i.e., La Malinche and the Virgin of Guadalupe), after the Revolution, this phenomena shifted, and male figures became more visible in order to accommodate the patriarchal impulses of modernization (Limón 1990). The momentum of modernity operated within the scope of a masculine agenda, or “national fantasy,” in which male icons mapped the country’s “glorious” past onto its “coherent” present (Berlant 1991). Specifically, the charro became a prototype used for “packaging and representing Mexican culture for public consumption both inside and outside of Mexico” (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 6). According to Nájera-Ramírez (1994), representations of the charro aligned with “the post-revolutionary romantic nationalist efforts to identify and promote traditional customs perceived as uniquely Mexican and to foster a sense of Mexican national unity and democratic ideals” (6).

The establishment of charro associations within Mexico and the promotion of charrería in American acts such as “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show” helped standardize public perceptions of an idealized Mexican manhood. Charro associations outlined strict principles of behavior through an institutionalized code of ethics, stipulating that members were barred from partaking in disorderly conduct while in costume. Drinking and fighting were expressly prohibited because carrying a real gun was part of the charro regalia. With

the intention of encouraging responsibility and safety, the code of ethics “sought to protect the status and reputation of the charro as a positive representative of Mexico” (Nájera-Ramírez 1994, 6). Images of Lo Mexicano associated with the charro were also closely linked to romantic portrayals of hacienda life that emphasized traditional social roles (e.g., class, gender, sexuality, and race). While the charro was one example of a particular version of Mexican manliness and a symbol of “good” citizenship that was promoted locally and internationally, another icon also started to emerge during this period--one which stood in opposition to the state’s representation of respectable Mexican manhood: the legendary revolutionary rebel, General Francisco “Pancho” Villa.

Pancho Villa, Tequila, and the U.S. Media

A hired insurgent and charismatic leader, Pancho Villa exemplifies the legacy, imagery, and mystique associated with the Mexican Revolution. Described as “Mexico’s macho hero par excellence” (Stevens 1965, 850), and the “Mexican Robin-Hood” (Womack 2002, 47), Pancho Villa simultaneously represents the embodiment of machismo and a symbol of national pride (de la Mora 2006). Rising from poverty to fight the wealthy while advocating peasants’ and workers’ rights, Villa’s commitment to social change evolved from a number of life experiences and crystallized during his participation in the Revolution (Meyers 1991). In the years that followed the end of Porfirio Diaz’ thirty-five year dictatorship,

Mexico, marked by a military coup, military regime, and presidential assassination, remained politically unstable. Dismayed by the lack of social progress and the amount of continued government corruption, Villa was concerned that the country's leaders were losing sight of the goals of the Revolution. As he saw it, the election of President Venustiano Carranza in Mexico, and the American government's recognition of his presidency, was further evidence of worsening domestic and international political decisions. The final straw, however, occurred when the United States reneged on an arms deal with Villa. In response, on March 9, 1916, Villa led 1500 troops across the U.S. border, killing seventeen Americans at Columbus, New Mexico. Villa and his army instigated the attack with the intention of severing U.S.-Mexican relations and bringing Carranza down (Katz 1998). However, the plan failed; the United States and Mexico did not break off relations, and Carranza remained in power. President Woodrow Wilson responded to the assault by sending 10,000 troops under the command of noted general John Pershing to locate Villa and his army. President Carranza also sent troops. Pursued by two different and well-equipped armies, Villa evaded arrest from both. After two U.S. army expeditions failed to capture Villa, in 1920 the Mexican government accepted his surrender and retired him on a general's salary. In 1923 he was assassinated in Parral, Chihuahua.

By challenging the authority of the U.S. government and the Mexican establishment, Villa embodied resistance to exploitation and injustice on both sides of the

border. The image of Pancho Villa contributed to the revitalized Mexican nationalism, one that was "accompanied by sentiments of distrust and inferiority towards foreigners, especially the United States" (Paredes 1967, 83). Immortalized in music and film, Pancho Villa became an emblem of Mexican national identity in Mexico and the United States. Mexican *corridos* (folk ballads) sung in Northern Mexico and in the Southwestern United States commemorated his determination and ability to outsmart both the U.S. and Mexican armies. Hundreds of *corridos* were written about Villa glorifying him as a hero of the common people of Mexico (Brandt 1964). One characteristic of these songs was the depiction of Pancho Villa in relation to alcohol. For example, in Miguel Lira's *Corrido de la Muerte de Pancho Villa* (Ballad of the Death of Pancho Villa), Villa is described as having visited a cantina on the day of his assassination:

¡Pobre Pancho Villa . . . !	Poor Pancho Villa!
Iba dejando Parral	As he was leaving Parral
Saliendo de una cantina,	Walking out of a cantina,
El valiente general	The brave general
Autor de La Valentina	Composer of La Valentina
"Si porque me ves borracho,	"If I look drunk to you it's because
Mañana ya no me ves;	Tomorrow you won't see me again
Si me han de matar mañana,	If they're going to kill me tomorrow
Que me maten de una vez..."	Let them kill me now once and for

all…"

¡Pobre Pancho Villa . . . ! Poor Pancho Villa!

Movies in the United States and Mexico also documented Villa's rise as a symbol of Mexico's Revolution and elevated the public status of army generals, populist figures, and reform-minded groups who participated in the revolutionary movement. Mexican films captured the tumultuous post-revolutionary period and served as a "conduit for a complex of ideas and influences: Mexican music, slang, performers, and folklore were popularized throughout the Hispanic world" (Mora 1989, 3). In the United States, Villa's revolutionary reputation spread with the 1914 release of the film, Gen'l Villa in Battle, Photographed Under Fire, With Extra Scenes Showing the Tragic Story of GEN'L VILLA'S EARLY LIFE. Depicting the rebellion as "a popular protest against despotic outrages, a struggle by upright Mexican farmers fighting for liberty and justice," the film showed Villa distributing food and clothes to the poor, and promising land to his troops (Womack 2002, 27). The American press was fascinated by Villa's image and ran numerous stories both condemning and defending his pursuits. For example, *The Fortnightly Review* described Villa's actions as "a recital of cold-blooded murders, thefts, torturings [*sic*], and atrocities of an even worse description," while *The Nation* magazine described him as "very different from the purely selfish and utterly ignorant cutthroat and robber" (Brandt 1964, 154).

In 1914, Villa signed a deal with American movie producer Harry Aitken to film his battles and to screen the newsreels in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. However,

filming real-life attacks proved to be difficult, and the scenes turned out to be a disappointment. A few weeks later, Villa (or his bodyguard) killed a British rancher seeking reimbursement for some lost cattle. Almost immediately, once sympathetic publishers began to portray Villa as "a bandit born" (Womack 2002, 28). Things went from bad to worse when, two years later in 1916, in response to the U.S. government's refusal to deliver weapons that were paid for, Villa attacked the town of Columbus, New Mexico. However, even before his U.S. incursion, Villa's actions provided the American press with an excuse to describe Mexicans as warring tribes and outlaws. For example, an article in the North American Review (1914) observed, "Mexico is not, in fact, a nation, but a country peopled by many tribes of Indians…none reaching what we would call civilization" (33). Often, newspaper articles and cartoons depicted Mexican statesmen and revolutionaries as violent bandits and insatiable drunks. For example, as figures one and two illustrate, representations of male drunkenness not only underscored Mexican irreverence to social order, but fed into and gained momentum from U.S. domestic racism towards blacks, immigrants, and Native Americans prevalent during this period. Drawing on exaggerated racialized images and using labels such as "ignorant" or "savage" enabled the press to easily communicate the ineptitude of Mexicans to the American public by relying on an already established language and symbolism of racial/ethnic inferiority used to disempower other communities of color.

Mexican men in general and Pancho Villa in particular were prime targets of the

U.S. media. Yet, Pancho Villa's image was manipulated to communicate both American and Mexican views of the Revolution. In other words, public opinion of Villa was also wide-ranging in each country. For poor and lower-class Mexicans, Villa symbolized the promise of equality and a future in which the "underdogs" could prevail. For wealthy, land-owning Mexicans, Villa and his revolutionary counterparts were viewed as threats to the status quo. At first celebrated by the United States and then later denigrated, Villa's image caught the attention of the American public whose knowledge of Mexico was limited to "picture postcards, newsreels, silent movies--pictures for excitement, not explanation" (Womack 2002, 27). To be sure, media depictions of Villa "visually reinforced the radical otherness of Mexicans to U.S. whites" (Marez 2004, 215). In one glaring attempt to further accentuate this "radical otherness," a 1914 New York Times article went so far as to claim that Pancho Villa was actually "a negro native of Maryland," who after getting into trouble with the law in Texas, fled across the border, became a bandit under the name of "Rondolz," and joined the Mexican army ("Villa a Negro" 1914, 12). Pancho Villa was reduced to a villain and bandit capable only of destruction--a specter against which American innocence, morality, and masculinity was defined.

In Mexico and the United States, Villa was depicted as the epitome of machismo, an exaggerated stereotype of manliness that appealed to conservative gender, familial, and cultural categories; a type of "symbolic capital" that sustained national and individual identity (Guttmann 1996, 27). However, the portrayal of Villa's "macho" attributes were

framed differently and served separate purposes in both countries. Instead of having purely negative connotations in Mexico, Villa's macho characteristics stressed codes of courage, honor, and respect. In his excellent analysis of the perceptions of machismo within Mexican and Latino culture, Alfredo Mirandé (1988) maintains that there are at least two models of machismo. The first, known as the "compensatory view," is a pejorative conception that emphasizes violence, irresponsibility, and male dominance over women as fundamental to the essence of Mexican male character. The second, described as the "ethical view," directs attention away from outward qualities of physical strength and virility and focuses on "inner ones such as personal integrity, commitment, loyalty, and most importantly, strength of character" (65). Challenging both the Mexican establishment and the U.S. government, Villa was respected by "common" people and feared by elites. Therefore, similar to the multiple and often contradictory conceptions of machismo, Villa likewise became associated with characteristics of Mexican manhood that differed within Mexican culture and varied across geopolitical borders. These depictions also had similarities, especially with regard to how they represented Villa in association with alcohol.

In cultural accounts as wide-ranging as corridos, American newspaper articles, and Mexican and Hollywood films, Pancho Villa is portrayed in relation to alcohol. The consistent representation of Pancho Villa with alcohol is curious for several reasons. First and foremost, contrary to the popular portrayal, Villa abstained from alcohol. In fact,

because of his concern about alcoholism in Mexico, he outlawed alcohol in his home state of Chihuahua and reportedly ordered the death penalty not just for the individuals who violated the ban, but also to their horses, dogs, and goats ("Near Prohibition" 1918). Before his relationship with the U.S. government broke down, Villa publicly expressed his admiration for president Wilson in the form of a toast, but not before adding the following disclaimer, "…for the first time in my life I am going to propose a toast, and for the first time in my life I am going to drink a toast, and it will be the first time that I ever willingly let liquor pass my lips…" (Anderson 1998, 60). In the famous 1914 meeting of Villa's army with Emiliano Zapata's army in Mexico City, Villa gagged on sip of brandy when the two generals shared a toast (Cummings 2006). A non-drinker and non-smoker, the highly self-disciplined Villa, in statements made to American newspapers, often described his enemies as "drunks." For instance, in an article published in a May 1914 edition of the San Francisco Examiner, Villa exclaimed, "I will go back to work as soon as I drive out that drunkard, Huerta. I am only a poor man. I wish only to see my countrymen freed from tyranny. I am a patriot. Yet I am the man they call the Bandit Villa" (Anderson 1998, 65). Ironically, it was Villa and not Huerta whose image would be forever associated with alcohol.

Although Pancho Villa abstained from alcohol, his image became and remained intimately linked to tequila on both sides of the border. U.S. newspapers played a major role in forging this association. For example, when British rancher William Benton was

assassinated in 1914, the front page headline of the Los Angeles Times declared “Blame Tequila for Execution: Benton Victim of Villa’s Lust for Liquor, It is Said” (“Blame” 1914, 12). The article continued by stating, “…Gen. Francisco Villa, with four of his cronies, were crazed with marijuana and tequila at the time Villa gave the order to shoot William S. Benton, a British subject and wealthy ranchman…” (12). Two months later, when Villa had several American media representatives deported from Mexico, the newspaper reported that Villa and his “so-called advisors” were “more or less under the influence of the native tequila” when the events unfolded (I2). A similar image was circulated through other forms of media. For example, well received in the United States and in Europe, the 1934 American motion picture Viva Villa!, directed by Jack Conway and starring Wallace Beery as Pancho Villa and Fay Wray as his love interest, famously portrayed Villa as aggressive, drunk, and misogynistic. Curtis Marez (2003), in his research on the early twentieth century U.S. drug war against Mexican immigrants, provides a compelling analysis of the portrayal of Villa and his army. Describing a particularly vivid scene, Marez observes,

> A prime example of Villa’s sexual sadism occurs during the last third of the film when Villa threatens to rape one of his benefactors Teresa, a wealthy Spanish Creole. Villa occupies her hacienda, and his soldiers raid the pantry and fondle the female servants, Sierra (Villa’s sidekick) is charged with locating Teresa and bringing her to the revolutionary’s darkened room, where he drunkenly tells her, ‘I only know how to make love one way. If I

> see an angel I got to make love that way, I got to grab hard.' When he pulls her to him for a bruising kiss, Teresa breaks away, produces a gun, and shoots him in the hand. (178)

In addition to depicting Mexican men as criminal and perverse, the "script grossly underestimated Villa's intelligence, invented episodes that never happened, and oversimplified the complex Mexican Revolution…" (Katz 1998, 792). For American readers and viewers of the early twentieth century, representations of Pancho Villa, Mexicans, and the Revolution were conflated with the vices of alcohol in general, and often, tequila in particular.

The American media's use of tequila as a metaphor of Mexican deviance emerged from and became structured within a range of material and discursive registers related to the changing logic of U.S. national expansion. In particular, heightened tensions regarding the U.S.-Mexican border as an ambiguous territory required a new language to explain the enforcement of stricter regulatory controls between the two countries and rationalize the increase in U.S. intervention in Mexican domestic affairs (Kaplan 2002). Able to project its desires onto Mexico from as early as 1865, the forces of American empire established a context in which U.S. entrepreneurs could justify their efforts to economically and politically control Mexico. As one investor put it, "Pushing American enterprise up to, and within Mexico wherever it can profitably go will give us advantages which force and money would hardly procure. It would give us a peaceful conquest of the

country" (Pletcher 1958, in Gonzalez and Fernandez 2002, 32). However, under the "harmless" guise of "peaceful conquest," extensive foreign investment in northern Mexico spurred an internal demand for labor and resulted in a significant northward migration of hundreds of thousands of displaced Mexicans. When work in mining and railroads slowed down in the early years of the twentieth century, Mexican laborers started to enter the United States in sizable numbers. These demographic shifts did not originate in Mexico, "rather, they emanated from large-scale foreign corporate enterprises operating under the protection of the U.S. government's foreign policy" (42). In other words, the rise in Mexican migration to the United States during this period was not simply a result of the devastation of the Revolution, but was propelled by the economic intrusion of U.S. capital investment. However, instead of focusing these factors, the press blamed Mexicans for criminal activity, decried the rise in immigration, and called for tighter border regulations.

Tequila was a Mexican spirit whose production and reputation began to rise at a time when ideas regarding temperance and nativism were gaining momentum in the U.S. political sphere. Compounding matters, there was growing overlap between prohibition philosophy and anti-immigrant sentiment. As a powerful "symbolic crusade," the temperance movement invoked the language of morality and values that denigrated "one group in opposition to others within the society" (Gusfield 1963, 172). Consequently, in spite of its economically successful connotations in Mexico and its ability to keep up with the pace of modern market demands (i.e., bottling, transport, and bulk export), upon its

arrival to the United States, tequila was mobilized as a metaphor to debase Mexicans. For example, in a 1899 Los Angeles Times travel article about Guadalajara, described "the native drink" in the following manner,

> The very cheapness of this vile stuff, which brings it within the reach of all, is a calamity. American whisky is bad, but this is infinitely worse in the physical and moral degeneracy wrought, especially among the best families. Unless the nation [Mexico] awakes to this awful curse, it will become a nation of decadent manhood (Shafer, 14).

An 1894 article from Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine described the mezcal from Tequila as,

> distilled from the root of a species of agave, and smells and tastes rather like Scotch whisky. It is of a light straw color, and highly intoxicating. As the best quality is made at Tequila, almost all mescal (mezcal) bears that name. Many of the rows and fatal affrays in Mexico are due to over-indulgence in mescal (mezcal) (Inkersley, 229).

Even scientific publications, including The American Journal of Pharmacy declared that tequila and mezcal were "very powerful in their effects. A Mexican Indian, addicted to their use, can drink a glass of any one…without effect; two or three glasses will set him demonically crazy" (Harshberger 1896, 591). Thus, journalists, travel writers, and newspaper columnists produced images of Mexico and Mexicans for Americans and other

English-language readers by symbolically locating Mexican deviance within a Mexican product.

Projecting negative meanings about Mexicans onto material objects at a time when Americans were more likely to read about other cultures than interact with them illustrates the dynamism of consumption in extending the symbolic reach of U.S. imperialism, whereby objects such as tequila represent not only potent political symbols, but are also metaphorically mobilized as a means to ethically validate containment and control. Elaborating on how justification processes operate in specific historical periods, Mary Louise Pratt (1992) contends that the collective works of European travel writers legitimated colonial intervention and expansionism to the general public (9). For Pratt, "asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" were and continue to be played out in what she calls, "contact zones" (4). A contact zone is a social space where "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination…A 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other" (4-7). The discursive imagining of Mexico through narratives regarding tequila and alcohol is a type of contact zone in which U.S. "frontier" ideologies are consumed, extended, and rationalized through the "objective" accounts of journalists, travel writers, and newspaper columnists. Described as over-indulgent, degenerate, and subject to demonic lunacy when consuming their "native" drink, the only solution left for Mexicans and Mexico, it seems, is the aid and intercession of the

United States. Therefore, contact zones, as sites of legitimation, also serve as locales where "individual and collective fantasy become nationally, embodied" (Berlant 1991, 17) and deviance, as an emotional register, becomes structured as fundamental for understanding difference. However, despite the momentum or intensity of particular conditions of interpretation, these relations offer the potential for resistance (Harding and Pribram 2004). In the following section, I illustrate how imagery and rhetoric about Pancho Villa and tequila was mobilized for different purposes with disparate political implications on both sides of the border.

Branding Pancho Villa

The U.S. portrayal of Pancho Villa as a macho, tequila-drinking bandit established a racialized metaphor in which notions of masculinity and alcohol consumption were fused together within the broader framework of Mexican national identity. In spite of the stability of this formulation, national identity, as Stuart Hall (1989) reminds us, is comprised of unstable signifiers that appear to represent the nation's "true" character. In his words, national identity

> is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. . . It has its histories–and histories have their real material, and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us… It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of

> identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made through the discourse of history and culture. Not an essence but a <u>positioning</u>. (211)

The dominant <u>positioning</u> of Pancho Villa and Mexicans in relation to alcohol and tequila operated on multiple levels. Specifically, it reflected an ideology of empire that promoted U.S. economic expansion within Mexico, while at the same time it supported the increased policing of Mexicans already living in the United States. In addition, the portrayal of Mexicans as intemperate and dangerous to the U.S. national wellbeing through the metaphor of tequila reproduced the image that alcohol was inherent to the essence of Mexican masculinity--adding yet another negative attribute to conceptions of Mexican male identity. The U.S. positioning of Pancho Villa simultaneously affirmed long-standing preconceptions of Mexican inferiority and served as the very basis from which a set of new influential stereotypes were established. Furthermore, it affectively constructed notions of belonging within the United States by erecting boundaries that stabilized meanings of "foreign" and "domestic"--concepts that secured the purity and integrity of U.S. national identity (Kaplan 2002).

Symbolic elements of the Revolution and images of Pancho Villa also became associated with tequila in Mexico, but for a different (although not entirely unrelated) set of reasons. This relationship was similarly forged during the decades following the revolution and remains powerfully evident in the contemporary names of tequila brands sold domestically and internationally. For example, "La Leyenda Tequila 30-30" (The Legend),

refers to the 30-30 rifle used by Villa and his army "Los Dorados." "Tequila Siete Leguas" (Seven Leagues) is named after Pancho Villa's horse. Laura Becerril, contributor to <u>The Tequila Guide</u> (1998), describes Siete Leguas as,"…by far Pancho Villa's favorite steed: whenever it heard the train whistle, it would rear up and neigh…This tequila's potency and feistiness render homage to the horse that belonged to Villa, the Centaur of the North" (132). Aside from "Tequila Pancho Villa," "Viva Villa," "Pancho Villa Viejo" (old), and "Hijos de Villa" (children of Villa), there is also "Tequila Los Arango," which is a reference to Doroteo Arango, Pancho Villa's given name, and "Tequila De Los Dorados" which "invokes the image of Los Dorados, the notorious and elite armed guard whose members were handpicked by none other than…Pancho Villa" (76). The label displays a bullet hole and a picture of Villa's troops. Numerous brands, while not referring to Villa directly, utilize images of bandit or revolutionary figures--many brandishing guns, mustaches, and sombreros. In addition to the names of different tequila brands, there are dozens of cocktails (many of which are tequila-based) that also draw on Villa's namesake (e.g., The Pancho Villa, The Pancho Villa Shooter, and The Pancho Villa #2).

Stuart Hall's notion of positioning also lends itself to an analysis of the link between Pancho Villa, the revolution, and tequila within Mexico. Not the image promoted by <u>Hispanistas</u> or <u>Indiginistas</u>, Pancho Villa emerged from the revolutionary milieu as an icon of <u>lo Mexicano</u>--a symbol that was as subversive as it was problematic, fitting into neither prevailing identity master narrative completely. Instead, meanings and

representations of Pancho Villa were negotiated within and in response to the dominating beliefs of Hispanismo and Indigenismo that pervaded the post-revolutionary period. On the one hand, the rise of Villa's reputation and association with lo Mexicano was bolstered by the widespread disillusionment in the capabilities of Mexican leaders to govern the nation in a manner that prioritized local development and the rights of ordinary citizens. On the other hand, Villa's representation as an icon of lo Mexicano served as a response to the distorted portrayals of Villa and Mexicans by members of the American media and government officials. Different from the sober and polished image of the charro, Pancho Villa stood as an alternative formulation of national belonging. Hence, Pancho Villa's status materialized as a symbol of resistance to the official discourse of the Mexican state and as a rejection of the debased images of Mexicans circulated in U.S. popular culture.

Pancho Villa's image as a gun-slinging, tequila-drinking bandit-hero is a source of romance and independence--qualities easily incorporated into different expressions of social positioning. For instance, as a counter-hegemonic cultural symbol, Pancho Villa signified and evoked sentiments of a particular account of Mexican national pride in which expressions of bravery and loyalty were constructed as indelible to the nation's character. While certain negative traits (e.g., drinking, womanizing, and fighting) were promoted and mythologized in Mexican corridos and films, Pancho Villa, a national hero who died a violent death much like the estimated two million Mexicans killed during the Revolution, became more known for his martyr-like qualities and less associated with the abusive traits

embellished by the media. With justifiable goals, honorable intentions, and the ability to relate to the experiences of less privileged Mexicans, Pancho Villa's complicated life and brutal death tempered his disreputable attributes.

Initially used to debase Villa by the U.S. media, and already in a solid position to represent Mexico's commitment to modernity by the beginning of the Revolution, tequila became associated with an oppositional consciousness not necessarily motivated by unity, but by the momentum for social change in the face of decades of corruption and inequality. The relationship between tequila and Pancho Villa was inevitable because their representations were shaped by and emerged within similar historical situations rooted in cross-border conflicts--struggles in which their images were simultaneously mobilized to racialize Mexicans as foreign "others," dangerous to the wellbeing of American innocence and Anglo manhood. As commodities, tequila and Pancho Villa brought together various components of lo Mexicano that appealed to the rejuvenated national identity. Thus, the production and consumption of the image of tequila and Pancho Villa, "serve[d] both the economic interests of the producers and the cultural interests of the consumers while not completely separating the two" (Fiske 1989, 25).

Conclusion

The period during and following the Revolution was pivotal in bolstering tequila's reputation as Mexico's national spirit. Amid widespread social transformation, new symbols were mobilized by the state to promote a united national identity. Struggles

between conflicting groups (liberals and conservatives) and their ideologies (Indigenismo and Hispanismo) regarding how to modernize Mexico followed "the dominant European conviction that a state is the expression of a people with a common culture and the same language and is produced by having a common history" (Batalla 2002, 30). With an emphasis on unity and no true commitment to equality, both Indiginistas and Hispanistas sought to establish a homogeneous national identity whose past traditions would serve as a base from which to stimulate modern development. To be sure, the new Mexican revolutionary state was "eager to perpetuate notions of Mexicanidad rooted in an 'authentic' mestizo rural culture of which it was the legitimate custodian and beneficiary" (Joseph and Henderson 2002, 2).

At the same time that tequila appealed to liberals and conservatives concerned with modernity and focused on establishing a unified (and acceptable) image of the nation, tequila also became associated with notions of lo Mexicano that stood in contrast to the positivist trajectory of the Mexican elite. The embodiment of machismo, Pancho Villa emerged as a symbol of the Revolution on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border. Challenging the Mexican establishment and the American government, Pancho Villa was simultaneously depicted as a villain and hero whose attributes became incorporated into divergent conceptions of Mexican masculinity. Even though he abstained from alcohol, Pancho Villa's macho characteristics were narrated through alcohol in general and tequila in particular. In the United States, Pancho Villa's macho, tequila-drinking image established a

racialized metaphor that fused notions of Mexican manhood and alcohol consumption onto dysfunctional notions of Mexican national identity that justified U.S. expansionist ideology and validated the increased policing not only of the border, but of Mexicans living within the United States. In Mexico, Villa's portrayal in popular culture emphasized laudable aspects of machismo that elevated his status as an icon of resistance who stood up to the Mexican and American governments. A romantic symbol of the Revolution that stirs pride and passion, Pancho Villa and his close association with tequila, together embody and reflect commemorative aspects of Mexican nationalism.

In contrast to these celebratory representations, alcohol prohibition (1920-1933) in the United States further pathologized Mexicans and Mexico as dangerous to American innocence by "enhanc[ing] the prestige of the victors (non-drinkers) and degrad[ing] the culture of the losers (drinkers)" (Gusfield 1963, 5). Despite attempts by prohibitionists to restrict American travel to Mexico in order to purchase alcohol, tourism continued to increase. The act of crossing the border into Mexico signaled one's predilection for illicit activities that included alcohol, drugs, gambling, and prostitution. As a site of vice that contrasted with the "virtuous" laws of the United States, Mexico was depicted as risky, unruly, and immoral--a place where forbidden behavior was seen as customary and, perhaps, even expected. From a historic perspective, Mexico has been portrayed as a location where "inappropriate" behavior is the norm. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that a century later, Mexico is one of the primary destinations for American spring-

break revelers who, known for indulging in excessive drinking, seek out new and exciting forms of pleasure. Visiting places like Cancun, where, “nothing happens in moderation,” new generations of Americans, much like the U.S. media from years past, reproduce symbolically through consumption, particular metaphors of domination whereby Mexico is imagined as site of intemperance.

As a social practice that illustrates people’s commitment to the nation and communicates expressions of national belonging, consumption remains a complicated and insufficiently understood process (Banet-Weiser 2007; Gray 2005). Furthermore, it poses elusive challenges to scholars interested in empirically capturing lesser-known linkages between the political, economic, and affective circumstances that influence common perceptions of “others.” Sociologists interested in critically engaging with politics related to structures of feeling (Williams 1975) should pay greater attention to connecting the social, cultural, and emotional contexts that not only naturalize particular national attributes, but at the same time, reinforce hegemonic constructions of difference and normality. Tracing the multiple representations of tequila in a particular historical moment across borders, this chapter sheds light on the terms and conditions that simultaneously structure seemingly divergent meanings of Mexican social identities.

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Endnotes

Despite its inclusive undertones, the definition of mestizaje excluded people of African decent whose presence was well documented in the work force.

Traditional ballad attributed to Miguel Lira (see María y Campos1962). English translation by the author.

La Valentina is the name of popular corrido said to be written by Pancho Villa.