

EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER DREAMED OF:
ROMANCE, GENDER AND TRAVEL IN MEXICO

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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Everything You Ever Dreamed Of.
Romance, Gender and Travel in Mexico.

by

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Abstract

This thesis focusses on intimate relations between Western women and Mexican men situated in a tourist town in Baja California Sur. Based on five case studies of North American women, the thesis explores relations of power. Relationships between Western women and non-Western men have been characterized by social scientists as subverting the traditional dominance relations. This thesis seeks to explain how the women and men negotiate the difference in power by exploring how relations of power are influenced by material, cultural and moral resources. Lastly, the thesis explores gender identity negotiation. Do Western women actually negotiate gender roles? Or are they forced into adopting Mexican gender roles? If so, how do they contend with the differences in gender role expectations?

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Everything You Ever Dreamed Of:
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Chapter One Introduction

"It's everything a girl dreams of as far as fairy tale romance."
Erin on dating Mexican men.

In 1995 Francis Ford Coppola with Alliance Videos released *Don Juan Demarco*, a movie based on the mythical figure Don Juan. Though there have been many mythical figures who, like Don Juan, have endured centuries, few have gained the popularity that Don Juan has, especially in Mexico. Gabriel Téllez, writing under the pen name of Tirso de Molina, was the Spanish monk who brought Don Juan to life in *El Burlador de Sevilla* (c. 1630), or *The Deceiver of Seville*. A moral tale, Don Juan was an insatiable womanizer who seduced women indiscriminately. He has since then become a popular myth in many countries and gone through a number of changes which are reflected in a play (Molière), an opera (Mozart), a poem (Byron) and a tone poem (Richard Strauss). During the Spanish conquest of Mexico, Don Juan, like the rest of Spanish culture, was incorporated into colonial Mexico. Don Juan would eventually become synonymous with "Hispanic men's narratives of seduction" (Seed 1993:747). Although he has been analysed (perhaps overanalysed), and declared a number of things including emotionally and sexually immature, "god-turned-monster", demonic, and heroic, he is inevitably identified as a womanizer (Smeed 1990:117-118). In the recently released film on the same subject, actor

Johnny Depp plays a young man who believes himself to be “Don Juan Demarco, the World’s greatest lover.” In this version, Don Juan is Mexican.

The Mexican man as *Don Juan* is just one image that North Americans are bombarded with through the media and popular culture. In an increasingly commodified world, we are barraged with images, like *Don Juan Demarco*, that influence how we perceive the *Other*, or the non-Western. Increasingly, images portrayed in the mass media and in contemporary culture (the latter including films, songs, music videos, advertisements, literature and ethnographies) affect both the formation of our own cultural identity and our perceptions of others (Giroux 1994:5). The media construct powerful and seductive images which influence how we think about masculinity, femininity, romance, and the Other. Representations also have the power to define what is desirable and pleasurable and accordingly, desire is continually redefined and reconstructed (hooks 1990:5). Hooks further notes (as do others), that historically the non-Westerner has been constructed as more passionate, more sensual and more sexual.

However, the media present Mexican men, and Mexico in general, in contradictory and ambiguous representations. Mexican men are often represented as being macho, domineering men who abuse their wives. The term *macho* has become synonymous with Latino men. Mexico itself often receives negative publicity in the media. On the one hand, the country is presented to us as dangerous, overpopulated, crime-ridden, corrupt, and polluted. The news, especially American news sources, continually report on corruption in the highest levels of Mexican government, and on the poverty and violence that is

supposedly inherent in Mexican culture and society. As well, the media ceaselessly recount stories of Mexicans, or *wetbacks* because they illegally cross the Rio Grande river into the United States, where they purportedly overburden the American social system.

In contrast, Mexico also gets portrayed as a refuge from our cold and unjust society, as a passionate paradise, a place where dreams come true. Films like *Don Juan Demarco* perhaps epitomize the film genre that portrays Mexico in this light. Mexican men are characterized as romantic and sensual, the archetypical masculine man. The 1993 Mexican film *Like Water For Chocolate* presented Mexicans as romantic Latin lovers with a lust for life incomparable in North American society¹. This film was a particularly popular film in North America: in 1993 it became the largest grossing foreign film released in the United States. Another very popular film was the box-office hit, *Thelma and Louise*. Though this film takes place in the Southern United States, its plot is about two women, in trouble with the law, who are running to Mexico. *Shawshank Redemption* presents Mexico in the same manner. After being mistakenly incarcerated for a crime he did not commit, the lead in this movie plans his escape; his destination – Mexico. For these fictitious characters Mexico is a place where they may escape from the harsh realities and injustice of American society. These are only a few of a lengthy list of films that portray Mexico as a haven, a refuge, an idyllic paradise².

But Hollywood is not the sole provider of Mexican images to North American popular culture. Tourism marketing plays an important role in how we view Mexico. Mexico is a very popular tourist destination for North Americans, due to its proximity and the

devalued peso. Marketing strategies for Mexican tourism must be very persuasive in order to convince people that, despite the negative images of Mexico that the media present, in Mexico they can find paradise. As Palmer argues, “the pictures and language of the travel guide are a powerful force” which influence our perceptions and create and maintain stereotypes (1994:796). And apparently their strategy is successful because tourism is Mexico’s third largest industry, following oil and in-bond manufacturing³ (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). By the year 2000, it is expected that tourism will have surpassed the other two, becoming Mexico’s most lucrative development strategy (see chapter two).

Tourism marketing discourse for Mexico includes such phrases as “Come live your dream, come to Mexico” and “Mexico: Everything you ever dreamed of”. Marketing narratives are full of romantic and sexual images. Enloe notes that sexual metaphors are a key component of promotional literature for tourism overall and that the industry depends on assumptions about masculinity, femininity, and heterosexuality (1990:32). An advertisement for a Los Cabos article in a travel magazine reads, “A love song to one of Mexico’s most exotic places: The romantic peninsula at the end of the world” (Keating 1994). Club Regina at the Westin Regina Resort Los Cabos advertises, “Here you will experience relaxing and romantic moments next to the murmur of the ocean... An experience that will let you do whatever you wish.” The Finisterra advertises, “Escape to a Magic Place where Dreams Happen at Finisterra (Land’s End)!” Canadian Air says of Los Cabos, “Strange and wonderful things come to life in this warm, hard land, including romance.” A fantasy world is constructed to entice visitors (both metaphorically and literally). The

tourism article describes Mexico with its “sun of Aztec gold” and “warm, silky sea”, and “the water is so blue you could dip a pen in it and write a love letter”. Even the dirt in Mexico gets sensualised: “The magic dust of Mexico is waiting to warm your heart.” Promotional materials romanticize and eroticise Mexico with sexual images, which successfully arouse fantasies of paradise. North Americans are told through marketing and popular culture that they can fulfil their dreams and fantasies of romance and love in Mexico. We are bombarded with seductive and powerful images enticing us to explore the non-Western.

But does Mexico, a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), classify as a “non-Western” culture? Torgovnick (1997) suggests that the desire for the “primitive”⁴ is much more complex than seeking the “tribal” or “exotic”. Instead, she suggests that “primitivism is the utopian desire to go back and recover irreducible features of the psyche, body, land, and community” and that it is linked to the search for spirituality (Torgovnick 1997:5). She adds that the “primitive” can be found in highly stratified extinct societies like the Aztecs, but also in the present American Southwest (1997:4). Following her line of reason, I suggest that in certain contexts, particularly in tourism marketing and popular culture, Mexico is also portrayed as “primitive” or as non-Western.

As Torgovnick (1990:9) notes, the non-Western, what she refers to as the “primitive”, is often portrayed as a desirable antithesis to the West. If North Americans seem emotionally cold, sexually repressed, or overly reasonable, then the non-Western, or in this

case Mexico, is constructed and portrayed as romantic, lustful, and irrational. While Canada and America have become overly industrialized, the non-Western has remained in tune with nature. If Americans and Canadians are seen as being materialistic, then Mexicans are portrayed as being spiritual. Mexico is constructed and delineated as a place that can fulfil American's and Canadian's fantasies of living romantic, esoteric, and natural lives. It is no wonder then that Americans and Canadians flock to Mexico each year in search of pleasure and paradise. Nor is it a wonder that some of those visitors will find the romance that they have been promised.

Enloe, among others (see hooks 1992 and Cohen 1995), has argued that experiencing another place has been equated to experiencing the *other*. To have a sexual encounter then with a Mexican man would be the ultimate "Mexican experience" if you were a Canadian (or American) woman. This is hardly a novel idea. On occasion, while in Mexico I have heard local men use pick-up lines that are based on this premise: "Come on, you have not experienced Mexico until you have experienced a Mexican!" Feminist theorist hooks argues that "mainstream white society" seeks people of difference (or colour) in order to experience something new and exciting, to escape the mundaneness of "white life".

It is within the commercial realm of advertising that the drama of Otherness finds expression. Encounters with Otherness are clearly marked as more exciting, more intense, and more threatening. The lure is the combination of pleasure and danger. In the cultural marketplace the Other is coded as having the capacity to be more alive, as holding the secret that will allow those who venture and dare to break with the cultural anhedonia (... "the insensitivity to pleasure") and experience sensual and spiritual renewal. (hooks 1992:26)

And indeed, international tourism seems to be based on this premise, that "spiritual

renewal”, the sensual, the pleasurable, can be found elsewhere. But our desire for the *other*, for difference, is not a recent phenomenon. It stems from a long history of Western colonialism and imperialism in both the East and the South. As Stoler argues, “The tropics provided a site of European pornographic fantasies long before conquest was underway with lurid descriptions of sexual license, promiscuity, gynaecological aberrations, and general perversion marking the Otherness of the colonized for metropolitan consumption” (1991:53-54). The non-Western has been a site of renewal, of regeneration, of exotic Others, for over a century⁵. But as Torgovnick accurately states, “the real secret of the primitive in this century has often been the same secret as always: the primitive can be – has been, will be (?) – whatever Euro-Americans want it to be” (1990:9). We create romantic, sensual images of the non-West, and then we are seduced by the very images we constructed (Torgovnick 1990:34). International tourism development counts on it. Each year Mexico (and hundreds of other countries) anxiously await millions of Western tourists seeking the promised seduction and romance of the non-West. What is it that they seek? All that has been promised, all that the West is missing (Torgovnick 1990:169).

Torgovnick (1990), who writes extensively on the “primitive” and gender, draws attention to the portrayal of the non-Western in literature and ethnographic texts. In *The Plumed Serpent* D. H. Lawrence (1926) writes about a relationship that is comparable to those written about in this thesis. Kate, an Irish woman, has come to despise Europe and, after visiting Mexico on holiday, decides not to return to Ireland but to stay in Mexico. In Mexico Kate finds the “mystery” that has escaped from Europe and she finds the forbidden

Mexican man.

With the black-eyed man it was the same. He was humbler... She could see the stillness, the humility, and the pathos of grace in him; something very beautiful and truly male, and very hard to find in a civilised white man. It was of the dark, strong, unbroken blood... these two silent, semi-barbarous men. (Lawrence 1932:116)

Kate's desire for the man could be interpreted as a search for the untamed sexuality of the exotic other (Torgovnick 1990:163). Non-Europeans are often depicted as divine, carnal, and wickedly sexual (Hodes 1993; Hadley-Freydberg 1985).

In the same manner, *Give Sorrow Words*, is a story about a woman who escapes from America to pursue a passionate, albeit self-destructive, life in Mexico (Holder 1979). The novel is non-fiction, based on letters that Maryse Holder wrote to an American woman friend living in Canada. The book documents Holder's quest for experience with dangerous Mexican men which ends up destructively killing her⁶. Women, like Kate and Maryse, or *Shirley Valentine* who found herself a Greek lover while on holiday in Greece, have found their *Don Juan*, or their romantic lover, while on holiday.

Research Objective

This thesis is about women like Maryse, Kate, and Shirley Valentine – women who actively sought to fulfil fantasies and who have pursued those fantasies by travelling to another country. Women who, though they may not have travelled consciously in pursuit of finding a love, have become enraptured by the “glamour of the powerful stranger” (Tsing 1993:227). They are all Western⁷ women who travelled to Mexico but who, once there, met

Mexican men whom they engaged in romantic and intimate relationships. In most cases the women returned to their homeland after a brief holiday but then made the move back to Mexico more or less permanently. They became expatriates, leaving their homeland for Mexico to pursue romantic loves. These relationships, though also sexual, are as Pruitt and LaFont (1995) note, “constructed through a discourse of romance and long-term relationship, an emotional involvement usually not present in sex tourism” (1995:423). They are not, as some might have it, “mostly for kicks” (Cohen 1971:226), or “pleasant and refreshing interlude[s]” (Wagner 1977:50), or as Bowman explained it, “the woman traveller finds herself so intensely harassed by local men that she may, for relief, take up with one of them simply to get the others to leave her alone” (1989:84-85).

This thesis aims to explore the experiences and relationships of young Western women living in the Mexican resort community of Los Cabos, Baja California Sur. Specifically, the romantic and intimate relations between young foreign women and Mexican men will be explored, focussing on the gender roles that develop in these relationships. Enloe (1989), among others, has argued that due to an increased control over wealth and resources, many Western women now travelling independently of men are able to explore new gender identities that may contest traditional and/or conservative notions of “femininity”. Pruitt and LaFont (1995) further argue that where sex tourism reinforces gender inequality of male dominance and female subordination, romance tourism contradicts traditional notions of male hegemony. Western women travelling abroad are able to explore more dominant gender roles, due to their social and economic status of being from the West.

These theories, however, apply primarily to transient women who do not settle in the foreign countries that they travel to. Transient women are able to experiment with gender roles that may not be socially acceptable to either their own society or to the one they are visiting because they do not have emotional or social ties within the community. They do not feel the pressures of that society's gender norms because they are not part of a community.

The literature on romance/sex tourism has tended to focus on brief encounters rather than the formation of long-term relationships, but what happens when Western women decide to make a permanent move to a location such as Mexico and create social relationships within that community? Zinovieff (1991) found that when local *kamakia* married foreign women (tourists), the women were expected to conform to the gender ideology of Greece. Such cases pose a problem for Western women, for as Alonso notes, "Gender is a central dimension of social being, one which cannot be realized in the same way on both sides of the border" (1992:181). Cole explains that Western women are faced with "ambiguities and contradictions that require them to negotiate their gender identities and gender relations" (Cole 1991:79). With influences from both cultures at work, how do Western women deal with the contradictory expectations? Do they adopt traditional Mexican roles of femininity, reject them for North American roles, or create new gender identities that include both Mexican and American notions of femininity? Is there any room for negotiation of gender identity and gender roles or are the women forced into traditional Mexican roles? Zinovieff (1991) noted that Western women who marry Greek *kamakia* have no choice but to conform, otherwise they are labelled as whores, ruining both their own and

their husbands' reputations. Anthropologist Alonso (1992) noted similar experiences during fieldwork in Mexico. If she had not adopted the traditional Mexican role of femaleness (she is American), she would have been labelled a *puta* or *mala mujer* and would have been unable to gain the respect needed within the community to pursue research⁸. In these instances, there seems to be no room for "negotiation". The women are pressured into adopting the traditional gender role which, in so-called "Third World" societies such as Greece and Mexico, is fundamentally limited to the domestic domain. Thus, the roles ascribed to them by their Mexican partners may seem restricting and confining. If she chooses not to conform to the local norms, if she desires to experiment with her gender identity or to continue in her own culturally specific gender role, are there disciplining actions against her like those noted above by Alonso and Zinovieff? Whether or not a woman chooses to conform to local standards of femininity or is forced to conform, she is still faced with ambiguities and contradictions, since she will never be perceived as the virtuous Mexican woman.

Recently, anthropologists have been increasingly interested in the "female sexual other", the Asian woman, or the African woman, and on the exoticization and eroticisation of the "female other" by the West. Said's (1978) work discusses the "feminization" of the other and explores how the sexual other is usually depicted as female. As Dubisch (1995) writes, there continues to be a gap, or an absence of work that explores the "male sexual other". Dubisch (1995), Ortner (1996) and Stoler (1991) are exceptions⁹. Stoler's historical research on the role of white, European women in colonialism offers insight into relations

between European women and “Native” men in the Dutch East Indies (and Africa to some extent). Although this paper focuses primarily on European women, she does offer some analysis on how colonized men were perceived by European men and women and how this influenced sexual sanctions. Stoler writes that the colonized man was seen as sexually aggressive, had “primitive sexual urges”, and a “heightened sexuality” (Stoler 1991:67-70). Although her research focuses primarily on men that are perceived to be a different “race” (for example, Asian or Black men), it offers insight into the historical construction of relations in general between Western women and non-Western men. Stoler explores how non-Western men have been constructed by European men as being more dangerously sexual and how sanctions on female sexuality, particularly European female sexuality, were based on these perceptions of black and Asian men’s sexuality.

Ortner (1996) has also written on relationships between Western women and “native” men. In “Borderland Politics and Erotics” Ortner explores relations between Westerners and Sherpas in the Himalayan mountains and relates it to the recent construction of masculinity among the Sherpas. She notes that in recent years, as mountaineering has become more popular among Western women, there has been an increase in sexual relations between the male Sherpas and Western females. Her research is particularly useful for the purpose of this thesis, since the women climbers have similar backgrounds to the women involved in this thesis – white, middle-class and of European and American descent. Ortner notes that the relations between the Sherpa men and the Western women are influenced by the different cultural backgrounds and by the feminist movement in the West that liberated

women's sexuality during the 1970's. She calls the mountaineering women "gender radicals" since mountaineering in the Himalayan mountains had been a primarily male sport and moreover, "it was always in part about masculinity and manhood" (1996:184). Women climbers were transgressing the typical gender norms for females. The women mountaineers are like other women travellers who have challenged traditional gender expectations.

Dubisch's (1995) analysis of gender relations between Greek men and Western women is perhaps the most pertinent study for the purpose of this thesis since it examines relations between white, Western European women on vacation and Greek men. Where Stoler's study focussed on racial differences, Dubisch's study explores a cultural group that is different, or other, however not racially distinct. This parallels the study undertaken here which focuses on Mexican men. When the "sexual other" is portrayed as male, "such portrayal often reveals the threatening dimension of erotic sexuality" (Dubisch 1995:33). In other words, when the sexual other is portrayed as passive, that other is female, but when the sexual other is portrayed as aggressive or dangerous, then it is a male other.

The relationships examined in this thesis can provide insight into relations between the "male sexual other" and Western women. How do the women's perceptions of Mexican men affect the relationships that these women and men share? Does tourism marketing influence the women's fantasies? Do Mexican men serve as cultural symbols for Mexican identity in the form of the Latino Lover or Don Juan for Canadian and American women (Babcock 1992)?

It is perhaps impossible to write on gender identity and gender roles without

mentioning power, since power is inherent in all relations. For the purpose of this thesis, I have adopted Lipman-Blumen's definition of power:

power is that set of processes whereby one party (be it an individual, group, institution, or State) can gain and maintain the capacity to impose its will repeatedly upon another, despite any opposition, by its potential to contribute or withhold critical resources from the central task, as well as by offering or withholding rewards, or by threatening or invoking punishment... The basic characteristic of the power process is an on-going negotiation, in which resources figure significantly. (Lipman-Blumen 1994:110)

Resources should not be viewed strictly as material resources but should include cultural and moral resources as well. I would also add to this definition that power is not a commodity or entity that one can hold but that power is "a relation" (Weedon 1987:113). I wish to stress that "dominance and power are not static, but are shifting, constantly negotiated and contested" (Pruitt and LaFont 1995:437).

The relations between Western women and Mexican men are interesting ones in which to examine relations of power since, as Dubisch writes, these relations "confuse dominance relations, for gender hierarchy in such a relationship (from the point of view of the dominant Western society) contradicts the hierarchy of the cultural relationship by making the dominant women 'available' to the subordinate men" (1995:34). Such relations raise an important question regarding dominance and power, a question that has largely been ignored by the existing literature, namely, how do the participants in such a relationship contend with the contradictions?

The exploration of power and gender in relationships between Western women and non-Western men has been limited. The existing literature focuses on male power and male

identity, virtually ignoring the woman's role in the power and gender relations. Zinovieff and Bowman both argue that the men in their studies (Greek and Palestinian respectively) suffer from inferiority complexes. They may feel, as Zinovieff argues, that they come from poorer countries that are "behind economically, politically, socially, morally, and culturally" (1991:212). As a result, these men feel a great deal of resentment towards the West and thus, Western women. Zinovieff (1991) and Bowman (1989) propose that men in such countries engage in relationships with Western women so that they may assert their dominance over the Western women, which symbolically is perceived as dominance over the West. As a result, some of the relationships are characterized by deceit and hostility. Bowman (1989) and Zinovieff (1991) also note the ambivalence that the men feel towards the women. In many cases the men prefer Western women to local women, yet view the Western women in a negative light because they violate traditional gender boundaries. The power relations are seen in terms of the non-Western man and "the West". As I have already stated, the woman is usually portrayed as a passive player in the relationship.

In the case of the mountaineering Western women, Ortner (1996) suggests that the women are not passive players but rather, that they actively sought to engage Sherpas in sexual relations. She notes that it is unlikely (although unknown for sure) that the Sherpas solicited the women because the Sherpas have a "relatively unaggressive and unpredatory attitude toward sex" and because the mountaineering women were considered to be of very high status (1996:189). Unfortunately, Ortner's research is preliminary and the degree to which she explores the intimate relations is rather superficial.

Zinovieff (1991) is an exception in that she does try to address the issue of power from the Western female perspective. However, her examination lacks concrete analysis. She argues that women who marry Greek men and remain in Greece have only the ability to leave as a means of power in the relationship. I propose that the issue of power and control is more complex than noted in the literature. I am left wondering, if the men do engage in the relationships as a means of asserting dominance, how do the women cope with this? Is there a struggle for power and control, or do the women give it up willingly, as suggested by the literature? Is there room for negotiating relations of power or are they forced into subordinate roles? This thesis will explore relations of power and gender from the female perspective.

Fieldwork

This project has taken on a slightly different direction since its onset. I initially started off with the intention of researching vacationing women who were involved in intimate and sexual relations with Mexican men. This came to an abrupt halt after a month in the field. Meeting women on vacation was relatively easy. People generally seem to be more relaxed on holiday and more friendly. It is not unusual to start talking to someone at the table beside yours in the restaurant, to ask, “where ya’ from”? Often while sitting at the bar in Carlos and Charlie’s, one of the most popular restaurant/bars in Los Cabos, someone beside me would lean over and start talking to me, asking me where I was from, how long I was on holiday for, etc. And during that first month I met a number of women this way

who were quite interested in my research topic. However, though a number of women eagerly volunteered to be interviewed, few showed up at the arranged times for the actual interview. It would seem that the spirit of the holiday would take them away to the beach or the pool and they would forget about me and my research.

Though I had been warned about the difficulties of interviewing transient women, I still became quite distraught in the field, wondering how I was going to write a thesis when I was unable to do the research. But during that first month, as I was getting to know Los Cabos, I began to meet other women who had moved there. Some of them were seeking employment, others were simply taking an extended vacation from the cold North, and still others were pursuing Mexican men; and that is how the thesis topic changed to a study of expatriate women. In one sense they are the same women as the tourists, but those who have stayed still long enough for me to interview them. But in another sense they are very different. These are women who have given up other lives to pursue new quixotic ones.

I spent four months in the field getting to know the expatriate community. As one might guess, it was relatively easy to be “accepted” by this community. I was not a visible outsider. I shared some basic similarities with the expatriates. A noticeable difference was that I had a planned departure date. One expatriate suggested to me that this might have caused some bad feeling, that it was held against me, as if I was betraying the expatriates in some way because I did not intend to stay. Others had a hard time believing that I would ever leave. I suppose I had convincingly “gone native”. When the time came for me to leave, new friends refused to say goodbye, insisting that, like them, I was *unable* to leave. They call it

“Cabo Fever”; like the traditional saying, “Once the dust of Mexico has settled on your heart, you will find peace in no other land.” The majority of the women whom I interviewed did not plan to leave Los Cabos.

Like them, I was a Western woman alone in a foreign country, and in a sense, I too was seeking the exotic, the sensual, the romantic, but *their* romance. All of us were drawn to Mexico, captivated by some aspect of it. We were part of a continuum of experience. I was, in a sense, a part of what I was studying – young Western women living in Mexico. Similarities ended there but nonetheless my personal experiences as a Western woman living temporarily in Mexico still contribute to the thesis.

Fieldwork in Los Cabos was not the “typical” fieldwork in which it is only the anthropologist who is learning a new culture. Maggie and Elizabeth both moved down around the same time I did. Both the “informants” and the “researcher” were adjusting to new lifestyles. I was like many of them, especially the newcomers, in that I was feeling vulnerable – a new place, a new language, a new culture. With some of the women I developed special relationships, relationships in which we came to rely on each other for different things. Maggie and I went running up to the weather station every other day. During these breaks from town we were able to release all our tension. We spent many hours running up and down that hill, telling each other how miserable we were, or how happy we were or how we could not survive Cabo San Lucas for one more day. Each of us did survive and I owe that in part to her. When Elizabeth was having a bad day, she would come by and invite me for breakfast, and we would sit on the marina at Francisco’s, drinking iced

coffees, watching the fishermen come and go. Nicole and I spent many hours in her pool swimming and at Las Margaritas ranch, escaping from the dust of Cabo San Lucas. And sometimes, a few of us would drive to La Paz or Todos Santos for lunch simply to get away from town.

The Interview

This thesis is based primarily on participant-observation and informal, semi-structured, conversation-like interviews. Other forms of information include fieldnotes from direct observation, my own journal, documents, and photographs. Interviews were “semi-structured” in that I would ask questions about a given topic but allow the conversation itself to determine how the information was obtained (Reinharz 1992:281 ff). I encouraged free interaction between myself and the women and I paid particular attention to non-verbal communication and speech “subtleties” (Reinharz 1992:23). The use of open-ended interviews enabled me to access the women’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words and from their personal point of view rather than in my words. With permission, I would tape the conversation between myself and the interviewee in order to capture the essence of her discourse. If the woman felt uncomfortable in any way, the conversation was not taped.

Information relating to tourism construction and development in the Los Cabos area was collected from the local office of the Fondo Nacional de Turismo (National Tourism Fund) in the form of both documents and personal correspondence. They provided me with

information on the history of tourism growth and new development initiatives in the Los Cabos region. I collected other types of documents from the women that I interviewed in the forms of letters, photographs, and poems. They shared these items with me willingly which sometimes offered insight into their lives that I missed from our daily interaction and the interviews. Following traditional ethnographic fieldwork practices, I kept a daily journal of all events that I observed or participated in. Information regarding legislation concerning domestic affairs, including divorce, support payments, and custody, was obtained from the Consulate General of Mexico in the form of documents and personal correspondence.

I met approximately thirty-five expatriate women who were living in Los Cabos. Not all of them were involved with Mexican men; some were accompanied by American husbands, and still others remained single. These women came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds; however, almost all of them were white. I met only one woman of colour, an Asian-American woman, who had made Los Cabos her home. She was living there with her white American husband, operating a small real estate office. A small percentage of the women I met were from Western Europe. Eleanora had moved to Los Cabos from France with her family to open up a restaurant. Marianne, a massage therapist at the Melia Cabo Real hotel, had moved to Cabo San Lucas from the Netherlands. Tracy was British and likewise had moved to Los Cabos after meeting her Mexican husband Marcos on holiday. She and Marcos ran a fishing tour company for sports fishermen in Cabo San Lucas. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and lack of research experience, I was unable to further investigate the socioeconomic background of this larger sample of thirty-five women.

The majority of the women whom I met were from either Canada or the United States and came from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds. It seemed that almost all the unmarried expatriate women were working in Los Cabos and most of them held positions in real estate (predominantly in condominium rentals), at the golf courses or in the hotels. American women who were living with their American husbands worked or did not, depending on their socioeconomic status. Those, for example, who lived in the exclusive Pedregal community did not work. However, American or Canadian couples who had moved to Los Cabos to start businesses would usually both work in the business. Expatriate women who married Mexican men sometimes continued to work but in other instances did not. In this way, the larger sample of expatriate women is similar to the ten women interviewed and the five case studies presented here: some of the women chose to work while others did not. They are also comparable in their socioeconomic backgrounds: some considered themselves middle-class while others came from working-class backgrounds. It is important to note that I do not have conclusive statistics regarding how many expatriates live in Los Cabos nor how many of them are women and therefore, I am unable to say how representative my small sample of five is. Furthermore, I did not collect enough information on the larger sample of thirty-five to be able to establish how similar they are to the sample of ten that I interviewed, nor the five women presented here as case studies. Presumably there were other expatriate women married to Mexican men or living with them whom I was unable to meet. This would include women who had become assimilated into Mexican culture and who no longer had contact with the expatriate community.

Though I met many expatriate women, I interviewed only ten of them. Due to time and space constraints, only five of the ten interviews are presented here. I chose these five because they were the most informative interviews, and the women I knew best. I realize now that it was not a matter of me choosing them as informants but them choosing me. Of the ten women initially interviewed, one of them was European and was one Asian-American. Like the five case studies presented here, they came from working-class and middle-class backgrounds. One of the expatriate women interviewed was married to an American man but all of the others were either dating or married to Mexican men. The women represented here, five in total, are not a “random sample” nor do I claim that they are representative of all the expatriate women living Cabo San Lucas. There were other women whom I would have liked to interview but they either declined or simply avoided it. Linda, for example, had lived in Los Cabos for ten years and told very interesting stories. I had asked her if she would mind being interviewed at some time, and she had said no, she did not mind, but whenever I suggested a time or date, Linda was busy. I concluded that she did not want to be interviewed and so, I stopped pursuing an interview with her. Though she was not formally interviewed, Linda and many other women still influence this thesis, because, although they did not participate in the interviews, they spoke to me about some of their experiences and I witnessed parts of their lives.

In one instance a woman agreed to an interview eagerly but then later suddenly changed her mind. I found out later that her Mexican boyfriend had demanded that she not meet with me. She was very apologetic but insisted that she could no longer talk with me.

Similarly, after I had interviewed Helen, her Mexican husband showed up at my place, asking what I had *told* his wife, afraid that I had told her that he was involved in extramarital affairs.

In the evenings there is little to do in Cabo San Lucas aside from going to one of the many bar/restaurants. Consequently, I spent a lot of time with these women at night in the bars, drinking Corona, margaritas, or as Nicole preferred, mescal. This created an ethical problem for me, since when people are inebriated, they are more likely to disclose information than when they are sober. I asked myself how much I could use of what I learned about these women when they were drinking without feeling as if I had betrayed them. The women were all aware of my research and knew that they were part of it, that I was researching *them*. Yet, at times I felt that they confided things to me as a friend, not as the quasi-anthropologist doing research. This is a dilemma faced by many anthropologists and solutions vary. The solution that I chose was to omit information that I knew would be harmful in some way to the interviewees. When I was not sure if the information was potentially hurtful, I avoided using it unless it seemed absolutely necessary to the individual's story. The use of pseudonyms for all characters hopefully decreases the likelihood that someone would be able to identify the women.

When I transcribed my interviews I became aware of an additional dilemma. The use of tape recorders is a preferred technique among feminist researchers since it enables the people being interviewed to answer in their own words but has its drawbacks (Reinharz 1992:18). People do not always say what they may mean to say whether it is because they

have difficulties expressing ideas or simply because they have misused a word. The use of an tape recorder means that the interviewees' words are frozen in time. Ideally, the solution to this dilemma would be to have the informants read over their transcripts to clarify any meaning that seemed ambiguous or unclear. Since I am not in a position to confer with the interviewees, I have omitted information that was unclear from the narrative chapters.

Structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one introduces the reader to the topic and the theoretical orientation. Chapter two introduces the reader to the ethnographic location and history of the fieldwork site, Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur. Chapters three to seven are case studies. Each focuses on a different woman and consists of two parts: the woman's narrative describing her experiences of living in Cabo San Lucas and an interpretive analysis. Chapter eight, which is the concluding chapter, offers an overall analysis of the data presented in chapters three to seven.

Chapter Two

Los Cabos: Historical and Geographical Background

cabo (*ˈka ·bo*) *n.m.* **1**, end; extremity; tip. **2**, *geog.* cape.
(The New World Spanish/English Dictionary 1991)

Los Cabos

Los Cabos is located at the southernmost tip, the end, of the Baja peninsula in Northeastern Mexico where the Pacific Ocean collides with the Sea of Cortez. The area is comprised of two rapidly growing towns, San Jose Del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, which are located approximately twenty-seven kilometres apart. The region, like most of the peninsula, is a dry desert with a distinctive cactus vegetation, the only thing that can survive the intense heat and lack of water. Most of the peninsula receives very little rain, less than 40 centimetres a year even in the mountains (Wayne 1991).

San Jose Del Cabo is a quaint town with small streets and Spanish-style buildings situated on the Sea of Cortez. But, not unlike Cabo San Lucas, it is growing rapidly into a major tourism resort. Fortunately, it has still maintained some of its colonial charm in spite of the hasty tourism development. Though the entire region of Los Cabos has been affected by the ever-increasing tourism industry – hotels sporadically line the twenty-seven kilometre strip that runs from San Jose Del Cabo to Cabo San Lucas – it is the latter that has become the main tourist destination/attraction. Though once a small fishing village, Cabo San Lucas

has been transformed into a tourist boom town, attracting workers from all over Mexico and tourists from all over the world. Cabo San Lucas was the primary field of research for this study, however, I use the terms 'Los Cabos' and 'Cabo San Lucas' interchangeably. Los Cabos refers to both San Jose Del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas. Cabo San Lucas is a dry and dusty town situated at the westernmost point of the cape, the location of the famous rock arches. The town can be separated into two distinct areas: the tourist resort and the Mexican residential community. The resort area is comprised of hotels, restaurants, bars, real estate offices, shops and markets. This area includes the beach area, both east towards San Jose and northwest along the Pacific shore. The ocean front is lined with large expensive hotels such as the Hyatt Regency, Melia Cabo Real, and the Hacienda. However in comparison to older resorts such as Manzanillo, Puerto Vallarta and Cancun, the beach is sparsely populated by hotels. The tourist area also includes two main streets in downtown Cabo, Calle Niños Héroes and Calle Lázaro Cádenas, which are located beside the marina and lined with open markets, shops, restaurants, condominium sales' offices, bodegas, and *el cambios* (money exchanges). There are a few small hotels also located in the downtown area which are considerably cheaper than the ocean front hotels. It is in downtown Cabo San Lucas where one sees most activity, especially in the evening. Tourists roam the streets in search of silver jewellery, Oaxacan pottery, and other crafts, in addition to eating at the numerous restaurants located in this area. At night, the downtown area becomes particularly busy when all the tourists come in to eat dinner and go drinking and dancing at the many bars.

Behind, or North of the downtown area, is the Mexican residential area. In the past fifteen years this area has grown from a small village encompassing four blocks to a growing town that spans many blocks both North and East. This area is composed of mainly homes, with the odd fruit market, automobile garage, and *bodega* throughout. The area is considerably poorer than the resort area. The homes range from the compact, prefabricated structures built by the government to the shanty-town shacks that offer little protection from the scorching heat or autumn rains. Within the small yards surrounding the homes one often sees chickens, dogs and the odd pig. The streets are generally unpaved, and are regularly washed away during the brief rainy season in September. Those that are paved have so many potholes that they might as well be unpaved.

There is another residential area of Cabo San Lucas located on the Pacific side, however, it is not accessible to everyone. To enter into this subdivision-like area, you must pass through guarded gates. The homes here, priced at one million US dollars and up, are primarily owned by rich Americans. A number of actors and other celebrities are rumoured to have homes in this area, including actor Sylvester Stallone and rockstar Eddie Van Halen.

The Community

The town of Cabo San Lucas is comprised of a number of smaller sub-communities: the local Mexicans, Mexicans that have migrated to Baja California Sur from the mainland or Northern Mexico, domestic tourists, international tourists (including American and Canadian), the expatriate community, and others that do not fall into any of the above

mentioned categories.

Expatriate communities in Mexico in general are comprised of a diverse group of individuals; what is referred to in Los Cabos as “the wanted and the unwanted” (individuals who are seeking refuge from the law, from taxes, from alimony and those who are considered to be the misfits or undesirable). Mexico, of course, has been drawing foreigners from all over the world for over a century. Historically, Mexico has drawn American and European artists and writers like D.H. Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway. Today some expatriate communities are made up predominantly of artists and writers (like Todos Santos and San Miguel de Allende). Expatriate communities are also characterized by a sub-community of wealthy individuals that have “second homes” in Mexico. Two other predominating groups in Mexican expatriate communities are the surfers and those that have chosen to retire in Mexico. What is interesting about the women whom I met and those whom I interviewed more thoroughly is that they do not seem to fit into any of the above-mentioned categories. Instead, they form a distinct category of women drawn to Mexico first as tourists, and then later as expatriates seeking intimate relationships.

This thesis discusses one small component of the expatriate community. Unfortunately it does not explore the ties that the expatriate community or, more specifically, the expatriate women, have with the larger social community of Mexican women and families, politics, economy, community activism, etc. Instead it focuses on the expatriate women and their relations with Mexican men. For the most part Mexican women have been left out of this discussion, but only because the women themselves did not

identify Mexican women as being a significant influence on their experiences in Mexico. The fact that the sample interviewed here did not perceive them as influential leads me to ask the question why not? A number of factors may have provoked this.

First and foremost the women may have concluded from the questions that I asked during interviews and during participant-observation that I was not interested in all of their relations but only in their relationships with Mexican men. Indeed, I was aware that the expatriate community associated my research almost exclusively with Mexican men and Western women. Secondly, it could be that the women interviewed for this thesis truly did not feel that Mexican women influenced their experiences. This could be true, since direct interaction between the expatriate women interviewed here and Mexican women seemed rare. Although other expatriate women may have had more contact with Mexican women, the women described here did not seem to have direct interaction with Mexican women on a regular basis. Mexican women did not join their husbands socially, whereas the expatriate women did. Elizabeth, for example, explained that Manuel's friends came over alone to socialize. Their wives or girlfriends were left at home, yet Elizabeth liked to socialize with Manuel and his friends. Mexican women for the most part did not socialize with the expatriate community. During their daily interactions the expatriate women did not have many opportunities to intermingle with Mexican women since Mexican women were typically not employed in positions that would require considerable interaction with the tourist population. The tourist industry relies primarily on male labour for positions that deal frequently with the public. Mexican women usually occupy positions that are "behind

the scenes” like chamber-maids. It is most likely related to the different cultural attitudes on sexual behavior for women. This also explains why vacationing men sought other vacationing women for sexual escapades rather than Mexican women. Mexican women are rarely seen at the bars and restaurants in Los Cabos and, therefore, vacationing men, like the expatriate women, do not have many opportunities to meet Mexican women. I also suspect that in many cases Mexican women avoided contact with expatriate women since expatriate women frequently did not conform to local standards of decency and morality and this would have been an affront to Mexican women.

Although Mexican women are not discussed here, it would be interesting to see further research carried out that examined the relations between Mexican women and expatriate women and how the perceptions of Mexican women shape expatriate women’s experience in Mexico.

Historical Settlement

The arid geography has kept the peninsula from becoming overly populated. Little seems to be known about the Indian population that existed in the southern cape. What literature is available comes from diaries of explorers and missionaries during the eighteenth century. The Southern Baja was sparsely populated with Hokan speaking peoples including the Pericu, the Cora and the Waicuri; none of which survived the missionaries. There are some Indigenous peoples left in the Northern part of the Baja peninsula but all others are extinct, unable to survive the cultural change from Jesuits and Spanish miners. The Baja

then has for the most part of the last three centuries been inhabited by foreigners.

The Spanish first discovered the peninsula in 1533 in La Paz, the capital city of Baja California Sur. In 1535 they settled in La Paz but were later forced out by the harsh climate and hostile Natives. Spanish settlers returned in 1596 to settle permanently. Since then the Baja has been a stopover for those explorers and missionaries seeking more hospitable land. They would continue North into California leaving the desolate and barren Baja California virtually unsettled. Life on the Baja was simply too harsh for the Europeans. Between the environment and hostile Indians, living in the Baja was a constant challenge.

The Jesuits were the first group that were able to even somewhat successfully establish settlements in the Baja. Between 1683 and 1767 when they were expelled from the New World they established fourteen missions from San José del Cabo to Santa Maria de Calamajue. Although the Jesuits succeeded in colonizing the Baja, their missions were still confined to certain areas due to the harsh climate. These mission sites grew into small populations. Franciscans (1768) and Dominicans (1773) followed the Jesuits into Baja but placed most emphasis on settling in the Northern part so that Baja California Sur continued to be scarcely populated.

The nineteenth century attracted American and English hunters and traders to Baja California who were in search of sea otters. After the War of Independence (1810-1821), there was a new interest in mining. In an attempt to stabilize the economy and bring in foreign capital, Mexico eased laws that previously had forbidden foreigners to own mines. The British were the first to establish mining areas; however, this industry never really got

off the ground. Meanwhile American and British whalers were attracted to the Baja in search of grey whales which bred off the West coast of the mid peninsula.

During the War of 1846-1848 the US and Mexico fought over Baja California but Mexico retained rights to it in spite of two years of US occupation and a number of “filibusters” who continued to fight for the Baja after the war had ended. The California gold rush (mid-nineteenth century) brought more foreigners to the peninsula. Many of whom were just passing through en route to California; others, who believed that the desert held the same gold deposits as California, came in search of mythic accounts of rich gold veins. During the late nineteenth century, mining development expanded on the peninsula. Foreign investments were once again encouraged. Silver, gold, and ore were mined in large quantities. Later iron, coal and oil were mined but still mining never gained the importance on the Baja that it did on the mainland. Once the ore had been extracted, the mining towns closed down, leaving abandoned desert towns.

It was not until the twentieth century that Baja California would experience any real growth. Tijuana, Ensenada and Mexicali all grew into sizable towns relying on American investors and businesses. The majority of growth resulted in part because of tourism. Interests in gambling, bullfighting, horse racing and casinos drew Americans back across the border, especially in the 1920's when alcohol was prohibited in the US. Tijuana and Ensenada were retreats for American pleasure-seekers. Since then the tourism industry has continued to grow, from about 20,000 tourists in 1929 to more than 5,692,000 in 1988 (Boo 1990:107; Chant 1992:87). Today many of Baja California's towns continue to thrive, which

is not surprising since each year more than fifty million people visit the Baja peninsula seeking pleasure (Fondo Nacional de Turismo).

Socio-Economic Development

Since the 1960s, the Mexican government has had a very active role in encouraging tourism as a development strategy, as have many Latin American countries (Chant 1992). The Mexican government has had an important function in the development of tourism -- President Zedillo has set a target goal of attracting ten million visitors and an expenditure of US \$5 billion by this year. Fondo Nacional de Turismo (FONATUR), or the National Trust Fund for Tourism Development, and the Secretaria de Turismo (SECTUR), the Ministry of Tourism, are the national agencies that are responsible for activating and promoting tourism development. FONATUR has been involved both in the "enhancement of existing tourist resorts (such as Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan) and in the creation of new ones like Cancun, Ixtapa and Cabo San Lucas" (Chant 1992:93-94).

Since the early 1970's tourism has continued to place within Mexico's top three industries as a producer of foreign exchange, with oil and in-bond manufacturing as the two competing industries. It is also a leading industry for employment and income (Fondo Nacional de Turismo). Within Latin America, Mexico has been and continues to be the most popular destination of international tourists with most of them arriving from the USA and Canada (87 per cent and 6 per cent respectively). The popularity of Mexico for international tourists is in part due to the extensive diversity of tourist resources -- ranging from natural

attractions such as sea and sun, to an immense and diverse range of ethno-historical and cultural features such as pre-Columbian archaeological sites, colonial Spanish architecture and contemporary handi-craft production (Chant 1992:87-89). Political stability is another reason that Mexico is the most popular vacation spot in Latin America. And indeed, the Mexican government has been very successful in promoting tourism. Despite a slight decrease between 1974 and 1985, international tourist arrivals are now increasing. Between 1985 and 1989 international tourist arrivals rose from 4.2 million to 6.3 million – almost a fifty per cent increase. Correspondingly, total expenditures increased from US \$1.72 billion to US \$2.98 billion – an increase of thirty-six per cent (Chant 1992:93).

Historically, the Baja peninsula has attracted those seeking a remote vacation. After the completion of the trans-peninsular highway in 1973, tourism began to expand. In the late 1970's and early 1980's Cabo San Lucas was a destination for wealthy fishermen who could afford the expensive flights. The late 1980's welcomed the onset of charter flights to Los Cabos. In the 1990's, tourism is quickly developing into Baja California's largest industry (Fondo Nacional de Turismo).

What does rapidly expanding tourism development mean for Los Cabos? Although poverty exists in Los Cabos, the area is apparently better off than many regions of Mexico because the people do not suffer from the same unemployment rates as the rest of the country. The continual growth in the tourism industry in southern Baja California creates employment, attracting workers from all over Mexico¹. However, the wages paid to those in the tourism sector tend to be low and as tourism increases, so do the local prices for food,

accommodation and services. Though most North Americans vacationing in Los Cabos believe that the high prices of goods and services are only for the tourists, Mexicans also have to pay those prices. Though small markets in the residential area of town offer lower prices on produce, they rarely have the abundance of goods that the larger supermarket downtown has. Baja California in particular tends to have higher prices because of its location: if it is not grown locally then it must be shipped in or brought in by truck via the seventeen hundred kilometre drive from Tijuana. The development and growth of the tourism industry has also increased employment opportunities for Mexican women.

The development of a tourism industry in Los Cabos has had many other repercussions that are similar to those experienced by other so-called Third World countries adopting tourism as a revenue builder. (For a thorough discussion on the effects of international tourism on Less Developed Countries see Harrison 1992:19-34).

Interchapter The People

Elizabeth: a massage therapist from Washington DC living with Manuel in Los Cabos.

Manuel: a Mexican who owns a condominium rental agency in Cabo San Lucas.

William: a Mexican of English descent who has lived in Cabo for twelve years; is a good friend of Manuel, Romeo, and Reuben.

Romeo: married to Lisa; lives at Las Margaritas ranch.

Lisa: a Californian who has lived in Los Cabos for approximately eight years and has a daughter, Sophia, who is one year old, with husband Romeo.

Reuben: a Mexican who also lives at Las Margaritas ranch; he is a very good friend of Romeo and is currently single but dates women on a regular basis.

Arturo: a good friend of Reuben and Romeo who lives next door to Maggie.

Maggie: a Californian who had been living in Cabo for about 4 months; is a friend of Arturo and Reuben and lives with Pedro.

Pedro: a Mexican who worked temporarily as a dancer with Roberto, and then at “Baja Bungy Jumping”, professed to be in love with Maggie.

Roberto: also Mexican; works as a dancer; is married to Helen, his fifth wife.

Helen: mother of six-month-old Patrick, from Arizona; they live upstairs of Maggie and Pedro.

Erin: a Canadian who lives in San Jose Del Cabo operating a tour company; previously involved with Reuben and William.

Nicole: ex-wife of Emilio, mother of Saúl and Miguel; lives in Cabo; is of Mexican-American descent from California; is dating Fernando and is a friend of Romeo and William.

Emilio: owner of “Squid Roe”; also of Mexican-American descent.

Fernando: a local Mexican businessman, romantically involved with Nicole.

Rebecca: From Oregon; is a friend of Lisa and Romeo; lives alone in Cabo San Lucas but dates Ricardo.

Ricardo: Mexican; a friend of Romeo and William; sells cocaine.

Scott: American; a friend of Romeo, Arturo, William, and Emilio; is involved in real estate.

Janet: an American woman who is married to a Mexican man, Julio; they are friends with Lisa and Romeo.

Chapter Three

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was born and raised in Tennessee, moving to Washington, DC to attend the American University where she pursued a Bachelors degree in psychology and dance. After graduation she pursued a diploma in massage therapy, and then set up practice in Washington. I met Elizabeth through a friend during her second trip to Cabo San Lucas. Elizabeth's first trip to Los Cabos was in 1987 with a friend from California, seven and half years before I met her. She and a male friend had come on holiday to Cabo San Lucas from Washington, DC to stay in a friend's condominium. During that first trip Elizabeth met Manuel, a Mexican man who owned and worked in a windsurfing rental shop on El Medano beach. During that brief vacation she and Manuel shared an intimate (sexual) relationship that Elizabeth recalled to be very "intense". At the end of the holiday, Elizabeth and Manuel decided to keep in touch through writing, and she promised to return as soon as possible.

Elizabeth returned home to Washington, to her friends, her work, but she never went back to see Manuel. She thought of him often, just as she often thought about returning to Los Cabos. Seven years passed and while sorting through old photographs, Elizabeth found pictures of her and Manuel from that vacation. She wondered where he was, what he was doing, nostalgic for the time spent together. She felt bad that they had lost contact and decided she would try to find him.

Though very few Mexicans have telephones in Los Cabos, Manuel had recently installed a phone after opening up Cabo San Lucas Properties (condominium rentals) with an American friend. It was the first time in his life that he had a telephone. Elizabeth called information to find out if there was a listing for a Manuel Billard and was pleasantly surprised to find there was one. She called the number and spoke to Manuel, seven and a half years after she had left there. He was surprised but delighted to hear from her. They had a wonderful talk and Elizabeth told Manuel that she was thinking of returning for a holiday. Manuel, anxious to see her after so many years, offered to put her up in a condominium and pick her up at the airport. Elizabeth made plane reservations and three weeks later was on her way to Cabo San Lucas.

A few days after she arrived in Los Cabos during this second trip I met Elizabeth at Manuel's home. I was asked by William if I wanted to go by and meet Manuel, who was one of his dearest friends, adding that Manuel had a female friend visiting from the US. Manuel lived on a quiet street in the residential area. His house was made out of grey cement bricks and like many homes in the Los Cabos area, looked as if someone had stopped building it part way through construction. And indeed, Manuel was always building on to it. It was surrounded by desert, a lone house at the end of a street with a dirt road leading to it.

Elizabeth seemed to have an inner peace about her that flowed outwards. She was very pleasant and we were immediately able to feel comfortable with each other in conversation. While Manuel and William spoke in Spanish, Elizabeth and I sat outside.

I asked if she understood Spanish and she said no. Manuel was fluent in English, as well as French and his native tongue, Spanish. She told me she was on vacation and that she would be leaving in a few days but would probably be returning. At that time I knew nothing of her relationship with Manuel, though it was quite clear that she and Manuel were more than friends. As William and I drove off Manuel wrapped his arms around Elizabeth, the two of them waving good bye. After William and I left, I thought more about Elizabeth, and wondered if she would talk to me further about her experiences in Mexico. The next day I went back to Manuel's house and told her more about why I was in Los Cabos and asked if she would be willing to talk to me about her holiday in Mexico and her relationship with Manuel. She was willing and so the next day we met for lunch at Mer Mediterranean and over salad and Evian water she proceeded to tell me how she had come to know Manuel. Eventually she confided in me, telling me that she and Manuel had decided during this visit that she would return to Washington to pack up her stuff and close her massage therapy practice, returning a month later to live with him in Cabo San Lucas. Elizabeth returned to Cabo San Lucas this time as promised and as the weeks passed I got to know her better.

My second interview with Elizabeth took place in January, a few days after the New Year celebrations. She had been living with Manuel in Cabo for five weeks. I knew Elizabeth was having a difficult time adjusting. She would often drop by my apartment, looking a little depressed, telling me how things were going with Manuel, asking if I would like to join her for iced coffee at Francisco's on the marina. It was obvious that Elizabeth was feeling very confused about being in Mexico. Part of her wanted to be there but another

part wanted to be back in Washington. A good part of the confusion seemed to come from the relationship she shared with Manuel. She was “in love” with this man but she was realizing how little she knew of him. Elizabeth spoke often of Manuel and their situation. Our conversations were dominated by Elizabeth’s adjustment to Mexico and her relationship with Manuel. Elizabeth started off the taped interview telling me about herself and Manuel.

I knew that when I left here I was 150% sure of coming back, this is the right place for me, I found the man of my dreams. I was 150% sure. There were just too many messages, too many omens, too many – between Manuel and I it was very, very clear that the timing was right. We were both ready for a commitment, we were ready to give this a try, we are ready to give this a try. I went back to Washington. And then, and I still feel real clear that this is right.

Elizabeth found the man of her dreams. She does not tell me what that is exactly, except that Manuel is him. She tells me that she knows she is doing the right thing but Elizabeth is talking in past tense, “I knew..., I was..., we were...”, indicating ambivalence on her part about being there which is a theme that turns up over and over again through the interview. Elizabeth catches herself talking in the past tense and corrects herself, “we are ready to give this a try”, stressing the “are”. And then adding that she “still” feels she has made the right choice. Nonetheless, it is clear that she is not so sure that this is the “right” choice. Elizabeth seems to experience a continual surge of doubts and misgivings about living in Mexico. One of those doubts is about her and Manuel. Elizabeth confided in me, telling me that she had recently found that she and Manuel did not know each other as well as she had hoped. And it was not just that she did not know him as well as she had hoped but also that it was a difficult process “getting to know” him.

And, one thing with Manuel, one thing that is interesting about our relationship is that we didn't build a friendship. We didn't build a base. Instead we went directly to this higher point of partners, and significant others, and lovers before really knowing each other that well. And, you know, when we went on our instincts, and trusting our hearts and trusting our souls to do the right thing – and now, it's the real, real hard part of getting to know each other in a deeper way.

Elizabeth and Manuel became romantically involved with each other before they were able to actually get to know each other. As mentioned earlier Manuel and Elizabeth had a short courtship by most standards. They had known each other seven years previously for a short duration, sharing a romantic relationship while Elizabeth was on holiday. Elizabeth returned for her second holiday and after spending a week together she and Manuel decided that Elizabeth would move to Los Cabos to live with Manuel. Their relationship was built on love (perhaps lust). They became intensely involved with each other before knowing anything substantial about each other's lives. Now that Elizabeth is living in Manuel's house she has come to realize how little she knows about Manuel and his life style.

In the past two and a half years I have been living by myself, and now, it's like living with someone that I don't really know...

This feeling that Elizabeth has about Manuel, a feeling of foreignness between each other, is a continual theme in Elizabeth's interview. Later when Elizabeth is telling me about how she has been feeling dependent on Manuel, a feeling she is not comfortable with, she adds:

It's interesting because that's part of getting to know someone too and understanding where we're coming from and knowing what we each believe in¹. And that's what is so tough about it right now, you know, we sort of went

to the top of the pyramid without building the base and now we have to build this whole base and we still, you know, don't know each other that well.

Elizabeth realizes that in some ways she and Manuel are strangers to each other. There is so much about each other they do not know and so much that is misunderstood. This disturbs Elizabeth. Immediately she follows with:

And in certain situations to see the way he reacts, you know, for me to react, for me to stand up for myself, it's um, I mean we're learning so much and it's very, very scary.

She feels that part of the problem for her in Mexico is not just that she and Manuel are strangers but also that she is a stranger to Mexico.

And one thing that we have on top of this is just not learning about each other and developing a relationship between the two of us but it's also me getting, learning about a new culture, a new society, a new town and new people. Coming to a place totally, totally foreign. And it's a lot of obstacles and hurdles all at once and it's very stressful, very tiring and I'm not... There is a part of me -- I just have to say, Elizabeth give it some time, trust in yourself, believe in yourself, remember the strong convictions I felt.

Elizabeth is experiencing a number of different stresses living in Mexico. She has left her family, her friends, her home, her job in Washington and now has to learn a new way of life and a new language. Elizabeth comments on the difficulties:

And, at times I have to remind him of how much I have left behind to be here with him and he's still here in a very familiar environment with all his good friends, his work, his mom is a phone call away, you know, he just saw her a couple of weeks ago. He's closer to his family and the only thing that is familiar to me, and it's not even that familiar, is him. You know, the few belongings I have - my dog. As far as any support system, any work? I'm getting to know my way around town and it's definitely, and I'm very good at being on my own, and I'm very independent and very resourceful. But I'm also a human being. I do miss. I do feel a major, major loss in my life. Um, but I made the choice.

A point of contention between Elizabeth and Manuel was Elizabeth's inability to speak Spanish. Cabos San Lucas, because it was a tourist town, was a place where one could easily survive by knowing a few basics in Spanish. A large percentage of the Mexicans spoke English. And those that did not were most likely trying to learn so that when you tried to speak to them in Spanish they would speak English, telling you also to speak English because they understood (and because they wanted the practice). But there were people who did not speak English and situations where even those that did, would not, so that if you did not understand Spanish there would be moments when you felt a bit alienated. In addition, not speaking the local language does cause a certain amount of dependency. Situations arise when you need to speak Spanish so that if you do not, you must rely on someone else to interpret for you. Though Elizabeth was trying to learn Spanish, she was still unable to converse in it, causing Elizabeth to feel dependent on Manuel. This too caused tension between Elizabeth and Manuel. She could pick up on things when she listened to conversations but had difficulty speaking. Elizabeth explains:

Learning the language is definitely a difficulty. You know, without a doubt you can live in this town and only speak English. But with all due respect to him and his friends, and his dear friends are primarily Mexican, and speak most comfortably Spanish, if any English at all, and so I know it's important for me and I will do my best to learn Spanish. But it's been stressful spending an evening, with a group of, whether its two or ten, you know, I might as well sit there with a book or write a letter or go for a walk. And a lot of times he's very good at interpreting but a lot of times he's... You know I can't help but, I don't know if it's me or if this is reality but, not that he blames me for not knowing the language, it's like you don't know the language but -- there are times when he's good about helping me out but there are times, so many times that I feel really left out. Lately I have been feeling that, -- initially he

was unbelievably supportive, unbelievably thoughtful, unbelievably attentive and now he's more, I don't know, maybe he felt like -- OK, you've been here a month and now it's time.

Elizabeth falters, not so sure how to complete the sentence. I help her out by adding, “to figure out what I’m saying?” and she quickly agrees with “yah, yah”. Elizabeth felt that Manuel was becoming impatient with her inability to speak Spanish. This was increasing the stress for Elizabeth. While in Mexico City for the Christmas holidays Elizabeth’s feeling of alienation increased. In addition to not understanding Spanish, Elizabeth was unable to participate in Manuel and his mother’s conversations because his mother spoke French.

With Manuel and his mom speaking French to each other and she spoke no English. They pretty much spoke French and Spanish and everybody up there [the community of Manuel's mother] spoke only Spanish. The only person that I could have a conversation with, the entire week, was Manuel. And that was very, very hard.

Elizabeth was truly bothered by her difficulty in speaking the language. She felt that it was a point of contention between her and Manuel but in addition she mentioned that she felt that her inability to speak Spanish may have been a source of stress between her and Manuel’s mother. Elizabeth expressed uneasiness when talking about her new relationship with this woman.

I still don't know what she thinks of me. They spoke yesterday and she said “hi” so I guess that's very positive. (laughs) I don't know, maybe she would like me better if we could communicate but you know there are some things that you can understand from a person just from their body language and their mannerisms and attitudes and emotions.

Elizabeth was obviously concerned about developing a relationship with Manuel’s mother.

In this last statement Elizabeth implies that she doesn't think that Manuel's mother approves of her. She suggests that Manuel's mother's body language says otherwise. Elizabeth thought that part of the problem is that she did not speak Spanish. Not speaking Spanish had been a topic of conversation for Elizabeth and me during one of our first meetings. Even then she had commented on how frustrated she felt when she could not understand the people around her. She had also mentioned that she felt very self-conscious trying to speak it, embarrassed by her mis-pronunciation. This would have been an obstacle for Elizabeth when trying to learn it because she was less willing to speak in front of other people. It may have been slowing down her progress.

Language was not the only area of Elizabeth's new life that was causing her to feel dependent on Manuel. Elizabeth came to Cabo San Lucas intent on finding work as a massage therapist, massage table and oils in tow. Elizabeth's notion of self was strongly tied to her work as a massage therapist. Part of the concern for finding work was financial, but there was more to it than that. Elizabeth would regularly bring up her occupation whether it was in regards to her clients in Washington or to finding new clients in Los Cabos. In Los Cabos she was having a difficult time finding work. It was possible to get work as a massage therapist at the large, or very exclusive small hotels. I had met a woman who worked for the Hacienda Hotel as a massage therapist but she was Mexican and therefore did not have to worry about obtaining immigration papers or an FM-3, a working visa. Elizabeth was disadvantaged because she had not obtained working papers yet and therefore finding work was difficult. If she did work, it would be illegal and if caught she would be required to

leave Mexico and return to the States. Elizabeth mentioned finding employment on a number of occasions. It was important to Elizabeth to find work.

I'm moving here, I'm living here, this is where my life is now, to be with Manuel, to start a life with Manuel, to eventually have a family with Manuel, to build my own business here. ... You know, I think I thought that finding work here was going to be easier. And I think that it's going to take a lot longer than I thought. Everything here takes a lot longer.

Her lack of employment obviously contributed to her feeling of dependency. Elizabeth's interview ended with her stating the following:

It's like a different culture, I can't work here, I can't, I feel unbelievably frigid. Yah, I feel sort of out of control. And if I had my own choice... I guess some of the answers will come in time.

I think what Elizabeth meant was that she had no control rather than that she was "out of control". She did not have the control over life that she would have had in Washington. She now had to consider Manuel in all major decisions, and there were times when she had no say in the decisions; they were Manuel's to make. Perhaps that is a consequence of being involved in a serious romantic relationship, whether it be Elizabeth or someone else. But Elizabeth's situation was intensified due to her circumstances. Earlier in the interview Elizabeth confided that she had been feeling "vulnerable".

Well, I think initially when I got here I felt very vulnerable, and sort of at his mercy because I, you know, I have never been in this dependent position before, and it's hard for me, Ah, very, very hard for me.

Feeling dependent was a difficult emotion for Elizabeth to get used to. She often referred to herself in conversations as being "independent". This feeling of dependency was

a complete contradiction of Elizabeth's idea of herself as an independent and resourceful woman. Because Elizabeth was feeling vulnerable and somewhat dependent on Manuel, it seems that she would often seek emotional support from him. But as she explained, she was beginning to dread talking to Manuel about certain issues, for example if something was bothering her, because she felt that Manuel would become defensive and rather than reassuring her, he would end up feeling as if she had attacked him and they would end up quarrelling. Elizabeth told me about one of many arguments:

And I don't know what to bring up now. Some of the things he said to me were very mean. And, very unconscionable. And so what I'm finding, what's happening, since that experience is how to make him feel better.

So rather than being reassured, made to feel better by Manuel, she ends up having to make him feel better. The discussion ends up being about Manuel, not Elizabeth. She further comments on Manuel:

And so, anyway, I'm finding him very defensive. Can be quite manipulative. I guess, I'm sure there's some good charm in it.

These are quite strong words for the man of your "dreams". Elizabeth found Manuel to be quite hostile at times. During the interview Elizabeth tells me that in Washington she had never experienced a "confrontational" relationship but that she feels her relationship with Manuel is. This issue came up during their Christmas vacation in Mexico City at Manuel's mother's place. Elizabeth often talked about this trip positively but there were aspects that she was obviously bothered by, Manuel's mother being one of them. But first, this is what Elizabeth had to say about Manuel's "hot-bloodedness" and their heated discussions:

And I think that it's a Latin characteristic. A Latin, Mexican characteristic -- this hot-bloodedness. And there was something that came out while we were in Mexico City, we were with Manuel's mom and she made a comment one morning because she and Manuel were getting into this heated discussion and she said --, "oh, tell Elizabeth that just because we do all this arguing and fighting, it doesn't mean that we don't love each other, we do." And it's like, OK, what about me and you Manuel? And it's something that's a part of their... And you know I think it can be very healthy if you can do it in a healthy way where each side is listened to and respected but I don't feel like my side is... And I think Manuel in a way is trying. He's very, very Mexican. That there's a part of him too because he's done so much travelling, and he's well educated that there's, I guess I want to give him the benefit of the doubt. ... Yah, there's definitely a hot bloodedness.

There seemed to be one quarrel after the other. Elizabeth told me a number of stories in which she and Manuel would get into a quarrel about something that seemed to be quite trivial but that then became a major issue between them. For instance, Elizabeth tells me about an incident while they were in Mexico City:

I mean we were in Mexico City and we had this, ended up being this major argument about pesto! It was just like - we were in an Italian restaurant and I was telling him about, you know, he ordered something, a pasta with pesto in it and I was talking to him about, you know, making pesto out of different, you know, you can make it out of different types of herbs or, and he just gets, blows up! Cause he's lived in Italy. And he goes well, you know what Pesto means?! It means Basil! And it's just like the total thing. It's like, Manuel, I've never lived in Italy, what I'm sharing with you is what I've read, remember, you know, I've come from the United States. I've never lived in Italy. So much of what I know -- in books, from people I know, and ah, and I said - you can't deny the fact that the US is known as the melting pot. There are people from all over the world that live there, Italy [from Italy living in the US]! And people come in with their ideas and their recipes and they, they may not have some things available to them and so they use other resources. And so things become diffused. And he just becomes... He gets so defensive.

I had witnessed Elizabeth and Manuel quarrel. Elizabeth celebrated her birthday in January

so they decided to go out for a romantic dinner at a beautiful restaurant that overlooked the sea. They asked me if I would like to join them for coffee afterwards. One of the things that came up during our conversation was furniture. We began talking about IKEA, the Swedish furniture company, and the benefits of shopping there. One of which was the idea that you could leave your children to play in a play-area where they were supervised so that you could shop without having to worry about them tearing around the store. Manuel took obvious offense at this and immediately began to criticize the “American” way of child raising, arguing that in Mexico parents would never leave their children with a stranger so that they could go shopping! Elizabeth then became defensive of her “American” heritage and began trying to defend this idea. I watched, not knowing what to say, not wanting to choose sides, eventually able to change the topic, worrying the entire time they were going to end up in a major fight, ruining Elizabeth’s birthday.

The argument surrounding IKEA seemed to be about a number of issues, child care, Elizabeth’s need for material things and, as I perceived it, about pride in their distinct cultural heritages. It seemed that their different cultural backgrounds, American versus Mexican, may have been at the root of a number of their arguments but Elizabeth thought the arguments were about something else; what she called “materialism”.

And, I think he sees me as being very materialistic, capitalistic, um, and I'm a very modest person. I'm a very, I think, a very creative, inventive person, very resourceful. So when I come here, it's like, I think, you know, I have ideas to do in the house, simple basic needs, silverware, pots and pans, you know. Furniture to sit on. I mean as it is, we still, I mean we don't have any chairs if anybody was to come over. We've got one stool. And he's just got a wood stump and that's his stool. And, we've moved his twin bed, that he

had in his bedroom into the living room and I took all the broken furniture out. That's still on the front porch after a month. Broken wicker furniture. He did buy a double bed right before I came. So that was a big step. I mean he has done a lot as far as, you know, he had this phone line put in for me, he had this bed, he had hot water coming into the house.

Elizabeth adds later:

Um, so things that I had taken for granted in my life, you know, I'm sort of feeling that he sees me as being frivolous at times. You know, if I want to buy, yah, basic things for the house. But the issue with the materialism, the capitalism. I just want, basic simple things and when I point out something, or a piece of furniture that is beautiful, he automatically assumes that's what I want. I point out a car and that's what I want.

Elizabeth found Manuel to be very “frugal” and she commented on this to me on more than one occasion. She and Manuel had different ideas about what were the “basics”. Elizabeth felt that she was not asking for too much by wanting a set of silverware that was not black from ‘hot-knifing’. Nor was it too much to want a coffee maker. After all, she was not asking for an espresso machine, just a coffee maker. She wanted glasses not “plastic coffee cups” to drink from. She realized that Manuel had tried to change his lifestyle in order to accommodate how she was used to living by getting hot water into the house, by having a personal phone line installed and by buying a double bed (he used to have a twin). But these were not enough for Elizabeth. She did not want to cook on a “little propane burner”.

Though, we don't have a stove or an oven and I feel like I'm camping half of the time using this little propane burner or this two-burner stove. We did get a coffee maker in Mexico City so that's making life easier, and some silverware. And I did buy some glasses here finally so I don't have to drink out of plastic coffee cups.

Elizabeth did experience a drastic change in her immediate environment. From what I could tell from both Elizabeth's descriptions and photographs, her home in Washington was quite different from Manuel's.

Built by Manuel, their home in Los Cabos was located in the Mexican residential area at the base of a hill. His house was like most of the others in this area. Manuel was still building on to it and so it was in an unfinished state with trash scattered around. As Elizabeth mentioned, broken furniture was left out in the front yard. Later she complains about waking up to cigarettes and beer bottles everywhere. The interior of the house was in a similar state. No glass panes and no screens on the windows enabled dust and bugs alike to drift in from the outside. Elizabeth never mentioned this to be a problem though I am sure it was. My one room apartment which had both window panes and screens, was also home to a number of large cockroaches and a very timid gecko.

Elizabeth had definitely experienced a "radical change" from life in Washington. There were moments Elizabeth said that she missed the "simple things" of life in Washington, like when she just wanted to have a "bubble bath".

I just want to put my body into hot water. They don't understand this. It's like, nobody has, unless you've got a big Jacuzzi or hot tub, nobody has just a bath tub. You know I feel like looking in a flea market for a classic tub and just putting it outside², you know. Simple things, that are just basic.

Elizabeth has a certain idea about the "basics" needed to run a home which is apparently quite different from Manuel's idea.

Elizabeth's frustration with Manuel regarding her need to have in Mexico what she

had in Washington reminds me of the film “Out Of Africa”. The story of Karen Blixen living in Africa in the first part of the twentieth century. To Africa Karen Blixen brings her China, her crystal, all the amenities she had in Denmark. It is played upon in the film on at least two occasions. One of them occurs when Dennis, a friend of Karen’s is visiting. After Karen finishes telling a story, Dennis asks her if she brings all her goods with her while she is travelling in her stories (Karen being an avid story teller) or in her imagination. When she replies no, he asks then why it is that she must have it all with her in Africa. Dennis is a man who travels continually and seems to have very few material items except his books.

Elizabeth was accustomed to a certain lifestyle in the US and had a hard time adjusting to Manuel’s “frugal” or “simple” lifestyle. But Manuel’s frugality was not the only aspect of Manuel’s life that Elizabeth had difficulty dealing with. Elizabeth was a very health-oriented person. She was very active. In Washington she had gone to aerobics regularly, in Cabo San Lucas she went to yoga every morning at 7 o’clock and was often either on her mountain bike going for a ride or on her way to the beach for a swim and walk. She was also a vegetarian which must have been difficult living in Mexico. Though stereotypically many people think of “rice and beans” when they think of Mexico, the diet includes a large amount of beef, pork and chicken. (The beans are made with lard.) In Los Cabos, like many coastal communities, there is also a heavy reliance on fish. Another obstacle in being a vegetarian is getting fresh produce. The Baja peninsula is a desert except for a few exceptional oases. This means that very little is grown in the region so that everything must be shipped in from mainland Mexico or transported by truck in from the

North. During my first visit to the grocery store I had been surprised at the paucity of fruit and vegetables, perhaps naively, associating a warm climate with an abundance of fresh fruit. Lettuce was often wilted, and discoloured, as was much of the other produce. I suspect that Mexico like many other “Third World” countries exports the best of its produce to the American market, keeping the left-overs for itself.

Part of taking care of herself for Elizabeth meant that she drank little, did not smoke and did not partake in drug use.

One thing too that has become very, very clear to me is that it's not a very health-oriented society. And it's something that I'm very conscientious about - you know, the food I eat, sure I have a tendency to drink too much wine every now and then. In the past I've exercised every day. Just trying to live my life as clearly and as cleanly as possible.

Elizabeth was very bothered by this aspect of Manuel's life. She had been a drug and alcohol counsellor for peers while in college. This was something that she obviously felt strongly about.

So, yah, something that's been hard for me is the, you know, the abundance of the..., not only do a lot of people smoke cigarettes but smoke pot, and drink a lot, drink a tremendous amount of beer. When I see, you know, the night the local boys came over, the soccer team came over, and they sat out on the front porch drinking the big ballenas. The number of bottles and beer caps that were out there. You know, I think, that I can't live that way -- to wake up in the morning and see empty beer bottles and cigarette butts all over my front step, our front porch.

Elizabeth was continually referring to the amount of alcohol people consumed. And indeed by North American standards a lot of alcohol was consumed in Los Cabos, a good part of it by American tourists who would spend 50% of their holiday drunk, trying to take

advantage of cheap beer prices. When preparing to go on a vacation to Mexico, tourists try to learn a few phrases in Spanish. Those usually consist of - gracias (thank you), donde esta el baño (where is the bathroom), and dos cerveza, por favor (two beers, please). Perhaps one of the reasons tourists consume so much alcohol when in Mexico is because of the pervasive stereotype of Mexico as having very poor water quality³. And there is a bit of truth to this stereotype. After returning home from the field I was told by my physician that he had found that my stomach was carrying “a number of unidentifiable parasites” that presumably were from my stay in Mexico.

But aside from the tourists, it did seem that Mexican men consumed a large amount of alcohol. Drinking was a diversion for them, not just on weekends, or on holidays, but any day. I think this was in part because as a tourist resort, every day was Friday. It is the timelessness of holidays. And the timelessness does not exist only for the tourist but also for the people who live there. The locals are forced to accommodate to the needs, or wants, of the tourist, which means restaurants, bars, stores are open every day and have the same hours every day of the week. At the bar, every night is Friday night. It is difficult to differentiate between days. The only facilities that do not adopt this time schedule are those that do not directly serve the tourists, such as, banks, the post office, and other government offices. This, too, was something that Elizabeth was having a hard time coping with.

But I have had a very hard time with the quantity and frequency of drinking and, um, yah, the abundance of alcohol. And I have heard of more than one or two people that have died of sclerosis around here too. It has to do with the liver, liver functioning, with Alcohol! But there's no education for it. I don't know, I really wonder what they teach in the school books here. And

I heard today it's another holiday. This weekend is another holiday -- January sixth. It's the twelfth night, you know. What I know of twelfth night, um, is that it's the sixth of January and it's another big party. And, you know, that's the way that people party. It goes all night long and people drink all night long. And that's something that I'm real clear about -- I can't live that way, you know? He was saying to me, he goes - you know there's something about staying up all night, seeing the sun rise. And I said yah, I like to see the sunrise too but I like to get up early to see it. You know for me to stay up all night long, I feel totally wrecked and wasted the next day and I like to enjoy the next day. I'm the kind of person that would rather go to bed at ten o'clock and get up at six o'clock. Maybe I would do that when I was 19 or 20 but I'm at a different level. A lot of it I think might have to do with, - you know Manuel and I had some arguments about consciousness, or conscientiousness, and responsibility. And what I believe as being conscientious and responsible are very different from what he believes as being conscientious and responsible. And where we differ is, you know, here I am talking about health and moderation and balance and what he's talking about is -- "but these people don't have anything and so when, the time, when they choose to party and celebrate they just, you know this is the time to really do it, they go all out." It's a strain. Then we have these differences where he says it only happens New Years Eve - but I've seen it happen 4 or 5 or 6 times in the past month. You know, don't tell me it only happens 3 or 4 times a year. It happens any time people have a reason to get together. It gets out of control.

Elizabeth likes moderation, "control", not excess "indulgence". As mentioned earlier Elizabeth would sometimes try to talk to Manuel about her concerns but these talks inevitably turned into arguments.

I mentioned to him that I don't know if I can be a part of this culture and I don't know if I can live here with this indulgence and this excess and the whole thing got so totally turned around that I was the one feeling, - um, here I was trying to express my concerns and my feelings and my emotions and it ends up being this situation where he was feeling attacked, and he was the one that was hurt, ah, here I was berating him and not just him... I've attacked him, I've attacked his culture, I've attacked his friends. He said, "I thought you were so happy, I thought you were so happy." I said, "you know, that's not the issue, it's not that I didn't have a good time last night, it's that I'm concerned about the way people indulge in quantities of drugs

and alcohol." And it just became so terribly twisted.

Manuel felt that Elizabeth's criticisms were directed at him and that they were personal attacks. Elizabeth had come to me before New Years Eve, telling me that she was not looking forward to spending New Years with Manuel and his friends. She was dreading the excess drinking and the drugs. Two days after New Years passed Elizabeth dropped by my place for a visit and told me how she and Manuel had spent the night. They had spent the evening at a friend of Manuel's who lived in the government subsidized housing at the far end of town. She drank wine, watching the others drink beer and smoke pot all night long. She was amazed by the amount of pot they consumed. Around 2 o'clock in the morning they returned to Manuel's, Elizabeth intent on going to sleep but Manuel had other ideas. He wanted to go out and see some people. I imagine that Elizabeth felt quite hurt when Manuel left, hoping that they would bring the New Year day in together. Instead Manuel goes out alone and returns in the morning, after the sun has already risen.

Another issue of contention between Elizabeth and Manuel was a relationship/friendship that Elizabeth had left in Washington. This relationship seemed also to be a point of confusion for Elizabeth. In Washington she had been very dear friends with Jack. Elizabeth describes him with fondness.

He's an unbelievably, talented. He's very, very creative. He's a dancer, he's a choreographer, he does sculpture, he does painting, he's a photographer, he does free-lance, computer graphic design, you name it. And right before I left he gave me this bronze sculpture of a dancer. It's sort of like, in flight, leaping. And he gave it to me the night before I left and it's like I said to him – I don't have any place for this! You know, my bags are packed and he goes – it's really important to me that you have it. And I'm glad that I have

it and it's sort of been sitting on this shelf.

But Manuel was not so fond of Jack. Elizabeth told me a number of times about how Manuel would make derogatory comments about Jack, a man he had never met but whom he heard much about from Elizabeth. Elizabeth continued to tell me about the sculpture.

And yesterday I saw Manuel, we were sitting down to lunch and he got up real quick and I saw him pick up the sculpture and he stuck it in the back of the closet and then he came back and goes -- "OK now I'm ready for lunch."

I ask Elizabeth if they had been talking about the sculpture or Jack.

No, he just got up and moved it out of sight. It's like he just didn't want to... And I can understand that too. And he, the other day, 'cause he had asked me if, ah, if Jack and I had ever been lovers and I had said no.

But in fact Elizabeth and Jack had been. She confided in me when I questioned her about this.

We have. We did two nights before I left Washington. Even though I said I knew I was doing the right thing coming here, it's like, Jack and I became unbelievably, unbelievably close the last month I was in Washington. And I was, trying to be as, you know, thinking I can't do this to Manuel and here I am you know, am I being a hypocrite by being with Jack now but it felt like something that Jack and I needed to complete and Jack and I talked over about it and I know it's something that I can't tell Manuel. And, even before Jack and I had ever made love it was as if we had made love in a very different level, a different way, it was as if we were lovers without making love, without it because we know we had this really deep connection. I mean we could just look at each other and communicate, or hold each others hands and... You know it's like when I think about those feelings and those emotions and those sensations it's like, I don't know, Elizabeth don't forget those but you know I'm here with Manuel. It's like I'm thinking about this other quality of experience that I've got with this other man, um, but he did bring it up the other morning. He said, -- and I bet you and Jack did make love, or something like that. And I said I can't believe you're bringing this up, I can't believe you're saying this.

Jack continued to telephone Elizabeth in Mexico much to the annoyance of Manuel.

The other day -- he goes, "you know, you bring up Jack every single day" and he goes "how do you think that makes me feel?" And I said, "you know what I shared with you about Jack", I said, "you know, it's being honest. You know, I'm sharing with you this friend of mine. I don't want to keep anything back from you." You know what I've realized now? You know, Jack called yesterday, every other time that Jack has called I've told him. When he asked me yesterday -- did you get any special phone calls this morning? I just sort of held the table, said, oh, not really. You know, I'm getting to the point where it's like, you know what, he probably does know but I'm not going to bring it up.

Elizabeth says she wants to be honest with Manuel, that she wants to share her life with him but at the same time she is dishonest with him. At times it seemed that Elizabeth was not so sure about who she wanted to be with.

And, you know, I would like to see Jack, possibly, maybe, I'm not sure but -- I'm not sure if that's good or not. Um, if that will sort of muddy my feelings about, um, about Manuel. I don't know if it would be good for me to, I don't know if it will confuse matters more about whether this is the place for me or not. If I get with somebody who's, you know, this unbelievably supportive friend saying, you know, -- Elizabeth, come home, come home, come home... But I think in the next month or so I'll take a trip up to California.

Elizabeth's friend Jack lived in Washington but had asked her if she would meet him in California. Elizabeth seriously considered the option of making a trip to California alone to see him and other friends.

Returning to the United States was something that Elizabeth thought of often, whether it was for a visit to California or the return trip to her home. The latter Elizabeth seemed to be continually contemplating, both when and for how long. She had once told me that she had agreed to move to Baja with the intention of staying for at least six months.

This, she felt, was a sufficient amount of time to see if the arrangement was working with her and Manuel. After six months if she felt it was not working, then she would return to Washington. If she and Manuel decided they wanted to make it permanent, then she would return to Washington to collect the items she had in storage and finalize any other arrangements that were needed. But, Elizabeth was unclear about this most of the time, switching back and forth between, “this is permanent” and “this is for six months”.

And, you know, I have been giving myself six months, six months, six months – I can't go back to the states, I can't go back, I can't go back, I have to stay here. At least 5 or 6 months then I'll know. But now I'm thinking I might take a quick trip up to California and see some friends. And, you know, I would like to see Jack, possibly, maybe, I'm not sure but – I'm not sure if that's good or not.

Either way, Washington was Elizabeth's “home”. Sometimes it seemed as if she really had no intent of making her stay in Mexico permanent.

You know, I have known for a long, long time because when I was in college I had planned to do a semester abroad but it didn't work out. Because there were some things going on in my family. I was going to go to Italy for a semester. I was accepted in a program but it just didn't work out. But I always just felt that I needed that time in another country. And so, now I'm just wondering if this is my 'semester abroad'. (laughs)

A few minutes later she adds:

And I knew there was a time, you know, I've been in Washington for 15 years, and it's a fabulous city and I absolutely love it but I always knew that before I settled there I would have to live some place else. I didn't think I was going to make such a radical change.

Elizabeth contradicts herself. Is it for a six-month holiday to experience something new and different or a lifelong commitment to someone she loves? It does not seem to be the latter

despite her continual declaration of love for Manuel.

Interpretive Analysis

Elizabeth's daily life was full of contradictory and conflicting experiences. Her narrative describing life in Cabo San Lucas included many dual themes such as materialistic/economical, moderation/excess, independent/dependent, Mexican/American, love/rage, and so forth. Elizabeth's ability to contend with these antithetical experiences is directly associated to her ability to negotiate her gender identity. This section will explore Elizabeth's perceptions of Mexican men and Mexican women. Further, I will explore how her preconceived ideas influence her relations with Mexicans in Cabo San Lucas. I hope to address the following questions: What is Elizabeth's dream that she seeks to fulfil in Mexico? How does Elizabeth perceive Mexicans and how does that perception influence her relations with Manuel and other Mexicans? Is it Manuel that draws her to Mexico, or is it simply a preconceived idea of a Mexican? How does Elizabeth contend with the different gender expectations between her native home and her new home in Baja California Sur? How does Elizabeth contend with relations between her and Manuel which, as Dubisch argues, contradict "dominance relations" (1995:34)?

Gender and cultural identity are interconnected and influence each other accordingly. As Prell notes, "gender and ethnicity are rarely, and only recently, considered together," yet they are inseparable, especially in her study on stereotypes of Jewish American Princesses, and I would argue, when studying Mexican men (1990:249). Men and women experience ethnicity in different ways. I do not mean to exclude or ignore the importance of the other

traits that contribute to identity, whether they are class, sexuality, or age, but for this purpose I wish to focus on the “cultural” (or ethnic) and gender aspects of identity. Elizabeth’s understanding of “Mexican” seems bound to gender, or more specifically to men. There are few, if any, Mexican characteristics that she views as gender-less, meaning those habits or customs applying to both men and women. Elizabeth does not know any Mexican women; she has no idea what it means to be a Mexican female. Her understanding then of Mexican-ness, is associated with the only Mexicans she knows – men.

Throughout her narrative, Elizabeth continually refers to the “overindulgence” of alcohol and drugs. Often during our conversations Elizabeth would mention how she was bothered by the “excess” drinking. Though many expatriates partake in this scene, Elizabeth did not. After she spent the New Year’s Eve drinking wine, she complained to me that she felt disgusting because she had drunk too much. It was not just a physical feeling but a psychological feeling also. She believes that Mexicans are overindulgent in their use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs such as marijuana. Elizabeth does not distinguish between Mexican men drinking and Mexican women. Indeed, she says, “I’m concerned about the way *people* indulge in quantities of drugs and alcohol.” But how often did Elizabeth see Mexican women drinking? It is far less common in Mexican culture to see women out drinking than it is in the United States or Canada due to the constraints placed on women by a society that is, for the most part, patriarchal (Alonso 1992:172). During important Mexican holidays, like the Day of the Dead and New Years Eve, it is more common to see young women out at the bars drinking but even then it is minimal in comparison to the

number of Mexican men, who swarm the bars looking for young gringas to pick up and take back to their hotels⁴. But for Elizabeth, this is something “Mexicans” do frequently. She complains how often it is, seeing every holiday as an excuse for Mexicans to drink excessively. This is in stark contrast to Elizabeth’s life of moderation in Washington that consisted of exercise and a vegetarian diet.

Elizabeth relates alcoholism and substance abuse to the Mexican educational system. In the first part of this chapter I quote Elizabeth discussing her perceptions of alcoholism in Los Cabos. She suggests that alcoholism is more of a problem in Mexico than the United States and that alcoholism continues to increase because there is no education surrounding addiction and abuse. This is what Friedlander refers to as a “negative identity” feature – Mexican-ness is a measure of what they are not or do not have (Friedlander 1975:71). In Elizabeth’s opinion the education system is inadequate. And there were times that Elizabeth associated education with not being a Mexican. She commented during one of our very first talks that Manuel was an “atypical” Mexican. She continued to explain to me that Manuel was fluent in Italian and French, spent his later high school years in Italy with a soccer scholarship and that he has a college degree in engineering. That he had an engineering degree surprised me so I asked William, who has known Manuel for over eight years as a close friend, if Manuel had a degree and he said not that he knew of. I never asked Manuel so I can not confirm it. But I found it strange to think that a man with an engineering degree would not be using it, though of course, it is not unthinkable. Perhaps there is not a market for engineers in Mexico, or perhaps Manuel simply decided engineering was not what he

wanted to do. However, I remained (remain?) suspicious of this simply because William was very puzzled that I would ask this, questioning me where I had got an “idea like that”. I wonder if perhaps Manuel told Elizabeth this because she herself is an educated woman having a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and dance and a diploma in massage therapy⁵. Perhaps Manuel was threatened by Elizabeth’s education.

Whereas substance abuse and alcoholism was an issue in Elizabeth’s everyday life in Mexico, something she experienced, the quality of education in Mexico would not have been part of her daily life. “I really wonder” does not imply that she really does not know, but rather that she thinks “what” they teach in Mexican schools (“here”) is substandard to the American way. But how can she possibly know what is taught? Elizabeth never mentioned or indicated in any other way that she had any interest in the welfare or education of Mexican children. I suggest then, that this was a stereotype that Elizabeth held about “Mexicans” influenced by the media in the United States that typically portrays Mexico as an impoverished, polluted nation of uneducated and corrupt people⁶.

Though she may hold this view of Mexicans, it does not affect her relationship with Manuel directly since he is an exception, a well-educated Mexican, and more than that, educated “abroad”. Indirectly her perception of Mexican education as being inadequate could have repercussions for Elizabeth and Manuel but only if Manuel disagreed with Elizabeth’s view of Mexican education. As a Mexican educated abroad, he may share her belief. But if he did not and Elizabeth began voicing her concern about the education system, particularly if she did it in the same manner as she voiced her concerns about substance

abuse, it seems inevitable that a quarrel would result. If “I really wonder what they teach in the schools books here” was interpreted as an expression of cultural superiority, then the consequences could be far reaching, increasing (or creating) conflict between Manuel and Elizabeth. Elizabeth does not associate education, travel or the appreciation of food with Mexicans. Elizabeth asserted, “He appreciates good food with the French side of his family too.”⁷ Elizabeth means that because Manuel is French he has an appreciation for fine cuisine, implying that “Mexicans” do not. Similarly she associates travel with the non-Mexican part of Manuel. Elizabeth adds after stating that he is “very, very Mexican” that he also had done a lot of travelling and is well educated so that she is able to give him the “benefit of the doubt”. This suggests that she has misgivings about being involved with a Mexican but since Manuel is “different” then she is willing to give it a try. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth believes the well-travelled and educated Manuel is a different “part” of Manuel. There is the “Mexican” Manuel, and there is the other part.

More generally Elizabeth perceives that in Mexico things move at a different pace. When talking about finding employment Elizabeth adds, “And I think that it’s going to take a lot longer than I thought. Everything here takes a lot longer.” The idea that Mexico is on a different time schedule is another pervasive stereotype, epitomized by the notion of “mañana”. The literal translation is “tomorrow” but it has a larger symbolic meaning which refers to the notion of “doing it tomorrow”. It refers to a carefree attitude, similar to “why do today what you can put off until tomorrow”. Though this carefree and relaxed world view may be seen in a positive light, it is also viewed negatively, most notably by scholars in

support of modernisation theories of development. Certain North American scholars believe that inefficient time management is the reason why non-Western countries have not prospered as much as the West. In this case it is no longer seen as a stress-free life-style but rather a form of laziness embodied by the “Third World Nations” and thus, inhibiting “development”.

Related to this idea of time is the notion that peasant societies live “simple lives”. Torgovnick explains that “primitiveness” is most often defined in terms of time, or different from the “present” (1990:8). Where the “present” is considered to be too materialistic, the “primitive” is not. She explains, “it is a pre-capitalist utopia in which only use value, never exchange value, prevails.” Elizabeth concluded her interview with, “I love the simpleness, and there’s a very romantic element to all of this...” Elizabeth talks about the pleasures of shopping at the Mexican fruit and vegetable stands – “You know there’s a part of me that – I really, really respect the simple lifestyle here and I like going to the little vegetable markets at the back of town.” These were small open-air stands that lined the back streets of the town that sold an abundance of dried peppers, avocados and onions, in addition to other produce. Part of her is glad to have escaped the burdensome mega Safeway stores of the United States. Though she does not express it as such, Elizabeth experiences nostalgia for a pre-capitalist society (Rosaldo 1989).

But at the same time, Elizabeth desires more than a “simple lifestyle”. She describes Manuel’s house when she moves in as the “ultimate Mexican bachelor house”, distinguishing it from an American bachelor house by what it does not have – “with about

2 forks, and 3 spoons, and 1 knife, and they're all burnt and half of them have been used for ... 'tools'." He does not have a complete set of silverware and this bothers Elizabeth so much that she bought a set. This is a contradiction in Elizabeth's life. On the one hand she desires the simplicity and yet feels that it limits her life. Though she implies that she desires a "material simplicity", she does not really. She is not looking to give up worldly possessions or the luxuries of bubble baths, vacations, and fine cuisine.

These *things* have a meaning for Elizabeth beyond their actual use. Elizabeth wants the pleasures of home in Mexico. Perhaps her need for material possessions is for comfort, a reminder of home. Similar to the character in the novel "Accidental Tourist" who writes books for tourists who want to find hamburgers in Tokyo, or waterbeds in Russia. But on the other hand, it could be a status symbol for Elizabeth. In Washington she seemed to have a fairly affluent lifestyle. Perhaps her desire to live in Mexico is associated with the Western historical construction of travel as being for the wealthy or upper classes only. At times I suspected that Elizabeth had come from an economically deprived family and had struggled desperately to remove herself from it. Though I do not know what life was like for her in Tennessee, in part because she never spoke of it, I suspected that it was not similar to the life she led in Washington. This is pure speculation on my behalf but my feeling was that the reason that she never spoke of her parents and of Tennessee was because she had tried so hard to escape it. Elizabeth's reluctance to give up *things* was because she had struggled to get them. I think that Elizabeth wanted to live in Mexico but without giving up the material items she considered "basic". This was a source of conflict between her and Manuel because

things had a different symbolic meaning for Manuel. There are clues to this in Elizabeth's narrative. When she complains of Manuel's "frugality" she adds that he sees her as very "materialistic, capitalistic". These words, each time with different meaning, turn up a number of times in Elizabeth's narrative and seem somewhat out of context. As if they are not her words. It seems that while Elizabeth is trying to escape poverty, Manuel is seeking to escape material wealth.

I suspect that they are not, that in fact they are Manuel's words, undoubtedly used during a conversation or argument between the two of them to refer to Elizabeth's need for material *things*. It seems that Manuel grew up in a very affluent Mexican household. Elizabeth gives small clues to this. His mother has a house in Mexico City as well as a home in the country. Manuel is well travelled. She comments that his parents have offered him financial help but that he does not accept, that he has "done everything on his own, to build it himself". From Elizabeth we get the idea that Manuel is very resistant to material wealth, that he wants to live a life without the burden of possessions. Manuel has chosen a life of simplicity of certain sorts.

What Elizabeth desires, what she seeks in Mexico, is a different type of simplicity, or "simplicity" as she refers to it. A simplicity that is more of a mental state than a physical state. This correlates with the notion that "primitive" societies are "in tune with nature, paradisaic, [and] ideal" (Torgovnick 1990:3). Much of Elizabeth's discourse is romantic in nature, she speaks of "messages" and "omens", "trusting our hearts and trusting our souls", believing in her "heart" and the "romantic element" to life in Mexico. Earlier during one of

my first conversations with Elizabeth she told me that she felt things to be more “intense” in Mexico. In one of our first conversations when telling me about her feelings about Mexico, Elizabeth told me about a book called the “Celestine Prophecy”. She explained to me that there was an intensity in the environmental forces in Baja California which attracted her. She explained to me that between the Pacific ocean, the dry desert and the mountains was an unbelievably beautiful place that created a magical location. And indeed, the geography of the region is quite startling – massive cacti, roadrunners, coyotes, vultures, canyons, the Sea of Cortez on one side, the Pacific Ocean on the other. Besides the Los Cabos region, the only other developed area of Baja California Sur is La Paz, the state capital of about 160,000 people. Otherwise the southern state is bare, with very small communities scattered infrequently along the transpeninsular highway. If you are a person who enjoys the outdoors, Baja California is an ideal place to be – hiking in the mountains of pine trees, swimming in the clear blue sea where even in the busiest beach coves you can see the fish swimming around you, or walking on pristine beaches. This would be paradise for many people, especially those who live the fast-paced life of the city. And indeed, that is how Mexico is marketed for tourism.

This image of Mexico as “paradise” is not one that you would pick up on in the media where, as I mentioned, Mexico is often portrayed in a negative manner. But within popular culture and the images and text presented in tourism brochures, Mexico is represented in a different light. Mexico is represented as being both a place where “dreams come true” and as a place that is filled with crime and corruption, with air pollution so bad

that they give daily warnings about the hazards of breathing without a mask. Giroux (1994:5) argues that increasingly the postmodern world is inundated with images and representations of “cultural difference” that shape the way we view ourselves and the world. He argues that these images influence our “lived experiences, [and] desires”. But when conflicting images are presented, what images does one absorb? One continually hears of the dismal conditions of Mexico in the news. How can one not be influenced somewhat by these images?

Though Elizabeth does not talk about Baja California Sur as being polluted or crime-ridden, she does associate negative characteristics with mainland Mexico, particularly when she is telling me about her trip to Mexico City with Manuel. But even then, she is ambivalent when talking about Mexican culture. Mexico City “is big, ugly, polluted but it’s very exciting. Lots of people drive their cars, lots of smog, very fast paced.” After spending a few days in the City and exploring the surrounding pyramids, Manuel and Elizabeth went to the countryside where they stayed in a small town. Elizabeth described it briefly, “But these little rural towns, you know, there’s so much colour and culture, and richness to the whole Mexican life.” Elizabeth has been influenced by a complex array of images but she is selective, picking and choosing the images that suit her needs. She seems not to see the pollution and corruption in Los Cabos. For Elizabeth, Los Cabos is untouched by the negative aspects of the urban centres. However she did see Los Cabos as being very Americanized in comparison to mainland Mexico. She called the mainland the “real Mexico.” But her perspective is unreal. Los Cabos *is* polluted, there is corruption, and there is even a traffic problem due to rapid growth with no urban planning. Elizabeth has a

romanticized vision of life in Los Cabos, in spite of her belief that substance abuse is a major problem for Mexicans, and in spite of the rest of her complaints.

Elizabeth's romanticized images of Mexico and of "Mexican men" are directly interrelated and influence the other. Elizabeth explained that never before had she felt the intensity of love she felt for Manuel. On numerous occasions Elizabeth spoke of her "tremendous love" for Manuel, a love that was like nothing else she had felt before. But concomitantly Elizabeth felt that she barely knew him, that he was "manipulative", "defensive", and "hot-blooded". The latter of which she suggested was "A Latin, Mexican characteristic". The term "hot-blooded" can refer to a number of emotions, whether it be strong enthusiasm, violent tempers, or sexual prowess. The idea that Mexican men are "hot-blooded" is perhaps one of the most overshadowing stereotypes of Mexican men. This is in part due to the gender ideology of Mexico which has been characterised as a patriarchal society (for example, see Alonso 1995 and Behar 1989).

Del Castillo (1993), among others, have suggested that patriarchy in Mexico is a "myth". Del Castillo argues, "Mexican gender ideology is much too complex and multifaceted to be essentially characterized as male-dominant (1993:239)." However, others such as Alonso, suggest that Mexican women are "subordinated to patriarchal authority" even though they may exercise an informal power (1992:172). Del Castillo is right in that Mexican gender ideology *is* complex and multifaceted, however that does not negate the fact that Mexican women do play a subordinate role to Mexican men in certain situations. Though they may wield some forms of power, most notably power within the home, the

women have restricted access to other forms of more formal power.

Mexican gender ideology is significantly different from North American. The Mexican woman who demands more control is an exception which is representative of “gender chaos” (Del Castillo 1993:241). The American (or Canadian) woman, though, expects a certain freedom and power over her own life. This raises an important question, how does an American woman like Elizabeth negotiate her gender role in a place like Mexico where female subordination is the expected ideal? As Alonso argues, “Gender is a central dimension of social being, one which cannot be realized in the same way on both sides of the border (1992:181).” What “femaleness” means in the United States is different than what it means in Mexico. Elizabeth’s experience of Mexico would have been significantly different had she found a Mexican partner on mainland Mexico, especially if he was a Mexican from a rural town; but Elizabeth found Manuel in Cabo San Lucas, a place that has a different history due to the developing tourism industry.

Tourism is a significant means of contact between cultures and peoples. During contact between cultures, values, traditions, and customs are exchanged, or sometimes as in colonialism, forced upon the other. So in an area like Los Cabos where there are thousands of foreign tourists regularly interacting with the locals, change is bound to happen. An example already mentioned is the issue of sexuality. Historically women’s sexuality in Mexico has been severely constrained by conservative Catholic restrictions, supported by the Mexican state. Mexican women are expected to accept a double standard, which requires them to stay within the home and be totally dedicated and faithful to their husbands, while

their husbands experience often numerous extramarital affairs, sometimes resulting in children. North American women on the other hand are much more liberal in regards to sexuality⁵. Thus, Mexicans living in Los Cabos, or any other tourist resort, become more aware of cultural differences, sometimes adopting foreign practices. Manuel may not hold the “traditional” Mexican beliefs on gender, particularly since his mother was french and he was educated abroad. At the very least, he is aware that American women do not hold the same perceptions of “femaleness” that Mexican women, or Mexican men, do, though he does not necessarily have to accept those ideas.

What I am suggesting then, is that Elizabeth was able to continue her “American” gender role-playing (to a greater extent than some of the other women that will be discussed) because Manuel was relatively more tolerant of her American beliefs. However this obviously does not hold for all other North American women involved with Mexican men. There were Mexican men that although aware of North American gender roles, still insisted that their American partner conform to the Mexican ideal. More specifically I am referring to Julio who would not let his American wife, Janet, leave the house without him. If she did, she paid dearly later when he would both physically and emotionally abuse her, calling her all sorts of derogatory names, like “slut” and “whore”. Manuel was much more tolerant of Elizabeth’s behaviour than Julio was of Janet’s.

Elizabeth referred to domestic violence just once during all our conversations. And it was one of the rare times that Elizabeth talked about Mexican women specifically. Elizabeth asked if I had heard about domestic violence in Mexico. After I answered yes,

Elizabeth replied:

If anyone was to call the police, they would just hang up the phone. It's not acknowledged. And it's just, very, - it doesn't happen, I guess you don't hear about abuse against children. You know, children are highly regarded here. But women are second class, the women, you know, as far as education, as far as respectability, and – it's a tough society. And right here it's really split because you've got the very strong American influence but then you still have the prevalent Mexican influence on the back side of town. And being with Manuel -- I've got both sides!

This becomes more than just a comment on Mexican women or domestic violence.

It is a comment on Mexican society, a reference to the power imbalance in both gender relations and state/people relations. And it is a comment on American society. She acknowledges the influence of Americans in Los Cabos, implying that they are different, which results in a “split” in Los Cabos. Elizabeth seems to associate domestic violence with Mexico even though it is also rampant in North America.

It is interesting that Elizabeth mentions Mexican women only in the context of violence, referring to them as “second class”. She makes no other reference to Mexican women. As far as I was aware, Elizabeth did not know any Mexican women personally. Her understanding of Mexican women was thus limited. I would argue that violence against women is part of the *machismo* Latin stereotype of men, and perhaps part of Elizabeth’s perception of “hot-bloodedness”. Gilmore (1987:130) defines *machismo* as “a masculine display complex involving culturally sanctioned demonstrations of hypermasculinity both in the sense of erotic and physical aggressiveness.” Mexican men have historically been stereotyped as very abusive both in popular culture and in academe. As Behar (1993:276)

suggests, violence and domestic abuse have often been exaggerated in the lives of working-class Mexicans. Elizabeth mentioned the heated discussion between Manuel and his mother. Though it is common for North Americans to have heated discussions and to argue, Elizabeth suggests that this is a Mexican trait, “A part of their [Mexicans]...” what? A part of their culture, their heritage? Elizabeth does not finish her sentence so it is hard to know what exactly she meant but the implication was that furious tempers are an element of Mexican culture.

It seems that “Mexican” to Elizabeth refers only to Mexican men. Her only mention of Mexican women, in the context of violence, seems removed from her other comments on Mexican society. Elizabeth has particular ideas about Mexico and Mexicans that seem largely influenced by the images and representations found in the media and in North American popular culture. These are both positive images that reinforce her desire for Mexico, and negative images that represent what she misses in the United States. She sees it as being a desirable place where she can fulfil her dreams but also a place where she felt she was lacking a sense of agency. Analysis of Elizabeth’s narrative suggests that she *is* seeking to fulfil a dream in Mexico. A dream that has been influenced by the West’s construction of the non-West. Elizabeth sought a life that was “simple”, “spiritual”, and “romantic” but that dream could not be fulfilled unless Elizabeth was involved with a Mexican man. She needed a Mexican man, a *Don Juan* of sorts, to provide the passion and romance that was intricately tied to her fantasy of Mexico. Elizabeth says that she moved to Baja California because she was *in love* with Manuel but as we saw, she barely knew him.

She was in love with the *idea* of Manuel, the sensual and passionate Mexican man. Though Elizabeth does seem to realize that she and Manuel are strangers to each other, she still insists that she loves Manuel more than anyone else, that he is the love of her life. But the problem in realising such a dream or fantasy is that the construction of Mexico in the media and popular culture is simply that – a construction, one which does not take the ever-changing nature of culture into account. Nor does it take into account individual differences in people's daily lives. Manuel is not a static being but, rather, complex, multi-faceted and ever-changing. Elizabeth's contradictory and shifting perceptions of Mexico were not what she expected and thus, left her feeling confused. Rather, she was expecting a one-dimensional experience like those promised in the glossy tourism brochures.

Chapter Four

Erin

Erin eagerly accepted my invitation to be interviewed. I suspect that she was probably waiting to be asked, since she filled the “subject” role perfectly – a Canadian woman living in Baja who experienced, in fact desired, relationships with Mexican men. So that when I asked if she would mind being interviewed she was enthusiastic. We set the date for December twenty-seventh. And at Julio’s beach side restaurant over tortilla soup Erin told me how she had come to live in Mexico, what it was that kept her there, and what it was that she loved about Mexico. Erin seemed to truly love the lifestyle she had constructed for herself in Mexico.

More than the other women I interviewed, Erin took control of the interview. She needed no prodding to talk, and felt comfortable being tape recorded. If I asked her a question she would answer but then quickly return to what she was talking about. Erin had a definite idea in mind what it was that she wanted to tell me. Often I found Erin’s comments on Mexico and the Mexican people odd or unsettling. Her narrative was full of contradictions and puzzles. I had a difficult time understanding where Erin was coming from.

Erin first came to Mexico on a Rotary exchange program after high school when she was eighteen years old. She lived with a Mexican family for one year in the Northern state

of Chihuahua. Though there were some unhappy memories from her stay in Chihuahua, her memories from that period seemed to be generally positive. It was that year spent with the Mexican family that brought her back again to Mexico. She described the large Mexican family as loving and caring. She describes it as a “traditional” extended Mexican family with 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls, and “aunts and uncles”. The oldest of the sons, just a year younger than Erin, watched out for her at school, protecting her from the other Mexican boys who were so fond of her fair blond hair and pale blue eyes. The family was affectionate, continually greeting each other with kisses and hugs, which Erin found very attractive. Her own immediate family, which consisted of just her parents and one older sister, had shown little emotional or physical affection.

Our house was a really cold house with a lot of rules. All the kids didn't come over to our house to play and make brownies or whatever. No slumber parties. My parents had marital problems you know, I was a lonely kid. My sister was 4 years ahead of me in school so you know she was always leaving, we were never in the same school. She left home when I was 15. I was alone a lot.

When her year with the Rotary exchange was over, Erin returned to Nelson, British Columbia where she enrolled in college. But once home she realized that she was extremely unhappy. It was a stark contrast to the life she had been living in Mexico. Her parents had separated and her only sister had left home. She was feeling awfully lonely even though she had been reunited with her high school boyfriend. After a year and a half of misery in Canada, Erin returned to Mexico, this time to Ixtapa, a Southern resort town located on the Pacific Ocean, to work for a charter holiday company. Again Erin felt the warmth of Mexico

and its families.

It was just so lonely [in Canada] and I realized what I was missing. I went to school [college] for like a year and a half. And then I got a job with Fiesta West and I moved down to Ixtapa. So I was down there at that point, like not in a parental home and stuff. I was really young. I led a really mature, a really simple life. It was almost like I had been sent off to boarding [school] or something. And I just really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the environment, the family environment. When I moved here, when I came here I was just like taken in by all these families. And I just felt so much a part of something. You know, also maybe because there's a lot of single individual people here. You came down here by yourself but you made a family out of friends¹. It's just such a warmth.

Erin enjoyed her job with Fiesta West but once again she returned to Canada where she had her high school sweetheart waiting. Unfortunately the situation was similar to before. Though she claimed to be “madly in love” with this boyfriend, things were not working out between them. Her relationship with him was much the same as it had been. It left her feeling lonely and depressed. In addition to this unsatisfying relationship, Erin found her own family situation depressing. Nothing had changed. The feeling of loneliness persisted while in Canada. Erin returned to the warmth of Mexico yet again to continue working for Fiesta West. This time in the Pacific resort town of Manzanillo.

I don't know, I just stayed with Fiesta. And that was kind of my security for the longest time, you know, I had a job, I had a car, I had a house, always. So I just did that for years.

Since the relationship between Erin and her high school sweetheart was over, Erin was now free to date Mexican men. Until now her only relations with Mexican men were with her Rotary “father” and “brother”. While working in Manzanillo she met Jorge, her first

Mexican boyfriend. Erin made it clear to me during our first meeting that she preferred Mexican men to Canadian men. Erin explained what it was like for her to date a Mexican.

First guy that I dated, they're like really intensive, they're really gentleman, and they love you more than anybody in the [world], treat you better than anybody, and hold you on a pedestal but if you ever, ever tip over the pedestal - that's it. It's like really, really hard to regain their confidence and their ego. So their ego upholding is that they've chosen you and that they're coming after you but if you in any way defy them or make them feel a lack of confidence then they, you know, that's it. They like throw you away, then they have no use for you afterwards but the first guy that I dated was really, really interested in me. Right away [he] wanted to get married and he always used to say, this happened with all my boyfriends, he said, - "Would you marry me?" Like a conditional. Not will you, but would you marry me? It's like an ego thing to see if you would and then full on flowers and everything a girl dreams of as far as fairy tale romance. Coming on to you and everything. But you have to put up with a lot in the meantime. Like the first guy I dated he was all over me and he wanted to be engaged and was totally dotting on me. But he was fooling around. So I said well, I don't think you're serious and that's not what I want and then I left.

Though Erin's intent may be to tell me about her first boyfriend, she ends up talking about "Mexican" men instead. There is little direct mention of Jorge. Erin reports during this interview, as she did on other occasions, that Mexican men are very romantic. They are more passionate than Canadian and American men and more loving. While trying to tell me the positive aspects of dating Mexican men, the traits that draw her to them, she also mentions some of the things that are less attractive. From her we learn that, though Mexican men are romantic, they are also demanding and unfaithful. Infidelity is an ever present theme in Erin's narrative. It is a trait that she distinguished as distinctly Mexican and she insisted that it was something that she did not put up with.

After her relationship with Jorge ends Erin moves again, this time from Manzanillo

to Puerto Vallarta, another resort city located on the Pacific Ocean, about a four hour drive North of Manzanillo. After working there for a short period she is transferred to beautiful Cancun, a resort constructed fundamentally for tourism, on the Yucatan peninsula. She continues working for Fiesta West until she meets Mario. Where Jorge was the “doting” and loving, albeit unfaithful, boyfriend, Mario was the boyfriend that Erin would indulge. The boyfriend that would become her partner in business.

And then the second Mexican guy that I dated with [was] in Cancun. I went out with him for a long time and it was the same thing [as before]. I totally doted on him and it's like in Canada or somewhere at home, and I've only had one Canadian boyfriend so I'm not that much [of an] expert, I was in high school or whatever, but my Mexican boyfriend, I worked full time and so did he. And I've usually earned more money than them [her Mexican boyfriends]. And I have always had a company house, a company car, because I've been in a good situation and with him for example I would, I would get up in the morning, make breakfast for both of us, go to work all morning, go do the grocery shopping, do the laundry, come home, cook, clean up, they always want to make love like three times a day, siesta time, you know, back to work in the afternoon, come home in the evening, make dinner, clean up. It was just expected of me to make lunch every day. I just felt so, like, they expected that home thing but they also expected me to be working full time.

Erin and Mario started their own tour company. Similar to Fiesta West, their new company catered to inexpensive, charter holidays in Mexico. They decided that the ideal location for such a venture would be Los Cabos so Erin went off ahead to set up the company. He joined Erin in San Jose Del Cabo where they lived together for a brief period of time until their relationship fell apart. Mario was also unable to remain monogamous in his relationship with Erin.

Los Cabos became Erin's most permanent home in Mexico. She had been living in

San Jose Del Cabo for four and a half years. Mario and she remained business partners after the relationship ended and the business continued to thrive in the busy tourist resort area. When I met Erin she was running the business alone, directing a staff of eight, both Mexican and Canadian. Mario had become a silent partner of sorts and was living on the mainland. Erin obviously had a good head on her shoulders for business since her company seemed to run smoothly and efficiently with her managing it. I visited Erin at her office which was in a beautiful terra cotta coloured building located in San Jose Del Cabo. Her staff seemed to be content. They seemed to respect her; all her interactions were pleasant. She was self-assured in all her interactions with them.

Erin took a certain pride in the fact that she was able to support herself fairly well while living in Mexico. She relied on no one for financial support. When things needed to be done in the home, she did them. She did not wait for Mario, or Jorge, she took care of things immediately.

With him [Mario] I did all the cooking, all the cleaning, and for a time I earned all the money. And I just did everything. And even like when we lived together here I still changed the gas, I still packed those heavy bottles of water to go get more water, I still had to put gas in the tanks, like he wasn't taking care of the car and the garden -- or any aspect of our life. I had to do everything, absolutely everything.

As well as being the financial supporter, she took care of the domestic chores. But Erin insists that she does not mind taking care of Mario, or any other boyfriend/husband. In fact she maintained time and time again that the “traditional housewife” role was the role that she desired. What she seems frustrated by here then is the perceived expectation by the

Mexican man to don both roles, the domestic and the non-domestic. She felt that she was expected to perform both roles: to cook and clean but to also bring in an income and do the “heavy” chores around the house. Her desire to play the “traditional” female role of mother and wife was expressed on a number of occasions. Erin believed that in Mexico she would be able to play this traditional role of womanhood where she could stay at home and be the “loving wife”.

Erin’s third and most recent Mexican boyfriend was Reuben. During a previous summer Erin lived in Cabo San Lucas doing promotional work for her company in the Melia Cabo Real hotel. It was during that summer that Erin met Reuben. They starting dating the spring before I arrived (1994) but it only lasted a few months. The relationship ended rather abruptly after a camping trip. The exact details of that camping trip remain vague – I was given three different versions, one from each of the involved parties. Erin’s explanation for the demise of the relationship was focussed less on the camping trip than it was on Reuben’s insistence that they become seriously involved, i.e. married, almost immediately. Though Erin argued that what she wanted was a committed and monogamous relationship, she was not willing to rush into it, as Reuben would have liked. She had only recently recovered from her former breakup and wanted things to progress slowly between her and Reuben. She explains:

And what sort of broke down our relationship, and you probably already know about it, is I went to his house one night. We went on this camping trip and he wanted either to move in with me or for me to move in with him. Like, now, right away. And I didn’t want that cause I wanted to maybe date a couple times a week. Let it grow, and like, maybe in a month, no, I wanted

to be married and have a serious relationship with him but I didn't think that moving in was the right thing. I needed it to move slowly and also because I own my own company and everything. I would gladly give up what I do professionally for a personal relationship because it's a priority for me. It would always take priority over my professional life but I'm not going to sell out of a company or let a company fall apart to have an affair with somebody or just to play, you know. I want to have something solid.

Erin states that she would be willing to give up her company for a personal relationship. This statement was similar to the ones I heard Erin make the first time I had met her at Romeo and Lisa's ranch. It was confusing for me. She seemed to be a very independent and ambitious woman yet she was willing to give up a company that she started for a serious (committed) relationship with a Mexican man. Erin's idea of the perfect relationship was one in which she would not be required to work outside of the home. Instead, she would focus her attention on taking care of her family.

And I would like to have that kind of family [a large cohesive family like the ones she saw on the mainland] because my family that I was born into isn't that way. And I think that it would be difficult to create that kind of family in Canada because nobody understands it. Very few people understand, maybe somebody who has come from that kind of family, like I have a friend who's Jewish and educated, and he really wants to have a big family. because that's what he wants -- like an Italian family or whatever. But I think that a Mexican man would understand that concept better and I want to be a traditional housewife. If I was, if I had been asked 20 years ago or yesterday what my idea of the perfect lifestyle [is], it would be to be a mom and a housewife and I would like to be simple mom and I don't think I would find a man in Canada who would agree with that lifestyle.

Erin believed that it would be difficult for her to find a husband in Canada that would allow or encourage her to stay home and be a mother, to play the "traditional" role. And that may be true. In today's Western world it seems that everyone desires a dual income for

Christmas vacations in Hawaii, the second car, the skiing lessons, or in some cases simply to keep their head above water. This in combination with women's increasing desire to work outside the home and the influence of feminist values has produced an era where it is most often assumed that both the woman and the man work outside the home. But still, there are women, many at that, who stay home, forfeiting careers to stay at home and raise children. But undoubtedly, Mexican society is more comfortable with women staying at home to raise a family. In fact the patriarchal Mexican society has in the past *insisted* upon it.

But Erin wanted more than to simply be a wife and mother. She wanted to be able to maintain a certain lifestyle along with it. She was specific about what she desired in Mexican men. She spoke of "well educated" and "upper class" Mexicans. She was not interested in the Mexican men that worked as waiters at the Squid Roe restaurant, though she added that there was nothing wrong with those men, that they had good morals, it was just that she wanted someone "well-educated". Erin explained indirectly.

Like when I think of him [Reuben], he's well-educated, he's educated abroad, he wants a family; family life is really important to him. He's got a value system and a moral base, his mom and his family's important to him. He's not like one of the guys, that's like a waiter in the Squid Roe, and a lot of those guys have pretty strong moral systems, that just happens to be their job but - , but he's educated and he's smart and he's up to date on things and in this country he's connected. He's connected and that's important. Not like it is in Canada anymore, I mean in Canada it is but before if you knew the MacMillans or the Bloedels or whatever, that was important but not so much anymore. I just think that lifestyle offers more. Like all the three Mexican men that I've dated who have had really strong families, that was important to me. And probably if I met a Canadian who had a big connected family, like I have one friend who's coming down here to visit next month, who I know all of his family, 5 brothers and sisters and they're all married and I know his parents and I've known them for 20 years. But they're really

dysfunctional, they don't like each other. There's no strong.. I think a religious base or like, there's just certain families that have more of a base than others. And I really, I want to create that in my life and so I think it would be easier to do that with a man from down here.

It becomes clearer that Erin has a concern not just for a husband that encourages her to stay home with her children, but for a husband that has a certain status and a substantial income. A status that she perceived Reuben as having.

Reuben did seem better off than most of the Mexicans living in Cabo San Lucas. He had a brand new pick-up truck, he spoke English fluently, and he worked for a real estate company in a somewhat leisurely manner. In fact, it did not seem like he worked much at all. Whenever I dropped by the real estate office, he and Romeo would be sitting around talking with others or they would be sitting down at the beach side restaurant drinking *cerveza* and eating *ceviche*. He was from Mexico City and had attended private school there with William and Romeo. When I first met Reuben he was living with Scott, an American expatriate from Kansas, on Las Margaritas ranch under a *palapa* roof on the beach. An old, silver airstream trailer made up one wall of their home which is where they did their cooking. They had hammocks strung across the place and though it seemed in one sense sort of paradisaal, paradisaal in that it was "natural", it was not what you would expect a middle-class Mexican to be living like. It was far from Mexican middle-class standards. But since then (December 1992), Reuben was able to make a substantial amount of money in a short period enabling him to build his own home on the ranch.

I was not exactly sure how he had done this because it was hard to get straight

answers regarding this matter. It had something to do with the property at the ranch and the other “half owner”, Octavio, who was imprisoned in the Californian state penitentiary, San Quentin, for charges involving narcotics. As I understand, Reuben acquired a piece of the property from Octavio at a very low rate and then resold it, making a considerable profit. He kept a parcel of land for himself on the ranch where he built his current home, a small but tasteful bungalow that had a view of both the sea and the mountains. It was modest but very nice (except for the small, sand-coloured scorpions that roamed aimlessly throughout). It had a romantic feel to it that I imagine Erin found very appealing. The new pick-up truck was purchased with the same money. As to being “well-connected”, I am not so sure. He may have been but I was unaware of any important connections that he had. So it seemed to me that Erin and I had a different perception of Reuben.

Erin wanted a well-educated, wealthy Mexican who would support her. To illustrate the point, here is another sub-story from Erin’s narrative.

One way that I've looked at it and I've said it to girlfriends, I said, these Mexican women are so stupid you know, they go out and marry these older rich guys, you know, just dogs that have a bunch of money, they get them pregnant, they have kids, and they stay home, you know, and sure their men take care of them, they live in this great house or whatever. But he's out fucking around on them all the time. And then the other side of it is – as a woman, men are liars, I hate men, I have dated so many of them, I'm sick of them, I never trust anybody, but here's this older guy that won't make me sick if I have to sleep with him, I mean he's really, really attractive, he's got tons of money, he can take care of me, he's going to respect me and put me in a place, on an altar. All I have to do is marry him, have sex with him enough times to produce as many kids as we want. I'll be living in style. I'll be kept in a life of luxury the rest of my life.

This sub-story is quite interesting and quite revealing. It seems to identify what Erin is

actually searching for – her fantasy man. A rich, attractive, Mexican man that adores the ground she walks on. Erin suggests in this anecdote that if you have a rich, handsome husband then you should “eat crow” and forgive his infidelities. This is a contradiction of Erin’s earlier stories about how she left both Mario and Jorge because they were unfaithful. Erin believed that infidelity was more or less acceptable in Mexico, that Mexican society taught young boys that it was acceptable behaviour for men. But at times she was uncertain about Mexican values. When I asked her if she really believed that it was acceptable for Mexican men to have more than one partner at a time she said she was not so sure.

I wouldn't tolerate it. I've left three men because of it. And I've got back [temporarily] with all of them. The first two boyfriends that I had, we split up and they came back like six months and a year later wanting to get back together to get married and the one who came back after three years, [Jorge] he came back after three years wanting to get back together. Last time he came back he gives me a house so we could have a baby. And he's a married man. As a married man he came back to offer me a house and a baby [even though] I wouldn't marry him². And all I could think of is, gee, I'm glad I'm not his wife. It depends on the person though. And obviously, their behaviour in Canada wouldn't be acceptable. I mean in Canada, if a man was unfaithful, he certainly wouldn't be bragging about it. He may tell his best friend but more likely in the dilemma, - oh my god, what am I going to do? He wouldn't be bragging about it, showing it off, or flaunting it. And I think certain men, like Reuben for example, I could imagine him living in Canada, being really happy. It's their friends that do it, like it's who they hang around with as to who makes it acceptable and OK. How serious they take it.

Erin left three boyfriends because they were unfaithful, she claims not to “tolerate it”, yet she reconciled with each one of them at different times. She has mixed ideas about fidelity. And she is perhaps naive about Canadian men in thinking that Canadian men find infidelity totally unacceptable and that their only talk of it would be asking for guidance on how to

escape from the situation. This is obviously not a realistic perception of North American men.

When talking about Romeo and Lisa, Erin implied that having an affair added something to the relationship. Romeo, a mutual acquaintance, was rumoured to have frequent extra-marital affairs. One of the women that he was rumoured to be having an affair with was Rebecca.

The thing is that when you get into a relationship, like I understand from the woman's point of view too, somebody like Rebecca isn't necessarily a threat because she is [not] a threat as far as taking him away, as being a spouse. Like if she's a sexual plaything then she's an acceptable one because she's not a threat intellectually or in other ways even though she's nice. She would always be like an add-on, like she would never take Lisa's place or anything like that.

This is a puzzling statement in light of Erin's affirmation that infidelity is unacceptable to her in a relationship. It seems a contradiction of everything she says regarding her relationships with Mexican men. She seems to imply, and indeed stated, that if the situation is otherwise desirable, she would be willing to disregard or ignore a man's infidelity.

Erin's attitude toward Mexican men was even more puzzling in light of the violence she had endured at their hands. As a rotary student in Chihuahua she had been sexually assaulted by a young man whom she had got a ride home with after school.

A couple things have happened since I've been here. And I think all of them are ..., I consider it racism. A lot of it. When I first lived in Chihuahua I, almost got raped there once. I was eighteen. One of my classmates from school offered me a ride one day and in Mexico, you never get in a car alone with a man unless he's your partner. This guy offered me a ride home from school and I went with him. And he drove out of town and pulled over and tries to make me give him a blow job. Like pushed me down. And I bit him

and fought him and got out of the car and went running back along the highway towards town and the brother of my host family, my host brother, picked me up and drove me back to town. We talked about it and he said don't tell anybody, everybody will just say it was your fault. You shouldn't have been in the car alone with him for the first place. And everybody will say you know, you're a blondie, and you deserve it and you would have done it anyway, and I'll take care of it. And him and his friends went out and beat the guy up. That's sort of the way they do it.

But that was just the first of many incidents that Erin would encounter with Mexican men. She went on to tell me about a number of other incidents that she had experienced with Mexican men in Mexico. As far as Erin could understand, the incidents occurred because of cultural misunderstandings. Mexican men did not understand the sexual attitudes or values of North American women.

I use to have guys grab at me on the street, I use to have guys masturbate in front of me. I know that happens in these places. They just have this perception that we [North Americans] are easy women. They don't understand what our standards are, they can not comprehend that even if you're not a virgin, it doesn't mean that you want to be with everyone. You wouldn't just be with anybody. They don't understand that there are reasons. And then when I was on the mainland, I got robbed once. I went into a gas station, and this group of young men came and surrounded the car and took my roof rack off my car while I was in the car. And there was nothing I could do. Because nobody was going to defend me. And I couldn't go to, it's like police thing, if you go to the federal police like, I was totally vulnerable being..., like you can go to the RCMP and expect to be protected. When you walk into the federal police station here, you feel like you're being watched and you wonder if they're going to throw you down in the back room and have at it.

The danger of the situation was compounded for Erin because as she saw it, she was at risk from both the criminals and the law. She felt that the Mexican police were not a source of justice or aid as she believed them to be in Canada. After being robbed Erin did not feel

confident in reporting it to the police because she feared the police also.

Erin concluded the interview by telling me about the traumatic experience of her rape. When our interview seemed to be coming to an end, I told Erin that I had been told that she had been raped and wondered if she would be willing to talk about it. She confidently replied that she had been planning on telling me the story even if I had not asked about it. I was amazed by the emotional distance she seemed to have when telling the story. It was so matter-of fact. Since then I have realized that what I perceived to be an emotional detachment was probably a form of defence, a way of distancing herself from an horrific event. Interestingly enough, it was the most coherent part of the interview. Like most of the interview, Erin needed no prodding or questioning.

She explained that after returning home one evening she was brutally raped and beaten by a young Indian man with a mental illness who was a neighbour in the small community where she was living. The young man, who had broken in and was waiting in the house for her when she returned, beat Erin with a Marlin club, tortured her, forced items down her throat, cut her with a knife, broke her ribs and cracked her skull over a period of hours. Eventually she was saved by another neighbour who suspected something was wrong when he saw the bathroom light in Erin's place being turned on and off. Erin had started to do this when she heard her neighbour drive up in his car. The young man, intent on trying to rape and torture her, did not notice. But being saved by her neighbour wasn't the end of the crime. Erin then had to endure four and a half hours of questioning by the police. She was surprised that when the police did arrive they sent a female officer. She did not think

that the police were sensitive enough to realize the importance of sending a female officer in such a case. But she added that they did forget to bring a camera and “other things”. She considered the investigation to be substandard although she added that she had never been in such a situation in Canada so she had nothing to compare with it. She was then taken to the police station where she was further interrogated, in spite of the fact that she needed immediate medical attention. She resented being kept in a “freezing cold police office” while her head bled and her body ached. Eventually she was taken to the hospital to be examined by a physician who was supposed to confirm whether or not Erin had been raped and to care for her badly beaten body. Erin explained, bitterly, that she thought the outcome of the examination was also influenced by racism. She believed that the doctor would not concur that she had been raped because she was a Western woman and, consequently, he would assume that she was sexually permissive. The male doctor concluded that Erin had not been raped since there was no trace of semen. Erin told me that the reason there was no semen was not because she had not been raped but because the young man had not climaxed. As a result, the man was not charged with rape, but with sexual assault and battery. If he had been charged with rape, he would have spent a considerable amount of time in prison since it is considered a horrible crime in Mexico and is punished accordingly³.

Rape would be a significant experience in anyone’s life, but Erin saw it as being particularly important to her experiences in Mexico because during throughout the rape the young man made reference to Erin’s blonde hair and blue eyes and spoke to her with the formal *usted* rather than the informal *tu*. Erin believed that the rape had influenced her

perception of Indian men. She told me that she had felt racist towards Indians since the event.

Erin remained in Mexico after the rape even though she considered returning to Canada. She still wanted her husband to be Mexican, and the incidents just described didn't change that. Erin however, did explain that she felt more racist, that is towards the Indians in Mexico, than previously since the young man had been Indian. For Erin, and perhaps because she had been in Mexico for such a long time and found out that race plays an important role in Mexican lives, race was an issue.

At the time of my departure from Mexico, Erin was still single but trying to rekindle a relationship with Reuben. He was no longer interested in having a romantic relationship with her, even though he had once asked her to move in with him. Reuben told me that he had cared very much for Erin, but that she had betrayed him in their relationship and he could not forgive her. Reuben was under the impression that Erin had had a brief sexual encounter with his friend William. William had confirmed this rumour, even though Erin denied it, and as a result he and Reuben had ended a long-term friendship (twelve years).

Interpretive Analysis

Erin, like many others who travel to Mexico and other “paradise” localities, was searching for something that was lacking or altogether missing from her life in British Columbia. She left a terribly lonely childhood and youth and in place of it found a culture full of loving families and loving men; a society that encourages women to play the domestic role, to stay at home and raise the children and take care of the husband. Erin’s dream come true.

Though Erin enjoyed living in Mexico and preferred it to life in Canada, it was not the exemplary life that she dreamed of. Erin never directly said that what she hoped for in Mexico was something different from what she was living; however, it is possible to discern from her narrative that in fact it was not. At least, not fully. A number of issues prevented the realization of her dream. First, it was in part Erin herself: she was ambivalent and sometimes contradictory about what she really wanted; and secondly, Mexican culture itself, so different from Canadian, also interfered. Though she was able to fulfil part of her dream, it was at a cost.

Erin said that when she returned to Canada after living in Chihuahua, her parents were not a part of her life. She maintained that they “didn’t want to be a part” of her life. Even in her adult life Erin felt lonely living in Canada, a lack of family and friends in her life. Erin states that the warmth of the large, extended Mexican family, like the one she lived with in Chihuahua, was part of the reason she had moved to Mexico and desired a

relationship with a Mexican man. When describing such Mexican families, though, Erin stated that there was a difference between the family she boarded with in Chihuahua and those that she was familiar with in the Los Cabos region.

When I moved down to Mexico I lived on the mainland and I didn't live in one of these smaller families that we see in Cabo. And the whole family unit was so strong and there was such pride and there was such a feeling that you don't really pick up on if you've only been in a resort town. You do a little bit, like our [Mexican] friends are like brothers in the way they all support each other.

Los Cabos as noted earlier is a rapidly expanding tourist resort area that increasingly attracts Mexicans from the mainland and the Northern Baja (more specifically, Tijuana) who are in search of employment. This tends to be single people who either have not yet married or who send remittances back to families still living on the mainland. As Erin points out, there are fewer “traditional” Mexican families in the Los Cabos region than in other areas. In other resort areas, such as Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo, where towns existed before tourism development, one can still see large Mexican families but in areas like Los Cabos and Cancun that have almost exclusively been constructed for tourism’s sake, families are less typical. Therefore, Erin is less likely to be involved with a Mexican man that has a large family close by. In all likelihood, his family is in Tijuana, Mexico City or Guadalajara. Erin’s business relies on the tourism industry so that if she wishes to continue successfully in the charter tour business, she must continue to live in the tourist resort areas. Living in San Jose Del Cabo restricts Erin’s access to the loving Mexican families that purportedly drew her there to begin with.

Aside from the geographical obstacle, Erin's perception of the "Mexican family" is unrealistic. She views all Mexican families as being large and loving. In fact, Erin seems to associate "ethnic" families, whether Italian, Jewish or Mexican, with extended families. She does acknowledge that large families are not restricted to "ethnic" families; however, it is not the same. Remember, Erin explained:

And probably if I met a Canadian who had a big connected family, like I have one friend who's coming down here to visit next month, who I know all of his family, 5 brothers and sisters and they're all married and I know his parents and I've known them for like 20 years and stuff. But they're really dysfunctional, they don't like each other. Like there's no strong tie between them.

Erin implies here that Canadian (but not Jewish or Italian) families that are large are "dysfunctional". She holds a romantic ideal of Mexican families which is unrealistic. One only needs to look at Behar's *Translated Women* (1993) or Lewis's *The Children of Sanchez* (1963) to see that large, extended families in Mexico can also be dysfunctional, abusive and neglectful. She sees all Mexican families as being like the one she lived with in Chihuahua. She does not allow for individual differences. Erin also seems to think that a large family means a happy family. Erin's need for a large family perhaps stems from her years at home of feeling alone. The four-year gap between her and her only sister was too large for them to be "friends" growing up. Erin would have always been too young to spend time with her sister and her sister's friends. By the time she was old enough, her sister had moved away, leaving Erin truly alone.

Erin's relationship with her parents and her sister may also contribute to her desire

for romantic love. Erin explained that her parents were not very emotionally expressive. She found her childhood “cold”. Her experience with Canadian men similarly left her feeling unsatisfied. In Mexico, she found very expressive people, particularly men who were able to give her the attention that she had for so long been missing. Mexican men are stereotypically known as being very expressive. Unlike the stereotypical North American man, Mexican men are more likely to show signs of vulnerability and passion. A common story told by North American women frequently includes a young Mexican man who spends his last night with a vacationing woman in tears professing his true love to her, even though he has only known her for one week. As well as being more inclined to express feelings of melancholy, Mexican men are also known as being more expressive with feelings of admiration. North American women are constantly bombarded with admiring remarks when in Mexico, whether it is “muy bonita”, “guapa”, or “mamacita” (very pretty, handsome, and ‘little mama’ respectively). Though some North American women find this type of admiration offensive, unaccustomed to the informality and boldness, others find the attention very flattering. As Meisch noted in the case of “gringas” in Peru, “young women who consider themselves too fat or otherwise unattractive suddenly discover that they are considered beauties, and the experience is heady” (1995:451). Erin because she is very fair, pale blonde hair and blue eyes, probably received an abundance of attention from Mexican men who seem to adore fair women like Erin. In Mexico Erin received far more attention from men than she did in British Columbia and she liked it.

Unfortunately for Erin, her blonde hair brought more attention from Mexican men

than she sometimes wanted. Most noticeable was the incident while she was living in Chihuahua with her Rotary family. Erin's blonde hair and fair complexion brought her both wanted and unwanted attention. She also reported a number of other incidents that involved sexual harassment. Granted, the same incidents occur around the world, North America included, but we might assume that some of Erin's experiences were related to the fact that she was a pale Northerner. Erin's story about being raped and beaten by the young Indian man illustrates this. As Erin told the story, the rape was a result of "racism". She felt that she was singled out as a victim because she was a blonde North American woman. She recounts that during the event the young man admired her "blondeness", stroking her hair, telling her how beautiful she was. Erin also felt that the result of the physical exam that she had after the rape at the hospital was also a consequence of racism. She later told me that she believed the physician concluded that she had not been raped because she was a Canadian. Whether this was accurate or not cannot be confirmed; regardless, Erin believed that it was true. As a result of the rape, Erin admitted that she had come to view the Indians (as opposed to the Mestizos) in a different light. She believed that she had seen something "in his eyes" which scared her, which made her think there was going "to be no way to reason" with him and she associated this with the fact that he was Indian as opposed to Mestizo. Why does Erin associate this anger or madness with Indians as opposed to with Mestizos? It is likely that because she lived in Mexico for such a long time, she had become aware of the racism that exists within Mexico where the Indians are treated much like the First Nation peoples of Canada. They occupy the lowest socio-economic level within society and they suffer from

extreme discrimination. It is possible that rather than seeing the rapist as a Mexican, Erin saw him distinctly as an Indian, an Indian who she surmised was both developmentally challenged and “inbred”. It could be argued that her perception of Indians is also related to images of the “primitive” in popular culture. Where Elizabeth saw Mexicans as being romantic, spiritual, and sensual, Erin perceived Indians as being threatening, or as Torgovnick writes, “our id forces – libidinous, irrational, violent and dangerous (1990:8).” If this was the case, then it would account for why she still desired Mexican men even after the sadistic rape. However, it was not the only case of violence that she encountered and she did not blame the other cases on Indians.

But Erin also noted that the sexual standards were different for women in Mexico than in Canada. She was under the impression, and appropriately, that Mexican men believed North American women to be “easy”. This reputation has been noted by other authors such as Bowman in Israel (1989) and Meisch who noted, “the general reputation that gringas have for being sexually loose allows a young man to hope that something might transpire (1995:451).” Though Erin stated that she thought both of the incidents in Chihuahua and Los Cabos were the result of racism directed at her, she was also aware that it had something to do with cultural differences in expected female behaviour. When telling the story about the ride home from school, she explained, “never get into a car alone unless he’s your partner.” After the incident, and no doubt after many years of living in Mexico, Erin understood that cultural expectations for women are different than in Canada. She added, “And down here, they just want their women with them, or to stay at home.” As

Behar notes, when a woman leaves the domestic sphere, she is no longer under the influence of patriarchal authority and “ceases to be a *mujer de respeto*, a respectable woman” (1993:281). Instead, she becomes a woman of the street, a woman who loves sex, “*la mujer del gusto*” (1993:281). Behar writes that such women are looked down upon in Mexican society (1993). From this we can conclude that Mexican men view North American women in the same manner. They are women who have escaped the control of patriarchal law and have freedom and as Behar writes, they are women who “flaunt their bodies and their desire openly” (1993:281). This is particularly true for North American women who do not conform to local standards of dressing by wearing swimsuit tops around town or revealing shorts. One might conclude that it would be these women, the perceived *mujer del gusto*, who would be targeted for sexual violence.

Erin was aware of the “double standards” for men and women in Mexico. She explained that whereas it was acceptable for Mexican men to have extra-marital affairs, even children with other women, the women were expected to stay at home and be completely faithful to their spouses. Erin’s opinion was that Mexican men saw women as either virgins or whores. There was no in-between. If a woman had premarital sex, she was a whore. Behar notes that women in Mexico are denied sexual freedom while men are given free license (1993). Erin understood this cultural difference, yet we are left wondering if she accepted it. Though Erin professed her love of Mexican culture, she talked about the double standards with bitterness in her voice, specifically the issue of fidelity. Erin brings attention to this attribute on a number of occasions.

Typically they're unfaithful and their level of infidelity, I mean, they just don't have the same general perceptions as we do as far as fidelity goes.

In every relationship she has had with a Mexican, Jorge, Mario and Reuben, she has had to deal with the issue of infidelity. Both Jorge and Mario were unfaithful to her, engaging in relationships with other women while they were involved with her. Jorge returns three years later as a married man and propositions Erin again, even though he now has a wife. She also suspected that Reuben was unfaithful when she arrived at his place for a date and found his friend Rebecca “drunk and passed out on his bed with her clothes hanging in the closet”. For coping with their infidelity Erin suggests both ignoring it and not putting up with it. She seems to both condone and condemn Romeo’s extramarital affair with Rebecca. She maintains that she leaves both Jorge and Mario for being unfaithful but then also notes later that she returns to both of them at later dates. And even though she suspected Reuben of having sexual relations with Rebecca, she was still interested in reactivating their relationship. Either way, this attitude does not seem to fit into Erin’s idea of the perfect relationship.

Erin suggests at one point that Mexican women on the other hand accept that their husbands will pursue other women. And as Ingham notes in a central Mexican village, many women do assume that their partners will pursue sexual activity with other women (1986). However, he also writes that women will try certain tactics as a way of resisting such a situation, particularly if it means less financial support for them. These tactics include complaints, reproach and open criticisms (Ingham 1986:62). In some situations a woman

may physically attack the husband, and Ingham notes that as a final effort women may try herbal poisons. Erin's perception then of Mexican women as passive players in their marriages is false and is probably based on faulty stereotypes of Mexicans (Behar 1993:277).

Erin noticed other undesirable characteristics that she perceived to be Mexican, including jealousy and heated tempers. While Mexican men are stereotypically labelled as passionate lovers of women, they are concomitantly known for their possessiveness. Erin recounts incidents with her past boyfriend Mario where he showed his true colours.

*A year and a half later after I split up from seeing him, we were in business together. We saw each other but we weren't dating anymore. I didn't date anybody [but] a year and a half later I started dating somebody and he totally flipped out. I was a whore, and I was a this and I was a that. Even though all that time had passed. I wasn't with anybody else for a year and a half and when I was, he **threatened to kill me**. And that's typical, but then if you befriend any of their friends or anything they get really jealous. They get really upset. They are extremely jealous.*

As a result of Mario's jealousy Erin had to modify her behaviour when dating him. She explained that after moving to Los Cabos to start the tour company, while Mario remained in Cancun for six months, she never went out at all, afraid that by simply going out he would "get the wrong impression". Though she modified her behaviour in order to avoid conflict with Mario, it did not help. Mario returned, threatening to kill her if he found out that she was seeing anybody. Though not literally locked in her home, Erin was emotionally locked in. She understood that her role as a woman in Mexico, especially her role as a girlfriend to a Mexican, meant that she would have to act in different ways. She noted that Mexican men "would expect the girls to stay home for example and whatever, you know, have a tea party."

If she made friends with other men, she would be accused of sleeping with them. This happened when she befriended Reuben's friends Scott and William. Reuben "automatically started assuming that we were all having sex and were all dating." In fact, Reuben insisted that Erin's friendship with William, one that he perceived to be sexual, was the reason their relationship ended.

Though Erin was willing in the case of Mario to change her behaviour in order to appease him, she seemed less inclined to do so for Reuben. After an afternoon barbecue at Reuben's place, Erin offered a mutual friend, Arturo, a ride into town. Reuben interpreted this gesture as something more, and at a later date he accused Erin of having a romantic interest in Arturo. Earlier in the chapter Erin was quoted as saying that in Mexico it is not considered respectable for a young woman to catch a ride with a Mexican man. Her rotary brother told her that she should not have been alone with the man in the car. Even though she is aware of the cultural norms regarding acceptable behaviour for women, she does not conform. The same could be said for Erin's desire to be the "traditional" housewife. She maintains that she would give up her professional life for a relationship, yet when Reuben asks her to move in, and, as she tells it, to get married, she declines, insisting that she is not willing to give up her company for an "affair". Is Erin's hesitance in giving up her company or is it because Reuben is acting too quickly?

One has to wonder if, like their Northern neighbours, some Mexican men might like their wives to work, to bring in an extra income, so that they too can take a vacation. Erin explained that she frequently made more money than her Mexican boyfriends. She claims

that temporarily she was supporting both her and Mario before they started the tour company together. At other times, her income was much greater than her Mexican boyfriend's. Though Reuben had acquired an expensive pick-up truck and had built a new bungalow, his income from his real-estate job was minimal. Other women I spoke to noted that they felt their Mexican boyfriends or husbands were attracted to them because of their desire to work and earn their own income. With a third of their country's population unemployed, Mexican men may very well desire a woman who is able to bring home an income. Mexican men and women (like their North American partners) also have conflicting values, wishes and goals: a working, and thus providing, woman or a woman of the house?

Alternatively, Erin could give up her business and play the role of the traditional wife. Like Mexican women she will be expected to stay in the home. Tasks outside the home will be assigned to men except for going to the market, or the grocery store. A case in point was Janet, a young Californian woman married to Julio, who was only allowed to leave the house in order to go grocery shopping. If Janet left otherwise, her husband would both verbally and physically assault her. And sometimes she was not even allowed to do the grocery shopping. Similarly Behar (1993) records that Mexican women are not allowed to look out the window onto the street; doing so will result in a bad reputation for both her and her husband. The same has been documented by Bourgois (1995) in the Chicano neighbourhood of East Harlem. Any deviation from those set standards results in verbal and/or physical abuse. Erin realizes this but seems to accept it.

The only problem anyone that I know who has ever been with a man here

successfully, has had to eat a lot of crow, like you just have to stay home and be a good girl and wait out and eventually they come around. But you have to put up with a lot in the meantime. You do have to put up with all their comments and slurs.

Erin puts up with more than their “comments and slurs”. She has been raped and beaten, sexually assaulted, she has had her life threatened twice.

However, the violence that Erin experienced was peripheral in her accounts of life in Mexico even though it seemed to be a significant part. She had been brutally raped and beaten, she had been robbed, she had been sexually assaulted, yet she did not focus on these events. She had saved the story of the rape and attempted rape for the end of the interview. Her narrative built up until the final, concluding story of the brutal rape. She still considered Los Cabos home even though the rape had occurred there. She also minimized crime, especially when it included her friends; some of whom were regular drug users, and one or two of them drug dealers. Reuben’s connection to the ranch and subsequent connection with the imprisoned Octavio (and his sudden wealth) were not of concern for Erin. Whether she suspected Reuben of criminal activity or not, she never said. But in her conversations with me, she described Reuben only as a “connected”, “well educated” and “upper-class” Mexican man. Although Erin was no longer seeing Reuben, she was pursuing him even though he was no longer interested in her.

Erin had a particular dream in mind that she sought to fulfil and she was somehow able to block out, at least mentally, anything that came in the way of that, whether it was sexual violence, Mexican sexual scripts or domestic abuse. Central to that dream was

finding a Mexican husband who had the wealth and status that she desired. For Erin, the concessions were worth it if she could find that particular man.

Chapter Five Helen

Helen was working as a waitress in a popular Italian restaurant when an old girlfriend from high school came in and suggested that the two of them take a vacation to Mexico. Helen took kindly to the idea for she had just ended a long-term relationship and was feeling emotionally drained from the experience. It had been a lengthy relationship, lasting from when she was 20 until she was 25, and had ended sourly. The entire relationship had been emotionally trying for Helen. She reported that David had been unsupportive and emotionally abusive. She had had only one previous boyfriend before David, living with a young man for a year when she was eighteen but that relationship did not work, either. He was unable to maintain a monogamous relationship with Helen, keeping “three or four others [girlfriends] at the same time”. It took Helen a year to recover from that relationship. Her self-esteem had been crushed by his infidelities.

Anyhow the end of that relationship I believe is what sent me, without knowing it, in search of the next one. My need for approval was so great that I would do anything to get it, including trying to change myself completely. It didn't matter for who. Which is what I did for the next 5 years.

In David, Helen found the approval she was searching for, or at least what she thought was approval. David was a handsome, athletic young man from a wealthy upper-class family studying to be a stock-broker. Helen was flattered by the seemingly

successful young man's interest. Unfortunately, David's interest and desire for Helen was at a cost. Helen reported that he made it very hard for her to maintain the loving and close relationship she had previously shared with her family. Helen's family had been particularly close, maybe more than most, because her mother suffered from mental illness. Helen explained that, though her family seemed like "just ordinary people", they had their "share of problems".

My mother has been in and out of mental hospitals, twice for manic depression and schizophrenia. She would blow up at you violently and the next minute be asking you if you wanted to go to the movie. It was pretty scary at times because she would go off when least expected. Well, what we didn't know for a very long time was that she had a chemical imbalance that made her that way. She got to the point where she was convinced that my Dad had hired people to drive her crazy and that there were cameras installed in the light fixtures and walls. It was incredible. Well, all my life I was the only one out of the family that she would trust, and that could calm her down. So naturally I felt it was my responsibility - kind of like my job. I never understood that I was also enabling her to continue in this pattern.

Helen's mother's illness created a strong bond between Helen and her family. Helen believed that family was the most important thing in life. She explained, "All you really have in your life is yourself and your family." It was a bond that David seemed to feel threatened by. Helen insisted that he tried to "tear me [her] away from them". Though Helen is vague in explaining exactly why David discouraged her relationship with her family, it seems that part of the reason was because of Helen's mother's condition.

The flip side is that David's family has just as many problems as anyone's but they were so busy scheming together to look perfect that they never

had any time to work their problems out. They would sit instead, in judgement of everyone to make themselves feel better. Making others feel inadequate.

As Helen described it, David and his family saw themselves as superior to Helen's. Helen said that David believed that he was doing her a favour by going out with her, that he was improving her somehow. When Helen left him, David responded with "I feel like you're the bird with the broken wing - I took you in and fixed you and now you're going to fly away." Helen's perception of the relationship and the subsequent separation was quite different; "I felt like telling him, yeah, you took me in and tried to break the other wing!" Helen tried hard to get along with David's family but as she mentioned earlier, that meant changing who she was.

When I first met David's folks we went to his house after a movie. I was studying acting at the time and planned on going to work somewhere in the film business. All they could say to me was "That's not very realistic as a career choice, is it?" And boom! I was off on another crusade to get myself approved.

Helen said that she was always trying to please David but nothing seemed to work. She commented that he "worked hard at the whole thing [the relationship]" but adds that they simply "weren't compatible". In addition to discouraging Helen's ties with her family, David had other failings. Helen reports that he was addicted to marijuana. She noted that although she understood one could not be physically addicted to marijuana, David was "definitely mentally addicted". He confessed his "dream life" to Helen, "to come home after work every day and smoke a joint and watch the trading results of the stock market for the day." Helen was not impressed by his "dream" and comments that it was soon

after this remark that she broke up with him. She referred to it as “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” Helen confided that David also believed that she was “prone to violence” since Helen’s mother’s illness often resulted in violent behaviour. Helen did not say if she ever behaved violently in the relationship with David. David believed it was genetic and thus inherited by Helen. It is not clear, but Helen hints that David himself was violent.

And so he would push my buttons and provoke me so that he could use his own violent tendencies to show who was dominant, but I'm much smarter than him so I quit letting him affect me.

David also belittled Helen. She reported that he was not talented in the “fix-it” category, leaving many repairs for her to make. She proudly boasts that she is a “tom-boy”, talented in areas where stereotypically women are not. Helen explained, “I know how to fix cars and some other things that girls don’t normally know.” But David found this an affront to his “manliness” and instead of praising Helen’s talent, would scorn her accomplishments.

Helen finally found the strength to leave David. Helen confessed that she wished she had ended the relationship before she did, because the change that she had undergone during her years with him had turned her into a “very ugly person” and “very, very unhappy”. That was the state Helen was in when she and the high-school girlfriend decided to take a vacation in Mexico.

Helen left the decision of where in Mexico they would holiday to her girlfriend. The choice had been between either Mazatlan or Cabo San Lucas. Helen had not been to

either place and was anxious to see both. So somewhat randomly, the choice was made and Helen and her high-school friend were off to Cabo San Lucas for a ten-day excursion into the sea and sun of Baja California. Once there Helen “fell in love instantly” – with both Cabo San Lucas and Roberto. She was captured by the warmth and “magic” of Mexico. She referred to it as her “paradise” and insisted, after travelling all through Mexico, that only in Los Cabos did she find this sort of aura. There was not anything in particular that Helen could identify that gave her this feeling. It was like the Mexican folk tales that proclaimed, “Once the dust of Mexico has settled on your heart, you will find peace in no other land.”

Like most of the vacationers in Cabo San Lucas, Helen and her girlfriend spent their days at the beach, swimming in the warm sea water and lazily sunbathing. In the evenings they would walk through the streets of Cabo, going for dinner and then later seeking out an exciting bar for dancing. It was during one of those evenings out on the town that Helen met Roberto. He was part of a dance show at a local nightclub. His routine, Helen recalls favourably, included many “Latino” dances. After the dance show, Roberto and Helen started talking. From that night on, Helen went to see the show every night. And during the days when Roberto was not working, he was with Helen and her friend on the beach. They hit it off amazingly well and Helen was convinced that she was in love. And apparently Roberto thought the same because after that one week of knowing each other, they were already talking about Helen moving to Cabo San Lucas.

Helen maintained that she would have considered moving to Cabo even if there

had been no Roberto. Helen said that her primary concern was being able to work in Mexico. When Roberto reassured her that it would not be a problem, Helen jumped at the opportunity. Though her parents were apprehensive about the move, suspicious of her new-found love, Helen maintains they supported her decision. Helen notes that her parents rarely interfered in her life after she turned eighteen, which was when she moved in with her first boyfriend. Helen's sister was also supportive. Many others thought that Helen was "bloody crazy". Her decision was quickly made and friends and some family felt that she had not thought it through carefully enough. But Helen said, "I'm really a hopeless romantic at heart and always will be." So she moved to Cabo to be with Roberto. That was in 1991.

When I first met Helen, in September 1994, she had married Roberto and borne him a child, Patrick, five months earlier. Roberto and Helen were both working at the Giggling Marlin, performing a dance show. The Giggling Marlin is a popular and very lively nightclub in Cabo San Lucas, which draws large crowds nightly for both dinner and dancing. Roberto was the "star" of the dance show, but the act also included two other young Mexican men and Helen. The dances that Roberto performed, and taught to one or two female members of the crowd, were very provocative. This type of dancing required full body contact. Roberto and Helen made a wonderful dance team. Helen had done dance training in California, in pursuit of an acting career, and it showed on the dance floor. In addition, she and Roberto spent many hours practising. But when Roberto asked the audience for volunteers, of which there were usually many, the act could

become quite humorous. It seemed that women watching the show found Roberto very seductive. He was the sexy, Mexican lover that all of them wanted to love, or at least it seemed that way. He would invite one or two women to dance with him while the audience looked on. These women, however, were inexperienced dancers for the most part. Roberto would do his locally famous “boob grab” (where he ran his hands over their breasts, often adding a little squeeze) and then spin them, dip them, and twirl them around endlessly. Often the women would slip, or trip, and no doubt Roberto suffered from many a bruised toe. The audience would watch in awe with smiles ear to ear, amazed I think by Roberto’s dancing skills but also because each night another vacationing woman would let Roberto fondle her breasts in front of the large crowd. Each dance ended with him and the female partner doing a tango across the dance floor, Roberto aggressively grabbing the woman’s face, directing it upwards so that she could not see where she were going. After the final dance, a popular American country and western song (“My Achy, Breaky Heart”) would come on and Roberto would invite everyone in the audience to start dancing, at which point a crowd of women would rush to dance with Roberto, many sliding American dollar bills into his pockets and down his pants.

While this part of the act went on, Helen circled through the audience with a large straw sombrero that she used as a basket, collecting tips from the audience members who were not slipping them to Roberto personally. On one occasion I asked Helen if it ever bothered her that Roberto had so many women longing for him and flirting with him so

obviously. In response, Helen answered that it was all part of the show. She did not feel threatened by it in any way.

Roberto and Helen had not always been a pair at the Giggling Marlin. When Helen first returned to Cabo to live with Roberto the summer was approaching, and thus the tourist season was ending. Roberto, like many others living in Los Cabos, depends on the tourist crowds to make a living. The end of tourist season leaves many Mexicans in the Los Cabos areas unemployed. So after marrying, Roberto and Helen moved to the US in search of employment, which increased Helen's family's suspicion. Helen said that her parents thought that Roberto "wanted to latch on [to her] as his meal ticket into the States."¹ Roberto managed to find a job immediately and that helped alleviate the concern of Helen's family. But after eight months in California Roberto and Helen found they were miserable and so they returned to Mexico. But because Roberto had left some "unfinished business" in Cabo San Lucas, which Helen does not elaborate on, he insisted they go on tour through mainland Mexico².

Though Helen was not pleased with Roberto's decision to bring his male dancers from Cabo, because, as she saw it, they were "the biggest group of bozos you've ever met", she did have a good time touring through Mexico. Her dislike for the other dancers did not prevent her from enjoying the dancing and the touring. She recalled fond memories of people they met along the way, in particular when she was learning Spanish.

Learning how to speak Spanish on the street was a lot of fun. The people really like to hear you try. Here people joke a lot at one another's expense, but everyone knows it's all in fun. They used to tease me about

my Spanish to no end. It was so much fun.

Helen had other fond memories of travelling through mainland Mexico. She, like many other foreign women, drew a lot of attention because of her fair complexion. Her strawberry blonde hair and almost translucent white skin were an oddity in Mexico, and the dark Mexican men understandably found it captivating.³

In Mexico, I am treated like royalty. I have a blonde [fair] complexion and blue eyes. I've also lived in Acapulco, Ixtapa, Manzanillo, and Oaxaca. They called me "the girl of Gold" in those places!

Helen found the attention flattering, unlike many women who find the Mexican men's direct and candid manner coarse and bothersome. It seemed that Helen had little difficulty dealing with Mexican men. Her strong will showed through and the Mexican men that I saw her interact with, usually at the nightclub, respected her. In Acapulco during their tour Helen had taught dance to 30 young Mexican men at a restaurant/nightclub called Paradise. She did not recall experiencing any difficulties with them. Instead she commented, "I had the best time with those guys!"

Eventually she and Roberto returned to Cabo San Lucas in order to settle down. Roberto made a deal with the management of the Giggling Marlin for them to perform nightly. The show became very popular and was quite a success. After the show each night at the Giggling Marlin, Helen would take their son Patrick home to their apartment while Roberto stayed around the bar. During the show Patrick was babysat at the Giggling Marlin by various people. For approximately two months while I was there Maggie, another expatriate whose Mexican boyfriend was one of the other dancers,

would babysit Patrick. This was done as “a favour” (with no pay) initially, and inevitably ended when Maggie began to feel taken advantage of. As one can imagine of a nightclub, the music was very loud. Patrick became ill for a short period with an ear infection, at which time the doctor told Helen she should not have him at the bar with the loud music because it was very hard on his newly formed ear drums⁴. But because Helen and Roberto could not afford a babysitter, they were forced to continue bringing him nightly to the bar. However, Helen did try to keep him farther from the noise centre. Once Maggie quit babysitting, Patrick would be watched by various other friends of Helen and Roberto. The show lasted under an hour, so it was not that difficult to find someone.

Helen and Roberto’s apartment was quite nice in comparison to many of the other Mexican homes in Los Cabos. The building, owned by an American woman, had six apartments, bachelors and one-bedrooms and for the most part were rented to Americans and Canadians. Roberto and Helen’s was a small one-bedroom apartment, on one level. There was a small kitchen and a living room separated by only a counter. On each of my visits, the apartment was cluttered with clothes. One had to manoeuvre oneself around so as not to step on any of the clothes that were scattered across the floor. But the thing that one first noticed when entering their apartment was the stench of urine, which I assumed was from baby diapers. The apartment was kept dark, the drapes kept drawn. This is, of course, a way of keeping the hot sun from penetrating into the apartment but it contributed to a dismal feeling.

I rarely saw Helen outside of work or her home. Since she was Patrick’s primary

caregiver, she was usually at home with him. She did not frequent the beach in search of a suntan. Her skin complexion remained pale. It did not seem to me that Helen had many friends. Maggie, who baby-sat occasionally, had befriended her but there were few others. Her time was almost exclusively spent with Roberto and Patrick.

Roberto, on the other hand, free of childcare restraints, was often seen around town. After the show, when Helen went home, Roberto would remain at the bar with the other male dancers, mingling with the tourists, primarily female. And when things slowed down at the Giggling Marlin, which they usually did around eleven o'clock, he could be seen at the Squid Roe until the wee hours of the morning. Though Roberto had a history of unsuccessful relationships – he had six children with five different women (including Helen's son Patrick) – Helen was convinced that Roberto remained monogamous with her. She asserted that Roberto was “not at all the stereotype of a macho Mexican”, rather, Roberto was “very romantic, [and] very sensitive”. From this and other conversations with Helen, it seemed that Helen's idea of the stereotypical Mexican man, the “macho Mexican”, was an aggressive, domineering man. Roberto does not fit into that category for Helen, although I would disagree in some sense. Although he did not fight with other men nor did he physically abuse Helen, I found his dance performances to be aggressive.

There was something unsettling about the nightly dance show. Every time I saw it, which was probably more than twenty times in total, I was intrigued by it. Roberto seemed to gain power from the nightly shows, to have all these young and old, beautiful

rich girls desiring him. He swung them around sometimes aggressively, almost cruelly, making them look like fools at times in front of watching friends or family. He fondled their breasts, a most intimate act, and they in turn would run their hands over Roberto's upper body and his buttocks, sometimes coming dangerously close to his groin. For these North American women, and most of the vacationing men, being on holiday was a time to "let loose". Inhibitions are dropped and people behave more freely than they would if they were at home. Though they would have seen nothing wrong or inappropriate with their behaviour, it is safe to say that their behaviour would have confirmed the already smeared reputation of Western women as being "loose". Though Roberto never said as much, I suspect that he had little respect for North American women. I wonder if he held anything for them besides contempt. Interaction between Helen and Roberto in public was cordial at best; at worst, it was rude and contemptuous. It was not the loving relationship that one would expect from a newly married couple.

I have mentioned earlier that at the end of the dance between Roberto and a female volunteer from the audience, Roberto would tango across the dance floor, aggressively grabbing the woman's face and forcing it upwards, which made it almost impossible for the woman to resist. The tango ended with Roberto dipping the woman, again aggressively. Roberto thoroughly played upon the image of the "macho Mexican", being both the romantic and sensual man that Helen perceived him to be and the dominant man who told you what to do (or physically forced you, like during the tango)⁵. Though Helen might argue that it was "part of the act", there were other indications that

suggested that Roberto had little respect for North American women⁶.

While Helen was at home caring for their child, Roberto was often sexually engaged with other women. Roberto had a very good friend in the apartment complex where I lived. Paul and I became friends also, not great but once in a while he would drop by my apartment and ask me to join him and his business partner for dinner. On a few occasions Paul dropped by and asked me if he could hang out at my place for awhile. When I asked him why, he explained that his place was “occupied”. I questioned him further, not really understanding what he was saying. He answered honestly, though somewhat sheepishly, that Roberto once in a while “borrowed” his apartment to entertain women in. Naively, I did not believe he was serious and insisted he tell me the truth. But he maintained that Roberto would bring women over to his apartment to engage in sexual activities with them if for some reason they could not go to the woman’s hotel. Paul noted that it was never the same woman. It varied from week to week. Paul said that it happened all the time. Roberto was continually unfaithful in his marriage with Helen. Paul was not my only source regarding Roberto’s infidelities. Maggie, the woman who babysat Patrick occasionally, was visited by numerous friends from California whom she would always take to watch the show. One of those female friends, Lucy, also slept with Roberto. I was quite surprised by this and asked Maggie if her friend did not worry about catching some sort of disease? Apparently not, because months later, Lucy returned and again had sexual relations with Roberto. And at Christmas when Helen returned to the states with Patrick to spend the holidays with her parents, Roberto had another American

woman stay with him in their one-bedroom, one-bed, apartment.

Interestingly enough, Helen revealed that she desired the “traditional” roles of mother and wife. She had on two separate occasions told me that she was not a supporter of feminist issues. She felt that “women’s lib [had] ruined everything.” Helen’s preferred lifestyle was not to work but instead to raise and care for her children. Helen said that she desired this role, yet she is employed in a non-traditional sector of work, even though female dancers in bars (like those in the sex industry) often face discrimination from mainstream society. They are both objectified and taken advantage of by employers who pay them very low wages. For Helen, though, maybe it was in part satisfying her dream of being in Hollywood. Each night she performed in front of large crowds.

Helen said that once she realized she was able to work in Mexico, she did not hesitate moving there. Work was an important issue in her decision to move to Cabo. But, in fact, Helen was illegally working in Mexico. She did not hold an FM-3, the Mexican working visa, which would allow her to work legally in Mexico. Due to the type of work she and Roberto did, Helen was able to avoid any trouble with the Mexican immigration. For the most part, she and Roberto relied on tips for their income and did not declare this income. Later I discovered that in the beginning, when Helen and Roberto first started working at the Giggling Marlin, they were not paid at all⁷. They worked for tips alone. Eventually, when the dance act became quite popular and drew people into the bar to see the show itself, Roberto began to receive a salary but Helen

never did. She relied on Roberto's income and tips from the audience. Later Helen began teaching aerobics classes out of a studio in a home of fellow expatriates in Pedregal. The aerobics classes were attended by a group of expatriate women and became increasingly popular. Unfortunately for Helen, immigration found out and showed up one day, asking to see Helen's working papers. Though no legal action was taken against her, she was required to stop teaching the aerobics classes. Helen was then again forced to depend upon Roberto for all financial resources.

Helen thought that Mexican men were attracted to Western women "because of our willingness to work"; she noted that "the times call for dual income". Whether or not the Mexican man wanted his wife to work was irrelevant because they *needed* the income, especially in a place like Cabo San Lucas where the prices of food and accommodation are very high in comparison to other parts of Mexico. And as Helen revealed (at least some of the time), she wanted to work. But she did have a problem with the way things ran in Mexico.

Unfortunately about 90% of the time the husband is not willing to pick up his 50% of household and child rearing responsibilities. I will tell you that even with the influence of American culture on him, Roberto still reverts back to 'the man has his position and duty and the woman has hers'. In the states, women and men share practically everything -- finances, chores, etc. Here it is a little one-sided. The women definitely work harder than the men. A lot more lies on their shoulders. The majority of Mexican men are very sexist. Women work, have kids, clean, cook, pay the bills, everything!

As noted earlier, Helen insisted that "women's lib" had gone "overboard in the USA" but concomitantly she felt the Mexican system was unfair to women, that too

much was expected of them. Helen did not explain what she meant by “overboard” and perhaps if she had, it would have clarified her ambivalence. It appeared, though she did not directly say as much, that Helen resented the amount of work Roberto expected her to do. She did the dance show each night with him, plus she was expected to care for Patrick, their son, all the time, and she was expected to clean and cook for Roberto. As I noted earlier, Helen did not seem too concerned with cleaning, and like many people in Cabo San Lucas, both Mexicans and foreigners, they ate out most of the time. Perhaps, this was Helen’s own way of resisting the burden that she felt she had been unfairly given. It is not clear what Helen actually wants. Maybe she wants the best of both worlds. She implies as much towards the end of our interview when she comments: “I also think that in the future we will see the positive effect our influence has on each other [American and Mexican]. Hopefully we’ll reach a balance.”

Interpretive Analysis

In light of Helen's admission that her self-esteem was very low after two unsuccessful relationships, it seems understandable, if not predictable, that she found Mexico very appealing. Though Helen was generally positive about her experiences, it was possible to see that Helen's life was a bit more complicated than she let on. Helen was open about her relationships and experiences, and was eager to answer any of my questions; however, she rarely spoke directly about herself and Roberto. But that was the one aspect of her life that I was witness to, at least in part.

What was Helen searching for in Mexico? The terms she used to describe Los Cabos are perhaps the best indication: "aura", "paradise", and "magical". Helen told me that she had found her own little paradise in Los Cabos, that there was something magical about the place that she had not found anywhere else. She also told me that she was "a romantic at heart", using that in part to explain why she had moved to Mexico to be with Roberto. These descriptive terms are similar to those used by other women, including Elizabeth who referred to the *Celestine Prophecy* (Redfield 1994) when describing what it was that drew her to Mexico. They are, as Torgovnick (1990) suggests, associated with a certain notion of primitiveness or Otherness. After Patrick's birth, Helen's mother came to Cabo San Lucas for a visit. Helen remarked, "At least now they don't think I live in a jungle!" Helen's reference to a "jungle" I think refers to the wild and untamed as opposed to the tropics

(because I am assuming that since her family lives in Arizona, they are aware that Baja California is a dry, hot desert). It seems that Helen, like Elizabeth, believes that in Los Cabos one can be closer to the spiritual and the natural. She had found the “paradise” promised by the tourism brochures. And, as was the case for Elizabeth and Erin, a romantic relationship with a Mexican man was part of that promised paradise.

Helen’s parents held other stereotypical ideas about Mexicans which were reflected in their attitude towards Roberto. Helen’s mother’s response after meeting Roberto was, “You didn’t tell me how cute he was!” Helen thought that her mother assumed he would be what she called the “greasy Mexican” from Mexico. She adds, though, that her parents never disliked him because he was Mexican. Helen’s sister is married to a Chicano and they accepted that without problem. But Helen notes that “they held this stereotype of what a Mexican from Mexico is like.” The idea that Mexicans living in Mexico are different, and perhaps less desirable, seems to be another pervasive stereotype in the US, even among Mexican-Americans themselves. Cisneros (1991) documents this in her short story “Never Marry a Mexican”. A Chicano herself, she explains that while growing up she learned that Mexicans from *el otra lada* were not the same as Mexicans living in the US, even though it was only the tortilla curtain that separated them. Helen’s parents also believed that Roberto’s only interest in Helen was in order to migrate to the United States. They thought their suspicion was confirmed when he and Helen moved there but then the couple returned to Mexico because they were unhappy in the States.

My impression of Roberto was not the one shared by the foreign female tourists or

the one held by Helen. I was immediately suspicious of his character, suspecting that he was a womanizer by the way he both spoke and looked at women. My suspicions were later verified by a number of sources, including Roberto himself. Other than observation and brief encounters at the Giggling Marlin, I had basically no interaction with Roberto. However, the day after one of my interviews with Helen, Roberto stopped by my apartment. He was obviously distressed and since I had company, two other expatriate women, Elizabeth and Maggie, he was hesitant to talk. But eventually he did, asking what I had told his wife. Though Roberto and I had never talked about his extramarital affairs, he was aware that I knew about them and he was deeply concerned that I might have told Helen about them. Though I did feel very sorry for Helen, I never said a word to her about Roberto. Nonetheless, Roberto remained very uneasy about my interviewing Helen. Up to that point, my suspicion of Roberto had been confirmed only by secondary sources. Roberto confirmed my suspicions.

Roberto, like Lewis's Sánchez character, Jesús, had been married a number of times (1963). He continued to spend time with his other families and to help them financially. At Christmas he opted to spend the holiday with his ex-wife Carmelita rather than Helen and their son Patrick. Roberto also pursued new sexual relations with women, particularly North American tourists. As I pointed out in chapter four, Ingham found that many Mexican women assume that their husbands will pursue other women for sexual relations (1986:61). However, one might assume that North American women, because of different cultural attitudes, would not accept it so openly. I would argue in response to both these ideas, that

the issue is equally complex for both Mexican and North American women and that the level of acceptance varies, not culturally, but individually. Helen did not comment directly on Roberto's fidelity. Though Helen never let on that she knew that Roberto was unfaithful, it would have been hard in a small town like Cabo San Lucas for her not to know. And since then, she and Roberto have separated, forcing Helen to move back to Arizona to rely on her parents for financial and emotional support. Though I cannot confirm it, I would not be surprised if their separation was a result of Roberto's infidelity.

Roberto's extramarital affairs were disrespectful to Helen but also to the foreign vacationing women⁸. If Roberto did see Western women as being sexually "loose" (and I am hypothesizing here), then where did Helen fit in? Since Helen was the mother of his child and the woman he married (*one* of the women he married), I presumed that he did not view her in the same light as he did the female tourists. But Helen's role was a paradoxical one. While she was both mother and wife, and the caregiver to their child, she was also a dancer at a bar. Though Helen did not share the same role as Roberto in the show, she was a key figure in an erotic dance show. I overheard young men in the audience say: "She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." Helen played two female gender roles in a sense. She was the traditional mother and wife but she was also the sexual being. However, Helen did not play her role as a sexual and beautiful women except in the dance routine. Unlike most foreign women in Mexico, Helen dressed quite conservatively. She often wore long pants, both during the day and while she was dancing. Other expatriate women dressed according to the somewhat less restricted North American standards in short shorts and tank tops,

baring legs and arms and sometimes their navels (and sometimes less than North American standards, like wearing swimsuit tops around town). Helen seemed to respect that Mexico had different standards of dressing than the United States and willingly conformed to those standards.

Helen was financially dependent upon Roberto since she did not have a working permit for Mexico. She received tips from the nightly show but those were split with the other dancers. Helen, without an income, might have felt somewhat powerless in Mexico. Unlike Mexican women who are able at least legally to seek work, Helen was forced to rely on Roberto. As Behar notes, “work outside the home is presented as an important source of personal strength for women”(1986:280). As illustrated in chapters three and four, work is an important part of these women’s identity. Both Erin and Elizabeth also sought work in Mexico. Without work, and the subsequent financial income, women are often left powerless, unable to leave miserable situations. When Roberto and Helen separated, she was forced to return to the US because she had no financial support in Mexico even though she had maintained that she would stay in Mexico if she and Roberto separated. When she left him, she also left her job. The two came as a package deal. Though in Canada (and presumably in the USA) Roberto is by law required to give child-support to Helen, in Mexico he is not, which forced Helen to return to the safety net of her parents. Helen’s economic dependency on Roberto may have formed or strengthened a relation of power between them where Helen was under the control of Roberto. Without an income of her own or free access to Roberto’s, Helen’s freedom would have been curtailed. She would not have

been able to leave Mexico without that economic support of her parents in Arizona. And indeed, when Roberto decided to spend the Christmas holidays with his ex-wife, Helen called home and asked her parents if they would buy her and Patrick a trip home. Unlike some women who flew home regularly, Helen could not. She ends up in a relationship, similar to the one with David, where she is separated from her family.

The issue of control seems particularly pertinent to this relationship. Roberto's dance routine seemed to be about power and control, rather than entertainment. As mentioned earlier, the tango that Roberto danced with a member from the audience always seemed to be particularly aggressive in nature. He was able to dominate the North American women by twirling them around, making them look foolish, by sexually assaulting them in front of a crowd of people. From a Mexican male's point of view, this must have been some thrill. Behar notes that to call a woman *la mujer del gusto*, a woman that likes sex, is the ultimate calumny in a "society where church teachings and the dominant gender ideology make women feel that they are not supposed to admit they get any pleasure from sex (1993:281)." Along the same line, when Roberto publicly gropes at these women's breasts, he perhaps feels immense satisfaction that he can denigrate them and then also have sexual relations with some of them which might be perceived as another form of denigration. After dominating them on the dance floor, Roberto can dominate them in the bedroom, or as the case may be, the hotel room.

Roberto's control over the female tourists also affected his and Helen's relationship. She was expected to stay home and care for their child Patrick while he went out to pursue

these sexual relations. She also had to watch the nightly ritual where Roberto slid his hands over someone else's body. Although she told me that the routine did not bother her because she knew it was just an act, I suspect it might have. Her behaviour towards Roberto was occasionally marked by an aggressive tone and manner. As I mentioned, she was forced to rely on Roberto economically since, like Elizabeth, she did not have an FM-3, thus increasing the control Roberto had over her. But as I suggested, Helen probably had ways of resisting the control like not cleaning the house when she was expected to. Helen's role in the dance routine may have been both a positive and negative influence on their relationship. The latter because Helen's position was much like the female tourist; she was the passive player in the tango. But on the other hand, she was an important player in the dance routine. The show as it existed needed a female dancer and Helen was responsible for some of its success. Roberto was not as aggressive with Helen as he was with the tourist women, nor did he fondle her breasts. Male tourists were attracted to her beauty, which Roberto must have been aware of. It is possible that Helen's significant contribution to the nightly dance gave her status in the relationship even though she was not paid for it.

Nonetheless, Helen seemed unhappy. The dream that she originally pursued in Mexico, the romance and the magic, had faded. For the most part, it seemed that Helen was unable to fulfil her dream because her relationship with Roberto foundered. Culturally different gender ideologies may have contributed to the demise.

Helen and their child Patrick now live in Arizona. I suspect that even though Helen thought that she would stay in Mexico in the event of a breakup between her and Roberto,

when the time came she realized that she was financially dependent upon him. Helen returned in March 1996 to talk to Roberto after finding out that she was again pregnant with his child. At that time, she found out that Roberto had also impregnated another woman in Cabo San Lucas. I do not know what resulted from that conversation.

Chapter Six

Nicole

Nicole had lived in Mexico for ten years when I first met her; her father was Mexican; she held Mexican citizenship; and yet, whenever Nicole spoke Spanish, it was with a horrible American accent. She had been raised in California by her wealthy American mother. Nicole's maternal grandmother had owned homes both in the US and in Acapulco, Mexico, and the family would move back and forth between the two. But her husband left her and started a new family with his new wife, leaving Nicole's grandmother alone with her children. Nicole's mother was sent to a private Catholic school in Cuernavaca where she had no contact with her father, and very little with her mother. Though Nicole's maternal grandmother had ample wealth, there was little love, especially in the private Catholic schools. When Nicole's mother was just sixteen years old, still in high school, she met Nicole's father, whom Nicole describes as "forty-one years old and a playboy". Nicole theorized that her mother was continually searching for the loving father figure that she had lost as a child and believed that she had found this in Nicole's father. But the romance was short-lived. Nicole's mother got pregnant shortly after they became involved. They married and soon after, Nicole was born, the first of three children her mother would eventually give birth to. Within a year of Nicole's birth, her father began locking her and her mother in the home so they were unable to leave. In addition, Nicole's mother was being physically

abused. She sought care from a physician, “a prominent doctor”. With him, Nicole’s mother found the care and attention that she was not receiving from her husband. Though he was married with two sons, they began to have an affair and Nicole’s mother became pregnant again. She left Nicole’s father, realizing, as Nicole put it, that he was a “total bastard”. The doctor, in love with Nicole’s mother, offered to leave his wife, to take care of Nicole’s mother, but she did not want him to. Nicole’s mother ended the relationship with the doctor shortly after the birth of her second child, another girl. From there, she moved home, back to her mother’s house in California.

So now she has my sister. She leaves this guy [the doctor] - she doesn't want to deal with him and she meets this guy, who is a nightmare, who's a singer -- who's from Canada actually, a very good friend of Frank Sinatra's, you know, a slow singer, a jazz singer, She meets him at another party of my grandmother's and he sees my sister and I in a crib at night, falls in love with us and just falls in love with my mother and says I want to marry you -- and she does. And she has my brother.

Though Nicole’s mother gets swept off her feet, this marriage is not much more successful than the first and ends after five years. By then, Nicole’s mother is only twenty-five years old. She has been married and divorced twice and has three children each with a different father.

It is interesting to hear Nicole tell this story of her mother and her upbringing because in many ways it parallels Nicole’s life. Nicole also grows up without a father. Nicole said she had no recollection of him as a child, for she was not even two years old when her mother left him. Though she lived with her mother, it was of little comfort to Nicole. She explains:

It was very difficult growing up with my mother. And I don't know if she had always blamed it on me, the situation with my father or, if it was just because she was so young and she was miserable. I can understand, now, very easily why we never got along. We never did. And when I was about 15 she kicked me out of the house. Because they wanted to kick me out of the school, high school because I dyed my hair red. It was such a straight school, you know, -- they were like either you go to Gonzales in Malibu [another high school] or leave.

Nicole's mother chose the latter and sent her to live with her father, a man she had neither seen nor heard from since her mother left him fourteen years earlier, "not even a letter, not a phone call, nothing". Nicole said she had no idea how she was going to recognize him at the airport, she had never seen a photograph of him. But she did not need to because he recognized her immediately. As she walked off the plane a "total hippy walks up, really old, long-haired hippy, and he's all 'welcome to Acapulco'." And that was Nicole's father. Nicole remembered that he was very emotional, full of affection, wanting to hug her with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks. He seemed delighted to see his estranged daughter after so many years. Nicole was particularly moved by his emotion.

Nicole experienced quite a change when she moved to Acapulco. Her mother had been very "strict", not allowing Nicole to drink or smoke as a teenager, like most North American parents, but also demanding that each night she was home before dusk and never was she allowed to date. In Acapulco Nicole arrived to a party at her father's house, welcoming Nicole to her new home in Mexico. Nicole recalled:

We get to his house and he's got this whole party waiting for me and it's full of people. And they're doing cocaine, and smoking pot. It was the first time I had tequila --I woke up the next morning with my head literally in the toilet. Very, very sick. I didn't drink for like a year after that. It was such a

horrible experience. There were parties in the night, all the time, drinking, smoking. – I couldn't stand the smell of pot, it made me sick. Couldn't stand drugs.

Nor could Nicole stand living with her father. Four months later, just sixteen years old, Nicole moved out on her own. She was fortunate enough to get a job as a model and began working in Mexico City, flying back and forth between there and her home in Acapulco. One weekend she and a group of other models flew to Puerto Vallarta for a photo shoot. After three days of working, the young models decided to spend a few extra days enjoying the sun and sea. In the evenings they went to Carlos and Charlie's to dine and dance. During her first evening out Nicole met Emilio, the man who would become her future husband¹. Nicole claimed that Emilio fell in love with her immediately. As she walked in the door he declared that she would be his wife. She told him that she did not return the feeling. She thought he was "some idiot jerk". But Emilio persisted, and night after night he did his best to court her. He paid for their dinners, their drinks, and begged Nicole to dance with him.

And from that night to the end of our trip he never stopped bothering me. I drank orange juice the entire time, my girlfriends drank massive amounts of alcohol – he paid for the entire cheque every night we were there. He would ask me when I would leave the restaurant – are you going to dance, can I join you? I would say - it's a free world, I really don't give a shit what you do. I was really rude to him, extremely cruel. I was really mean. He would come and sit next to me and bring up conversations with me and I would just ignore him totally. And he'd say do you want to dance and I'd say no and I'd turn around and tell my girlfriend let's go dance. He'd just sit there like an idiot. This is Emilio. And then, I left. That was it. I never thought twice about this guy. I never paid attention [to him] while I was there.

But Nicole returned six months later. The life of modelling was wearing her down.

She wanted a break from modelling, or what she referred to as the “meat market”. So she went back to Puerto Vallarta to rent a condominium with two other model friends. Three days after arriving, Nicole and her friends return to Carlos and Charlie’s. Though Nicole claims to have forgotten Emilio, he had not forgotten her. Nicole recalled that as she walked in, he grabbed her arm and exclaimed, “Where the hell have you been? I am never going to let you out of my sight again.” The next day Emilio showed up at Nicole’s house asking her out for breakfast, the day after that it was lunch, the day after that it was dinner. Each day Emilio would show up, asking Nicole out again and again. Nicole asserted that he never left her alone. Nicole said that they became very good friends but that Emilio’s interest was still romantic. After six months, Emilio asked Nicole to move in with him.

So finally, he didn't like where I was going to move – with another girlfriend somewhere, and he didn't like where I was moving and he asked me to move in with him. By this time we had become really good friends and I'm like, you're out of your mind. And he goes no, just let me make love to you - let me show you this could really work. I was really against it. But it happened one night [they spent the night together]. I don't know - I don't know what I was thinking. I really don't because I really just liked him as a friend. You know I didn't want to lose that. And yet I didn't know how much longer he would have been satisfied with just that.

Nicole finally agreed to move in with Emilio and she admits that she grew to love him but added that she was never “in love” with him. He became her best friend. She became very dependent on him. With hindsight, Nicole thinks that he wanted her to become dependent on him. She believes that Emilio wanted her not to work, wanted her to live with him, so that she would be completely dependent on him and he would be able to take care of her. Dependency was not something Nicole was used to. She had been living on her own

since she was sixteen, living a relatively fast-paced life. Nicole took pride in her independence. She told me that she told Emilio that she was “wild and incredibly bull-headed” and that she was not “some weak pathetic little thing”. He told her that *that* was what he loved about her. Nicole trusted Emilio for, as she explained, even though he knew her, he still loved her. Nicole liked living with him. He gave her the space she needed, “not smothering” her with affection and love. She said it was “just the perfect amount, the right amount.”

Nicole got pregnant while living with Emilio. She confessed that she really did not want to have the baby².

I was eighteen. I wanted to get an abortion and, of course, he didn't. Freak me out. And ah, I really came close to doing it... I actually went to the States. He was just miserable. He was just telling me - please don't do this, you know, please don't do this. And I said, 'well I don't want to get married'. He's 'fine, fine, fine'. If that's the way it's going to be then we don't. Because he wanted to get married. I didn't. So I said OK. I thought, I'd had an abortion before and something really weird happened. I just thought, even if I wanted to I just couldn't have an abortion. I felt like I had to have this baby. And we did.

Nicole gave birth to a baby boy and six months later she and Emilio wed in the US. Nicole's fondest memories from the wedding was the mariachi band and her mother's embrace, the first that she could remember. She maintains that she did not want to get married but Emilio and her mother were pressuring her to for the baby. She said that she married him simply because she “couldn't stand it [the pressure] anymore”. Nicole confessed, “The minute I signed that paper was the biggest mistake of my life.” Emilio ceased to be the man she knew before. Nicole saw a sudden and drastic change, a change

that she did not like. Emilio became very possessive of Nicole. He suddenly would not let her go anywhere. He asked her numerous questions regarding her whereabouts, who she was with, when she would be home. She was allowed out once a week but only with the wives of Emilio's friends and co-workers and it had to be in the restaurant where Emilio worked so that "they could watch us [them]."

Nicole explained that in the beginning it was acceptable because she did not want to be anywhere else. She liked being where Emilio was. She had no interest in anyone but him. But Nicole began to feel more and more confined in the relationship. She soon resented the lack of freedom that Emilio had imposed on her life. After being with Emilio for two years, Nicole had an affair with another man. She explained that it was "an animal attraction thing". A relationship based on sexual pleasure.

And then the jealousy started. The paranoia started. If somebody would even look at me, he'd threaten them. Possessiveness. Even over friends, it doesn't have to be over a relationship. Even over friends they are possessive. That's when the problems started, and I, very honestly, had an affair -- which few people know. I had an affair with an incredibly beautiful man who was young, who was about the same age as myself. Mexican. It was a strange circumstance. I had been with Emilio for like two years. And it was like one of those animal attraction things. Like, love at first sight, across a crowded room. He was in love with me. And he was incredibly beautiful, intelligent, good family -- everything was perfect. I should have married that guy instead. That's what I should have done. I made the biggest mistake of my life - I didn't marry that guy.

Nicole presumed that Emilio never found out about the affair but perhaps his sudden jealousy was an indication that he suspected that Nicole was having an extramarital affair. During the same time, Emilio was offered his own restaurant to manage by Carlos Anderson,

one of the owners of the restaurant chain “Carlos and Charlie’s”. He was given a choice of locations that ranged from Spain to Japan but Emilio wanted to remain in Mexico. Carlos Anderson suggested they try Cabo San Lucas. The three of them took a trip to check out the location and Nicole reports, “Emilio fell in love with the place.” Nicole on the other hand hated it. She admitted that she spent the entire three days in tears at the hotel because she knew that they would end up moving there. Nicole did not say but perhaps her anguish stemmed from the fact that her affair would end, or maybe it was that she would now be completely isolated from her friends on the mainland. But when Emilio came to her and asked what she thought about the move, she told him that she did not have the heart to stand in his way. She knew how much he wanted it. Carlos Anderson was giving him a great opportunity. As well as being manager, he would own shares and would eventually be able to become the main shareholder of that restaurant. Nicole told me that she felt she had no choice in the matter. She had to support him in his decision to move.

I was not at all happy about it. So, he had said to me, “what do you think?” and I said, “You know what, this is a good move for you. I can’t possibly tell you no.” I did it for him. He knew I hated it, hated the place. I had said, you know what, I can’t say no. So I went along with it. I had no other choice. I really didn’t. No woman would stand in the way of a good opportunity for her husband. So we moved here. I totally hate the place.

If Nicole was unhappy with their relationship in Puerto Vallarta, she became desperate in Cabo San Lucas. The new business required constant attention from Emilio. He worked day and night so that Nicole rarely saw him. She said that the only reason he came home was to eat, sleep and shower. It was too much for Nicole to bear. She became very

lonely. I suspect her loneliness was less from missing Emilio than it was from missing her friends and lover.

Nicole understood that Emilio expected her to play a certain role in their marriage.

And she said that she played that role as best as she could.

I really tried. I did. I was a totally respectful wife. I would never talk to anybody. [As a result] everybody thought I was a snob. Emilio wouldn't let, wouldn't want people to come to my table, you know. I did the whole thing -- the whole wife-motherly thing.

Though she was entirely unsatisfied with the relationship, Nicole claims that she tried to uphold her end of the deal by being the kind of wife she thought was expected. She did not go out with other women, or men. She took care of their son Saúl. She took care of Emilio when he was home. As a result, Nicole isolated herself from the community where she might have made new friends. After almost three years Nicole decided she could not do it anymore. She went to Emilio and told him that she “couldn’t handle it anymore” and that she wanted to leave him. She explained to him that she wanted a husband again, a father for their child, a friend. She told him that if he thought he could change, she would return and give the marriage another try.

Nicole and her son Saúl moved to Mexico City and stayed there with friends. She confessed that she was miserable. She was continually crying and depressed. The entire time Emilio was calling her, asking her to come back, promising that he would change. After four months and with Christmas approaching, Nicole gave in. She returned to Cabo San Lucas with hopes that things would be different. She prayed that Emilio would spend less time at

work and more with her and Saúl. But after four months apart, Nicole suspected that Emilio might have been with other women while she was in Mexico City. So on returning she asked him if there was anything he wanted to tell her. Nicole wanted Emilio to be honest with her if he had any sexual relations while they were separated. She did not want to find out from someone else if Emilio had been with other women. Nicole explained that it had a lot to do with pride. She did not want to look “like an idiot”. Emilio denied any involvement, telling Nicole not to worry. But three days later Nicole found out that Emilio had in fact been dating other women.

Of course I found out he had been sleeping with more than a few people. A lot of people. So, that pissed me off. I thought, you know what, you could have just told me the truth. He's like - no it wouldn't have done any good. And I said, yah it would have - because, you know what, it's a lot worse when you find out from someone else, than if you'd told me yourself. So, I told him -- I'm leaving you - good bye. See you.

Nicole moved out, this time staying in Cabo San Lucas, and moved into an apartment building where she met a female friend, Jenny, who was in a similar situation. She was also a North American woman married to a Mexican man. Nicole explained that Jenny convinced Nicole to start going out, “to start living our [their] own lives.” Once Nicole started going out with Jenny she was able to meet more people, including men. Nicole engaged in three (or more³) informal relationships with Mexican and expatriate men. Nicole believed that Emilio did not know about these sexual relationships but in such a small town, it seemed unlikely that he would not have known.

Nicole insisted that these relationships meant nothing to her. Nicole maintained

emotional indifference to these relationships. However, she noted that each of the men had become particularly attached to her. She had, for example, broken Scott's heart.

No, no, Scott? – I ruined his life. According to him I ruined his life. Scott started getting really attached. Scott would like loan me his car, and we'd go out and we'd spend a lot of time at his house. And he'd cook dinners for me and he was really nice. I wasn't crazy about him, you know? I'm never really crazy about anybody. I have a really short attention span with people. I'm like, I just don't want to see you any more. I get bored really fast. From one day to another I just didn't want to see him any more. And, he got really hurt by that. To this day he blames me for his miserable life. That I ruined him for women because, you know what, he was a great guy, until after that. He went out with another girl friend of mine – and she said I had ruined him. He was a really sweet guy, then he became a total asshole. He'd been burned so badly that he had become a total jerk after that.

Nicole was equally unattached to the other men. Though Nicole was involved in these casual affairs, she told me that she was still depressed about her separation with Emilio. She added that she was actually “feeling guilty”. Emilio then started coming over more often to spend time with Saúl. Nicole thought that maybe he was beginning to feel guilty too. He started spending more time with Saúl and even tried to spend more time with Nicole. Things were going well. And as they began to see each other more often, Nicole started thinking about reconciling yet again. And then she got pregnant.

Emilio saw the pregnancy as an omen that they should get back together. Nicole claims that Emilio begged her to return, promising change and apologizing for not telling her the truth about the other women. Nicole agreed, hesitantly, and moved back in with Emilio; however, she declared that she knew it was a mistake almost immediately. Nicole was not prepared for the role of mother and wife again (and perhaps she never was). She

explained:

And I just knew it was the biggest mistake of my life. It was like, -- he was so happy when I was pregnant. It was like he wanted me to be pregnant for the rest of my life. You know what I mean? That typical barefoot and pregnant. He was happiest in our marriage when I was pregnant and at home and I couldn't go anywhere. And when I was pregnant that second time, I realized this is what he wants. This is really what he wants. He is so happy when I am fat and ugly and I can't go anywhere.

Nicole gave birth to their second son, Miguel, but remained miserable in her relationship with Emilio. She explained to me that she had a hard time dealing with Emilio's infidelities, even though she herself had done the same (or worse, because she and Emilio were not separated during her first affair in Acapulco). She could not forgive him. A big part of it for Nicole was pride. She felt humiliated that Emilio had been with other women. The issue seemed less to be that he was with someone else, than it was that other people knew he had been with other women, and that made Nicole look bad. She maintained that no one knew about her relationship with Scott⁴. Nicole believed that the affair was acceptable if it was discreet. So, unable to bear the humiliation and the situation with Emilio, she left him again. Nicole said that by that time, Emilio was feeling basically the same way. He too was tired of dealing with the relationship, so that when Nicole said she was leaving again, he said fine. Nicole told me that neither of them could stand the sight of the other.

That was the last of their marriage. What followed was a horrible separation and divorce. Nicole remained in the house with her two sons. Emilio moved out into a rented house, and his mother and sister, who had been living in Tijuana, moved in with him. Nicole did not care for Emilio's sister at all. Nicole claimed that Emilio's sister said that it should

have been her marrying him instead of Nicole. Nicole thought this type of sibling love was abnormal. She referred to Antonia as “weird” and “psychotic”. In Nicole’s opinion, Emilio simply replaced her with his sister Antonia.

In the beginning Emilio refused to divorce Nicole. He agreed to the separation, to move out, but refused the actual legal divorce. Nicole begged him. She was miserable. She explained that since everyone knew Emilio, she was unable to date anyone. Men did not want to date her because she was legally Emilio’s wife still. Nicole believed that Emilio’s high status in the community prevented other men from asking her out. When Nicole threatened that she would get a lawyer and divorce him, he simply laughed at her and told her she had no rights. Nicole, unfamiliar with divorce law in Mexico, believed Emilio at the onset. Eventually though, it became too much for her to bear and she went to get a lawyer anyway. The lawyer told her she did have rights and it would be no problem for her to get a divorce. She explained to Emilio that she simply wanted a divorce. She was not asking for alimony. However, she did want a house to live in (in the children’s name) and a car so that she could drive the kids to school. As well, she required child support. Nicole had no job to support herself so she was at the mercy of Emilio.

Emilio was furious that she had obtained a lawyer but agreed to an amicable divorce after talking to the lawyer. Nicole’s lawyer went about the standard procedure. Everything seemed to be going well until one weekend Emilio asked to take the boys. Nicole agreed and after three days she called Emilio to ask when he planned on bringing the children back. Emilio pleaded with Nicole to let him keep them a week and so she hesitantly agreed. But

when that week was up, the same situation arose: Emilio pleaded to keep them one more week. Nicole was a little leery but since they were on vacation she thought, why not, and Emilio pointed out that she had them all the time. Every three days or so Nicole would call Emilio and ask him to bring them back but Emilio would give another excuse. Finally after three weeks, Nicole decided to go pick up the kids herself.

I'm knocking on the door and nobody's answering the door. So, I open the door and it's open and I walk in and I hear this crying and his mother [has] locked my kids in the bathroom. She wasn't going to give them to me. His mother. She said - you're never going to have your kids again, we're keeping them, if you want them - go to hell. Whatever. She just went off on me. I had never had a problem, ever, with this woman before and all of a sudden she was like freaking out. So, I ended up going to the police. He had filed all these horrendous things against me - saying I was abusing the kids, I was neglecting them, that I was a whore, that I was an alcoholic. Everything you could possibly say about a person he said. I went to the police station [and] they told me he was what he was doing was totally illegal. They gave me six policemen, two patrol cars to go get my kids and by the time we got there, not even ten minutes later, they were gone. They were gone. For four days I didn't know where my kids were.⁵

Emilio eventually returned with the boys and things settled down. Emilio returned the boys to Nicole and the divorce proceeded, but not favourably for Nicole. Nicole explained that Emilio ended up with everything. Though officially they have joint custody of the boys, they live with Emilio because Nicole is unable to support them financially. She received no child support or alimony. Emilio was required to pay Nicole's rent for one year and he had to buy her a new car which he took his time doing. When I asked Nicole how this had happened, she declared that in Mexico "you can do anything with money." Nicole believed that Emilio had paid off the judge who was presiding over the case as well as other

officials involved. She told me that by bribing the judge, Emilio was able to get out of paying alimony and child support. Nicole told me that Emilio admitted this to her. She also described situations in which people came up to Emilio in front of her, asking for their payment for their role in the divorce. Emilio was a very wealthy Mexican. His restaurant, El Squid Roe, was *the* most popular hang-out in Cabo San Lucas. He had become the main shareholder, as Carlos Anderson had promised him, plus he now owned shares in the other Carlos and Charlie's restaurant in town. Both restaurants catered to North American tourists looking for a Mexican dinner (but not *too* Mexican) and a lively atmosphere where they could drink tequila and *cerveza* until the wee hours of the morning⁶. His business was extremely successful. When this interview took place, Nicole and Emilio had been officially divorced for just two months. She was obviously hurting from the separation and bitter divorce.

Nicole told me that she still hated Cabo San Lucas. She was one of the very few people who said they did not like living on the Baja peninsula. When I asked Nicole why she did not move, she replied that she could not take the children with her. Since the divorce, they lived with Emilio and his family (mother and sister). Two days a week Nicole had them overnight. They were very sweet boys. Saúl was eight years old and Miguel had just turned three. She was a very vociferous mother, continually yelling and screaming at the boys. Usually she spoke in English to them but Miguel always spoke in Spanish. Nicole complained that they had no respect for her, that they never listened to what she said. From what I witnessed this seemed to be true. The boys would rarely obey Nicole's wishes,

whether she was yelling or not. Nicole insisted that Emilio's sister told them not to listen to her. They were receiving mixed messages from each household. Nicole also complained that when she went to pick them up at Emilio's house, they were never prepared. They would not have a change of clean clothes. Nicole refused to go into Emilio's home when picking up the boys. On one occasion I went with Nicole to pick up the kids. Emilio's sister walked the kids out the door but neither she nor Nicole even looked at the other. This must have been very hard on the boys.

Nicole was searching for work but with no work experience except in modelling, no post-secondary education, and no money, it was difficult. I had heard her discuss opening a business with her friend Scott. I never inquired what it was since I assumed if it was, anything serious she would have told me. Nicole confessed to me that her mother would now send her money once in a while. But it was barely enough for Nicole to survive on. And once the year was up and Emilio was no longer paying her rent, she would be in trouble. She lived in a beautiful one-bedroom apartment five minutes from town (another obstacle without a car). The rent was \$550 US. Nicole however was very unhappy with this living arrangement. She found it too small (it was quite small, even for one person) and simply not up to her standards. She told me that since their divorce, Emilio had bought a home in Cabo Bello. This was an ocean-front community about ten minutes from Cabo San Lucas. The houses were primarily owned by foreigners who could afford the expensive prices in American dollars. Nicole was particularly bitter about Emilio's move there. Nicole, with obvious irritation, explained to me that while she was married to Emilio they had to live in the back

part of town. Now that they were divorced Emilio had bought an ocean-front home which was exactly what she had always wanted.

Nicole's standard of living had decreased since she divorced Emilio. However, Nicole had other strategies for surviving economically. After the divorce Nicole had started dating Fernando. Fernando was a wealthy young Mexican who owned two companies in Cabo San Lucas, a mailbox service (an American chain of private post-offices) and a condiments/catering service. Nicole had been dating Fernando for about six months at the time of the interview, but their relationship was tenuous. They had broken up a few times already. Fernando lived in a beautiful condominium on the Pacific side of Cabo San Lucas. When he and Nicole did anything together, Fernando always paid for everything. When Nicole was with Fernando she never had to worry about not having any cash. I do not know if Nicole consciously sought out someone of Fernando's status, but dating Fernando did let Nicole live in the style she was accustomed to. Knowing Nicole as I did, I do not think she would have been dating someone who had no money. But unfortunately for Nicole, this meant that again she was in a relationship where she was completely dependent upon her partner. And with Fernando, as with Emilio, she was unable to get cash. They bought her gifts and dinner but she never had her own source of money.

These gifts carried certain expectations with them, most notably sex. Like Emilio, Fernando also had ideas about how Nicole should and should not behave – ideas that were not shared by Nicole. These differences in opinion seemed to be the main cause of most of their arguments. I was witness to one fight just days before I left. A large group of us had

gone out for dinner to Carlos and Charlie's. Both Nicole and I had friends visiting from the US and Canada, and during their last night in town we agreed to go out with them for a night of dinner and dancing. After dinner we went to a small bar on the marina which was owned by friends of Fernando's. Everyone had been drinking quite a lot. As always, Nicole drank Mescal straight with a cranberry chaser. Fernando complained whenever she drank Mescal, telling me that it made her "crazy". He spoke to me honestly about it. He was very concerned because whenever she drank Mescal Nicole would start behaving in ways that Fernando found unacceptable.

The main reason why Fernando did not like it when Nicole drank Mescal, he said was that her behaviour changed. He claimed that when drunk on Mescal, Nicole would do things she would not even consider when sober, more specifically she became very sexually aggressive. During our night out together I could see a fight brewing between Fernando and Nicole. He was carefully watching her all night, keeping track of how much she drank. As the night wore on, we ended up at El Squid Roe. Nicole rarely went there because she did not want to run into Emilio. But on this occasion, she knew Emilio was out of town so Nicole was willing to go, even though she knew that the head waiter would be sure to tell Emilio that she had been in. Once there, everyone started dancing, Nicole included. As is almost always the case at the Squid Roe, the dancing was quite provocative. Fernando became increasingly agitated by Nicole's dancing until finally he insisted that they leave. Once at home Fernando confronted Nicole about her behaviour. He insisted that as a mother she should not be acting that way, especially since it was in her children's father's

restaurant. The next day Fernando and I had an opportunity to talk alone. I asked how things were between him and Nicole. He explained to me that he no longer wanted to be with Nicole. He told me he loved her but he could not stand her behaviour when she was drunk. In Fernando's mind Nicole could not be both a mother and a sexual being, at least not in public. Nicole's behaviour when drunk was comparable to the female tourists'. It was not desirable in a partner (wife or girlfriend).

Fernando and Nicole stayed together but not without some pleading from Nicole. Though she does have a willful temperament and acts as if she needs no one, Nicole desperately needed to be loved. When Nicole was talking about her mother's second husband she explained that he had seen Nicole and her sister in their crib and had "fallen in love" with both them and Nicole's mother. Emilio too had "fallen in love" with Nicole, almost worshipped her, even though, as she maintained, she had never been "in love" with him. This tended to be a theme in Nicole's discourse – men who love her unconditionally. Nicole recalled other stories, too, of men loving her passionately, yet through them all, Nicole maintained emotional independence. She asserted that she was unattached to these men, and declared a lack of interest in them. Nicole was continually protesting emotional detachment. She never let on that she cared about anyone deeply. She had even said that she was "never really crazy about anybody". This became most evident to me when I left the field. Nicole and I had become quite close in the field, spending a fair amount of time together. The day before I left we arranged to meet at her house to say goodby, but Nicole never showed up. For the entire day before I left she made herself scarce. I was quite hurt,

but I assumed that it was simply Nicole's way of dealing with it. I assumed that saying goodbye was going to be as difficult for Nicole as it was for me. Avoidance was Nicole's strategy for dealing with painful situations. I suspect that she learned it long ago when her mother sent her away to live with the father she had never met.

Interpretive Analysis

Nicole, unlike the other women of this thesis, did not move to Mexico in pursuit of some fantasy life, or a romantic relationship with a Mexican man. Instead, she was sent to Mexico as a teenage girl by her mother to live with her estranged father. Mexico was a difficult place for Nicole to live in for many reasons. She had spent her adolescent years growing up in America and her late teenage years in Mexico, so she was familiar with the cultural expectations from both countries. But the gender-role expectations were different in Mexico and as a result, Nicole seemed to live in constant conflict, always trying to negotiate the difference. Nicole's mother had lived in a similar manner to Nicole, challenging the Mexican and American cultural notions of gender. But it was a continual battle, one that Nicole was unlikely to win. She thought of herself as an independent woman with a strong will. She hated to be confined or restricted. Yet Nicole had chosen a life which both controlled and limited her activities.

Most notably, Nicole was completely dependent upon other people economically. Nicole had not worked since she was eighteen years old. She gave up modelling when she moved in with Emilio. Once having given up her modelling career, Nicole had no income, so she was forced to rely on Emilio financially. She recalled that he had encouraged her dependency, and that he had wanted her to rely on him. Although Nicole insisted that she was an independent and determined person, she had taken the role of dependent rather

easily. Nicole never went back to modelling after their son was born, nor did she attempt to find other employment. There was no need to since Emilio was able to support his new family amply. Additionally, Emilio, as Nicole claims, did not want her to work. He wanted her to take the traditional Mexican female role as mother and wife. However, once Nicole became economically dependent on Emilio, her freedom was restricted to an even greater extent. Emilio controlled the wealth in the family. He would give Nicole money, but she had no wealth of her own. While living in Cabo San Lucas, it became increasingly difficult for Nicole to get money from Emilio. She said in the beginning he was quite generous with cash but that as the jealousy started, the cash diminished. He would not even give her enough money to fill up the gas tank of the car, afraid that she would drive back to the States.

Though Emilio never gave her cash, Nicole was well cared for in other ways. She had a very substantial wardrobe that included top designer names. On New Year's Eve I saw her slip on a pair of Manola Blahnik shoes. When I asked her how much they had cost (recognizing the designer name), she replied that she had paid four hundred US dollars. While married to Emilio she had her own car, a Volkswagen Jetta. At both Carlos and Charlie's and El Squid Roe, Nicole was able to eat and drink free of charge.

This economic dependency on Emilio must have made it very hard for her to leave him. In interviews with Mexican immigrant men working in California, Peña (1991) elicited the following response:

You know what advantage the women have here? The women from here, the ones who are alone who have been left [by their husbands] are supported by welfare. And over there they are not. That's why they [women in Mexico]

don't leave you. (Peña 1991:35)

As this Mexican immigrant notes, a woman is less likely to leave a bad situation when she is financially dependent upon her spouse and unable to make her own income. Even in Canada, a country with a welfare system, many women are forced to stay in abusive situation because they can not maintain their standard of living on social assistance. I suspect that this was the situation for Nicole. Before the final separation, Nicole had left Emilio twice but returned both times. I suspect that Nicole's financial situation in combination with her need to be loved was a significant factor in her decision to return. Without Emilio, Nicole had no income and therefore no way to survive in Cabo San Lucas. Nicole had been concerned about how she would live now that she and Emilio had divorced. She still ate at Carlos and Charlie's and had the waiters put it on Emilio's tab. She often took the children there to eat because she had no food in the house. She would shop at a small grocery store in the back of town where she could pay for the food with special vouchers that were given to employees at all of the Carlos and Charlie's restaurants⁷. These vouchers were not accepted at the main grocery stores downtown where the best produce was sold, so Nicole had to make do with mostly frozen and canned food. This was also difficult because Nicole no longer owned a car (since, as she explained, Emilio had sold her Volkswagon Jetta during a jealous rage) and getting to these other grocery stores was difficult without one⁸.

Nicole's situation differs from that described by Ingham in a central Mexican village where he notes that Mexican women control the family finances and thus, are able to restrict their spouses activities (Ingham 1986:61). Nicole's lack of access to production and

distribution of material resources, namely money, contributes to her dependent position in all her relationships. Without the ability to produce her own economic resources, Nicole will have a difficult time escaping from those relationships, regardless of how abusive they may be. Nicole, like her mother, endured abusive relationships. As a young woman, just seventeen years old, living in Acapulco Nicole had become involved with a Mexican man who would lock her in the house. She was unable to leave the house without him. Nicole eventually escaped after suffering for three months by calling a friend and asking her to bring over a locksmith so that she could leave. Nicole said that she never returned. This story paralleled the story of Nicole's mother who was locked in her home by Nicole's father. As well, as noted earlier, Nicole's mother had been physically assaulted by Nicole's father. Nicole had chosen or recapitulated the same lifestyle as her mother. Emilio's jealousy confined her freedom in their relationship so that she was unable to make friends; and Fernando had hit her in a fit of anger over her behaviour while she drank. Although she did leave the boyfriend in Mexico City, and eventually left the constricting relationship with Emilio, she had entered into yet another abusive relationship with Fernando. And though they had a number of arguments at which time Fernando would threaten to leave her, she pleaded with him not to. I suspect there are a number of complex reasons behind her reluctance to leave him, including her affection for him. But more than that, I suspect it was also because Fernando offered financial security to Nicole at a time when she was desperately in need of it. Nicole, like Helen or Maggie, was able to call home and receive financial aid from her mother, but it wasn't enough to sustain the lifestyle she was

accustomed to. For all the women involved in this thesis, parents seemed to be a source of emergency funds rather than supplying a monthly income. Although Nicole was forced into a somewhat subordinate role in her relationships with men because of economic dependency, she did have ways of resisting the controlling men in her life. She resisted in a number of ways: she pursued other men while she was married, she acted seductively, and she challenged her expected gender role. Both Emilio and Fernando expected Nicole to conform to a certain role of femaleness. Namely, they expected her to restrict her activities to the home and to her family. Nicole explained that Emilio would not give her enough money to fill the gas tank because he was fearful that she would try driving back to the United States. He kept a close watch on her by insisting that she only go out to the places that he worked at. As a result, Nicole sought another man. And then eventually she left the relationship. Though she did not have any access to production of material resources, she eventually took the risk of leaving and asking for a divorce. Emilio threatened her, telling Nicole that she had no rights in Mexico, and that threat did scare Nicole. She did not immediately pursue a legal divorce from him because she believed that as a woman she would have no rights. As Behar writes, Esperanza's mother also felt constricted by the patriarchal law of Mexico, "the law of the fathers", which condemns women who leave their marriages, and she is aware that if she leaves her husband, the law will not protect her (1993:279). Nicole's experience was similar; when Nicole eventually did seek a legal divorce, she lost many rights she could have had because Emilio had the financial backing to "buy" his rights.

Drinking alcohol in Mexico, especially hard alcohol like Mescal, is typically considered a male privilege, commonly associated with machismo (Peña 1991; Lancaster 1992). By drinking Mescal Nicole was challenging traditional Mexican gender norms. As a woman raised in the States by an American mother, Nicole was able to do so with minimal reproach. Mexicans in Cabo San Lucas were used to seeing vacationing North American women drunk on tequila. But Nicole was also Mexican and the Mexican men she dated (or married) expected her to conform to the Mexican ideals of femaleness. Fernando did not mind if Nicole drank beer but he really disapproved of her drinking mescal. Additionally, one could tell by his disapproving looks whenever Nicole ordered Mescal that he disagreed with her choice to drink. If Nicole and I went to meet Fernando and his friends later in the evening, he would come up to me and ask if she had been drinking Mescal.

The machismo ideology condones men abandoning their wives and children to start new families, but it is unacceptable for women. Women are expected to remain faithful to their husbands no matter what the circumstance. Nicole was continually challenging this role. But Nicole could only contest the expected gender roles so far if she wanted to maintain her relationship with Fernando. He would either threaten to leave her or he could resort to other controlling mechanisms – like physical assault. During the evening that I recalled earlier when Nicole and Fernando were arguing, Fernando attempted to hit Nicole. I did not see it for I was in another room but I did hear it. Immediately afterwards, Nicole came rushing into the room in tears, telling me that Fernando had just tried to hit her. Physical (and psychological) violence against women is also legitimized by the ideology of

machismo in Mexico (Peña 1991). She was continually rebelling against the expected norms. But it was self-defeating. Nicole's resistance to the oppressive gender roles only ends up reproducing the agony and pain that she is trying to escape.

It seemed that Nicole was continually seeking love and approval while at the same time she was always insisting that she never wanted it. She would often encourage Fernando to talk to other women. I overheard her say on a number of occasions to Fernando, "Look, she's pretty. Go talk to her." Nicole also recalled saying the same thing to Emilio when he first began courting her. I do not believe that Nicole ever wanted Emilio or Fernando to see other women. Rather she wanted to hear them insist that she was the only one they were interested in, and that they loved *her*.

Nicole also needed to be desired sexually. She needed to know that people (men in particular but women also) found her appealing. It was very important for Nicole to look and feel beautiful. And she was beautiful, but this never stopped her from continually seeking approval and attention. I think this was part of the reason that Nicole continually pursued sexual relations with other men. She was always very flirtatious with men, not because she was actually interested in them, but because she wanted them to be interested in her. In this way Nicole was also challenging the Mexican norms of female behaviour. Women were not allowed the sexual freedom that men were. It was a double standard that Nicole did not adopt. She refused to submit to the sexually passive role that was expected of her. But it was a source of conflict in Nicole's life.

Nicole said that her mother had been a very unemotional and unaffectionate woman.

Nicole told me that the first time she remembers being hugged by her mother was at her wedding. She had never been a compassionate person, Nicole said. This is vividly demonstrated when Nicole's mother sends her away to live with a father she has never met in a foreign country at a time when Nicole most needs the comfort and guidance of a parent. The teenage years are typically difficult years, full of confusion and turmoil. At sixteen years of age Nicole is uprooted from her home and sent to live with a stranger. Nicole most likely felt abandoned by her mother. I propose that Nicole's endless need for love and attention stems from her relationship with her mother and from her lack of relationship with her father. Nicole never had a stable father figure in her life since her mother never remained married for longer than five years. Perhaps Nicole was also searching for the father she never had.

Nicole was unable to obtain the life she desired. A number of issues stood in her way. One of those issues was that she was not economically independent. She could not live her life the way she wanted to as long as she was living with someone else and economically dependent on them. If she continues to be economically supported by the men in her life, she will be continually faced with their expectations of her as their dependent. Nicole will be unable to challenge the traditional gender role without repercussions, like verbal and physical abuse, unless she can become financially independent. Unlike Helen, Elizabeth and Maggie (next chapter) who are unable to seek employment because of immigration policies, Nicole can legally work in Mexico. Rather, other obstacles, perhaps including Nicole's desire to live affluently, stand in her way.

Perhaps another obstacle that stands in Nicole's way is her need to be loved. She continues to stay in relationships that are abusive because her desire to be loved is greater than her desire to be in a relationship that is abuse free. And in some ways, her desire to be loved accentuates the abuse in the relationships. Her behaviour, especially the flirtation, angers the men she dates. Nicole has, in many ways, reproduced the life of her mother. To fully understand Nicole's situation however, a psychological explanation that delves deeper into Nicole's past is needed.

Chapter Seven

Maggie

Like so many of the expatriates living in Cabo San Lucas, Maggie was from Southern California. She was the youngest of five children. She had been somewhat of an “afterthought” for her parents, she explained. There was a ten-year difference between her and her next oldest sibling Paula. She came from a wealthy family. Her father had been in real estate but had taken an early retirement at 60 years of age and was now living in Palm Springs enjoying the hot desert sun with Maggie’s mother. Maggie had been raised in a conservative Christian household, attending a Catholic private high school. After graduation she went directly to university, attending the University of San Diego, also Catholic and private, where she enrolled in business. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration in 1992 with first-class honours. Considering law school, Maggie found work with a very large intellectual properties law firm immediately after graduation. She had been working there for two years when she started feeling bored with life in San Diego. Maggie complained that it consisted of working 9 to 5 daily, working out at the fitness club in the early mornings before work and spending time with friends on the weekends, going to the night clubs to see live bands, etc. Since graduating from the University of San Diego, little had changed in her life. She had not done the travelling that so many students do during or after their studies at university. She explained that she was simply feeling “unfulfilled”. In

addition, Maggie was feeling an overall lack of direction in her life. After two years at the law firm she still had not decided whether or not she wanted to return to school to enroll in law. She felt she did not know where life was leading her.

During Spring break in her last year of college Maggie had taken a holiday with a few friends down to Cabo San Lucas. Increasingly, as the boredom intensified, Maggie reminisced about her time spent down there. Though it had been a brief holiday, it had been memorable. It had been Maggie's only experience outside of the United States. She had been rather taken by the beauty of the Baja and by the relaxed feeling of Cabo San Lucas. It was with this in mind that Maggie decided she needed to take some time off from work. After careful thought Maggie decided that she would quit her job and move to Mexico indefinitely. She continued working at the law firm in order to save enough money to live on until she could find a job there, then she quit her job, giving them three months notice, and told her parents she was moving to Cabo San Lucas¹. Maggie was surprised by the responses of her family and friends when she told them her plan. She explained that it had not been in her nature to be spontaneous or adventuresome but here she was suddenly moving to Mexico. Her parents were more than surprised, they were disapproving. They did not understand why Maggie wanted to leave a good job and why she would want to move to Mexico. Yet at the same time, they seemed to support Maggie's decision, helping as best as they could with her move.

In September 1994 Maggie flew down to Cabo San Lucas for three days with the purpose of finding a place to live. She explained:

I decided to look for a place. I went down for three days and if I found a place to live, then I knew I would feel comfortable going back. And I'm so in to 'signs', that I figured if I was comfortable, if I found a place to live, if it looked right, felt right, then that meant that I was supposed to go down there. So I flew down to Cabo for three days. And I liked it. Everybody I met was nice. It was awesome. And I found the place I wanted. It was just perfect, exactly what I was looking for. My own little place. And so I decided that was it.

Maggie returned to San Diego to get her belongings, say her “good-byes”, and then it was back to Cabo San Lucas. Though Maggie made the trek alone and did not know anyone living in Cabo San Lucas, she was not lonely. Maggie had a stream of visitors starting the first week she was there. Her friends took advantage of having someone to visit and came to visit often, especially during that first month. By the time the stream of visitors slowed down, Maggie had met a number of people living locally and was far from feeling lonesome or homesick.

On first arriving in Cabo San Lucas, Maggie spent a fair amount of time with her neighbour Arturo and his friend Reuben. Arturo was from a wealthy family in Mexico City and had been educated abroad (France and Spain). When I first met him (in 1992) he was working as a supervisor at Carlos and Charlie's but by my return in 1994 he had quit his job there and was working with Romeo and Reuben at their real estate office. But like Romeo and Reuben, Arturo seemed rarely to work. They spent their afternoons on the beach, drinking lemonade at the beachside restaurants, flirting with the vacationing women. When Maggie first moved into her apartment in Cabo San Lucas Arturo came over to introduce himself to her. Maggie was impressed by this gesture. She recalled:

Arturo was the first Mexican [that] I met down here. Arturo is probably one of my favourite people that I have met down here because we just get along really well. He came over and introduced himself and I was excited to see that. I never met somebody from another country, or got to know somebody really well from other countries. I saw that you can grow up in different worlds and still have a lot in common and still like a lot of the same things. I also learned that I lived, I grew up in, a very sheltered life. Because the more people I met, the more people like Arturo, who went to school in France, and went over to Spain and learned three different languages and could read and write them. And it was like, wow, somebody my own age and they were so much more advanced in that respect. So, anyway, Arturo helped me a lot down here as far as meeting people and just being my friend. And that was probably one of the most important things that I needed.

Arturo was the first to introduce Maggie to Mexican life. He also introduced Maggie to her first Mexican boyfriend, Reuben. Maggie met Reuben at Romeo's ranch and recalled that she almost immediately fell for his charm. Reuben always seemed to date foreign women (see chapter four) and when a new attractive woman moved to town, he would, without fail, pursue her. Maggie recollected that she was very taken with Reuben's cultured demeanour. Like Arturo, he was educated abroad and lived a life of leisure. She enjoyed the evenings at Reuben's newly built hacienda with its ocean view. She was surprised at how quickly she became attached to him. After meeting, they started spending every day together. Maggie felt things were going well but apparently Reuben did not feel the same because within two weeks he ended the relationship with Maggie. Though the relationship was short-lived, Maggie felt that she learned a lot about Mexican men from it. She found that they were both similar and different to American men. She saw the differences resulting from different cultures and the similarities due to their shared gender. She perceived Reuben as "dominating" and "controlling" because he always had the "final say". Maggie remembered

that though he would ask her what she would like to do, they never did what she suggested or requested. Maggie also noted that Reuben came from a “strong religious background”, unlike Pedro, her next Mexican boyfriend.

Maggie felt that she also learned something about herself by dating Reuben – when the relationship ended she was alone to deal with the hurt. In California she always had family and friends for support. She realized while living in Cabo San Lucas that, if need be, she could survive alone. Nevertheless, Maggie cherished the friendships she made in Cabo San Lucas. It was perhaps the most pervasive theme throughout her narrative. Maggie became good friends with two other women who were also dating Mexican men, Elizabeth (see chapter three) and Cindy. These relationships were very special to Maggie because these women were living similar lives in Mexico. They were American women who were intimately involved with Mexican men. During their time together they would talk about their relationships, comparing the attitudes of their partners.

During the first two months Maggie explained that she simply had fun and “played around”. She was happy to be away from the financial and work-related stresses in the States. In Cabo San Lucas Maggie had very few worries aside from getting a sunburn. In early October Maggie decided she wanted to have her car with her. Shortly before moving to Cabo, she had bought a new Volkswagen Jetta but had left it in the care of her sister in California. She flew home with the intent of driving it back down with her friend Jackie. The transpeninsular highway, though only recently built, is a treacherous road for even the most veteran of drivers. It is a narrow road with no shoulders. Cattle and donkeys roam freely

about, the unlucky ones lying dead on the road. There are very long stretches of highway with nothing and no one near. Gas/service stations are few and far between. The Mexican government requires that when crossing the border with a vehicle, you purchase Mexican car insurance if you have already not done so in the US, since neither Canadian nor American car insurance covers you in Mexico; however, the Mexican border guards do not check to see if you have bought it, therefore it is possible for some people to travel into Mexico without having bought the Mexican car insurance. Although Maggie was driving a new car, she had not bought the car insurance, assuming nothing would go wrong. But just south of Mulege, one thousand kilometres south of the border, Maggie lost control of the car when a truck went by, forcing her off the road into the ditch. The car rolled three times and was completely ruined; however, Maggie and Jackie were able to walk away from the accident with just a few scratches and raw nerves.

Although the experience was terrifying, Maggie vividly remembered that the only people who stopped to help were Mexicans.

About eight hours north of Cabo, we totalled the car. And that was a learning experience because, for one thing, not a single American that drove by would stop and help us. Everybody who stopped was Mexican and very helpful. I mean, they drove us back down to Cabo, they took us to the doctor, they got every single thing that I had in the car and put it into their car. I mean it was unbelievable that people like that still exist. And it was a really good feeling that there were a lot of people like that.

Maggie had been touched by the Mexicans who stopped and helped her and Jackie out, taking note that the Americans would not stop. Luckily for Maggie, her insurance company covered the wreck, paying off the amount owing on the car. Although shaken up by the

experience, Maggie stayed in Cabo. Her friend, who was considerably more traumatized by the event, returned to California within days. Though Maggie was very upset about the accident, both because of the danger of the situation and the loss of the car, with hindsight she explained that it was probably for the best.

So I came back to Cabo with no car. Which was probably a good thing because one of the reasons I came down here was to get away from those things, from materialistic things, you know. And to get back to the basics. And I do, that's for sure. I live on no money and never buy anything, never go shopping. But I don't really miss it either. Well, I didn't, not at first.

Maggie more than any of the other expatriate women that I met, even Elizabeth, sacrificed a comfortable life in the States to live in Mexico. In the beginning she was able to live off the money she had saved at the law firm but it disappeared quickly. Cabo San Lucas is not a cheap place to live, particularly if you enjoy the night life, as Maggie did². By late November Maggie had become concerned with how she was going to survive in Mexico, so she actively started to seek employment. Unfortunately Maggie, like the other expatriate women, did not have Mexican working papers, an FM 3, and so it was difficult for her to find work. One evening while Maggie and I sat at a street-side café drinking iced coffees, an acquaintance of mine, Santiago, came by and asked if I knew anyone who was looking for work. He and his family owned Siesta Suites, a small hotel in the middle of town, and more recently he had been trying to establish Baja Bungy Jumping. He was in need of people to work at the Bungy Jumping, preparing for the oncoming tourist season. Maggie eagerly volunteered, although without the FM 3 she was unable to work legally in Mexico. They came to an agreement that Maggie would apply for the FM 3 while working at Baja Bungy.

This worked for a while until immigration came by and forced Maggie to give up her position until she was able to get the required working visa.

On another occasion, in mid-December, while Maggie and I were out having a beer, I ran into another acquaintance, Simeón. Simeón, who lived in San Jose Del Cabo, was in town visiting with two friends from Mexico City who were opening up a new bar on the marina. He, too, asked if I knew anyone who was in need of work. Maggie and I both volunteered but we explained that neither of us had a working visa. The owners, Paulo and Cipriano, told us that this was not a problem and that they would be able to get us working papers. The next day Maggie and I met Paulo and Cipriano at the new bar that was in the midst of being constructed. We were hired without papers (which they would arrange for us) and started work on opening night on December twenty-first. It is a tradition in Mexico during the opening night of a bar that the drinks are free. As a result, it was a busy night and Maggie and I had a good time working for Paulo and Cipriano. The pay was horrendous, a little less than five US dollars a day but we also collected tips³. Unfortunately for Maggie and me, Paulo and Cipriano came to the conclusion that it was harder than they thought for them to get us working papers and thus, on Christmas Day we were fired and replaced by Mexican waiters. I had decided to return to Canada in January, so the loss of the job meant very little to me, but Maggie needed the job if she was to stay in Cabo San Lucas. She was running out of options as long as she did not have a working visa. Though she had applied for one when she started working at Baja Bungy, the process was very slow and she was not guaranteed one in any case. But by then Maggie was dating Pedro who offered some

financial security, however minimal it may have been, and had moved into Maggie's apartment. Without a job Maggie became very thrifty. She lived on Mexican bread – just three pesos a loaf. She confessed that at times she and Pedro had stolen things from the grocery store when they had no money.

Maggie had met Pedro while he was living above her with Helen and Roberto. He was one of the dancers in their dance show that performed nightly at the Giggling Marlin. One day while doing laundry Pedro found a sock in the washing machine and, assuming it was Maggie's, he brought it to her apartment. Maggie said that they talked for hours that day, establishing a new friendship. When she told me about meeting Pedro, Maggie declared, "Whew! And then I *really* learned about Mexican culture!" Pedro introduced Maggie to a new side of Cabo San Lucas, one that she had not experienced before meeting him. But Pedro had been raised in the barrios of Guadalajara. When he was just fourteen years old Pedro began living on the streets. By the time he was twenty-four years old, Pedro had been addicted to cocaine for ten years.

Maggie explained that she wanted to be open-minded living in Mexico, to be non-judgmental.

And that was another thing I told myself, I wasn't going to judge people right away and I was going to be open. And I met Pedro and he openly told me how he was a drug addict and fucked around, and I was like, whatever, it's your life, I'm not going to hold it against you and we'll be friends. But with us becoming friends and spending practically every day together, I guess I just saw this really neat person deep down inside of him and I saw this challenge, and I wanted to bring it out [the person she saw inside of him].

Maggie was true to her word and she tried not to be judgmental of Pedro's lifestyle.

They became very good friends and spent time together on a daily basis. Pedro told Maggie that he wanted to quit taking drugs. He started getting vitamin B₁₂ shots (which made him quite ill with fever and the shakes) and promised Maggie that he had quit taking cocaine. Maggie had faith in Pedro's determination to quit drugs, so much so that within a few weeks Pedro had started staying at Maggie's apartment. In November Maggie decided that she would go home for Thanksgiving (American Thanksgiving) and she let Pedro stay in her apartment while she was away. I drove Maggie to the airport and asked her on the way if she had any concerns about letting him stay in her apartment alone. She said that her only concern was that he might return to his old habit of drug use, since this would be his first weekend alone since quitting. She felt, however, that by trusting him to stay in her apartment, she was giving him reason to quit. She believed that Pedro needed somebody to trust him, to believe in him, so that he would have the initiative to quit drugs. She did however, ask me to go by and check on him. I did as she asked and all he wanted to talk about was how much he missed Maggie.

Maggie said that the Pedro she met in the beginning was not the Pedro she later got to know. In the beginning Maggie seemed to have complete control over the relationship and remained rather emotionally detached from it. Pedro continually professed his true love to Maggie, both in private and in public but Maggie's behaviour always suggested indifference. At times, I thought Maggie to be downright rude to Pedro. She did what she wanted with little concern how Pedro might feel about it. If she and I were going out for lunch or iced coffee, she would not invite him. When he would ask if he could come along, she would say

no. While living in California Maggie had been involved in a relationship that, although over, she had not quite recovered from. During her visits home she continued to see this young man. He was a musician and while in Mexico Maggie continually played his music. Maggie had been honest with Pedro regarding this relationship, going so far as to tell him that she was still in love with the musician. She also explained that during her trips back to the States she would see him. Maggie explained that in the beginning Pedro was quite tolerant of her “independence”.

When I first met him he was pretty lenient about our relationship, like when I'd say, “this is what I want to do, I'm going to do it”, because I'm a pretty independent person, – which doesn't fit well with most Mexican men because they like to dominate and they're the ones out drinking, out having fun with their friends. But I was independent and did my own thing.

Though Maggie seemed emotionally detached from Pedro, she claimed that she did love him. His birthday was in early December and Maggie wanted to do something special for him. She baked him a cake and decorated it in beautiful colours. She had bought him all kinds of different gifts and wrapped them in colourful paper with bows and ribbons, hiding them at my place. She planned a surprise party for him at the Giggling Marlin (his work place at the time) where she had decorated a corner, and took him out for dinner to Mer Mediterranean, a French restaurant. The entire evening was a surprise for Pedro. Maggie had asked me if I would take photographs of the evening. Throughout the evening I heard Pedro exclaim, “No one has ever done this for me before. I have *never* had a birthday party before.” Maggie had gone all out in celebrating Pedro's birthday and it had meant the world to him.

But as their relationship progressed, Maggie noticed that Pedro's attitude changed. He became very possessive of her. He started asking her *where* she was going and *why* she did not want him to come along. When she did tell him where she was going, he would later show up at the place to join her despite her insistence that she wanted to be with 'the girls'. Maggie explained:

Things have changed, it's 'me and Pedro' and everybody knows it as me and Pedro. And I am not my own person any more and I have to do everything with him or tell him everything, which for a while I didn't mind. It was kind of neat to be back into a relationship. To have somebody care about you but after awhile I got kind of tired of having to ask if I can go have coffee with Elizabeth and things like that. So, it kind of taught me that I don't want a relationship where I have to ask for that kind of thing. It's not my kind of personality but I didn't really realize it at first. I just thought, whatever, that's the way it's going to be, that's the way the relationship is.

One evening Maggie and I had gone out to have a drink at Carlos and Charlie's. While we were there the "commandante", the head of the Mexican FBI for the entire Baja peninsula, came in with his entourage (including the chief of police) and, as was customary for the commandante, he invited Maggie and me over to his table to join them. The commandante, Luis, wielded considerable power and authority and was seemingly feared by many. After joining the commandante for a drink, Maggie and I went to the Giggling Marlin to see if Pedro was finished with the dance show. When Maggie told him that we had been invited by the commandante to join him for drinks, Pedro was furious. I tried explaining to Pedro that the commandante always invited me to his table to join him for drinks (as he did with many people) and that it had nothing to do with Maggie but he remained enraged. Pedro could give no reason for his anger but I suspect that it was both

jealousy and fear of the commandante, since one of the commandante's main responsibilities was convicting drug dealers.

Though Maggie disliked Pedro's possessiveness and protectiveness over her, she really admired his generosity. Although he had barely anything, Maggie said Pedro was very generous with what he did have. Pedro gave the money he made from dancing (tips⁴) to Maggie to take care of. He told her he did not trust himself with the money, afraid that he would spend it on drugs. But there was little money from the tips, especially after Pedro contributed his half to the rent. Pedro was also able to get work at Baja Bungy, which was fortunate since he lost his job at the Giggling Marlin in December. Though Pedro's employment was often temporary and part-time, he was almost always able to find work. Bucky's Bar and Grill, a new bar, opened on New Year's Eve and Pedro was able to obtain temporary work there for the season. Pedro always handed over his pay to Maggie. She was responsible for paying the bills and budgeting the money.

Maggie explained that another thing that she really admired in Pedro was his ability not to worry about money. Maggie told me that her tendency to worry about money was one of the reasons she had decided to move to Mexico.

But one thing that I did pick up, – the whole materialistic thing is not as strong down here, you know, living from pay cheque to pay cheque and paying the bills, it's not the same as in the States. That's what I really enjoy and what I really like about Pedro, he doesn't stress out about that stuff. He knows the money will come around and we'll get things paid. And he enjoys a lot of life. I like that, I want to be more like that. And I try not to stress about how I am going to pay the rent this month.

Pedro's lack of concern no doubt stemmed from a survival spirit that he acquired

while living on the street. But additionally, it was rumoured in town that although Pedro was no longer doing drugs, he was dealing. In fact, this was the reason he lost his job at the Giggling Marlin. The owners blamed him for dealing drugs within the bar. Pedro denied this charge and Maggie believed him and supported him, arguing that his dismissal was unjust; however, there were very few other people that believed him. I had been told before Pedro had lost his job that he was dealing drugs occasionally. This was supported further by an acquaintance, Rebecca, who said she had seen him at a drug dealer's house buying cocaine. Often Maggie would comment naively that she wondered where Pedro got money sometimes. It appeared to many, except Maggie, that when Pedro needed money he simply made a deal to sell drugs⁵. Though I could not confirm the rumour, it would have been quite easy for Pedro to assume this new role, since he already had many of the contacts needed. Pedro always came through with some money when he and Maggie really needed it.

Though Maggie's family was fairly well off financially⁶, Maggie only called home once to ask for money and it was for only \$300 US dollars. Rather than call home to ask for financial help, Maggie lived on bread with mustard and at times would resort to theft. When she and Pedro did have a little money, they would go out but drink only at the places that had 'Happy Hour' drink specials (like the Rio Grill that had three-for-the-price-of-one margaritas) or they would frequent the non-tourist bars that typically sold beer for half the price. When Maggie could no longer afford to pay her rent (\$450 US per month), she and Pedro moved out into a smaller place in the heart of downtown.

Maggie noted that the lack of material wealth made life "very simple" in Mexico.

She also believed that poverty characterized Mexican relationships.

Now another thing about our relationship which I think is very typical of many Mexican relationships is that the way Pedro and I live at this moment is probably the way we will live for the rest of our lives. You don't have the big old, moving up and having the big house. You're living day to day and it's very simple, which was one of the reasons I moved here, but also I have found out that I can only handle it for so long, [because] I was raised in a situation that wasn't that simple. But that was one of the reasons I came here, and I found it and I saw what it is like to live so simple.

Maggie believed that Pedro did not have the desire to move up in the world. She presumed that Pedro did not have dreams of owning his own house, of getting a steady well-paying job. She saw Pedro as being content with the life he led, with living “pay cheque to pay cheque”. She saw it as a way of life for Mexicans, and it was one of the reasons she had been attracted to Mexico in the beginning but shortly after she said that she could not see herself living like that for long.

After living in Cabo San Lucas for eight months Maggie decided to return to southern California. Pedro followed her about three weeks later in search of work. He moved in with her at her sister's house and their relationship continued for another four months but eventually collapsed. Pedro did not fit into Maggie's Californian life. She returned to working at the law firm and has since then enrolled in an MBA program at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Interpretive Analysis

Though by many people's estimation Maggie's life was ideal in California, - she had a good job, she was well educated, and had a good upbringing, - Maggie herself felt that it was lacking. She felt generally unsatisfied with it, believing that her life had become mundane and repetitious. She believed that by moving to Mexico she would be able to fill the void in her life. As Maggie described it, she had been sheltered from the harsh realities of life that face many people. She had attended private Catholic schools all her life. Her interaction was primarily with other "white" middle-class people. Maggie told me that before going to Mexico, the only Mexicans she knew were the ones who worked as waiters at the Golf Club her parents belonged to. And she did not really know them. Her only interaction with Mexicans was when they were serving her. Consequently, Maggie's knowledge about Mexico and its people was established on secondary sources like the media and popular culture. In many ways it seemed that Maggie was suffering from "middle-class boredom". By quitting her job and moving to Baja California Maggie sought to experience something new and exciting. Maggie told me that she was "really excited to meet Mexicans and learn the Mexican culture, the Spanish culture." Part of the excitement in moving to another country was that she would immerse herself in a new and different society. Though Maggie had never known anyone of Mexican descent (an indication of just how sheltered her life was, since Mexican-Americans and Mexicans make up a large percentage of Southern California's population), she did have a definite conception of what it meant to be

a Mexican, or perhaps more precisely, a Mexican male.

Several themes ran through Maggie's narrative regarding her understanding of Mexico and Mexicans. Many times Maggie referred to the "simplicity" of life in Mexico. This was in contrast to the "complicated" life in California. She explained that she wanted to escape from the materialism of American life, to get "back to the basics". She did this by quitting a well-paying job, leaving her "material wealth" behind and moving to Mexico where she lived with minimal possessions. Maggie eagerly embraced the minimalist attitude she perceived in Mexicans yet, was forced at times to steal for more. Their lack of desire for more, which she discerned in Pedro, she believed to be "typical". As I pointed out in chapter three, which focussed on Elizabeth, Torgovnick (1990:9) believes that the idea that the "primitive" society is a "precapitalist utopia" is a notion that is pervasive in the popular culture of the West. Furthermore, Torgovnick points out, the non-Western is seen as the "past", a utopian ideal where there are "still people like that." The so-called "primitive" is commonly contrasted with the overly materialistic "present". Non-Western societies are often imagined to be non-materialistic and thus, idyllic. This is how Maggie perceived Mexico and the perception was, as she explained, one of the main reasons why she moved there. This is very similar to Elizabeth who saw Mexico as an idyllic place because of its simplicity. Related to this is Maggie's view of Mexicans as being kind and friendly. Maggie noted that after her accident only Mexicans stopped to help, even though Americans did drive by. Similarly, she was impressed when Arturo came over to introduce himself when she moved into her apartment.

Of course, Mexico is *not* a “precapitalist utopia”. It has become an intensely industrial society comparable to the Western world. The image that Maggie has of Mexico is far from realistic. It is a stereotypical view unsubstantiated by the facts of Mexican life. Though Pedro may have been content with his life, as Maggie suggested, I doubt it. Pedro never confided to me his dreams or ambitions (or lack of them); however, I suspect that he too hoped for more than temporary, minimal paying or illegal jobs. This is perhaps evident from Pedro’s recent move to Northern California in search of work. Like many other Mexican men and women, Pedro has moved North seeking employment and an improved way of life by earning American dollars.

Though Maggie maintains that she went to Mexico to “get back to the basics”, she also confesses that in the end, basics were not enough. She had come to Mexico to experience the “simplicity” of life, yet after living there for a few months, Maggie realized that she wanted more. As I mentioned earlier, after living in Cabo San Lucas for eight months Maggie returned to California and her job at the law firm, admitting that Mexico was “*too simple*”. Though Maggie initially found the non-materialistic attitude of Baja appealing, eventually she tired of it. But Maggie was never actually without. It is true that she and Pedro lived on close to no money and that occasionally they stole from the grocery store, but Maggie at any time was able to telephone home to ask for money from her parents who were more than willing to help her out. Like Nicole and Helen, Maggie could depend on her family for financial support in case of emergencies. Maggie chose to live without money, unlike Pedro who had no alternatives but to find work in an informal and illegal sector.

Furthermore, Maggie flew home to California monthly during the four month period that I was living in Cabo San Lucas. The trips were paid for by her parents. This is hardly the life of the underprivileged. It was in direct conflict with Maggie's purported desire for the simple way of life.

One of Maggie's reasons for moving to Cabo San Lucas was to experience something new and different. However, I propose that she moved to Cabo San Lucas simply because it was not *too* different. Palmer (1994) illustrated that in Caribbean tourism advertisements black female models are used to lure the Westerner (specifically the Western male) in search of romance and sexual experiences to the islands. She argues, as do others (see Hooks 1992 and Torgovnick 1990) that the non-Western female is often synonymous with the sexual. However, she notes that in the advertisements, models who are clearly light-skinned blacks are used as opposed to models who are dark-skinned. She proposes that although the Westerner desires to experience the "other", if the non-Westerner is too different it becomes frightening. Maggie moved to one of the most American-influenced towns in all of Mexico (except for Cancun). It was familiar to her both because she had been there on holiday before and because it was so much like home with its Baskin and Robbins ice cream, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Mrs. Field's cookies, and thousands of American tourists. Maggie was able to survive with relative ease in Cabo San Lucas even though she did not speak Spanish. Cabo San Lucas in many ways had all the comforts of home for Maggie. It was a "safe" other for Maggie but also for all the other women interviewed here.

Maggie, like Erin, perceived Mexicans to be more religious than Americans.

Although Maggie was raised in a Catholic home and in Catholic schools, she said she was not a believer. Though she may have not believed in it, there was a certain religiousness to her discourse at times. For example, “And I just think that even though I’m not religious, there are forces out there bringing people together who need to be together. I think that happened with you and me, and I also think that happened with Pedro because he needed somebody to pull him out of what he was going through and he deserved a chance and I think that I was down there to help him through that.” Though she maintained that she was not a believer, she emphasized the importance of religion. Pedro, she said, was familiar with Catholicism but he simply did not believe in it. She saw Reuben as being “more in touch with Mexican culture” because of his family background and religious beliefs. Maggie believed that Reuben also came from a better “family background”. Maggie perceived both to be a fundamental part of the value system of Mexican society. Though it is unclear exactly what Maggie meant by “in touch with Mexican culture”, it is probably fair to say that because Pedro did not believe in Catholicism and because he had lived without family on the streets for many years, Maggie thought that he lived a life that was not the typical “Mexican” life. In reality, it is probably Pedro that lives like the majority of Mexicans. Reuben, on the other hand, is part of a very small minority in Mexico, the privileged elite class, which can afford to live the life of leisure. Pedro’s life of temporary employment and homelessness is probably more characteristic of the Mexican mass.

But Maggie seems ambivalent about what “Mexican culture” means. Though she saw Reuben as being “more in touch with Mexican culture”, she said that only after she had met

Pedro did she “really learn about the Mexican culture.” Maggie’s understanding of Mexican culture was fluid and multi-layered; it changed depending on the context. Where Reuben introduced Maggie to the life of leisure in Cabo San Lucas, the long deserted beaches at the ranch, the weekend barbecues, (in many ways to the romance of Cabo), Pedro introduced her to the poverty and crime of Mexico. Pedro’s life, the drugs and the “fucking around”, were the basis for one part of Maggie’s understanding of what Mexico was about. It fit with the images the media in Southern California portrayed of Mexicans – the poor Mexicans who smuggle across the border illegally in search of wage labour in the fields of rich American farmers or the Latinos who smuggle drugs across the border. Though Reuben was also involved in the drug scene in Cabo San Lucas (see chapter five on Erin) and used drugs, he was more private about it. So much so that it is possible that Maggie was unaware of it. On the other hand, Reuben introduced Maggie to the Mexico that was promised in the tourism brochures – the romantic sunsets, the deserted beaches, margaritas by the seaside. Reuben conformed to some of Maggie’s other ideas on what it meant to be a Mexican, or more specifically a Mexican male. His charm and cultivated manner, his faith in Catholicism and his supportive family, combined with Pedro’s life of poverty, crime and drug use, confused Maggie’s understanding of Mexican culture and Mexican men.

Unlike some of the other expatriate women interviewed, Maggie did not move to Cabo San Lucas to join a Mexican boyfriend or lover; however, she became involved in relationships with Mexican men once there. Indeed, her narrative suggests that her experiences of living in Mexico were constructed almost solely around Mexican men. She

associated a number of different traits with Mexican men, some of which were mentioned by the other expatriate women. Maggie believed that Reuben was “dominating” and “controlling”, which are two pervasive stereotypes of Mexican men, epitomized by the *macho* Mexican man. Nicole and Erin described Mexican men in a similar fashion. And like Erin, Maggie was offended by the Mexican double standard for men and women. She resented the fact that she was expected (by both Reuben and Pedro) to remain at home while they went out to have their “own fun”. Her relationship with Reuben ended quickly, so it is hard to say how she dealt with this dilemma in their relationship. Perhaps she refused to play the role Reuben expected of her and thus, Reuben ended the relationship. However, I do not have access to this information so I cannot confirm this suspicion.

In Maggie’s relationship with Pedro, which lasted much longer⁷, I was able to observe how she dealt with this new expectation. It seemed to me that Maggie refused to conform to the traditional Mexican female role. Of all the relationships I viewed between Mexican men and North American women, Maggie seemed the most resistant to this role. She refused to stay at home while Pedro went out drinking with his male friends. If she stayed home, then Pedro also stayed home. There were times when Pedro stayed at home and Maggie went out but never did she sit at home while he was out having fun. Maggie seemed to maintain control over the relationship where other North American women either could not claim it or lost it. Like many of the other expatriate women, Maggie came to rely on Pedro financially but she was never as dependent as some of the others were (for example Nicole). This was clear from the number of times she flew home to California. As Zinovieff

(1991) discovered in relations between Western female tourists and “kamakia”, when a Greek man marries a foreign woman, he is capturing the “free woman” (one who travels away from home) and symbolically locking her in the home. She is expected to conform to the traditional Greek role of femaleness, wife and mother, whose territory is defined within the domestic domain. Maggie however, refused to conform and refused to give up her freedom of movement.

How was Maggie able to resist? Zinovieff (1991:219) adds that the only power that foreign women wield in such relationships is the ability to leave. Maggie and the others never lost their ability to fly home to Canada or the United States. As Zinovieff suggests, Maggie retains control because she is able to leave and has access to American dollars that enables her and other Western women to leave. It is the status of being an American or a Canadian that enables them to leave (and come) so easily. The Mexican government does not treat visiting Americans in the same manner as the Americans treat the Mexicans, or the Mexican-Americans for that matter. Americans can freely enter Mexico whether by foot, car or plane even if they do not possess the required tourist visa. Mexicans, on the other hand, who wish to visit the United States will face harassment, abuse and persecution at the border (see Anzaldúa 1987). There was always the threat of Maggie leaving if Pedro tried to force her into a role she did not want. It was a particularly powerful form of control since Pedro seemed truly terrified of losing Maggie. If Maggie mentioned returning to California, Pedro would become visibly upset. If he was arguing with Maggie at the time, he would immediately stop in order to appease her. In the end, when Maggie returned to California,

Pedro followed her. I asked Maggie if Pedro had obtained legal papers to be in the US, and she had replied that she didn't know and was afraid to ask. The relationship in many ways seemed to be more important to Pedro than it was to Maggie. Although she claimed to love Pedro, it never seemed to be with the same conviction as he had. Maggie's lack of commitment to the relationship also gave her power. Emotionally she was not as involved as Pedro seemed to be. This made it easier for her to leave.

As others have noted (see Cohen 1971; Bowman 1989; Zinovieff 1991), when non-Western men engage in sexual/intimate relations with foreign women it is often in hopes of gaining access to a Western country. It is a method of improving one's standard of living. If Pedro did see their relationship as an opportunity to improve his life, it is something of an irony, since Maggie believed that Pedro did not have desires to improve his life. This perception is related to the stereotype that defines Mexicans as trapped in a drudgery they are incapable of escaping. Perhaps Maggie believes that Pedro is powerless and unable to improve his circumstances. If so, he proves her wrong by pursuing work in California, whether legally or illegally.

Bowman (1989) and Zinovieff (1991) have argued that non-Western men symbolically conquer and/or "dominate" the Western world by dominating Western women (physically and sexually) in order to compensate for feelings of inferiority. Although that may be true for some Mexican men (Roberto for example in chapter five), I would argue that Pedro was almost powerless in his relationship with Maggie. In other instances where Mexican men were not able to maintain sufficient control (in other words, where their North

American girlfriend or wife refused to conform to the expected role), violence, both symbolic and physical, was used, for example with Nicole and Erin. But Pedro was never physically aggressive with Maggie.

He did revert to the symbolic violence of calling her derogatory names as other Mexican men had. Pedro also occasionally resorted to “screaming and yelling”. Maggie, like Elizabeth, considered bad “tempers” a Mexican trait also. She explained, “You can’t rationally just sit there and talk things through. It’s always an argument. It always has to be a big ordeal rather than just reach a decision.” On the odd occasion that I did see Pedro raise his voice to Maggie, her disapproving look always convinced him to immediately change his tone and to apologize; however, it is possible that it was my presence that discouraged him from getting angrier at her. Maggie would not let him treat her in any way that she perceived as being disrespectful.

The only way in which Maggie noticeably modified her behaviour to conform to the Mexican ideal of femaleness was in regard to control over the finances⁸. Although on many levels Mexican women might be considered subordinate, they often wield considerable “domestic power”. Gilmore (1990) illustrates a similar case in a study in Southern Spain. He defines domestic power as the “capacity to impose one’s will in decisions concerning sex relations, marriage, residence, divorce, and the lives of children (1990:955),” including the domestic economy. His analysis can be used also when looking at Mexican women. Traditionally in Mexico it is the woman who is responsible for the finances. Ingham (1986:59) writes, “Power in the home is reflected as well in the control she [the Mexican

woman] has over the family purse.” Accordingly, Maggie conformed to Mexican standards of femaleness only when it meant that she would gain power in the relationship or when Mexican standards were compatible with her own. It is worth mentioning that Gilmore (1990:957) and Zinovieff (1991) contend that the power that women wield in such circumstances partially results from kin networks, or the “domestic team” of married daughter and her mother. Maggie, like all the other expatriate women, was without kinswomen. Maggie, however, was able to maintain the power in her relationship based on her mobility (the threat of her leaving), which was a result of her access to American dollars and her status as an American.

As mentioned, Maggie eventually returned to California, to her job at the law firm. Fortunately, her American lifestyle remained secure even though she had in a sense, rebelled against it. I think that was what she saw in Pedro. He was her Johnny Rebel. She once said to me, “Pedro is my mother’s worst nightmare.” And her mother confirmed this during a brief conversation one day when I was calling to get Maggie’s new number in California; she told me that she could not see what Maggie saw in him. She and Maggie’s dad had gone down to visit Maggie in Cabo San Lucas and met Pedro. As far as she was concerned, Maggie had no future living in Mexico, nor with Pedro. She prayed it was just a phase that Maggie was going through. She asked, “What is it that you girls love about that place?” In part, I think what Maggie loved about Mexico, was that her mother could not understand what she loved about it. Pedro represented everything that her parents did not want for Maggie, not that Maggie really wanted what he represented either. She wanted to “spicen

up” her dull middle-class American life (Hooks 1992).

Did she succeed? Maggie did seem to accomplish what she set out to do. She wanted to experience something different and something new, more specifically a new culture. And as I point out in chapter one, it has been suggested that by experiencing another person, one can fully experience another culture. This seemed particularly true for Maggie, who was introduced to the cultures of Mexico through Mexican men. These relationships were fundamental to her experiences there and to her perceptions of Mexico. She was able to return to California, to her middle-class life, claiming that she had lived in Mexico and tasted the spice of life. Why was Maggie able to leave Mexico where the other women seemed unable to? I suspect that Maggie’s dream to fulfil was simpler, less complex. Perhaps the other women had bigger issues to work out at home while Maggie simply wanted to have fun, live a little dangerously. I also suspect that her relationship with both her parents and Pedro made it easier for her to leave. She was not trapped economically as Nicole was, nor did she have children. She maintained control over the finances and this seemed to give her a lot of control in their relationship. Maggie seemed to have quite a close relationship with her parents and I suspect that in the end, she did not really want to disappoint them.

Chapter Eight Conclusion

Cultural Experiences

The question, why people travel and vacation in other countries, has been explored by a number of different writers. What is it that we seek in travel? Underdevelopment theorists have argued that holidays simply provide recreation for workers to enable them to continue their tasks in the productive system (for example, see Britton 1987). Others, like Graburn (1989), have suggested that tourism is a “sacred journey”, a form of pilgrimage, where tourists seek a break from ordinary life, that is work, family, and responsibilities, and in place desire the non-ordinary, or the ritual (see also Turner and Turner 1978). MacCannell (1976), has drawn from anthropology, sociology and semiotics to create a “metacritical” study of modernity; more specifically, an ethnography of leisure that has been very influential in the study of tourism and travel. MacCannell suggests that tourism is a form of escape from the estrangement of postmodern society in which tourists seek “authenticity” or “cultural experiences” (MacCannell 1976; Urry 1988 and 1990). It is this latter theory that I wish to adopt for the purpose of this chapter.

Though MacCannell’s theory is applied to tourism and leisure, it is possible to apply it here to a study of expatriate women. I have argued throughout this thesis that these women

seek to fulfil dreams or fantasies in Mexico. Furthermore, I have suggested that these fantasies have parallel themes which are based upon stereotypical ideas of the male “other” and Mexico. They travel to Mexico initially in search of the promised dream – a romantic Latin lover. In chapter one, I suggested that the Mexican man is portrayed in the media and in tourism marketing as being romantic; he can make your fantasies come alive. Mexico is portrayed as an immaterial and mystic place. MacCannell argues that one of the effects of modernity is that people seek “naturalness”, mysticism, and the spiritual; or in Rosaldo’s (1989) words, they feel an “imperialistic nostalgia”; a nostalgia for what they (or the West) has destroyed through colonialism and imperialism (see also hooks 1992). As MacCannell writes, “For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere; in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles” (1989:3). As illustrated in chapter one, Mexico is portrayed in tourism brochures as deserted beaches, lush jungles, with an exotic Mayan past awaiting to be “discovered”; a place where your “dreams come true”. In other words, “authenticity” for expatriate women seeking to fulfil fantasy lives.

Adopting Goffman’s (1959) ideas of “front and back regions”, MacCannell further argues that authenticity, or reality, is found in “back regions”, where “*staged* authenticity”, is the “front” (1976:93-94). “Staged authenticity” is what the tourism industry offers to tourists who want to visit other cultures but who do not want to become part of them.

MacCannell maintains:

In our society, intimacy and closeness are accorded much importance: they are seen as the core of social solidarity and they are also thought by some to be morally superior to rationality and distance in social relationships, and

more “real”. Being “one of them”, or at one with “them”, means, in part, being permitted to share back regions with “them”. (MacCannell 1976:94)

Indeed, the field of sociocultural anthropology is based on the idea that close relationships have more meaning and offer more truth. Anthropologists seek the “back”, the authentic experiences rather than the staged. Anthropologists seek to become “one of them” so, as MacCannell argues, they can learn and live true “cultural experiences”. Perhaps the most important “rite of passage” in the field of anthropology is fieldwork: it is believed that only by spending a minimum of one year in the field will anthropologists be allowed access to the real lives of the community. Tourists observe other cultures but as anthropologists, we seek to explore and experience the “back regions” of others’ lives by participating and observing.

Likewise, I would argue, many of the women of this thesis have sought to experience the back region of Los Cabos, both symbolically, in the form of intimate Mexican lives, and physically, by inhabiting the non-tourist area of the town. In chapter two I described the spatial arrangements of the town Cabo San Lucas: divided into two separate parts, the tourist region and the residential, the “back” part of Cabo San Lucas. The tourist region is located on the waterfront and consists of stores, *bodegas*, dancing bars, and hotels. It includes Kentucky Fried Chicken, Baskin Robbins, and Hard Rock Café; all large, expensive American companies. In the back region however, are the Mexican restaurants which sell *las enchiladas*, *los tamales*, *el menudo*, and *tripa*. Most tourists rarely seek out this back region of town; they are content to remain within their sheltered multi-national hotels, which

serve them continental breakfasts in the morning. And often, tourists are criticized for seeking the “staged” rather than the authentic Mexico. Expatriates living in Baja California are careful to distinguish themselves from the tourists because the latter are looked down upon for not understanding, or not appreciating the “real” culture of Mexico. To be mistaken for a tourist is an insult for all expatriates because tourists seek, or are fooled by, the unauthentic: the Oaxacan pottery, the Mexican blankets, and the silver jewellery. Items that are constructed for the consumption of tourists, not the local Mexicans. Expatriates seek out the “real” Mexico; they seek to become “like them”. They dream of seeking improved lives through a “purer”, “natural” and “mystical” place.

I have illustrated through the narrative analysis that the expatriate women of this thesis also seek the authentic. Helen felt the “magic” of Cabo San Lucas; it was her “paradise”. Elizabeth compared it to the spirituality described in the popular novel *The Celestine Prophecy* (Redfield 1994), and liked the simplicity of life in Mexico. Maggie also desired the simplicity of living in Cabo San Lucas, although eventually the novelty wore off for her. Erin also made references to the “naturalness” of Mexico and Mexicans. Nicole was an exception; she claimed to dislike Cabo San Lucas, remaining there only for her children. But Nicole herself was half Mexican; and was always wanting to leave the back region of Cabo San Lucas. She was extremely angry when her ex-husband Emilio moved to the exclusive neighbourhood Cabo Bello to live with an ocean view while she had been denied that when married to him. Nicole had not romanticized life in Mexico, the poverty or the violence, as others had. However, her perception of Mexican men was similar to that of the

other women. There was a common thread that ran through all of the narratives regarding Mexican men: Mexican men are romantic, yet unfaithful lovers.

What is the significance of the Mexican male in their dreams? What themes run parallel through their fantasies? Though it would require another study to explore how popular culture and the media influence women's perceptions of Mexican men, it is plausible to propose that the complex array of images that women see, hear and read regarding Mexican men do in fact influence their illusions about Mexico. As I indicated in chapter one, there continues to be a scarcity of research that explores the "male sexual other". Though Said (1979) in *Orientalism* (see also Babcock 1992) argues that the Other is usually portrayed or seen as female, I would argue that in the case of Mexico the Other is portrayed as predominantly masculine, as the Latin Lover or Don Juan, and that it is the Mexican man rather than the woman that acts as a cultural symbol for Mexican identity.

The desire these women have for the natural, the mysterious and the spiritual is fulfilled, at least in part, by the men that they are involved with. If we look again at expatriate women's perceptions of Mexican men it is possible to understand what part the men play in their fantasies. The men are described as *macho*, violent, abusive, liars, unfaithful, romantic, generous, alcoholics, loving, dangerous, simple, unconcerned with material worth, sexy, and so on. The descriptive language employed by the women includes conflicting and shifting images. Foremost, we see the women describing the stereotypical Mexican man: *Don Juan*. He is romantic and lustful, yet he is also a heavy drinker and unfaithful to women. We see him everywhere; in "Harlequin" romance novels, on the

television, at the movies, in ethnographies, and we hear about him in songs, poems and on the radio. *Don Juan DeMarco: The World's Greatest Lover*. He is the desirable alternative for many women who have tired of the monotony and the tedium of “Northern” men; their lack of emotion, creativity, and spontaneity. The popularity of romance novels like “Harlequin” and those written by Danielle Steel are evidence. To be sure, the women have also described the violent and dangerous Mexican male, but he too can be exciting and erotic for women. Maryse Holder sought Mexican men who used and abused her ruthlessly until eventually she ended up dead (1979). For some, the appeal of the *other* is the very danger of it, or at least the perceived danger. Illicit and sinful men may be very desirable for some women. But it is not simply *Don Juan* that women desire; it is also the environment that is perceived to accompany him that they desire. They seek the perceived freedom from rules, the leisure, authentic “culture” in a postmodern era, excitement, danger, and unlimited sex.

Most of the women interviewed for this thesis had first travelled to Los Cabos for a vacation. The tourism brochures promise all that they desire and more: love, romance, culture, excitement, all that is lacking from their lives in Canada and the United States. While countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea manipulate the stereotypical image of the Asian woman to draw international tourists, especially male, it is simply the idea of romance that is used to lure people to Mexico. As I pointed out in chapter one, advertisements for tourism in Mexico often focus on romance and the fulfilment of romantic fantasies. The West continues to romanticize and eroticise the non-West, as they have done

historically.

Tourism marketing strategies exploit the needs and desires of people in the name of capitalism. They use, create, and reconstruct existing images of Mexico and Mexican people in order to create interest and desire. In combination with popular culture images, it makes for a very strong marketing campaign. Marketing for international tourism is brilliant and the statistics for international travel support this: approximately 425 million international tourist arrivals were recorded in 1990 worldwide (Harrison 1992:3). Mexico ranked tenth among the top earners in international tourism for 1986 (Harrison 1992:4).

And if MacCannell's theory is correct in that people seek "cultural experiences", then how better than through *another*? As hooks argues, it is believed that through the *other*, Westerners can experience the excitement, danger, and the thrill of otherness (1992). For the women of this thesis, the Mexican man is an ideal candidate for he is known as a romantic, in addition to representing a country that in the North is often stereotyped as primitive, idyllic, exciting, and paradisaical. It is through the "male sexual other" that these women seek and find "cultural experiences".

Disillusionment

It is, of course, impossible to fulfil dreams that are based on stereotypical images that are both static and constructed. Each woman interviewed here at one time or another felt disillusioned or unsatisfied with her relationship. The images or the stereotypes that the women come to Mexico with are flat, one-dimensional; but their experiences with Mexican

men are fluid, complex and continually shifting. Although Mexican male identity is often created by social scientists as fixed and static, his cultural and gender identities, like those of others, are continually shifting and being reconstructed (Gutmann 1996). As a result, the women are often left with entangled, ambivalent, and contrary experiences that do not fit into the expected nice, neat packages. As I pointed out in chapter one, the West constructs the images of the *other* that we are seduced by. Though it may be possible to live out fantasies during a short period of time (for example, a love affair during a one-week vacation), it becomes more difficult as the length of stay increases. When the romantic relationship becomes long-term, the difficulties of fulfilling a one-dimensional fantasy in a three-dimensional relationship become apparent. Because the fantasies are based most often on stereotypical perceptions of Mexican men, they are impossible to fulfil completely. A discrepancy results: the fantasy *Don Juan* versus the real Mexican male. The fantasy male is a static and conforming image but the real Mexican male is complex and contradictory. Although certain aspects of him may fulfill the fantasy, other aspects, for example the alcoholism and the abuse, may not coincide with the desired dream.

And there are other issues that further complicate the process of fulfilling fantasies. For some, what is originally different, new, and exotic will, with time, cease to be new or different and it becomes commonplace, ordinary and unromantic. In other words, what originally attracts us to an individual may in the long run be the trait that turns us away. In addition, short-term vacations offer a freedom from norms and cultural constraints that long-term stays do not. Once a woman becomes part of a community she is forced to conform to

local cultural standards of femininity. Vacationing Canadian and American women in Mexico drink alcohol excessively, dance the erotic tango with Roberto, dance on tables, swim nude in the sea, suntan topless, etc. However, few, if any, of these actions would be considered acceptable for a Mexican woman. Such actions would bring shame to the woman and thus, her family and/or husband. But for some North American women, being able to do these activities, not being constricted by their own cultural standards, is part of the fantasy they seek in Mexico. Although most of the women interviewed here were aware of Mexican standards of femininity, they felt (or hoped) that as Americans and Canadians they were excused from those cultural customs. As Enloe (1989) has argued, travel often offers women opportunities to transcend traditional gender boundaries and seek new, often daring, identities. If that is a part of the fantasy, then becoming a part of the community works against fulfilling the fantasy because again you are confined by cultural standards. In the case of Mexico, those cultural practices are even more confining and restricting than in the North, due to a long history of Catholicism and a state that confined women to the roles of wife and mother (Alonso 1995).

Additionally, I would argue that rarely does an *other* (in this case the Western traveller) ever gain true access to the “back” region. Anthropologists have likewise experienced that although you may be allowed to enter the “back region”, you never become “one of them”. You are always an outsider, identified by your language, the colour of your hair, or the shade of your eyes. The women interviewed here often felt excluded from Mexican society and from the lives of their Mexican partners. For Elizabeth, language and

different cultural understandings prevented her from becoming a real part of Manuel's life. In fact, different cultural meanings prevented each woman from experiencing a larger part of their male partners' lives and consequently, from fulfilling their fantasies.

"Negotiating" Gender?

The cultural meanings surrounding gender roles and identity were particularly troublesome for both the women and men and contributed to the disillusionment experienced by the women. Both the American and Canadian women and the Mexican men held culturally and personally disparate understandings of gender. Although it has been suggested that when travelling, women are able to experiment with gender roles, it appears that in instances where the women make more permanent moves such as this, the freedom to negotiate gender identity is more complex and is influenced by a number of different factors, namely, resources of power. As Western women living in Mexico they are continually faced with situations where they must either conform to local gender conventions or risk challenging the local gender order. The relations that these women share with Mexican men to a large extent determine the negotiation of their gender roles. Both the women and the men played significant roles in determining the extent of negotiation of gender roles. When compared to other cases, like that of Greek men and tourist women (see chapter one for Zinovieff 1991), I found that the women in this instance played a more decisive role in establishing their gender identities. Since Los Cabos is primarily a tourist resort catering to Westerners, if the women were not involved in intimate relations with

Mexican men, there would be less pressure for them to conform to the local expectations of femaleness. Although Enloe argues (1990) that women travellers are increasingly able to experiment with new gender identities challenging so-called traditional roles, this does not apply to the expatriate women of this thesis. Women who make permanent commitments are not as free to construct new, liberal gender identities because they will face community pressures and sanctions as do the local Mexican women. Instead their gender identities are negotiated with their Mexican partners but within the realm of the community's sanctions.

As I pointed out in chapter one, women are expected to conform to local expectations of femininity, yet as Western women they often found these roles confining and restricting. Whether or not each woman is actually able to "negotiate" her gender identity, as opposed to being forced into adopting an identity, depends fundamentally on the resources that they have. A woman with material, cultural and moral resources would be able to contest a Mexican female gender identity because the resources strengthen her negotiating position for a "Western" gender identity. Women who had fewer resources were in weak positions for negotiation. In fact, the negotiation process became more of a "succession" than a negotiation. If the women insisted on exploring non-traditional gender roles or were asserting their own culturally specific gender identity they found themselves being punished or ostracized. Abuse was one powerful means of controlling gender roles of North American women: Nicole and Erin reported physical abuse, others reported emotional abuse. In contrast to transient female tourists that I observed, women who become involved in romantic long-term relationships find it more difficult to experiment with gender

identities. Western women vacationing in Los Cabos rarely, if ever, seemed constricted by Mexican standards of femininity. They dressed in bikini tops and mini-skirts that were considered unacceptable by Mexican standards. Many American and Canadian women drank alcoholic beverages excessively and would become quite intoxicated. Many danced provocatively on table tops and left the dance bars with men they had just met. My observations of female tourists led me to believe that female tourists do not feel constricted or confined by Mexican gender roles. Rather, female (and male) tourists seemed completely oblivious to the fact that Mexico had different standards of behaviour for women.

Gender and power

The different cultural and personal understandings of gender give rise to the issue of power and control. In chapter one I adopted Lipman-Blumen's definition of power in which she argues that "the basic characteristic of the power process is an *on-going negotiation*, in which *resources* figure significantly" (1994:110). The relationships explored here are likewise characterized by an on-going process of negotiation where the resources of each actor play an important role. In this part of the final chapter I want to explore instances of power at work within the relationships more closely. Too often individual experiences of power are ignored in discussions of power and domination. What basis does power have in these relationships? What resources does each person have that enable her/him to control the relationship (cultural, moral, or material resources)? What are the social and cultural sources of power? Is there a struggle for power and control?

Most importantly, Mexican men have a culturally sanctioned base for power and domination. This is not to say that Mexican women do not; however the types of power are different. Mexican women often have “influence” rather than power. Or as Gilmore suggests in Southern Spain, women have “domestic power” which he defines as decision making in regards to issues that occur within the domestic sphere, or women’s domain, such as marriage, children, family finances, and sexuality (Gilmore 1990:955). In Mexico, the woman performs most of the domestic chores/tasks and is the primary caregiver and disciplinarian for the children (Ingham 1986:59; Lewis 1963). Her power and control, although considerable, is limited to the domestic realm. Men, on the other hand, have political power. Alonso argues that although Mexican women do exercise informal power, they are still “subordinated to patriarchal authority” (1992:172). Though some argue that this is no longer true, that the ways of Mexico are changing, research rarely supports this view. Gender relations in Mexico, that is male domination and female subordination, have long been structured by the state and the Catholic church. Behar (1989:181) writes “whatever power women do have is thought to be illegitimate, negative and disruptive.” Gutmann (1996) points out in his study in Mexico City that Mexican women do still occupy a subordinate position. He argues that most Mexican men “continue to benefit as a group from aspects of the subordination of women” even though “gender identities and practices are not fixed, automatic or predestined” (1996:23). Alonso maintains that the construction of gender in Mexico, both masculinity and femininity, is directly related to the formation of the state, not a universal dichotomy of women/nature - men/culture as others have suggested (see

Ortner 1974). The construction of gender in Mexico has a “long and complex history, one in which the church and the state have played key roles” (Alonso 1992:172; Zavella 1997). Furthermore, gender discourses in colonial Mexico were used by both the Mexican government and the Catholic church as a form of power, what Alonso calls “technologies of power”, to shape various aspects of Mexican culture, especially the construction of gender and sexuality (1995:90). For instance, virginity and motherhood had been “sacralized” by the state and used as a basis for power over reproduction. Gender construction in Mexico has been used by the state to enforce male dominated authority and control over women.

In Mexico the construction of masculinity is influenced profoundly by *machismo*. The ideology of *machismo* has been described as a political and social system which legitimizes the oppression of women, structuring gender relations (Lancaster 1992; Peña 1991). *Machismo* is often used as an explanatory device by social scientists researching gender and power relations in Mexico and other Latino cultures. However, often writers do not adequately explore the meaning of *machismo*, nor do they try to understand what produces *machismo* itself. Rarely is one presented with a thorough analysis of *machismo*. It is frequently equated with Mexican men, a stereotype of working-class Mexican men and sometimes with Mexican culture in general, representing a national symbol (Gutmann 1996:27) Anthropologists in particular have been responsible for creating a widespread stereotype of Mexican masculinity¹. Oscar Lewis’s research in Mexico has immensely influenced the way anthropologists think about Latin masculinity. As Gutmann (1996) notes, Lewis’s work is often used as a reference point for social scientists writing on gender and

family ideology in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Lewis's 1961 ethnography *The Children of Sanchez* in particular has been part of a dominant discourse on Mexican masculinity. As Gutmann (1996) illustrates, Lewis's work is often taken as the authority on Mexican masculinity, particularly the following three lines:

In a fight, I would never give up or say, "Enough," even though the other was killing me. I would try to go to my death, smiling. That is what we mean by being "macho," by being manly. (Lewis 1961:38; cited in Gutmann 1996: 231)

It is unlikely that Lewis meant to represent all Mexican men with these three lines, nor did he intend to promote a national stereotype of Mexican male masculinity. Behar notes that when Lewis's Spanish translation was received in Mexico, Mexicans were affronted by what they perceived to be an "exaggerated view of the role of violence and anger in Mexican life" (1993:277).

But Lewis has not been the sole commentator on Mexican masculinity. Paz (1985) is also referred to regularly as an authority on Mexican masculinity and cultural nationalism. Paz's depiction of Mexican men is similar to Lewis's in that he stresses the violence of Mexican masculinity but additionally focuses on the violent history of the mestizo when the Indian Malinche (or Marina), the Spanish colonialist Cortés' translator, became his lover and thus, gave birth to the first mestizo (1985:86-87). Paz draws an analogy between sexual intercourse and the colonial act, seeing both as a "conquest and violation" (Zavella 1997:393). Paz (1985:77) argued that "the chingón is the macho, the male; he rips open the chingada, the female, who is pure passivity, defenceless against the exterior world." Paz's

psychoanalytical characterization of Mexican maleness has been criticized by many for its simplicity and gross generalizations. Nonetheless, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* is often referred to in studies of Mexican masculinity, and certain scholars believe it is the best introduction to Mexican culture (Gutmann 1996:229).

A critique of the concept of *machismo* was written by Paredes (1971) who argues against the belief that *machismo* results from the historical encounter between the Spanish man and the Indian woman. Instead, he suggests that *machismo* traits are shared by men of many cultures including the United States. He further demonstrates that the word is a recent construct, directly tied to the pistol-carrying American cowboy (Paredes 1971:22).

More recently, writers have tried to offer more complex discussions on the origin of *machismo*. Peña (1991) argues that *machismo* is a result of class exploitation. Mexican men, he argues, oppress women because they feel powerless in an increasingly exploitative world. His study focuses on agricultural migrants working in California and thus is class-biased. He does not account for *machismo*-associated characteristics in middle or upper class men. Peña also fails to consider the historical context of *machismo* by limiting the discussion to working-class men in the late twentieth century and by not examining historical patterns and/or changes. Additionally, he fails to convincingly demonstrate why class conflict is transferred into gender hostility. He does however illustrate how “macho” behaviour, however oppressive and abusive it might be, is tolerated.

Lancaster (1992) in *Life is Hard* and Gutmann (1996) in *The Meanings of Macho* offer perhaps two of the most sophisticated analyses of *machismo*. Although Lancaster’s

study explores sexuality and machismo in Nicaragua, it offers insights into Latino male sexuality and male identity in general. Lancaster (1992:19) concludes that, “machismo is resilient because it constitutes not simply a form of ‘consciousness’, not ‘ideology’ in the classical understanding of the concept, but a field of productive relations”. Of course, machismo, like gender, is not a static and ahistorical phenomenon, but is historically and socially constructed so that variation exists between different societies². Gutmann’s (1996) study of Mexican men is the most useful for the purpose of this thesis since it is situated in Mexico City and explores how Mexican masculinity is related to family, sexuality, violence and *machismo*.

As a practice, machismo has been defined as a sexual and physical conquest which both constructs and promotes values (Lancaster 1992:40). Some scholars, Lancaster among them, suggest that ‘macho’ behaviour includes excessive drinking, gambling, womanizing, and physical and psychological violence against women³. They argue that the ideology of machismo commands that women be passive, and that they should be dominated and subjugated. Gutmann concluded from his study in Colonia Santo Domingo that the one trait machismo was most often associated with was domestic violence (1996:237). As a Mexican man, to be dominated by one’s wife or partner is to be feminized or deprived of your masculinity. Physical abuse is a tolerated means of keeping women in a submissive position. Violence, then, both physical and symbolic, is a source of power for Mexican men. It is a culturally sanctioned form of control, at least within the “culture of machismo”. Though it may be contested by some members of the society, and increasingly is, it

continues to be used as a form of power over women. Mexican men believe that women who do not obey or respect their husbands should be punished, physically if required (Ingham 1986).

The women of this thesis encountered a variety of violent experiences. For some, it was a central part of their experience while living in Mexico. Erin in particular encountered the pain and abuse of violence when she was raped and beaten by the young Mexican man. As she revealed her story during the interview it became apparent that the rape itself was not the only violence that Erin feared. Erin also felt apprehensive calling the police. She had hesitated to call them because of the fear that once she was at the police station she would again be raped by the police⁴. This view of the *policia* was not limited to Erin. I heard other women make similar comments. But whether or not this is a true representation of the Mexican *policia* or simply part of the stereotypical image of Mexicans that Western women absorb from the media, I cannot say. What is obvious is that the fear itself was real for Erin, as it was for others. The fear of corrupt *policia* in Mexico, and other Latin American countries, affects many lives, both male and female but as female Northerners, these women were particularly vulnerable. I too, as a female student from the North, encountered the *policia*, and felt the terror that other women reported in dealing with the Mexican police. The *policia* hold considerable power within Mexico and have reportedly misused that power. Although the Mexican government has promised to clean up the police, corruption (taking bribes for example) continues to exist. The *policia*, then, that is the male police, practice different forms of domination. Power is exercised through both structural dominance, for

example a male-dominated legal system, and physical dominance.

Physical violence was also central to Rebecca's relationship in Mexico. Though I have not devoted a chapter to her, she has influenced this thesis perhaps as much as the other women have. Rebecca was regularly physically assaulted by her Mexican partner, Ricardo. Her body often bore the signs; new and old bruises lined her frail, waif-like frame. When I would comment on the bruises, she would try to make excuses for him, telling me that he did not really hit her, just "shoved" her around. But she could not say that after removing her sunglasses when half her face was black and swollen from the beating Ricardo had given her in his car. She told me she had done nothing to instigate it; he had simply started hitting her as they drove down the road. Although cases such as Rebecca's occur in Canada and the US, hers is particularly telling because as a foreigner living in Mexico, Rebecca was without kinswomen or other support to help her in times of need. Had Rebecca been a Mexican female, she would have had kinswomen or kinsmen to protect her. Had Rebecca been living at home in California, she would have had family or access to women's shelters (although it does not necessarily mean that she would have used the services). In Mexico, however, as an American with no family, she was all the more susceptible to Ricardo's violent outbreaks because he knew that she had no brother or father or mother that would come to rescue her. Eventually Rebecca did leave Ricardo and returned to the United States but only after he broke her jaw.

The same situation existed for Nicole. She recounted that while living in Mexico City as a young woman, she was locked into her apartment by a Mexican boyfriend. This

confinement is also a form of violence, whether construed as physical or symbolic. In Nicole's case she was literally locked in the apartment, so that finally she decided to call a locksmith to get her out. Nicole was more fortunate, however, because she had a girlfriend who had an apartment where Nicole was able to hide from her boyfriend. She was then able to leave Mexico City temporarily and discontinue the cycle of abuse.

Rebecca and Nicole experienced domination in the form of physical violence. Violence, though, does not always have to be physical. As Kraus (1993:168) argues, domination can often take other forms, like symbolic violence or intimidation. Female tourists in Mexico often complain about the way Mexican men speak to them on the street, as did the women of this thesis. Such verbal comments to women are called *piropos*. Suárez-Orozco and Dundes (1984:113), who assert that the *piropo* "articulates a collectively held male fantasy on the nature of women", illustrate that *piropos* can be both complimentary and degrading towards women. The remarks that Mexican men make to foreign women are often sexual and degrading in nature, yet most tourists do not understand the comments because many do not speak Spanish. Women, especially those like Erin and Lisa who are fair-skinned with light hair colour, are bombarded with *piropos* that are often insulting and aggressive. For women who do understand the *piropos*, or when the *piropos* are spoken in English, walking down the street can become an experience of violation. Elizabeth and Maggie both commented to me on the stress that they felt walking down the street, especially in the evening. They found themselves quickening their pace, staring at the ground, and remaining silent as they walked by the young Mexican men who called out to

them as they walked by. The comments, and the tone they were delivered in, discouraged the women from walking the streets alone or at night. I am suggesting then that the *piropos* act as a form of domination, or control, over the women because they are so intimidating⁵. Though this type of intimidation was not directly an issue in the interpersonal relationships, it does have implications. It shaped the women's perceptions of Mexican men, and thus their partners. For many of the women, these verbal assaults are their first encounters with Mexican men.

Verbal abuse also occurs in interpersonal relationships. For women like Janet, a Californian woman married to a Mexican man, it also forms a central part of their experience of living in Los Cabos⁶. Janet's partner continually referred to her with derogatory terms, such as *puta* and slut, even though by any standards she was not. Her husband consistently abused her verbally, both in public and in the privacy of their home. It was particularly bad if Janet went out alone, even if it was just to the supermarket for groceries. The odd time that he and Janet would go out together with friends, he would end up telling Janet that she was worthless, that she was an American whore and a bitch. As a result, Janet rarely left their home. Although she was not physically locked up, as Nicole had been, the threat of being denigrated pressured Janet into staying within her domestic domain.

I have tried to show that violence, both symbolic and physical, is condoned, if not encouraged by the law of Mexico. But of course, Mexico does not exist in a vacuum, and thus, is influenced by a number of external sources. Perhaps most importantly, the geographical area under examination in this thesis is Los Cabos, an area devoted almost

entirely to the tourism industry. Each year the area is swamped with foreign tourists, whose values and ideas accompany them. Mexicans living in Los Cabos, because of continual contact with tourists, are very familiar with American values. They are quite aware of the wealth that exists in the world and naturally desire to possess some of it. Influences from the United States in combination with Mexican cultural values create conflicting and confusing expectations for the men and women in these relationships.

I would like to suggest that although machismo may be embedded within Mexican culture, supported and constructed by both the state and the Catholic church, and although it may be strongly influential in structuring gender relations, it is not impermeable to outside values or ideologies (Gutmann 1996). As a result, relations between men and women (both Mexican women and foreign women) in Mexico are complex and multifaceted. As the previous chapters have shown, each relationship is different, each couple experiences their relationship differently because there are so many variables. Though violence and domination of women may be culturally sanctioned, or at least forgiven, it does not necessarily mean that all Mexican men will practice it. And indeed they do not. As the interviews illustrate, many of the Mexican men were nonviolent. Machismo is just one, albeit dominant, source of power in these relations.

“Sexual Conquests”

Intricately connected to *machismo* and violence is the question of sex. Gutmann theorizes that “men’s sexual conquest of women” is a defining characteristic of machismo

(1996:237). Bowman (1989) suggested that in relations between Western female tourists and Arab men, the men employed sex as a means of domination over the women. He argued that Arab men sought sexual relations with Western women in order to assert dominance over the women, whom they perceived as symbolic representations of the “West”. Bowman interviewed Arab men who had sexual relationships with the Western women⁷. Their narratives of the encounters were imbued with aggressive and demeaning language. Bowman maintained that the men saw the sexual possession of the Western women as a way of asserting their power as marginalised “Third World” men. This argument is similar to Peña’s (1991) in that he argues that the domination of women is a consequence not of gender relations but of neo-colonial or class oppression. Bowman, however, does not adequately explain why the transfer of hostility occurs. Zinovieff (1991:215), along the same line, insists that in relations between Greek men and Western female tourists, the only real form of control and domination that the men maintain is sexual.

How important is sex in the relationships examined here? As a moral resource, the importance of sex as a means of control and power varied. Nicole and Roberto, Maggie’s husband, were two individuals who did use their sexuality as a form of control. Roberto’s employment as a dancer placed him in a position where he was able to use sex as a means of domination. As illustrated in chapter five, Roberto’s dancing was often aggressive and always sexual in nature, containing a contemptuous flavour. Yet it was rarely, if ever, questioned because it was considered appropriate within the context. It was only an “act” that he performed. The final dance that he performed, the Latino tango, was sexual and

aggressive in nature and has a long history within Latin American gender politics. According to Guy (1992:142), historically the tango was danced only by men because it was considered “too erotic” for women. When women were allowed to dance the tango, it was prostitutes that danced with the men because it was believed that tango dancing infected women (1992:144). The tango reflects traditional gender expectations in Latin America. Guy explains, “Like the waltz, the tango encouraged close embraces, but it could be described more as clutching that led to total female domination by the male dancer. Legs were used not only for movement, but also for the man to kick his partner in ritual fashion” (1992:142). Roberto’s nightly dance was more than simply a way to make a living – it was a ritual of male domination over female tourists. Roberto also used sex in another way which affected his relationship with Maggie more directly. He pursued numerous brief sexual relationships with female tourists and seemed to maintain quite a strong relationship with one of his ex-wives. *La casa chica* has been referred to by some as a social institution in Mexico whereby Mexican men maintain two households, or two women, at the same time; a type of “urban polygamy” (Lewis 1961; Gutmann 1996:140). It has historically been culturally sanctioned among all classes of Mexicans, under the rubric of *machismo* (Lancaster 1992; Gutmann 1996). Gutmann (1996) argues that it is a product of Catholicism which forbids divorce and predominates among the lower classes who cannot afford to arrange for divorces. In any case, it is a double standard where the women are discriminated against. Although it may originally have resulted from economic or religious factors, in Roberto and Maggie’s case it seemed simply to be a product of deceit and lust.

Nicole, as illustrated in chapter six, was a woman whose sexuality was fundamental to her identity. It was through sex that Nicole seemed able to resist the restrictions imposed upon her by her boyfriend and her ex-husband. Nicole would act sexually aggressive when she was out for dinner or at the dance clubs. She would flirt openly with men, even when her boyfriend, Fernando, was present. Fernando's discomfort with her behaviour seemed to have little effect on Nicole. Nicole would dress and dance provocatively, seducing men but always maintaining an emotional distance. She used her sexuality as a way to control men and as a way to resist the control of her partners. I would suggest, however, that women's sexuality in Mexico is not a sanctioned form of power and therefore does not grant women any more control than what they already possess in the form of domestic power. Though Nicole maintained a strong demeanour, inside she seemed to be suffering. At times I would find her feeling awfully sad even though she would always try to put on a strong front. I think she realized that even though she could feel empowered by the act of sex, she was never really in control. But for Roberto, sex did seem to be a legitimate form of domination. The reason that sex works as a form of domination and control for Roberto but not Nicole is because of the perception of women's sexuality in Mexico. Traditional Catholic doctrine has restricted women's exploration of sexual pleasure, especially premarital, and has urged women to maintain their sexual purity (Zavella 1997). Women in Mexico have been required to hold two distinct and conflicting roles – the sexual woman and the nonsexual mother (Castillo 1993; Zavella 1997). Traditional Catholic expectations for women to be chaste and pure are symbolized in Mexico by the Virgin of Guadalupe (Paz 1985). Zavella

suggests that the preference for sexual purity is a distinct Mexican trait not seen in Mediterranean systems of “Honor and Shame”⁸ (1997:392). It is difficult to embody both facets of the virgin/whore dichotomy, therefore women in Mexico are continually caught in a bind between two polarized ideals. And as Behar notes for Esperanza’s mother, women sometimes separate their “womanhood from motherhood” (1993:279). Although some women believe that they can use their sexuality as a means of power, for example through seduction, I would argue that the power is limited and temporary, especially in heterosexual sex. Women exploring their sexuality in Mexico find it more difficult than in Canada or the United States where sexual scripts and mores are more relaxed. Because female sexuality in Mexico is embodied with such contradictory and conflicting meanings, it is rarely used as a sanctioned form of power . It would have been particularly difficult for Nicole since she had attended a Catholic school in Mexico and, therefore, was not absolved from traditional Catholic beliefs that expected women to renounce sexual pleasure. Nicole’s sexuality provided her with temporary control which was not endorsed by the state or the Catholic church. As Behar points out, most women are denied “culturally legitimate authority” (1989:181). Female sexuality does not function as economic, political or ideological power in Mexico and therefore does not act as a resource for women.

Economic resources

Most often when we think of power and resources, we think of material resources rather than nonmaterial resources (Dubisch 1986; Warren and Bourque 1981). Definitions

of power most often illustrate asymmetrical access to material resources as the fundamental factor (see, for example, Frye 1983). In societies where women have active roles in resource production and/or control of distribution of the resources, it is assumed that they will enjoy increased positions and status that accords them power. When power is limited to the domestic sphere, it is no less real and, as Dubisch (1986:22) argues, it would be “ethnocentric” to ignore it. The issue of material resources has been central to the lives of the women of this thesis, primarily because the women have left situations where they had access to production and distribution of resources and moved to situations where they are denied access to production. This is not so much a result of the gender ideology as it is a result of immigration policy. Because the women are not Mexican citizens, they cannot pursue employment legally in Mexico without first obtaining an FM3, that is, a working visa. FM3's are relatively difficult to acquire unless you have a company sponsoring you and even if you do obtain one, you cannot work in the tourism sector⁹ (telephone communication with Sanchez, G., Consulate General of Mexico). An employer is only permitted to hire foreigners if a Mexican citizen cannot be found. In an area like Los Cabos that relies almost 100% on tourism, finding work can be difficult with or without the FM3. Elizabeth (see chapter three) was perhaps affected most by the sudden change in her ability to access and control resources. In Washington she had worked as a massage therapist; she had prided herself on being an independent women supporting herself. But with her move to Mexico she became almost entirely dependent upon her partner, Manuel. She had not acquired a working permit but still searched for work. She had brought her massage table with her and had hoped to set

up in one of the many large hotels. Unfortunately for Elizabeth, there were already a few massage therapists in town who could work legally so it was difficult for her to find work. As a result, Elizabeth became financially dependent upon Manuel, always needing to ask him for money if she wanted to buy something. Though she did have some money of her own, she relied on Manuel for most things. Elizabeth particularly said how dependent she had become with the move to Mexico and that it had resulted primarily because she no longer could work and support herself independently.

A similar situation arose for Nicole (see chapter six). She had married her ex-husband Emilio when she was quite young and uneducated, working as a model in Mexico City. After she married Emilio, she stopped working as a model and thus relied on Emilio for all material wealth. After divorcing, she still relied on him financially. The divorce settlement required that Emilio pay Nicole's rent for one year and that he buy her a new car. As a result of the divorce settlement Nicole had no income. Nicole searched for some work, but she had been used to living a life of leisure both before and during her marriage to Emilio and thus would only work in a position that held some status. With her new Mexican boyfriend, Fernando, Nicole ended up in much the same position as she had been with Emilio, relying on him for her material needs. With no economic resources of her own, Nicole was dependent upon the men in her life and consequently remained in a powerless position. Peña's (1991) article on Mexican agricultural workers in California perhaps illustrates this best. As one Mexican agricultural worker argued, it is a lot easier to leave an undesirable situation if you have access to a social system that supports you financially

(Peña 1991). Economic dependency is one of the main reasons why women in abusive relationships do not leave their partners. As long as a woman does not have access to production and distribution of material resources, it will be difficult for her to escape a situation of subordination.

Though some of the women in this thesis did become financially dependent, an equal number did not. Erin (see chapter four) was quite successful as a business woman in Mexico. She and a Mexican male partner had opened a tour company in Los Cabos which Erin seemed to run quite efficiently. And even before establishing the tour company, Erin almost always made more money than her partners because she worked for Canadian tour companies¹⁰. It was Erin who had access to production of material resources. She paid the rent, had her own car and had a continual income. Her Mexican boyfriends relied on her for financial comfort. This reversed the situation so that it was the Mexican men in Erin's life who were dependent. Even the women who claimed to have no income of their own had access to some material resources simply because they were citizens of Western countries and came from relatively wealthy families. Elizabeth, Nicole, Erin, and Maggie could at any time call on their family in the USA or Canada for financial help if needed. All of the women were able to fly home periodically to visit family. Most often it seemed these trips would be paid for by the family rather than the partner. This was definitely an important source of power for the women. At any time, with or without the permission or assistance of their partners, they could return home. It acted like an emergency escape route; it was always there if they needed it.

It is not just the economic resources that influenced the women's position within the relationships; in part it was simply the threat of being able to leave. As Zinovieff illustrates (1991) in relationships between *kamakia* and foreign female tourists, it is the woman who leaves the man to return to her normal way of life, while the man remains behind, waiting for the next relationship to occur. Although the women may have chosen to stay in Mexico, they have the resources to leave the men and return to their native homeland. It is the women who control the "fundamental conditions" of the relationship, i.e. arriving and leaving, not the men (Zinovieff 1991:215). As others have noted (see, for example, Meisch 1995; Pruitt and LaFont 1995; and Zinovieff 1991), the Western woman is often desired as a romantic partner. The question why non-Western men desire Western women has been the topic of many papers: suggestions have included material reasons (gifts and plane tickets), status and prestige among friends, escapism (migration to the West), sex, and the desire for the "different" (Bowman 1989; Cohen 1977; Karch and Dann 1981; Meisch 1995; Wagner and Yamba 1986). Most likely it is a combination of all these factors, differing among individuals. Mexican men also seemed to desire Western women as intimate and sexual partners. Migration and material wealth rarely seemed to be factors since most couples settled in Mexico and rarely did the income of the female raise the status of the male. Instead I would suggest that the desire for "difference", that is blonde-haired and blue-eyed women, might be a motivating factor as suggested by Meisch in a Peruvian study (1995). Ethnicity then, acted as a source of power for the women. The men's preference, or their *desire*, for Western women acts as a resource for the women, but on the other hand, it also

works as a resource for the men, since the women actively seek Mexican men.

Emotion as a resource

The final resource of power that I want to examine here is *love*. There is a tendency when talking about issues of power and domination, especially in regard to gender and class, to generalize about abstract phenomena and to ignore the personal and individual aspects of power; to ignore how power is experienced by individual people. In intimate relationships between individuals, love figures significantly. But how does such an abstract phenomenon fit into an analysis of gender and power? Love can be perceived as a form of property – “emotional possession” (Randall 1995:46). People often understand love as being a right that people secure over others’ emotions. The discourse surrounding love illustrates this: “She’s mine.” “I’ll be yours forever.” “Will you be mine?” Ideally, love is supposed to be equal between two people but this is rarely the case. Women and men often play psychological games with each other over who is more in love with the other. Love, then, is like other forms of property that can be used as a resource for power and domination. In the relationships examined here, emotional possession influences the relations of power. For Nicole, her denial of emotions for men acted as a form of power. If she did not care for them, yet they fell in love with her, then she would be the one in control of the relationship. Maggie also seemed to remain emotionally detached from her partner Pedro, while he seemed hopelessly in love with her (see chapter eight). For the other women, love played a principal role in their decisions to move to Mexico. Elizabeth moved to Los Cabos, leaving

behind her massage therapy practice, because she felt an “immense love” for Manuel. In situations such as this, the male is able to use emotional possession as a leverage within the relationship.

Love can also be used as a form of power when children are involved. Helen and Nicole were both mothers to children of Mexican fathers. This must have been a significant factor influencing their ability or desire to leave. And, in fact, Nicole had said that one of the reasons she did not leave Cabo San Lucas and return to California was because of her two sons. After her bitter divorce she and her husband had been awarded joint custody but Nicole lacked the financial resources to take care of the children and therefore, Emilio ended up taking care of Saúl and Miguel most of the time. In a sense, then, Nicole’s love for her children inhibited her from leaving a situation that she frequently described negatively.

Helen, on the other hand, was still living with Roberto and had only shortly before given birth to their son Patrick. If she chose to leave Roberto most likely she would have been awarded custody of their son. According to Mexican domestic policy women are usually given custody of the children after a divorce because of the cultural significance of mothers in Mexican society (telephone communication with Sanchez, G., Consulate General of Mexico). She would be able to return to the United States with their son legally only if Roberto agreed. Since she sporadically returned home to visit her parents with Patrick and since Roberto had other children with other women, I would assume that Roberto would not have objected to Helen permanently returning to the United States. Helen did not say anything to suggest that Roberto used Patrick as a source of power in their relationship, yet

it is possible. Children often complicate difficult relationships. Both men and women often stay in unhappy marriages for the sake of children. And frequently parents use the children as a source of power to keep the other partner or spouse from leaving the relationship. Children, or the love for children, could therefore also be considered a resource of power for expatriate women even though Helen and Nicole did not discuss the full impact their children had on their experiences and their relationships.

Conclusion

I have tried to illustrate that within personal relationships there exists a wide range of resources that affect relations of power. Too often we overlook the individual experience of power, instead creating grand generalizations about structures of oppression. Every relationship is distinct, and people have differential access to resources, so that it is very difficult to say that *machismo* structures relations in such a way that men are dominant and women are subordinate. Although *machismo* does influence relations within Mexico, it is not the sole influence. There are a number of resources, moral, cultural, and material, that affect relationships.

The relationships examined here between Mexican men and North American women, as Dubisch (1995) argues, reverse dominance relations between the male and the female. I have tried to illustrate that, as a consequence, the men looked to other forms of control and power, such as the culturally sanctioned *machismo* to gain and retain dominance in the relationship. In return, some of the women were forced into subordinate positions

within their relationships which left them feeling unsatisfied and unhappy. Gender roles are continually shifting but rarely negotiated, as they might be during temporary travel. Women are most often expected to conform to local standards of gender identity. Nonetheless, women are not without control and power within these relationships – they, too, have resources to draw upon, and sometimes these resources are quite influential. As is true in most relationships, both partners have access to resources that influence the relations of power.

An important question remains: Why do these women endure physical, verbal, and sexual violence when they have the resources to leave the situations and return to Canada or the United States? Unfortunately I have been unable to answer that question here. Perhaps an inquiry into how these women view Canadian and American men would offer some insight on to why they remain in Mexico when others would have left. It is also possible that I have not taken into account other factors in their lives that shape the decisions they make about whom they live with.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The film was an adaptation of the novel "*Como agua para chocolate*" written by Mexican author Laura Esquivel (1989).
2. In "*Generation X: Tales of An Accelerated Culture*", Coupland writes about the desire of young Canadians and Americans to escape to Baja California to seek less materialistic and more mystical lives (1991).
3. These are manufacturing plants, or "offshore production" factories, that import raw materials and export finished products to the United States, usually in the form of electric, electronic, and textile garments (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). In-bond manufacturing has recently experienced a growth in Mexico since NAFTA was passed. Also known as *maquiladoras*, these factories are located throughout Mexico but a large percentage are located along the Mexican-American border. Multinational corporations such as Sony, Nike and GE exploit Mexican labourers, usually women, paying them an average wage of five dollars a day for approximately twelve hours of work. The working conditions are reported as dangerous and often toxic. These companies have also been targeted by environmental groups because of the extreme environmental degradation that they cause. For more information see Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Tiano 1994; and Wilson 1991.
4. Torgovnick argues that primitive is synonymous for "savage", "pre-Columbian", "tribal", "third world", "underdeveloped", "developing", "Archaic", "traditional", "exotic", "the anthropological record", "non-western", and "Other" (1990:21).
5. Meisch argues that in the case of "gringos and Otavaleños" there is a "*mutual fascination*" [italics added]. The Otavaleños, the Peruvian Indians, find gringos, especially blondes, to be "unusual and exotic" (1995:451).
6. The film *Winter Tan* is an adaptation of the book *Give Sorrow Words*, produced in Canada.
7. The women involved in this research were from Canada, the United States, France and England. The five case studies presented here, however, include women from the United States and Canada only.
8. As Moreno (1995) states, "An acute problem for female anthropologists, like myself, is that members of the host society may force us into local gender order, in precisely the

same way as local women, who unwittingly or wittingly provoke and challenge the existing order, are punished and brought into line” (1995:219).

9. Historian Martha Hodes (1993) also explores sexual relations between European or white women and Black men but from a historical perspective.

Chapter 2

1. See Harrison 1992 for information surrounding the effects of tourism on employment. He also points out that it has been suggested that the contribution to employment has been exaggerated (1992:15).

Chapter 3

1. Elizabeth is referring to her feeling of dependency.

2. Presumably Elizabeth wanted to put the tub “outside” because there wasn’t room inside for one.

3. A common ailment for international tourists on holiday in Mexico is stomach upset, more commonly known in Mexico as “Montezuma’s Revenge”. Apparently stomach ailments are the result of picking up parasites that exist in the water. This results in a number of symptoms, most notably, diarrhea. Hence, *donde esta el baño?*

4. Most Mexican men hold a stereotypical view that Western women are “easy”, meaning their moral standards regarding sex are far less strict than those of the local women, and thus the men are eager to pick up these women (tourists) at the bars.

5. Most of the women I interviewed were more educated than their Mexican partners but this did not appear to be an issue. However, Elizabeth was the only woman interviewed that was hoping to use her education while in Mexico.

6. In some sense, Mexico may be portrayed accurately by the media – the majority are impoverished, there is extreme environmental degradation in certain areas, and there is corruption within the state but to assume that these characteristics apply to all Mexicans would be like saying that all American women are “easy”.

7. Perhaps the idea that North American women are sexually liberal becomes exaggerated because of the *place*. In general, people on holidays are more apt to perform or engage in

activities that they would not at home because they are free from the constraints of their own culture. This has been noted in particular reference to women who travel (as noted earlier in the introduction). Where at home they may have concerns about being named a “slut” or “tart” for sleeping with a relative stranger, in Mexico they are free to do so because no one will know. A saying I heard repeatedly in Mexico was, “what goes in Mexico, stays in Mexico”. Meaning, “your secrets are safe in Mexico”. So North American women often engage in activities that you would assume most of them are not doing at home. See also Ortner 1996.

Chapter 4

1. Cabo San Lucas attracted many single individuals from large cities like Tijuana, Mexicali and Guadalajara. I suspect what Erin means is that even though Cabo San Lucas has many more single individuals than families, like those she knew through Rotary, one still feels like they belong to a “family”.

2. He was offering to set up Erin in a second household, or *la casa chica*, as it is called in Mexico.

3. Occurrences such as this are either rare in Los Cabos or never revealed because other than Erin, I was unaware of any sexual crimes committed against foreign tourists. I suspect that it was rare. Mexicans that I spoke to were very aware that the success of tourism depended upon a certain reputation. If crime became too much of a problem then tourists would stop vacationing there. But at the same time, that would equally give Mexican officials reason to keep any such events from public knowledge.

Chapter 5

1. This is a fairly common response among Americans in the Southern US today. The conservative political climate in the United States seems to have increased anxiety and distrust of Mexicans crossing the border in search of work. See Anzaldua 1987; Cisneros 1991; Dwyer 1994; and Nathan 1991.

2. This was related either to Roberto’s ex-wives or to problems relating to drug use.

3. See Meisch (1995) on the attraction of Peruvian men to fair, blonde female tourists.

4. Aside from having the normal colds and influenzas of childhood, I suspected that Patrick had a more serious problem. I was almost convinced that Patrick suffered from

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Though I never confronted Helen with this possibility, I suspect she was aware of it.

5. Bowman explored sexual relations between Arab men and foreign women and concluded that, the sexual act for the men, seen as a form of domination over Western women, is metaphorically an act of domination over Western men and the West in general (1989).

6. I did not observe Roberto interact with Mexican women so I am unable to state whether or not he treated them as he did the North American women.

7. The Giggling Marlin was owned by a very wealthy American couple.

8. One can assume, though, that the foreign women Roberto was sleeping with were aware at least in part what Roberto was like. Many people in town thought of him as the town gigolo. These were hardly naive, young women “falling in love” with Roberto. It would be safe to say that these women were also looking for brief sexual encounters, like those documented in both the sex-tourism and romance-tourism literature. See hooks 1986.

Chapter 6

1. This interview was recorded just two months after Nicole and Emilio’s divorce. Nicole was still feeling very bitter about the divorce and this shows in the interview.

2. It was difficult for Nicole to admit this. I suspect because she did not want her son Saúl to know that she had once contemplated not having him.

3. Initially Nicole explained that she had *one* relationship during this period of separation from Emilio. Then she remembered there had been one other. Then later she added a third. I suspect, knowing Nicole well, that there may have been more.

4. Gossip was rampant in Cabo San Lucas. I am sure many people knew about Nicole and Scott’s relationship, as well as the other men she had been with.

5. Whether or not Nicole was given this much support from the local police department is hard to say for sure, but it seems unlikely in light of her complete story.

6. The restaurant brought in American dollars primarily as opposed to the peso which continually decreased in value. The waiters, who generally worked 10 to 12 hour shifts,

six days a week, were paid the equivalent of five US dollars a day (not including tips). Presumably, with low costs, Emilio was making a substantial amount of money.

7. These were like food stamps. Nicole still received them from the company, not Emilio, even though she was no longer married to him, because her family had been friends for many years with the original owners.

8. About one week before I left, Nicole received the car she had been promised. A new red Volkswagen Bug (still made in Mexico).

Chapter 7

1. Maggie was unaware of the restrictions on foreigners working in Mexico and, therefore, thought it would be relatively easy finding work.

2. Although Maggie loved to go out in the evenings, she didn't spend much money. She rarely drank unless someone offered to buy her a drink.

3. This is average pay in Mexico.

4. Pedro, like Roberto, made money during the dance show from tips. When Roberto started getting paid by the owners of the Giggling Marlin, he paid Pedro and the other dancers a fraction of his wages.

5. If Pedro was dealing drugs, I suspect it was not very often and that he was not making much money.

6. Maggie saw her family upbringing as "middle-upper class".

7. Her relationship with Pedro lasted for about one year. For the first eight months they were in Cabo. The last four months of the relationship was in California, after Maggie had moved back and Pedro accompanied her in search of work.

8. It may be that Maggie's behaviour was consistent with the Mexican standard and therefore she did not change at all.

Chapter 8

1. For a comprehensive discussion of the influence of the social sciences on the

stereotype of Mexican men, see Gutmann 1996.

2. For an examination of cross-cultural variations of machismo see Gilmore and Gilmore 1979.

3. See also Mirandé 1988 and Bolton 1979.

4. In Los Cabos the *policia* was dominated almost exclusively by males, although in other areas of Mexico, especially Mexico City, women are more equally represented.

5. See Gardner 1980 for an examination of American construction workers and “cat-calls” as a form of domination.

6. I have not discussed Janet in earlier chapters, but she was a source of information in the field.

7. Bowman does not offer any view on the meaning of the sexual act for the women, claiming that as a male ethnographer he did not have access to this intimate information.

8. For example, see Herzfeld 1980 and Gilmore 1990 .

9. Unless, like Erin, you open a business with a Mexican partner, thus creating work for Mexicans.

10. With an exception of Reuben who may have been making a considerable profit illegally.

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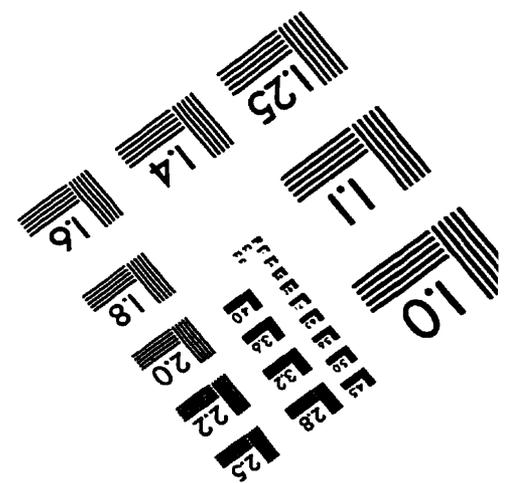
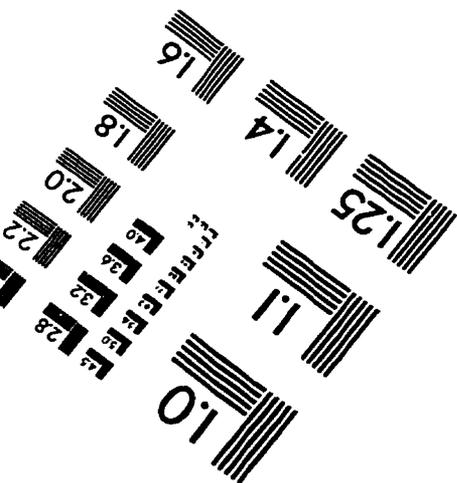
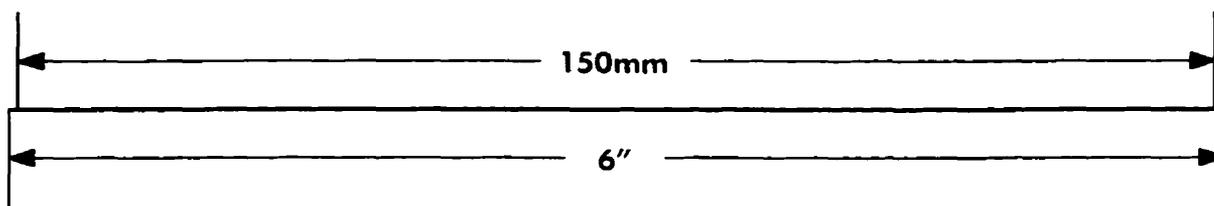
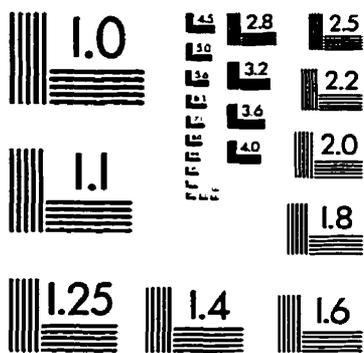
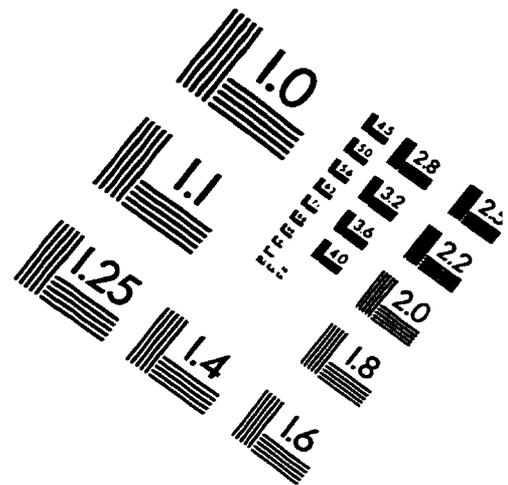
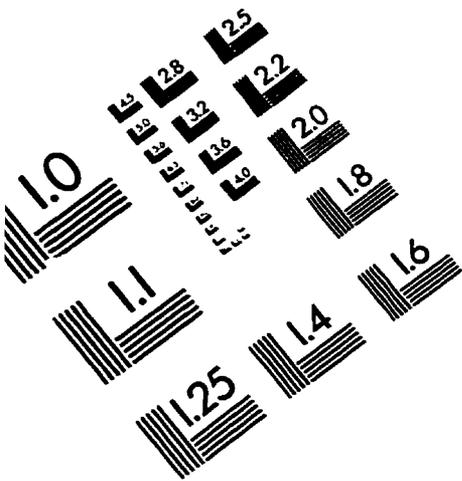
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