

**From “La Mujer Esclava” to “La Mujer Limón”:
Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality
in Early-Twentieth-Century Chile**

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The world that the unhappy woman worker
inhabits is a martyr's cell,
where she suffers the infamies and miseries
of life with deep sadness!
Could there be some hidden power
that makes the woman, always enslaved,
accept the foolish and miserable insult
of the powerful and mystical bourgeois?
No! Because the sun of the Social Question
has already brightened the minds of the people.
It destroys universal ignorance,
and, woman, you must study in its temples
Workers of the world! Already, the light
that shines on human knowledge
has begun to destroy the yoke and the cross
that we have carried on our shoulders for so many years

—Clara Rosa González, “Al Combate,” *El Acrata*, May 15, 1901

Listen, woman. I am going to speak plainly to you. Right now you are a machine for stopping weaklings, a machine incapable of conceiving of something noble and humane. . . . You have played and you will always play the role in life of a lemon, which after it is squeezed is dashed violently in the garbage. Your history is very sad and disgraceful.

—Juan Levadura, “Tu eres como el limón,” *El Comunista*, August 6, 1921

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The paradox of the Chilean labor movement under the Parliamentary Republic is not that so little attention was given to women, but rather that there was so much. As foreign labor ideology and modes of organization reached Southern Cone countries via tides of working-class immigrants—and, in the case of Chile, through translated foreign pamphlets that circulated among workers—the question of what to do about “the woman question” provoked considerable concern among working-class activists. Amidst the growing influence of anarchist ideology and the proliferation of the “resistance societies” (*sociedades de resistencia*) that they promoted, anarchists were among the first working-class organizers to draw attention to the topic of female subordination. When Clara Rosa González read her poem *Into Battle* to a large audience of men and women gathered at a union hall in downtown Santiago in April 1901, she joined prominent male anarchists in a program dedicated to the topic of the woman question, illustrating the level of attention anarchists generally dedicated to it at the turn of the century.¹ González’s brimming optimism about women’s imminent transformation from victims of capital into agents of revolution reflects what Chilean anarchist leaders were writing and saying about women’s emancipation; most anarchist writings on the woman question in Chile prior to World War I emphasized, as González did, that libertarian education alone could free women from their historic slavery to men and capital. Such utopian claims may have seemed less so to working-class listeners in the context of anarchist propaganda, which triumphantly recorded the proliferation of women’s and mixed-sex resistance societies among working women in Santiago and Valparaíso after the turn of the century.

By the third decade of the twentieth century, however, attention to women in anarchist newspapers and union broadsides revealed anarchists’ relatively greater skepticism about women’s revolutionary potential. The publication of diatribes such as “You are like a lemon” signaled a turn to more aggressive, sarcastic rhetorical strategies after 1918, as some anarchist writers publicly upbraided women for their intransigent passivity and blamed them for the declining participation of male workers in anarchist unions. These writers no

Barbara Weinstein, Soledad Zárate, and the two anonymous readers from *HAHR* for their comments. This article is dedicated to the memory of Cecilia Salinas Alvarez (1944–2001). All translations from Spanish are by the author.

1. *La Campaña*, 1 Jan. 1901, 4. The report on the meeting at the union hall on Bascañan Guerrero street also noted M. J. Montenegro’s speech on “La mujer en la anarquía” and Luís Morales Morales’s “La mujer a través del progreso.” Both speakers were also frequent contributors to the labor press, and Montenegro became a well-known editor of anarchist newspapers in this period.

longer rendered working-class women as the incarnation of revolutionary hope, but rather as a symbol of the regressive, slavlike mentality that betrayed the revolutionary aspirations of their working-class brothers. On the one hand, the ferocity of these attacks suggests the very real frustration that anarchists might have felt in the postwar period, as marxist unionization efforts came to outstrip those of anarchists, particularly among women industrial workers. On the other, the inversion of the symbolic function of "woman" in anarchist rhetoric of the 1920s also testifies to the contradictory and unstable nature of anarchist sexual politics throughout this 30-year period, a topic that has not been sufficiently addressed in existing literature on Chilean anarchist movements.²

This study examines anarchist discourses on women and revolution in Chile in these two periods, tracing the evolution of themes such as female victimization, women's emancipation, and misogyny, as they emerged and recurred in the anarchist press and libertarian pamphlets. I will focus on anarchists' role in creating, sustaining, and reshaping the Left's discourse on gender and sexuality in the context of two central arguments. First, I argue that the communalist anarchism that pervaded many working-class organizations at the turn of the century stimulated a sustained, radical critique of male domination on the part of Chile's anarchist leaders, almost all of whom were men. In their attempts to illustrate how capitalism had denaturalized human social relations, Chilean anarchists punctuated their appeals for radical sexual equality with references to prior utopian moments of harmonious, "natural" relations between men and women.³ Further, because of the ideological heterogeneity

2. Chilean anarchists' substantial concern with sexuality and gender hierarchy has been overlooked by a variety of scholars, even where such research has examined the construction of libertarian social ideals in anarchist discourse. See, for example, Jorge Barria Serón, *Los movimientos sociales en Chile desde 1910 hasta 1926: Aspecto político y social* (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1960); Patrick Edward Breslin, "The Development of Class Consciousness in the Chilean Working Class" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1980); Peter DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902–1927* (Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Alicia Gariazzo, "Orígenes ideológicos de los movimientos obreros chileno y argentino," *Revista Paraguaya de Sociología* 18, no. 51 (1981); and Claudio Rolle Cruz, "Anarquismo en Chile, 1897–1907" (bachelor's thesis, Univ. Católica de Chile, 1985). A 1987 investigation carried out by Tomás Moulian and Isabel Torres Dujisin first suggested the centrality of sexual morality to both anarchist and communist politics of the 1920s, but reached conclusions substantially different from those presented in this article. See their "Concepción de la política e ideal moral en la prensa obrera, 1919–1922," working paper no. 336, FLACSO, Santiago, 1987.

3. Claudio Rolle Cruz argues that such constructions were in some sense conservative: "given the fact that the anarchist utopia is, in part, a bygone utopia, we find

of Chile's working-class movements at the turn of the century, this critique also gave crucial ideological and organizational impetus to other political movements that were open to a gendered critique of capitalism, such as the workers' movements affiliated with the Democratic party. In a second argument, I show how international and domestic factors combined in the postwar period to fragment anarchist organization and to dampen Chilean anarchists' former enthusiasm for women's participation in revolutionary politics. Chilean anarchists' turn in the 1920s to a relatively more conservative sexual politics coincided with the shifting sexual politics of international anarchism, which everywhere struggled against more effective state repression and competition from marxist-led unions and political parties. In the Chilean case, although anarcho-syndicalism in some sense flourished in the powerful associations of shoemakers and printers and the newly established International Workers of the World (IWW), the hardening of ideological divisions with marxist-led unions after 1921 and increased state repression under the Sanfuentes and Alessandri regimes forced anarchist unions into a bitter struggle for existence, in which the stakes for worker mobilization were much higher and the political payoffs more limited than in earlier years.⁴ While DeShazo is correct in asserting the vital importance of anarcho-syndicalism in urban Chile in the postwar period, the *Federación Obrera de Chile* (FOCh) remained a more powerful force among workers in clothing, food and textile manufacturing, industries in which women workers were concentrated. Further, the Wobblies remained strongest among maritime and construction workers, two industries which by their very organization excluded female participation. Given these shifts in anarchist organization from earlier in the century—when ideological differences were less marked and libertarian ideas more pervasive—the turn of some anarchist writers to a more conservative sexual politics in the 1920s is not surprising. The overtly misogynist tone of texts such as “You are a lemon” therefore expressed some anarchists' frustration with their increasing difficulty in mobilizing male workers for revolutionary action and their limited influence over women's unions in particular. While some anarchist writers of the 1920s continued to celebrate women's revolutionary potential, others railed

in their ideas about society numerous references to past eras in which the principle of mutual support and the practice of solidarity among men were more developed, which gives a somewhat conservative cast to the anarchist idea of utopia.” Rolfe Cruz, “Anarquismo en Chile,” 3.

4. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 146–58, 164–74, 179–94, 201–10. The penchant of FOCh leaders for state arbitration and legal recognition of member unions contributed to the popularity of the FOCh throughout this period.

against the continued postponement of social revolution by attacking ready and traditional symbols of social conservatism, namely, working-class women.

The sources used in this study are the short-lived periodicals generated by working-class militants in Santiago and Valparaíso—where most anarchist activity was concentrated throughout this period—as well as the translated works of Spanish, French, and Argentine anarchists that circulated in pamphlet or excerpted form.⁵ These newspapers and pamphlets emerged side-by-side with the new trade unions, resistance societies, and socialist “brotherhoods” (*mancomunales*) that made up the landscape of organized labor in Chile at the turn of the century. This labor press not only gives us access to the meetings, rallies, and groups that composed the movement, but also testifies to the high priority accorded to propaganda and education in workers societies of the period. As elsewhere, Chilean anarchists devoted considerable energy after 1900 to the diffusion of libertarian ideals not only among workers and artisans but also in intellectual and artistic circles. Although this propaganda took many other forms—from public meetings and speeches to reading circles and dramatic performances—the labor press served both to provide news about such activities and disseminate anarchist editorial commentary and instructions in libertarian ideas. The shifting network of anarchist contributors and editors, as well as their newspaper exchanges with foreign anarchists, have left us with extensive evidence about the most public discussions on the woman question within Chile’s self-identified revolutionary vanguard.

As rich as this labor press is for understanding the ideals that motivated Chilean anarchist leaders, it does not shed much light on how anarchist representations were perceived by their working-class readers, male or female. That certain paradigms for gender relations were repeatedly stressed by anarchist authors testifies more to the legitimacy of such ideas among working-class intellectuals and journalists than it does to their acceptance among the rank and file. Without recourse to these voices, this article remains a study in

5. The Chilean labor press has proven to be a valuable resource for students of Chilean labor politics, who have classified these working-class newspapers and journals and analyzed their impact on workers movements during this formative period. Important information about that press can be found in Osvaldo Arias Escobedo, *La prensa obrera en Chile, 1900–1930* (Chillán: Univ. de Chile, 1970); Serón, *Los movimientos sociales en Chile*; Breslin, “The Development of Class Consciousness in the Chilean Working Class”; Ximena Cruzat and Eduardo Devés, eds., *Recabarren: Escritos de prensa, 1898–1924*, 4 vols. (Santiago: Terranova Editores, 1987); DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*; and Cecilia Salinas, *La mujer proletaria: Una historia para contar* (Concepción, Chile: Ed. Literatura América Reunida, 1987).

the gendered fictions that operated in anarchist public discourse. As Ann Farnsworth-Alvear has argued, such fictions are incomplete without corresponding knowledge about what she calls “real” working-class men and women; but such cultural fictions in themselves expressed working-class leaders’ assumptions about gender, assumptions that in turn shaped working-class political strategies.⁶ Further, we can see in the content and frequency of anarchist attention to the woman question some evidence of the fluctuating appeal of libertarian constructions of radical sexual equality: whereas by 1905, female emancipation had become a rallying cry for anarchists, socialists, and mutualists alike, by 1914 this attention had dwindled to a rare mention in the labor press; by 1917, as Chilean labor movements struggled to rebuild, the woman question reemerged and, for some anarchist unionists, in a decidedly misogynist form.

Given the real limits of the labor press as a window on working-class culture more broadly, one of the most significant characteristics of anarchist writings is the degree to which it was dominated by male authors and male concerns. Most anarchist texts on the woman question were authored either by men, or by pseudonymous authors who claimed to be women.⁷ Although Moulián and Torres have taken female pen names as evidence of female participation in anarchist politics, the fact that other women authors do appear occasionally in the anarchist press in the 1920s—and under their own names—suggests another interpretation. The use of pseudonyms was admittedly a widespread practice in the Chilean labor press, particularly among anarchists; this practice both protected anarchists from police retaliation and universalized their contributions by denying individual authorship.⁸ Frequent contributors often cultivated symbolic pseudonyms, while others simply invented names that indicated their occupations or corresponded to a particular sentiment, such as “A baker for love” or “As a poor man I have made no laws, but I have followed all of them.”⁹ Similarly, Chilean authors who attached female

6. Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905–1960* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 74.

7. Moulián and Torres Dujisin, “Concepción de la política e ideal moral en la prensa obrera,” 85.

8. Lily Litvak makes an excellent case for the universalizing intentions of pseudonymous anarchist authors in Spain. See her *Musa Libertaria: Arte, literatura y vida cultural del anarquismo español (1880–1913)* (Barcelona: A. Bosh, 1981), 211–12.

9. Rolle Cruz asserts that anarchists’ affinity for highly symbolic names extended to family naming practices, citing children’s names such as “Tiger of the Revolution” and Bakunin that appear in anarchist accounts. Rolle Cruz, “Anarquismo en Chile,” 75.

pseudonyms to their articles about “the woman question” may have done so in order to increase the validity and appeal of their arguments about women.¹⁰ Such literary cross-dressing testifies not to an anarchist challenge to fixed gender roles—which these writers repeatedly embraced—but rather to the pervasive paternalism that entitled male anarchists quite literally to speak for working-class women and to define women’s interests in revolutionary terms. It is therefore significant that the harshest anarchist critiques of female passivity and obstructionism in the 1920s were penned by “women,” demonstrating once again that the resulting discourse was not so much for or about women as it was a further expression of male anarchists’ objectives, mediated through constructions of working-class femininity.¹¹

Anarchism and the Industrial Workforce

By the turn of the century, Chile’s export-led development had produced a sizeable urban labor force, which together with workers in the nitrate sector comprised the key population for building a diverse array of workers organizations in urban areas. As Santiago and Valparaíso expanded as the centers for domestic manufacturing, administration, and transport, so too did the urban working-class communities where labor activism could flourish. While seasonal migration for agricultural work and unstable employment in nitrates ensured the high mobility of much of the Chilean workforce, protectionist

10. Until now, only Luís Emilio Recabarren has been credited with this technique. On Recabarren’s use of pseudonyms, see Cruzat and Devés, *Recabarren*, 1:iv; Elena Caffarena, “Luís Emilio Recabarren Feminista,” *La Nación*, 15 Dec., 5; and Edda Gaviola Artigas et al., *Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones: Historia del movimiento feminino chileno, 1913–1952* (Santiago: Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Condición de la Mujer, 1986), 32.

11. Barrancos has noted a similar mediation occurring in the anarchist periodicals of Argentina in the same period. See Dora Barrancos, *Anarquismo, educación y costumbres en la Argentina de principios de siglo* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Contrapunto, 1990), 269. The issue of authorship also distinguishes these Chilean texts from other well-known examples of anarchist feminism promoted by women in Latin America. See, for example, *La Voz de la Mujer*, an anarchist journal published by and for women in Argentina in 1896–97, and the writings of Puerto Rican anarchist Luisa Capetillo. See also Maxine Molyneux, “‘No God, No Boss, No Husband’: Anarchist Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Argentina,” *Latin American Perspectives* 13 (1986); Julio Ramos, ed., *Amor y anarquía: Los escritos de Luisa Capetillo* (Rio Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1992); and Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870–1920* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1999), 159–66.

policies, industrial investment and increasing domestic demand for foodstuffs, clothing, and other manufactures fueled the slow growth of a more permanent industrial labor force after the turn of the century.¹² Chilean industry also employed workers in ever-larger establishments: in Santiago, for example, industrial surveys recorded 17,567 workers in 1,052 factories in 1895 (about 17 workers per establishment), and 25,183 workers in just 1,086 factories by 1906 (approximately 23 workers per establishment).¹³ By 1918, fully 42 percent of industrial workers were employed in firms of 11 to 100 workers, while a slightly larger percentage worked in factories that employed 100 or more workers.¹⁴

The leading employment sectors in Chilean industry and most of its largest factories were concentrated in food and clothing production, activities that also employed the greatest number of women workers. While many of the women migrating to Santiago at the turn of the century initially sought work as domestic servants, the changing nature of the city and its industries provided women with a more visible and troubling option, from the point of view of organized labor, that is, factory work. Although women were numerically fewer than men or children in factories producing shoes, crackers, cardboard, or paper, women predominated in the areas of making dresses, corsets, shirts, sandals, wicker furniture, cardboard boxes and wool clothing. Women also made up a significant number of workers in bakeries, and in cracker, sweet, soda water, shoe, pasta, *empanada*, and glass factories.¹⁵ While national census statistics show that the almost 48 percent of economically active women employed in the "industrial" sector in 1895 declined dramatically in the twentieth century (reaching a low of 26 percent in 1930), more reliable figures from the annual industrial survey reveal that between 1912 and 1925, women made up a solid third of Santiago's factory workers, and that they also predominated

12. Internal migration was largely responsible for the expansion of Chile's urban population from 34 to 49 percent between 1895 and 1930, while Santiago was the city with the highest growth rates throughout the period: roughly 4 percent from 1885 to 1995, and about 2.5 percent thereafter to 1930. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, table 1.1, 4.

13. *Ibid.*, table 1.6, 16.

14. Henry W. Kirsch, *Industrial Development in a Traditional Society: The Conflict of Entrepreneurship and Modernization in Chile* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1977), 108.

15. See "La desocupación en diversos centros industriales durante el tercer trimestre de 1915," *Boletín de la Oficina de Trabajo* 10 (1915). A more detailed description of women's industrial activities appears in Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor and Politics in Chile, 1900-1930* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, forthcoming), esp. chap. 2.

in clothing, textile and tobacco factories at a rate of three women to every man employed.¹⁶ All told, approximately one-tenth of the wage-earning women of Santiago worked in factory production prior to 1930, including those who took in factory outwork to be completed in their homes.¹⁷ This visible presence of women in the factory workforce after 1900 ensured that working-class women—and women workers in particular—would become a primary concern for organized labor, since their participation constituted both a threat to male wages and prerogatives and a new audience for political education.

Working-class mobilization in Chile—rooted in the nineteenth-century tradition of mutualism—gained significant momentum in the final decades of the nineteenth century, as increasing numbers of Chilean workers turned first to mutualist and socialist and then to anarchist forms of organization. Although anarchist ideas arrived in Chile later and without the dramatic tides of immigrants seen elsewhere in Latin America, libertarian ideology nonetheless made an important mark on the development of Chilean labor politics. In contrast to the flood of Italian and Spanish immigrants that carried anarchism directly to the shores of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chilean anarchism was fostered primarily through anarchist writings that were translated and published first in Argentina or Uruguay and later reprinted in the Chilean labor press. Alongside the articles and editorials produced by Chilean authors—from the well-known journalist, editor and orator Manuel Montenegro to an obscure “revolutionary hatmaker”—foreign anarchist texts littered and sometimes even dominated the pages of anarchist publications. Pieces by Bakunin, Kropotkin, Thackeray, Proudhon, Tolstoy and Zola appeared regularly in Chilean papers, as did as those of Spanish and Italian anarchists such as Mir i Mir and Pietro Gori. This

16. The argument that changing census methodologies at the turn of the century produce a distorted picture of women's employment appears in Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, “La historia detrás de las cifras: La evolución del censo chileno y la representación del trabajo femenino, 1895–1930,” *Historia* 33 (2000); and Anne Pérotin-Dumon, ed., *El género en historia* [book on-line] (Santiago: Univ. Católica, 2000), available from August 2000 to March 2001 at <http://www.hist.puc.cl/genero.html> and on CD-ROM.

17. Author's calculations are based on data from the following sources: República de Chile, Oficina Central de Estadística, *Anuario estadística de la República de Chile* (Santiago: Imp. y Lit. Universo, 1909–1925); República de Chile, Comisión Central del Censo, *Censo de la República de Chile, levantado el 28 de noviembre de 1907* (Santiago: Imp. y Lit. Universo, 1908); República de Chile, Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo de la población de la República de Chile, levantado el 15 de diciembre de 1920* (Santiago: Imp. y Lit. Universo, 1925); and idem, *X censo de la población efectuado el 27 de noviembre de 1930*, 3 vols. (Santiago: Imp. Universo, 1935).

flow of anarchist ideology and news was facilitated by the vast exchange network that flourished between domestic and foreign presses, which conveyed news to Chile from cities as distant as Madrid, Havana, Tampa, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, and Paris. Chilean labor movements were also occasionally nurtured by visits from well-known foreign anarchists: Italian anarchist Pietro Gori visited Chile in 1901; and Spanish freethinker Belén de Sárraga traveled to Chile in 1913 and 1915. Chilean anarchists' unembarrassed embrace of European ideas testifies not only to the accessibility of those ideas, but also to the eclectic nature of working-class politics in Chile at the time.¹⁸ Despite mutual suspicion between anarchists and socialists, for example, labor activists from both tendencies frequently collaborated in pursuit of common revolutionary and syndicalist goals throughout this period.

The growth of Chile's anarchist press reveals the network of anarchist workers organizations that took hold among manufacturing and transport workers in the final decade of the nineteenth century, despite employers' frequent recourse to state-supported repression of strikes and other workers' activities. Through the radicalization of many existing mutual aid societies and the proliferation of resistance societies, anarchist groups formed the backbone of labor actions in this period, such as the shippers strike of 1890 that grew into a national movement.¹⁹ Thereafter, anarchist influence grew from its enclave among shipping and port workers to include other transport, tobacco, construction and leather workers, as well as typesetters and other artisans. It was during this period that anarchist ideology exercised decisive influence among several principal organizers of the Democratic party, a reformist workers party founded in 1887 that alternately collaborated and competed with anarchist federations for workers' loyalties.²⁰ It was also during this period that labor mobilization spread quickly among women and unskilled workers, who formed their own mutual aid and resistance societies in the predominantly female or significantly mixed trades of sewing, weaving, and shoemaking.

It was these women, who worked alongside men in textile, shoemaking,

18. Julio Ramos notes the tendency of Puerto Rican anarchists to paraphrase freely from foreign texts, which were also often translated and read aloud to workers long before they became available in printed editions. See Ramos's biographical essay on Puerto Rican anarchist Luisa Capetillo for a detailed analysis of the interplay between foreign and domestic anarchist doctrines in that journalist's writings. Ramos, *Amor y anarquía*, 11–58.

19. Sergio Grez Toso, "La huelga general de 1890," *Perspectivas* 5 (1990).

20. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, esp. chap. 4; Angel J. Capelletti, forward to *El anarquismo en América Latina*, ed. Carlos M. Rama and Angel J. Capelletti (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1990), lxxxiv.

and cigarette factories, who formed a primary target of the mobilization efforts of anarchists, mutualists, and Democratic party leaders after the turn of the century.²¹ While mutual aid organization had existed among women workers in Santiago and Valparaíso since the late 1880s, anarchist-oriented women's resistance societies also flourished after 1902 among hatmakers, seamstresses, shoemakers, textile workers, and cigarette makers.²² Between 1902 and 1908 direct action in the form of strikes and work stoppages spread to these women working in industry: female workers participated in 24 percent of recorded strikes, demanding shorter working days, better working conditions, higher wages, and reforms in factory management.²³ While women's activism—like men's—was rarely tied exclusively to anarchist principles, such actions frequently combined wage and workplace demands with the goal of revolutionary change through direct action, demonstrating that anarchist propaganda and leadership had indeed deeply influenced such movements.²⁴

Anarchist influence on working men and women was not limited, however, to workers who identified exclusively with libertarian goals and methods. The trajectory of socialist organization in Chile included close collaboration

21. Although the labor press occasionally decried the exploitation of women working in domestic service, industrial homework, and prostitution, anarchists and socialists alike generally despaired of forming viable unions in these trades. When domestic servants and homeworkers did organize mixed-sex associations in the 1920s—with an important quotient of male leadership—they did so largely as mutual-aid associations.

22. Although exact figures for women's resistance societies are unavailable, a survey of periodical and Labor Office sources revealed the stable existence of at least 22 female and mixed-sex revolutionary workers' associations in Santiago in 1907–1908. See República de Chile, Oficina del Trabajo, *Estadística de la Asociación Obrera* (Santiago: Imp. y Lit. Santiago, 1910); *La Reforma* (1906–1908); *La Alborada* (1905–1907); *La Palanca* (1908); and *El Socialista* (Valparaíso, 1915–1918).

23. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, table A.5, 268.

24. Chilean labor historiography, led first by Chilean marxists and later by North American scholars focusing on export sectors, has consistently emphasized marxist over anarchist leadership and organization. This emphasis has been caused, at least in part, by the dramatic resistance of workers organized in the nitrate sector as well as the attractive though somewhat enigmatic figure of the founder of the Communist party, Luís Emilio Recabarren. This focus also reflects the historically dominant position of marxism in Chilean labor movements since the 1930s. However, as Peter DeShazo has so cogently argued, this trajectory should not occlude our appreciation for anarchist contributions to the ideology and organizational forms of Chilean labor, particularly in the urban and transport sectors, during the first third of the century. Anarchists laid the groundwork for socialist unionization through worker education, organization, and leadership training during the mobilization drives of the early twentieth century. See DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*.

and near fusion with some anarchist groups around 1900, as workers associations already allied with the Democratic party began to favor the direct action tactics employed so successfully by anarchist-led groups. This convergence was further consolidated when the marxist journalist and orator Luís Emilio Recabarren led his brotherhood-based movement away from the Democratic party to form the Doctrinaire Democratic party between 1906 and 1908.²⁵ It was precisely during this period of anarchist ascendancy that Recabarren and other Democrats raised the banner of female emancipation and provided material and rhetorical support to the cause of female union organization. The resulting movement of “worker feminism”—analyzed more extensively elsewhere—drew its inspiration from anarchist critiques of sexual inequality, but concentrated largely on working women’s economic concerns and social respectability, producing a more dramatic surge in female unionization than anarchists’ more radical critique ever would.²⁶

Anarchism and the Emancipation of Women

As elsewhere in the Southern Cone, anarchist writers of the turn of the century identified the emancipation of women with the overthrow of all forms of social, economic, and political hierarchy. The first references to female subjugation in these terms appeared in 1900 in the anarchist publication *La Campaña* (1899–1902).²⁷ The newspaper’s editors, who exchanged their own paper

25. Peter DeShazo sees the creation of the Doctrinaire Democratic party as the result of disputes primarily over leadership, rather than ideology. Since worker support for Doctrinaire leadership came from blue-collar workers in the nitrate and urban sectors, cooperation with anarchist resistance societies and independent unions that were renouncing reformist, *mutualista* tactics furthered Democratic mobilization among workers. Particularly during that period of schism, movements and newspapers associated with Recabarren showed a clear affinity for anarchist teachings and strategies, even as some socialist leaders occasionally denounced anarchists’ antielectoral strategies. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 120–21; Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, esp. chap. 4.

26. Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, “El feminismo en el movimiento obrero chileno: La emancipación de la mujer en la prensa obrera feminista, 1905–1908,” working paper no. 80, FLACSO, Santiago, 1992; and idem, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, chap. 4.

27. Although Martina Barros’ 1873 translation of John Stuart Mills, *The Subjugation of Women* (London: London National Society for Women’s Suffrage, 1869) predates Chilean anarchist texts on the woman question, liberal feminists did not enter into significant public debate on that issue until after World War I. See, Ericka Kim Verba, “The Círculo de Lectura de Señoras [Ladies’ Reading Circle] and the Club de Señoras [Ladies’ Club] of Santiago, Chile: Middle- and Upper-class Feminist Conversations (1915–1920),” *Journal of Women’s History* 7 (1995).

for the anarchist feminist paper *La Voz de la Mujer* of Argentina, proved to be consistently attentive to the role of women in anarchism. For example, an article denouncing obligatory military service included women in its list of society's victims: the working-class woman appeared here as "man's slave" and the "daughter of the people," as well as a victim of the workshop "where she suffers from anemia, where she is the beast of social corruption."²⁸ The paper went on in succeeding months to record M. J. Montenegro's and Luis Morales Morales's speeches on the women's question, report the increasing participation of women in events such as Pietro Gori's public talks, and publish a call from "Juana Rosa revolucionaria" for the mobilization of "exploited" women workers.²⁹ This sampling of news stories from one anarchist paper accurately reflects the diverse aims of anarchists concerned with the woman question: not only to promote the idea of female emancipation among its readers, but also to educate and mobilize women—particularly women workers—in active support of revolutionary goals.

Anarchist critiques of female subordination were predicated on the common theme of "the enslaved woman," or the historic tendency of men to oppress women, even as laws, technology, and education eroded the real differences between the sexes. As early as 1902, *La Ajitación* reprinted excerpts from the 1901 work of French anarchist René Chaughy, whose *La mujer esclava* was later released as a pamphlet in Chile in 1921.³⁰ In it, he attributed the weakness of "the fair sex" to the continued sexual division of labor, which, rather than protect women, exploited their labor, and made them more dependent on their male "protectors." He dismissed male superiority as "an illusion borne of the desire to dominate," which he claimed was only poorly masked by men's apparent respect for women. Since education had not prepared them for anything but "servility," women who sought economic independence from male domination were constantly forced to choose between badly paid work and prostitution. Finally, Chaughy proposed that the liberation of women would bring about a revolution of incalculable size and the end of war: "Women's freedom," he wrote, "is the rising up of a new humanity." These two

28. Alejandro Eskobar i Karbayo, "La paz armada: El servicio militar obligatorio en Chile, la Patria," *La Campaña*, Nov. 1900, 3.

29. *La Campaña*, Nov. 1900, 3; 1 Jan. 1901, 4; 1 May 1901, 2–3; and Juana Rosa Revolucionaria, "A los explotadas," 3 April 1901, 1.

30. René Chaughy, "La mujer esclava," *La Ajitación*, 3 Feb. 1903, 1, later reprinted in *La Protesta*, May 1912, and *El Productor* 2:16, and released as a pamphlet with an introduction by Chilean anarchist "Aura." See, René Chaughy, *La mujer esclava* (Santiago: Imp. Ideal, 1921).

elements—a radical critique of male power and self-interest, combined with unfailing optimism about women's capacity for liberation—also characterized Chilean anarchist writings about women, thereby demonstrating the importance of international ideological currents in the development of anarchism in Chile.³¹

The earliest Chilean anarchist writings on the woman question closely followed Chaughi's assessment, emphasizing that the main obstacle to female emancipation was the persistence of male domination, which anarchist writers argued were upheld by bourgeois institutions such as marriage and the state. Anarchist critiques of male domination thus emphasized the oppressive and unnatural strictures of the institution of marriage, and the desirability of its prescribed remedy, free love: Magno Espinosa argued in the first issue of *El Acrata* that "love will not be a conventional lie, as it is now, in which women must sell their bodies like some kind of merchandise; in the future men and women will unite freely and they will enjoy that love as long as the affection that united them shall last."³² In another example, women's emancipation in the private sphere implied their subsequent participation in revolutionary struggle: "Only then will the woman, finding herself in the fullness of herself, become an active and vigorous instrument of the human community."³³ Significantly, anarchist challenges to the strictures of marriage did not imply acceptance of anything other than monogamous heterosexual practice: in addition to eliminating prostitution, the same author claimed that free love would "eliminate the huge phalanx of masturbators, as well as the great evils caused by abstinence, such as insanity, hysteria, catalepsy, and nymphomania."³⁴ The problem with marriage, from an anarchist point of view, was that it trapped both men and women in a permanent and unequal relationship, one that violated the free will of both parties.

This critique of bourgeois marriage was not nearly so pervasive, however, as anarchist appeals to the harmony of working-class families untainted by

31. In addition to Chaughi's text, for example, *La Ajitación* also presented Thackeray's treatise on free love and Mir i Mir's condemnation of the hypocrisy of marriage to Chilean readers. See Thackeray, "El hombre i la mujer ante la sociedad," *La Ajitación*, 1 Jan., 1902, 3; J. Mir i Mir, "Amor libre," *La Ajitación*, 24 May 1902, 1.

32. Cited in Rolle Cruz, "Anarquismo en Chile," 80.

33. Eduardo Milano, "La familia anárquica," *La Ajitación*, 21 June 1902, 1.

34. Ibid. In the proletarian novel *La oscura vida radiante*, 3d ed. (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1996), anarchist Manuel Rojas portrayed the anarchist ethic as antithetical to both alcoholism and homosexuality: "It is inconceivable that an anarchist could be a homosexual, or at least a declared and active one." Cited in Rolle Cruz, "Anarquismo en Chile," 71.

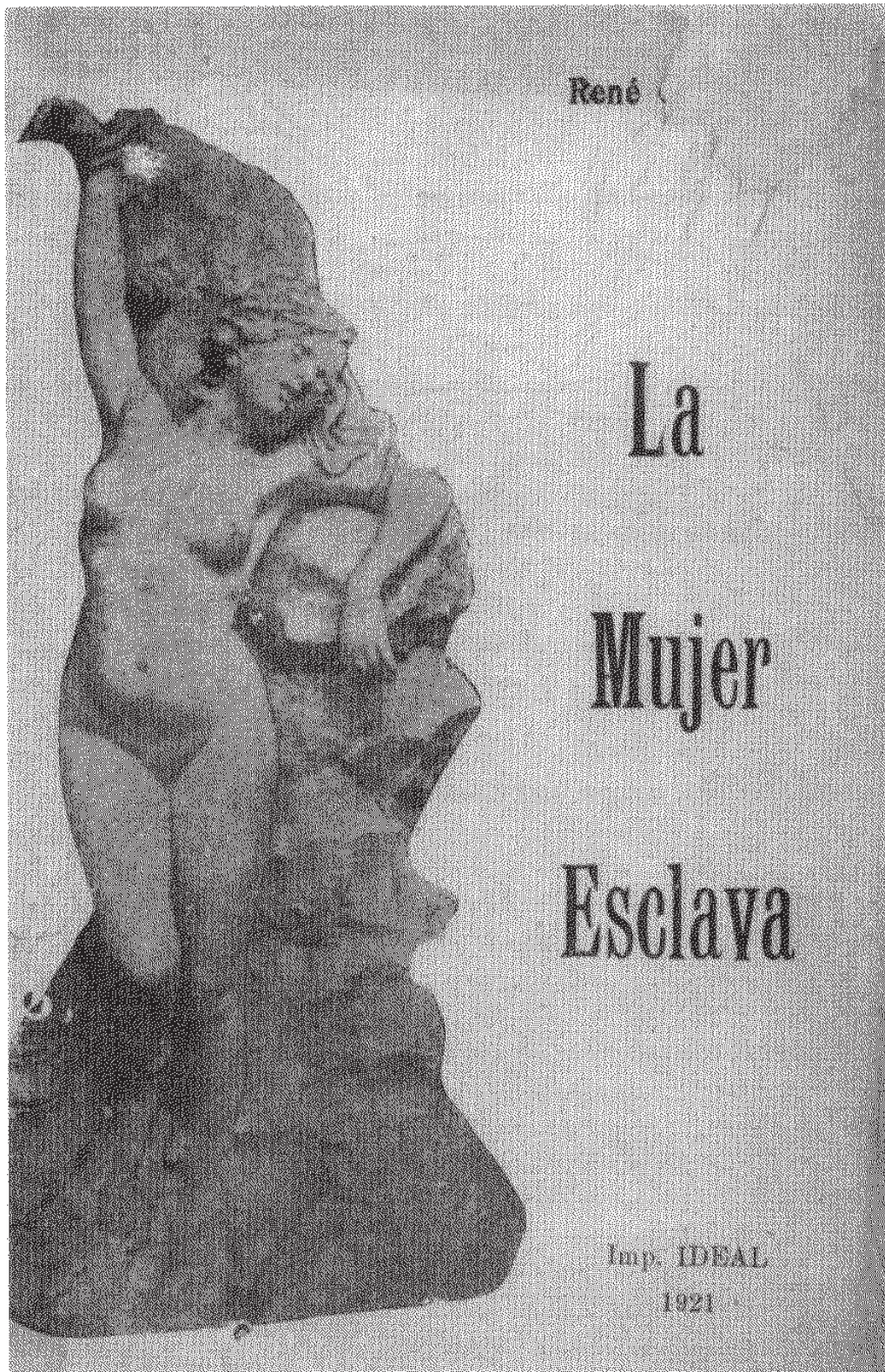


Figure 1. La mujer esclava. Source: René Chaughí, *La mujer esclava* (Santiago: Imp. Ideal, 1921). Courtesy of Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.

capitalist exploitation. Anarchist accounts of the destructive force of capitalism directed readers' attention not only to the effects of overwork on workers' bodies but also to its insidious effects on family relations. In "The modern family," Carlos Malato decried the impoverished moral environment of both poor and wealthy families. "What kind of family is this?" Malato repeatedly asked, recounting the tragedy of the father, mother and son "working like mercenaries in a factory so that they don't die of hunger; they compete against each other and later they meet at night, after ten or twelve hours of separation; because they are exhausted and disheartened slaves, instead of words of love, they rain curses on their partners in chains."³⁵ The pathetic virtue of Malato's working-class family, crowded in one room and beset by the daughter's unwanted pregnancy, contrasted sharply with his vision of bourgeois immorality: a father who went with prostitutes, a mother who attended parties, a son who seduced actresses, and a daughter whose only desire was to catch herself a good husband. In the paper's following issue, Luís Sanz echoed the theme of working-class family crisis by describing the plight of the *costurera* (seamstress). Women's continuing need to work, even when surrounded by family members, testified to the continuing poverty of the working poor: "the proletariat is not only made up of the mason, the blacksmith, the mechanic, and the carpenter, who are the only ones that we acknowledge; it is necessary to speak and act on behalf of women workers—the mothers, partners, sisters and daughters of those masons, blacksmiths, mechanics and carpenters—who are forced by their *comfortable living conditions* to invade factories and workshops and to comb the streets of our metropolis heading for the [job] registry and shop that wants to rent their labor at the price fixed by the fief. Hunger demands adaptation!"³⁶ The targets of Sanz's exhortation were the bourgeois senators who proudly touted the high wages earned by male artisans. While that might be enough, Sanz implied, to satisfy the material needs of single working men, family men must demand more and "speak and act on behalf of women workers," so that women's economic sacrifice might not be made in vain. Women's economic exploitation, anarchists argued, was not an injustice leveled only against the female sex; it was also an affront to working-class men's aspirations to provide for their families, and a persistent obstacle to family and male-female harmony.

Like many observers concerned with the "social question," however,

35. [Carlos] Malato, "La familia moderna," *El Alba*, 1 Mar. 1906, 2.

36. Emphasis in the original; see, Luís M. Sanz, "La costurera," *El Alba*, 15 Mar. 1906, 8.

Chilean anarchists most often illustrated the extent of female exploitation by dramatizing the plight of working women. Anarchist writers participated in the prevailing consensus that women's work connected to factory production—both in the workshop and at home—placed women in grave physical and sexual danger. In 1904, for example, *Jerminal* published H. Deprax's ode to workers, which focused on the women's work considered most emblematic of the unjust exploitation of capital: "Seamstress—you clothe the fashions / with tedious work, sticking your fingers / ruining your eyes, coughing the nights away / as the ostentatious luxury robs you of sleep. / You have no more than a shirt / to protect your weak and flaccid body / and never in your life will your needle earn / furs, silks, or splendid dresses." This verse reflects a typical portrayal of the seamstress that could be found almost anywhere in the working-class or daily press at the turn of the century. Destroyed by overwork, seamstresses were even denied the luxurious fruits of their hard work for themselves. But the poem continued, in the next verse, to lament and to exonerate the working-class prostitute: "Prostitute—you show off, undaunted/the infamous fineries that win your kisses / for the clumsy, soul-less, anonymous [man] / whose vile residue profanes your bosom. / You are not completely to blame / that your own pimps spit in your face / for the ravenous snakes that annoy you / the mauraders who eat away at your sex."³⁷ This verse on the prostitute is a particularly good example of the breadth of anarchists' vision of revolutionary struggle: unlike socialist organizers, Chilean anarchists followed Bakunin in considering the *chusma*, or "lumpen," to be the chief actors in revolutionary change. Men and women portrayed by the poet were cast in what Lily Litvak, in her study of the Spanish anarchist press, has called "folklore of wretchedness": anarchist discourse stressed both the absolute misery and the moral superiority of the victims under scrutiny, whether these were male workers, homeless children, impoverished elderly, or sexually threatened women.³⁸ The lens of sexual oppression allowed anarchist writers to consider the working-class prostitute, domestic servant or seamstress not just as paradigmatic victims of male sexual predators; the fundamental purity of these women would enable also them to overcome the immoral exploitations of capital. Like many other contemporary observers who also pointed to prostitution as evidence of growing social crisis, however, anarchist writers seemed disinterested in the theme of sexual oppression beyond its utility as a rhetorical device in the struggle against capitalist exploitation.³⁹

37. H. Deprax, "Poesias," *Jerminal!* 28 Apr. 1904, 2.

38. Litvak, *Musa Libertaria*, chap. 3.

39. Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, "'El Fruto Envenenado del Arbol Capitalista':

In these early years, the concept of the “enslaved woman” was also used to promote female unionization, which took the concept beyond the direct implications of Chaughí’s text. Writers for *La Luz* (1901–3), for example, regularly issued calls for women to rebel against their historic oppression. Luís Morales Morales, a shoemaker and anarchist leader who represented his trade at the Workers’ Social Congress and wrote for several anarchist publications, began his plea for female activism by making reference not only to women’s historic enslavement, but also to their innate capacity for rebellion: “What will happen to the slave of all ages, that anonymous being, the meat of pleasure, the victim of society and, finally, the one who pays double tribute so that she will be allowed to live, banished as a slave to male egotism. . . . Tomorrow the women will answer you, as we have already seen they are preparing to achieve justice. Forward, fair sex; cede not a single step on the battlefield; laugh at the egotism of men and march on alone in pursuit of tomorrow, where you will cast laws, marriage, and religion into the abyss . . . Hail!”⁴⁰ Morales here elaborated a vision of female emancipation that distinguished anarchist tracts from those of other labor movements in the same period (mutualist or socialist). The struggle of “enslaved women” was not simply an economic struggle against capitalism and its lackeys, but also a fight against male domination in all its forms: labor, marriage, and religion. Morales then went on to urge women workers in particular to examine their plight (economic and sexual), rebel against their employers, and to count on male solidarity to help them if they were threatened.⁴¹

How then could the woman—already a slave—reach the desired goal of emancipation? Curiously, anarchist texts on the woman question in this period urged women both to lead and to follow men. Primarily through stories,

Women Workers and the Prostitution of Labor in Urban Chile, 1896–1925,” *Journal of Women’s History* 9 (1998). Findlay has documented how—in an important variation on the Left’s utilitarian rhetoric of prostitution—Puerto Rican labor leaders employed sympathetic representations of working-class prostitutes in their protests against anti-prostitution laws imposed by the United States during World War I. See, Findlay, *Imposing Decency*, 149–51, esp. note 42, and chap. 6.

40. Luís Morales Morales, “Mujeres!” *La Luz*, 15 Jan. 1902, 4.

41. “You have finally had enough, at last you women can get justice for us; it is time for you to rise up, that the awakening dawn begins for you, rebel against those heads you call bosses, demanding from them shorter hours and more wages, do not fear their threats because, united, they will fear your justice, and if you weaken in any way, come to us and our arms will help you.” In Luís Morales Morales, “Despertad, mujeres!” *La Luz*, 15 Mar. 1902, 3.

poems, and dramas that appeared in these papers, anarchist writers showed emancipation to flow spontaneously from women's intrinsic sense of dignity and love, which time and again overpowered the forces of class and gender oppression. Although the anonymous author contributing to *El Alba* lamented the force of traditional and counterrevolutionary ideas among women, the overall tone of his editorial was optimistic: "You, woman, will be the redeemer of the world . . . you will see to it that your love—that of the daughter, lover and mother of the worker—tears from their pedestals the idols with which our tyrants have managed to blunt your senses, in order better to enslave you and us; you will be the redeemer, have no doubt; your quick intelligence will show you the reality of our ideals and the shortest way to reach our redemption."⁴² Women's natural affinity for rebellion, some argued, had been further augmented by their social marginalization. In one article, "a revolutionary hat-maker" explained women's sympathy with anarchists' antielectoral views as the result of their exclusion from formal politics: "Fortunately, our masters denied us the right to relegate power to other [representatives], which has kept us out of the political corruption into which the sons of labor have fallen in this and other countries." Hand in hand with their anarchist brothers, she continued, women would "bury all of the institutions that enslave humanity."⁴³

Further, some anarchist authors of the period argued, women's instinct for rebellion had been provoked by the moral and economic threats they faced through their participation in the workforce. Particularly during the publication of *La Protesta* (1908–10), anarchist writers seemed intent on promoting examples of female militancy that might attract women readers to the struggle. One of the most dramatic examples of this effort is the representation of female militancy that emerges in "The Rebel," by Patricio Tovar. Presented as a kind of on-the-street interview between Tovar and a destitute widow named Beatriz, Tovar dramatized the sexual dangers of female employment as well as the capacity for militant consciousness that allowed women to preserve their virtue. In response to the reporter's seemingly innocent query, "who are you?" Beatriz lamented the struggles of a poor woman left to fend for herself in the world: "Me? . . . I am the one who had half of her life snatched away by the burdens of the social order. . . . I am the one who, when I saw that I was forsaken, asked for work in the workshop, where the manager fired me when I would not consent to satisfy his lust! . . . I am the one who has not yet made a

42. "La mujer," *El Alba*, Sept. 1906, 3.

43. Una sombrerera revolucionaria, "Al gremio de sombrereras," *La Luz*, 1 Feb. 1902, 2.

pact with the pimp who deals in human flesh! . . . I am the mutilated, tormented one . . . dead! . . . but defeated? . . . Never!"⁴⁴ Beatriz's triumphant monologue concludes where it began, with a celebration of revolutionary consciousness: "I am the one who has not lost all hope, because I struggle and I hope . . . Yes, I am a rebel . . . because I am aware!" In this manner, Tovar constructed an image of female militancy that seemed to illustrate how women who protected their sexual honor were also a crucial component of the class struggle. Curiously enough, "The Rebel" was framed on the same page by two significant counterpoints: one, a sexually explicit, almost pornographic celebration of free love by a male author, and two, an anonymous, excoriating denunciation of male workers' passivity in the face of capitalist oppression. Both pieces balance the image of female rebellion presented in "The Rebel," fixing the different lessons that men and women could learn from it: that, in contrast with the heroic sexual virtue of the rebel, male desire became revolutionary as an expression of free love and that some women could even attain greater revolutionary consciousness than some men. Women's revolutionary sexuality was at once bound by virtue and radically revisioned outside of marriage, while men and women became symbolically equal in the crucible of revolutionary action.

Like Chaughi, the "hatmaker" and other anarchist writers described women's struggle for freedom as a spontaneous, natural act, and as a catalyst for the greater liberation of the working classes: "Make way for the enlightened woman worker! Make way for woman, the workers' redeemer!"⁴⁵ Nevertheless, anarchists' insistence on women's (apolitical) instinct for rebellion smacks of paternalism: the authors of these tracts were, after all, participating politically in decidedly planned and ideologically driven ways, and from that perspective, offered their guidance to women, their "natural" supporters.⁴⁶ Paradoxically, women's spontaneous impulse toward their own liberation began only through revolutionary anarchist education, a paradox common in anarchist constructions of workers' resistance. But if working-class women had to be reeducated to save them from exploitation, they were also considered instrumental—in their role as mothers and family members—to the salvation of their class as a whole. Anarchist writers dispensed regular instructions about

44. Patricio Tovar, "La rebelde," *La Protesta*, June 1908, 7.

45. "La mujer," *El Alba*, Sept. 1906, 3.

46. Thanks to Barbara Weinstein for this observation, in her comments on "From 'La mujer esclava' to 'La mujer limón': Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality in Chile, 1901–1926" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Seattle, Jan. 8–11 1997).

women's revolutionary duty: to raise their own consciousness in order to support and educate their male relatives. In 1903 "R. D." reiterated Chaughí's analysis of female subordination and raised "women's voice," urging women to seek their own liberation by joining with anarchist men: "And we [women], how can we fail to follow [the men] when our emancipation depends on their triumphs?"⁴⁷ Elena Kardenas later attributed the lack of female union participation to women's inability to break free from the tyranny of the church: "Comrades: I am ashamed to confess that there is a long way to go in order to tear out of women the fanaticism that the priest has managed to teach her. Only recently I heard a young woman say: I would rather stop eating than stop going to mass. This is ridiculous and shameful."⁴⁸ Following a characteristic appeal to women to join their brothers in the struggle, Kardenas asked men to support a school for women, so that women could be brought into the movement not by seduction, but by education: "Educate her and remember that the cradle of the human race is in her hands. Educate her if you want free generations to follow."⁴⁹ This kind of paternalism, particularly Kardenas's reference here to women's fanaticism, presaged the misogynistic construction of women as the dupes of religion and capitalism that would pervade anarchist writings in the 1920s.

Anarchist writers on female militancy—both male and female—were careful during this period to distinguish their demands from those of contemporary bourgeois feminists, but in so doing left the door open for legitimate expressions of working-class feminism. The first such reference illustrates anarchist ambivalence about the continuities between working-class and bourgeois feminism: when an unknown youth spoke to an anarchist crowd of 200 (including "many women") in March 1903, his comments focused on the need to educate women, particularly the three-quarters of the female Chilean population that could not read or write. When the young man called on the government to increase opportunities for female education, the reporter for the anarchist *El Acrata* derided the speaker for his foolish hopes.⁵⁰ Other anarchist writers in this period similarly complimented elite feminist movements for the initiative and bravery of their women leaders, but mocked and rejected their

47. R. D., "Nuestras voces," *La Luz*, 3 Feb. 1903, 3.

48. Elena Kardenas, "Para mis compañeras," *El Productor*, Oct. 1912, 3. The language of the text as well as the spelling of "Kardenas" suggests that the author was inspired by events in Russia; other examples of this include anarchist leader Alejandro Escobar y Carvallo's spelling of his name as "Alejandro Eskobar I Karbayo," *El Faro*, Nov. 1902, 2.

49. Elena Kardenas, "Para mis compañeras," *El Productor*, Oct. 1912, 3.

50. "Movimiento revolucionario," *El Acrata*, Mar. 1900, 3.

reformist objectives. In an article titled "The Emancipation of Woman," for example, male author Barcia described the activities of foreign feminists, pointing out the limitations of these movements from the point of view of Chilean working-class women. Barcia began by acknowledging women's growing discontent with male domination in the economic and social sphere, but quickly came to the point: female suffrage was not an appropriate vehicle for the organization of Chilean women. His primary objection, predictably enough, was that the electoral system was a farce that could only bring women an "illusory right."⁵¹ Later articles that appeared in the anarchist press echoed this sentiment, arguing that feminist "action is worthy of attention and good, it is in line with revolutionary methods, but it becomes irrelevant once [the vote] is achieved, since they only ask for the vote for women."⁵² A second objection maintained by Barcia and other anarchists was that working-class women faced more pressing demands than the struggle for political representation, demands that male workers should support rather than oppose: equality with men in all aspects of employment and organization. These goals, which Barcia also called "feminist," coincided with libertarian objectives: "It is in the oppressed man's interest, then, to sit down and talk with the woman."⁵³ This attempt to draw lines between a misguided bourgeois feminism and legitimate working-class feminism illustrates the doctrinal preeminence of antistate rhetoric in anarchist texts, which was also characteristic of Argentine anarchism in this period.⁵⁴ At least in this instance, anarchists rejected bourgeois feminism not because it promoted sexual equality, but because of its class origins and reformist methods. Later anarchist critics of bourgeois feminism would not be so generous.

Concomitant with anarchist celebrations of women's revolutionary capacity, evidence of the "enlightened woman worker" grew throughout the decade, as women joined existing resistance societies in the weaving, sewing, and shoe-making trades and formed new ones. In a single issue of *La Revuelta* (1903), for example, an opening article by "Adriana" explained the historical origins of anarchism, and "Chocano" contributed a poem urging women to support their brothers, husbands and sons in revolutionary struggle. An announcement on the last page indicated the formation of a resistance society for seamstresses and women shoemakers (*aparadoras*), to whom the newspaper pledged its con-

51. L. Barcia, "La emancipación de la mujer," *La Protesta*, Sept. 1909, 3.

52. "Las sufragistas inglesas," *La Batalla*, 1 Aug. 1913.

53. L. Barcia, "La emancipación de la mujer," *La Protesta*, Sept. 1909, 3.

54. Dora Barrancos, *Anarquismo, educación y costumbres*, 276-77.

tinued support.⁵⁵ The diversity of these references to female participation reflects the many ways that working-class women were in fact participating in labor movement activities in this period. Curiously, however, although revolutionary anarchism had clearly penetrated women workers associations, women activists were far less likely to contribute to the pages of anarchist newspapers than their counterparts in Democratic party circles. Clotilde Barrios de Agurto, for example, then Secretary General of the shoemakers' resistance society, published her appeal for working-class unity in the Democratic Party paper *La Reforma*.⁵⁶ Compared to the socialist press, where women workers had been publishing their views regularly since September of 1905 (and under their own names), women writers made relatively few contributions to the pre-war anarchist press. It was not until 1914, when shoemakers' leader Clotilde Barrios began to write for the anarchist paper *Luz y Defensa*, that female anarchist leaders consistently found a voice in their own papers.⁵⁷

Surprisingly, the long-running anarchist publication *La Batalla* (1912–16), which demonstrated the revitalization of anarcho-syndicalism after the sharp decline in most labor mobilization after 1909, contains very few references to women, as either enslaved victim or heroic rebel. Aside from two articles by women (which addressed historic massacres of workers in Chile and the futility of war), only one article focused on explicitly female concerns. In the news section, Capo Sensiti (Sensitive Boss) reported on the poor working conditions and pay received by women working in a large sweatshop, who were exploited by the "executioner managers" who ran the shop.⁵⁸ Aside from the author's declaration of anarchists' solidarity with women who suffered such exploitation, references to women's issues were notably absent in anarchist discourse of that decade. Subsequent publications such as *Luz y Defensa*, the organ of the shoemakers' resistance society, contained relatively more information about female unionization, including calls for continued female

55. "A las costureras, aparadoras y trabajadoras de ramos anexos, *La Revuelta*, 24 Oct. 1903, 1–3.

56. The publication of Barrios' article is significant because it demonstrates the early openness of the socialist press both to self-identified anarchists and to recognized women militants. Clotilde Barrios de Agurto, "Educación social obrera," *La Reforma*, 1 Sept. 1907, 1.

57. In that year, Barrios published a literary piece that thanked the paper's editors for not overlooking female union membership or women's need for revolutionary enlightenment. See, Clotilde Santelices Barrios, "Mis contemplaciones," *Luz y Defensa*, 15 Mar. 1914, 4.

58. Capo Sensiti, "Acción social," *La Batalla*, 1 Dec. 1912.

mobilization and improved education.⁵⁹ Like anarchist movements more generally—which suffered significant losses in leadership and rank-and-file popularity after 1907—the second decade was largely a lost decade in terms of anarchist attention to the woman question.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Recabarren and other socialists continued to promote female unionization and working-class women’s associations by regularly celebrating women’s militancy in their newspapers.⁶¹ It was not until 1917, when both factions met the prospects of postwar prosperity with increased mobilization and strike activity, that anarchist leaders once again sought to single out and prepare working-class women for their role in revolutionary struggle.

Female Liberty and Betrayal

The labor movement of postwar Chile witnessed a rejuvenating wave of strikes and increased mobilization between 1917 and 1920, as old and new socialist, anarchist, and mutualist leaders competed for working-class followers and collaborated in a variety of successful labor actions. Repeated strikes and successful negotiations with employers in that period bolstered the prestige of organized labor, fostering the spread of revolutionary ideas through reinvigorated worker organizations and incorporating significant numbers of unskilled and previously unorganized workers.⁶² Although socialists and anarchists cooperated in the union drive of 1917 to 1920 and shared a common syndicalist strategy, the ideological differences between the groups became increasingly rigid in the wake of the Bolshevik victory in Russia. These international shifts, as well as domestic ones such as FOCh’s affiliation with the Red International of

59. Clotilde de la Barra, “A Prepararse,” *Luz y Defensa*, 1 Mar. 1914, 3; and Mon Galvez, “La mujer y su educación,” *Luz y Defensa*, 28 Mar. 1914, 4.

60. Significantly, Eileen Findlay and Maxine Molyneux note this same silence on issues of sexual hierarchy in the 1920s, in Puerto Rico and Argentina, respectively: Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency*, 166; and Maxine Molyneux, “‘No God, No Boss, No Husband,’” 139–41.

61. Recabarren’s attention to the woman question continued, in modified form, after the abrupt decline in worker feminist mobilization and publication after 1908. The demands of working women were included in the founding statutes of the Socialist Workers’ party in 1912, and Recabarren and his compañera Teresa Flores hosted the speaking tours of Belén de Sárraga, founding centers for working-class women in Iquique after her visit there in 1913. In similar fashion, the Valparaíso-based paper *El Socialista* continued to publish editorials by and about women between 1915 and 1918, demonstrating that socialist activism in this area had not been entirely extinguished by the repression of 1908. See Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, chap. 4.

62. DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions*, 146–47.

Labor Unions in 1919, boosted the appeal of marxist ideology among Chilean workers. Despite the anarcho-syndicalist orientation urban shoemakers and printers unions, and the direct action tactics of newly established IWW sections among construction and port workers, anarchist ideology never recaptured its singular role as the vanguard of working-class mobilization, particularly after marxist political forces were consolidated in the Communist party in 1922.

In terms of the sexual politics of organized labor in this period, the gender composition of workers organizations also helps to explain the greater attention to women workers and female emancipation in marxist rather than anarchist circles after 1921. Although the FOCh drew the majority of its membership from nitrate and coal mining communities, the federation also benefited from the legacy of Democratic and Socialist Workers' party ties to urban unions in textile, beverage and food industries, where women workers predominated. Women's trade unions and FOCh women's councils, usually organized by city, made up about a fifth of the groups represented at FOCh conventions, and convention records indicate the Federation's continuing concern with female mobilization.⁶³ By contrast, most of the reinvigorated resistance societies of the period were concentrated in all-male crafts, and the IWW successfully united the (mostly male) workers in transportation and construction for industrywide strikes. After 1921, vestiges of anarchist feminism found their expression only within the mixed-sex shoemakers and bakers federations, where some women militants made their mark and male-female collaboration remained an organizing principle. Elsewhere, anarchist sexual politics had become more reactionary: working-class women were suspect and feminism was rejected as a fraud perpetrated by Chilean señoras. The structure of the Chilean labor movement thus had apparently left some anarchist leaders bereft of a female constituency with which to pursue their goals, providing them with a handy scapegoat for anarchism's embattled position in the face of marxist successes and state repression.

This transformation of anarchism's union membership in the twenties had serious repercussions for what had been a broad and influential anarchist consensus about the need for female emancipation in Chile. As in the United States and elsewhere in Latin America, Chilean anarchists responded to the political marginalization stemming from the Bolshevik victory by retreating to a more conservative sexual politics, clamping down on or passing over the radical sexual alternatives that had characterized the communalist anarchism of

63. "Acuerdos de la VII Convención de la FOCh," *Justicia*, 23–31 Dec. 1925.

previous decades. Evidence of anarchist ambivalence on the woman question in this period also emerged in a period of heightened public debate on female participation in the public sphere, as middle-class and elite women's organizations pressed for reforms to the civil code, female suffrage, and women's greater educational access in postwar Chile.⁶⁴ Even as ideological divisions between anarcho-syndicalist and marxist ideology hardened in the 1920s, contradictory positions on the woman question emerged within anarchist circles that would further complicate anarchist arguments for the liberation of the "enslaved woman."

Before turning to the antifeminist strains that emerged within anarchism in the 1920s, it is important to emphasize that support for female militancy among anarchists did not completely disappear in postwar Chile. Although the IWW was weakest in Chile's most feminized industries, several women militants nevertheless participated in the second convention of the IWW in 1921, and the convention's resolutions supported the principles of female unionization and equal wages for men and women.⁶⁵ Moreover, several anarchist writers—including several women who wrote under their own names and foreign female anarchists in translation—returned to the issue of the women's question, drawing on radical libertarian ideals as they urged women to organize for revolution: "Oh! Women around the world, let us stand up, let us recognize our humiliating condition as slaves and let us unite our forces once and for all to break the chains that hold our thoughts, and keep us from giving the

64. On bourgeois feminism in postwar Chile, see Felicitas Klimpel Alvarado, *La mujer chilena: El aporte femenino al progreso del Chile, 1910–1960* (Santiago: Ed. Andrés Bello, 1962); Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890–1940* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1996); Diana Veneros R-T. and Paulina Ayala L., "Dos vertientes de movimiento pro-emancipación de la mujer en Chile: Feminismo cristiano y feminismo laico," in *Perfiles revelados: Historias de mujeres en Chile, siglos XVIII-XX*, ed. Diana Veneros Ruiz-Tagle (Santiago: Univ. de Santiago, 1997); Erika Maza Valenzuela, "Catolicismo, anticlericalismo y la extensión del sufragio a la mujer en Chile," *Estudios Públicos* 58 (1995); and Ericka Kim Verba, "Catholic Feminism and *acción social femenina* (women's social action): The Early Years of the *Liga de Damas Chilenas, 1912–1924*" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1999).

65. Barría Serón, *Los movimientos sociales en Chile, 177*. When the anarchist construction union of Santiago created a "Women's Department" in 1924, they issued an appeal to women to join, based on their role in educating the young: "For this reason we want to call to our bosom all of our compañeras, doubly enslaved, in the home and the workshop. . . . Our compañeras of misery and sadness are always welcome." See, "Departamento Femenino de Oficios Varios (J.W.W.), *El Obrero Constructor*, 1 June 1924, 4.

supreme embrace to sublime liberty."⁶⁶ Agustina Gómez, a leader in the shoemakers union, went on to echo these optimistic sentiments as she affirmed the principle of sexual equality: "Doesn't woman have a brain to think with? Does she perhaps lack the will [to think]? Well, let her put her brain to work right away, in whatever direction she thinks is best."⁶⁷ Prominent male anarchists, meanwhile, also demonstrated their unfailing belief in women's capacity for revolutionary action. For example, Manuel Montenegro assessed the economic plight of working women and described how women, "obeying their defensive instincts, which are so strong in them, have created organizations for struggle that have shone on more than one occasion. Shoemakers, cigarette rollers, women from the textile factories, and streetcar workers have proven their strength of spirit, which should serve as an example to the men's organizations."⁶⁸ Montenegro's enthusiasm—expressed, not incidentally, in the pages of the FOCh party organ—stemmed from his willingness to look closely at those trades in which women workers had formed significant, longstanding unions—whether those were anarchist or socialist in orientation. Likewise, anarchist men in mixed industries consistently called on women workers to defend their economic interests through unionization, and celebrated when they did.⁶⁹ Thus, even after the dramatic shifts in anarchism's organizational links to working women, it is still possible to find traces in this later period of anarchists' desire for female mobilization and their reliance on symbolic representations of female liberty as emblematic of libertarian struggles.⁷⁰

In comparison with anarchists' unanimous endorsement of female emancipation in the first decade, however, anarchist writers of the twenties were more divided on the woman question. In stark contrast with the optimism characteristic of that earlier decade, some anarchists now stressed female complicity with forces of capitalism over their historic victimization at the hands of men and capital. Anarchist papers reported and encouraged female union par-

66. Luisa Arratia, "Libertad!" *Acción Directa*, 1 Nov. 1922, 2; and María Alvarez, "A las mujeres," *Acción Directa*, 1 May 1921, 2.

67. Gómez also appealed to women to instruct their men about female dignity: "make them understand with your resistance that you are a lot more than a bunch of vulgar cattle (*hembras*)." See Agustina Gómez, "A las compañeras," *El Comunista*, 3 Sept. 1921, 3.

68. M. J. Montenegro, "La mujer obrera en las luchas sociales," *La Federación Obrera*, 9 May 1923, 1.

69. See, for example, *El Obrero en Dulce* (1926) and *Boletín Oficial de Obreros y Obreras en Calzado, Reorganizada* (1922).

70. Likewise, anarchist writers continued to represent bourgeois capitalism through reports about the victimization of women through prostitution and marriage. See, for example, Julio Navarrete, "El amor," *Verba Roja*, 15 Sept. 1923, 4.



Figure 2. Chilean Liberty, Confectioners Union, 1926. "En este glorioso día de las reivindicaciones, los proletarios del mundo se estrechan las manos, y extienden a través del planeta la cadena de los corazones, a la luz de la antorcha del sindicalismo revolucionario." Source: *El Obrero en Dulce*, 1 May 1926. Courtesy of the Chilean National Library, Periodicals Office.

ticipation, but these news stories now appeared alongside a series of accusatory, excoriating reports on women's failure to join the labor movement, and even worse, their tendency to obstruct men's participation in it. Typically directed at women and signed by "female" contributors, these texts were less concerned with women's "double slavery" than they were with deriding women who suffered from it. This change marked an important rhetorical shift, from a construction of women as alternately victimized and militant to one of female intransigence and betrayal in the face of capitalist exploitation.

Anarchist consensus on the woman question seems to have unraveled considerably by 1921, when the anarchist journalist Aura (gentle breeze) wrote the prologue to a Chilean edition of René Chaughy's *La mujer esclava*, a new translation of Chaughy's original essay. In her prologue, Aura inaugurated a hypercritical perspective on women's passivity, one that departed dramatically from previous anarchist representations of women. After summarizing Chaughy's analysis of women's historic subordination—which "she" claimed had become "axiomatic"—Aura reminded her readers of men's victimization at the hands of capital and criticized both bourgeois and working-class feminists for their misguided struggles against men. Writing in 1921, Aura was probably responding not to the specter of distant British suffragists, but rather to the elite and middle-class Chilean women who had become active in women's causes since 1915, calling for increased educational opportunity, reform of the civil code, and increased representation for women.⁷¹ Angered by the "poisoned innuendoes" with which women had ostensibly slandered working-class men in the past, Aura responded: "Now, the poor woman, who is economically different from [the bourgeois woman], is similar in that she blames her sad situation on the man who is closest to her. She forgets or she does not know that she, together with her *compañero*, are the victims of the dominant regime."⁷² Aura blamed bourgeois feminists for arousing these antimale feelings in working-class women. Feminist campaigns had, according to Aura, only managed to "awaken in the minds of ignorant women a horror and almost a hatred of their *compañeros* . . . forgetting to attack the exploiter, Capital."⁷³ Even worse, feminists had seduced working-class women with meaningless promises of female suffrage and economic independence. For their part, bourgeois women

71. Significantly, as anarchist writers rejected collaboration with bourgeois feminists, Socialist party and FOCh newspapers reported favorably on middle-class feminists' efforts to improve women's civil status. Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, chap. 4.

72. Aura, forward to Chaughy, *La mujer esclava*, 4.

73. *Ibid.*, 5.

could in no way be considered “slaves,” since they belonged to the dominant, “despotic” class. By redirecting readers’ attention to how capitalism had oppressed men and women equally, Aura contradicted the fundamental premise of Chaughí’s original work—women’s universal and historic “double slavery” to capitalism and to men—and subordinated his critique of all sexual hierarchy to one of male-female unity in the class struggle.

In marked contrast to the triumphalist feminism of earlier years, anarchist writers of the twenties expressed their frustration with women’s intellectual and economic subordination in explicitly misogynist terms. Nowhere was this critical view of working-class women more apparent than in the pages of *El Comunista*, a “newspaper of ideas” that later became the organ of the bakers’ union, where Juan Levadura (John Yeast) took women to task for obstructing the cause of anarchist unionization. Levadura began his essay, “You are like a lemon,” with a virulent attack on women’s intelligence and emotions: “Right now you are like a machine that stops weaklings, which is incapable of conceiving of something noble and human.” The author then dramatically inverted the usually sympathetic anarchist tropes on the history of female subordination; in the final analysis, women were responsible for their own oppression because they had done nothing to combat it. “What have you done to defend yourself against your attackers? You are nothing more than a lemon rind; you meekly let yourself be opened up until they squeeze the last juice out of you.” Even worse, women remained the slaves of the church, allowing priests to usurp the rightful place of the men of their own class:

If a noble idea occurs to you, you never try to act on it yourself, nor do you talk about it with your husband or *compañero*; rather you go to the priest, meek and obedient, to give yourself body and soul. . . . On the other hand, when your husband or *compañero* wants to liberate you from the yoke of fanaticism and capitalist exploitation, you whinny like a beast, you insult him, you denounce him to the priest and the police, you betray him when there is no danger and you demand the impossible. Do you understand that you are ruin itself?

The woman in Levadura’s account betrayed her *compañero* “body and soul,” undermining both his political convictions and exclusive sexual prerogatives. Woman was “ruin itself,” not only because she perpetuated her own enslavement, but also because, in so doing, she colluded with other men against those of her own class. Although Levadura acknowledged some women’s capacity for rebellion (citing Luisa Michel and Rosa Luxemburg), he seemed relatively

pessimistic about Chilean women's inclination to join with men in revolutionary struggle. Finally, he offered the following prescription: women should join the industrial unions of the IWW, "so that you live your life among humanity."⁷⁴

If Juan Levadura had been a single, misogynous contributor to the anarchist press—one, we might imagine, who had himself witnessed the female betrayal he described with such venom—we might not question whether anarchist discourse in the main continued to promote female emancipation. However, in February 1922, as anarchists struggled to recover from the repressive onslaught of the Alessandri regime, the IWW propaganda organ *Acción Directa* invited two contributors to address the particular "issue of women's participation in social struggle," producing some of the best examples of anarchists' growing frustration with women to be found in the working-class press.⁷⁵ The first of these contributors, Ariadna, a long-time contributor to the labor press, responded by describing the egotism of female alcoholics, citing Gabriela Mistral as a model for maternal sacrifice and joy.⁷⁶ In "her" first invited contribution, Aura pointed to women's "indifference and inertia" as the principle obstacle to social revolution: "The apathy with which women workers and students observe the present era, with all of its developments, is noteworthy and shameful. If there is a demonstration to protest against the prudent criminals sent daily against us by the rabble from above, or a talk about very important social questions, the female sex is the first to stand out . . . for its absence."⁷⁷ Although this depiction of female apathy was contradicted by continuing evidence of female unionization, Aura went on to attribute women's purported passivity to women's desire to become "petit bourgeois," and to their fundamental ignorance of social issues. Her remedy, oddly enough, was to admonish women to do what they do best, perhaps at a minimum: teach the young about their obligation to throw off their oppressors.

In a subsequent article, "Women! Your love is a lie!" Aura continued to focus on "the woman question" as a manifestation of women's emotional shortcomings. Aura intensified her critical rhetoric about women, excoriating those who had remained passive in the face of the suffering of their loved ones:

74. Juan Levadura, "Tu eres como el limón," *El Comunista*, 6 Aug. 1921, 2.

75. The paper's editors introduced this section with the following statement: "Women's participation in social struggle is extremely important. Perhaps it is the most important factor. For this reason, we have asked two *compañeras* to work at our side to achieve our common ideal." See *Acción Directa*, 1 Feb. 1922, 6.

76. Ariadna, "A las mujeres," *Acción Directa*, 1 Feb. 1922, 6–7.

77. Aura, "A mis hermanas," *Acción Directa*, 1 Feb. 1922, 7.

“But I ask you: what have you done to remedy the situation? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but all the women boast about how loving and generous they are; they believe that saying ‘I love you’ is enough to make it true.” If women do not “wake up” from their false dreams, Aura continued, they would face worse oppression than they already had and watch their husbands and children destroyed by capitalism. The climax of her diatribe included the admonition that Aura would dispense to such women: “Criminal! Murderer! With your apathy, with your mortal silence, you contribute to the corruption of your sons, you have lost your husband and your mother and the whole Universe! Now you cry, and if you suffer a lot, you deserve it! Roll around, wailing uselessly! Woman’s love, of which you make such a display, is a farce, foolish quackery!”⁷⁸ Aura here turned on its head what previous anarchists had considered one of women’s paradigmatic strengths in revolutionary struggle—their capacity for love and sacrifice on behalf of family members—calling women’s love a “lie, hypocritically proffered.” Although her final appeal targeted working women, calling on them to attend cultural activities and learn what the revolutionary future would hold for them, the tone of the article condemned women as a group, based on their historic passivity, to the constant—almost reflexive—betrayal of the noble cause of human liberation. Anarchist authors such as Aura and Juan Levadura shared a common disgust toward women’s perceived rejection of revolutionary ideals. Significantly, they could only explain this rejection by denigrating female nature as dramatically as it had been celebrated by the previous generation of anarchist writers at the turn of the century.

Another key to anarchist formulations on the woman question in Chile during the 1920s came from neighboring Argentina, where the well-known anarchist Juana Rouco Buela edited *Nuestra Tribuna* (1922–25), a women’s anarchist paper that circulated to several anarchist papers in Chile. In 1923 Rouco’s *Mis proclamas* was published in Argentina and made its way to Chile, where excerpts were published in the union newspaper of tailors, *La Aguja*.⁷⁹

78. Aura, “Mujeres, vuestros amores son mentiras,” *Acción Directa*, 1 June 1922, 3. The Iquique anarchist paper *El Surco* later echoed Aura’s portrayal of female obstructionism, drawing a potent caricature of one worker’s reactionary wife: “Will they feed you in those Centers? What do you gain with those societies! Blessed strikes, they bring nothing but hunger and misery! The only thing that ideas bring are fights and headaches!” G. D., “La mujer en la lucha social,” *El Surco* (Iquique), 20 Dec. 1924, 2.

79. Juana Rouco, “La costurerita,” *La Aguja*, 3 Dec. 1924, 5. The anarchist literary newspaper *Más Allá* reported the sale of *Mis Proclamas* from its offices in 1924, while the chauffeurs union paper, *Voz Chofer*, printed the excerpt “A mis hermanas” in the same year.

Significantly, the excerpt repeatedly published in Chilean newspapers, "The seamstress," is the section of Rouco's work that most clearly resembles the earlier anarchist trope of working-class women as "la mujer esclava." The excerpt relates the drama of a seamstress, beset by poverty, illness, and the "vulgar propositions" of her employers, charging that they transformed her from "the weak bud of a flower into a rose without petals and perfume, violently plucked from the garden of her youth, to be thrown into the arms of corruption and vice."⁸⁰ The excerpt concludes with an optimistic call for women's spontaneous rebellion from slavery, led by her libertarian *compañeros*. In her complete work, however, Rouco (like Aura) lamented the continuing passivity of women, who she said "stand out for their absence" in revolutionary struggles: "And I see you submissive, meekly bearing the injustices with which this society of feline wolves burdens you . . . I wish to see you standoffish, rebellious, anarchist; singers of your rage, commentators of your sadness, narrators of your dreams."⁸¹ Rouco objected to the bourgeois origins of Argentine feminism, which she claimed had created a "politics of castration." Although Rouco made her fame among Argentines as a distinguished female orator who protested discrimination against women, in her own writings she was less concerned with female emancipation than with the need for women to join with anarchist men in their struggle for liberation.⁸²

The transformation of anarchist discourse on the woman question from an enthusiastic endorsement of female emancipation to the competing formulations of the 1920s reveals evidence of the declining success of anarchist organization among women in early twentieth century Chile, as well as the emergence of a more conservative sexual politics in the labor movement as a whole.⁸³ As women's participation in female or mixed resistance societies became increasingly common after 1900, the example of female mobilization threw into relief the intransigence of those women who, out of religious belief, conservatism, or fear, refused to follow their example. The degree of anarchist hyperbole originally expressed to defend and enlighten "la mujer esclava" was the source of dashed expectations for some anarchist militants, who in the 1920s demon-

80. Juana Rouco, "La costurerita," *La Aguja*, 3 Dec. 1924, 5.

81. Juana Rouco Buela, *Mis proclamas* ([Lux], n.d.), 5.

82. Juana Rouco Buela, *Historia de un ideal vivido por una mujer* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Reconstruir, 1964), 54.

83. Although Chilean communists also retreated from female emancipation as a central concern of revolutionary struggle, they nevertheless rescued and occasionally emphasized the legacy of working-class feminism in political campaigns of the 1920s. See Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, esp. chap. 4.

strated their impatience with what they viewed as a lack of adequate female support for revolutionary objectives. This frustration unleashed anarchists' harshest criticisms of women as a group, and also raised their suspicions about feminist critiques of male power, some of which, ironically enough, had been libertarian in origin.

Gender and the Latin American Left

The emergence of "la mujer limón" to compete with "la mujer esclava" in anarchist discourse betrays a fundamental continuity in these seemingly contradictory representations of women. Both constructions—though elaborated in response to the emergence and visibility of "real" working women—rested on essentialist representations of women's "nature," which were in turn idealized abstractions of the values that anarchists sought either to promote or to destroy. Although "real" working women may have ascribed to the views that anarchists attributed to them—loving, indignant, virtuous—they also may well have rejected anarchists' most radical positions on matters such as sexuality and gender equality in favor of marxist representations of working women's practical economic and moral concerns; the continuing success of marxist leadership among organized women workers in the 1920s and the FOCh's continuing support for female emancipation through legislative and economic reform offers some evidence for that conclusion.⁸⁴ The continuing presence of female militants in anarcho-sindicalist mixed-sex unions, moreover, illustrates the range of rhetorical options available in anarchist circles in the 1920s, some of which demonstrated considerable continuity with anarchist representations of female militancy from earlier in the century. Where women workers were in evidence, anarchist veneration of woman as liberty made sense; where they were not, leaders grasped at negative constructions of female betrayal. Both paradigms address female agency and emancipation in terms of the larger goal of class revolution, which remained a project gendered largely male by its principle interlocutors.

As is often the case when we deconstruct the cultural patterns that inform working-class politics, a critical reading of anarchist constructions of female sexuality tells us more about the (predominantly male) anarchists who addressed

84. This conclusion concurs with Molyneux's foundational article on anarchist feminism in Argentina, which showed that the mysterious disappearance of *La Voz de la Mujer* might in part be explained by women's rejection of anarchist positions on marriage and sexuality that challenged working-class beliefs about religion and family. See Molyneux, "No God, No Boss, No Husband," 140–41.

the "woman question" than it does about the real women such texts purported to discuss. In the case examined here, for example, it would be a mistake to measure the significance of anarchists' gendered rhetoric only in terms of how successfully it corresponded to "women's interests," particularly since women themselves had little to do with shaping that discourse in the first place. While anarchists' egalitarian sexual paradigms accompanied and may at some times even have sparked increased female mobilization in the labor movement, I argue that this was not, in fact, the only—or indeed, the primary—goal of such discursive formulas. Rather, anarchist optimism—and later pessimism—about female "nature" also testifies to the changing strategic imperatives of Chilean anarchist movements. Throughout these three decades, anarchists consistently described woman's revolutionary potential in terms of her sexual attributes as mother, lover, and daughter to male workers, even when such women also suffered economic exploitation in the workplace. The value of women's participation and presence in anarchist politics was measured almost exclusively in relational terms; hence the emphasis on female equality and revolutionary potential rose and fell on its perceived utility and women's actual participation in the larger revolutionary struggle.

Historical interpretations of the gendered politics of labor traverse a difficult terrain: too narrow a focus on the egalitarian promise of radical ideologies—and the inconsistencies and reversals that inevitably seem to follow from them—can prejudice our understanding of organized labor and its role in shaping working-class community and consciousness, presenting such strategies as cynical and utilitarian. Such a conclusion—which would no doubt show that Chilean anarchism ultimately sold out on its emancipatory promise to women—misses the point that those promises were always conditioned by the larger, more pressing agenda of anarchist revolution, an agenda conceived largely by and about working-class men and viable working-class patriarchal arrangements. The education and mobilization of women according to anarchist principles was a logical strategy for anarchist militants, but this did not take the form of a "women's movement"; rather, the emergence of the woman question in Chilean labor discourse provided anarchists with an opportunity to demonstrate, through an analysis of female victimization and struggle, the appeal and promise of libertarian ideals for the whole working-class community. Similarly, negative assessments of female consciousness that emerged in the twenties illustrated the ignorance, betrayal, and complicity that were attributed to those who opposed revolutionary change. Anarchist discourse on the woman question contributes, at least in those three decades, primarily to the history of the ideological and activist evolution of Chilean anarchism, and not to the history of women's consciousness or mobilization in Chile.