

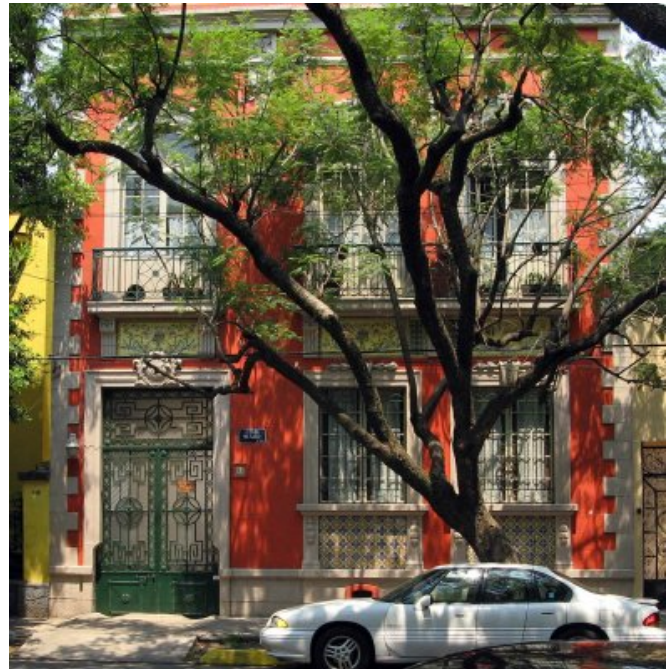
Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda Study Guide

Compiled by Alejandra Gonzales

La Colonia Condesa de la ciudad de Mexico

La Colonia Condesa is a unique neighborhood in Mexico City that was constructed in the early 1900's. *Los edificios condesas*, among the oldest apartment buildings in the city, are constructed in the Art Deco style. Art Deco was a post- WWI aesthetic movement that fused distinct cultural and period styles in order to reflect the disorder and lack of strong cultural identity that plagued the world after the devastation of the World War I. This uncertainty was doubly true for Mexico as the country had just gone through the 1910 Mexican Revolution- Pancho Villa and other Mexican rebels combating Presidente Porfirio Diaz for liberation. The neighborhood marks a strong departure from the colonial architecture stereotypical of Mexico City.

Today, the neighborhood has become very fashionable and is dotted with restaurants and art galleries. According to Juan Carlos Vives, the director of Miracle's 2010 production of *Entre Villa and una mujer desnuda* and native of Mexico DF, "It is a place where the "artists" with money live, a double-moral area, a zone in which everybody has a dog, everybody is ecological, everybody does pilates, everybody cares of what everybody says, everybody is disagreeably tolerant, is large-minded, permissive, indulgent. The Colonia Condesa is a place of appearances, of hypocrisy and zero commitments... A light world that thinks they are a deep world... This is the world of Gina and her friend Andrea... This is the world that a young man like Ismael would love to live in... I don't mean this is Gina's personality, neither Adrian's nor Andrea. I mean this is the perfect battlefield for a mature man as Adrian to get his perfect catch..."



Why did Sabina Berman place Gina's apartment, the location of the plays drama, in this neighborhood?

What does *La Colonia Condesa* say about the character's views on societal gender roles?

Pancho Villa

Campesino, bandit, guerrilla, martyr, husband, father, lover, macho, General, head of the Northern Division of the Revolutionary Army, and finally, an undying legend.

Pancho Villa was born and christened José Doroteo Arango Arámbulo and grew up in a family of sharecroppers on an hacienda in San Juan del Rio in the late 1900's. He spent his childhood enduring the harsh realities of peasant life and, at the age of 15 with the death of his father, he became the head of his family of six. In 1894, he killed the owner of the hacienda after discovering the man's intentions to seduce his 12-year-old sister. Arango Arámbulo ran for the hills and began his life as an outlaw, first as a bandit, then as a revolutionary. He changed his name to Francisco Villa and during the years between 1896 and 1909, he lived the life of the legendary Pancho Villa. He was a provincial bandit, who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor. He received the faith of the rural poor and became a leader and a folk hero.



In 1910, the Mexican Revolution began and the landless peasants rose up against the oppressive landowners and the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. Pancho Villa and his bandits became a guerrilla force that grew into an army of trains, horses, guns and 50,000 men. Pancho Villa soon showed evidence of being one of the most brilliant military strategists of the 20th century. In 1914, he and Emiliano Zapata met in Mexico City in triumph for the poor, the *campesinos*, and the disinherited. However, in 1915, Woodrow Wilson, the president of the United States permitted his rival, Carranza to transport troops over US soil in order to battle and defeat Villa's División del Norte at Agua Prieta. It was the beginning of the end. Despite a common enemy Villa and Carranza were rivals and without the easy access to arms and funding Carranza received from the United States, Zapata and Villa were at a distinct disadvantage. In 1916, Villa retaliated against US involvement in the Mexican War with a raid into New Mexico. President Wilson sent General John J. Pershing into Mexican territory looking for Pancho Villa. Pershing was unsuccessful, but due to the many fronts of the conflict, with Carranza, Pershing and Porfirio Diaz

all presenting as enemies, Villa's military strength was diminishing. In 1919, Emiliano Zapata was murdered. In 1920, Villa surrendered what was left of his army and settled in Canutillo to live peacefully. On July 23, 1923, he was murdered and died in the streets of Parral, Chihuahua.

Along with his reputation as a skilled military strategist and noble revolutionary, Pancho Villa represents an archetype of *machista* masculinity. His life on the run translated very badly to the culture of family and tradition in the communities in Mexico. He was first married to Luz Corral and remained so until his death. However, his nomad lifestyle, traveling throughout Mexico, allowed him to have many affairs as well as other wives. He would often trick women into living with him by staging a fake marriage that did not result in an official certificate, as he was legally unable to be married to more than one woman at a time. He is said to have been a tender lover, but was often aggressive and overly jealous if the many women in his life showed any consideration to other men. He remained married to

Luz Corral, and it is she who is considered his primary wife. She knowingly tolerated his affairs, took in his illegitimate children who needed a home, and then turned the other way while he lived with other wives and maintained long term relationships outside of their marriage. She always asserted that as long as he treated her as his wife in their house and always returned, their relationship would continue unviolated. Long after his death she spoke of him with great affection.



The early 1900's Mexico brought to the play by the spirit of Pancho Villa is clearly very different from the world of Gina's apartment in La Colonia Condesa. Juan Carlos Vives describes, "In contrast, we have Pancho Villa's world, placed on Adrian's head: rural, 1910's times, the countryside, the dust, the sun, the weapons, the revolution. A world in which a real man yells "because I said so" and nobody discusses. Machismo's ways. Of course, Adrian has been attracted by this character, by this rude way of being, by the "Centauro del Norte" (Villa's nickname), because it's completely alien to him." Adrian's dilemma, one of many

in the play, pits him between the two worlds and allows him to reconcile the machismo of the days of the revolution and the softness of La Colonia Condesa.

How does information about Pancho Villa complement your understanding of the play?

In learning about the life of Pancho Villa, is his character as a Mexican Macho an understandable result of the world he lived in?

Machismo

Machismo is the excessive display of masculinity or overt male chauvinism. The stereotype of the macho revolves around the concept of male superiority; in strength, ability, alcohol tolerance, sexual experience, etc... Pancho Villa is the epitome of a Mexican macho, for not only is his character overtly masculine, but he comes from a time period – the early nineteenth hundreds during the Mexican Revolution- when heroes were rebelling against authority and the danger and severity of life made such a character a great leader. Pancho Villa embodies a masculinity heavily influenced by his violent nature. As a revolutionary, he was focused in his use of violence and his overt masculinity was seen as a great asset in the fight against Diaz.

In the case of Adrian, he masks the very traditional macho role, of maintaining multiple relationships with minimal emotional investment, as an enlightened modern concept. Gina enables this role, she allows him to fulfill the macho dream and asserts her own power in the relationship by claiming to maintain equal emotional distance from their relationship. She pretends to be unconcerned about the limits and the lack of exclusivity of their relationship in an attempt to assert her own power as a post-feminist macho as well. Regrettably, her desires do not coincide with the role she adopts and the drama ensues.

Does a Pancho Villa figure fit in modern times? How do you think the culture of Portland, OR in 2009 would treat such a person?

Female Sexual Liberation

Pancho Villa represents a macho figure with no awareness or consideration of the modern conceptions of gender roles. His actions as a Mexican revolutionary predate the women's rights movements that spanned the 20th century. First wave feminism occurred around the turn of the 20th century and focused on issues of suffrage and political equality. Women received the right to vote and began to be considered full citizens.

Second wave feminism revolved around the idea that, despite voting power, the society is entirely patriarchal by nature and is founded on a deeply ingrained sexist power structure. The second wave saw the rejection of the role of the housewife and claimed women were being denied their own independent identity and living behind their husbands. Second wave feminism refused to accept the limitations of the patriarchal power structure and fought for women's rights in the workplace and for the creation of a feminine identity outside of the home. Second wave focused on making men and women equal on paper, focusing on equal salaries and legislation requiring equal treatment in many sectors.

Third wave feminism of the early 90's deconstructs the strong code established by second wave feminism in the 60's and 70's by rejecting the gender binary and acknowledging the personal construction of each woman's identity. Third wave acknowledged that second wave had gone too far in rejecting all previously held female roles – such as the housewife – and wanted to acknowledge that each person's identity is based on personal characteristics rather than dictated by gender. The movement of Sex-positivism was a part of the third wave and fought for liberation from the Western Christian model that repressed sexual expression, in particular for women. Proponents of sex-positivity claim that under the Western, Christian tradition, sex is seen as a destructive force except when it is redeemed by procreation, and sexual pleasure is seen as sinful.

Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda explores Gina's sexual identity. She begins her relationship with Adrian with the same approach as him, they aren't communicative or affectionate, they both focus on sex. Gina discovers that she doesn't find the relationship satisfying and has to assert herself, not as an equivalent to a man, but instead assert herself as a woman.

How do Gina's relationships with Adrian and Ismael conform to the twentieth century waves of feminism?

Boleros



The bolero is a couple's dance that is slow, smooth, powerful, and romantic. The style is noted for its gracefulness, the slow tempo of the music, and the particular and difficult dance steps that create a dramatic mood.¹

"Desdichadamente," a bolero written by the famous Puerto Rican songwriter Rafael Hernandez translates to "Unfortunately" or alternatively "Unhappily", plays while Gina feels her greatest disappointment with Adrian. Ismael witnesses her sadness and takes her in his arms. She begins to dance the bolero with him. Ismael, a young and inexperienced man, is clumsy; he does not

know how to dance. Gina must lead. The scene is interrupted by Adrian's arrival. A new bolero plays when Adrian cuts in and "Una y Otra vez" (Again and Again) by Rodolfo Mendiola follows their dance. The two are excellent dancers and the dance reflects the drama of their relationship. But in the end, the dance turns into a furious fight, and suddenly Gina breaks away and shuts off the music.

Explain how Sabina used music and dance to dramatize the emotional struggles of the characters?

Sabina Berman

Sabina Berman is a feminist, a Jew, a Mexican and a playwright, all aspects of her identity she has embraced as her elements of being an "other". She was born in Mexico in 1954 to Eastern European immigrant parents and her childhood was laced with the themes of heritage, religion, cultural isolation and national displacement. Her deconstruction of Mexican machismo in *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* and her message on female empowerment partly come from her identity as a Jewish woman: twice a minority in a very patriarchal and catholic society. She is Mexico's most successful playwright and internationally recognized for her work which includes numerous award-winning plays such as *Yankee*, *Herejia*, *Rombecabezas*, and *La maravillosa Histotia de Chiquito Pingüica*, along with scripts, poetry, articles and a novel entitled *La Bobe*. She compiled a collection of interviews of powerful Mexican women, *Mujeres y poder*, a piece that won a journalism award in 2000 and explores gender role politics and the influence of power. *Entre Pancho Villay una mujer desnuda*, the movie based on Ms. Berman's play, was nominated for an Oscar Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1996.

Explain Ms. Berman's identification as a minority. How has it influenced her work?

Sources

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Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda

February 12 to March 6, 2010

Thursdays at 7:30pm, Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm, Sunday matinees at 2pm
at

Milagro Theatre

525 SE Stark St., Portland, OR 97214

Tickets are \$20-\$22

\$16 for students, seniors; \$15 per person for group of 15 or more

For Group sales, please contact Tim Krause, Marketing Director: 503-236-7253
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Tickets may be purchased at www.milagro.org or by calling 503-236-7253
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Post-play discussion with the director and actors on
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