

# The Perfect Miss Narco: On Hateful Representation of Women in Netflix TV Shows *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico*

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The aim of this research paper is to rethink the representation of women in two Netflix TV shows, *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico*. The explanation for the selection of these two shows lies in the fact they occur in the same country and approximately in the same time period and in their popularity. Both TV shows tackle drug trafficking in northern Mexico and the relationship between Mexico and the United States. This paper will include media and film analysis, but also historical literature overview regarding women in drug trafficking from revisionist and feminist points of view (Campbell, 2008; Carey, 2014; Franco Diaz, 2015). In the TV shows analysis, we will analyze trophy women and women within the family (mothers, for example) as part of the narcoesthetics. The second category we will analyze is rare, empowered women in drug trafficking, which will include an analysis of the woman body. Body as a category is an important part of the analysis of instrumentalization and objectification of women in drug trafficking, and *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico* exploit that aspect in the sense of Debord's ideas on spectacle.

If we type the word “narco” in the search tab on the Netflix website, we will find many different TV shows, both in English and Spanish. Each search will probably be individualized, but we would see *Narcos*, *Queen of the South* (Spanish language version and its remake in English), *El Chapo*, *Pablo Escobar* (and all TV variations on this topic), *Señora Acero*, *El Cártel* etc. Cabañas suggests that these new shows are the “new subgenre of telenovelas” (Cabañas, 2014: 10). We would also come across several documentaries, such as *Inside the Real Narcos* or *The Business of Drugs*. Available options are far more numerous nowadays than they were just a couple of years ago. However, two of these TV shows, *El Chapo*, and especially *Narcos* enjoy wider popularity all around the world. The first version of *Narcos*, regarding Colombia and Pablo Escobar, has over three hundred thousand critic comments on IMDb. This biggest and most famous movie database on the Internet shows how many people decided it was worth grading a TV show or a film. The audience cannot leave comments; they can only grade a movie or a show. Just to compare, *Narcos: Mexico* has a little bit over sixty thousand reviews (rated mostly between 8 and 9 out of 10 as the highest grade), while *El Chapo* has some fifteen thousand reviews (mostly 8 out of 10). *The Queen of the South* (Spanish language version) has not more than two thousand reviews (the grade is mostly 10, but there are not many participants). As we can see, the popularity rates show strong differences, and although we cannot know for certain how many

people actually watched the shows since not everybody votes on IMDb, it still gives us some idea on their popularity. The TV shows having female protagonists are not in the top three.

What these statistics show is that the most popular TV shows on drug trafficking are the ones that offer a strong masculine perspective on the matter, while the ones that have female protagonists do not have that many participants in the grading section of the website. On the other hand, they offer the possibility to better understand the intersection between the popularity level of the show and its representation of women. The most popular TV shows on drug trafficking have the most traditional depiction of women on screen. Additionally, men directed both *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico*. As a matter of fact, men are most of the crew staff in these two TV shows (producers, writers, composers). However, *El Chapo* does involve women; writers are Carlos Contreras and Silvana Aguirre, and among executive producers there is Camila Jiménez Villa, although producers, cinematography and editors are all men. Therefore, we can freely assert that the dominant point of view in both shows is masculine. Pannetier-Leboeuf (2017) discusses the idea of male gaze in movie making, and discusses the way women are reduced to their biological bodies and eroticized by montage.

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the representation of women in *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico*. *Narcos: Mexico* follows the rise and fall of Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, the kidnapping and assassination of the DEA agent Kiki Camarena and the aftermath of the event, while *El Chapo* follows the rise and fall of Joaquín (“El Chapo”) Guzmán Loera, from the late 80s until his extradition. Female characters in both TV shows do not occupy much space on screen, although their roles vary from trophy women in *El Chapo* to more empowered women drug traffickers in *Narcos: Mexico*. We understand a trophy woman as a passive, secondary and silent character, used for the purposes of satisfying man’s desire. By comparison, an empowered female character is someone who has more agency in the show, and a more active role in the organizational business. In order to get an accurate idea of the representation of women on screen and to identify its historical roots, we will first tackle images of female drug traffickers and smugglers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Women in Drug Trafficking from the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century until the Late 80s: Historical Overview**

Even if women in drug trafficking might not be new players, the investigations that focus on women in this illicit business have been relatively new. Carey (2014), Campbell (2008) and Franco Diaz (2015) are among researchers who have published on this issue. All these analyses are from this century; however, they approach women in drug trafficking historically, offering us a panorama of activities women did throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These investigations provide a new piece of the puzzle to understanding women’s role in drug trafficking without necessarily changing what has previously been said about the business itself.

Carey offers a historical approach to discussing and presenting women in drug trafficking, although she mentions in the beginning some of the most recent events, such as the arrest of Sandra Ávila Beltrán (in 2007) (Carey, 2014: 1). Even though we cannot know for sure, since there are no parameters to measure popularity, Sandra Ávila Beltrán is at least one of the most famous female drug queens in history, and she certainly is the most famous in different cultural productions. The famous book by Arturo Pérez-Reverte, *The Queen of the South*, is based on her, and Isabella Bautista in *Narcos* is alleged to be based on her too. However, before they came to power, there were other women building their names in this world.

Among women who were part of the smuggling of different products and drug trafficking in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Carey stresses the case of Lola la Chata, a Mexican famous drug trafficker who was active from the 30s until the late 50s. As Carey states, she “ruptured the normative expectations of what it meant to be a woman and to be civilized by using limited and constrained forms of feminine power to become a transnational threat” (2014: 92). At that time, and it seems that not much has changed, she used two elements to build an empire: family and sexual connections (97). Carey even compares her to Pablo Escobar and El Chapo, as she too would organize visits during her imprisonment, had a hairdresser come to do her hair, and she accepted people who were coming to ask her favors (99). There was a lot of emphasis on her looks. Anslinger and Salazar, the men involved in her capture and surveillance, would describe her as not attractive according to the elites’ symbols of beauty; there were references to her weight and race (112-114). According to this historical account by Carey, we can see that there was not much difference between Lola La Chata and any male drug lord. She does not form part of any cultural productions, for now, but that is probably due to the time period when she was active. There are hardly any shows or many films in Spanish that would include drug trafficking stories from the 30s, 40s or 50s. On the other hand, she is a reminder that women were not only trophies to the drug lords, but they even were drug queens themselves.

Similarly to Lola la Chata, in the late 20s La Nacha was a woman who built the drug trafficking business around her family (Carey; Cisneros Guzmán, 2011: 23). Campbell stresses how female involvement increased since the 70s (2008: 238). He adopts a feminist approach to this topic, as he tackles the issues of liberation and economic marginalization in order to explain the reasons women entered the drug trafficking business (240). In order to understand the gendered analysis of drug trafficking, he stresses that we need to take into account cultural, economic and political issues. He categorizes women in drug trafficking into four categories: female drug lords, middle-level women, low-level mules and women who have minimal participation, but are still somehow connected (245). His examples of female drug queens coincide with Carey’s, as he mentions Lola la Chata and La Nacha, Sandra Ávila and Enedina Arellano Felix, an important figure in the Tijuana Cartel, who also appears as one of a few empowered female characters in *Narcos: Mexico*. Although Campbell describes how women adopted a kind of behavior that they found fit for their roles, we argue that there is a notion of feminism here. They felt more in control of their own actions, bodies and possibilities, and that is a feminist understanding of female agency. When it comes to middle-level female drug traffickers, they still strongly depend on the patriarchal structure (253), while the lowest levels, such as mules, are naturally the most vulnerable and the most dependent on others, mostly men. This is the most numerous group, and it puts women in the traditional positions of being of “secondary value” in drug trafficking.

The United Nations’ report from 2018 tackles the issue of women and drug supply, categorizing it as women and drug production, women and drug trafficking and women and justice system (World Drug Report, 2018: 23). The part that focuses on Latin America also stresses the contemporary examples of Enedina Arellano Felix (“believed to have led the Tijuana cartel since 2008”), Sandra Ávila Beltrán, known as “Queen of the Pacific” and Griselda Blanco, known as “La Madrina” (World Drug Report, 2018: 27). Interestingly enough, they include a Norwegian study from 2012, according to which successful women use four strategies in drug trafficking: desexualizing themselves, violent reputation, emotional detachment and service-minded approach (World Drug Report, 2018: 29). When we look at

these four elements of a successful woman in drug trafficking, it seems that there is not much difference between this and what men do. However, as we will see in the TV shows' analysis, these aspects are present, but the instrumentalization and sexualization are some of the crucial elements for female characters on screen.

On the other hand, Franco Díaz, in her short evaluation of female roles in drug trafficking, points out how women “have gone from a place of leadership to being trophies” (2015: 23). The shows *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico* confirm this hypothesis in a cultural sense and on screen. Franco Díaz (24) coincides with Carey and Campbell as she also mentions the active roles in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and Lola la Chata, as well as Felisa Velasquez and La Nacha. In the 60s, she stresses the role of Manuela Caro and Margarita Caro Lopez and in the 80s the sisters Enedina Arellano Felix and Alicia Felix Zazueta (25). We can already establish some of the most prominent figures, since all academics mention more or less the same women. Each one of them adds one or two more, but the changes are not that significant. What varies is how Franco Díaz adds that in the 80s and 90s there was a change in the women's role in drug trafficking. She attributes to them mostly the roles of mules, and stresses that in those years the drug trafficking became a “misogynous cult” (25). From these analyses we can conclude that there is a certain need for female empowerment in an illicit drug trade. Additionally, both Carey and Campbell stress the active roles women had or have in drug trafficking, while at the same time they recognize the vulnerability and lower roles women have. This will be depicted in our analysis of *Narcos: Mexico* and *El Chapo*. However, what Franco Díaz points out will also be reflected, since the misogynist elements and female degradation might cloud the roles they had in the past. All these historical accounts provide us with evidence that there were women in drug trafficking, and those women were powerful. Although the drug trafficking story is still a mostly masculine world, there were women throughout history who shaped this transnational illicit business. However, the analysis of *El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico* shows that TV productions do not care much about the historical view on women in drug trafficking. Many powerful women on screen in a male dominated world simply do not make good TV. What makes good TV is a sexualized, desirable, and perfectly shaped feminine body, and we have learned from this historical overview that not all women in drug trafficking were like that. The historical accounts try to move us a step forward in understanding female roles in drug trafficking, but the era of Netflix pulls the strings in another direction, pushing us back.

### **Trophy Women and the Spectacle of the Body**

Blanco Pérez points out that in the Netflix era there is a reconstruction of the facts regarding drug trafficking through a literary screenplay with esthetic and ethic intention (2020: 108). Although he focuses on the political aspects and the borders between fictional and documentary style, this idea of esthetic and ethic can be seen through the representation of women. They form part of what Acosta Ugalde calls narcoesthetics. His understanding of narcoesthetics includes “another form to apprehend reality” (Acosta Ugalde, 2014: 110). In that sense, we can speak of narcocorrido, narcofosa, narcocine, exhibitionism regarding money, dress code and architecture (110). He does not include women in this research on esthetics, because he focuses on artistic forms and expressions. However, we understand trophy women as part of this artistic landscape because similar to houses or clothes, their basic purpose is to accompany a powerful drug lord just as a nice car would go with him.

In their article about women in drug trafficking, Ovalle and Giacomello offer categorization of different types of women we may encounter in the drug trafficking world. This categorization goes in a different direction in comparison to Campbell's historical approach, since they refer to women as: narco mothers (*narcomadres*), narco wives (*narcoesposas*), narco daughters (*narcohijas*), trophy women (*mujerestrofeo*), working women (*mujerestrabajadoras*), women prisoners (*mujerespresas*) and women as victims of violence (2006: s.p.). This categorization is not definite, and it may fluctuate and be open to changes in different time periods, but the ideas of trophy women and narco mothers that we will analyze seem constantly present in these TV shows.

*El Chapo* and *Narcos: Mexico* show one big similarity when portraying women, and that is that both TV shows marginalize them in the sense that the scenes with women are not as abundant as the scenes that include men and extreme violence. The reason for that is, as we showed with the historical approach, there are and always have been women in drug trafficking but essentially not as many as men. Therefore, the TV shows ignore women, since it is a *masculine story*. *Narcos: Mexico* offers, however, a more reliable picture of female roles in drug trafficking in the 80s. There are *sexy women*, but there is not much sex. In *El Chapo*, it is a completely different story. The TV show almost does not picture women anywhere outside of the sexual framework.

In the first two episodes of *El Chapo* a few women appear. The first one is El Chapo's young lover who waits for him in bed, but her appearance in the series will be short. The second one is his first wife Alejandra, when they have a short conversation, and the third one is his second wife, Graciela, where we can see the short sex scene between the two. Therefore, the very first female appearances are related to family and sexual pleasure, while the sole plot of the show plays out somewhere else. The only woman that gets more space in the first couple of episodes is Lupe, an *unfaithful woman*, who cheats on her husband (one of the drug lords, Güero) with an insignificant employee. However, this space is given to her only to emphasize her brutal killing, and the killing of her children, as a way of drug traffickers' revenge. The only woman in the first season that appears as slightly empowered is the above mentioned Chio, the lover from the first scene. The reason why she seems empowered is that she helps El Chapo whenever he needs some help, and consequently she leaves with him while he tries to flee the country. On the other hand, this empowerment is weak, since in episode six, Chio says to El Chapo: "Por fin puedo conocer el otro país". And El Chapo replies: "Conmigo vas a conocer el pinche mundo". Therefore, even if Chio is not just a sexual object she is also not an independent woman, especially because she ends up in prison when they capture El Chapo, and we do not see her anymore in the show.

Ovalle and Giacomello emphasize how women trophies are probably not excluded from sexual harassment (2006: 305). This idea of sexual harassment cannot be neglected in the analysis of women in drug trafficking. Although the authors refer to sexual harassment mainly towards women who are girlfriends or wives of drug traffickers, there is another aspect to take into account, and that is rape of unknown women. The show *El Chapo* does not provide explicit images of rape, but rather it shows a scene that is prior to what every viewer knows is going to be a rape scene. In the first episodes of the second season, El Chapo is in prison. As it happens, he made some arrangements and he could have whatever he wanted in prison, for example, he turned it into a hotel. At that time, they bring another female inmate to prison. El Chapo immediately requests for his people to bring her to him, and as they do, she enters the cell, and the viewers can see that she is afraid to her core. As she starts crying, El Chapo says to

his friend Güero to go and leave them alone. Eventually, everybody leaves the cell, the camera focuses on the empty hall, and we can only hear screams and crying of the woman. It is the only rape scene in both TV shows. Although we cannot know exactly how many women are raped or exposed to some kind of sexual harassment in relation to drug trafficking, scenes like these can give us some insight that it can be only worse than what we see on screen.

Probably the most important trophy woman in *El Chapo* is Elba, his newest and youngest wife. She appears in the second season, and we promptly see her standing in front of the mirror in a nice dress talking to her mother. The short monologue that the mother elaborates contributes to our understanding of female roles in poorer areas strongly affected by drug trafficking and the relationship between morale, religion and money. Elba's mother says: "Pareces muñeca, Elbita. Sí puedo confiar en ti, ¿verdad? Ya sabes que, mi hija. Los hombres luego solo quieren una cosa. El fruto dañado, ya no hay quien se lo quiera llevar". This short discourse alludes to beliefs on purity and virginity of women. However, Elba, who is only seventeen years old, goes to a party where she sees El Chapo and has intentions to meet him. Acosta Ugalde, in her analysis on narcoesthetics, reflects one change that happened when it comes to appropriation of a female figure in drug trafficking. She stated that in the anterior periods (she does not specify what time period would that be for her), drug traffickers had a strong desire to have beautiful women, but that in recent years, a beautiful woman is the one who wants to be a girlfriend of a drug trafficker (2014: 121). Therefore, we have a beautiful and young Elba consciously wanting to be El Chapo's girlfriend, even though it is clear that she knows who he is. Other scenes that involve El Chapo and Elba are very typical and traditional. Firstly, Elba says that he needs to wait for her until she is eighteen, because it is not appropriate for her to marry him before that. Secondly, she wins a beauty pageant. This tradition of women having the *Miss* title and their relation to drug traffickers is not new. It is shown, for example, in the film *Miss Bala* from 2011 alluding to the figure of Laura Zúñiga. Eventually, Elba marries El Chapo, and she is the only wife he has a connection to since she is the youngest. Most of Elba's appearances later on in the show are quite superficial: she is the protagonist of the sex scenes, she has children, and she gets Botox in her lips. Her role does not go not go much further. There are short comments about how if something happens to El Chapo she will have to continue without him, but her role stays mainly sporadic, as the role of a drug trafficker's wife probably is.

Mothers are sacred ground for drug traffickers, at least as we see it in *El Chapo*. His mother does not have a lot of appearances, but every time she does, he tells her how much he loves her, and she prays to God to keep him alive. However, there is another type of mothers in the show, and those are mothers who lost their children to drug trafficking violence. One of the last episodes of season two shows a shooting in a local bar where drug traffickers kidnap one of the girls. As her friend tells the girl's mother what happens, the mother decides to start looking for her. As she travels to another city to try to find her, she meets the police who promise they will help her, but eventually that never happens. The mother gets more seriously involved in the issue, and we can see her in one scene interrupting the president's speech claiming that she lost her daughter, as many other people in the region have. This mother's episode is short, and it does not repeat later on; However, it gives another insight into the relationship between women and drug trafficking. Apart from women wanting to be girlfriends, and apart from women wanting to be drug traffickers themselves, there are mothers who lost their daughters (and sons too), and they are hardly ever listened to.

Both TV shows have plenty of chauvinist comments and jokes that connect drug trafficking, drug traffickers and how they understand women. In the first season of *Narcos*, the brothers Avendaño are one of the key players. They are a clear reference to the Tijuana cartel and to the Arellano Félix brothers. As one of them is having a birthday party at home, they decide it is time to take the party somewhere else. His wife is very excited that they can continue the party, however, he tells her to shut up, and what comes next is “the party for men”. We do not know what happens afterwards, but we can assume it includes other women. Shortly afterwards, in another scene that includes politicians and bribery, El Chapo says to one of the politicians: “Tengo un boleto de primera clase y te incluyo una vieja”. Moreover, as he tries to close a deal in the end of the second season, El Chapo says to his new partner: “Si yo fuera vieja, te habría cogido hace rato”. With this expression, there is a double word play. Firstly, he states that he did not trick him. Additionally, he points out that women would have already had sex with him. In *Narcos: Mexico*, Amado Carrillo Fuentes compares women to airplanes when he says the following sentence with reference to the girls: “Vale madre el tamaño, todas se mueven igualito”. Most of these expressions and jokes occur as jokes and explanations in the conversations that do not have anything to do with women, except in the first case. It shows how this is a man’s world, a misogynist world in which one uses women as a parameter in a joke. It puts them together with other elements or objects that constitute a joke. In this way, they are deprived of humanity since they are inferior to men who are never part of the joke. In addition to these jokes and comments, there are many others in *El Chapo* related to Mexican politics and the women involved.

### **Empowered Women: Enedina and Isabella**

*Narcos: Mexico* includes women who are more than a body that corresponds to men’s desires. It is still a masculine vision of the world, and the number of female roles is minimal, but among a few that appear, there are roles of Enedina Arellano Félix and Isabella Bautista. The first one is a historical figure, and she is suspected to be part of the drug business in Tijuana. Neither of them has many appearances, and they do not form part of the main story. Enedina appears in the second season for the first time, while Isabella is in the show from the beginning and makes appearances from time to time.

We characterize them both as more empowered because they have more agency in comparison to the female characters in *El Chapo*. However, TV production makes one clear difference between the two of them; Enedina lacks typical TV show sex appeal. She is presented wearing sweaters, long skirts or pants, never showing much of her skin, never smiling, almost always being angry and arguing with her brothers. This is how we understand how male TV production traditionally sees a woman who is a boss. She is equal with her brothers (not completely, since one of the brothers is the boss), she has smart ideas, and she tells her brother what he needs to do and what he needs to ask Félix. She speaks perfect English while her brothers do not. In the second episode of the second season, the Arellano Félix family has a visit from a dealer from Los Angeles who introduces crack to them (historically, that was the period when the crack epidemic started in the United States), and she is the one who negotiates. However, it is clear later that she should not negotiate because that is not her job. Nonetheless, her role in the organization is not insignificant, while her appearance on the screen is minimal.

On the other hand, Isabella is a strong physical contrast to Enedina. She represents everything that a male gaze could ask for on screen. If we look at how Jiménez Valdez

describes a trophy woman, we could easily see Isabella. She possesses beauty, voluptuous body, charisma, strong makeup, large nails, high fashion clothes, a body of a model but with curves, probably with Botox lips and long dark hair (Jiménez Valdez, 2014: 109-110). And yet, Isabella is not a trophy woman; however, she is also not a boss. That is the difference between the traditional representations of a female character on screen. Enedina, being the boss, has to be less feminine, while Isabella just tries to achieve something in the narco world, but always loses and gets to be a traditionally desired gorgeous woman. Her power lies in her sex appeal and in her connections. Her first appearance is in the very first episode when she helps Félix Gallardo meet a powerful dealer of Cuban origin, and she stresses how she will not let him forget all the help she provided for him. Throughout the TV show, she helps Miguel Ángel a few times, but she never gets any real power within the drug trafficking organizations; she is simply left out. She is somehow a tragic character in the series, since she represents how much effort one can invest, and still not get anything in return. Her character is not central to the story, and there are not many lessons to get from her role. We argue that her appearances in the show are for the sake of “a sexy female character” that makes good TV. Since Enedina is the boss, she cannot really be sexy according to the TV standards, but Isabella can be sexy since she will never acquire much power in the masculine world.

Another element that is worth mentioning is the relationship between Enedina and Isabella. They form an alliance for a short period of time, which we consider to be a feminist moment of women empowerment. In the middle of the second season, Isabella proposes that she and Enedina should make deals with Columbians and smuggle cocaine to the United States on their account. Although Enedina rejects that idea in the beginning, stating that she will not betray her brother and form an alliance with Isabella simply because they are both women, she rapidly changes her mind. The two of them do collaborate for a short period of time, and they build a prototype version of smuggling drugs through mulas (persons, usually women, carrying drugs across the border). Enedina buys a border company that helps women cross the border every day in order to work in the United States, and that is how the two of them move cocaine across the border. These working women were doing it for them, and they were paid really well. It was a brief women empowerment moment in the show since no man formed part of their business. Even if they were partners, Enedina was more of a boss than Isabella. However, this deal does not last for a long time. In the last episode of the show, Enedina decides to stay with her brothers, and breaks her deal with Isabella, who gets arrested. The brief feminist moment is over, and we slide back into the masculine dominant world. Even if this feminist moment was very present, we believe that it was mainly there to appeal to the female audience. However, the unfolding of their story is more than disappointing, and the potential it had eventually seems irrelevant. It was a TV trick, an illusion that a female character in the drug world could operate on her own. Mercader observes how through these ideas of male and female characters on screen, we can understand social and cultural behavior that they are supposed to represent, and that cinema is “an act of representation and auto-representation” that shows the relations between genders (2009: 60). Therefore, we can add that even though historically there were powerful women in drug trafficking, according to the TV shows representations, they must have been “less” feminine, or more feminine but less powerful, since that is a culturally and socially accepted norm.



### Concluding Remarks

Campbell discusses how “in popular imagination, Latin American drug lords are conceived of a hypermasculine, folklorically macho characters whose excessive, extravagant lives rival those of movie stars and pop stars” (2009: 60). This applies only to men, and the newer TV productions on Netflix make sure it stays that way. Even though historically there were some women who played key roles in shaping the drug trafficking industry, this world is still strongly perceived as masculine. If we look at different research and their papers on Mexican cinema on drug trafficking and gender, there are some efforts to give women more agency, and they surely have it. However, most of that research was written before the boom of *Narcos*, or before the Netflix platform and its exploitation of the topic. What *Narcos: Mexico* (and *Narcos* with focus on Columbia too) and *El Chapo* do is a step back for the female representation on screen. Instead of them possibly contributing to women empowerment and affecting how we perceive the drug trafficking world and women, they opt for the traditional alternative of a male gaze with strong masculinity and intelligence where women do not play crucial roles. Of course, we must bear in mind who makes these shows and where Netflix comes from. As Bunker and Da Cruz state “the US national experience is quite different than Mexico’s as its relationship to drug trafficking” (2015: 712). However, these TV shows are not purely from the United States. These productions are the result of collaboration between countries regarding sites for shooting, cast and crew, but the main distributors and production companies are based in the United States. Would the representation of women be any different if it were purely Mexican? It probably would not. Therefore, the conclusion is that even if the Mexican and the American visions of the reality of drug trafficking are different, the cultural representation of women does not differ in the end. The idea that the drug trafficking world is what we previously called a masculine and misogynist cult surpasses countries’ borders. We have provided some historical evidence about women in drug trafficking from both sides of the border, and there are many more; however, all these historical accounts lose their importance in the light of what makes good commercial TV. It is an artistic liberty, and it would be hard to influence creators to change their vision of a TV show. On the other hand, we can advocate for a more accurate female presence in the shows that are not low budget, or at least advocate for more women to be part of the crew behind the scenes. One of the most important elements for now is that we need to destroy, rethink and redefine the idea of a female character being sexy and not having power and a female character having power but lacking sex appeal due to her power.

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