

The Erotic Power of Sensuality and Sexuality: The Identity of Women in the Mexican Revolution

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Historically, Mexican women have played significant roles in the history of the Mexican Revolution (circa 1910-1919). However, their multiple roles in the Mexican Revolution are not as recognized or recorded as much as their male counterparts. Recent research projects on the participation of women and their various roles in the Mexican Revolution aim to fill this gap (Soto, 1990; Macias, 1980; Bush, 1994; Arrizón, 1998; Doria Peña, 2002; and Soto-Carle, 2005). Very few theatre scholars analyze the plays of Mexican playwrights that write about women's roles in the Mexican Revolution (Arrizón, "Soldaderas and the Staging," 1998; Doria Peña, 2002). This essay aims to construct a historical narrative on women's roles during the Mexican revolution and explores two Mexican playwrights and their plays on the Mexican Revolution: María Luisa Ocampo, *El corrido de Juan Saavedra* (1929) and Elena Garro, *Felipe Ángeles* (1966). Using U.S. Latina scholar Alicia Arrizón's concept of sensuality and sexuality, we argue that these playwrights, Ocampo and Garro address a feminist perspective of the sensual and sexual subjectivities of women in the midst and the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. This essay begins with introductions to Arrizón's theory of Latina sensuality and sexuality, a brief description of each playwright, followed by an introduction to the play and excerpts from the plays demonstrating how sensuality and sexuality serve as agents of social, political, and erotic power for the women to navigate through the Mexican Revolution.

Representations of Mexicana/Latina¹ Sensuality and Sexuality

Our interest in comparing Mexican playwrights and their plays about the Mexican Revolution stems from our personal understanding of the historical, social, and cultural connection to the land that our Mothers knew as México. Sharing a social and cultural history, Mexicana/Latinas are responding to the same systems of patriarchy in our everyday lives and for scholarship, contesting the traditional research paradigms (Anzaldúa 1987; Bernal 1998; Norma E. Cantú and Olga Nájera-Ramírez, 2002; Sandoval 2008). A Latina feminist standpoint also acknowledges the connections to indigenous roots by embracing the dualities and contradictions in the lives of Mexicanas and U.S. Latinas. This notion of Latina Feminism in the Americas is further articulated in literary scholar Anna Marie Sandoval's book, *Toward a Latina Feminism of the Americas: Repression and Resistance in Chicana & Mexicana Literature*. In her book Sandoval writes that "sharing a cultural history, Chicanas, [Latinas], and Mexicanas critique similar issues"(2008, 2). Sandoval advocates and develops a consciousness of Latin American feminism in her writings that explore the experiences of Chicana and Mexicana/Latina writers. Much like Sandoval's Mexicana/Latina epistemology, our interdisciplinary studies in Mexican Literature and Latina/o Theatre acknowledges that a Latina epistemology is needed to reformulate the diversity and complexity of gender and sexuality in performative contexts.

¹ The term Mexicana/Latina is used interchangeably to discuss women of Mexican origin and/or women who identify with this label. We use these terms to consciously and critically remind our readers and ourselves that our epistemology comes from both matriarchal ideologies of Mexicanas' (our Mothers born in Mexico) and U.S. Latinas' (daughters born in the U.S.) transnational thought and experiences. These terms highlight intergenerational and transnational *mestiza* feminist perspectives. Our Mexicana/Latina feminist identities are complex and are composed of multiple layers. As scholars and educators we identify as Latinas and use a U.S. Latina feminist analysis (Arrizón, et al.) to "read" or derive knowledge about the roles of Mexican women who participated in the Mexican Revolution. The act of Mexicanas/Latinas "reading" each other across the U.S.-Mexico border has a longstanding oral and written history. Our epistemological framework begins by recognizing existing histories that are rooted in the oral traditions of Mexicana feminist ideologies.

To date, the majority of work on gender and sexuality in dramatic texts and performances has been largely restricted to the analysis of mostly playwrights and performing female artists from the United States or Great Britain. However, with Arrizón's most recent publications *Latina Performance: Traversing the stage* (1999), *Latinas on Stage* (2000), and *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance* (2006), these texts have broaden the scope of Latinas as performative subjects, contested the perspectives of Mexicana/Latinas within traditional theories of performance, and pursued critical engagements with race, sexuality, identity, and transnationalism, in performance scholarship. Influenced by Alicia Arrizón's paradigms of Latina sensuality and sexuality, which develops a feminist cultural practice and theory in the field of Theatre and Performance for Latinas, builds upon overlapping traditional notions of female sensuality and modern notions of sexuality attributed in Raymond Williams' book *Marxism and literature* (1977).

Arrizón's analysis of female sensuality and sexuality in *Latina subjectivity, sexuality and sensuality* (2008), addresses Williams theory of "structure of feeling" as a source of cultural insights and understanding of a specific culture in order to define the intricate notions of sensuality. Arrizón includes in her scope of sensuality "'this structure of feeling' is what I associate with sensuality—it is experienced subjectively as we become spectators and participants of the world we inhabit and represent" (192). For Arrizón, in the Mexicana/Latina culture it is how we perform sensuality "in music, clothing, fragrance, and accessories, or while walking, singing, and dancing....seen only in the consciousness of subjecthood" (193). Furthermore, Arrizón posits that sensuality can be expressed in one's sexuality and recognizing the sharp overlapping tones of both sensuality and sexuality. She states that, "while sexuality is

characterized by sex, sexual activity, and sexual orientation, to be sensual is to be aware of and to explore feelings and sensations of beauty, luxury, joy, and pleasure” (192-93). The sensuality affect publicized by Arrizón focuses on the whole essence of feelings, emotions, actions, and thoughts that please a woman. I believe this begins a theoretical discussion on the variety of ways in which Mexicana/Latinas express their erotic power².

Another aspect to Arrizón’s theory of sensuality and sexuality in Mexicana/Latinas is the paradoxical situation embedded within the social structures of the Latino culture. As Arrizón and Chicana/o historians recognize, Latina/o culture is naturally sensual all of which are based but not limited to, the historical views of language, music, clothing, dance, and food. However, sexuality is a taboo subject for many Latina/os. Arrizón states that, “the effects of *marianismo*, *machismo* and “whore-virgin” dichotomy are embedded in a cultural legacy shaped by the entrenchment of Christian values and patriarchies in Latino cultures” (193). Arrizón advocates for a cultural practice that elicits a critical analysis based on a subject of understanding how Mexicana/Latinas function “sensuality” and “sexuality” under the social structures of patriarchy. Exposing the differences and similarities of sensualities and sexualities among Latinas is what Arrizón actively promotes in critical engagement. She states, “to develop a feminist cultural practice and theory that works towards understanding the complexities Latina/o sensuality and sexuality, it is necessary to identify representations as a political issue and to analyze women’s subordination within patriarchal forms of representation” (193). While there has been a historical process of sensuality and sexuality in Latino culture, we are influenced more so by

² The scholarship response to women of color and their sexuality has been varied: philosophizing, spiritual, sensual, and psychic. A rather profound articulation of the erotic as power comes from Audre Lorde’s essay, “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* edited by Henry Abelove Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (Routledge: New York, 1993).

contemporary media views on Mexicana/Latina sensuality and sexuality. Given these contemporary and historical factors, Mexicana/Latinas face a paradoxical condition that is forever changing, contesting, reinventing their own views of sensuality and sexuality, in particular, as manifested in the plays of Ocampo and Garro.

María Luisa Ocampo (November 24,1907 - September 15, 1974)

María Luisa Ocampo Heredia belongs to the first generation of women who promoted the acknowledgment of the rights to citizenship for the Mexican woman and made a valiant defense towards these women obtaining the right to vote (Cervantes 1). Ocampo is one of the most important figures and dramaturges of the twentieth century and foremost in Contemporary Mexican Theater (Merlin 39). She was the only woman during this century to also promote theater in Mexico (Merlín 39). For example, she shared ideas with other well-known dramaturges such as, Rodolfo Usigli and Amalia de Castillo Ledón and decided to support theatrical projects throughout Mexico. Ocampo was born on November 24th in 1908, in Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico and died on August 15th in 1974. She was the daughter of Melchor Ocampo and Delia Rosuara Herrera, both from a middle class family (Merlín 41). She started her studies in 1910 at Mineral del Oro in the state of Mexico and completed them at the capital of the republic. Before becoming part of the literary world as a theatrical writer, this influential dramaturge crossed the commerce path, where she assisted the students of commerce as the President of the Health Brigade. She was also second in command at the *oficina de Archivo y Correspondencia* for the National Comptroller's Office. As a young adult, she wrote verses and shared them with her friends from the brigade. Ocampo's verses did not have the romantic tone generally written by an eighteen year-old woman, they associated more with

everyday life occurrences (Merlín 41). Some of the titles to these are *La avenida*, *San Felipe*, *La perfumista*, and *El cine*. In 1922, she wrote her first theatrical play, *El estigma*. However, she was not known until she wrote the comedy *Cosas de la vida*, which she wrote in 1923. After the premiere of her play *Cosas de la vida* at the Teatro Municipal she was named an honorary partner for her success in theater by the *Sociedad de Estudiantes e Hijos del Estado de Guerrero*.

During the 1922 to 1955 she wrote more than 35 plays in addition to writing novelas³. Nevertheless, her plays were accepted and put on stage by the major theater companies in Mexico from 1923 until 1943. During these two decades, Ocampo played a vital role in the Mexican theater and continued her participation in political organizations. She was chosen as secretary of the *Acción Femenil del Frente Zapatista de la República* (Río Reyes 255-256). Furthermore, she participated in many other societies and organizations such as, *Ateneo de mujeres de México*, *Bloque de obreros intelectuales*, *Unión Mexicana de Autores*, and the PEN club of Mexico (Merlín 129). Ocampo's advocacy for women's rights was an important personal choice that influenced her writing for the stage.

Similar to the literature she wrote as a young lady, Ocampo's plays are based on the real events and activities during the time period of her writings. Within them she utilizes real historical characters with fictitious names, as well as changes some of the circumstances to the events. Ocampo also has a very unique method of writing her plays, which can include any one or all of the following techniques: serenades, processions, songs, dance, roosters, and the *corrido*

³ Just to name a few of her theatrical work: *El refugio* (1923), *Lunela* (1923), *El matrimonio de Lucía* (1923), *La hoguera* (1924), *Los que han hambre y sed* (1925), *Una mujer* (1925), *Las máscaras* (1926), *Más allá de los hombres* (1928), *El corrido de Juan Saavedra* (1929); in the 1930's she wrote the plays, *Castillos en el aire* (1930), *Tres hermanos* (1930), *Traducción de Los hermanos Kamarazov* (1932), *El santo de Chucho López* (1933), *La casa en ruinas* (1934), and *Una vida de mujer* (1937).

(ballads). According to Arrizón, these are the components to the sensuality of the Latino culture. It is the world in which Ocampo's characters inhabit and represent ("Latina subjectivity, sexuality and sensuality" 193). Integrating these cultural elements in her plays indicate cultural symbols highlighting that María Luisa Ocampo was very conscious of her surroundings and what was going on around her, especially of how the Mexican woman was treated during the time period of the Mexican Revolution.

The Mexican woman developed a spectacular role during the Revolution. Women of all classes formed resistance groups, founded newspapers and magazines, worked as nurses, constructed hospitals and health organizations, purchased, stole and sold weapons, they fought and collaborated plans and documents (Soto 21). In her literature, Ocampo wanted to give an understanding of these different roles, from the traditional woman to the *soldadera*. The *soldadera* was a woman who traveled with the armies in order to cook, fight in battle, heal the wounded, and do a massive amount of other activities while living in misery alongside the men who battled in the Revolution. Furthermore, with her respected political roles, which Ocampo pursued, and her dramatic literature, she represented the voice of the Mexican woman.

In *El corrido de Juan Saavedra*, which premiered at el *Teatro Regis* in Mexico on May 24, 1929 and was published in 1934, the play is set in Tixtla, Guerrero, Mexico in 1912 and the scene is on a revolutionary campsite, where there are a variety of characters: a young 18 year-old girl, some men, a 40 year-old woman, another woman, the general, Juan, two other women, an old man, a soldier, Adelaida (a 25 year-old woman), and a group of soldiers. In the following scene of *El corrido de Juan Saavedra*, Ocampo demonstrates the gender relations between men

and women fighting in the Mexican Revolution. She begins with the use of generic terms to equalize gender roles, such as *mujer*, *muchacha*, *hombre primero*, *hombre segundo*, etc...

Muchacha: Ya mero entramos allá...(Señala un punto.)

Hombre primero: ¡México! (Todas se vuelven a mirar el lugar donde señala la muchacha.)

Muchacha: ¡Tantas cosas! ¡Tantos vestidos! ¡Cómo andan las catrinas de México!

Hombre primero: Cuando éntremos allá te compro todo lo que quieras. Vamos a tener harto dinero.

Muchacha: ¡Adió! ¿Y de dónde?

Hombre primero: ¡De los ricos, caray! Par' eso peliamos, pa que no lo tengan todo y uno ande siempre deseando las cosas.

Muchacha: Nomás que si lo sabe Raymundo que tú me regalas cosas...

Hombre primero: No le hace. Yo me las arreglo con él, mialma.

Muchacha: ¡No eres tan hombre!

Hombre primero: ¿Quieres verlo?

Muchacha: Así dicen todos y naiden se atreve.

Hombre primero: ¿Quieres que te lo despache de una vez?

Muchacha: A verlo, pues. (El hombre se levanta y coge su carabina.)

Hombre segundo: ¡Epa! ¡Va a hacer una tarugada! (A la mujer primera.) Todas las indinas viejas tienen la culpa de las desgracias que suceden.

Muchacha: ¿Y a usted que le va?

Hombre segundo: A mí, nada. Pero el otro es también un cristiano. (Entran otros dos soldados, extienden un sarape en el suelo y sacan una baraja.)

Hombre cuarto: (Pone dos cartas sobre el sarape.) La sotita de oros y el as de bastos.

Hombre quinto: Vete al as y no perderás. Le voy un tostón.

Hombre cuarto: ¡Cinco de copas! Ay, que te emborrachas. Tres de oros; caray, cómo te quieren. (Siguen jugando. La mujer segunda, que está acostada, se mueve y se queja.)

Hombre segundo: Ora, cállese.

Mujer primera: ¡Déjela! ¡Le metieron un balazo en la mera barriga y quiere que se esté queda!

Mujer segunda: (Entre sollozos.) Demetrio...¡ay, Demetrio! ¡pa qué salimos de nuestra tierra y de nuestra casa! A estas horas estarías vivo...

Hombre segundo: Cállese; ¿pa qué se meten las mujeres en lo que no les importa? Éstas son cosas de hombres. (326-328).

Illustrated in this scene are the new roles that the Mexican woman took on during the Revolution. A common role is the woman who fought physically in the war alongside the men, better known as *soldaderas*. *Soldaderas* were seen more often as the role of the *Muchacha* in the preceding scene, who fought alongside with the men, traveled with the men to cook for them and sleep with them, and perform as the men's personal prostitutes. Within political upheaval, these women were accustomed to use their sexuality to change their status, as we can see with the role of the *Muchacha*. She knows that *el hombre* will not be able to provide her with the things she wants and needs, however, he can supply her more so than Raymundo. These women took

advantage of and would be with the man that was able to provide them with the most financial opportunities and material wealth. For *Muchacha*, the use of her sexuality was a financial gain which meant more than just changing her social status, it also meant political power and being able to control her own future. For *Muchacha*, material wealth was a symbolic expression of what Arrizón articulates as the “sensations of beauty, luxury, joy, and pleasure” and “a subject’s sensuality stimulates her/his sexuality” (193). These are concepts and functions that empowered sensuality and sexuality for *Muchacha*.

In the following scene we see more characteristics of the *soldadera* and her perspective during the Mexican Revolution.

Muchacha: (Yendo con los jugadores.) El que gane me tiene que dar a mí.

Hombre cuarto: Yo te lo doy, preciosa.

Muchacha: ¿De veritas?

Hombre cuarto: Nomás ven por ellos.

Muchacha: A poco dirás que te tengo miedo.

Hombre cuarto: ¡A verlo! (Se le acerca la muchacha. Él la coge por el cabello y la atrae a sí violentamente, echándosela encima. La besa. Entra el hombre primero.)

Hombre primero: Ya lo...(Al ver a la muchacha se echa la carabina a la cara. La muchacha da un grito y corre a un lado.)

Hombre cuarto: (Sacando un puñal.) Yo no tengo cuete, pero si quiere, amigo vámonos p'allá.

Hombre segundo: Asilénciese. Todas éstas...son una punta de...asilénciate, José. ¿Qué

juites a hacer?

Hombre primero: Jallé dormido a Raymundo y le di con la culata en la mera cabezota.

Mujer primera: ¡Jesús! (Entra el general.)

General: ¿Ónde anda mi coronel Saavedra? No me lo han visto por'ái?

Mujer primera: ¿Quién sabe onde anda?

General: (Paseando furioso.) ¿Ónde se habrá metido? ¡A ver tú!

Hombre segundo: (Cuadrándose.)Mande, mi general.

General: Lárgate a buscarlo, y si no lo trais no vuelvas. (Mutis el hombre. Mirando al que está con el organillo.) Échame una pieza de esas movidas. (A la muchacha.) Ven acá, mialma. (La muchacha se acerca. El hombre primero se interpone.)

Hombre primero: Déjemela, mi general.

General: ¿Qué diablos quéres tú?

Hombre primero: Esta vieja anda conmigo.

General: (Dándole un puntapié.) Y a mí, ¿qué me importa? (El hombre trata de revolverse. A los soldados.) ¡Llévense a éste! (Se le echan encima, lo desarman y se lo llevan. Él lucha por desasirse.) Me lo cuelgan del árbol más alto pa que todos vean mi autoridad.

Hombre primero: (Gritando.) Déjenme, déjenme. ¡Por ésa...maté a Raymundo! ¡No me maten! (Mutis los soldados con él. Se escuchan sus voces, que se van apagando.)

Muchacha: ¿Me dejas ir contigo pa México?

General: Natural, mialma. Serás la generala. Te compraré un automóvil pa que andes pa'rriba y pa'bajo por las calles, y te envidien toditas las catrinas. Muchacha: ¿No me da

nada en prenda?

General: (Arrojándole unas monedas.) Toma eso. (326-328)

In this passage, *Muchacha* as *Soldadera* constructs her image as one with compelling erotic agency. Her body becomes the main weapon and tool for negotiating power relations and obtaining materialistic objects, all for a better way of life. In doing so, *Muchacha* creates her own sexualized subjectivity within the Mexican Revolution. *Muchacha* left Raymundo for *el Hombre primero* because he promised her dresses like the ones the rich women wore, and then she left *el Hombre primero* because the General promised her a car. *Muchacha* illustrates both her sensuality and sexuality as Arrizón advocates that self-representation becomes a political issue. For *Muchacha*, she seeks pleasure in the selection of clothes as a site of performance, and her sexuality as a political agency for advancement in the social patriarchal hierarchy.

During the Mexican Revolution, it was difficult for the woman to be more than just a woman; she had to do what she had to, in order to live a better life, which creates a paradoxical space for women. Also demonstrated in the scene above is a common attitude in which men blamed women for the war. Men continued to express that everything is always the woman's fault. The *Hombre segundo* says "*todas las indinas viejas tienen la culpa de las desgracias que suceden*" (327). This quote clearly accuses the woman for everything (all disgrace) up to the Revolution itself. Ironically, *Hombre segundo* tells the *Mujer segunda* that the Revolution is a man-thing and women should not stick their nose into what is of none of their concern. These quotes exemplify the image of what the *macho* Mexican man felt towards the Mexican woman during the time period of the Revolution; the woman needed to be at their beck and call and if she wanted more than this a man would simply rid him of her. This scene also demonstrates that

the woman needed to satisfy a man's desires and cook and clean for him, and was not competent of understanding what was going on around her.

The Mexican men created a subordination role for women as they displayed the struggle for power among the men. For example, the General had sent for *Hombre primero* to get hanged, not because he was in love with and had true feelings for the *Muchacha* but because he wanted to show *Muchacha* his authority and power. During this time, men also believed that the woman were bad and showed no respect towards her especially when they were called “*viejas*”, “*indinas*” and “*putas*”. To resist these patriarchal forms of representation, women such as *Muchacha* exercised their self-representation of power through means of sensuality and sexuality expression.

María Luisa Ocampo in *El corrido de Juan Saavedra*, was the first Mexican playwright to construct a theatrical image of the *soldadera* as *prostituta*. *Muchacha* illustrates that her sexuality is power, especially in time of war. *Muchacha* defines for women the alternative role as *la prostituta*, which gives her a way to gain possessions that would advance her status in the war. Therefore, feeling empowered by her sexuality as a weapon and exploring the complexities of “woman” during the Mexican Revolution. *Muchacha* follows the pattern of Mexican women who opt to find their place in non-conventional roles and embrace their female erotic sensuality and sexuality within social and political contexts.

Elena Garro (November 11, 1916 – August 22, 1998)

Elena Garro is considered one of the most controversial and fascinating figures of the Mexican culture (Vargas 1). Garro was born on November 11th in 1916 in Puebla, Mexico.

She was raised in Puebla with her family and along with the indigenous sons and daughters of the employees of her home. This is where her respect and interest for the marginalized was born; in other words her extra literary intent to fight for the indigenous. As a young lady, Garro wrote articles for newspapers and magazines in favor of the distribution of land for the *campesinos* (farm workers). She also solicited a legal hearing from President Lázaro Cárdenas to help the *campesinos* (Toruño 7).

When Garro was 17 she was a choreographer for the *Teatro de la Universidad*, directed by Julio Bracho in Mexico City. In 1937 she married the very well known Mexican poet Octavio Paz, with whom she had a daughter. During this time, she distanced herself from the theatre and did not return to it until the 1950's. Octavio's diplomatic career took her to Paris, where she lived during the years of the postwar (1946-1951), and to Japan (1951-52). Upon her return to Mexico in 1953, she divorced Octavio Paz and worked in journalism where she prepared film guides. In 1953 she wrote the *novela*, *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, nonetheless, the dramaturge was not known for this novel, however, for her pieces *Andarse por las ramas*, *Los pilares de doña Blanca* and *Un hogar sólido*, which she wrote in 1957. The *Universidad Veracruzana* published these three works the following year under the title *Un hogar sólido*. She also wrote the dramatic plays *El Rey Mago*, *Ventura Allende* and *El Encanto y Tendajón Mixto* in 1957. The following years, she wrote the dramatic play *La señora en su balcón* (1960), *El árbol* (1963), and *La dama boba*, which premiered in *El Centro Cultural Popular* in 1968. In addition, she received the award "Xavier Villaurrutia" for the dramatic play *Los recuerdos porvenir* and the award, "Novela Juan Grijalbo" for the *novela* *Testimonios sobre Mariana* (1981).

During the crucial decade of the 1950's, she began her research on the Mexican Revolution and wrote a play, *Felipe Ángeles*. She got involved in the defense of the *campesinos* that had their land taken from them. This antigovernment position forced her to leave Mexico again in 1959. Later on she participated in el *movimiento estudiantil* in 1968 and after the October 2nd massacre in the *Plaza de Tlatelolco*; she was accused of a communistic complot to destroy President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. This tense, prosecutable situation forced her to leave the country. Her exile took her to New York (1972), Madrid (1974), and Paris (1981). She lived in paranoia, misery, hunger and desperation for twenty years.

In 1991 the *Sociedad General de Escritores Mexicanos* (SOGEM) invited Garro to Mexico to be present at the *XII Muestra Nacional de Teatro* in Aguascalientes which was dedicated to her theatrical plays (Lopátegui, "Una nueva colección" 2). Later in 1993 she returned to live in Mexico, where she lived her last years. She had a very complicated life and her dramatic plays and *novelas* reflect the lifestyle and surroundings she lived through. Elena Garro died on August 22, 1998 in the city of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Even though Elena Garro did not incorporate the *corrido* in her plays, she did however write a historical drama about a figure who was present in her mind ever since she was a child and overheard her grandfather, Tranquilino Navarro and her uncle, General Benito Navarro speak of a just and honest man who died for the true ideals of the Revolution. She later brought the figure to life again in her play *Felipe Ángeles*.

In the following analysis the protagonist of the play will not be analyzed, however, the three female figures and how their roles in society changed drastically from the roles of the

women in *El corrido de Juan Saavedra* as the traditional Mexican woman, the prostitute, the vengeful *soldadera* to one where the Mexican woman used her intelligence to get her through the years of political resistance and rebellion. The dramaturge is not only paying homage to the grand distinguished men who fought in the Revolution and tried to reconstruct their society but also to the women who also took part in the reconstruction of Mexico.

The following passage demonstrates how the role of the Mexican woman becomes the voice of the town, as she fought against the assassination of Felipe Ángeles. The play takes place towards the end of the Revolution and we can see that Garro represents the woman who would react with reasoning not emotion in the following dialogue:

Señora Revilla: ¡General Diéguez, lo hemos buscado toda la noche!

Diéguez: (A mitad de las gradas) Lo ignoraba, señora: nunca me hubiera privado de su presencia.

(Diéguez baja las gradas y hace una reverencia a las señoras.)

Señora Seijas: Nos envían los comités Pro-Felipe Ángeles a pedir la vida de su prisionero.

Diéguez: No es mi prisionero, señoras, sino el prisionero del Gobierno. ¿Son ustedes parientes del general Ángeles?

Señora Galván: No señor, la familia del general Ángeles está en el destierro, usted lo sabe, y el Gobierno no deja cruzar la frontera a su hermano.

Diéguez: Perdón señora. Veo que vienen impulsadas por la piedad.

Señora Revilla: No señor, la justicia se parece poco a la piedad.

Diéguez: Señora, me precio de ser hombre que conoce la justicia, ya que estoy

encargado de impartirla.

Señora Galván: ¿A organizar esta función de teatro le llama usted justicia, general?

Señora Seijas: La confunde usted con el terror.

Diéguez: A veces el rostro de la justicia es aterrador. . . pero, no es mi propósito, discutir con señoras. ¿En qué puedo servirles? No entiendo lo que me piden. (21)

This passage speaks to the feminist concept of “social collective” that is promoted by many feminist critics (Judith Butler, 1990; Iris Marion Young, 1994; Kathi Weeks 1998). Social collective is a feminist “attempt to construct or speak for a subject, to forge the unity of coalition from the diversities of history and practice” (Young 716). As this concept relates to *Felipe Ángeles* the women, collectively, know that it is best to fight together than alone, a socially constructed behavior common in Mexican women. Their unity also represents a symbolic “bola,” in which they create a *coup de tat* to overthrow the decision of the assassination of Felipe Ángeles. There is an erotic feeling in the “social collective” concept that Garro explores in the construction of identity and sexuality among a circle of women. The three women represent a powerful force of women joining forces to create justice for their community. They realize that they are more powerful and have better odds at obtaining Felipe Ángeles’ freedom together rather than individually. Arrizón’s concept of sensuality is problematic when used with the “social collective” approach of the characters in *Felipe Ángeles*. As demonstrated in the social collective power of the women, intelligence and reasoning, for example, accentuate the sensuality of the women in the Mexican Revolution.

One can clearly see the role of the Mexican woman start to evolve with the attitudes of the three women presented in the play. They have gained confidence so that they are more able to articulate what is on their mind but choose their words cleverly so not to offend the authoritative men they have to deal with. In the following passage, the women interrogate Dieguez's motives for his quick plotting. Using their intelligence and power of reasoning, the women counteract his reasoning powers.

Diéguez: No está en mis manos satisfacer sus deseos, señoras.

Señora Galván: Pero sí está en sus manos formar un tribunal compuesto por generales adictos al régimen.

Señora Seijas: ¡Y esta prisa por anunciar la traición del general Ángeles! Se diría que están ustedes llenos de miedo.

Diéguez: Vivimos en un tiempo que va más de prisa que nosotros, señora. El gobierno no puede gastar muchos días en el caso de un general traidor a la Revolución.

Señora Revilla: General, antes de afirmar que su prisionero es traidor, debe usted probarlo.

Diéguez: ¿Pide usted pruebas? Las tendrá hoy mismo.

Señora Revilla: ¿El tribunal encargado de condenar a muerte a Felipe Ángeles me las va a dar?

Diéguez: Es un tribunal formado por antiguos compañeros de armas del acusado.

Señora Seijas: Amigos en el poder, dispuestos a conservarlo aun a costa de su honor.

Diéguez: ¡Señora!. . . Hay hechos que usted olvida: la Revolución triunfó y ella es la única que puede absolver o condenar a sus enemigos.

Señora Revilla: ¿La Revolución? ¿Llama usted la Revolución a una camarilla de ambiciosos que están sacrificando a todos los que se oponen a sus intereses personales?

Diéguez: (*Serio*) Señora, yo no puedo ayudarlas. No comparto sus opiniones políticas. Consulten con un abogado, el prisionero todavía no ha pedido defensores. (22)

This passage indicates that these *señoras* make General Diéguez a little nervous because they are very conscientious of what is going on around them and of Felipe Ángeles' state of affairs.

Diéguez, anxious to speed up the process of the assassination, fears that the women will interfere. The *señoras* are very direct when they speak to him and make sure to offend him without his acknowledgement. “*¡Y esta prisa por anunciar la traición del general Ángeles! Se diría que están llenos de miedo*” is an example of how this trio of women questions Diéguez's manhood (22). These women perform their sensuality by developing the concept of social collective to shape, influence, and inspire one another.

The trio of women, engage in “social collective,” as they stick to their guns and do whatever it takes to try to save Felipe Ángeles' life. Garro demonstrates this when she wrote:

(Por el lado izquierdo del proscenio entran poco a poco los generales del Consejo de Guerra. Ven a Diéguez acompañado de las señoras y permanecen alejados.)

Señora Galván: ¿Preparar la defensa de un condenado a muerte? ¿Así, sin tiempo, en unas cuantas horas?

Diéguez: Tengo entendido que la barra de abogados de Chihuahua forma parte de los Comités Pro-Felipe Ángeles. Ahí pueden encontrar a mejores consejeros que yo.

(Diéguez mira en dirección de los generales y trata de separarse de las señoras.)

Señora Revilla: ¿Y nos concederá hablar con su prisionero?

Diéguez: (Mirando hacia los generales) Cuantas veces lo juzguen necesario. El prisionero estará aquí antes de las ocho de la mañana. Me perdonan, pero debo atender a los señores generales del Consejo de Guerra. ¡A los pies de ustedes, señoras!

Señora Revilla: Gracias por su consejo, iremos a buscar abogados. (22)

This passage illustrates that the *señoras* have come together to save an innocent man's life because they believe that the Revolution was not formed to kill a man who fought to reconstruct the town of Chihuahua and also because there is nobody else willing to take a stand to be his defense. They have the intelligence and strategies to legally defend General Ángeles and are strong-headed in their ideals. Toruño explains the dialogue between Señora Revilla and Diéguez best when she said: "Ellas insisten en los aspectos legales, en los aspectos verdaderos, como también en la responsabilidad que tienen ante el pueblo de hacer resplandecer la justicia, al lograr la libertad de un inocente" (84). We also notice that Diéguez is always trying to escape from these women, he doesn't even want to have to speak to them because they question his every move and he feels threatened by everything they know or could find out. When exploring Latina sensuality and sexuality, the women in *Felipe Ángeles* navigate their political bodies by quickly strategizing and incorporating the appropriate language and reasoning demonstrating their ability to assert their identity as a collective unit. In functioning as a collective unit, the women serve as heroines to the plot of the play in saving the life of General Ángeles. It is

crucial to consider intelligence as an emotion of sensuality and the female body as sites of knowledge, language, history, and erotic power—the heroic characteristic in *Felipe Ángeles*.

Even though we are seeing the role of the Mexican woman develop, there are always those who will try to maintain the traditional ways and there will be those that never change, for instance, the group of the generals only consists of men; there is not a single woman on the *Consejo de Guerra*. Diéguez also always tries to put the women's position and role into a traditional one when he uses words such as “Señoras” and “¡A los pies de ustedes, señoras!” in order to indicate or presuppose that they do not have any power; and even though he acts as though he respects them, he does not have any respect for them. With a dialogue such as this one and the following one, one can undoubtedly recognize that Garro not only wanted to resist the development of the Mexican woman in society, but also in changing her role in literature. Rhina Toruño states the following about the same dialogue.

La actitud de las mujeres es totalmente opuesta a la de los militares, quienes insisten en practicar no esas características que la lógica masculina se ha apropiado de ellas, sino en aquéllas que la tradición ha atribuido a las mujeres como son la sumisión, la obediencia al Jefe aún a costa de la propia conciencia dado que para Diéguez quien también luchó con Angeles, éste es inocente. (85)

Garro opens a new door to a significant and respectful role for the woman through the three *señoras* who are the voice of the town of Chihuahua, and portrays the strength they put into attempting to free a man who is probably going to be assassinated either way. The naming of

“*señoras*” promotes a specific and distinct social collective, one that gives feminism in the play its specificity as political and erotic power in unity.

The *señoras* rise up against the embedded patriarchy—the oppressive powers. The subsequent dialogue exemplifies the fact that in a *machista* (male-dominated) society many times it does not matter how sharp these woman are, in the end the masculine logic will not let the *Consejo de Guerra* see the reasoning and truth, even though there has not been any documentation found accusing this Felipe Ángeles of wrong-doing.

Señora Revilla: Esperaba esa respuesta, pero también la política es variada y admite interpretaciones. Su partido, general Diéguez, era el mismo que el de Ángeles. ¿Quién ha cambiado?

Diéguez: El poder cambia al hombre.

Señora Revilla: Entonces, ¿reconoce que usted ha cambiado y que es cómplice de crímenes y de actos equivocados?

Diéguez: Hermosa señora, reconozco que todos hemos cambiado, pero no admito ser cómplice de crímenes. Reconozco también que hay actos que no me gustaría comentar y que no tengo más remedio que realizar. Por ejemplo, ahora nada me gustaría más que hacerla sonreír y sin embargo me veo obligado a contrariarla. Para ejercer el poder hay que establecer un equilibrio entre las concesiones y la dureza; por eso, al mismo tiempo, insisto en concederle todas las facilidades que me pide para defender al general Felipe Ángeles. Le aseguro, señora, que no siempre es grato ser inflexible, y menos frente a la belleza. Este es el juego de siempre, señora, las dos caras de la medalla. Y ninguna es

peor, ni mejor que la otra, y las dos son igualmente peligrosas. ¿No ha pensado usted en que podría ser yo el acusado y Ángeles el jefe de la plaza?

Señora Revilla: Después de este diálogo me parece inútil la defensa, ya que las cartas estaban echadas de antemano.

Señora Seijas: Hemos apelado a la Suprema Corte y a la Cámara de Diputados. De ellos esperamos una decisión favorable.

Diéguez: Señora, la Suprema Corte puede cambiar el final de este diálogo.

Señora Galván: El amparo de la Suprema Corte llegará de un momento a otro

(50 -51).

The women do not back down, they are always hopeful about the situation getting better with time and reasoning in which Garro demonstrates another dimension to the concept of “*soldadera*.” In Garro’s image, *las señoras* represented the “intelligent *soldaderas*” and the “social collective” voice of the Mexican Revolution. They were intelligent, heroic, and courageous women fighting in the Mexican Revolution, not physically, but with their ideas, words, and beliefs—this constructed their erotic power through sensuality and sexuality. Garro creates political agency in collaborating forces with each other as intelligent, strong-willed individuals. They not only seek justice for themselves, but also for those that have been unjustly imprisoned by the Mexican Revolution and society.

Conclusion

While these plays and playwrights are separated by thirty-seven years, they share some remarkable similarities in how Post-Mexican Revolutionary women playwrights viewed their sexualities. Ocampo and Garro, integrate both a “social collective” theory and a “sensual and sexual” theory to create a space in Mexican Theatre where complex and imaginative concepts of the *soldadera* are explored. Through their female characters in *El corrido de Juan Saavedra* (1929, María Luisa Ocampo) and *Felipe Ángeles* (1966, Elena Garro), the playwrights construct a theatrical image and a narrative on how Mexicana/Latinas negotiate their sexuality, appearance, and behavior during the Mexican Revolution. With the characteristics of exuding sexual dominance, heroic values, and intelligent demeanor, *soldadera* represents the complex history of Mexicana/Latina erotic power and feminine sexuality.

As Mexican feminist playwrights, Ocampo and Garro were highly influenced by the political environment of their time and both were faced with political opposition in creating a feminist narrative about the Mexican Revolution. Calling attention to women’s rights and fighting for the equality of women in Mexican culture, they were displaced or exiled in society for expressing their views of women in the Mexican Revolution. Finally, by highlighting women’s roles in the Mexican Revolution, Ocampo and Garro, exemplify agency in the female performative subjectivity. They illustrate the power structures that war creates, and demonstrate how women negotiate, mediate, and traverse the politics of war in the name of re-articulating their own female sensuality and sexuality, and political agency.

Moreover, one of the major contributions of this article is not only to centralize Mexicana/Latina performative subjectivities, but also to recognize an emerging articulation of a new epistemology in transnational Latina theatre research. A Mexicana/Latina feminist

epistemology, borrowing from U.S. Latina and Anglo feminist scholars, our mothers' Mexicana oral histories, and our lived experiences, gives us freedom to interpret our own reading of these plays. In doing so, we embrace these cultural ideas posited by Ocampo and Garro of *soldaderas*, *prostitutas*, *inteligentes* and *heroínas* and begin to understand the cultural history of erotic power, social dynamics, and political resistance through Mexicana/Latina's bodies and sexuality.

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