Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining La Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936.* Duke University Press Durham and London, 2008. Paperback $23.95.

Joanne Hershfield, Chair of the Department of Women's Studies at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill investigates modernity in Mexico, focusing on post-revolutionary Mexican women as they were envisioned in popular culture from 1917 through 1936. She argues that Mexican films, and other pictorial illustrations that appeared in a variety of genres and forms of popular visual culture that circulated towns, cities, and villages of Mexico shaped people's understanding of Mexican modernity.

The book is divided into five chapters, beginning with Mexico's transformation from a rural, agricultural society to a cosmopolitan, European-style urban centered country. This period was influenced by army general Porfirio Diaz who seized power in 1876, hoping to modernize Mexico under a banner of "peace, order, and progress" driven by capitalism and rational management. Public discussions about gender often focused on women's fashion, provoking heated debates criticizing and celebrating the modern woman's appearance. Articles and advertisements in the popular press advised women on what to wear, how to apply makeup, and how to keep their bodies slim and healthy. Cinema also played a role in altering women's perception of what was fashionable: Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford's wide shoulder and slender hip silhouettes were widely adopted by middle class Mexican women as expressions of their own changing lives.

Along with notions of women's physical appearance came attempts to domesticate *la chica moderna*. The conditions of modern women's everyday life were defined by marriage, motherhood, and homemaking, structures that were intimately and forever connected. What was different for Mexican women of this time was that these structures were centered on the ideology of Mexican nationalism and the framework of consumer capitalism. By 1900, the culture of consumption was intertwined with the culture of domesticity; women were now not only concerned with cooking and cleaning, but they were also responsible for overseeing the consumption of material goods that would benefit their home and family. The private space of the home now assumed a more important social role as wives and mothers were persuaded to purchase the necessary items to make their homes attractive centers of family life.

The chapter on working women examines two photographs; one of two typists being timed by their male supervisor, and the other of a group of *lavanderas mexicanas*, or Mexican laundresses. Both photographs are examples of how women's labor was imagined in Mexican visual culture. Both images differentiate between the type of work assigned to the lower and middle classes. The photograph of the typists designates clerical work for the middle class, apparent by the dress, body type and demeanor of the models. The laundresses, on the other hand, range in age from teenagers to grandmothers. Their dress is a mixture between traditional and contemporary, and their long hair is worn braided due to long-established custom, indicating that laundering clothes were for lower class women. Both photographs represent the contrast between the traditional and the modern, and the wealthy and the poor.

Hershfield analyzes advertisements, newspapers, postcards, film, photographs, and journals to offer a glimpse into the world of women in post-revolutionary Mexico. Visually intriguing and easy to read, *Imagining La Chica Moderna* offers insight on this topic to a general audience. Film, fashion, history, gender, and culture are all aspects that make this book appealing to vast audiences. Finally, this book bridges gaps in the history of modern Mexico by emphasizing how national ideologies manipulated every aspect of women's lives in order to materialize *la chica moderna*. Fashion, homemaking, and childrearing were central to the formation of women's identity. Hershfield's analysis of the production, circulation, and use of popular culture demonstrate their political power in shaping women's identity.

Monica Valenzuela