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RACE AND POLITICS IN PERUVIAN AND ARGENTINE PORN UNDER THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, 1975–1985

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This paper examines the articulation of race, class, gender, and politics in erotic magazines during the Argentine and Peruvian destapes in the transition from dictatorial to democratic rule at the turn to the 1980s. We argue that porn, as a genre, was not limited to a niche of readers seeking to use the magazines only for erotic purposes. In Peru, porn was one of the main agents in the opposition to military rule, and it only became a separate, autonomous genre devoid of politics with the coming of democracy. The emergence of magazines focused mostly on eroticism developed as editors attempted to lure readers among recent migrants from the Sierra who lived in the pueblos jóvenes (squatter settlements) in Lima. In this context, the audience demanded pictures of local women to replace foreign white female nudes. In Argentina porn became a crucial aspect of democratic politics, understood as a tool to overcome inhibitions, develop a self-exploration, and undermine traditional mores while fostering democracy. Driven by an impulse to emulate the alleged open-mindedness of Europe and the US, Argentine porn cemented white middle-class identity at a time of economic decline. In this context, Argentine erotic magazines praised sexual experimentation as courageous and gave voice to women, gays, and lesbians. Our approach combines social, political, and cultural history focusing on how the readership shaped magazines and at times achieved significant editorial changes. Through the study of porn we offer new insights regarding the transition to democracy in late Cold War Latin America.

Keywords: pornography; race; *destape*; Latin American dictatorships; democracy; Cold War; Argentina; Peru

Note: This article contains explicit images of sexual acts.

Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, pornographic magazines in Latin America boomed, devising a new genre that does not exist today. In Peru, porn magazines competed in popularity with the largest print media in the country, and in Argentina an explosion of erotic representations characterised the period. The new genre combined erotic images with demands for free speech, challenges to

military rule, intervention in national party politics, popularisation of social theory, pleas in favour of modernisation, and critiques of social inequality. Common sense often assumes that porn reproduces hierarchies of gender, sexuality, and race.¹ In this article we will argue that porn in the Peruvian and Argentine transition to democracy often challenged these hierarchies instead of reproducing them. Moreover, when one type of hierarchy was reproduced in erotic magazines, it was in combination with the undermining of another form of oppression. In Peru, the porn boom sometimes deployed homophobia and the male gaze in combination with an undermining of Lima's middle-class's racial status based on their self-perceived whiteness, while in Argentina erotic magazines reinstated a white identity in crisis while undermining gender and sexual hierarchies. Despite the contrast between Argentina and Peru, in both countries the commercialisation of sexual images enabled individual sexual experimentation and gave a new voice to mestizo/a migrants, progressive urban middle classes, women, gays, and lesbians. In addition, we argue that some of the most innovative and challenging sexual and political ideas were expressed in the late Cold War through pornography, at times written by famous public intellectuals.² Porn is comparable to other mass-culture phenomena analysed by Antonio Gramsci. Like other mass representations, erotic images have also “deposited (...) an infinity of traces” useful to explore the culture and politics of the region to this day, but “without leaving an inventory” (Gramsci 2011, see also Tortorici 2020). In this paper we seek to reconstruct such inventory and hope to illuminate some aspects of the history of politics and race that might otherwise be overlooked.

Comparing Argentina and Peru provides a vantage point that illuminates the diverse roles of race and class in late Latin American Cold-War porn booms during transitions to democracy that were different in nature but happened very closely in time (in 1980 in Peru and 1983 in Argentina). In Argentina, erotic magazines launched an agenda of “compensatory whiteness” that embraced individual experimentation as a form of aspirational eroticism constitutive of progressive politics and associated with Europe (Ben and Insausti 2022; Insausti and Ben 2023). Europeanness in Argentina was – and to some extent continues to be – synonymous with whiteness because racial categories were not exclusively related to skin colour. Instead, “white” in Argentina includes people of Indigenous and African ancestry, but within a stratified system based on longstanding prejudices linking “darker tones to low socioeconomic status and lack of cultural refinement” (Alberto and Elena 2016). In this context, the perception of Argentina as comparable to Europe was more important than phenotype when it came to defining the country as white. Yet, the alleged Europeanness of Argentina was undermined by the economic downturn and the memory of authoritarian military rule back in the 1970s, which in turn undermined the perceived whiteness of the country. In response, Argentine erotic magazines aimed at “modernising” the country by reas-sociating Argentina with Europe, implying that the northern continent was not merely a place of prosperity and political stability but, instead, a land better defined by its tolerance of sexual freedom.

In Peru, on the other hand, decades of mass mestizo/a migration to Lima, land reform under Velasco, the rise of left-wing politics associating the West with imperialism, and a comparatively “progressive” military encouraged a political and cultural

“browning” observable in Peruvian erotic magazines at the turn to the 1980s. Although initially we also explored Mexican and Brazilian erotic magazines, and considered including these” the comparison between Argentina and Peru emerged as the most adequate because it was facilitated by some chronological and political similarities while also showing contrasts that unravelled the complexity of Latin American late Cold-War porn booms.

Combining economic, political, and cultural analysis through a study focused on the power that the audience had to determine the content of erotic magazines, this article examines the *destape* in Lima and Buenos Aires at the turn to the 1980s. In Spanish, *destape* literally refers to taking “the lid off, uncover, expose, or undress” and is used to refer to periods of sexual openings under transitions to democracy, when “an avalanche of sexual images and narratives” led to “new levels of visual and discursive explicitness about sex and the body” (Milanesio 2019, 6). While focusing on the similarities of the *destapes*, close attention to the comparative chronology of censorship shows that, counterintuitively, military dictatorships sometimes enabled porn, while democracies could challenge its very existence. In her work on Argentina, Milanesio presents the *destape* as a phenomenon exclusively associated with the coming of democracy. To an extent, this claim fits the Argentine case where erotic magazines were effectively suppressed by the military, even though other aspects of the Argentine *destape* were already emerging in the last years of dictatorial rule (Ben 2022). Other countries in Latin America, however, show a different trend. An analysis of Peru shows the limitations of an approach that so closely associates *destapes* with regime change. In Peru, porn emerged and thrived against the backdrop of late dictatorial rule, and it was the strengthening of public opinion with the advent of democracy that enabled a coalition seeking censorship.

As has been the case in all legal, historical, and cultural studies of pornography, defining the term itself is especially challenging (Williams 1999; Hunt 1993; Kendrick 1996; Lindgren 1993; Sigel 2005; Sigel, Tortorici, and Whitehead 2020). For the most part, the publications examined here represented themselves as erotic to elude censorship and the social stigma associated to pornography. Censors, however, often classified the publications as pornographic. The terms “erotic” and “pornographic” are used interchangeably in this article because magazines, public opinion, and the state disputed the boundaries between these two categories. In addition to contesting definitions of pornography and eroticism, the changing relations between publishers, the state, public opinion, and readers also shaped every aspect of porn representations.

This paper avoids an exclusive focus on content analysis and instead places the spotlight on the above-mentioned agents who pulled the erotic magazines in multiple and, at times, opposite directions. Our analysis emphasises the overarching arc characterising the development of porn magazines over time that allows for a proper contextualisation. Examining stand-alone representations could artificially split a shifting dynamic into synchronic slices separated from the historical processes in which they existed. Instead, a sequence of representations showing enduring patterns allows for the exploration of negotiations between editors and audience. Moreover, attention to magazines as shifting cultural productions

deployed throughout the years requires an analysis that follows threads connecting myriad representations beyond specific examples. The focus on trends transcending single representations enabled us to explore business goals and conflicting political agendas vis-à-vis audience interests amidst a changing political arena driven by sociodemographic transformations.

Erotic magazines were driven by their own cultural and political agenda, but their entrepreneurial nature and the challenges they faced in times of regime change only surface when examining how the audience and potential censorship shaped shifting editorial decisions. Our paper examines a variety of contemporary cultural productions while deploying this approach to understand the tensions driving the changing representations of eroticism in three magazines during years of political transition: *Zeta* between 1979 and 1981 in Peru, and *Viva* and *Destape* in Argentina between 1983 and 1986. At the turn to the 1980s, these periodic publications had a large audience and became icons of the late Cold-War porn booms in both countries, expressing the cultural transformations affecting race, gender, and sexuality in the context of regime change.

***Zeta* as a “white” middle-class political magazine between April 1979 and mid-1980**

Zeta became one of the key civilian voices calling for regime change after nearly twelve years of military rule (1968–1980). The magazine confronted the dictatorship demanding free speech at a time the military was losing control over the country. The first issue published in February 1979 was neither erotic nor pornographic under any possible definition. The cover (Figure 1) featured the headshots of the presidential candidates for the coming 1980 democratic elections, Haya de la Torre, and Bedoya Reyes both formally attired. Not a single nude or even a slightly erotic photograph was included in this first issue.

After five issues focused exclusively on politics, in late April 1979 *Zeta* suddenly shifted and began to feature upper-body female nudes on the magazine’s cover (Image 2). At first, the covers displayed blonde, white women that the average Peruvian perceived as foreign. Other than the front page, the magazine’s contents had not transitioned to porn yet. Erotic pictures inside the magazine were rare and most pages were devoted to politics and sensationalist articles, a characteristic of *Zeta* between April 1979 and January 1980, a few months before the advent of democracy. During this period political essays were mostly moderate, addressing decades-long concerns of Lima’s (white) middle class (Parker 1998), and leaning towards the centre-right of the political spectrum.³ *Zeta* supported the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana or American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, also known as APRA. The magazine suggested that the leader of this party, Haya de la Torre, was presidential despite the concern with his old age – he was 84 years old and would eventually die before the election.⁴ Earlier in the twentieth century APRA had been a radical anti-capitalist party but it had become moderate later in the century. As social conflict increased under the last years of the military dictatorship during the presidency of General Francisco Morales (1975–1980) and



Figure 1. *Zeta*, 1, no. 1, 15 February 1979. Lima, Peru.

left-wing organisations became very popular, the Peruvian military began to perceive APRA favourably for the first time. At this point, APRA had become an option that could stem the growing influence of anti-capitalist politics (Dietz 1986; Palmer 1992). By 1978 the legitimacy of military rule was seriously eroded, and the dictatorship promised a transition to democracy (Tuesta Soldevilla 1994; Dietz 1986; Cotler 1995), opening some opportunities for a dissident press. *Zeta* emerged in this historical and political junction. The owner of the magazine, the lawyer Anibal Aliaga, was an APRA congressional candidate for the Junín district

6 in 1980 (Aliaga 1984), and he used *Zeta* as a platform for his candidacy (Anicama Cárdenas 2019, 77–82).

An important part of our analysis of *Zeta* in this article is based on the research by Anicama Cárdenas (2019) who claims that the erotic pictures in the magazine's covers under military rule, since issue 6, were meant to avoid censorship by making the magazine look as something other than a political publication. Yet, although *Zeta* posed a challenge to the military because of its obsessive denunciation of censorship, its support of APRA was becoming acceptable for the military. In fact, for all the denunciation of censorship in this publication, under military rule *Zeta*'s issues were never seized by censors and the magazine was never banned during this period. Actual censorship, as Anicama Cárdenas brilliantly describes, would only take place under democratic rule.

Zeta's shifting genre suggests that the magazine was attempting to enlarge its audience through the inclusion of erotic pictures. Given its moderate political tendencies, *Zeta*'s original readership was mostly limited to Lima's white middle class and possibly the elites. To succeed in the promotion of Aliaga's candidacy, *Zeta* needed to expand beyond this readership and include themes attractive for non-APRA audiences. However, new poor immigrants from the Sierra were the main cause for the doubling of Lima's population between 1960 and 1980 (Chambers 2005), and this was not an APRA-leaning audience. On the contrary, having migrated from the Sierra this new urban population inhabiting the so-called *pueblos jóvenes* favoured the growing anti-capitalist Left and was an unlikely niche for *Zeta*. The *pueblos jóvenes* were squatter settlements mostly inhabited by mestizo/a recent migrants from the Sierra (Dietz 1984) who were pejoratively labelled *cholos* by a Lima's middle-class population self-identified as white and attempting to draw a racial boundary to exclude mestizo/a newcomers and claim a higher status. Attracting a *mestizo/a* readership was difficult for a magazine with middle-class identity and politics.⁵

An examination of the shifting racial representations appearing in erotic pictures suggests that *Zeta* used erotic images to lure serrano readers from the *pueblos jóvenes*. Initially, *Zeta* published nudes of American blondes like the ones on issue 6 (Figure 2) discussed earlier. Gradually, however, white female nudes were replaced with pictures of mestizas (Figure 3).

The magazine could purchase pictures of white women from image banks at a relatively low price while mestiza female nudes required intensive recruitment work and were comparatively very expensive.⁶ For the racial shift in porn to happen, *Zeta* had to launch a campaign occupying an entire page of the magazine (November 1980, 2, no. 43, page 55) and offering mestiza women a sum of one hundred thousand soles, equivalent to roughly the cost of 285 issues for a session of erotic pictures. Despite the cost, *Zeta* was eager to find mestiza models. Against the backdrop of race relations in Lima, where mestizas were derided by the middle class as undesirable, the eagerness to have these women as models suggests a strategy to lure mestizo men who found them attractive.

The preference for mestiza female nudes among mestizo men was not only a preference for skin colour. From the point of view of this audience, a beautiful woman was supposed to have pronounced curves and prominent breasts, as in the



Figure 2. *Zeta*, 1, no. 6, 26 April 1979. Lima, Perú.

case of famous Peruvian vedettes like Suzy Diaz or Monique Pardo. Foreign white nudes as the one shown in Figure 2 did not fit this beauty standard, as the women were slim. Another problem with foreign white female nudes was that they seemed too distant and cold for the Peruvian male audience because they did not resemble the women they knew in their daily lives. In other words, this was not an audience seeking “exotic” bodies. In fact, male readers preferred pictures of Peruvian celebrities even if they were not fully naked. Whenever possible, *Zeta*



Figure 3. *Zeta*, 2, no. 38, n/d. Lima, Perú.

published pictures and extensive articles about celebrities like Chuchita Salazar⁷. Something similar can be observed in other Latin American countries. In Mexico, readers' letters to the erotic magazine *Bravo* around the same years explicitly state that they preferred to see "our own national production: more sensual and plump women" and explained that "we like our [women best] because they are the models we see in the theatre, nightlife entertainment, and burlesque".⁸ This was very different from the case in Argentina. Although in Argentina beauty standards for

female bodies were similarly bent towards “plump” bodies, as exemplified by the success of famous vedettes like Moria Casán and Beatriz Salomón, porn magazines did not face the same pressure as in Peru or Mexico and relied more on foreign white nude photography exhibiting women with fit bodies.

In summary, when *Zeta* became an erotic magazine, it also achieved commercial success because it lured a larger audience of mestizo men from the *pueblos jóvenes* through a shift in racial representations. Either as a strategy to avoid censorship or to achieve commercial success, erotic images fared well under Peruvian dictatorial rule. Studies of the late Cold-War porn boom in Latin America have often assumed that dictatorships suppressed sexuality while the commercialisation of eroticism thrived under democratic regimes (Milanesio 2019). The case of Peru, however, seems to suggest the opposite was true.

Democracy, the erotic turn, and the *pueblos jóvenes*

APRA lost voters due to Haya de la Torre’s death, and another moderate candidate whose campaign was centred on reconciling opposing views, Fernando Belaúnde Terry, won the May 1980 elections. In this context, *Zeta* abandoned its political agenda and fully transitioned into the erotic genre. Earlier in January, Aliaga had decided to sell the magazine to the journalists (Anicama Cárdenas 2019, 82), who began to focus more intensively on female nudes and enticing erotic narratives while gradually developing a tension with the government. Most written articles at this point increasingly came to deal with sensationalist themes, such as “Schoolboys with female breasts”⁹ or “Women, incest, and necrophilia”.¹⁰ Simultaneously, the magazine also became a platform for the indictment of urban unrest, crime, prostitution, homosexuality, and drug addiction.¹¹ *Zeta* relentlessly attacked brothels in all issues of this period.¹² Prostitution in Lima was on the rise, as suggested by the new marketing strategy of shady neighbourhood motels deciding to charge by the hour to attract those who could not afford to pay for a full night. *Zeta* began to attack these motels, publishing pictures of nearby parked cars and claiming that the owners promoted prostitution and were driven by greed.¹³ Seemingly moralist, this denunciation was an attempt to get back at Danilo Mejía, Lima’s prefect, who had requisitioned *Zeta*’s issue 34 in July 1980 while also using the police to protect the sex motels where prostitution thrived (Anicama Cárdenas 2019, 88). Alluding to corruption, *Zeta* accused Mejía of association with the rise in prostitution, an activity perceived by the population at large as a problem more urgent than pornography.

When read in context, many of the moralist contents in *Zeta* point towards a self-defence against a rising effort to censor the magazine during the democratic period. As the tension between *Zeta* and the government increased in the following months, the magazine began to attack the entire government, to the point of accusing democratic president Belaúnde Terry using insulting allegories that associated him with venereal disease. For instance, issue 44 from November 1980 stated that the “bloody chancre becomes ever more infectious and pernicious. The banditry, corruption and moral contamination that afflicts us has really sharpened

dramatically with the rise to power of Architect Fernando Belaúnde Terry and his political party".¹⁴ During the first year of democratic rule, the government had targeted pornography as the alleged source of moral decay in Peruvian society. In response, *Zeta* used venereal disease as an allegory for political corruption. Moreover, the magazine denounced the hypocrisy of politicians who enabled the rise of prostitution while denouncing pornography. Against this backdrop, *Zeta* attacked ministers and officials from a variety of state institutions, especially those in charge of regulating family life and protecting minors.¹⁵

The attack on prostitution also stemmed from *Zeta*'s new interest in expressing the concerns of recent migrants to Lima. Female prostitutes were portrayed as innocent migrant women victims of urban corruption, and *Zeta* explicitly defended them while attacking brothels, motels, white middle-class patrons, and anyone else making money through the sexual exploitation of women. Describing one of the prostitutes, who grew up in the "warm and welcoming city of Trujillo" and was eager to become a model, *Zeta* stressed how "the harassment of *limeños* disturbed her and fed her ego at the same time" as "she walked confused among the great and bustling avenues of the great capital looking for an address printed on a card that she carried in her long and trembling hands".¹⁶ It was innocent and attractive women from the provinces like this one, *Zeta* argued, that were "trapped by the ruthless fire of the corrupted capital and fell into the claws of prostitution since [their] first days in the city when hunger and desperation to find shelter" pushed them "from the very first days down a slope" that they "never managed to climb back". The anti-prostitution campaign, *Zeta* clarified, was against the exploiters who were invariably associated with Lima's corrupting influence, and not against female prostitutes consistently portrayed throughout the pages as victims from smaller towns or rural areas.¹⁷

In the eyes of *Zeta*, it was the lack of opportunities in Lima for migrant women that compelled some of them to turn to prostitution. The situation was desperate, *Zeta* claimed, leading old prostitutes to die in the streets: "Las viejas se mueren en la calle". The magazine emphasised how heart-breaking the fate of prostitutes was:

They walk whatever way they can, almost dragging their feet, but still walking. Some are near their seventies, others even older, and no matter how much they try to conceal their age, they can't. They are compelled to go out every day to the streets in search of patrons who almost never show up. With luck, they may be able to eat one more day. Otherwise, goaded by need, they will extend their hands hoping for alms.¹⁸

Decrying the fate of prostitutes as *Zeta* did, became a successful trope associated with the fate of all *serranos* in a country with one of the most unequal wealth distributions in Latin America during the early 1980s (Chambers 2005; Klarén 2000). In the articles on prostitution published in November 1980, the magazine added sordid pictures of destitution in the areas next to brothels (Figures 4 and 5).

This new theme was in sharp contrast with the concerns of *Zeta* under dictatorial rule when the magazine had focused on middle-class participation in politics. With the advent of democracy *Zeta* redirected its attention towards the wealth gap between the haves and the have-nots. An article about the cemetery in Callao



ARRIBA: Un muladar sirve de marco a la entrada posterior que ahora usan para ingresar al prostíbulo. Parece que un poco de vergüenza hizo que ya no usaran la puerta delantera. ABAJO: En esta calle céntrica, la más concurrida de Barranca se reúnen, en la esquina de la zapatería los mafiosos y vagos que se dirigen al prostíbulo del "Céjo" Ramírez.

Figure 4. (Left) A domestic waste mound works as entrance hall to the brothel.¹⁹



Otra vista de las mismas carrocerías. Una prueba más del "auge" de la prostitución clandestina en la zona roja de La Parada. El "ingenio" al servicio de la corrupción a vista y paciencia de las autoridades.

Figure 5. (Right) Another view of rusty bodywork shells. One more proof of the scenes surrounding clandestine prostitution in "La Parada".²⁰

(Lima's coastal suburb and harbour), for instance, lamented the chasm between wealthy mausoleums and crypts on one hand, and niches for the poor on the other. *Zeta* reviled the garbage clusters next to graves of the poor and stressed the point with sordid pictures, arguing that this "tragedy" was the "faithful expression of the contradictions and division in social classes presiding human relations in the overall picture of dynamics driving all of society in its very life, and as a legitimate expression of the division of labour and the possession of the means of production leading some to be poor and others to be rich".²¹ Through examples like these, *Zeta* introduced a heavy use of Marxist jargon. Words like "class struggle", "capitalism", "contradiction", "proletariat", "alienation", "imperialism", were recast over and over throughout the articles.²²

This endorsement of Marxist language was puzzling, as *Zeta* never embraced the leftist politics associated with the new jargon. The new writing style was influenced by the growing anti-capitalist politics of the era. Although extremely divided, dozens of anti-capitalist grassroots organisations gathered 36% of the vote for the Constitutional Assembly in 1979 and the same for the Lima city elections in 1983 (Klarén 2000). Most left-wing voters came from the *pueblos jóvenes*, also the main audience for *Zeta* at this point. In addition to shifting left, the *pueblos jóvenes* were embracing the Marxist jargon and worldview. The anti-capitalist language provided recent migrants from the Sierra with a new way of expressing their frustration with the city. A 1985 movie filmed in Lima illustrates how Marxism poked out of Peruvian mass culture and shaped the sexual and gender politics observed in *Zeta*. Entitled "Los Shapis en el mundo de los pobres" [The Shapis in the world of the poor] the movie told the story of the Shapis, an actually existing popular band of musicians from the Sierra.

Contrasting lives in their homeland Sierra and in Lima, the movie portrays the discrimination faced by lower-class mestizo migrants when facing white middle-class men in positions of power who blocked every access to serrano upward mobility. Chapulín, the movie protagonist and leader of the band remembers how hopeful he was before migrating to Lima, only to later find out that "money was not lying in the streets, in Lima there is only hunger, destitution, and humiliation for the serranos". Throughout the movie the characters constantly turn to Marxist jargon, as when they refer to themselves as "proletarians", also using the originally pejorative term "cholo" to stress pride in their *mestizo* background, and idealising life back in their Huancayo homeland. By contrast, the urban white petit-bourgeois characters in the movie work for out-of-touch greedy imperialist business owners babbling in unsavoury English or Italian accents. Portrayed as petty, drunken, and prone to cocaine, whites in Lima had fallen into a portrait of "bourgeois decadence" resembling Soviet manuals or Chinese Cultural Revolution propaganda, even when the movie showed no involvement in left-wing partisan affairs and explicitly rejected the project of launching a revolution to overcome capitalism. By contrast, *cholos* spoke truth to power, embracing their native roots, and seeking to improve and modernise Peru. The members of the Shapis music band are presented in the movie as creative and not mimicking tradition, they play cumbia with electric guitars and pursue a modern, mass, urban nationwide audience instead of only being focused on their small town.

The relation between Lima and other towns and regions as represented in this movie illuminates concerns about migration and urbanisation that galvanised a nationwide audience also reached by *Zeta*. Like in the movie, the articles published by *Zeta* used Lima while placing newcomers to the capital at the forefront. It was precisely this contrast that allowed *Zeta* to reach an audience outside of the capital. Letters sent by readers show that the magazine reached some larger urban areas, as in the case of the northern coastal city of Chiclayo. The editors also received letters from smaller towns, where issues of *Zeta* was probably brought by returning migrants. Readership outside of Lima was lured by reports on the life of migrants whose lives were like those of friends and family members who had left their native regions to live in the capital. The concern with the “deviant” nature of the capital addressed an interest that readers outside of the capital were eager to explore. Both the movie about the Shapis and *Zeta* speak to male serranos portrayed as the agents of progress and modernisation, while women play roles that are unimportant or represented within a Manichean opposition as either victims or unscrupulous agents of city corruption. Chapulín regrets having left his girlfriend back home in Huancayo and is enticed by nightlife entertainment and semi-naked women in Lima while also perceiving the eroticism exuded by the city as a pernicious influence. This ambivalence matches *Zeta*’s schizophrenic use of female nudes right next to vilifications of porn. The tension between loving a future wife and seeking casual sex central to this movie also shapes the representations and narratives published in *Zeta*. Issue 63 (August 1981) is a good example of this ambivalent attitude consisting in, promoting and denouncing pornography at the same time. In this issue, the advertising of phone numbers for sex hotlines and the pictures of female nudes coexisted with fiery pleas against pornography and ads recruiting women to pose for nudes coexisted with complaints against brothels and sex motels.

Simultaneously defending and attacking porn, *Zeta* was responding to the challenges posed by the new democratic order. The coming of democracy and the explosion of porn in Lima since 1980 was part of a wider transformation of the city. The sudden population explosion had favoured anonymity and, therefore, it had allowed uprooted migrants seeking sexual adventures to escape the control of their families and communities. One sign of this was the emergence of Plaza San Martín as a space where public sex and prostitution coexisted with street vendors selling porn magazines and, later in the 1980s, VHS videos. *Zeta* first, and *Cinco* later, were the most visible publications due to their large number of readers and because they were locally produced, but the explosion in porn included many other publications, the majority of which were imported.

Not only the conditions fostering the *destape* and pornography thrived in Lima during the 1980s. Democracy also created new demands. Under military rule, the main civilian demands were the return to democracy, the improvement of salaries, and the end of censorship. An attack on porn was unlikely to come from civilians at this point. Allowed by the dictatorship, porn in Peru faced no opposition. As Peru returned to democracy, however, porn boomed but the opposition to porn also thrived. As democracy was achieved, campaigning against porn became a more pressing matter for some groups. In this context a demonstration against *Zeta* and

other porn publications was organised in Plaza San Martín, showing opposition not only to porn but to all other expressions of the *destape*.

The opposition to porn affecting *Zeta* was launched by a heterogenous coalition including newspapers, the Catholic Church, feminists, judges, and the police (Anicama Cárdenas 2019). *Zeta* claimed their readership was growing larger than that of the largest magazine in Peru, *Caretas*. By seeking to ban erotic images, *Zeta* argued, *Caretas* attempted to prevent porn magazines from using the one factor that was making them more successful. Driven by new democratic freedoms allowing public expression of political views, the anti-porn coalition put pressure on judges and the police and achieved censorship to a degree unforeseeable under military rule. Censorship was so effective that *Zeta* was forced to cover the magazine's cover in black plastic and to stop publishing nudes by February 1981, when the magazine shifted once more and became a coffee-table magazine.

Argentina: porn as white middle-class democratic experimentation

The rise of porn in Argentina during the 1980s followed a very different trajectory. During the 1976–1983 dictatorship, only softcore eroticism survived. To claim that Argentina's military regime was obsessed with suppressing sexuality, however, would not accurately portray cultural policy during this period. In fact, the portrayal of the dictatorship as anti-sexual was an *ex post facto* representation that coalesced after the advent of democracy as a way of stressing the difference between military and civilian rule. Despite the dictatorship's labelling of Argentina as a Western Catholic country, the regime also funded and encouraged a variety of overtly erotic representations on TV and in the movies (D'Antonio 2015; Manzano 2020). The Brazilian dictatorship followed a path very similar to that of Argentina, also deploying a moralistic official rhetoric in direct contradiction with the funding of *pornochanchadas*, a genre of soft-porn erotic movies (D'Antonio and Eidelman 2020; Cowan 2016). In both Brazil and in Argentina, the military dictatorships had both a religious conservative and a liberal modernising wing. As the introduction of new technologies led the military in both countries to increase investment in state-run TV channels and film production institutions, the pressure to improve ratings led to easing regulations against erotic representations (Ben 2022). These representations would help amortise investment by growing the national audience and facilitating exports to foreign markets where the demand for eroticism was booming. The advent of democracy in Brazil and Argentina led to a boom in porn that took the industry to new heights unforeseen during the dictatorial period (Milanesio 2019; Manzano 2020). This transition, however, had been preceded by a commercialisation of eroticism under dictatorial rule that, by contrast, was largely erased from public memory.

Argentine print and filmic porn were very different from their Peruvian counterparts. Most erotic magazines in Argentina were aimed at a middle-class audience in Buenos Aires. In Argentina the large migration wave from rural to urban areas peaked before the 1950s, and by the 1980s a significant portion of migrants from

the hinterlands had become part of the middle class (Murmis and Portantiero 2011). As in Peru, Argentina also experienced racial tensions between the allegedly white European capital and the imagined dark-skinned “morochos” from the hinterlands. Racism, however, did not prevent upward mobility for rural migrants. On the contrary, many of these migrants successfully integrated into the middle class, in many cases marrying people of European descent, and eventually identifying themselves with the prevailing white European national identity (Acha 2014). This led to a racially diverse but self-perceived white middle class from Buenos Aires (Alberto and Elena 2016) that shaped the mindset of erotic magazines. These magazines were sold nationwide and were eagerly purchased in the provinces and in nearby Uruguay despite the higher cost (to cover transportation and other expenses). Some sections in the Argentine magazines focused on places other than Buenos Aires, but often through representations of white women with complexions that were unusually light for the average in their geographical area. For the most part, however, the target audience was in Buenos Aires, as is usually the case with all Argentine media. It was precisely because porn magazines catered to an audience from the Argentine capital that many in the provinces were attracted to these publications. Just like Buenos Aires looked up to Europe and the US, some people in the provinces saw Buenos Aires in a similar manner, as a place from where to draw cultural sophistication and to claim whiteness by association. This was especially evident in letters sent by readers from small towns across Argentina who praised Buenos Aires.

Given the white identity of the target audience, erotic magazines were more likely to import pictures of the foreign white women that the Peruvian magazines eventually rejected. Not only was porn imagery imported into Argentina, with nudes of American blondes occupying most pages, the entire erotic enterprise was shaped by an obsession with emulating Europe and the United States. Magazines like *Viva*, *Shock*, and *Destape* offered news of the latest sexual experimentation in the Northern Atlantic. For instance, one article described Venice Beach in the US as “something never seen before in our country”,²³ while another article was entitled “German women know all the tricks of the trade when it comes to sex”²⁴ and yet another text emphasised “only those who live in Europe – especially in Germany – know the details of lesbian demands for their rights”.²⁵ The attacks on pornography found within the pages of *Zeta* were absent from Argentine magazines. On the contrary, erotic images were presented as a form of Europeanised cultural sophistication embraced by a middle class who rejected the extremism of right-wing Catholic acolytes. Although in Argentina porn magazines did not have a clear allegiance or opposition to specific political parties as was the case in Peru, overall, they identified with free speech and sexual tolerance under democratic rule, while they denounced the previous dictatorship and contested the power of the Catholic Church. This political view was presented as a moderate option that promoted cultural sophistication and confirmed the whiteness of Argentina at a time when this racial national identity was in crisis. Against this backdrop, erotic magazines sought to undermine traditional mores and promote the liberalisation of sexuality so that individual erotic experimentation could thrive. This agenda was defined as crucial for a commitment to democratic ideals associated with white

middle-class identity. Being a guardian of democratic ideals and pursuing *destape* was a crucial commitment for this middle class, as the subtitle of one of the magazines suggests: “El guardián del Destape”.

The association of sexual freedom with a moderate, reform oriented, centre-of-the-political-spectrum middle-class white subject emerged in the context of the economic challenges in the 1980s. After the military regime lifted protectionist import tariffs in 1976, many factories had closed, and former workers used their savings and severance packages to create small businesses (Cappannini and Massano 2018). A middle class of struggling professionals and small businesses owners as it existed in the so-called “lost decade” (because of economic decline) was the audience for Argentine erotic magazines. Classified personal ads often emphasised the middle-class background of the readers. *Sex Humor*, a political magazine with a touch of erotic humour and a similar audience to *Viva* and *Destape*, launched a survey about sexuality and couples that illuminates the class composition of the readership. More than three hundred people agreed to answer questions about this topic, and 71% of them were professionals, white-collar workers, and small business owners. Affected by the early 1980s debt crisis hitting all of Latin America, and amidst slow GDP growth, this urban middle class struggled to keep its alleged former glory (Damill and Frenkel 1993) and its association with whiteness.

Amidst this challenge to their status, cultural enterprises like porn offered the middle class an opportunity to represent themselves as part of a “modern” European openness towards sexuality that signalled European culture and whiteness and was perceived as a sort of “compensation” for economic decline. The marketing of porn as a form of sophistication for Europeanised connoisseurs was not exclusive to Argentina. Magazines like *Eros* deployed the same strategy in Mexico during the 1970s, also choosing to import foreign photography with white female nudes. In Mexico, however, *Eros* was meant for a smaller exclusive elite and political essays by local and international public intellectuals were also included to enhance the status of the magazine. Unlike *Eros*, Argentine erotic magazines associated the status granted by sexual sophistication with democratic ideals meant to include everyone regardless of skin colour, but within a stratified understanding of whiteness where lighter complexion was associated with sophistication and beauty, while darker hues were exoticised or included in association to other forms of higher status that could compensate for lack of whiteness. Although rarely formulated in explicit terms, the imagination of an underlying evolution from sexual repression to sexual liberation drove the racialised imagination of the pornographic enterprise in Argentina.

For Argentine erotic magazines, however, maintaining a white identity was not only about skin colour, it also meant embracing democracy and progressive views on sexuality as they existed in the US and Western Europe. The description of racial features was a part of many personal classified ads. Many men and women advertised their whiteness and blonde hair. However, classified ads where people described themselves as dark skinned, “de piel oscura”, were not rare at all. Whiteness surfaced as a sign of beauty and distinction throughout the erotic magazines, and while darker features were not erased, they were alluded to within a stratified understanding of skin colour. When described as objects of sexual desire,



Figure 6. “Show erótico entre serpientes”. *Viva*. Issue 31, July 1984.²⁷

dark skin tones appeared as casual comments instead of exoticised or fetishised exceptions. However, Afro-Brazilian women and other racialised others were indeed exoticised in some sections of Argentine magazines,²⁶ but this perspective coexisted with sporadic positive representations of darker skin. In fact, it was the inclusiveness and elusiveness of racism as it appeared in Argentine erotic magazines that allowed these publications to conceal their racial views. Erotic magazines marked their opposition to the dictatorship not through a critique of the politics of whitening but, on the contrary, through a denunciation of sexual prudishness under the military regime and an emphasis on making pornography as edgy as possible. In doing so, these magazines consolidated the hegemony of whitening in Argentina.

Against this backdrop, the explosion of eroticism since 1984 was contrasted to an imagined dictatorial past where *anything* explicitly sexual had been censored. To stress such contrast, erotic magazines constantly pushed the limits of the

acceptable. In 1984, for instance, *Viva* published the photography of a French couple engaging in a threesome with a snake (Figure 6). Labelled “kings” of the erotic show in Barcelona, they were praised for their courage.

Enacting the most bizarre sexual acts became a sign of an individual’s commitment to democracy. In this context, *Viva* and *Destape* also gave a space to gays and lesbians, fomented female subjectification, and sought to push the limits of the acceptable to the point of promoting sadomasochism, zoophilia, and any other form of sex between consenting adults. The articles referring to these themes did not portray them as exotic foreign practices to cause morbid fascination among readers. Moreover, the variety of sexual practices was unlikely to appear as part of a distinct niche of consumers with a fetish. Whoever was interested one day in a type of experiment could perfectly move on to another kind later.

The focus was not on accepting people as they were but, instead, on expanding one’s own horizons and encouraging others to do the same. In the 1986 *Sex Humor* survey referred above, 65% of respondents declared that they had recently incorporated new sexual practices. Erotic magazines claimed this expansion of sexual horizons as their contribution to democracy. *Viva* and *Destape* would not ask readers to find out who they were and accept the sexual drive allegedly constitutive of their sexual/gender identity. On the contrary, the stress was on overcoming “inhibitions” – a word repeated everywhere – and becoming something other than one’s own self. This task was especially important for mainstream heterosexual men and women. The portrayal of new frontiers of sexual freedom achieved over-seas and now possible in Argentina under democracy was meant as an aid in this project of personal improvement. As the subtitle of *Viva* stipulated, this would allow people to live “con todo”, to the fullest. Challenging “inhibitions” to let unconscious desire emerge was part of the agenda of psychoanalysis, a professional practice with a long history in Argentina. Middle-class Argentines were so familiar with psychoanalysis that the jargon of this discipline percolated into daily life (Plotkin 2001). It was in this context that the word “represión” came to signify both the military persecution of political dissidents and the seemingly concomitant attempt to suppress sexuality. It was no wonder erotic magazines could claim sexual freedom as a contribution to democracy.

A regular section published in several magazines and entitled “mándenlos su foto” or “send us your picture” illustrates this impulse to push the limits of what was socially accepted regarding sexuality (Figure 7). In a 1984 issue, the magazine published the nudes of a middle-aged female reader named Mónica. After failing to succeed in previous attempts, Mónica had jokingly threatened editors. She told them that she would keep sending more pictures and would stop advertising the magazine among her female friends, a comment in passing that assumes porn to be a topic of casual conversation among average middle-aged women. This was not an isolated case; women of all ages, body types, and regions of Argentina would send pictures for publication in this section of *Viva*, *Destape*, and *Shock*. Women’s eagerness to see themselves in the erotic magazines surfaces in many of their comments. Men would also send pictures of themselves, but they were in the minority. Although editors sometimes objectified the women who sent pictures, they also did so with men. In fact, while traditional masculinity was contrary to being the



Figure 7. “Send us your pic” section in *Viva*. Left: Marcia, 53 years old. Lower Middle: Magdalena, a Paraguayan woman, in *Viva*, issue 28, from 3 July 1984. Upper Middle, Monica in *Viva* n/d. Right, Jorge in *Destape*, no. 78, n/d.

passive object of someone else’s gaze, men in Argentine porn were often portrayed as sexual objects (Insausti and Peralta 2018; Insausti and Fernandez 2020). Readers who sent pictures to this section, also, were rarely meaning to exhibit bodies they presented as exceptionally attractive. Jorge, for instance, is described as not having “rollitos” (a dad bod) and rather as featuring a “summer body”, a euphemism for fit people.

Women showed themselves naked in unedited photographs, and editors published their images in black and white and in pages with low-quality paper. Through these pictures, women and men were attempting to overcome their inhibitions and live to the fullest, as the magazine invited them to do. Models in different sections throughout *Viva* and *Destape* were portrayed as sexual objects, especially when published in colour on pages with high-quality glossy paper. Even these pictures, however, exhibited a countertrend of female models in charge of the situation rather than just posing for men to see. Overcoming inhibitions and exploring new horizons was not only popular among readers, it also shaped the narratives surrounding female nude models who claimed in interviews that they were “trying to live as intensively as possible” and that “posing naked was a way of showing so”.²⁸

This characteristic of Argentine porn was very different from what we observed for *Zeta*. The Peruvian magazine included a section for women but its readership was mostly male. Women were more decisively objectified in female nudes when

compared with Argentine magazines. Some of the women interviewed by *Zeta* also showed agency in displaying their bodies, but such agency was never articulated into a political agenda aiming to transform the self and explore new sexual horizons, as was the case in Argentina. By the end of the 1980s the Argentine project of overcoming inhibitions and encouraging sexual experimentation had reached new heights. Issue 288 of *Destape*, published in February 1989, for instance featured a diverse and large number of personal classified ads by gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and the most important category: couples seeking threesomes. Although the most frequent demand was to form triads of two women and one man, a common male heterosexual fantasy also present in other periods and across societies, the drive to experiment and challenge normative boundaries is also present in this type of sexual encounter. For instance, a twenty-two-year-old man interested in “making love with two women ” notes that “I wear women’s underwear” [uso ropa interior femenina].²⁹ Most importantly, sexual fantasies were not only driven by male desire. Readers and editors obsessively insisted on words like “respect”, “discretion”, and “seriousness” that were very important for women to feel safe and follow their own impulses. The project of challenging horizons was not something to be forced upon others. On the contrary, the attempt to democratise Argentina through modernised aspirational eroticism was always presented as a freely chosen individual path. Everybody needed to engage in a process of self-analysis to overcome atavistic prejudices against sexuality, but for individuals to succeed in this task, they needed to do it on their own terms and timing, and in an atmosphere of utmost respect.³⁰ If forced by others or disrespected, individuals – especially women – could in fact retreat into normative sexuality. This is not to say that Argentine culture followed these idealised rules, the imposition of male desire over women continued to be hegemonic in Argentine culture, but the ideal of “respect” was crucial for the agenda of erotic magazines.

One of the most edgy aspects of Argentine erotic magazines for their period was the inclusion of gay porn and, to some extent, the participation of lesbians. Although gay men were making important inroads into the public sphere and were increasingly accepted by others as regular citizens, their status was still ambivalent in the 1980s. The relative tolerance of gays coexisted with lack of recognition in other realms. Systematic police persecution against gay men as it had existed for most of the twentieth century continued at least until the early 1990s, despite the transition to democracy since 1983. Yet, in porn magazines gay men could find a space where their sexual interests were welcome. Some articles in Argentine porn magazines were written by gay activists and other pieces defended the point of view of the Lesbian and Gay movement at the time. Moreover, gay porn was not segregated into a separate niche. Later, in the 1990s, specialised gay porn magazines would thrive, but during the 1980s gay porn photography occupied central pages in mostly straight erotic magazines like *Viva* or *Destape*. Many heterosexual readers not only embraced gay porn, but at times they also perceived it as another opportunity to challenge their inhibitions and prejudices. In this context, however, lesbians were not equally visible through photography. Most pictures representing two women in sexual attitudes were likely meant for the male straight gaze. Yet, lesbianism as a topic approached from the point of view of lesbians – as opposed

to the usual male gaze – was not entirely absent from the magazine. Women expressing desire for other women published numerous classified ads and the topic was discussed and praised in written articles. By contrast, *Zeta* derided both female and male homosexuality as forms of degeneration. For this Peruvian magazine, gay men were part of the combo of vice in Lima, together with drugs and prostitution they were a noxious foreign influence. The idea that homosexuality was more likely to be welcomed in Europe or the United States was present both in Peru and Argentina, but the imagination of core Western nations as gay-friendly was read very differently in *Destape* and *Zeta*. In *Zeta* the foreign impulse was associated with the alleged corrupting influence of American imperialism. In *Destape* and other Argentine magazines, on the contrary, it was perceived as a form of openness that all civilised countries were supposed to emulate, a cultural sophistication that confirmed the otherwise ambivalent whiteness of Argentines. The difference between *Zeta* and *Destape* should not be understood as a comparison between Peru and Argentina. Other mid-1980s Peruvian erotic magazines not discussed in this paper, like *Cinco*, showed a positive representation of homosexuality like that of Argentine magazines (Anicama Cárdenas 2019, 38). On the other hand, homophobia in other Argentine published venues during the 1980s was associated to a similar civilisational divide of gay-friendly Anglo societies vs. traditional Mediterranean and Latin American countries. The late Cold-War understanding of porn as a civilisational divide anticipated some of the geopolitical tensions we can observe in the twenty-first century, especially in relation to how Western societies today often present themselves as welcoming sexual diversity in opposition to allegedly intolerant countries in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe (Insausti and Ben 2023).

Conclusion

Our paper postulated five major counterintuitive approaches to the study of sexuality, gender, race, and politics in porn magazines. First, we challenged a common assumption among the lay public claiming that dictatorships ban the mass circulation of erotic images while democracies protect the freedom of speech enabling porn. Second, we showed how pornographic representations not necessarily strengthen hierarchies of sexuality, gender, and race. In fact, during the period under study porn undermined some of those hierarchies in the two countries. Third, our focus on porn as a commercial enterprise drove us away from a top/down understanding of culture. Instead of understanding readers as mere recipients of ideas imposed by the magazines, our approach stressed the power that audiences had to shape media representations, a tension through overarching content analysis over time. Fourth, the magazines we examined forced us to perceive porn as integral to politics, not as a separate sphere of erotic representations. Porn magazines became a focal point in the transition to democracy, debating the overall nature of society and politics. Last but not least, this paper proposes a methodological approach under which porn transcends the status of mere curiosity for the study of sexuality and, instead, it becomes a centrepiece for illuminating social, economic, political, and demographic transformations.

Regarding the banning of porn, we noted that even in Argentina, where democracy brought a sudden explosion of eroticism, the trend did not merely result from the lessening of censorship. In fact, censorship persevered several years after the advent of democracy in the country (D'Antonio 2015). In Peru, on the other hand, the late 1970s military regime provided a promising context for the publishing of female nudes in *Zeta*, while the coming of democratic rule strengthened political coalitions demanding that the circulation of porn be shut down. Therefore, instead of focusing on the opposition of military censorship vs. democratic freedom of speech, this paper examined how the transformation of Lima and Buenos Aires fostered new urban cultures shaping the status of porn at the turn to the 1980s.

Emerging in times of political change, these new urban cultures sometimes under-mined older hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality and demanded revamped porn representations matching new worldviews. Challenging inhibitions, porn in Argentina promoted experimentation, female self-assertion, and acceptance of sexual diversity as part of the rising democratic agenda. Such agenda, however, associated sexual democracy with the global north and, therefore, with whitening. In doing so, Argentine porn contributed to the reproduction of enduring racial hierarchies. Meanwhile, mass migration to Lima undermined white middle-class hegemony, leading a new male audience to regard the physical attributes and complexions of Andean women in higher esteem than those of their white counterparts. In opposition to Argentina, however, Peruvian porn did not associate democracy with female self-assertion but, instead, deployed concerns about the dangers that the capital posed for the purity of migrant women who were expected to require male surveillance. Moreover, porn in Peru was often hostile to LGBT people, even if it opened some opportunities to argue in favour of defending their rights.

Attention to the commercial nature of the porn enterprise illuminates the rapport with the audience as well as the shifting editorial policies and political agendas. It should be noted that porn did not develop as a top/down project deployed by editors who shaped their readership's views. On the contrary, selling required an adaptation to audience demands. In the case of Peru, editors were forced to make a significant investment in photographing local women. In Argentina, magazines launched surveys to explore changing views among their customers. Moreover, editors provided readers with space to publish their own images and stories and expanded the classified ads section to lure those seeking sexual partners. It is through the influence that audiences had over magazines that we can explore the socio-economic, political, and cultural transformations expressed through porn. This approach, however, requires methodological attention to the overarching arc of changing representations over time as opposed to detailed focus on specific articles or images.

Unlike in other places and historical periods, porn in Latin America during the late Cold War became deeply intertwined with politics. Hunt (1993) found similar evidence for the history of early modern Europe, stating that porn became an autonomous sphere at some point in the 1800s, whereas it had been mixed with politics and natural philosophy before that date. Scholars of colonial Latin America found a similar situation on the other side of the Atlantic, where porn seized by the Inquisition was also mixed with politics and Enlightenment philosophy (Donahue-Wallace and Lamar Latham 2007). Our research suggests that the relationship

between porn and politics has certainly fluctuated over time. The transnational history of porn as a genre that is at times associated with other themes while later becoming autonomous deserves closer attention if we are to grasp the different connections between politics and sexuality through time and geography.

Often perceived as a minor genre, porn has failed to attract the attention of historians seeking to understand major social and political transitions. Unbecoming and shameful, pornographic representations have rarely been preserved by archives and libraries. Even avid consumers of porn tend to discard it soon after acquisition. Facing legal and social obstacles, private collectors have seldom preserved these materials. Yet, the ephemeral and tantalising nature of erotic representations has often enabled mass circulation of political ideas that would have otherwise remains marginal. In Peru, the allure of female nudes contributed to the APRA campaign in the transition to democracy, in Argentina porn became a focal point in undermining the political power and cultural influence of the Catholic Church during the transition to democracy. Although some of these themes could be explored through alternative historical evidence, the massive commercialisation of porn is crucial to understand changing worldviews affect daily life.

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Magazines

Viva (Buenos Aires)

Destape (Buenos Aires)

Shock (Buenos Aires)

Zeta (Lima)

Eros (Ciudad de México)

Archives

Memorias Desviadas, Buenos Aires.

El Insulto, Ciudad de México.

Archivo General de la Nación, Lima.

Ruben Barcelli (director of *SoHo* magazine), interview by Santiago Joaquín Insausti & Pablo Ben, Lima, 2021.

Notes

1. This assumption is partly inherited from one current of 1980s feminism participating in the so-called “porn wars”, see Dworkin (1989) and MacKinnon (1991). In the Spanish-speaking world, the assumption that porn reproduces hierarchies can also be observed among some trends in the “posporno” movement. The idea that porn has been inherently oppressive has been challenged by the historiography of pornography, as in the case of Hunt (1993), Laqueur (2003), Sigel (2005).
2. For instance, Zelmar Acevedo in Argentina, and Max Obregón and Amadeo Grados Penalillo in Peru. This trend was even more noticeable in Mexico, where erotic magazines like *Eros* published essays by Carlos Monsiváis, one of the most iconic public intellectuals in the country, or Nancy Cardenas, famous leader of the lesbian and gay movement.
3. See, for example, in the same issue: “El futuro del APRA”, “El APRA sufre revés”.
4. “El Peru busca un líder civil: ¿Haya muy maduro? ¿Bedoya muy inmaduro?” *Zeta*, 1, no. 1, 15 February 1979.
5. Categories like “serrano/a” or “white middle class” as used in this article should not be taken as representing clear-cut racial groups. In fact, some of the categories are based on geography. The Sierra, for instance, is a location. Serranas and serranos (from the Sierra) include a majority of mestizo/a people and a minority of whites. Similarly, Lima’s middle class is associated with whiteness but includes people who are not white and, in some cases, even former Serrano/a migrants who experienced upward mobility.
6. Pictures of mestiza women included the name of Peruvian photographers, showing that the images were produced by *Zeta* (for instance: Miguel Cartolini in issue 29, Francisco Castillo in issue 35 and 37) while the pictures of white women have no references and were either purchased from American image banks offering lower prices because of mass scale production, or were even probably just stolen at no cost.
7. *Zeta*, 2, no. 64, August 1981.
8. “Cartas de lectores”, *Bravo*, Issue 27, n/d.
9. *Zeta*, 1, no. 13, August 1979.
10. *Zeta*, 1, no. 8, May 1979.
11. “Peñas criollas: drogas y putas”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 63, August 1981; “Citas de drogas y sexo en los cines Omnia, Bolívar y Alameda”, *Zeta*, 2, November 1980.
12. “Burdeles en pleno centro”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 73.
13. “En el Cinco y Medio ganan un millón diario”, *Zeta*, May 1979.
14. “La parada al rojo vivo”, *Zeta*, 44, November 1980, pp. 12-5.
15. “La parada al rojo vivo”, *Zeta*, 44, November 1980, pp. 12-5.
16. “Betsy”, *Zeta*, 63, p. 61
17. “La campaña es contra los explotadores y no contra ellas”, *Zeta*, 73, p. 18.
18. “Las viejas se mueren en las calles”, *Zeta*, 1, no. 6, May 1979.
19. “En Barranca todo vuelve a ser como antes”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 44, November 1980.
20. “La parada al rojo vivo”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 44, November 1980.
21. “Lucha de clases tras la muerte”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 43, November 1980.
22. Marxist jargon appears in articles on a variety of themes, such as “Las transnacionales y el negocio de los medicamentos”, *Zeta*, May 1975; “Las autoridades, las drogas y el INAPROMEF”, *Zeta*, 2, no. 44, November 1980.

23. “La playa gay de Venice Beach”, *Viva*, 1, no. 23, May 1984.
24. “Ulla”, *Viva*, 1, no. 23, May 1984.
25. “La revolución de las lesbianas”, *Destape*, 2, no. 90, May 1985.
26. “Sigue la fiesta de sexo, locura y erotismo”, *Viva*, 2, no. 63, March 1985.
27. “Show erótico entre serpientes”, *Viva*, no. 31, July 1984.
28. “Emilse”, *Viva*, 1, no. 23, May 1984.
29. “Cartas de lectores”, *Viva*, no. 70, April 1985.
30. In Issue 63 of *Viva*, for instance, a bisexual couple seeks men, women, or other couples. In their classified add, they state “our relations will happen in a context of respect and cordiality”. “Club de contactos”, *Viva*, no. 63, March 1985.

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