El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex (René Cardona 1969): El Santo, sexploitation films and politics in Mexico 1968

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***El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex* (René Cardona 1969): El Santo, Sexploitation Films and Politics in Mexico 1968**

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Keywords:	sexploitation, adult films, Mexico, 1968, student movement
Abstract:	<p>Taking a cue from Eric Schaefer (2005) and Linda Williams (2008) whose work underlines the value of studying sex/adult films and sex in films as a significant part of cultural and social histories, this article explores the production and subsequent disavowal of <i>El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex</i>, a Mexican erotic film and alternate version of popular horror/wrestling hybrid Santo en el tesoro de Drácula/Santo and Dracula's Treasure made 'only for export' in 1968. The article analyses how <i>El vampiro y el sexo's</i> 'dirty parts' might signify in the context of dominant and counter cultural values in Mexico in 1968: particularly in relation to its emergent student movement and the repressions imposed by the country's politically authoritarian regime. The article explores <i>El vampiro y el sexo</i> as part of an upswing in production of sexy films, analysing the textual and political reasons why softcore, alternate versions like <i>El vampiro y el sexo</i> were deemed problematic enough to determine them for export only whilst other sexy films could be shown with an 18 rating.</p>

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El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex (René Cardona 1969): El Santo, Sexploitation Films and Politics in Mexico 1968

[8798]

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***El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex* (René Cardona 1969): El Santo, Sexploitation Films and Politics in Mexico 1968**

Taking a cue from Eric Schaefer (2005) and Linda Williams (2008) whose work underlines the value of studying sex/adult films and sex in films as a significant part of cultural and social histories, this article explores the production and subsequent disavowal of *El vampiro y el sexo/The Vampire and Sex*, a Mexican erotic film and alternate version of popular horror/wrestling hybrid *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/Santo and Drácula's Treasure* made ‘only for export’ in 1968. The article analyses how *El vampiro y el sexo's* ‘dirty parts’ might signify in the context of dominant and counter cultural values in Mexico in 1968: particularly in relation to its emergent student movement and the repressions imposed by the country’s politically authoritarian regime. The article explores *El vampiro y el sexo* as part of an upswing in production of sexy films, analysing the textual and political reasons why softcore, alternate versions like *El vampiro y el sexo* were deemed problematic enough to determine them for export only whilst other sexy films could be shown with an 18 rating.

Keywords: sexploitation; Mexico 1968; adult films, student movement

In the opening essay to Volume 14 of his epic *Historia Documental del Cine Mexicano* (1995a) eminent Mexican film historian Emilio García Riera, describes 1968 as a year of contrasts for Mexican cinema between an ‘increasingly degraded [commercial] cinema’ and one made ‘with a free, innovatory spirit.’ This ‘free, innovatory’ cinema is the ‘cine de autor’ – the auteur cinema of the emerging Nuevo Cine movement including Felipe Cazals, Arturo Ripstein, Jorge Fons and others (1995a, 7). The commercial cinema, García Riera points out, makes up the majority of productions for the year and consists mostly of comedies and melodramas. Most significantly (for the purposes of this essay) 1968 sees the ‘eroticization of a conventional [read commercial] cinema,’ that was, for García Riera ‘more interested in finding box office formulas to pander to the vulgar tastes of the naughty middle-classes rather than maintaining family values’ (1995a, 8). García Riera is referring here (somewhat prudishly) to the fact that the majority of productions (34 out of about 54 regular productions) received a C (for 18 years and older) or D (for 21 years and older) classification for their ‘female nudity’ (1995a, 8): melodramas such as *Al rojo vivo* (*Red Hot*, Gilberto Gazcón) *Sexo y crimen* (*Sex and Crime*, Alberto Mariscal) *Claudia y el deseo* (*Claudia and Desire*, Miguel Zacarias) and sexy comedies such as *24 horas de placer* (*24 Hours of Pleasure*, René Cardona) and *La cama* (*The Bed*, Emilio Gómez Muriel) many of which were directed by René Cardona and starred Mauricio Garcés. García Riera suggests that the ‘daring’ qualities of these films were very much about ‘emulating an increasingly bolder foreign cinema.’ (1995a, 8)¹

The ‘bolder foreign’ cinema to which García Riera refers is likely that of the United States where, as Eric Schaefer argues in the introduction to *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution* (2014), 1968 is a year that sees a spike in the production of media images of sex ‘from mainstream movies, to sexploitation and art house’ and in the venues for their exhibition. ‘Sexploitation movies were playing everywhere:

downtown grind houses, neighborhood theaters, exclusive urban showcases, drive-ins' (2014, 10). Schaefer and Linda Williams (2008) connect this rise in images of sex to societal and political shifts of the late 1960s –the sexual revolution² and a mood of dissent which links sex with the larger goals and activities of the counterculture (antiracism, anti-war, anti-capitalism and anti-patriarchy) (Schaefer 2014, 3; Williams 2008, 8). García Riera however, disavows any similar equation between sex and politics in Mexico suggesting instead that commercial factors and external markets are responsible for the eroticization of Mexican cinema, even though at the time Mexico was also experiencing, through the nascent student movement, its own political upheaval and emergent counterculture. In rejecting the relevance of low brow popular genres, including sexy films as purely commercial or the product of foreign influences and embracing the 'cine de autor' of the Nuevo Cine movement as reflective of the national zeitgeist, García Riera takes up a position that reflects the cultural biases of the majority of dominant Mexican and indeed Latin American film scholarship and criticism. Most Latin American film criticism follows a 'prescriptive' rather than descriptive idea of 'national cinema,' writing the continent's national film histories according to art cinema models (in the case of García Riera's essay on Mexico 1968 the auteur cinema of Cazals, Fons and Ripstein) and dismissing the sexy comedies, adult films, and other commercial and popular cinemas, even though these films generally attracted the majority of cinema audiences (Tierney 2004; Syder and Tierney 2005, 35; Ruétalo and Tierney 2009).³ García Riera's position contrasts with that of Schaefer and Williams who underscore the value of studying sex/adult film as part of 'the cultural story of the movies' and as a means of 'engag[ing with] a larger field of: contextual issues: [...] not to mention 'the three ps' politics, power and pleasure' (Williams 2008, 9; Schaefer 2005, 89).

However, although García Riera dismisses *Al rojo vivo* and the other erotic films of 1968 as ‘degraded’ cinema, he does not completely ignore them. (1995a, 7). *Al rojo vivo* and the other 1968 films given a C and D rating are included (pruriently it seems) along with many of their lurid film stills and posters throughout Volume 14 of the *Historia Documental*. This at least acknowledges that, although disparaged and rejected in terms of relevance to the national picture, these erotic films form part of Mexico’s cinematic history which is the key endeavour behind the eighteen volumes of the *Historia Documental*—to give a documented and documentary history of every film produced in Mexico between 1929 to 1976. However, despite these intentions, still largely omitted from Volume 14, are four other erotic films produced in Mexico in 1968; *El horror y el sexo* (*Night of the Bloody Apes*), *El asesino y el sexo* (*The Murderer and Sex*), *Blue Demon y las seductoras* (*Blue Demon and the Seducers*) and *El vampiro y el sexo* (*The Vampire and Sex*). As the titles suggest, *El vampiro y el sexo* et al. are sexploitation films. In actual fact, they are repackaged versions of four popular horror/wrestling hybrid films⁴ with added sex and nudity.

The reason why the sexploitation versions of the horror/wrestling hybrids are mentioned only in passing is because, as García Riera states, they were made ‘sólo para exportación’ – for the export market only (1995a, 141).⁵ But why, we may wonder, were these sexy films made ‘sólo para exportación’ and not able to be shown with a C or D rating in Mexico like *Al rojo vivo* or *La cama*, particularly in a year where, as the figures García Riera supplies show, a majority of the cinematic product had some erotic content and, judging by the long runs of some of these films in Mexico City cinemas⁶, audiences were demanding it.

Taking a cue from Schaefer and Williams, whose excellent work underlines the value of studying sex/adult films and sex in films as a significant part of cultural and

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3 social histories, this article explores the production and subsequent disavowal of one of
4 these softcore, ‘only for export’ films made in 1968 –*El vampiro y el sexo* alternate
5 version of *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/Santo and Dracula’s Treasure*. The article
6 analyses how its ‘dirty parts’ might signify in the context of dominant and counter cultural
7 values in Mexico in 1968. If not from ‘the bolder foreign’ cinema, as García Riera
8 suggests, where did the eroticization of Mexico’s cinema come from and why was the sex
9 *these* films portrayed, as opposed to that of the nationally released sexy melodramas
10 problematic enough to determine them for export only?
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26 **Sex on screen/sex unseen in Mexico 1968**

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28 Although García Riera makes claims to the contrary in the *Historia Documental* essay,
29 in industrial terms the proliferation of sexy comedies and other genres he considers low
30 brow in the late 1960s, can be traced to precise conditions at home which he actually
31 references elsewhere. By 1968, Mexican Cinema, which had enjoyed a Golden Age in
32 the 1940s of qualitative and quantitative film production, winning awards at European
33 film festivals and acclaim from famed *Cahiers du Cinema* critics was in crisis. During
34 the 1950s and 1960s both the ideological –the political institution of the Mexican
35 Revolution– and institutional ‘systems’ of Mexican classical filmmaking had been
36 disintegrating (Berg 1992, 37). During the Second World War, US Government-
37 mandated help from Hollywood (for Mexico as an ally nation) had facilitated the
38 growth in production and quality of Mexican films. But from the end of the Second
39 World War onwards, Hollywood encroachment into the Mexican market as it returned
40 to pre War competitive practices as well as other factors precipitated a deep problem in
41 the film industry, First, the Jenkins’ monopoly (after American mogul William Jenkins)
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that controlled not just exhibition but also what kind of films were exhibited, pushed producers to exploit certain cheap and profitable genres (urban themes, musical comedies) to the point of exhaustion (Mora, 1992, 75; King 2000, 129; García Riera 1995b, 152; Paxman 2016). A short cycle of 8 nude films made between 1955 and 1956 starting with *La fuerza del deseo* (*The Force of Desire*, Miguel M. Delgado, 1955) and ending with *Juventud desenfrenada* (*Youth Unleashed*, José Díaz Morales, 1956) were interestingly some of the low budget, rapidly made films (churros) that resulted from this overly commercialized production strategy. They enjoyed a brief run of popularity before the censors banned them in 1956 (García Riera 1995b, 170). Additionally, the quality of production was further worsened by the closed-shop union policy that excluded new directors, competition from television and a lack of risk-taking on the part of producers. By 1968 and as García Riera points out elsewhere, it was this overproduction of certain genres by a limited number of directors that occasioned the kind of crisis in ‘quality’ filmmaking (García Riera 1987, 167).

By September/October 1968 the Mexican State was also in crisis. Over the summer students from the National Autonomous University (UNAM) and the Politécnica, the two largest universities in Mexico City had been protesting against the increasingly authoritarian Government of President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and the repressive tactics (arrests, beatings, and the occupation of campuses) it was employing to curtail student opposition to the regime and limit disruption to the Olympic Games which were due to take place in Mexico City in October. These repressive tactics culminated on the 2nd October (afterwards known as *la noche triste*/the sad night) in a bloody massacre in the Plaza de Tlatelolco when government forces opened fire killing hundreds of young protesters and imprisoning thousands more (Hegarty 2007, 166; Joseph et al. 2001, 3-5). In addition to forcibly putting an end to

the student movement, *la noche triste* also put an end to the collective belief in, and any sense of coherence to, the Government's official rhetoric of revolutionary promise and the idea of Mexico's Revolutionary Family as a model for the patriarchal state (Joseph et al. 2001, 11-12).

In Mexican film history these twin crises – of the state and the cinema – are traced to one film in particular *Cuando los hijos se van* (*When the Children Leave*, Julián Soler 1969). In his masterful *Cinema of Solitude: A Critical Study of Mexican Film 1967-1983* (1992) Charles Ramírez Berg suggests that poorly crafted films like *Cuando los hijos se van* are a sign of not just imminent industrial collapse but also the ideological crisis of the Mexican state and its revolutionary system precipitated by the Tlatelolco massacre (1992, 36-42). The film's narrative (about the patriarch of a middle-class family losing authority over his children's lives) and its technical shortcomings (narrative leaps and flat lighting) reveal a filmmaking apparatus and its supporting ideological basis that has run out of steam.

Only more recently, and significantly with a U.S.-based younger generation of Mexican film scholar, has the question of sex and post 1968 commercial cinema been focused upon. Kerry Hegarty's (2007) excellent analysis of sex in cinema in this period explores the links between what became of the student movement once it was dissipated by violent repression --*La Onda* (the wave)-- and the commercial cinema. Hegarty argues that in films from the years following Tlatelolco- *Confesiones de un adolescente*, (*Confessions of an Adolescent*, Julián Soler 1969) and *La inocente* (*The Innocent Girl* Rogelio A. González 1970) any hint of *sexual* revolution is contained narratologically by the forces of conservatism making sure unruly women are re-inserted into patriarchy or punished for straying outside its boundaries (2007, 169-175). Significantly as this article will show, in *El vampiro y el sexo* although also 'commercial cinema' unruly women are

not contained, nor does patriarchy itself ultimately control or contain female sexuality and it is precisely the explicit sex scenes (rather than the hinting at sex of much of the cinema of this period) which carry the charge of sexual revolution.

Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/El vampiro y el sexo began shooting on the 30th of September 1968 (García Riera 1995a, 114) coincident with the height of the student movement and just two days before *la noche triste*. *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula* is part of a subgenre particular to Mexico –the *lucha libre*⁷/horror/science fiction hybrid that dominant criticism of Mexican cinema classes as illustrative of the degradation of Mexican cinema that began in the mid-1950s.⁸ These hybrids fused wrestling with Universal Studio-style horror, science-fiction and/or other narratives to produce films like *Ladrón de cadáveres* (*The Body Snatchers*, Fernando Méndez, 1956) in which a mad scientist aims to create a race of Aztec Warrior super men by transplanting gorilla brains into wrestlers. From the late 1950s, and after the Government banned live matches from television screens (Tierney and Syder 2005, 42) a number of real-life popular wrestlers (*luchadores*), including, Blue Demon, Mil Máscaras, and, most famously, El Santo appeared in their own successful film franchises. El Santo (The Saint, Rodolfo Guzmán Huerta) made his first films in 1958: *Santo contra el cerebro del mal* (Santo vs. the Evil Brain, Joselito Rodríguez), and *Santo contra los hombres infernales* (Santo vs. the Devil Men, Joselito Rodríguez). In these films he played the role of superhero (*Santo contra las mujeres vampiro/Santo vs the vampire women*, Alfonso Corona Blake, 1962), crime fighter or secret agent (*Santo en operación 67/Santo in Operation 67*, René Cardona Jr., 1967) but also always played himself (or rather his alter ego) -a real life wrestler.

In *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula*, El Santo is a scientist who has invented a time travel machine. To test it he sends his fiancée Luisa (Noelia Noel) to a nineteenth

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3 century Mexican *hacienda* where a mysterious Count Alucard (Dracula spelled
4 backwards) (Aldo Monti)—drinks her blood and makes her ‘his bride.’ Safely returned
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6 to the present Luisa, El Santo, and her father Dr Sepúlveda are frustrated in their
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8 attempts to find Dracula’s treasure by a hooded nemesis. When El Santo wins back a
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10 necessary clue to the whereabouts of the treasure in a successful wrestling match, the
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12 hooded nemesis re-animates the vampire count who kidnaps Luisa. The police arrest the
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14 hooded figure who is revealed to be a rival scientist, Dr Kur. El Santo arrives and saves
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16 Luisa, killing Dracula and his vampire women by letting sunlight into the cave. *El*
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18 *vampiro y el sexo* has exactly the same narrative and cast. It differs only in that several
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20 sequences (when Luisa or other female victims are being bitten or inducted by Dracula)
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22 include topless female nudity and some simulated sex.
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28 For many years’ *El vampiro y el sexo* was presumed to be ‘lost’ until it
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30 (re)surfaced as part of the programme of the 2011 Guadalajara International Film
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32 Festival. Found by filmmaker Viviana García Besné in her Calderón family archive, and
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34 restored by the Filmoteca at Mexico’s National Autonomous University, with funding
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36 from Mexican horror and science fiction director Guillermo del Toro, the film was to be
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38 the highlight of a series of specially programmed vampire films. However, the
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40 screening was cancelled when El Santo’s son objected to the film being screened on the
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42 grounds that it would besmirch the legacy of his father and that it was not an actual film
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44 in its own right but a spliced version, containing bits of other explicit films of which his
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46 father (El Santo) had had no knowledge (Anon. 2011a). It was screened however, later
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48 the same year at the Cineteca Nacional (Anon. 2011b). *El vampiro y el sexo* is
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50 however, very much a film in its own right and although El Santo doesn’t appear in any
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52 sex scenes, he does share screen time with some naked vampire women towards the end
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54 of the film. His character is also made complicit in the sexual content of the film
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because he watches Luisa (transported to the nineteenth century) have sex with Count Alucard.

Indeed, from analyzing both films, and in particular the sex/nude sequences, it becomes evident that, the sex and nude sequences are not from one or several other films, but like Hollywood's foreign language versions of the 1930s and mid-1940s, including Hispanic Cinema like George Melford's Spanish language *Dracula* (1931) and Emilio Fernández' *La perla/The Pearl* (1948),⁹ from a version produced simultaneously. The six sex/nude sequences share the same cast including two of the principal actors (Monti as Dracula and Noel as Luisa) as well as the vampire women extras. They also share the same sets, staging and even blocking: characters and extras are in the same positions in both films whether they are nude or clothed. So near perfect is the matching on action –which is unusual in what is otherwise a film with very low production values including plastic bats on string and very few camera set ups– that at one point El Santo even appears to share screen time with some of Dracula's topless vampire women. In the denouement of *El vampiro y el sexo* El Santo arrives in the cave just as the vampire women have disrobed. In a shot shot/reverse shot sequence (but not a master shot which would confirm beyond a doubt simultaneity in the shooting of both versions), the (topless) vampire women turn as El Santo, Dr Sepúlveda and his comic side kick Perico run into the cave and look (via eye-line match) to where they are. Although it could therefore be possible, as El Santo's son claimed, that, a supposedly chaste, El Santo might have been unaware of this alternate version it appears unlikely that such an eye-line match would be possible without some very simultaneous shooting of both versions.

In addition to being understood as like the other film of a dual language version which is itself an economic way of diversifying into other markets, *El vampiro y el sexo*

can be simultaneously understood in terms of other production strategies. *El vampiro y el sexo* is effectively repurposed material, a common strategy in exploitation cinema (something like the contemporary practice of K. Gordon Murray's Mexican wrestling and horror films, bought and dubbed into English and then released onto the US drive-in market or sold to television companies for late consumption) (Syder and Tierney 2005, 45). *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula/ El vampiro y el sexo* also represents, a common practice in classical exploitation known as 'hot' and 'cold' prints. As described by Schaefer:

[t]hese alternative versions differed in the amount of nudity or censorable material that they contained. Hot prints were shown in states or communities without censorship and could feature graphic shots [...] cold prints were self-censored versions for exhibition in difficult territories (1999, 73–74).

Of course, the two versions, *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula* and *El vampiro y el sexo* were made for different *national* markets rather than different territories or communities. Additionally, rather than *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula* being a 'cold' version (i.e. with 'hot' bits of *El vampiro y el sexo* excised), *El vampiro y el sexo* is a hot version of *Santo en el Tesoro de Dracula* where some scenes are replaced with sex or nude scenes. To a certain extent, in making erotic or 'hot' versions of masked wrestler films, Guillermo Calderón and other producers in Mexico (Rafael Pérez Grovas, producer of *Blue Demon y las seductoras*), were, like contemporary exploiters in the United States jumping on the sexual revolution bandwagon and seizing on the liberalization of external markets¹⁰ particularly in the U.S. to augment what was an already lucrative¹¹ domestic market. Mexican producers were not alone in doing this. Argentine producer Orestes Trucco contracted industry director Emilio Vieyra to make low budget, explicit horror movies for the Hispanic market in New York and New

Jersey resulting in the exploitation classic *La venganza del sexo* (*The Curious Dr Humpp* 1967) and other films *La bestia desnuda* (*The Naked Beast* 1967) and *Sangre de vírgenes* (*Blood of the Virgins* 1967) (Dapena 2009). *El vampiro y el sexo* was shown in this market, according to an advertisement in *El Diario*, a Spanish language newspaper, in 8 theaters across New York during Halloween week in 1969 (Figure 1). The New York, New Jersey and potentially broader Spanish language cinema circuit that existed across the U.S. (in Los Angeles and the South West) would potentially have been its *only* market because the film could not have been shown anywhere else in Spanish speaking Latin America or Spain where similar authoritarian governments and levels of censorship to Mexico existed. Unlike Isabel Sarli and Armando Bo's *Fuego* (Fire, 1969) which was also premiering that week in New York, but at the Rialto on Broadway and in subtitled form, it would not have had access to the broader art cinema circuit (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 1]

[Insert Figure 2]

These producers were also forced by Mexico's strict censorship of the late 1960s to self-regulate and produce these films for an external market. Unlike the U.S. where censorship was 'on the wane' in the 1960s (Schaefer 1999, 327) in Mexico, censorship was 'even harsher than the [mid to late] 1950s' (Ugalde 2003, 607).¹²

In this period, one could only see on our country's screens incorruptible police and authorities and likewise the administering of rapid, expedited and equal justice for all. In the subject matter of our cinema there was no such thing as rural, railway, medical or labour conflicts, even though reality told us that the Mexican miracle and its stabilizing development had run out. This false image was the product of harsh censorship itself produced by a

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3 filmmaker/government/conspiracy, in which the former agreed not to film
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5 anything uncomfortable to the authorities and in return would receive support
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7 for the diffusion of their films via state companies like the recently established
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9 exhibitor Operadora de Teatros, and the distributors Películas Mexicanas and
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11 Películas Nacionales (Ugalde 2003, 607)
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14 Mexican scholar Víctor Ugalde suggests that there was a tacit agreement between
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16 filmmakers and the authoritarian government of the 1960s ‘to not film anything
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18 uncomfortable to the authorities.’ Although Ugalde only refers to political censorship,
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20 sex can also be considered part of this ‘tacit agreement’ given that, and to answer the
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22 question posed at the beginning of this article, if *El vampiro y el sexo* and the other
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24 alternate erotic films could be made only for export they must have been breaking that
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26 agreement. Indeed, that sex and in particular the female body is political is supported by
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28 Claire F. Fox who suggests that during the relative ‘aperturas’ both prior to the 60s and
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30 after them, female nudity in film ‘came to represent minimal state intervention in the
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32 private sector as well as freedom from censorship’ (2000, 164).
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37 If we examine the sex scenes, or in Williams’ terms ‘the dirty parts’ in *El vampiro*
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39 *y el sexo*, how these function in the film’s narrative and how this may differ to the
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41 treatment of sex in one of the nationally (sanctioned and) released sexy melodramas, it
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43 may be possible to discern what is so politically problematic in the context of the late
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45 1960s Mexico about the sex in these alternate versions, and how they might challenge
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47 (in terms of sanctioned gender roles) aspects of the authoritarian government’s ‘fiction’
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49 of a continuing economic miracle that Ugalde suggests is narrated in 1960s and speak to
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51 the youth of Mexico’s counter culture .
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55 In the film Luisa is initially mapped onto a very conservative role. She is
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57 presented as (surrogate) mother to an orphan (Paquita) and future wife (we learn she is
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engaged to El Santo). But, this understanding of her shifts when she offers herself as a subject for El Santo's time machine experiment. The sex scenes that subsequently take place which involve only her and Dracula appear all the more different because they are inserted into a context of liberalized female sexuality (i.e. a woman being able to self determine what she does and enjoy sex outside marriage). Luisa's sex with Dracula is all about her pleasure. In the first scene of simulated sex (23mins into the film), Luisa first pleasures herself, caressing her bare breasts, before Dracula kisses and caresses her breasts and then disappears down her body (out of frame) to perform what we presume to be a sex act on her.¹³ Slightly out of focus close ups on her breasts accompany her moans as she reaches climax.

In one of the contemporaneous sexy melodramas that was released nationally *Al rojo vivo*, the maintenance of economic success and proper gender roles goes hand in hand with the film's conservative moral discourse. It features two young men, Raúl (Rodolfo de Anda) and Alfredo (Jorge Rivero) who, forced to flee Mexico City having committed fraud, end up in the Northern city of Monterrey and attempt to wangle managerial positions at a foundry. Getting hired instead as labourers, Raúl attempts to work his way up by seducing the owner's daughter Angela (Irma Lozano) and simultaneously begins an affair with a co-worker Carmen (Norma Lazareno). Sex (between Raúl and Carmen) is alluded to – in cut aways from the couple embracing to a suggestive montage of 'red hot' molten steels and thrusting pistons at the foundry –but never shown. Having freely engaged in sex with Raúl, Carmen ends the movie pregnant and abandoned. He, in turn, ends up with the boss's daughter, but doesn't benefit financially from the relationship, nor escape the consequences of his affair with Carmen. Angela, who has refused to have sex with him before marriage has the upper

hand. She intends to keep their finances separate, live on what he earns and force him to provide child support to Carmen.

Al rojo vivo presents a conservative narrative that ultimately contains both its representation of sex and criticizes sexual behaviour outside of marriage. *Al rojo vivo* is more like the contemporaneous Spanish sexy films and comedies which, under a similarly authoritarian regime and censorship, promise a lot in their posters and titles but show very little (Triana Toribio 2003, 100-105) such as *No desearás al vecino del quinto* (*Thou Shalt not Desire your Neighbour on the Fifth Floor*, Ramón Fernández, Spain, 1970). In *El vampiro y el sexo*, by playing no overt part in the film's narrative, sex actually makes a huge comment that relates ultimately to the politics and the moment of its production.

Sex and nudity in *El vampiro y el sexo* deliver on the progressive elements of the narrative in *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula*. Most significantly, and in contradistinction to *Al rojo vivo*, there are no consequences to the sex that Luisa enjoys whilst time travelling in the nineteenth century, nor are there evaluative judgments made about her for having enjoyed this sex by El Santo or by her father who have both seen it (on a television device which allows them to track the time travelling subject). Their deadpan comments after the sex sequence merely point out that Count Alucard is obviously Count Dracula and that there were seemingly vampires in nineteenth century Mexico. This lack of judgment or commentary on Luisa's sex is an unintended consequence of the production strategy of inserting these nude and sex scenes into what is otherwise a conventional El Santo *lucha libre*/adventure movie hybrid. It also has the unintended consequence of evoking the future behaviours of the counterculture. Significantly, as Eric Zolov points out in his *Refried Elvis: The rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (1999) part of the Mexican movement to which the youth turned in the wake of

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3 Tlatelolco- *La Onda*- was the open defying (*desmadre*) of *buenas costumbres* (good
4 manners) and part of this defiance involved having 'liberated sexual relations' (1999,
5 132).
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10 And it is partly because of this sense of liberated sexual relations together with
11 some more liberated ideas about women that further explains why a film like *El*
12 *vampiro y el sexo* could only be produced for the export market. Although there are
13 elements of *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/El vampiro y el sexo* that fit into what was
14 politically permissible in the 1960s i.e. -Dr Sepúlveda's modern house located in
15 affluent wide-street suburbs of Mexico City suggesting a patriarchally overseen
16 economic prosperity and 'incorruptible authorities' (the police arrive to fight on El
17 Santo's side out at one point) this dual version film also points towards these liberated
18 ideas about women and their role in society. Dr Sepúlveda does not control his
19 daughter. Luisa can volunteer to be El Santo's test subject for the time machine. In fact,
20 the time machine specifically requires a female test subject because, as El Santo himself
21 points out, women 'resist up to four times more' (although he does not suggest what it is
22 they resist). These narrative points, in the A (Mexican audience classification) version
23 of the film already suggest a more progressive attitude in terms of gender roles which
24 are further developed in the 'hot' version where the sex and nudity take on a similarly
25 progressive bent.¹⁴
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47 However, although analysis suggests that there is something progressive in the
48 narrative and the sex in *El vampiro y el sexo*, locating this progressiveness in Mexican
49 film and political culture of the post 1968 moment is also problematic. Firstly, as the
50 opening to this article has suggested, conventional accounts of Mexican cinema have to
51 date found no place for adult cinemas within canonical histories of national cinema.
52 Mexican film history's countercultural discourse of 1968 is determined by Leobardo
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López Arretche's moving chronicle of the student moment *El Grito (The Scream)*, made over the summer of 1968 by students from the recently founded CUEC (Centro Universitario de Educación Cinematográfica) at the National Autonomous University. Indeed, García Riera speaks about *El Grito* as the defining film of the year in the prefatory essay to Volume 14 of the *Historia Documental*. Secondly, sex itself, although mentioned by Zolov, Hegarty and others in relation to the post '68 counterculture in Mexico, has not been explored in depth in relation to culture and particularly not in relation to film. In this respect, Mexico is not unusual, as Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen have pointed out. They suggest that despite the importance of 'gender and sexuality in political agency in '68' in the movements of youthful rebellion in Mexico, the Czech Republic, France, the U.S. and elsewhere, scholarship on this period 'still underestimates their importance' (2009, 1).

Thirdly, in defining how these alternate versions might be progressive, there is also a problem of audience. *El vampiro y el sexo* and the other alternate versions were, as far as Mexican film history is concerned, produced not for a local audience (one that might have been experiencing political upheaval) but reportedly for an external market and, as the advertising and Spanish language version that exists further indicate, for a Spanish speaking audience sector constituted (according to demographics) in the majority by New York and New Jersey-based Puerto Ricans and Cubans (Dapena 2009, 90).¹⁵ To determine how these films were received and read, requires further work on these U.S. based Latinx audiences and also exploration of the potential connections between them and the contemporaneous New York-based countercultural films which were also focused on sex and/or nudity –*WR Mysteries of the Organism* (Dusan Makavejev 1970), Sarli and Bo's *Fuego* and Mexico's own *El Topo* (Alejandro Jodorowsky, 1970) (Hawkins 2014, 151-152). With respect to *El Topo*, exploring how it

might sit in exhibition terms alongside *El vampiro y el sexo* and other alternate versions potentially also playing simultaneously in New York, might be one way of connecting Jodorowky's film to Mexican commercial cinema – from which it is generally considered to be set apart. Another point of examination, and again under the rubric of reception, is to explore how this body of films addresses non-heteronormative sexualities, queer fan communities, and parallel cultural production involving LGBT communities taking place in film and other cultural sectors.¹⁶

Finally, it is important to point out that this essay is not suggesting that the explicitness of these alternate or underground versions makes them in some way automatically transgressive of Mexico's authoritarian status quo. Indeed, scholarship on a subsequent era of Mexican filmmaking, the early to mid -1970s, where there was greater freedom to show nudity – takes issue with U.S. scholarship (Schaefer 1997, 362) which celebrates the critical potential of other forms of nudity in film such as striptease (Fox 2000, 165). For all the potential progressiveness of *El vampiro y el sexo* in 1968, where showing the female body was tantamount to political opposition (in that it countered sanctioned gender roles, within a patriarchal state), it is important to point out that some of these alternate versions were particularly reactionary in their depiction of sex and nudity. Both the A version of *El horrorpilante bestia humana* and its 'sólo para exportación' version *El horror y el sexo*, for instance, display exploitative levels of violence towards women including a number of brutal rapes and murders.

However, there is a political reading to be drawn from the coincidence of these alternate versions which could only be made for export and the moment of their production. In the political administration *following* Díaz Ordaz presidency in the late 1960s, that of President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), there was a relaxation of censorship with regards to nudity and simulated sex. This in itself indicates the

interconnectedness of sex, politics and film in Mexican cinema in 1968. In the 1970s, Echeverría—who had been President Díaz Ordaz’ Secretary of the Interior and is therefore considered to be responsible for the Tlatelolco massacre- permitted lots of sex and nudity in Government sponsored ‘art’ and ‘industry’ films. In this era even El Santo felt he could relax the supposedly rigid standards which had led him to ask José Calderón, head of the family filmmaking business, to ‘bury’ *El vampiro y el sexo* (García Besné 2009). Barely a year after *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/El vampiro y el sexo* El Santo appeared in bed with a topless Hedy Blue in *Santo y Blue Demon contra los Monstruos* (Santo and Blue Demon against the Monsters, Gilberto Martínez Solares 1970) (Figure 3). Echeverría’s sexual liberalization has been interpreted as a kind of compensation for the excessive political repression of the late 1960s (Ramírez Berg, 1992). During Echeverría’s presidency many of the same producers and directors who made the underground ‘only for export’ alternate versions, including Guillermo Calderón could subsequently make films (such as *Bellas de Noche/Beauties of the Night*, Miguel M. Delgado 1975 which was produced by Calderón) with full frontal nudity and simulated sex for national release not just with the government’s blessing but also its funding.

[Insert Figure 3 Here]

‘[W]rit[ing] the formal and cultural history’ (Williams 2008, 7) of an explicit film like *El vampiro y el sexo* is facilitated by the new scholarship on sex and adult film from U.S. scholars. For instance, we can read (and potentially explain the brief tolerance of) Mexico’s cycle of nude films from the mid-1950s (many of which were produced by Guillermo Calderón, the producer of *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula/El vampiro y el sexo*) as being like many contemporary nudist films from the U.S. These ‘contained the female body’ according to the ‘conventions of art’ and ‘shots were often

composed as tableaux' connecting them to the 'respectable forms' of 'painting and sculpture' (Schaefer 1999, 316). Indeed, most of the Mexican nude films were precisely about artist's models and justified their nudity narratologically by having their protagonists posing for paintings. However, there is also a limit to how much we can draw from the work of Schaefer, Williams and others in explaining why the alternate versions could only have been made for an external market. In the U.S. context the nude female body (in burlesque films) is (in contradistinction to nude/nudist films of 1950s) 'uncontained' and 'excessive' and therefore embodies 'liberatory potential' (1999, 317). In the Mexican context Luisa's nude female body and additionally the sex she enjoys may be potentially connected to contemporary events but they are also strangely untethered from the student protests, the campus occupation and the brutal repression which followed, none of which are ever referred to in the film's narrative.

Ultimately, writing the formal and cultural history of an explicit film like *El vampiro y el sexo* is most helped by more local perspectives on its cinema's institutional history. García Riera's work is authoritative, but since its 1995 publication there have been shifts in how Mexican cinema history is being written and researched. Most significant of these shifts is the work of García Besné herself whose excellent documentary *Perdida* (2009) explores the disavowed films -including *El vampiro y el sexo*- made by her filmmaking family, the Calderóns, that she couldn't find in any history books (Tierney 2014, 135). Her account of the thrilling/ 'morbo' films her Uncles made, including the alternate sexploitation versions of wrestling films like *El vampiro y el sexo*, emphasizes how they broadened the boundaries of what could be represented in anticipation of a more liberalized era.

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Figure 1. Advertisement in *El Diario* for the Gran Estreno/Premiere of *El vampiro y el sexo* (The Vampire and Sex, René Cardona, 1969).

Figure 2. Advertisement *New York Times* 10th October 1969.

Figure 3. El Santo in bed with a topless Hedy Blue in *Santo y Blue Demon contra los Monstruos* (Santo and Blue Demon Against the Monsters, Gilberto Martínez Solares 1970).

¹ Interestingly, in the Criterion Collection interview with Felipe Cazals, the director of key nuevo cine classic *Canoa* (1976), recorded for the 40th anniversary DVD release of the film, Cazals also tries to talk about dominant Mexican cinema in the late 1960s and early 1970s in similar terms to García Riera. Cazals uses Garcés's films as marker of what he considers Mexican cinema's degradation. Cuarón however, in a move that is characteristic of his own genre-led filmmaking that doesn't discount popular cinema and its cultural and political value, actually steps in to defend Garcés and the kind of popular sexy films he starred in. Cuarón's most recent film *Roma* (2018) is about the Corpus Christi massacre (Halconazo) of June 1971 (Cuarón 2016).

² Although Schaefer also points out that it actually was less of a revolution and more the product of 'slow steady shifts in attitudes taking place since the start of World War II' (2014, 3).

³ For more on why national film histories have ignored Latin America's exploitation cinemas see Ruétalo and Tierney (2009), Syder and Tierney (2005) and Tierney (2004). Some of the recent Mexican and Argentine scholarship that does not follow these prescriptive histories of national cinemas and does explore the popular/exploitation/low genres cinemas includes Raúl Criollo, José Xavier Navar and Rafael Aviña (1991) and Curubeto (1996). Alternatively, English language scholarship has championed Latin

America's popular cinemas –particularly those of the classical era. Ana López' ground-breaking work on melodrama in 'Old' Mexican cinema (1993) was the start of the turn to the popular in Latin American film criticism in English.

⁴ Respectively, *El horripilante bestia humana* (The Horrifying Human Beast, Cardona), *Las luchadoras contra el robot asesino* (The Female Wrestlers versus the Robot Murderer, Cardona), *Blue Demon y las invasoras* (Blue Demon and the Invaders, Gilberto Martínez Solares) and *Santo en el Tesoro de Drácula* (Santo in the Treasure of Dracula, Cardona).

⁵ Although, it is also likely that García Riera himself was unable to view them as they were at the time of completing the *Historia Documental* and, in some cases still are, 'lost' or hidden.

⁶ *Al rojo vivo* played from the 20th February for seven weeks (5 weeks more than the average commercial run) in three of the capital's cinemas: the Roble, the Florida and the Savoy (García Riera, 1995a, 20)

⁷ For more on the politics, history and cultural relevance of *lucha libre*, a term used in Mexico to describe its own form of professional wrestling, see Esther Gabara (2010), Heather Levi (2001, 2008), and Carlos Monsiváis (1995).

⁸ Jorge Ayala Blanco, an esteemed and institutional critic of Mexican cinema, credits the flourishing of exploitation in Mexico to the decadence of the Mexican film industry's mythic 'Golden Age' (1936–54), resulting in the increasing hybridization of national genres and climaxing in low-grade horror as aberrant stopgap in a struggling industry (1993, 157–8). Emilio García Riera is similarly dismissive of them (1995a) while Tomás Perez Turrent suggests 'At the end of the 1960s, it was clear that economically and structurally Mexican cinema was in bad shape. Artistically and cinematically things were even worse. The era of the great popular figures was long

gone. In fact, only one popular idol was successfully circulated in this decade: El Santo and his genre. In the Santo genre [sic.], masked wrestlers modelled on Superman and other Anglo-Saxon prototypes found time – in between wrestling bouts-to defend the Good and to fight crazy scientists as well as Dracula, Frankenstein, the wolf man, the mummy and so on' (1995a, 99).

⁹ See Tierney (2011) for more on the dual language productions in Hollywood in the 1940s.

¹⁰ This was due to the 'waning' of the Production Code, changes in censorship 'on the state and municipal levels' and a series of court decisions from *Burstyn vs. Wilson* onwards that had 'opened the door [to] an almost unrestricted flow of exploitation [and sexploitation] films to [US] screens' (Schaefer 1999, 326–329).

¹¹ From García Riera's information we know that *Santo contra el Tesoro de Drácula* ran for four weeks at a staggering, 13 cinemas in the capital (1995a, 140).

¹² Indeed, in the late 1940s and early 1950s there was comparative freedom in Mexico to show subject matter that would have been banned by the Production Code in the U.S. 'Mexican industry genre films of the 1940s/1950s were therefore free to show or allude directly to such PCA-banned subject matter as mixed-race marriages (*Angelitos negros*/Little Black Angels, Joselito Rodríguez, 1948), nudity (*María Candelaria*), pre- or extramarital sex (*Trotacalles* /Street Walker, Matilde Landeta, 1951), prostitution (*Aventurera* /Adventuress, Alberto Gout, 1949), and infanticide (*Victimas del pecado*/Victims of Sin, Emilio Fernández, 1950)' (Ruétalo and Tierney, 2009, 5).

¹³ The second of these two sex scenes, takes place in the twentieth century. Dracula has been reanimated by the hooded figure and finds Luisa in her bed. The sex scene we see taking place is signalled as Dracula's fantasy because Luisa is actually in a bed next to Paquita her adopted child.

¹⁴ For more on the cultural history of gender representations preceding *El vampiro y el sexo* see Debra A. Castillo's longitudinal study of sexualized and sexually active women in Mexican literature, *Easy Women: Sex and Gender in Modern Mexican Fiction* (1998).

¹⁵ Lobby cards also exist in Italian.

¹⁶ For a reading of *lucha libre* that focuses on same sex desire see Salvador Novo (1964). For work on queer desire in Mexican Cinema see De la Mora (2006) and for work on Mexican sexualities see Robert McKee Irwin (2003).