

**'CONSUMERS OF GOOD TASTE:'
MARKETING MODERNITY IN NORTHERN MEXICO, 1890-1910**

by

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ABSTRACT

Mexican historians, emphasizing capitalist production as the defining feature of nineteenth- and early twentieth century Mexican society, have largely overlooked the other question of capitalism, that of consumption. This emphasis has impeded a recognition of the cultural and social impact of a budding consumer society in Mexican cities prior to the Revolution of 1910. By the time of the 1910 Revolution, a culture of consumption had become synonymous with the public culture of the northern Mexican cities of Monterrey and Chihuahua. This consumer culture and an accompanying service economy arose where capitalist production and urban growth created mass societies of wage-earners reliant upon the market to satisfy their basic needs and increasing desires. It became a means by which enlightened Mexicans conveyed their vision of a modernizing Mexico, integrating and disseminating the messages of consumption with the principles of economic progress, nationalism, moral reform, and civic pride. By and large, this culture of consumption spoke to the sensibilities and moral values of Mexico's urban middle classes, yet it also included the artisan working classes who claimed social respectability for themselves by trying to emulate the consumption patterns of their social superiors. The effects of modern consumption also transformed gender roles and spheres of influence; new territories of public space became open to middle class women as consumption became identified as a feminine trait. Mass-circulation newspapers, department stores, commercialized entertainments, brand-name goods, and the "science of advertising" became the most visible symbols of this new culture. Not only did this culture of consumption inform the daily discourse and social relations of Mexicans, but it also transformed the urban landscape in which they worked, strolled, and found entertainment. As part of a modernizing effort by urban reformers to clean up city centers and remove vice to the fringes, shopping and entertainment districts shared public space and new urban transportation and communication networks with business establishments, civic buildings, and public monuments. Both the consumption and production sides of capitalism characterized the rapidly growing and transforming urban milieu in which increasing numbers of Mexicans lived.

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INTRODUCTION

On the night of Mexico's centennial on September 16, 1910, in place of the usual military parade, the residents of Monterrey witnessed a carefully orchestrated extravaganza showcasing the establishments and wares of their city's downtown commercial core. For days the much-awaited Competition of the Façades (Concurso de Fachadas) had captured the city's attention as shoppers and side-walk strollers had been kept wondering what lay behind the blanketed windows of the stores along Morelos street. As six o'clock neared, expectant citizens began to gather at the end of the street, arriving as passengers in automobiles, carriages, and coaches or as pedestrians. At the stroke of six, employees all along the thoroughfare turned on light switches and unveiled the large show windows of stores and business houses. The crowd began to move through the shopping district which storeowners and event organizers had "transformed into one grand open theater with the show windows serving as the stage settings."¹ The store fronts acted as the focus of the crowd's attention, as onlookers discussed the merits of each establishment to decide upon a winner. The La Reinera and the Treviño department stores joined other enterprises in receiving lavish praise for their flashing coloured lights, national flags, emblems and bunting, and other eye-catching decorations. For one journalist the most patriotic and "tasty" show windows belonged to the M. Cirno y Cía. department store. Display organizers had filled the background with an enormous shield of national colours while creating a foreground of a large gilt national emblem on one side and on the other a "more than life-size figure of liberty dressed in the national colors holding a Mexican flag."² The local businessmen who organized this display could only be pleased that the following day's front-page headlines called it "One Of The Most Brilliant Events In The History Of Monterrey."³

The central importance of store fronts and business façades in this celebration testifies to the new culture of consumption that emerged in the Porfirian years. While historians have dealt with the cultural, social, and economic impact of the productive forces of capitalism, they have yet to broach the effects of

¹Monterrey News, 17 September 1910, p. 1.

²Monterrey News, 17 September 1910, p. 1.

³Monterrey News, 17 September 1910, p. 1.

consumption upon Mexican society. Both of these aspects of capitalism characterized the rapidly growing and transforming urban milieu in which increasing numbers of Mexicans lived. Consumption, as well as essential to economic growth, came increasingly to define the culture and self-image of more and more Mexicans. This thesis, then, illustrates the importance of consumption to both the economy and culture of Mexico during the Porfiriato.

Consumerism became part of the dominant modernizing vision of the Porfirian era. A new culture of individuals exchanging pesos for goods and services arose in the urban market economies of Mexico during this time. For urban Mexican men and women, this new consumer culture entered nearly every aspect of their daily lives to excite and educate them in a new way of living. Advertising on posters, billboards, handbills, and storefronts as well as in new mass-circulation newspapers beckoned urban Mexicans to part with their pesos wherever they went. From these sources, Mexico's new consumers learned of the healthiest beer, the most modern cigarette brand, the most entertaining vaudeville-cinema show, and the latest fashions in the new department and clothing specialty stores. Urban dwellers spent their money and their leisure time not only shopping but in new spectator-oriented commercialized entertainments such as cinemas, refined vaudeville shows, bullfights, and circuses. At the same time public events and celebrations increasingly incorporated and emphasized the messages of consumption in their organizational framework, whether through advertising posters, corporate sponsorship, or leadership by local Chambers of Commerce and other business groups. For many, participation in this exchange system signified being part of Mexico's modernization efforts. It was through consumption that these Mexicans patterned themselves after Western European and other North American economic and cultural models.

Consumer culture is not, of course, unique to Mexico. For more than the last decade, historians have debated the impact of consumer cultures in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada but there is little consensus as to its societal and cultural effects.⁴ Some have seen in the advent of a modern consumer culture the democratization of luxury, in which increasing numbers of people have access to, and the ability to

⁴One of the first books to seriously recognize tackle the social and cultural issues of consumer culture is The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980, eds. T.J. Jackson Lears and Richard Wightman Fox (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

purchase, consumer goods.⁵ Others see a democratization of desire, in which the consumer world inculcates a certain uniformity among consumers.⁶ Perhaps the observations of Cynthia Wright and Michael Schudson are more on the mark.⁷ They concede that a sense of democratization occurs in a consumer culture--in the sense that anybody can buy any object as long as that consumer possesses the necessary money to purchase it--but that it is also based on the reality of economic class position which sets clear limits on who possesses the ability to acquire the objects of their desire. In essence, the culture of consumption publicizes a world where all can dream and aspire to the good life even if it is largely inaccessible to many.

In turn-of-the-century Mexico, with the exception Mexico City, nowhere was this more so than in prospering urban areas of the north. Cities such as Monterrey, in Nuevo León, and Chihuahua City, Chihuahua, fostered a consumer culture that stemmed from their proximity to established U.S. consumer markets and the influences of those markets combined with their own rapid growth in terms of the economy, population, and wealth. These northern urban zones developed quickly in response to the labour demands of heavy industrialization in areas like Monterrey or in export centers such as Chihuahua where light industries and factories complemented a commercial and banking center for a thriving mining and agricultural economy. The population of Monterrey skyrocketed from 14,000 to 79,000 in the four decades preceding the 1910 Revolution while Chihuahua City expanded from 12,000 to well over 30,000 residents.⁸ These urban residents could purchase both domestically-produced and imported consumer goods, benefitting from their cities' position as railway hubs for an increasingly inexpensive rail network. Within this transportation web, consumers tapped into Mexico's international, national, and regional markets which made

⁵Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse," Victorian Studies 32 no. 2 (Winter 1989), 169-188.

⁶Rosalind H. Williams, Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁷Cynthia Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); and Michael Schudson, Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984).

⁸Alan Knight, The Mexican Revolution, 2 vols. (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1986), vol. 1, 40.

mass-production and the distribution of foreign and domestic goods economically feasible.⁹

Each transaction involving the trading of pesos for goods and services, each new technological breakthrough which could somehow make a person's life easier or exciting, stood not only as a reinforcement of a capitalist economy, but also represented an idealized lifestyle for many Mexicans. This ideal, promoted and articulated by government and business leaders through the medium of public speeches, newspapers, and public celebrations, and, increasingly, delivered in the form of consumer goods and services, was to be characterized by affluence and leisure. Moreover, the residents of urban Mexico endowed themselves with an image of modernity not only by the actual act of buying, but also by the type of good purchased as well as the location of the transaction.

Modernity, as defined by the dominant public culture, included consumerism. Although historians of Mexico have previously noted that many middle- and even working-class Mexicans adhered to a "developmentalist" ideology, composed of moral reform, civic pride, hygiene, nationalism, and economic progress, none have included consumerism as part of this package of beliefs. Many urban Mexicans, particularly those known as the gente decente, or respectable people, defined themselves by means of these cultural values. This category included lowly municipal clerks as well as powerful businessmen, teachers, shopkeepers, government officials, store managers, journalists and other "white collar" workers.¹⁰ As the twentieth century began, the gente decente became the standard-bearers for the moral, economic, and consumer behaviour that had defined the middle classes of Western Europe and the rest of North America as modern. They shared the Porfirian government's modernizing efforts of economic progress based on the Western ideologies of liberalism and capitalism. At the same time, their social and moral values closely duplicated their European and North American counterparts. Some members of the working classes, particularly artisans, claimed a place for themselves within this respectable society, partly through their

⁹From 1873 to 1910 freight rates drop from 10 cents/km/ton to 2.3cents/km/ton. Stephen H. Haber, Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 16.

¹⁰For more information on the gente decente and their developmentalist ideology, see Knight, The Mexican Revolution, especially vol. 2, 510-511; William E. French, "Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico," Hispanic American Historical Review 72, no. 4 (November, 1992), 529-553; William H. Beezley, Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1987).

patterns of consumption.¹¹

The gente decente, or "consumers of good taste," as one newspaper journalist called them,¹² integrated consumption into their larger social vision, conveying and reiterating their perceptions of gender roles and superior class position through their participation and inclusion into a consumer culture. This arrangement led to a mutually-satisfying relationship between consumer and vendor, the gente decente and the advertising and consumer industries. Paradoxically, as participation in this culture of consumption reinforced some gender roles and separate spheres of influence it also subverted ideas of female domesticity by opening up whole new territories of public space to the women of the middle class. Society continued to glorify women and ensconce them in a cult of feminine domesticity that portrayed them as mothers and "Guardian Angels" of the Mexican home, but the expanding market economy necessitated that they be consumers as well as household providers.¹³ Women became shoppers who needed to leave the home in order to meet their families' new consumer needs. Department stores and urban shopping and entertainment districts became zones of consumption defined by the presence of women.

At the same time, moral reformers, local businessmen and governments set out to control and transform urban social space so that its appearance harmonized with the refined image of urban modernity held by enlightened Mexicans. Walking through the streets of Monterrey and Chihuahua in the early 1900s, an observer would quickly deduce the successful rise of modern consumption, state-building efforts, and moral-reforming civic pride. Department stores, hotels, cinemas, theaters, commercial houses, and Chambers of Commerce represented the new consumer system in an urban landscape marked by signs of capitalism and state-building in the form of state and municipal palaces, urban mansions of business elites, army barracks,

¹¹For artisan efforts to gain membership in respectable society, see Alan Knight, "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900-1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16 (May 1984), 51-79; and William E. French, "'Progreso Forzado:' Workers and the Inculcation of the Capitalist Work Ethic in the Parral Mining District," in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, eds. William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994).

¹²*Monterrey News*, 29 August 1905, p. 4, in a newspaper article praising the sophistication of patrons who imbibed the various award-winning beers of the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc.

¹³For more on this Mexican middle class cult of domesticity, see French, "Prostitutes and Guardian Angels."

newly paved and modernized public markets, public schools, factories, and historical monuments. Paved streets, trams, telephones and telegraph lines provided a network for a commercialized economy moving people, information and goods.

The festival calendars in Monterrey and Chihuahua also began to reflect the official culture of the *gente decente*, but consumerism alone did not change these festivals. The new organizers transformed the public celebratory calendar by merging their partiality for the vision of the modern consumer world with the contemporary Porfirian ideologies of moral reform, civic pride, and state-building. Businessmen became central figures in the organization of festivals new and old, secular and religious. They figured in the workings of nationalist holidays such as Independence Day, the new and expressly commercial Carnival in Monterrey, and the old Trades Procession and the Santa Rita festival.

All in all, by the late nineteenth century, the residents of Monterrey and Chihuahua lived in an environment characterized by the glorification of personal and family consumption, where definitions of social norms and the ideal image of a "modern Mexican" centered around the act of consumption. Consumers, however, had to ensure that whatever they purchased enhanced their personal modern image, that the item they bought or the event they attended embodied the larger values of modernization upheld by the *gente decente* and Porfirian society. Fortunately, consumers had a new guide to help them in this task: the new mass-circulation newspaper and the advertising it contained.

MASS-CIRCULATION NEWSPAPERS AND ADVERTISING

Into this urban sprawl came the rise of the mass-circulation newspaper and the science of advertising. Newspapers, purchased on the streets or delivered to the home, became a necessary accoutrement and guide to the city for enlightened urban dwellers. Literate Chihuahuans, over one-quarter of the state population, comprised the major market for these papers, but non-literate citizens could also be counted due to the iconographic nature of consumer advertising coupled with the modern connotations of simply looking at the

pages.¹⁴ In general, these readers could browse through the daily journals to find out about new developments in the world and in town. For some, local news meant checking on new businesses in the area, while for others the reading of newspapers and their advertisements allowed them to keep in touch with the latest available products and with what stores and entertainment venues had to offer.

The editors of these mass-circulation newspapers realized that their readership and their advertisers had given their journals a mandate to advance a tone of a modernizing and increasingly affluent society. They expressed this stance through the publicizing of consumer goods, services, and other progressive advances made in their cities, regions and the whole world. New technologies of mass production made particularly newsworthy stories, and allowed for the creation of new consumer products and the lowering of prices for traditional ones, such as cigarettes.¹⁵ Journalists reported on the domestic consumer industries that ranged in size from the huge Cervecería Cuauhtémoc - Monterrey's "mother industry"¹⁶ -- to the smaller but highly efficient electrified tortillerías. These industries fed, quenched the thirst, clothed, cleaned, and housed Mexicans of all classes. From the coarse cotton clothing made for workers to the bottled sparkling mineral water from the Topo Chico resort, there were products for both the affluent and wage earners. Around Monterrey and Chihuahua, the goods commonly produced for mass-markets included bread, crackers, food sauces and pastes, vinegars and oils, butter, preserved meats, carbonated water, chocolate, sweets, beer, liquors, ice, matches, veils, soaps, cosmetics, perfumes, cigarettes, beds, and some furniture for both home and office.¹⁷

Newspapers also noted efforts to further facilitate the movement of commodities and labour, as city planners and new service industries in Monterrey and Chihuahua built urban infrastructures in the name of increased efficiency, technology utilization, and public safety and hygiene. Electric power grids provided

¹⁴Nearly 28% of Chihuahuans were literate, and specific groups such as artisans boasted rates of nearly 35% with even higher levels among the gente decente. Knight, The Mexican Revolution vol. 1, 40; and Knight, "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution," 53.

¹⁵Haber, Industry and Underdevelopment; and Williams, Dream Worlds, 10.

¹⁶Alexander Saragoza, The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 5.

¹⁷Mario Cerutti, Burguesía, capitales e industria en el norte de México: Monterrey y su ámbito regional (1850-1910) (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León: Alianza Editorial, 1992), 180.

power to industries, stores, commercial businesses, and lighting for the streets. Paved roads and electric trams moved people to and from their houses, places of work, stores, and entertainment venues. Information networks of telegraph and telephone systems criss-crossed business districts and, in the case of telephones, began to be available for domestic consumption.

The Monterrey News in Monterrey and El Correo de Chihuahua in Chihuahua were two examples of this new breed of daily paper covering the urban world. Founded in 1892 by American entrepreneur Joseph A. Robertson, the Monterrey News became a highly successful English-language daily newspaper, read by Mexicans and Americans alike. Robertson eventually launched a Spanish edition in 1906, yet even then the English edition continued to print bilingual and occasional Spanish-only advertisements.¹⁸ El Correo, a Spanish-language newspaper dedicated to the propagation of Catholic reform ideas, was edited by Silvestre Terrazas from 1898 to 1912. These two newspapers disagreed on politics and religion but they shared a consumerist perspective on progress. Both El Correo and the Monterrey News reflected and encouraged their readers' incorporation of a consumerist world view through articles, editorials, and especially advertising. Advertising through journals offered businesses the ability to connect with the growing urban population while at the same time introducing the readership to products they may not have otherwise known about and where to buy them.

Advertising incorporated new, sophisticated, attention-grabbing techniques. In the past, most advertisements had relied on a style of simple text and unassuming size, and some stores and companies continued this format. But by the early 1900s, large companies shook up this old practice; they introduced brand-names and often completely-new products using the new technologies of photography with drawings and even serial cartoons. Advertising texts also began to instruct and titillate their readers in large half- or full-page ads. Mexican and American manufacturers, department stores, and mass entertainment shows instituted campaigns that sketched out and defined a rosy and ideal lifestyle delivered by consumer goods, particularly their own. These ads suggested social success through key words and images pertaining to progress, fashion, and hygiene that advertisers carefully chose to strike resonant chords in Porfirian psyches.

¹⁸See, for example, Monterrey News, 30 August 1908, p. 6; 19 December, p. 3 of the Christmas Supplement.

Supporting their advertisers, many newspapers defined "news" as new developments for consumers.¹⁹ Articles on business ventures, while ostensibly written as news stories, came across as advertisements. The Cervecería Cuauhtémoc, for example, could rely on frequent press publicity, whether in support of its high public profile at public events or simply to extoll both the company and the virtue of its products. The Monterrey News promoted the brewery for its efforts to "bring [men] comfort and happiness, and open the way to a higher civilization."²⁰

The opening of the La Estrella cracker factory, owned by the powerful Terrazas clan, illustrates the integration of advertisements and articles in promoting favoured players in the consumer-market field. In January 1905, La Estrella advertised on the front page of El Correo that it would be opening its new steam-powered bakery to the public. It let its potential customers know, in bold letters, that it was "the first of its kind in the state" making the "purest and best quality bread" using only fresh leavening agents, nothing fermented. Emphasizing its new technology and playing up the Porfirian concern for hygiene, it continued on to note that its bread was "mechanically produced, absolutely clean;"²¹ in other words, a far superior product than its less progressively-baked counterparts. Furthermore, for the next month, the hip Locales y Personales column on Page One of El Correo suggested that La Estrella was the place for pan, in fact it was "El mejor de la ciudad."²²

The highly competitive tobacco industry also basked and battled in the limelight of the newspapers and public discourse, each firm vying for consumer loyalty with dazzling contests and by identifying its brands as the most modern and fashionable. The tobacco wars illustrate a wider phenomenon in modern consumption; modern corporations emphasized selling an "image" along with the product itself, using

¹⁹Monterrey News, El Correo de Chihuahua, and, to a lesser extent, the Chihuahua Enterprise comprised the body of my research work. Skimming through other newspapers suggests that their emphasis on consumption closely matched that of other contemporary journals.

²⁰Monterrey News, 29 August 1905, p. 4.

²¹El Correo, 16 January 1905, p. 1. "La presente semana abriremos al público nuestra gran Panadería a Vapor LA PRIMERA EN SU GENERO EN EL ESTADO elaborando pan de la mejor CALIDAD Y PUREZA. LEVADURA FRESCA, NADA DE FERMENTOS. FABRICACION MECANICA, ABSOLUTA LIMPIEZA.

²²See, for example, El Correo, 01 February 1905, p. 1 as well as the two weeks preceding and following this article.

distinctive brand names and advertising through print and public spectacle.

Mass-production technology and huge capital investments provided the means to carve out a national market for cigarettes. This development directly resulted in smaller companies being squeezed out or forced into mergers in order to stay competitive and survive.²³ This process soon left only two major players on the field: El Buen Tono, which also held a controlling interest in La Cigarrera Mexicana and thus captured 50 per cent of the market, and La Tabacalera Mexicana, which held a 12 per cent market share.²⁴ Together, at maximum production, they could produce over six billion cigarettes a year by utilizing automated cigarette machines imported from France. Hundreds of employees complemented these machines in El Buen Tono's huge, modernized factory that also provided recreational entertainment to off-duty workers and doubled as a show-case of Mexico's progress to foreign dignitaries.²⁵

Using impressive graphics and minimal text, the advertisements for El Buen Tono let consumers across Mexico know that it was the first, the largest, and the most modern tobacco manufacturer in the country. One ad featured a woman worker standing behind a huge cigarette rolling machine with a caption of "Ultima Perfección de 'El Buen Tono,' S.A.". The ad proclaims that this machine absorbs all tobacco dust, making El Buen Tono's cigarettes "the most perfect and hygienic in the Republic".²⁶ Another ad series illustrates a cigarette factory that spanned several blocks. In a picture of modern urban efficiency, smokestacks billowed over male and female workers as they streamed into the front doorway. Bicyclists and automobiles completed the portrait, sharing the street with company delivery trucks and well-dressed pedestrians who hopped over the electric tram tracks.²⁷

²³Contemporary Mexicans recognized the possible monopoly situation in which their tobacco industry was heading. In *La Gaceta de Policía*, the editor devoted an admirable amount of space to comment on the massive size, incredible production capabilities, and the potential monopoly of El Buen Tono as it attempted to edge La Tabacalera Mexican out of the market. See, for example, 11 February 1906, p.6, and 18 February 1906, p. 6.

²⁴Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment*, 48.

²⁵Tony Morgan, "Proletarians, Políticos, and Patriarchs: The Use and Abuse of Cultural Customs in the Early Industrialization of Mexico City, 1880-1910," in *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, 156.

²⁶*El Correo*, 03 February 1906, p. 4.

²⁷*El Correo*, 05 October 1907, p. 3.

The spectacular marketing battle waged by these two firms had the mark of a Barnumesque epic. El Buen Tono and La Tabacalera employed female hostesses to hand out free samples to men at bullfights and at theatre shows; women received red roses rather than cigarettes, a fascinating example of gendered marketing considering the fact that women did smoke at this time. They presented free public films and variety shows on their factory grounds or at public events; promotions escalated into more outrageous spectacles, including the use of a dirigible and Mexico's first airplane to advertise the various brands.²⁸

After bringing their customers these novelties of the world, El Buen Tono and La Tabacalera fought each other for a larger market share by engaging in a lottery campaign that offered prizes encompassing the exceedingly generous and the truly bizarre. Smokers mailed one hundred empty El Buen Tono packets to Mexico City in order to receive one ticket in the company's lottery draw.²⁹ La Tabacalera's lottery campaign featured a cigar-chomping, top hat-wearing black man who looked a dead-ringer for Uncle Sam.³⁰ The ads of this upstart firm crowed about the ease of its lottery, requiring only the purchase of one packet to enter, with \$100 prizes in randomly-distributed packs.³¹ La Tabacalera offered a monthly draw of one \$10,000 peso grand prize with ten \$1,000 peso subsidiary prizes while El Buen Tono upped its largesse to \$12,500 per month by 1910.³² In addition to cash prizes, the companies offered smokers the opportunity to win a new house, a new French car, and even a crocodile.³³

These campaigns dangled the possibility of affluence to Mexican consumers by linking the cigarette with Porfirian modernity, wealth, and leisure. They took the historically-established lottery and adapted its rewards to reflect what Porfirian society prized most. While cash signalled prosperity, it was modern consumer luxury goods such as the new automobile and the respectability of house ownership that signified social success in turn-of-the-century Mexico. To a cross-class audience, the free film shows and the presence

²⁸Morgan, "Proletarians, Políticos, and Patriarchs," 155-156.

²⁹El Correo, 20 April 1906, p. 4

³⁰El Correo, 16 April 1906, p. 4.

³¹El Correo, 16 April 1906, p. 4; Morgan, "Proletarians, Políticos, and Patriarchs," 155.

³²El Correo, 18 April 1906, p. 4.

³³Morgan, "Proletarians, Políticos, and Patriarchs," 155.

of cigarette-bearing salesgirls at the theatre, the bullfight, and other spectator events had an effect similar to that of the lotteries. Together they cultivated the association of the cigarette as an object to be consumed at leisure events and in circles of successful arrivistes, a product that literally offered a ticket to the Porfirian good life.

The tobacco companies paralleled their lottery competition with aggressive print campaigns. Like the lottery, the supposedly impartial news articles, innovative graphics and cartoons found in the newspapers forwarded an image of cigarettes as the modern ticket to a dreamworld of success for which most of their consumers could only puff and pray. For example, El Correo helped to raise the social stock of cigarettes, dishing out praise evenly to both El Buen Tono and La Tabacalera. Covering the events at a "Kermesse," a fund-raising festival held by Chihuahua's respectable society, the paper spent considerable column space commenting how El Buen Tono and its "Canela Pura" brand were the clear choice for "la sociedad elegante chihuahuense." For good measure the article mentioned a doctor who stood up, announced himself a happy, heavy smoker of the "delicious Canela Pura" and proceeded to recommend that the spectators purchase a pack from one of the beautiful, wandering cigarette girls.³⁴

La Tabacalera received its support in articles such as the one entitled "Siempre 'Flor de Canela'," which recounted how a group of friends met at the fashionable high-society Casino Club to compete for the Shooting Club's Cup of Honour.³⁵ One friend told that he smoked only the Flor de Canela brand produced by La Tabacalera, a tobacco firm "whose fame was increasing greatly." Another mentioned that he would smoke no other product. The one doubter, "Chente", expressed skepticism, but he decided to try one after the local representative from La Tabacalera announced that he would donate a magnificent Winchester Automatic rifle to the winner. The rich flavour of "Canela Pura" swept Chente into extolling the virtues of these cigarettes whose smoke was unoffensive, unlike other brands. Well, all the guests praised his phrases and Chente went on to win that rifle. Just in case El Correo's readers got a little suspicious, the article's author tacked on at the end that "All this is not an advertisement, but it is the truth."³⁶

³⁴El Correo, 09 February 1909, p. 1.

³⁵El Correo, 08 May 1906, p. 1 and p. 2.

³⁶"Todo esto 'no es un réclame, pero es verdad'".

In the realm of paid advertisements, the El Buen Tono ad series that came in the form of nine panel cartoon strips was perhaps the most fascinating byproduct of the tobacco companies' marketing war. First of all, the comics illustrated the influence of large-scale business interests in the consumer industry; these firms marketed multiple products through the medium of a single advertisement. The creators of these comics advertised not only El Buen Tono cigarettes, but also "Moctezuma" brand beer, "El Vulcano" beds, and even the Mexico City newspaper, "El Imparcial." Second, and most importantly, this series offers a rich commentary on Mexican society and humour as advertisers worked cultural mores and social angst into their efforts to sell cigarettes. Each cartoon-ad advanced Canela Pura or "Superiores" cigarettes as a saviour for the protagonist who usually sought love, economic success, and/or social prestige. The ads covered a wide variety of subjects, portraying a world of fantasy and the fantastic that, judging from their longevity, must have communicated positively with the intended audience.

As in the lottery campaign, these ads presented El Buen Tono cigarettes as a dream-maker, a sure thing in a constantly-changing world of fads and phony panaceas. One ad focuses on a man's quest to put on weight. Tired of enduring taunts from friends who nicknamed him "dragonfly" for his slender physique, our hero Popote (drinking straw) seeks out a solution. First he tries dozens of the health elixirs and patent medicines that crowded Mexican ad space and store shelves at this time.³⁷ Upon their failure he turns to an unsuccessful hydrotherapy that only gives him a cold. To no avail he works out at the gym, rides a bicycle, then plays sports. Not even eating heaps of food helped him to put on weight. At wit's end he considers writing a will, but a friend intervenes and convinces him to smoke a Canela Pura. A miracle occurs, and suddenly we see our portly protagonist puffing contentedly as he toasts his friend over a mug of Moctezuma. One might speculate that the final message of this ad characterizes how El Buen Tono wanted Mexican smokers to relate to its products: Popote hoists a beer in honour of Canela Pura cigarettes, "to which he owes

³⁷ For background on many of the patent medicines sold in the U.S. and Mexico at this time, see Sarah Stage, Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women's Medicine (New York, W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1979).

the realization of his constant desires."³⁸

Along with the satisfaction of desires, the ads blended scenes of traditional Mexico with modern technology that depicted El Buen Tono as its driving force. The dirigible that El Buen Tono brought to Mexico in 1907 found its way into two ads, both of which claimed that only the smoke of Canela Pura cigarettes kept it aloft while the fumes of other brands would cause the downfall of the airship. In the first ad a European-dressed man implores a mixed-class crowd to have faith in the new technology, proving his claim by landing the smoke-filled balloon in the middle of a bull-fight to the cheers of the crowd.³⁹ In the second, a famous European aeronaut, Mr. Hamilton, succumbs to the "stupid idea" of the devil to substitute the smoke of Canela Pura with another brand. He becomes tangled in the new electric wires and electric street lights that were spreading throughout urban areas. Next we see a mob scene of dozens of sombrero-sporting Mexicans pelting the devil with stones for tarnishing the good name of El Buen Tono.⁴⁰ These ads seem to suggest that without Canel Pura one cannot negotiate the positives and negatives of modernity.

Other consumer-good technologies such as the automobile also filled a central position in these cartoons. In one case the motor-car is used as a get-away vehicle for two young lovers⁴¹ while in another, a pedestrian is flattened but revived when the chauffeur lights up a Canela Pura, sticks a rubber tube into the pancake-like victim, and blows in the rich smoke. Afterwards, all is forgiven over a glass of Moctezuma beer.⁴²

Advertisers portrayed technology as a good thing that would save the world when combined with progressive thinking men. In one instance, a famous inventor named Colaza reads of an impending collision of Halley's comet with Earth and decides to take action because, as the ad tell us, "he was not a man capable

³⁸El Correo, 08 February 1908, p. 3. "...en honor de los cigarros CANELA PURA, á los que debe la realización de su constante anhelo."

³⁹El Correo, 28 March 1908, p. 3.

⁴⁰El Correo, 27 July 1907, p. 3.

⁴¹El Correo, 28 June 1906, p. 3.

⁴²El Correo, 04 August 1907, p. 3.

of tolerating such a cataclysm."⁴³ After a fine meal, a Moctezuma beer, and a good sleep on an El Vulcano bed, he attaches wings to his bicycle and climbs to the stars to speak to the rogue comet. To no avail, he tries to convince the comet to change its course, but finally he reinforces his arguments with a Canela Pura. The comet instantly promises not to hit the Earth and flies off with a cigarette dangling from its mouth. Colaza returns to become famous and wealthy by giving conferences on how the full flavour of Canela Pura cigarettes had saved the world from destruction.

This story of rags-to-riches had many variations. Moreover, this line of advertising became increasingly common after the economic crash of 1907, perhaps giving fallen members of respectable and working-class society something to cling to, or simply providing them with a stream of gallows humour. Whatever the case, ads suggested that only the consumption of goods, whether cigarettes or beer, could provide a solution to personal and national crises.

Cachivache (worthless fellow), the once-great banker, fell victim to the crisis of 1907 and lost millions of dollars. For temporary employment he tries street entertaining, but children stone, and dogs bite him. Writing love-letters proves futile and he quits, declaring that twentieth-century love does not need epistles. Completely resigned to his fate, Cachivache finds the still-burning butt of one of El Buen Tono's Superiores cigarettes and quickly inhales its pleasurable secrets. He becomes a cigarette vendor in the plaza, then starts his own stand as the reader sees him wearing successively better clothes to match his rising economic fortunes. Cachivache finally returns to the world of high finance and offers up his personal experience as a remedy for the economic crisis. The reader is told that the rich aroma of Superiores attracts foreign capital, and is left with the image of a smoking cigarette leading sackfuls of ambulatory German marks, French francs, Spanish pesetas, United States dollars, and British pounds off of a rowboat onto Mexican soil.⁴⁴ In this ad personal consumption provided a necessary helping hand to the Porfirian self-made man. At the same time, the ad implies that the engine of Mexico's economic recovery is not so much the producer economy but rather the consumer economy and consumption, specifically of El Buen Tono cigarettes.

El Buen Tono's writers drew upon widely appealing themes of love, marriage, domesticity and the

⁴³*El Correo*, 30 November 1907, p. 3. "...Colaza ne era hombre capaz de tolerar tal cataclismo...."

⁴⁴*Monterrey News*, 22 August 1908, p. 3.

problems they create to promote their cigarettes as saviours. In this society based on honour and shame, sexual relations between young lovers had to be negotiated with the strictest decorum as the honour of the young woman's family remained at stake. The reality of courtship and marriage frequently did not coincide with this social ideal; *El Buen Tono* played on this angst in comic advertisements. They provide an exposé of both the tensions bred in the courtship process between lovers and parents and the lovers themselves, as well as the pitfalls present in the sacred institution of marriage itself.⁴⁵ One might speculate that as the reader can readily identify with the plight of the protagonists, so *El Buen Tono* hopes that he or she may as easily identify the consumption of its cigarettes as a panacea for the love problems in Mexican society.

With the help of *Canela Pura* and *Superiores* cigarettes, appropriately-named protagonists such as Carrizo (Reed), Camarón (Shrimp), and Cacahuatate (Peanut) set out to win their girl's love. Their nemeses include mothers-in-law, chaste heroines, and angry ranchero fathers. Our first hero, Cacahuatate, smuggles his girl from the bedroom of her ranchero father's house, using what appears to be a three-wheel moped as his get-away vehicle. The ranchero hunts them down until their engine explodes and then leads them off with tires around their necks. Resigned to his fate, Cacahuatate lights up a cigarette from which a rich aroma exudes to pacify immediately the father, Don Serapio. In the final panel we see a beaming Don Serapio sitting at the kitchen table with his daughter and Cacahuatate who are now bride and groom; all are laughing, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. So the ad ends, telling its readers that we must thank the rich aroma of *Canela Pura* for the formation of a new family blessed with the sanctity of a legitimate marriage.⁴⁶

Our next hero, Carrizo, plays the caring but spineless husband at the mercy of a meddling mother-in-law. The mother-in-law walks him to and from his office to prevent him from seeing his friends; she beats him with a broom if he embraces his wife. Not only will she not let them dine in peace, she drinks his "Moctezuma" brand beer. The young couple cannot enjoy the theatre as the mother takes the best seat, and then they come home and she sleeps in their wedding bed made by "El Vulcano". The daughter cannot stop her mother and so the husband and wife are resigned to weep at their fate. At the end of their tether, the

⁴⁵French, "'Te Amo Muncho:' Loveletters from Porfirian and Revolutionary Chihuahua," a paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Meeting, Learned Society's, Calgary, June 1994.

⁴⁶*El Correo*, 28 June 1906, p. 3.

couple decide they must either commit suicide or murder her mother to end this horrid state. Suddenly, a faithful friend appears and, after being informed of the situation, recommends "Canela Pura" to humanize (para humanizer) the monster, an interesting insight into the effects of nicotine. Next we see Carrizo, trembling (like a Reed?) as he offers his mother-in-law a pack of cigarettes and then, *voila!* Her personality improves instantaneously as we see her smoking contentedly in her rocking chair as the couple kiss in the background. Again the reader is told we have to thank Canela Pura for its pacifying effects and for finding a cure for mothers-in-law.⁴⁷

The final story involves the tale of Camarón and the beautiful Elena, a parody of the ideal Porfirian fairytale of love. The reader is told that Camarón's intense passion for love must remain unrequited, a passion without hope, for Elena has decided she will die celibate. One day she changes her mind and, from her balcony onto a street swarming with jubilant men, she declares she will give herself to the man who will send his love to her via a dove. Camarón searches tirelessly, until finally a buzzard is attracted by his cigarette and promises to deliver the letter in return for a smoke. The deal is made and the buzzard delivers the note to a startled Elena. She decides a buzzard has the same value as a dove and, in a picture of a well-to-do marriage ceremony, the young couple is married. The ad leaves the reader with Superiores cigarettes integrated into an ideal image of Porfirian domestic bliss with a twist. Camarón sits on his rocking chair with a fez on his head, a cigarette in his mouth, and a newspaper in his hands. To complement this image of domesticity his wife dutifully dotes on him, while the Superiores-smoking buzzard cares for their newborn.⁴⁸

Such dominant Porfirian images of an ideal family life extended beyond the advertising of cigarettes and factored into the marketing strategies of widely diverse companies. In a more serious vein than *El Buen Tono*, these advertisers sought to present their products as essential accessories to the contented states of matrimony and domesticity. Furniture stores, phonograph dealers, and Eastman Kodak cameras literally illustrated ways for consumers to use their products. Their images often projected a vision of domesticity sold in the United States, images that found enthusiastic acceptance among many northern Mexican consumers who easily related them to Porfirian values of domesticity and social status. An ad created by the Monterrey

⁴⁷El Correo, 27 October 1906, p. 4.

⁴⁸Monterrey News, 11 July 1908, p. 3.

furniture dealer, J.M. Carr & Company, portrayed a wealthy and elegant middle-class couple in the foyer of their sumptuously decorated home complete with a grandfather clock, easy chairs, plush drapes and other fine furniture. Titling the ad "Home Sweet Home", they asked the readers of the Monterrey News "Wouldn't You Like to Be Here? This is Homelike. Let Us Furnish Your Home and You Will Be Satisfied."⁴⁹

Eastman-Kodak also advertised its products as essential to any family, energetically entering the northern Mexican consumer market in the years preceding the revolution. Its ads frequently sported a domestic theme, such as a father taking a picture of his wife as she leans over their toddler tightly stuffed in a baby stroller, or a mother immortalizing her two young toddlers with a Kodak "Brownie" camera.⁵⁰

The phonograph, manufactured both by Edison and Victor brands, proved to be a hot entry in the new field of consumer technological wonders. Advertisers aggressively marketed this product as home entertainment for the family. Popularly known as the "talking machine", the phonograph caught the imagination of those enamoured by this blending of modern technology and culture. Machines sold for \$27 to \$1200 Mexican dollars and played four-minute records, delivering the sounds of opera by Enrico Caruso and Louisa Tetrazzina in addition to orchestra, marching band, and comic selections from around the world to fit the tastes of the whole family.⁵¹ The phonograph reached a truly international audience in Chihuahua; a Chinese language-only ad placed by the "Calderón Hnos." store in Ciudad Juárez solicited requests for a free catalogue of newly arrived Chinese Opera records imported from Canton.⁵²

The ads of the Victor Phonograph distribution agent in Monterrey, the Sonora News Company, made the family home entertainment emphasis explicit. They routinely depicted a nuclear family of a father, mother and three daughters sitting around the dining room table listening thoughtfully to a Victor record player.⁵³ Well-dressed in a finely furnished home, the family centered their whole attention on the product,

⁴⁹Monterrey News, 19 January 1910, p. 8.

⁵⁰Monterrey News, 29 May 1910, p. 8; 15 April 1910, p. 8.

⁵¹Monterrey News, 18 March 1906, p. 15; 23 May 1909, p. 4; 24 February 1910, p. 8; and 15 August 1909 p. 5.

⁵²El Correo, 30 August 1908, p. 4.

⁵³Monterrey News, 06 October 1907, p. 8.

next to which sat a stack of records from which the family could make their next selection and thus spend an evening at home so entertained.

Together, advertising and mass-circulation newspapers produced articles and images that blended consumption with other "modern" values to present a world of modern Mexico and modern Mexicans. As these information mediums asserted consumerism as part of the package that would help readers to succeed in love, business, and family, they also suggested the new department store as the correct place to buy these aids to Porfirian personal fulfillment.

WOMEN AND CONSUMPTION: DEPARTMENT STORES

Advertising messages supported the middle class emphasis on family and domesticity, but the realities of urban capitalism mitigated this ideal and gave women an active and visible role in the public world. Employment in the production and service industries provided this exposure for working class women, but for women of greater affluence and leisure it was the new world of consumption, especially in department stores, which offered them a place outside the home.

Mexican department stores, like other component parts of the consumer culture, reinforced older gender roles and defined new ones. In the United States, the new public space of the department store was clearly marked as bourgeois female territory: socially determined gender roles cast women as consumers and store practices encouraged and intensified this tendency.⁵⁴ Mexican stores appear to have duplicated this arrangement; despite economic class differences both customers and sales staff were generally female.⁵⁵ As in other emerging consumer societies of Western Europe and North America at this time, changing Mexican

⁵⁴Susan Porter Benson, Countercultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 76.

⁵⁵For female workers, see Monterrey News, 19 December 1909, p. 1 of the Christmas supplement. To promote early shopping, the Ciudad de Londres department store urged its customers to "think of the workers - girls with aching bodies and pale drawn faces...". The largely female clientele is reflected in the lists of store lottery winners, see El Correo, 08 June 1908, p. 1; and 14 January 1909, p. 4.

male and female social roles mirrored the new divisions of the economy into production and consumption.⁵⁶ Males represented the producer economy, the force that brought home the paycheck and created products for the market. This logic cast women as consumers, steadily replacing their position of domestic producers with the new role as purchasers of household goods in the urban market.

This dichotomy is supported by the ratio of female-to-male shopping advertisements in the newspapers that clearly suggest that females were the target market. Like their North American and European counterparts, Mexican establishments spent a wildly disproportionate percentage of their advertising budget on female fashion. Newspapers had weekly fashion supplements sponsored by stores that burst with photographs of the latest styles from Paris and New York as well as smart dressing and hostessing ideas.⁵⁷ Nowhere did men's clothing receive such attention. Men's ads tended to be in a minority and, with a few exceptions, followed a no-nonsense bulletin-style format. Even the floorspace layouts of stores supported the idea that shopping was feminine territory. Rarely then, or now, did managers in United States or Canadian stores place men's clothing sections above the main floor because trade wisdom held that men would not delve into "feminine territory" much beyond ground level.⁵⁸ At present, it is not known whether Mexican department stores used floorspace to organize gender.

Some wage-earning women patronized these new "Palaces of Consumption,"⁵⁹ but it was the leisured women of the *gente decente* who had the time and the affluence to find a second home in the department store. Both Mexican and foreign women had an opportunity to escape the confines of the house to meet friends and spend their leisure time taking advantage of the facilities, entertainment, and services provided

⁵⁶For this duality of female shopper and male breadwinner, see the cartoons in the Monterrey News, 25 March 1909, p. 4, and 09 April 1909, p. 4; and in Rachel Bowlby, Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola (New York: Methuen & Co., 1985), 18-35, 81, and 89.

⁵⁷See, for example, Monterrey News, 15 April 1906, p. 20; 29 April 1906, p. 13. These weekly supplements ran every Sunday and included the full page section of hostess and fashion tips entitled "Fads and Fancies for Feminine Eyes."

⁵⁸Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance'," 250.

⁵⁹The phrase is Susan Porter Benson's in Countercultures, 82.

by department stores.⁶⁰ Mexican store managers, fighting among themselves and against competitors in San Antonio, El Paso, and Laredo for consumer dollars, sought to create an atmosphere of refined leisure for these women. In particular, they drew upon the most recent technological advances as well as traditional definitions of high culture and grandeur to create this desired setting. As in the U.S. and Canada, those women who wished to stay at home could place orders by phone or have a boy come by the house daily to collect their requests. Every Mexican department store had a phone order switchboard, and, by 1910, many affluent patrons had domestic service as the telephone branched out from its original confinements in business districts.⁶¹ This service attracted customers and burnished the store's modern image. "Try our twentieth century way of Telephonic Shopping" beckoned one Monterrey store to its customers, and try it they did.⁶²

But other women preferred the sociability of the store. Here they had access to free phones, cool drinking water, wash rooms, check rooms for their parcels, as well as lounges in which to rest, chat and have a refreshment with friends; finally, they could have their heavy cargo sent home by free home delivery.⁶³ These amenities meshed with cultural recreations. The Sonora News Co., in Monterrey, kept an Art Room Display which it claimed to be "the grandest artistic indoor display of fine paintings, silverware, and cut glass ever made in Monterrey."⁶⁴ In Chihuahua, El Nuevo Mundo offered a huge exposition of china and crystal as well as seasonal expositions of its latest novelties.⁶⁵ Managers used sales and lotteries in an effort to bring in customers and to turn over stock quickly. Unheard of even two decades before, full two-page

⁶⁰Based on the lists of prizewinners of the lottery held by the El Nuevo Mundo department store, non-Mexicans consisted of 10% to 20% of the clientele. For these lists, see, for example, El Correo, 08 June 1908, p. 1; and 14 January 1909, p. 4.

⁶¹For the active promotion of shopping by telephone by both telephone companies and department stores in Canada, see Michèle Martin, "Hello Central?: Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems" (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 147. In Monterrey and Chihuahua, every department store had a phone number and the soliciting phone sales was a regular component of department store ads. See, for example, the El Nuevo Mundo department store ad in El Correo, 19 October 1908, p. 4.

⁶²Botica del León, Monterrey News, 15 December 1907, p. 12.

⁶³See, for example, El Correo, 29 February 1908, p. 3; 19 October 1908, p. 4. Also Monterrey News, 15 December 1907, p. 3.

⁶⁴Monterrey News, 15 December 1907, p. 3.

⁶⁵El Correo, 06 February 1909, p. 4; 20 October 1908, p. 4.

advertisements trumpeted store-wide sales of 10% to 40% off.⁶⁶ Raffles provided another gimmick, with prizes valued from 10 to 180 pesos. The type of awards offered by El Nuevo Mundo suggest that these raffles catered to a gente decente clientele that was female as well as family- and home-oriented. Austrian home furniture worth 180 pesos went to the first-place winner, while subsequent winners received gifts with which to fashionably entertain, such as porcelain coffee jugs, serviettes and serviette rings, soup tureen and plates, wine glasses. Games for the whole family could also be won, as El Nuevo Mundo awarded baccarat games for adults, stuffed dolls and toy pianos for girls, and toy cars and variety games for boys. Winners also had their fashion needs attended to, from prizes of underwear for men and women, to clothes of cashmere, bolts of silk and wool, and even flannel from England.⁶⁷

Private diaries of middle-class women and public schedules of department stores in upstate New Jersey and Paris during this time give an insight in to how the entertainment and pleasures of the department stores fit into consumer lives. These women noted department store sales and special events along with holidays and religious festivals, integrating the world of consumption into their daily lives.⁶⁸ In Mexico, department stores actively promoted this merger of holidays and consumption by offering seasonal promotions from the ubiquitous Christmas free-for-all to the sale of plastic flower wreaths for the Mexican Day of the Dead.⁶⁹ Langstroth Sucs. in Monterrey, for example, went all out in 1907 to provide a modern festival atmosphere with its Coney Island Electric Park, billed as "the first ever seen in Monterrey." For free entrance, parents and children could browse at the amazing world of lights while checking out the 100,000

⁶⁶See, for example, El Correo, 29 February 1908, p. 2; 18 August 1908, p. 3; and Monterrey News, 31 August 1909, p. 3; 12 September 1909, p. 2.

⁶⁷El Correo, 14 January 1908, p. 4.

⁶⁸Bowlby, Just Looking, 32; and William R. Leach, "Transformation in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," Journal of American History 71 no. 2 (September 1984), 336.

⁶⁹For Day of the Dead advertisements placed by El Nuevo Mundo, see, for example, El Correo, 27 October 1909, p. 4.

toys and perhaps entering a Christmas raffle in the hopes of winning one of 20 prizes.⁷⁰ With images like this, Mexicans could no longer doubt that they had finally entered the modern age.

The department store stood as the most visible icon of this new era of mass consumption and spectacle that so thrilled many urban Mexicans. Over a period of two decades, entrepreneurs in the retail trade in Europe, the United States, and Canada modified traditional ideas of retail business that anticipated a new business philosophy tailored to mass consumption. This development culminated in the full-fledged department stores of the 1890s, which Mexican and foreign businessmen soon transported to Mexico. Mexican storeowners, influenced by the policies of United States stores across the border, shared the new emphasis on quick stock turnover by implementing the policy of entrée libre so that customers could enter without feeling obligated to buy, as well as fixed pricing, clearly-marked merchandise, and eagerly patronizing commission-paid salesstaff. In doing so, these storeowners reflected a trend that turned away from basing store presentation and stock selection on the satisfaction of stable needs and instead adopted the strategy of inventing new desires among their clientele.⁷¹ No longer did consumers face the haggling and confrontational style of previous selling techniques, but rather entered the comfortable, pleasant environment noted above that encouraged hassle-free browsing and particularly the phenomenon of impulse buying. Smart operators in this new system took to heart the observation that modern consumption "is a matter not of basic items bought for definite needs, but of visual fascination [with] remarkable things not found at home."⁷²

Northern Mexican consumers could choose from a variety of new department stores. Some were simply older stores renovated and expanded into a department format while others were completely new, patterned after their European and American forerunners. In Chihuahua, consumers could choose from Fischbein Hermanos with its branch in Parral; Las Tres B.B.B.; the upgraded Ketelsen y Degetau; or the gem of the city's department stores, El Nuevo Mundo, with its modern design and over ten departments including food, perfumes, silks, fashions for women and girls, sporting goods, men's attire, and several other sections.

⁷⁰Monterrey News, 12 December 1907, p. 8; 15 December 1907, p. 12.

⁷¹Rachel Bowlby, Just Looking, 2.

⁷²Guy Debord, La Société du Spectacle, 1967, repr. Paris, Éditions champ libre, 1973, cited in Bowlby, Just Looking, 1.

These last two stores also included sizable pharmacies, particularly the Botica Central owned by Ketelsen y Degetau, that sold everything from medicines to cosmetics and assorted weight-loss equipment.

Monterrey shoppers and their children found delight in the departments of Langstroth Sucs., the undisputed toy king with over 100,000 different toys at Christmas, "the largest and best assorted stock of toys in the North of the Republic."⁷³ The Sonora News Co. competed with La Ciudad de Londres, a branch of the store in Mexico City that boasted of four stories of departments frequented "by the most select of the high society of the Mexican capital."⁷⁴ The gigantic La Reinera store, first founded in 1855 and then renovated and expanded to a modern department format in 1901, held a special place in Monterrey.⁷⁵ The choices appeared limitless, for if they tired of the novelties at the stores noted above, consumers could take one of the new electric trams or a coach over to Al Puerto de Hamburgo and be served by multilingual salesclerks, or perhaps visit the ever-popular Sorpresa y Primavera owned by Manuel Cantu Treviño and the sponsor of the Monterrey New's "Ladies Style" section.

In these new stores, Mexican consumers engaged in mental as well as physical consumption. In a modern consumer culture, shopping and consumption stress the ongoing creation of desires and cannot be viewed merely as a series of mechanical completed acts.⁷⁶ Therefore, in addition to offering various services, sales, lotteries and entertainments, store managers in Monterrey and Chihuahua realized that the exhibition of goods was of paramount importance in drawing these mobile consumers into their stores. Elaborate window displays became the trademark of successful shopowners, as everyone from department stores to watchmakers set about making their front windows a stage to win the hearts of passersby. Stocked with toys, modern gadgetry, and the latest mass-produced, ready-to-wear fashion for the whole family, department store windows enticed a cross-class clientele to satisfy their desires. Whereas in the past when windows often displayed nothing, either for lack of ideas or because the owner saw such displays as tasteless, now stores crowded about their imaginative displays and tried to outdo their competitors. The three-storey El Nuevo

⁷³Monterrey News, 12 December 1909, p. 2 of the Christmas supplement.

⁷⁴Monterrey News, 11 August 1909, p. 4.

⁷⁵Saragoza, The Monterrey Elite, 42.

⁷⁶Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance'," 232.

Mundo took advantage of its ideal location on the corner of Victoria and Aldama to install and decorate huge display windows wrapped around both exposed sides of its ground floor.⁷⁷

Store and display designers realized presentation required an artistic touch and eye-catching appeal, and they borrowed design concepts of past grandeur to meet modern needs. Colour, glass, and light were no longer limited to stained glass windows in churches and civic buildings as storeowners used this impressive arsenal in a commercialized context for both interior and street-side displays. Mexican storeowners, attentive to the actions of their retail competitors across the border in Laredo and San Antonio, picked up display ideas from the design schools in commercial display that sprang up in the United States to train professionals in this field. Most likely they received the latest trade news via their competitors or directly from design innovators such as L. Frank Baum - the creator of the Land of Oz - who disseminated their knowledge through shopkeeper periodicals such as the Dry Goods Economist.⁷⁸

Together with modern consumption's class-blind acceptance of the peso, these shop displays took an age-old struggle over fashion and luxury to new heights. Women of a lower economic status eagerly accepted the opportunity presented to them to imitate their social superiors with cheap copies of exotic fashions from San Antonio, Paris and New York. Their social superiors tended to buy tailored or better-quality, ready-to-wear clothing from the stores, yet, on the streets, the casual onlooker often could not notice any glaring difference. Such a development caused a great deal of consternation among Mexico's moral reformers who viewed the blurring of class distinctions through fashion and luxury as dangerous. What constituted daily attire when worn by members of the gente decente became wasteful luxury and a sign of social decadence when slipped onto a social inferior. One nineteenth-century contributor to the Diario de México even declared that women should be put in uniform according to their social class.⁷⁹

⁷⁷El Correo, 01 January 1909, p. 3.

⁷⁸William Leach, "Strategists of Display and the Production of Desire" in Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 107.

⁷⁹Jean Franco, "Women, Fashion and the Moralists in Early Nineteenth-century Mexico" in Homenaje a Ana María Barrenechea, ed. Lia Schwartz Lerner and Isaias Lerner (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1984). For further debate on fashion across the industrializing world in the late nineteenth century, please see Mariana Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse", Victorian Studies, 32 no. 2 (Winter, 1989), pp. 169-188. In Mexico, see French "Prostitutes and Guardian

Merchandise, by providing fashion for the many, public displays, and free access to all, gave an illusion of social equality. The Porfirian social reality proved this different. Strolling through urban cores looking at the window displays did provide middle-class families and those aspiring to such status a new form of leisure. Inside, theoretically all social classes could rub shoulders, united by a cultural vision of consumer plenty and progress even if some could afford it and others could not. In addition to the opportunity of buying at sales, many stores did carry goods for budgets of both high and low. After announcing its tailoring department carried "the finest imported Woolens", La Ciudad de Londres added that it "carr[ied] a large assortment of popular priced goods, for the Miner, the Farmer and the Mechanic."⁸⁰ Its competitor, the Sorpresa y Primavera store, also exhibited this cross-class inventory: "THE PRIDE OF DRESS is praise worthy in every one whether rich or poor. In our great stock can be found both the expensive and the cheap to suit the needs of all. Your money will go furthest here...."⁸¹

For all its appearance of social equality, the department store itself actually reproduced more general class and gender conflicts. Work on Mexican department stores has yet to be done, but one may tentatively conclude that they would share many of the characteristics of stores in the United States. This possibility is supported by the similarities in staffing and the social make-up of department stores in both countries combined with a tendency of Mexican managers to emulate the policies of their northern competitors. Store clerks in the United States attended to wealthier patrons first; managers soothed middle-class sensibilities by physically separating departments with "popularly-priced" goods from those that respectable ladies might visit. Moreover, tensions sometimes flared between poorly-paid working-class salesgirls, male managers, and their upper-class female customers.⁸² Finally, what terminated the illusion of a consumer paradise and brought the reality of social inequality to the foreground was, of course, the price-tag discreetly attached to the object of desire.

Angels," 548.

⁸⁰Monterrey News, 19 December 1909, p. 8.

⁸¹Monterrey News, 08 April 1906, Saturday supplement.

⁸²Benson, Countercultures, especially Chapter 3 "'An Adamless Eden:' Managing Department Store Customers," 75-123.

MASS ENTERTAINMENTS AND PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

Mass consumption and urban living for both middling and lower classes bred mass culture characterized by commercialized entertainments and corporate sponsorship. Almost all appeared to cater to the sensibilities and income of the gente decente. City dwellers experienced new amusements that resulted from the recent technology of cinematography and the expanding rail system on which travelling American Carnival shows and their crowd-pleasing special effects rode to town. Organizers also cleaned up popular performances such as the circus and vaudeville to make them suitable for respectable audiences.

Sports such as the traditional bullfight and the new contest of baseball provided forms of mass entertainment that rapidly became commercialized. The large, captive audiences provided an excellent market for advertisers. Bullfighting arenas became billboards for the dozens of huge banners plastered onto, and hung around, the ring and the different seating levels. Hungry audiences also fostered a unique market for increasingly mass-produced and brand name food, cigarettes, and novelty items that hawkers in the stands hustled to satisfy. Still in its infancy, baseball took northern Mexicans by storm. As early as the 1890s, crowds of nearly 1000 flocked to watch the binational Chihuahua Blues play in Chihuahua City, an attendance level that surpassed by far those in the nation's capital.⁸³

Cinemas sprouted up in the urban cores of northern Mexico as part of the commercial districts anchored by the department stores. Patrons of the Salon Fausto in Monterrey watched and marvelled at the wonder of moving picture technology with film shorts from the United States bearing such titles as *Indian Gratitude*, *The Lion Bride* and *the Hindu Ring*, and *The Spirit of '76*.⁸⁴

More commonly, the new film shows built on existing entertainment traditions by acting as chasers for vaudeville shows, acting as a signal to the audience that the show had finished. The long and often sordid popular history of vaudeville provided an excellent conveyor for the new medium of cinematography. At the

⁸³Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 20. For more on the Chihuahua Blues, see the *Chihuahua Enterprise*, 16 September 1899, p. 8; 24 March 1900, p. 1; 05 May 1900, p. 8; and for its Mexican and American team roster, see 10 May 1902, p. 2.

⁸⁴*Monterrey News*, 06 July 1909, p. 1.

Zaragoza theater, Monterrey's other film venue, viewers watched moving pictures after the Cosmopolites troupe had finished their show.⁸⁵ Chihuahuan audiences had the opportunity to watch the International Theater's three hour long "Cinematography and Vaudeville Show" (Cinematógrafo y Variedades).⁸⁶

Recent developments in the U.S. popular entertainment industry affected the complexion of the American acts that hit Monterrey like a deluge in the summer of 1905. Writing on turn-of-the-century amusements in New York, Kathy Peiss notes how entrepreneurs gave moving picture shows their debut in "refined vaudeville" that sought to make this popular theater respectable for women and children. By 1910, cinema had become an industry on its own in Canada and the United States and an important leisure activity for the working-class and for women.⁸⁷ It became such an integral part of lower-class recreation that the Canadian Ottawa Journal rallied against a proposed civic tax on cinemas, for such a tax "would simply put a great deal of clean, educative pleasure out of the reach of the poorer people of the city's population."⁸⁸ In the rest of North America, the lower classes embraced the cinema as an important entertainment destination. By 1910 in Mexico this diversion appeared to attract a cross-class audience, playing in both the elegant Salon Fausto as well as in vaudeville shows.

Many American circuses and shows found that wintering south of the border all but guaranteed enthusiastic and plentiful crowds for their performances. They competed with Mexican shows such as the Treviño circus, giving Mexican audiences a taste of the differences between gringo shows and their own. Even American commentators had to admit that while their shows had better music, the Mexican one-ring circus made viewing a lot easier than the chaotic three rings of the northern acts.⁸⁹

In Monterrey, the arrival of one of these new shows sent a shot of adrenalin into the urban world.

⁸⁵Monterrey News, 10 December 1908, p. 4.

⁸⁶El Correo, 13 January 1908, p. 4.

⁸⁷By 1910, 75% of moviegoers in the U.S. were working-class, a significant number of these were women. Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), esp. 146.

⁸⁸Ottawa Journal cited in the Monterrey News, 01 July 1910, p. 4.

⁸⁹On the music, see Monterrey News, 07 March 1906, p. 3. With regards to the circus format, see Monterrey News, 22 July 1905, p. 3.

Organizers whipped up public interest via print media, word of mouth, and the chain reaction set off by curious consumers. First, advertisers blitzed the newspapers and the local bill posters got busy and covered the city "with the glaring posters and the announcements of the coming of another big show."⁹⁰ Word of mouth took over as potential audiences decided whether to see "Bell, The King of Clowns" at the Plaza Juárez or perhaps attend the comfortable Teatro de los Héroes and watch the amazing Professor Hermann and his company of French Illusionists followed by a film show.⁹¹ For women and children, the Teatro Progress offered "Clean, classy, vaudeville" featuring, among others attractions, "Monterey, A Musical Skit," and Miss Mexico. For real excitement, the Miller Brothers' "101 Ranch Wild West" looked like a sure thing. They guaranteed to ensure real value and real stunts, promising "NO melodramatics, NO make-believes" and best of all, "NO molly-coddlers" among its cast of cowboys, Vaqueros, Señoritas, Guardias Rurales, and Steerthrowers.⁹² The combined Dr. Carver and Treviño show always caused a stir. The "Girl in Red" was the star attraction, plunging forty feet on the back of her "High Diving Horse" in her "Dip of Death."

To attend the shows, audiences relied on the electric trams for transportation. Show promoters, realizing the importance of the new public transportation system, frequently made deals with the street car companies to stop directly in front of their venues. They noted in their ads the safety value of the arrangement, whereby employees would escort women and children to and from the sidewalk to the door.⁹³ Standing at the entrance, after all the hype and recommendations from friends, only the ticket booth remained between the audience and satisfaction. Entrance fees offered a space for everyone; they ranged from ten to fifty centavos for a seat in the second class section all the way up to a box for six people costing nine pesos.⁹⁴

Enlightened northern Mexicans and foreign nationals viewed the booming commercialized amusement

⁹⁰Monterrey News, 22 July 1905, p. 3.

⁹¹Monterrey News, 31 July 1909, p. 2; and El Correo, 31 January 1908, p. 4; 20 January 1908, p. 1.

⁹²Monterrey News, 03 December 1908, p. 2.

⁹³See, for example, Monterrey News, 25 December 1907, p. 6.

⁹⁴El Correo, 15 November 1906, p. 3; and Monterrey News, 25 December 1907, p. 6; 17 December 1907, p. 3.

industry as a sure indicator of their city's, and their nation's, march towards progressive civilization. As one group of carnival onlookers exclaimed, the number of shows present "is due to the fact that Monterrey is becoming citified and must have the amusements of a city."⁹⁵ Citizens swelled with civic pride at the number of American and Mexican entertainments they could attract with their disposable income, delighting in the novelties that each new show brought. These shows also provided a venue to sell the mass-produced carnival kitsch and other goods that served as prizes or souvenirs for fare and show-goers looking for ways to impress girlfriends and lighten their pockets.

One typical carnival took place on Zaragoza Plaza in Monterrey. Organizers split the plaza in three sections: in the first, flaring signs expounded the wonders of a volcanic show; in the second, a huge exhibit of poisonous snakes was set up ; and in the third, faregoers contemplated posterity by experiencing "the joys of having your picture taken in any pose or posture that you happen to admire."⁹⁶ The electric light show presented "a modern sight", illuminating a suave gentleman foiling the crowd with magical legerdemain. He spoke to the crowd in Spanish and English, reflecting the binational nature of the onlookers. So too did the barker for the snake-charmer who "in irreproachable Spanish told the Mexican showgoers of the viciousness of the snakes."⁹⁷ As the crowd moved on they visited the photograph gallery, taking only five minutes to have their picture emblazoned on a postal card, on a button, or "in any novel manner that you choose." Hawkers like this beckoned curious audiences to purchase their wares that had very little practical purpose, but as one commentator stated, it was these "patriotic buttons, canes and other knick-knacks on which the youth of a city are so anxious to spend their money."⁹⁸

Public events offered more sophisticated environs for spending money than did carnivals, vaudeville, and other types of shows. Held in outdoor public parks and open spaces, these highly-publicized events were

⁹⁵Monterrey News, 24 March 1906, p. 8.

⁹⁶Monterrey News, 24 March 1906, p. 8.

⁹⁷Monterrey News, 24 March 1906, p. 8.

⁹⁸Monterrey News, 24 March 1906, p. 8.

usually organized by the more affluent in Mexican society through the medium of social clubs such as the "Club Sorosis." The events themselves were not unique, having existed for decades, but by the turn of the century the participation of large corporations such as El Buen Tono and the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc and smaller local businesses dominated the atmosphere. These companies found the events an excellent environment to increase their profile among the city's most conspicuous consumers. Participants, mostly drawn from the middling and elite classes, eagerly accepted their presence for their entertainment and novelty value as companies enveloped their products and corporate image with a veil of refined luxury and technological wonder.

Corporations reaped benefits for their community involvement not once, but twice. They received publicity and cultivated goodwill not only among the participants, but also among the reading public who read of their beneficent exploits in the mass-circulation newspapers delivered the next morning. These readers kept up with what was new in their community and quickly recognized the high status of products associated with, and consumed by, the social and economic winners in Porfirian society. Typical affairs included Mexican and foreign national holidays, but particularly the ever-popular fiestas to benefit the victims of natural disasters across the nation.

Bastille Day in Monterrey was one such event, occasioning a great deal of fanfare among the French community and the capital's native elite. French businesses and other sympathetic establishments adorned their buildings in French and Mexican flags and bunting, the street car lines made special preparations to handle the crowd as late as midnight, and the organizers rented out the popular Alameda park to set up a variety of booths, bandstands, and game areas. All along the Alameda festival-goers would eat, drink, and throw confetti to celebrate the French national holiday. Plazas and parks such as the Alameda provided the usual point of congregation for the gente decente during their recreations like Bastille Day or the fund-raising Kermesses. These rationally-designed parks consisted of walkways, benches, trimmed hedges, statues and shady trees. Private citizens participated in this process, donating land and often paying for improvements such as lighting. Fernando Izaguirre, the treasurer of the Number Two smelter in Monterrey, donated a plaza of 7,000 square metres while the distinguished young ladies and women of the fund-raising Club Sorosis paid over \$3,000 to install thirty-four arc lamps in the Chihuahua City Lerdo de Tejada park so that they could

hold festivals there.⁹⁹

In 1905, the celebration organizers combined Bastille Day with a fund-raising benefit to aid survivors of an earthquake in Guanajuato. Over ten thousand people paid to gain admittance and thousands more held their own celebrations outside. Once inside "the people indulged themselves in the many pleasures of life, which can be had only when money is expended freely and no thought of the pocketbook is given."¹⁰⁰ The entertainment clustered around the dozen or so stands set up along the brightly-lit Midway, named and patterned after the Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. Prominent local consumer businesses owned these stands, selling their products and donating the proceeds to the disaster victims. The companies did not just slap up plywood carnival booths, but rather created an atmosphere of elegance and escape in their seating areas. The trendy Topo Chico bottled water company and the Toluca brewery set a high standard for the displays of other companies; their guests milled about a grotto-style setting, attended to by beautiful young women and bathed by soft light emanating from electric lights concealed within the imported moss that draped the site.¹⁰¹

No one, however, could contest the awe-inspiring stand of the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc. Situated near the bandstand and encircling the central fountain, the organizers made their territory a testament to the Mexican nation, its progress, its high culture and, of course, its fine beer. Decorators strung hundreds of electrified Japanese lanterns with streamers of Mexican and French colours along the thirty-foot flag pole rising from the fountain. To observers, its effect at night was "something bewildering and a murmur of surprise went up from those gathered in the enclosure at the time."¹⁰² The stage artists attested to Mexico's fine transportation network by lavishly, yet artistically, displaying fresh flowers brought from all over the

⁹⁹For costs, see Municipal Treasurer to Municipal President, Chihuahua, 19 August, 1907. Exp. 29, caja 68 from the Fondo Porfiriato y Terracismo, Tomo 1, Sección: Secretario. Archivo Histórico Municipal (AHM), Chihuahua. For lighting contract, see General de la Vega to Don José Asúnsolo, Jefe Político Chihuahua, 29 May 1907. Exp. 29, caja 68, AHM. For the donated park, see Monterrey News, 14 June 1905, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰Monterrey News, 24 March 1905, p. 8.

¹⁰¹Monterrey News, 14 July 1905 p. 1; 15 July 1905 p. 1.

¹⁰²Monterrey News, 15 July 1905, p. 18.

Republic to make the scene "a fairyland." The entrances to the enclosure consisted of arcades made of blossoms and vines entwined with ribbons. Honeysuckle, roses, lillies, and other flowers completed the scene.¹⁰³

Within this dreamscape the bon ton of Monterrey society ate and drank. The sexual division of the seating arrangement presented a display of gender roles among Mexico's modern well-to-do. In the center of the stand, male employees attended to the wants of the men "unaccompanied by ladies", while hundreds of women were seated around the core of men at small tables, "served by some of the most beautiful young ladies Monterrey can boast of" who "flitted about" in large, white aprons with the picture of Cuauhtémoc embroidered thereon.¹⁰⁴ Blending opulence and conspicuous consumption with the gendered social setting of this public display, the gente decente revealed how its members premised their vision of modernity upon the strict division of gender roles.

The Cervecería appeared to have a knack for defining its products as the choice of the modern drinker. Once again it pulled off another enviable publicity coup at another aid benefit by absorbing all of the expenses and turning it into one huge advertisement for its brewery through a public film show. The brewery organizers first held the show in the "Teatro de los Héroes" to raise funds for the benefit. Then, however, they took the show outside to the Paseo Bolívar for a free public viewing so that all social classes could see the magnificent and modern images of Mexico's most progressive industry. More than three thousand people grasped the opportunity to see this new technology that allowed them literally to peer inside the famous beerworks and watch "each and every task executed at the massive factory by the many people employed there."¹⁰⁵ On the film, they saw the ice-making factories and refrigerator rooms, the furnace system, and finally the huge vats of frosty brew just before the machines bottled the amber liquid that was the pride of Mexico. To finish off, the audience watched as thirty railroad cars zoomed off to distribute the

¹⁰³Monterrey News, 15 July 1905, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴For a similar display of gendered dining arrangements see William H. Beezley, "Dining With the Dictator and Crowning the Virgin: Forging Images of Mexico's New Society," a paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Meeting, Learned Society's, Calgary, June 1994.

¹⁰⁵El Correo, 26 January 1909, p. 1.

famous "Saturno" and "Carta Blanca" brands and their "civilizing influences"¹⁰⁶ to the far flung corners of the Republic. As the reporter reminded its readers the next day, the Cervecería ranked among the best in the world, and its products "are the delight of consumers of good taste."¹⁰⁷

Leading members of these "consumers of good taste" began to transform the festival calendars in Monterrey and Chihuahua so that they reflected the official culture of the gente decente. Consumerism alone did not change these festivals; new organizers instilled the events with their modernizing vision that included not only consumerism but also the contemporary Porfirian ideologies of moral reform, state-building, and civic pride.

In Chihuahua, sometime between 1905 and 1908, the Junta de Festejos de Santa Rita, dominated by the Chamber of Commerce, took over control of staging the Santa Rita festival from the Ayuntamiento, the town council. The businessmen who made up this committee consciously converted this celebration of Chihuahua's patron saint from a religious-oriented feature of popular culture into a celebration of capitalism. Expelled were the gambling, the cantinas, and the vices and lewd songs of popular culture that came with them. The Junta de Festejos expanded the fiesta from eight to ten days, thus shedding the festival of its traditional religious time significance.¹⁰⁸

Santa Rita became a major tourist event. The Chamber of Commerce created and distributed the program of the festival and organizers ensured that these programs blitzed the whole state. The new railroad became instrumental in achieving high participation rates. Organizers made arrangements with railroad companies to subsidize festival excursion rates by as much as forty percent.¹⁰⁹ These inducements brought in

¹⁰⁶Monterrey News, 29 August 1905, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷El Correo, 26 January 1909, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸Junta de Festejos de Santa Rita to Don José Asúnsolo, Jefe Político del Distrito de Iturbide. Chihuahua, 13 Mayo 1908. Exp.34, Caja 68, AHM. Chihuahua Enterprise, 29 May 1909, p. 1. I would like to thank William Beezley for suggesting the religious significance of this time change.

¹⁰⁹Junta de Festejos de Santa Rita, Program for 1909. Chihuahua, Exp. 29, caja 69, AHM.

visitors from local towns and neighbouring states, whether they be Mexican or American, first-class ticket holders or second-class. The end result of these efforts led to increased attendance which provided a larger audience to partake in the values of the fair, benefitting local businessmen by bringing in more festivalgoers with money to spend.

The Junta de Festejos explicitly and primarily valued the fair for its economic merits. In a letter to jefe político Don José Asúnsolo, the Junta stated that the purpose of the Santa Rita Festival was to attract the largest possible number of visitors to the city so that the city's business and industry would have the opportunity to increase trade and also to forge business transactions with foreign capitalists. By doing so, the fair would "improve the economic conditions that are found here."¹¹⁰

Businessmen found testaments to their social prominence not just in the organizational control of the event, but within the very activities themselves as the festival reproduced the dominant existing social and cultural values. The contests at Santa Rita reflected the tastes of the gente decente and the businessmen in its ranks by including specific categories for capitalists.¹¹¹ Horse races, for example, had categories for businessmen riders, gentlemen riders, the military, and the Rurales. Automobile races, featuring both two and four cylinder varieties, clearly catered to the wealthier set of Chihuahuan society. The local shooting club, an elite group to be sure, designated the Santa Rita as the time for their annual contest of skills. It was in the new parade format, however, where Mexicans witnessed the greatest expression of the confluence of consumption and production occurring in urban Mexico.

Festival organizers introduced highly-regimented float parades into the Santa Rita celebration that explicitly reinforced the primacy of capitalism in gente decente and Mexican society. While maintaining a traditional torchlight parade on the opening night, the organizers switched the limelight onto key branches of the Chihuahuan economy. Opening ceremonies now featured festival sponsorship messages given from the parade floats that represented Commerce, Industry, Agriculture, and Mining.¹¹² These floats then joined

¹¹⁰Junta de Festejos de Santa Rita to Don José Asúnsolo, Jefe Político del Distrito de Iturbide. Chihuahua, 13 Mayo 1908. Exp. 34, Caja 68, AHM.

¹¹¹See, for example, Chihuahua Enterprise, 16 May 1908, p. 10.

¹¹²Junta de Festejos de Santa Rita, Program for 1909. Chihuahua, Exp. 29, caja 69, AHM.

various organizations approved by the state and local governments, such as mutualist and employee groups, and travelled down the main streets of the city.

Displays such as this gave companies a chance to juxtapose and legitimize both themselves and their products through public ritual. As in the fund-raising benefits mentioned earlier, the parades and the floats allowed companies to present themselves as good corporate citizens. Along with sponsoring the fair, industries entered floats that exemplified modernity and "culture." One brewery constructed an Eiffel Tower float that was "greatly admired."¹¹³ The local agencies of the Monterrey, Toluca, and Orizaba brewers typified a more direct marketing approach. Their float had on it the shape of an immense beer bottle with men in it drinking beer. According to the reporting journalist, "this made no end of fun for the on-lookers."¹¹⁴

This infatuation with parade floats and their advertising potential encompassed other celebrations as well. The Trades Procession in Chihuahua held on 14 September did not feature workers, but, rather, specially decorated floats that vied to outdo each other and earn "the murmurs of admiration from the spectators." To create consumers and cultivate their image as job-providing, beneficent patrones of society, companies handed out samples to the spectators. La Fábrica de "El León" had a miniature soda plant on its float and attracted considerable attention when the bottles of fine soda were distributed in the crowd. Dozens of "urchins" followed the float of the La Estrella cracker factory, all anxious to get samples of its splendid products.¹¹⁵ The overhauled Santa Rita festival and the Trades Procession reveal how changes in public rituals involved not only the guiding force of middle-class values of morality and progress but also the infusion of consumer culture into the events.

The newly-revamped Carnival in Monterrey followed the general format adopted by the Santa Rita organizers. Although still preceding Lent, the new and expressly commercial Carnival lost any remaining religious vestige as organizers rivalled their Chihuahuan counterparts in glitter, secular emphasis, and corporate involvement. Here, too, a committee of leading local businessmen took hold of the organizational reins. They reacted to the number of wealthy U.S. business people visiting the town each year after the

¹¹³Chihuahua Enterprise, 14 September 1901, p. 1.

¹¹⁴Chihuahua Enterprise, 05 June 1909, p. 1.

¹¹⁵See Chihuahua Enterprise, 07 September 1901, p. 1 and 14 September 1901, p. 1.

Washington birthday celebration in Laredo, deciding to hold an event to reflect the city status of Monterrey and to bring in business capital and tourist dollars.

Monterrey revealed its best face to visitors and its citizens in the new Carnival in 1906. Held in the downtown commercial and business centres of Comercio and Zaragoza streets and Zaragoza plaza, the festival revealed the business organizers' claim on urban space and their perception of progress. The venue was as "light as noontime on a midsummer day" as arc lights strung above the street shone in competition with coloured lights illuminating business fronts and shop windows. The crowd numbered in the tens of thousands. People ambled and strolled along the urban core tossing confetti, admiring and gawking at the brightly decorated business establishments that provided a stage for the festival's entertainment. The National Bank building was crowned "with a halo of pure white incandescent lights" as were the Banco Mercantil, the Puerto de Veracruz, the Fábricas de Francia, and even the high profile Wagner and Levien Music Company which had done up its store in lights of the Mexican colours. The trendy pharmacy and novelty shop, the Botica de León, cleared out the Kodak cameras and the abdominal trusses to decorate its two-storey building with lights, Mexican flags and garlands. The Dressel hardware store continued this patriotic theme, placing two large pictures of President Díaz and Governor Reyes in the front windows.¹¹⁶

Attracting large crowds of onlookers, the department stores of the district radiated this patriotic and festive mood by giving their window displays of consumer goods a patriotic and festive air. Owners of the La Reinera store had it covered with lights from top to bottom, decorating every window in the building. The crowd became so thick around these windows that people had to pass in the middle of the street. The artistic displays of the Treviño store also drew lavish praise from onlookers and commentators. One Monterrey News journalist remarked that "the windows of an Eastern city [meaning Eastern United States] could not have been decorated with less regard of cost, nor with more artistic taste."¹¹⁷ At the very end of this festive commercial corridor, the crowd passed through a gigantic arch erected in a joint venture by the Topo Chico mineral water company and the Cervecería Cuauhtémoc to see, finally, the brightly-lit municipal palace and the plaza. The whole effect could only be described as fantastic as the enthusiastic crowd revelled

¹¹⁶Monterrey News, 02 March 1906, p. 1; 06 March 1906, p. 6.

¹¹⁷Monterrey News, 02 March 1906, p. 1.

in the atmosphere. To one onlooker, the decorated building fronts and bright shop windows "[made] the streets look more like those in some dream city of Fairyland than those of a hustling business district."¹¹⁸

In the aftermath, the organizers looked optimistically to making this Carnival a new city tradition. Blending consumerism with the age-old tradition of Carnival in an enthusiastic and elaborate atmosphere promised to attract people from all over the region to celebrate the festival and spend their money. To foster this image the organizers had arranged for discount railrates to bring in the crowds who had played their expected role of festive, visual consumers drinking in the sights and fattening the coffers of local merchants. The media commented on how the people remained orderly, while drunkenness and disorder seemed a thing of the past; organizers stated that with crowds like this "there is nothing which will bring capital to a city quicker." Public celebrations became a means to an economic end for the organizers, an ideology accepted by the majority of the city's self-proclaimed progressive citizenry. A remarkable tidbit of conventional wisdom offered up by a local journalist illustrates the blending of the established capitalist tenets of production with those of consumption: "capitalists do not invest their money in dead towns...Monterrey has learned the magic of advertising and has the grit to show what it advertises."¹¹⁹

CONCLUSION

By the time of the Centennial in 1910, a culture of consumption had become synonymous with the public culture of northern Mexican cities. It became a means by which "enlightened" Mexicans conveyed their vision of a modern Mexico, integrating and disseminating the messages of consumption with the principles of economic progress, nationalism, moral reform, personal and public hygiene, and civic pride. As members of the gente decente, manufacturers, store owners, and advertising agencies portrayed an ideal lifestyle of personal fulfillment and social respectability largely based on the values held by themselves and their potential clientele. They asserted that this lifestyle could only be obtained through the consumption of

¹¹⁸Monterrey News, 02 March 1906, p. 1.

¹¹⁹Monterrey News, 04 March 1906, p. 4; 06 March 1906, p. 6; 07 March 1906, p. 8.

goods and services, particularly their own, that were offered in the consumer market. For enlightened Mexican consumers concerned with "civilizing" and "modernizing" their society, the messages implied in consumer culture struck home. They had the disposable income to pursue, if not realize, this dream world that consumer goods seemed to promise.

Thus, while mass consumption and immersion in the urban market may have encompassed most urban Mexicans, the consumer culture expounded by mass-circulation newspapers and department stores was a decidedly class- and gender-based one. These institutions and their forms of advertisement laid out the framework, rules, and images of consumption, forwarding the definitive word on good taste, propriety, and refinement. Furthermore, building upon the gente decente conception of clearly divided gender roles, they gendered consumption as a feminine trait. They grabbed customers' attention with eye-catching appeals, whether through comics, photography, and interesting texts for newspaper ads, or the use of glass, colour, light, and a new emphasis on commercial art within the stores. On the one hand, the consumer desire created through these techniques crossed class boundaries, instilling a new phenomenon of mental consumption among city dwellers. Window shopping and browsing through store displays became new leisure activities for the affluent and the less well-off. On the other hand, while all could participate in craving the objects of their desire, it was the consumer whose pocketbook enabled her to affirm her own and her family's class position who was the ideal target for the department store and for much of the advertising world.

The purveyors of a consumer ethic reached beyond the department store to target public entertainments and celebrations as public space for the messages of consumption. Show and festival organizers transformed or adapted older forms of entertainment and celebration to introduce new types of mass entertainment and a new standard of commercialized amusement reflecting new values, particularly those of Mexico's middling and upper classes. Refined vaudeville piggy-backed the new technology of cinematography, joining new American carnivals and shows and the standby of circuses as standard entertainment fare. The traditional bullfight arena, draped in advertisement banners and populated by brand-name cigarette, novelty, and food vendors, became a transmission site for the culture of consumption to a society-wide audience. Consumer industries and businesses targeted a respectable clientele with displays and by sponsoring public events. In doing so, they entrenched themselves and their products as a welcome

and integral feature of the festivities. As the new consumer culture was incorporated into the celebratory calendar, northern urban Mexicans became further enmeshed in a consumer ethic. Collectively, these events supported a process that was making consumption as well as production a visible part of the public culture. Urban consumption and the consumer culture it nurtured permeated the daily discourse and social relations of urban Mexicans, creating a host of new public contexts for old social struggles.

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