



# Women with Golden Arms: Narco-Trafficking in North America, 1910–1970

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## Abstract

After the arrests of a number of prominent women traffickers in 1975, the Federal Bureau of Investigation proclaimed that there was ‘no anti-woman bias’ in the Latin American drug trade (*New York Times*, April 22, 1975). Long before, narcotics warriors in the US, Mexico, and Canada had monitored the activities of a number of prominent women traffickers. Using official documents, reports, and newspapers, this article examines five cases of women smugglers of opiates and marijuana who operated from the early 1910s to the 1960s. Two of the women lived in the US, two in Mexico, and one in China. For all of them, Mexico served as a source of supply, a site of transit, a point for contacts, and/or a place for peddling. In this study, I argue that women found lucrative opportunities in the trafficking of narcotics just as men. Moreover, this study challenges the masculine constructions of the narcotics trade by considering how female peddlers used certain spaces in the economy to develop their enterprises or how they exploited certain gendered stereotypes to undermine the law.

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In 1917, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the police had dismantled the largest transnational drug smuggling ring for violation of the Harrison Act.<sup>1</sup> The earlier arrests of Oscar Kirshon and Max Singer, two smugglers in New York City, led to the destruction of the most lucrative dope rings on the West Coast.<sup>2</sup> That million dollar a year (2006: \$18,518,518) bicoastal enterprise moved heroin and opium from Canada and Mexico into California. With the cooperation from the New York smugglers turned informants, authorities in California reported that they had taken into custody: Charles Cohn, Louis Bernzaft, Max Steiner, Joseph Smith, Sam Levy, Alexander Gladstone, Max Silverstein, and Mrs Eva Silverstein. During a raid of the Silverstein’s apartment, police discovered \$60,000 dollars (2006: \$111,111) of morphine and heroin. As the only woman arrested, the press labeled Eva Silverstein the ‘Queen’ of the narcotic ring.<sup>3</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reproduced only her image. Using a portrait probably found during the raid, the newspaper showed Mrs Silverstein dressed in a shirt-coat while resting her head to the left on her index finger with her hair in tidy buns on either side of her head. She appeared

more a union leader or a suffragette rather than an international smuggler. What contributed Silverstein's role in narcotics trafficking led to speculation: her husband's opium addiction or perhaps her own?<sup>4</sup>

Silverstein represents one of the first women in North America identified as an equal partner in a highly lucrative illicit American-Mexican-Canadian enterprise. Her case reveals that transnational and bicoastal business contacts and the physical mobility of smugglers in the early 1900s. Her story when juxtaposed with reports in the same decade about Mexican women evolving into experts in bootlegging of mescal and tequila during the Mexican Revolution exposed that transnational criminal behavior on both sides of the border was not bound by race, gender, class, or national origin.<sup>5</sup> From the 1910s, a subversive enemy emerged embodied in bootleggers but also drug smugglers who used Mexico as a site of enterprise.<sup>6</sup> By the 1930s, the role women played in illicit trade in North America grew more sensationalistic in the newspapers and ever more disturbing for police, customs officials, Foreign Service officers, and narcotics warriors on both sides of the border.

Throughout the twentieth century, Mexico and the US-Mexican border developed as site of illicit trade that offered women with the ingenuity – and criminality – a place to conduct business whether for supply, transit, contacts, or clients of narcotics. Contemporary research on the history of narcotics usually focuses on the ramifications of policy. When examining gender, most studies explore the impact of policy on women's bodies as their response to addiction, particularly while pregnant and its criminalization.<sup>7</sup> In examining international narcotics trafficking, contemporary studies and melodramatic representations situate women as victims of their lovers and family members.<sup>8</sup> Because of the US' continued War on Drugs and the impact of it on legal and political policy, media, and medicine, much of the literature has been produced by scholars that focus on the US as a victim of Mexican drug traffickers.<sup>9</sup> Through the examination of individual traffickers, historical research disputes the constructs of 'woman as addict' or 'woman as victim' as universal and timeless truths. More importantly, I position five case studies of women within the policy and gender debates on both sides of the border. Thus, Eva Silverstein, Sadie Stock, Maria Wendt, Lola la Chata, and La Nacha all contributed to the formation of policy because they inadvertently informed ideas surrounding gender and drugs.

Certain women gained financial and political power from the smuggling and peddling of narcotics. Women in Mexico, along the US-Mexican border, in the US, and from other parts of the world developed sophisticated networks and enterprises with powerful men, and if necessary, they resorted to extreme violence to maintain their positions within criminal enterprises and to access the profits that they yielded. They assisted in the creation of chief narcotics ports along the US-Mexican border beginning the in the 1910s and 1920s. Moreover, they embraced new

forms of technology to supply addicts in the major narcotics hubs of New York City, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Toronto; cities far from Calexico–Mexicali, Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Mexico City.<sup>10</sup>

In this article, I examine five women who were connected to the peddling and smuggling of opiates and marijuana from and through Mexico into the US and Canada from the 1920s to the 1960s to situate them within the greater historiography of crime.<sup>11</sup> Their stories complicate the masculine constructions of the narcotics trade, but they also display certain commonalties. These women found lucrative career paths that built upon one of the few spaces within the economy left open to them: the informal and illegal market.<sup>12</sup> Women, accustomed to work in that market used their feminine wiles to develop their businesses. If necessary, they embraced certain gender constructs to avoid imprisonment by exploiting tales of victimization. More significant, they created vexing problems for policy makers since they defied the cultural meanings of women and narcotics by violating the law while maintaining and, in some case, enriching their families. Like Eva Silverstein, many of the women had male partners that furthered their careers, but a few were the architects of their own multi-generational familial transnational criminal syndicates.

### *The Long Day's Journey in the Night: Heroin*

In 1914, the Harrison Act dramatically altered the urban landscape in the US. The Harrison Act of 1914 required physicians and pharmacists to register with the Treasury Department, to pay a tax, and to keep records of the narcotic drugs they prescribed or dispensed.<sup>13</sup> Historians and medical scholars argue that the Harrison Act followed by the 1919 Supreme Court's anti-maintenance interpretation of the law contributed directly to the increase in illicit trade and an explosion of addiction since it essentially cut off supplies to iatrogenic addicts. Prior to the passage of the Harrison Act, women comprised most opiate addicts since doctors prescribed narcotics to treat a host of 'feminine illnesses'.<sup>14</sup> Doctors treated men and women with various complaints, whether a cough, dysentery, asthma, neuralgia, or neurasthenia with opiates and its derivatives thus creating a class of addicts.

Medical professionals first introduced heroin as a substitute for other opium derivatives that proved addictive: codeine and morphine. While doctors and pharmacists prescribed it for a host of ailments, heroin was a treatment for respiratory illnesses.<sup>15</sup> Administered orally in pill or elixir, only small amounts of heroin needed to be consumed. Initially, heroin served as a treatment for respiratory infections in US prisons. Once experiencing the euphoric effects of the narcotics, prisoners sought the drug on their own once outside prison walls thus creating the first addicts. Once it entered the mainstream for treatment or not, heroin

evolved into a problem because it was initially marketed as non-habit forming. While used for asthma and coughs, doctors prescribed it as a step down and cure for morphine addiction; thus, moving addicts from one vice to another.<sup>16</sup> By 1903, physician George Pettey caused a stir when he contradicted conventional wisdom and noted that heroin was indeed habit forming.<sup>17</sup> In turn, doctors prescribed less and less heroin by the 1910s. Just as the US government forced pharmaceutical companies, pharmacists, and medical professionals to comply with changes in the law, heroin became a replacement for other narcotics in the general population because of its ability to maintain its euphoric content when adulterated.<sup>18</sup>

The shifts wrought by the Harrison Act in the US contributed to the criminalization of the border at the same time as the violence of the Mexican Revolution pushed people toward the northern border who tried to escape the violence.<sup>19</sup> US officials on the border grew aware that this invisible line in the sand became a site of dangerous pleasures but also a space for criminality. With concern, they noted its permeability in sustaining certain vices in the North. By 1916, US soldiers stationed along the border developed a taste for tequila and mescal, and Mexican smugglers were more than happy to oblige their vice. As journalist W. D. Hornsday noted:

One of the many interesting and strange phases of the animated military life upon the long strip of United States territory that fronts Mexico is the native bootlegger and smuggler, who in some mysterious unaccountable way, manages to cross the boundary line without detection and through confederates on this side, place the contraband fiery intoxicating liquors within purchasing reach of some of the camps of soldiers.

Ever since the Rio Grande became the dividing line between the United States and Mexico, mescal smuggling has been a fine art with many of the brown skin natives of the border. It is more or less a family vocation with them. In the old days it was regarded as an honorable though somewhat hazardous method of earning a livelihood. Mescal smuggling is not confined to men but many Mexican women are adepts [*sic*] in the business . . . It is petty lawlessness that the border customs officers and their guards have never been able to suppress.<sup>20</sup>

Hornsday's 1916 article about smuggling of alcohol served as a harbinger for greater profits to come. Even before Prohibition in the US, Mexican bootleggers created the paths that served those in the trade of marijuana and opiates. Bootleggers learned early on that the customs officials and border agents were few, and that they could bypass the fees by smuggling their goods to gain greater profits. Even by 1963, the US Department of Treasury estimated that it intercepted only 5% of the narcotics smuggled into US from Mexico.<sup>21</sup>

Hornsday's analysis of the role of women and the Mexican family in transnational bootlegging evolved into an essential characteristic of the

illicit trade of narcotics.<sup>22</sup> Even in 1916, Hornsday's analysis challenges certain gender of *marianismo* and *machismo*.<sup>23</sup> In his article, both men and women engaged in bootlegging with success. For many women, street vending offered one of the few economic opportunities. Thus, bootlegging served as a more lucrative extension of the vending of beverages whether alcoholic or not. Historically, women dominated the informal economic sector whether selling food, drinks, or their own bodies. Lower class women have always subverted societal gendered traditions by being public and engaging in commerce in order to survive and maintain their families. Thus, Hornsday observed a common phenomenon in the informal economic sector whether legal or criminal: it was a family business passed from generation to generation. The family served as an instrumental institution for social acculturation and economic maintenance. Thus, families not only passed on their cultural and social practices, they also bequeathed the economic practices. In a country where the informal market flourished, for many people street vending and peddling provided far greater profits than a traditional job.<sup>24</sup> In a time of crisis and massive social upheaval such as during the Mexican Revolution, such economic activities sustained families that had been displaced by violence or deprived of their traditional means to earn a living.

Along the US-Mexican border, numerous cities served as central ports of entry: Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, Brownsville-Matamoras, and El Paso-Ciudad Juarez in Texas, Douglas-Agua Prieta in New Mexico, Nogales in Arizona, and Calexico-Mexicali and San Diego-Tijuana in California. Smugglers operated through these cities as central points of smuggling whether cattle, people, goods, or tequila and mescal. During Prohibition from 1920 to 1933, the US Treasury Department focused on the illicit trade of alcohol that passed through border cities, but the customs agents grew further concerned about narcotics trade that entered the US and Mexico along the California and Baja California coast.<sup>25</sup> By the 1930s, certain cities in Mexico long known as illegal alcohol ports transformed into transit stations for the trafficking of heroin as well as marijuana. As the US Treasury Department shifted to narcotics after the passage of the Blaine Act and the Twenty-first Amendment, heroin and marijuana use had grown in the US.<sup>26</sup> By the end of Prohibition, both marijuana and opiates had moved beyond their traditional users: for marijuana, Mexicans in the Southwest and for opium, among Chinese, sailors, and bohemians. Relations between the US and Mexico grew strained due to narcotics. As the US sought to control the smuggling of opiates from Asia, Mexico became a potential trafficking point.<sup>27</sup> In the 1920s and the 1930s, a number of women in Mexico and along the border had become wealthy and powerful keeping the supply lines open to northern cities in the US and Canada. However, by the early 1930s, Mexican and US authorities resolved to collaborate in their antinarcotics efforts.<sup>28</sup>

*Supplying the Golden Arm: Women and Trade*

Beginning in the 1920s, US customs officials became increasingly alarmed by the rise of Calexico–Mexicali as a central point of entry for narcotics. A *Los Angeles Times* journalist wrote that it was rumored that more contraband crossed at Calexico–Mexicali in three months than in New York City in one year.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps exaggerated, there is little doubt that Calexico–Mexicali evolved into a central port even though it was landlocked. Large amounts of narcotics could never be smuggled by water on boats or barges; furthermore, the terrain and atmosphere was difficult when considering the sea-level desert climate. However, traffickers became adept at using streams to float hollowed logs filled with drugs, and they lined with narcotics wheel basins of trucks for land crossings.

Despite these innovative methods, smugglers saw women as the *burro* or mule of choice. Women emerged as carriers of narcotics because they were less likely to be searched. In the 1920s, US customs and border officials stationed in Mexicali–Calexico noted that women may have been responsible for 60% of the drug flow across the border. As mules, they hid narcotics under their skirts, in their clothing, or in their bodies. One official complained: ‘It is not at all easy for men engaged in the work of trailing these agents to seize and search women’.<sup>30</sup> The role of women as mules resulted in the first hiring of women custom’s agents for the sole purpose to search other women.

While women operated as mules along Mexicali–Calexico using the land port, women such as Sadie Stock developed a lucrative transnational business in the 1920s by using an emerging sea port.<sup>31</sup> By land, limited amounts of heroin and other opiates were hidden under skirts or strapped to legs. Stock represented the technological and entrepreneurial shift that yielded far greater profits. A successful business woman in the 1920s, federal agents arrested Stock and her chauffeur Oscar Dusel on August 4, 1925 in San Diego.<sup>32</sup> In their search, agents seized large amounts of narcotics, jewelry, and \$22,000 (2006: \$252,874) in cash. Stock insisted that she planned to use the money to pay her income tax. With Stock’s arrest, agents reported that they had dismantled one of the most successful narcotics syndicates in the US. Her ties reached to Europe, Asia, and Mexico. She received her shipments of opium from Asia through ports in Ensenada, Mexico; she also received shipments of other drugs from Germany.<sup>33</sup> From Ensenada, she moved her merchandise into the US where she supplied much of the heroin trade in California and the Pacific Northwest. Immediately after her arrest, Stock posted a \$15,000 bond with Dusel freed on \$5,000 paid by her attorney. Later, she went to trial, but she gained her release on a technicality. Calexico–Mexicali as a central narcotics port later was overtaken by Tijuana–San Diego by the end of the 1920s with the assistance of women such as Stock. In the 1930s, however, Stock appeared to still be trafficking working with a Mexican partner through the Calexico–Mexicali port.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1930s, women emerged as prominent traffickers. Moreover, federal agents became more comfortable in searching, seizing, and arresting women that they believed were transnational drug traffickers. These arrests also show that the trade drew women of diverse class and ethnic backgrounds. The case of Maria Wendt (also referred to as Molly Maria Wendt) demonstrated the role of women as transnational mules with extensive international contacts. In 1936, federal agents detained Wendt after she disembarked from the Japanese ship *M.V. Heiyo Maru* as it ported in San Pedro, California. Customs agents grew suspicious of her and searched her items. Initially, they thought they had caught a smuggler whose wardrobes were full of silk items. Upon closer inspection, customs officials found secret compartments that yielded 54 pounds (862.75 ounces) of pure heroin valued at \$100,000 (2006: \$1,449,275). Federal officials arrested Wendt, one of the largest narcotic arrests of a mule.

In their investigation, agents found that the heroin allegedly came from Shanghai. Daniel Bailey, the Customs Agent in Charge, reported

that the deal for this shipment of narcotic was consummated in Mexico City between Anton Wurthmueller of Mexico City and Norbert Lefenholtz Branstatter of Shanghai China and unknown parties are from New York City.<sup>35</sup>

He alluded to the fact that Wendt may have been present in Mexico City. For years, US customs officials followed Lefenholtz Branstatter. With surveillance, customs agents tracked his movements through the 1930s from Shanghai to Spain, to Mexico, and to Cuba. The detention of Wendt led to the eventual arrest of Lefenholtz Branstatter in Cuba, who was allegedly her partner.<sup>36</sup> Deported from Cuba to New York in late August, he committed suicide en route to New York while in the custody of US Treasury officials.<sup>37</sup>

Wendt also attempted to avoid prison. Once taken into the custody by US Customs agents, she escaped. This led to a crisis within the Treasury Department. Officials proclaimed she must have been kidnapped 'by her own friends'. On August 12, 1936, Thomas Gorman of Customs reported to Henry Morgenthau, US Secretary of Treasury, that Wendt had fled from his officials in Los Angeles. However, he stated that they detained her that morning in New York City boarding the *S.S. Deutschland* to sail for Germany. Morgenthau became enraged over the incompetence of his L.A. agents. He indicated that there must be some disciplinary action against the employee or employees responsible for her escape.<sup>38</sup> After her escape from the hotel, Ms. Wendt had boarded a United Airlines flight from Los Angeles to New York City on a ticket allegedly purchased by a man that custom agents assumed was Japanese.

After her capture in New York, Wendt returned to Los Angeles to stand trial. There, she became very ill and underwent surgery. Because of her illness, she repeatedly requested to be deported back to China. Unlike Sadie Stock, Wendt went to trial that resulted in guilty verdict for violation of

the Harrison. She received a sentence of ten years at the federal women's prison in West Virginia. In the newspaper coverage of her trial, many images of Wendt appeared: a petite woman in stylish clothes. Journalists identified her ethnicity as Eurasian or Chinese-German. Her ethnic background further contributed to officials on both sides of the border who were trying to ascertain who was responsible for the increase in heroin trafficking in the 1930s. Bailey reported that Mexican officials blamed expatriate Germans and Chinese as responsible for new laboratories that had sprung up in Mexico in the 1930s. In turn, the US agents continually discussed the influence of the Japanese in drug trafficking. Wendt served all these perceptions. Her contacts in Mexico included ethnic Germans; and she was Chinese and German. US officials continually argued that a Japanese agent purchased her ticket on the *Deutschland*. Wendt embodied the national rhetoric of degeneracy on both sides of the border, but she also complicates the narrative.

As a woman, Wendt maintained that she was simply a mule, 'a tool' that had been 'abandoned by those who used me'.<sup>39</sup> Her sex gave the appearance that her assertion seemed true, that she was a pawn in a scheme concocted by two men. However, her contacts in China and beyond contributed to doubt. From the time of her arrest, journalists reported that she hailed from a well-connected family and that she was a multilingual, world traveler. One journalist noted that an agreement had been reached not to disclose the family's name. It was not until the mid-1940s – in a *New York Times* article about the new government and national anthem in Nanking, China, a Japanese colony – that a journalist reported the name of Wendt's family. Maria Wendt was the daughter of Wen Tsung-yao, the Minister of Justice in the Nanking government. Prior to the nationalist revolution, he also served in the government. Thus, since her childhood, Maria Wendt moved in sophisticated circles. With her multi-cultural background and a powerful father, Wendt was highly educated, urbane, Western, and well-traveled. Her influence and power did not necessarily come from her involvement in illicit trade; instead it probably served as a great cover for her role in trafficking in 1936. Questions remain: Were Lefenholtz Branstatter and Wendt partners and suppliers to Mexico as well as the US?

Stock and Wendt's stories serve as examples of women on the US side of the border who engaged in transnational illicit trade. Moreover, both women reveal that traffickers and smugglers hailed from the elite class as well as working classes. For both of them, Mexico served as a transit and contact point. With shifts in the US, Mexico evolved into a satellite that fed the demand for narcotics addicts in the US drug industry. By the 1930s, US customs officials closely monitored Mexico as a port of entry, and the influx of people and goods across the border became cause for speculation among US customs officials. With an increase focus on the Asian drug trade and the anti-immigration policies in the US, Mexico further evolved from transit to production.



Recent studies on the history of narcotics disclose that Mexico, particularly Baja California, had been a central port for Asian opium in the late 1800s and early 1900s due to the anti-immigration laws in the US and greater control of the west coast harbors.<sup>40</sup> The production of poppy in Mexico emerged with the arrival of a large Chinese population that settled in the Mexican states of Sinaloa and Sonora. Encountering difficulty in their new country, recent immigrants found the land to be excellent for growing poppy and developed lucrative business. Initially, the Mexican government viewed opium use and addiction as a problem unique to Chinese immigrants and bohemians. In 1917, Dr J. M. Rodriguez proposed the creation of the *Consejo de Salubridad General* (Ministry of Public Health), and two years later the ministry focused on the use of alcoholism, but also opium, marijuana, heroin, and cocaine because the abuse of such substances was spreading across class and culture and threatened the ideals of the nation in the wake of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>41</sup> Thus, states first passed laws controlling the use and distribution of opium derivatives and marijuana.<sup>42</sup> By 1923, President Alvaro Obregón (1920–24) introduced federal laws prohibiting the importation of opium (morphine and heroin) as well as cocaine. By 1925, President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924–28) ordered the police department to arrest all users and dealers. He also demanded the immediate deportation of all Americans in Mexico involved in trafficking.<sup>43</sup> Following the request of US Ambassador James Rockwell Sheffield, Calles limited and enacted greater controls on the movement of Asian opium that served the pharmaceutical industry into Mexico.<sup>44</sup>

In the late 1930s, the problem of drug trafficking and Mexico's centrality emerged in both official documents in the US and Mexican newspapers.<sup>45</sup> With the end of Prohibition, the US government grew more concerned about another menace that was seeping across its borders from the south: narcotics.<sup>46</sup> The US drug policy toward Mexico became even more focused in the 1930s with the establishment of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) housed in the Treasury Department in 1930.<sup>47</sup> Harry Anslinger, the first director of the FBN, the predecessor to the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), saw Mexico as a continued hindrance to the attempts of his agency to gain control of the narcotics problem.<sup>48</sup>

In Mexico, with the end of the Revolution, the government began to act on its own growing concerns about the rise of narcotics abuse in the cities. Like those in the FBN, Mexican officials too were concerned of the vices of foreigners, particularly Chinese immigrants who were perceived as a threat to the nation. The national exploitation of Chinese as responsible for the increase in drug trafficking relied upon xenophobic and feminized deviant discourses that ensured that they were a danger to the Mexican nation, very similar to those same arguments developed in the US.<sup>49</sup> Beginning in the late 1800s, Mexicans began to organize campaigns in northern states to boycotts Chinese businesses, control intermarriage, and press for anti-Chinese legislation.<sup>50</sup> Suspected ties to narcotics trafficking

further fed anti-Chinese sentiment. Police led raids on Chinese opium dens and gambling palors documenting the arrests and confiscation of pipes and other paraphenlia.<sup>51</sup> When questioned about their role in the opium trade, Mexican officials continually argued that the Chinese and Germans were responsible. In international meetings, they argued that the demand in the US fueled the drug trade and brought dubious characters to Mexico. Cases like those of Eva Silverstein, Maria Wendt, and Sadie Stock further added to these assertions since all embodied the official rhetoric of the government due to their national origins and ethnicity.

By the 1940s, the Mexican government could no longer deny that transnational smuggling was a crime that was dominated by foreigners. In 1945, the President of Mexico Manuel Ávila Camacho issued a decree to the Minister of Interior and to police agencies throughout Mexico to arrest 'public enemy number one' Lola la Chata of Mexico City as well as another infamous trafficker, Ignacia Jasso, Vd. de González, also known as La Nacha, from the northern state of Chihuahua.<sup>52</sup>

As discussed by journalist Hornsby in 1916 in regards to bootleggers, both La Chata and La Nacha demonstrated the importance of family, informal networks, and power derived from peddling and trafficking narcotics. Compared to Silverstein, Stock, and Wendt their careers lasted much longer and their organizations were more lucrative, Lola la Chata controlled the heroin market in Mexico City from the 1930s until her death in 1959.<sup>53</sup> La Nacha too was an infamous trafficker of marijuana and narcotics along the US-Mexican border where she operated mostly out of Ciudad Juárez from the 1930s until her death in the late 1960s. The daughter of a street marketer turned morphine and marijuana vendor, La Chata grew up working as a mule in La Merced in Mexico City. During the Revolution, she went to Ciudad Juárez where she gave birth to two daughters but also learned something about transnational trafficking. Eventually, she made her way back to Mexico City where her marriage to ex-police officer Enrique Jaramillo, a successful narcotics smuggler and peddler based in Pachuca, Hidalgo. Her marriage ensured police protection while her success contributed to her important contacts in Mexico. Moreover, her children and extended family also followed her into the trade, thus creating three generations of peddling women.<sup>54</sup>

Like La Chata, La Nacha had contacts with powerful men in the area of her operation. In 1939, American Vice Consul T. L. Lilliestrom wrote to the Secretary of State about La Nacha and her ties to powerful men. Lilliestrom pointed out that La Nacha had long been the head of a prominent narcotics ring that operated in El Paso-Ciudad Juárez. In October of 1939, she fled Ciudad Juárez due to an impending arrest. In Torrerón, Coahuila, two plainclothes police officers beat her and told her that she must pay 20,000 pesos or General Alatorre, the Commander of the Garrison at Ciudad Juárez, had enough evidence against her to send her to Islas Marías. A relative of La Nacha approached Alatorre. Lilliestrom wrote:

The General made it clear to this individual that he had no part in the matter, but that to the contrary he deplored the underhanded treatment she had received. He further stated that the only action he could condone would be legal punishment which might be meted out to her as a result of regular judicial procedure.<sup>55</sup>

Lillestrom went on to explain that Alatorre deplored the behavior of his men, but he also recognized that La Nacha had a protector who was the Sub-Chief of Police. She did go to jail in 1939. By 1940, however, La Nacha, living in Delicica [*sic*], Mexico, operated as 'the source of supply for small peddlers'.<sup>56</sup>

After the presidential degree in 1945, the police took both women into custody within a few days. Both La Chata and La Nacha fought to gain a reprieve from the Presidential Decree.<sup>57</sup> Special Employee Peña noted that US Treasury officials were closely observing who supported the La Chata. Peña wrote:

A close watch was kept by agents of the Federal Narcotics Police of the Department of Health and Assistance and by this office over people who tried to help her by using their influence with the authorities. This was done in order to keep check on possible connections between this subject and any prominent Mexicans who might have some interest in the illicit traffic of narcotics.<sup>58</sup>

Both women fought the presidential decree, but despite their efforts, they were sent to Islas Marías. La Nacha partially succeeded in her pleas. She received a transfer to the penitentiary in Ciudad Juárez, and eventually La Chata received a medical transfer to Mexico City. From the prison in Ciudad Juárez, La Nacha received prominent visitors and continued to sell marijuana and opiates in and outside the prison.<sup>59</sup> In Mexico City, La Chata's agents continued her trade whether she was behind prison walls or on the street.

For La Chata, Mexican newspapers reported in the 1940s that her fortune had been confiscated by the Mexican Police to be turned over to the Secretariat of Health to treat addicts. Circulating the translated version of the articles, Anslinger wrote: 'Good precedent. Why not apply it in the USA?'.<sup>60</sup> La Chata's arrest in 1945 highlighted Mexico's emergence as a key player in transit but also as a site of production. In the 1940s, Anslinger argued that heroin use declined, and scholars such as David Courtwright and David Musto have agreed. World War II in Europe and the Pacific disrupted the opium trade lines to the US, thus prices for heroin increased substantially. For a woman like La Chata who had a steady though fairly small national supply of heroin, she profited greatly during this time. During World War II, smugglers easily moved Mexican heroin by land or planes. In the United Nations Commission on Narcotics meetings, Colonel C. H. L. Sherman, Canada's representative argued that Mexican 'brown [Mexican] heroin' had been seized in large

raids in Toronto. Moreover, 'the traffic in this drug was directed by a syndicate with headquarters in Toronto'.<sup>61</sup>

Despite being labeled 'public enemy number one', in 1945, La Chata continued to peddle and traffic into the late 1950s. In 1957, Mexican police arrested Lola la Chata for the last time as she was processing heroin in her home.<sup>62</sup> Described in the press as a 'famous international narcotic trafficker', she had been captured after eluding police for two years. Once found guilty and sent back to *Cárcel de Mujeres*, she died in September of 1959 of coronary failure at the age of fifty-eight.<sup>63</sup> Following her arrest and imprisonment, many of her band died in prison while serving sentences on narcotics charges.<sup>64</sup>

Once released from prison in the late 1940s, La Nacha continued to sell and traffic narcotics for more than two decades. In 1950, FBN officials documented her as the potential source of a prominent Californian trafficker, Consuelo Sanchez de Dores.<sup>65</sup> Originally from Ciudad Juárez, FBN officials described Sanchez as an exprostitute who relocated to Los Angeles to peddle drugs. In 1951, the mayor of Ciudad Juárez Pedro García told P. A. Williams, an FBI agent, that La Nacha lived permanently in Guadalajara. However, when she visited her sons in Ciudad Juárez, she always carried an 'amparo' which the FBI agent described as a legal document to prohibit her arrest. Her two sons, Natividad and Ignacio continued operating out of Ciudad Juárez. By the 1960s, La Nacha abandoned Guadalajara and returned to Ciudad Juárez where she peddled and trafficked marijuana and heroin with her family. By the mid- to late 1960s, her age did not inhibit her business since her children – but also her grandchildren and grand-nephews – had joined her. Like La Chata, she had spawned a multi-generational extended peddling and trafficking family.<sup>66</sup> La Chata and La Nacha's continued careers and their ability to manipulate police and government officials fueled FBN suspicions that Mexican authorities were incompetent and corrupt. These ideas continue to the present contributing to on-going debates on both sides of the border.

### *Selling Women: Conclusion*

These case studies of Eva Silverstein, Sadie Stock, Maria Wendt, Lola la Chata, and La Nacha offer some startling evidence that defies the gendered constructs of transnational narco-trafficking as highly masculine enterprises.<sup>67</sup> While popular culture highlights the role of women whether in narco-corridos or melodramas, scholarly work has mostly ignored the role of women. More women served as mules than architects of criminal families and enterprises, but there exist exceptions. The women mentioned above represent diverse backgrounds whether categorized by their involvement in smuggling or their ethnicity, class, or national origin. Trafficking of narcotics gave women a lucrative economic opportunity where few existed during their lifetimes. Economically and social marginalized, all of the women mentioned above

built upon limited informal and formal social networks to construct lucrative businesses. Compared to men of their class, national origin, and ethnicity, their economic options were more limited. Their ability to manipulate men, legal structures, and economic boundaries highlighted their entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, these women and their successes and failures disrupt the view that the trade was and continues to be a male domain.

The differences between these women highlight the rhetoric of threat and danger in Mexico, the US, and Canada. Maria Wendt obviously came from a comfortable background; however, her family contacts may have provided a great cover for her illegal ventures. She differs greatly from women such as Eva Silverstein, Lola la Chata, and La Nacha since she portrayed herself as a mule who had been duped. Women of means such as Wendt and Sadie Stock perhaps found adventure as well as economic opportunity in smuggling.<sup>68</sup> Silverstein, La Chata, and La Nacha found socio-economic advancement where little would have been possible. Women such as themselves found their options of employment limited to sweat-shop worker, maid, street vendor, or prostitute. Still, those jobs left women open to exploitation and danger as did drug smuggling and peddling. Moreover, the profits earned from such work would surely have paled in comparison to their documented earnings from narcotics.

Beginning in the 1970s with the arrests of prominent female traffickers from Mexico and Chile, the DEA reported that there was 'no anti-woman bias in the Latin American drug trade'.<sup>69</sup> Drug trafficking relies on a system that mimics certain stereotypical feminine traits and female economic skills of the informal market. The traffickers developed private and informal networks for supply, distribution, and sales. All the women relied upon men either as partners, as protectors, or as agents for greater influence. They understood how to operate on the margins of the economy, and they struggled to protect their privacy since it ensured their success in the trade. Whether in the 1930s or the 1970s, women sought profit in drug peddling and smuggling.

### *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank Fred Romanski and John Taylor for all their help at the National Archives – College Park; and Karen Anson, Robert Parks, and Marc Renovitch at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Charlotte Strum at the Rockefeller Archive Center for all their assistance. I would also like to thank Robert Bubbington, Francie Chassen-López, Paul Gootenberg, Regnar Kristenssen, and Mary Kay Vaughn for their comments.

### *Short Biography*

Elaine Carey received a Ph.D. in Latin American history from the University of New Mexico, and she is an Associate Professor at St. John's University

in Queens, NY. She has held fellowships with the National Endowment for the Humanities and Fulbright–García Robles. In 2005, she published *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power, and Terror, 1968 Mexico*. In 2007, she held a second Fulbright–García Robles fellowship in Mexico where she conducted research on women and illicit trade in North America.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The Harrison Act of 1914 required physicians and pharmacists to register with the Treasury Department, pay a tax, and keep records of the narcotic drugs they prescribed or dispensed. David Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2–4.

<sup>2</sup> 'Nab Alleged Heads of Drug Syndicate Here', *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1917. When arrested, Kirshon and Singer had over \$500,000 worth of morphine, heroin tablets, and opium.

<sup>3</sup> Eva Silverstein was from a long list of 'queens' that gained their royal title from narcotics. Male smugglers were rarely referred to as 'kings' in the 1910s to the 1930s.

<sup>4</sup> 'Nab Alleged Heads'.

<sup>5</sup> W. D. Hornsday, 'Bootleggers on the Border', *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1916. The U.S.–Mexican border continues to inspire studies of transnational crime. See Ovid Demaris, *Poso Del Mundo; Inside the Mexican-American Border, from Tijuana to Matamoros* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1970); Sebastian Rotella, *Twilight on the Line: Underworlds and Politics at the United States Mexican Border* (New York, NY: Norton 1998); Charles Bowden. *Down by the River: Drugs, Money, Murder, and Family* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Historians have long documented the use of mind-altering substances in Mexico. Chroniclers discussed the use of peyote and hallucinogenic mushrooms. See Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *A History of Ancient Mexico, 1547–1577: Anthropological, Mythological & Social 1547–1577* (Detroit, MI: Blaine Ethridge Press, 1931). Early work such as Francisco Guerra, *The Pre-Columbian Mind: A Study into the Aberrant Nature of Sexual Drives, Drugs Affecting Behaviour and the Attitude towards Life and Death, with a Survey of Psychotherapy in Pre-Columbian America* (New York, NY: Seminar Press, 1971) examine the attempts of the Spanish laws to control the use of psychotropic drugs. For Mexico in the modern period, the first laws passed regulating the use of narcotics took place in Mexico City and Baja California. These were followed by national laws passed in 1871. For a legal histories, see Olga Cárdenas de Ojeda, *Toxicomanía y narcotráfico: Aspecto legales* (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976) and Sergio García Ramírez, *Delitos en materia estupefacientes y psicotrópicos* (México, DF: Editorial Trillas, 1970). For a thorough general history of the contemporary period, see Luis Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas: El narcotráfico, del Porfiriato al nuevo milenio* (México, DF: Plaza y Janés, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> See Susan Boyd, *From Witches to Crack Mothers: Women, Drug Law, and Policy* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2003). Boyd examines the shifts and distinctions of policies that focus on women in Canada, Great Britain, and the United States. Nancy Campbell, *Using Women: Gender, Drug Policy, and Social Justice* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000). Campbell follows the shifts of policy on cultural meanings of drug use in the United States. Much has been written on mothers' use of drugs from various disciplines. For a legal and policy perspective, see Laura Gómez, *Misconceiving Mothers: Legislators, Prosecutors, and the Politics of Prenatal Drug Exposure* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997) who studies drug policy in California from 1983 to 1996 as it focuses on policies directed at crack mothers. Sheigla Murphy and Marsha Rosenbaum, *Pregnant Women on Drugs: Combating Stereotypes and Stigma* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999) provide a sociological study of mothers who use opiate and coca derivatives. Boyd's earlier work, *Mothers on Illegal Drugs: Transcending Myths* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) questions why the numbers of using mothers is so high in North America when compared to other studies in Europe. She further analyses the impact of anti-narcotics legislation and maternal behavior in Canada.

<sup>8</sup> See Mara L. Keire, 'Dope Fiends and Degenerates: The Gendering of Addiction in the Early Twentieth Century', *Journal of Social History*, 3 (1998): 809–22; Margath A. Walker, 'Guad-narco-lupe, Maquilarañas, and the Discursive Construction of Gender and Difference on the US-Mexico Border in Mexican Media Representations', *Gender, Place, and Culture*, 12 (March 2005): 95–110. For melodramatic representation, see Paul Mezey et al., *Maria Full of Grace* (New York, NY: HBO Home Video, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Much of the recent literature on drug trafficking focuses on security issues such as Tony Payan, *The Three US-Mexico Border Wars: Drugs, Immigration, and Homeland Security* (Westport, CT: Praeger, Security International, 2006); Peter Andrea, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). Journalist have continued to question the US War on drugs. See Elaine Shannon, *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, US Law Men, and the War America Can't Win* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1988); Rotella, *Twilight on the Line*; Bowden, *Down by the River*. Mexican journalistic approaches include Ma. Idalia Gómez and Darío Fritz, *Con la muerte en el bolsillo: Seis desafortados historias del narcotráfico en México* (México, DF: Editorial Planera, 2005) that documents the different cartels and individuals operating in Mexico; Jesús Blancornelas, *EL Cartel* (México, DF: Plaza y Janes, 2002) focuses on the rise of the Arellano Félix family as it emerged to be one of the most powerful organized crime families. Ricardo Ravelo has written a number of books on those involved in drug trafficking in Mexico: *Los capos: las narco-rutas de México* (México, DF: Plaza Janés, 2005); *Los narcoabogados* (México, DF: Delbolsillo, 2007); and in light of the escalated drug war *Herencia maldita: el reto de Calderón y el nuevo mapa de narcotráfico* (México, DF: Grijalbo, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> 'Smuggling of Dope Alarms', *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1922, reported the growth of Calexico-Mexicali as a major port of entry. United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Report to the Economic and Social Council on the First Sessions of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs Held at Lake Success, New York 24 July to 8 August 1947 contains information regarding the growth of Mexican heroin in Toronto.

<sup>11</sup> For a history of narcotics smuggling, peddling, and trafficking, see Luis Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras: Los expedientes de una guerra permanente* (México, DF: Grijalbo, 2003) where he examines the Mexican drug trade as presented in the DEA archives. See also *El siglo de las drogas* where he examines the newspaper coverage of drug trafficking in Mexico from the 1800s.

<sup>12</sup> Female addiction has been well-documented. 'Frightened: The Agony of the Nervous Woman', *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1901. In popular culture, there are countless characterizations of female addicts, for example see Eugene O'Neill, *The Long Day's Journey into the Night* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (New York, NY: Time Warner Books, 1960).

<sup>13</sup> Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 2–4, 142. For a detailed history of the Harrison Act, see David F. Musto: *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotics Control*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54–68. For a policy history of cocaine, see Joseph Spillane, *Cocaine: From Medical Marvel to Modern Menace in the United States, 1884–1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) and for a global approach, see Paul Gootenberg (ed.), *Cocaine: Global Histories* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999). For a policy history of marijuana, see Rudolph Joseph Gerber, *Legalizing Marijuana: Drug Policy Reform and Prohibition Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004). For studies on drug control in the Americas, see William O. Walker, *Drug Control in the Americas* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press 1989); Walker, *Drugs in the Western Hemisphere: An Odyssey of Cultures in Conflict* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> Stephen R. Kandall, *Substance and Shadow: Women and Addiction in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Carolyn Jean Acker, 'Portrait of an Addicted Family: Dynamics of Opiate Addiction in the Early Twentieth Century', in Sarah W. Tracy and Caroline Jean Acker (eds.), *Altering American Consciousness: The History of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the United States, 1800–2000* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 165–81. For more historical studies of addiction, see Abraham Myerson, *The Nervous Housewife* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972 [1920]); Sara Graham Mulhall, *Opium: The Demon Flower* (New York, NY: H. Vinal, 1926). Graham Mulhall served as New York City's First Deputy State Narcotic Control Commissioner.

<sup>15</sup> While Franklin D. Roosevelt was a state senator, he received a number of letters protesting the passage of various bills that would limit the sale of cocaine and narcotic medicines. Edmond

Congar Brown, Attorney to Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 22, 1913 and Charles B. Towns to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 31, 1913, New York State Senator, box 8, The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Library (hereafter FDR Library), Hyde Park, New York.

<sup>16</sup> For personal letters regarding use of heroin to treat asthma and other respiratory problems, see Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York State Senator, box 8, FDR Library.

<sup>17</sup> George Pettey, 'The Heroin Habit another Curse', *Alabama Medical Journal*, 15 (1903): 174–80.

<sup>18</sup> See Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 85–109; Lawrence Kolb, *Drug Addiction: A Medical Problem* (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1962).

<sup>19</sup> Historical studies on the border inform the current perceptions of the border as a place of danger, violence, and vice since the time of the Revolution. For diverse approaches see Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1995); David E. Lorey, *The U.S.-Mexican Border in the Twentieth Century: A History of Economic and Social Transformation* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999); Robin E. Robinson, *Vice and Tourism on the U.S.-Mexican Border A Comparison of Three Communities in the Era of U.S. Prohibition*, Ph.D. diss. (Arizona State University, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> 'Bootleggers on the Border', *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1916.

<sup>21</sup> Dean F. Markham the Executive Director of the President's Advisory Committee on Narcotics and Drug Abuse, 1963, James Roosevelt Papers, Legislation Subject File, 1963 Box 483, FDR Library.

<sup>22</sup> For a historiographical study of the family, see Ann S. Blum, 'Bring it Back Home: Perspectives on Gender and Family History in Modern Mexico', *History Compass*, 4/5 (2006): 906–26.

<sup>23</sup> Over thirty years ago, scholars began to contemplate the gendered constructs and differences in Latin America. The earliest works are Ann Pescatello, *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973); Asunción Lavrin, *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978). More contemporary literature reveals how women become public figures and how they interact with the state or other institutions. For the colonial period, scholars have examined constructs of honor and how men and women conform or rebel against constructs. See Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett Rivera (eds.), *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). For the modern period, scholars have examined how women of diverse classes engage in public life See Thomas M. Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904–1948* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Karin A. Rosenblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures & the State in Chile, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2000); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham, NC: Duke University 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Even today, street vending yields great profits than working, for example, a factory job. See John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: Street Vendors and the State in Mexico City* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Cross argues that a street vendor in the late 1990s could earn over \$2,000 a month in the informal market.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

<sup>26</sup> The Blaine Act passed on February 17, 1933 ended Prohibition in the United States.

<sup>27</sup> 'Traffic of Opium and Other Noxious Drugs', Resume for the Mexican delegation at the League of Nations, by Dr. Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, 1938. Salazar wrote: 'In respect to the traffic in opium, it can be briefly said that in our country it has two aspects: Those who promote and encourage the use of drugs by our inhabitants, and that which is destined for the United States coming though our country merely in transit'.

<sup>28</sup> William O. Walker III, 'Control across the Border: The United States, Mexico, and Narcotics Policy, 1936–1940' *Pacific Historical Review*, 47 (February 1978): 93.

<sup>29</sup> 'Smuggling of Dope Alarms', *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1922. Calexico-Mexicali was second only to the ports in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the border as a site of vice, see Erich Schantz, 'From Mexicali Rose to Tijuana Brass: Vice Tours of the United States–Mexico Border, 1910–1965', Ph.D. diss. (University of California Los Angeles, 2001). See also Andrew Wood, *On the Border: Society and Culture between the United States and Mexico* (Lanham, MA: SR Books, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> 'Accused Drug Dealers Free', *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1924. For the role of Calexico–Mexicali, see G. R. Recio, 'Drugs and Alcohol: US Prohibition and the Origins of the Drug Trade in Mexico, 1900–1930', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34 (2002): 38–40.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*; Mexicali Consul to Secretary of State, April 24, 1927, Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, RG 170, Box 98, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter BNDD–NA).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Bailey, Customs Agent in Charge, Intelligence Bulletin, No. 8, September 19, 1936, Henry Morgenthau Papers, FDR Archive.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Bailey, Customs Agent in Charge, Intelligence Bulletin, Report 9, September 26, 1936, Henry Morgenthau Papers, FDR Archive.

<sup>36</sup> 'Accused in Narcotic Plot', *The New York Times*, August 30, 1936.

<sup>37</sup> 'Smuggler Pursuit Ended by Suicide', *The New York Times*, September 5, 1936.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum of Conference in Secretary's Office, August 12, 1936, Morgenthau Diary, FDR Archive.

<sup>39</sup> 'Smuggler Pursuit Ended by Suicide'.

<sup>40</sup> For a general history of drugs, see Jordan Goodman, Paul Lovejoy, and Andrew Sherratt, *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); David Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). For a pictorial history of patented medicine abuse, see Barbara Hodgson, *In the Arms of Morpheus: The Tragic History of Laudanum, Morphine, and Patent Medicine* (Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> *Excelsior*, July 8, 1919. Because of the connection of poppy production to the Chinese, Chinese immigrants were targeted for attack. See Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento anti-chino en México (1871–1934). Problemas del racismo y el nacionalismo durante la Revolución Mexicana* (México, DF: INAH, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Cárdenas de Ojeda, *Toxicomanía y narcotráfico: Aspecto legales*. The first status to passed laws were Baja California and the Federal District (Mexico City).

<sup>43</sup> 'Mexico to Join US in Fight on Drugs', *The New York Times*, May 10, 1925.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* By the mid-1940s, Mexico was producing 32 to 40 metric tons of opium.

<sup>45</sup> Consul Henry C. A. Damm, Opium Poppy Planted in Northern Sonora, August 16, 1927, See Record of Drug Enforcement Administration, Subject Files Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1917; Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento anti-chino en México (1871–1934)*. In 1927, Damm wrote about receiving information from U.S. informants living in Mexico about the Chinese in Sonora. He stated, 'The large Chinese population on the Mexican West Coast would undoubtedly offer a market for a large quantity of opium produced, but this consulate has not heard of any attempts to smuggle the drug of Sonora origin into the United States directly across the border'.

<sup>46</sup> Recio, 'Drugs and Alcohol'.

<sup>47</sup> Hearings before the Committee on Ways and Means House of Representatives, Seventy-first Congress, HR 10561, March 7 and 8, 1930 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1930). The urgency of the problem is illustrated by an attached map of the United States represented the 'Estimated Average Drug Addiction among Violations of the Harrison Narcotic Law', (1922–1928). See also Walker, *Drug Control in the Americas*.

<sup>48</sup> Douglas Clark Kinder and William O. Walker III, 'Stable Force in a Storm: Harry J. Anslinger and United States Narcotic Foreign Policy, 1930–1962', *The Journal of American History*, 72/4 (March 1986): 919. Anslinger strong-armed Mexican politicians as well as violated Mexico's sovereignty by putting operatives in Mexico without the knowledge or consent of the government. For a complete biography on Anslinger, see John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 1991). For a discussion of the Chinese in Mexico, see Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento anti-chino en México (1871–1934)*; José Luis Trueba Lara, *Los chinos de Sonora: una historia olvidada* (Hermosillo, Sonora México: Universidad de Sonora,

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<sup>50</sup> Gerardo Rénique, 'Race, Region, and Nation: Sonora's Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s–1930s', in Nancy Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosenblatt (eds.), *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 211–36.

<sup>51</sup> 'Chinos Jugadores y Viciosos', part of the collections at the Fototeca, Pachuca, Hidalgo. The photo-journalist collection documents raids on Chinese gambling business and opium dens.

<sup>52</sup> S. C. Peña, Special Employee, to Commissioner of Customs, July 7, 1945, DEA–BNDD, RG 170, Box 161.

<sup>53</sup> For a more in-depth discussion, Elaine Carey, "'Selling is More of a Habit than Using": Narcotraficante Lola la Chata and her Threat to Civilization, 1930–1960', *Journal of Women's History*, forthcoming.

<sup>54</sup> Attorney General of the Republic to Commissioner of Narcotic Treasury Department, January 22, 1962, Drug Enforcement Administration, Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, RG 170, Box 161, NA. This document disclosed the arrests of one of her daughters as well as nieces.

<sup>55</sup> T. L. Lillestrom, Vice Consul, Ciudad Juárez to the Secretary of State, October 13, 1939. Drug Enforcement Administration, Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, RG 170, Box 23, NA.

<sup>56</sup> Terry A. Talent to H. J. Anslinger, Treasury Dept, Bureau of Narcotics, El Paso, TX, December 1, 1947, Drug Enforcement Administration, Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, RG 170, Box 23, NA. In this list of names of Mexican arrested for narcotics violations, 17 names were on the list. La Nacha was the only woman. However, for potential dealers in Chihuahua, she was joined by five other women.

<sup>57</sup> S. C. Peña, Special Employee, to Commissioner of Customs, July 9, 1945.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> American Consulate at Ciudad Juárez, January 24, 1945, DEA–BNDD, Box 23.

<sup>60</sup> Extract from Newspaper, August 30, 1945.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Report to the Economic and Social Council on the First Sessions of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs Held at Lake Success, New York, July 24 to August 8, 1947.

<sup>62</sup> George White to H. J. Anslinger, newspaper clipping 'Blow to Narcotic Traffic', DEA–BNDD.

<sup>63</sup> Luis Alfonso Brucet Anaya, *El crimen organizado* (México, DF: Porrúa 2001), 252.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum Report Bureau of Narcotics, El Paso, TX, March 15, 1950, Consuelo Sanchez de Dovas alias Consuelo Rodriguez, Mexicali Mexico, DEA–BNDD 0660, Foreign Countries – Mexico-Peru, Box 29, DEA–BNDD.

<sup>66</sup> Wayland L. Speer, Acting Commissioner of Narcotics to Mr. A Gilmore Fluey, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, August 26, 1960; Ernest M. Gentry to H. J. Anslinger, June 7, 1962; Thomas W. Andrew to H. J. Anslinger, June 11, 1962, George H. Gafney, 'Survey of the Southwest Border', RG 170, DEA–BNDD 0660. See also Astorga, *Drogas sin fronteras*, 91–2. For a discussion about cocaine familial enterprises, see Paul Gootenberg, 'The "Pre-Colombian" Era of Drug Trafficking in the Americas: Cocaine, 1945–1965', *The AMERICAS* (October 2007): 133–176.

<sup>67</sup> Much of the masculinized discourse surrounding narcotics trafficking has emerged in popular culture. Narco-corridos have served to commemorate traffickers and smugglers. See Elijah Wald, *Narcocorrido: A Journey Into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerillas* (New York, NY: Rayo, HarperCollins, 2001). Also, prominent cases of those such as Pablo Escobar of Colombia and Pablo Acosta of Mexico, see Mark Bowden, *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001); Terrence E. Poppa, *Drug Lord: The Life and Death of a Mexican Kingpin* (New York, NY: Pharos Books, 1990).

<sup>68</sup> For a contemporary discussion of elites seeking adventure through drug trafficking, see 'The Narco-Juniors of the Arellano-Felix cartel' (video) part of *Frontline: Drug Wars*, aired October 9 and 10, 2000, see URL <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/business/afo/>, last accessed 17 February 2008.

<sup>69</sup> 'No Antiwoman Job Bias in the Narcotics Trade', *New York Times*, April 22, 1975.

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