

ADD GENDER AND STIR?:
Cooking up Gendered Histories of Modern Latin America

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- COMPROMISED POSITIONS: PROSTITUTION, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND GENDER POLITICS IN REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO CITY.* By Katherine Elaine Bliss. (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001. Pp. 243. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- IN DEFENSE OF HONOR: SEXUAL MORALITY, MODERNITY, AND NATION IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRAZIL.* By Sueann Caulfield. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 328. \$64.96 cloth, \$21.95 paper.)
- FROM SUBJECTS TO CITIZENS: HONOR, GENDER, AND POLITICS IN AREQUIPA, PERU, 1780–1854.* By Sarah C. Chambers. (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. Pp. 296. \$55.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- HIDDEN HISTORIES OF GENDER AND THE STATE IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 400. \$64.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.)
- DOÑA MARÍA'S STORY: LIFE HISTORY, MEMORY, AND POLITICAL IDENTITY.* By Daniel James. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 336. \$54.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- GENDERED COMPROMISES: POLITICAL CULTURES AND THE STATE IN CHILE, 1920–1950.* By Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. 368. \$59.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

As several recent overviews of the literature have noted,¹ published works on the history of gender and sexuality in Latin America have made attempts at review an increasingly challenging endeavor. For those

1. Katherine Elaine Bliss, "The Sexual Revolution in Mexican Studies: New Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in Modern Mexico," *Latin American Research*

of us who cut our teeth as graduate students in the search for scarce historical scholarship on Latin American women in the early 1980s, the current interest in gender evidenced by university publishers, scholarly journals, conference panels, and course offerings represents an exciting development.² It is now possible—as Sueann Caulfield has recently demonstrated—to turn our attention in a sustained way to theoretical and comparative issues, drawing from this exercise a sense of the dramatic potential of gender analysis to transform Latin American history and a preliminary diagnosis of what remains to be done.³ The present review builds on recent attempts to “take the pulse” of the burgeoning field of Latin American gendered history and points out how such studies have contributed to historiographical debates on the modern period.⁴

Review 36, no. 1 (2001): 247–68; Sueann Caulfield, “The History of Gender in the Historiography of Latin America,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2001): 451–90; Thomas Miller Klubock, “Writing the History of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Chile,” *HAHR* 81, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2001): 493–518; Martin Nesvig, “The Complicated Terrain of Latin American Homosexuality,” *HAHR* 81, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2001): 689–729.

2. Some of the more concrete examples of such attention include the recent catalogs of several university presses, including most prominently those of North Carolina, Duke, Penn State, and Nebraska; the special double issue dedicated to “Gender and Sexuality in Latin America” by the *HAHR* 81, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2001); numerous research and historiographical panels organized for the Conference on Latin American History of the AHA and the Latin American Studies Association; and the conference “Las Olvidadas: Gender and Women’s History in Postrevolutionary Mexico” held at Yale University in May 2001. This summary does not even consider the numerous interventions of scholars specializing in gender in other venues, or attention to gender and sexuality incorporated into broader projects and research in the Latin American field.

3. Caulfield, “The History of Gender.” Caulfield’s essay places the study of women and gender in Latin America in the context of U.S.–Latin American scholarly dialogue and the emergence of women’s and gender studies in U.S. circles, emphasizing (as she demonstrates in her own work in Brazilian history) the importance of scholarship on women in development and the colonial period for the conceptualizations employed in studies of the modern period. Caulfield’s essay builds on and updates a series of historiographical surveys of Latin American women’s history produced since the 1970s, including Meri Knaster, “Women in Latin America: The State of Research, 1975,” *Latin American Research Review* 11, no. 1 (1976): 3–74; Marysa Navarro, “Research on Latin American Women,” *Signs* 5, no. 1 (1979); K. Lynn Stoner, “History” in *Latinas of the Americas: A Source Book*, edited by K. Lynn Stoner (New York: Garland Publishers, 1989), 237–61. In her 1994 presentation to the Conference on Latin American History, Donna Guy was among the first to observe the significant turn towards Joan Wallach Scott’s conception of gender analysis in the Latin American field; “Future Directions in Latin American Gender History,” *The Americas* 51, no. 1 (July 1994): 1–9.

4. Additional testimony to the dynamic state of this field is the fact that *LARR* received many more works than was possible to review here and, while this essay was in preparation, several important monographs have been released or are currently in press.

The six works reviewed here have been grouped according to three central concerns: continuity and change from the colonial to the national periods, processes of state formation and hegemony, and the innovative use of oral testimony. Despite the diversity of cases and subjects treated in these works, they share some basic characteristics: each employs gender analysis to reorient historical inquiry, raise new questions, and explore new sources. All reject an exclusive focus on women subjects and question teleological arguments about women's status in modern Latin America. Reading for gender sheds crucial light on social, state-society, and elite-subaltern relations, demonstrating how fundamentally constructions of gender and sexuality shape the mechanisms of power. Together these works advance our understanding of how specific historical processes have been gendered, allowing us to push towards broader synthetic and comparative perspectives on gender relations in modern Latin America. If, as many observers have noted, the recipe for early women's history was to "add women and stir," we can now see that *gender* has become a crucial ingredient for much of the recent scholarship cooked up in the field of U.S.-based Latin American history.⁵

CHALLENGING "COLONIAL LEGACIES": HONOR, SHAME, AND NATION

One identifiable trend in recent nineteenth-century Latin American gender history has been for scholars to question some of the prevailing assumptions about the legacy of colonial gender relations during the republican period. The scarce attention to Latin American women in pre-1970s scholarship was marked by teleological assumptions about women's advance in step with liberalism and modernization. Consequently, scholars have more recently struggled to historicize the sources of gender inequality in the republican period, asking what kinds of gendered continuities shaped the transition from Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule in the Americas and which elements of patriarchal control were actually created in the republican period.⁶ Three of the

5. An assessment of the scholarly attention devoted to women and gender by Latin American scholars lies outside of the scope of the present review, but is critical to our understanding of the intellectual challenge faced by historians based or trained in U.S. institutions. For information on research and publication on women and gender by Latin American scholars, see Carmen Ramos Escandón, "La nueva historia, el feminismo y la mujer," in *Género e historia: La historiografía sobre la mujer*, edited by Carmen Ramos Escandón (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992); Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, "Women's History in Puerto Rican Historiography: The Last Thirty Years," in *Puerto Rican Women's History: New Perspectives*, edited by Félix V. Matos Rodríguez and Linda C. Delgado (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); Caulfield, "The History of Gender," 450–51, 473–75; and especially Klubock's insightful and detailed analysis of Chilean gender studies in "Writing the History of Women and Gender," 493–505.

6. Another fundamental element of this teleology—the pervasive argument that

works examined here devote considerable attention to this question, examining the construction of citizenship, class and racial relations, and nation through the familiar lens of the honor/shame paradigm. This analytical construct has been successfully employed, refined, and critiqued in studies of Spanish and Portuguese America in the colonial period, providing a primary conceptual orientation for excellent work on gender and sexuality.⁷ The continuing centrality of both elite and plebeian notions of honor has also been convincingly established in a

Colonial Latin America was rigidly patriarchal in social organization—has also recently begun to unravel in debates on gender relations in the early period. On the one side stand a set of widely-read studies that portray colonial society as composed of multiple levels of mutually-reinforcing instances of patriarchal power—from individual families to the political and symbolic order of the colony—that are continually challenged, but more often indirectly subverted, by women actors: see especially Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Sylvia Marina Arrom, *Women of Mexico City, 1790–1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); and Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). A newer cadre of colonialists have challenged this view, arguing instead that women’s ability to challenge male domination was integral to social organization and royal control in the Americas, and that intensified or increased patriarchal control was rather a late colonial development that emerged only with Bourbon political centralization. See Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Lisa Mary Sousa, “Women, Rebellion, and the Moral Economy of Maya Peasants in Colonial Mexico,” in Susan Schroeder, Stephanie Gail Wood, and Robert Stephen Haskett, eds., *Women of Early Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Kimberly Gauderman, *Playing the System: Women’s Lives in Seventeenth-Century Quito* (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming). Although Arrom and Stern in particular have elucidated some key aspects of gender relations for the late colonial period, this newer scholarship problematizes assumptions about the scope and operation of male domination under colonial rule, and like the works discussed here for the nineteenth century, contributes to a more historically-specific account of the relationship between political symbols, organization, and gender relations. On the need to continue reworking our understanding of patriarchy for the modern period, see Klubock, “Writing the History of Women and Gender,” 510–18; and Heidi Tinsman, “Reviving Patriarchy,” *Radical History Review* 71 (Spring 1998): 183–95.

7. The works of Patricia Seed and Ramón Gutiérrez were among the first to establish the relevance of honor and shame for colonial historians: Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey*; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). The promise of this paradigm in colonial studies was later developed further in the essays included in Asunción Lavrín, ed., *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Spanish America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). The malleability and historically-specific constructions of elite and plebeian notions of honor have been further explored in Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

variety of case studies on the national period.⁸ What emerges from recent studies of the nineteenth century is not a simple picture of continuity with late colonial gender relations, nor the fulfillment of revolutionary—then liberal—promises to invest (elite) women with the responsibilities and privilege of republican motherhood. Rather, recent historical scholarship has documented the ways that republican citizenship and legal regimes drew on legacies of “traditional” patriarchal rights to foster national identity and consolidate state hegemony through civil codes, criminal law, public rituals, and police enforcement. The works examined here share a concern, moreover, with how the legal and political consolidation of patriarchal control in the nineteenth century was in fact a continually contested process, and one that depended as much on plebeian agency for the structure and expression of gender relations as it did on the actions of state professionals.

In *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854*, Sarah Chambers skillfully examines the question of republican virtue and political culture in Arequipa, Peru, in terms of what she calls the dialectic of elite and plebeian honor codes. Drawing on a careful review of criminal trials, successive national constitutions, and local regulations concerning public behavior, she places the question of colonial continuity in “the middle period” at the center of her analysis, arguing that post-independence Arequipeño liberalism is incomprehensible outside of the context of local expressions of plebeian agency, which centrally shaped legal definitions of honor in the post-colonial world. Chambers stresses the centrality of gender, race, and ethnicity to definitions of republican virtue for the residents of post-revolutionary Arequipa, showing how such factors shaped plebeian interactions with the state and contributed to emerging republican culture. Through this profound reassessment, Chambers suggests the need to critique Arequipeño political exceptionalism and counter elite bias in existing studies of post-colonial political leadership.

Building on the earlier work of Steve Stern and Sylvia Arrom, which characterized colonial politics and administration as patriarchal, Chambers focuses her attention on the ways that republican legislative and political practices challenged certain forms of hierarchy, while leaving others (such as gender inequality) largely intact. While the decapitation of the colonial regime and the introduction of citizenship codes formally legitimized the political participation of a new range of male,

8. Eileen J. Suárez Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870–1920* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Kristin Ruggiero, “Honor, Maternity, and the Disciplining of Women: Infanticide in Late Nineteenth-Century Buenos Aires,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 3 (1992): 353–73.

non-slave, employed actors, it relegated to a lower status plebeian women, slaves, and servants, who could lay no such claims to citizenship. Republican political culture emphasized virtuous behavior over precedence as the key source of honor, at once widening avenues toward male citizenship while further restricting the behavior and autonomy of women, particularly of the lower classes. But not all women were affected equally: in the specific context of Arequipeño political culture, the notion of republican motherhood opened arenas of public participation to some women (providing legal reaffirmation of their sexual virtue) while further disenfranchising most plebeian women, who became more vulnerable to patriarchal control because of legal strictures and greater public scrutiny. Chambers is at her best where she examines court records for the different uses made of such dichotomous definitions of honor/virtue by men vs. women, and by slaves vs. free persons, noting the ways that the strengthening of the Habermasian public sphere increased the legitimacy of family patriarchs and shielded them from public criticism or censure. While Chambers' assertion of a fundamental continuity in patriarchy's political basis is problematic (from king to constitution), her careful explanation of how republican discourse eroded the communal power of women makes an important contribution to our understanding of how gender was constructed in early republican politics.

The continual contestation, appropriation, and negotiation of honor codes is also the central analytic concern of Sueann Caulfield's *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*, which describes how popular and elite conceptions of honor functioned in the courts and on the streets of early twentieth-century Rio de Janeiro. Using as her documentary base the roughly 500 criminal cases of "deflowering" brought to the courts each year by predominantly lower-class families, jurists' writings, and debates surrounding 1890 and 1930 penal codes, Caulfield makes a convincing case for how honor serves as a suitable lens for interpreting gender and race relations under Brazil's First Republic.⁹ Caulfield's study demonstrates the coexistence and interaction of multiple conceptions of honor, including those of popular litigants, police, jurists, and state intellectuals, and points to the not-accidental linkages between the state's modernizing project and shifting codes of honor in Brazilian society.

9. In so doing, Caulfield applies the analytical lens of gender so seamlessly that readers might be tempted to overlook the significance of her contribution to the wider field of gendered history, viewing this instead as a more traditional social and family history. In her own review of the state of the field, Caulfield demonstrates a clear preference for historical scholarship that engages with—but does not overemphasize—"grand theory." See Caulfield, "The History of Gender," 455, 480–90.

Her examination of Afrânio Peixoto's campaign against hymenolotry—in which medical professionals argued over the biological basis for establishing women's virginity—is one example of how Caulfield's gendered lens reveals the shifting conceptions of women's honor-virtue: once women's claims to purity could not be established physically, she argues, greater emphasis came to be placed on evidence of their moral purity, foreclosing many plebeian women's claims that they possessed honor in the first place. In this sense, Caulfield reads elite and popular sources not as separate, but for "common vocabularies of honor and gender," showing how—despite the shifting requirements for establishing women's honor—women and their parents continued nonetheless to claim the entitlements of sexual virtue (14). This often conflictive dialogue over what constituted individual, family, and national honor illustrates how both elite and subaltern actors appropriated, selected, and adapted available notions of honor in pursuit of diverse objectives.

Like Seed in her foundational work in this area, Caulfield carefully examines how the language of honor—articulated both by accusers and defendants—demonstrates continuity and change in the legitimacy of honor-based claims, not because such cases were strictly representative, but because they were expressed as formal court appeals and thus reveal what defendants and their accusers perceived as the legitimate contours of argumentation in racial, social, and gender terms. In a sampling of deflowering cases from the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Caulfield notes how litigants rarely invoked race as a free-standing signifier, but rather mentioned race only as a descriptor correlated with other characteristics, such as behavior and economic standing. Litigants seemingly found race a relatively insignificant factor—or one unlikely to convince a judge—and jurists likewise preferred to couch their arguments in terms of individual honor, thereby adhering to the ideology of racial democracy. Also like Seed—but with considerably greater access to popular discourse—Caulfield's cases show the ways that victims of deflowering used the police and the courts to force marriages and fight off parental objections, revealing how these institutions served also as arenas for the expression of inter-generational—as well as sexual and racial—conflict.

Caulfield's is among those recent studies that, in refusing to attribute twentieth-century gender inequality to an abstract and hegemonic "colonial legacy," carefully documents how republican jurists and legislators nevertheless institutionalized such inequality on the basis of appeals to the "traditional morality" of a more orderly, paternalistic colonial past. Caulfield's detailed examination of nineteenth-century civil and penal codes illuminates how each reinforced male control where it had not previously existed (in the Philippine Ordinances of 1603 and sub-

sequent colonial administration). In letter and in practice, Caulfield argues, Brazilian jurists of the Old Republic increased official scrutiny and arbitration of disputes over family—and primarily female—honor, and through simultaneous appeals to tradition and positivist notions of female physiological and emotional honesty, tipped the scales further in favor of male defendants. The reinforcement of male prerogative through more stringent notions of female honor did not, however, mean that elite and popular families valued or protected women's virtue any less. Indeed, one of the most powerful findings of Caulfield's study is to corroborate what scholars of the honor/shame complex have intimated all along: that elite claims to honor based on either precedence or behavior—claims that, from an elite perspective, ipso facto excluded popular classes—did not prevent the plebe from laying similar claims to honor in strategic ways. Brazilian popular families' repeated defense of their daughters' honor in the early twentieth century, even under increasing suspicions of the "modern woman's" moral corruption, survived and shifted with the transformation of political authority, from monarchy to oligarchic democracy and authoritarian paternalism.

Unlike Chambers, Caulfield's lens of honor is trained not so much on the circulation of political discourse as on the interaction of legal and popular notions of family honor in the space of streets and courts. Caulfield then turns to the subject of how these expressions were in turn appropriated for nationalist and state-building objectives under the First Republic, in which honor served the "new ideologies of cultural unity and national identity" cultivated under that regime (8). By the 1940s, Caulfield argues in her epilogue, the rise of the *Estado Novo* implied a dramatic break with family-based honor as a central organizing principle of Brazilian society, legitimizing instead the honor of male worker-citizens and further narrowing the avenues by which women might accede to honor and its legal protections. While the bulk of Caulfield's narrative concerns not "the state" but rather the debates and dislocations among legal professionals and between these actors and lower-class litigants (or, in the case of prostitution, among urban administrators, police, and prostitutes), she weaves the periodization of regime change skillfully into the heart of the book, joining it seamlessly with her analysis of how such transitions were expressed and experienced in gendered terms. In the process, Caulfield also offers insightful commentary and reinterpretation of key themes in Brazilian historiography, including the modernizing paternalist state, the myth of racial democracy, and the organization of urban spaces of house and street, demonstrating again how "gender history" is richest when exercised not in its own sphere, but rather in dialogue with a variety of other interpretive lenses.

The linkages between republican legal reforms and gender arrangements are central themes addressed in Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux's edited collection, *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*. In this volume, the editors have brought together twelve case studies of state-society relations in the modern period, framed by the editors' introductory discussions of gendered dynamics of state formation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The volume is ambitious in its scope and consistent in its high empirical and conceptual rigor, presenting many more worthwhile chapters than could be effectively reviewed here. Although only a minority of cases included in the collection deal with the early republican period, several of these engage with the above debates on how postcolonial transitions and early republican reforms transformed gender relations. In her introductory essay, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," Dore sets out to correct both overly-teleological narratives of women's progress under liberal states and to provide a regional history of nineteenth-century state policy toward women and family. As the title suggests, Dore remains skeptical of liberalism's egalitarian impact on gender relations, arguing that republican movements instead appealed to patriarchalist precedents to consolidate nation-states and, particularly in the late nineteenth century, circumscribed many of women's previously existing rights through civil codes that altered family inheritance and married women's property rights. Significantly, Dore's regional perspective allows her to elucidate the diverse renderings of women's status articulated in different civil and criminal codes, some of which dismantled women's rights to inheritance, but some of which did not. Such diversity in the formulation and implementation of what she calls "quasi-official gender regimes" works against not only the liberal narrative of women's progress in the modern period, but also any unitary framework for interpreting "women's status" in the nineteenth century (8). The accompanying case studies allow Dore to lay out the contradictory effects of postcoloniality: whereas some women gained opportunities for education and individual rights by the close of the century, the majority witnessed the erosion of their legal and social protections under republican rule.

TESTING SCOTT: GENDER AND THE STATE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICA

One of the key theoretical issues that scholars have continued to address has been Joan Scott's assertion that "politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics."¹⁰ At this point, rote acknowledgments of Scott's decisive influence have become commonplace in recent

10. Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 46.

publications, but how has this formulation really shaped findings in the Latin American field? An initial step in this direction was launched by Sandra McGee Deutsch's 1991 application of Scott's proposition to four case studies—the Mexican Revolution, Peronist Argentina, the Cuban Revolution, and Chile under Popular Unity—arguing that gender ideology was in all cases fundamental to each regime's political project and degree of social control.¹¹ Maxine Molyneux and Donna Guy, among others, also made early contributions to this line of inquiry, demonstrating the relationship between state-building and gendered reforms in Nicaragua and Argentina, respectively.¹² At this juncture, with over ten years of published scholarship on which to build, the three studies examined in this section demonstrate the wealth of insight into Latin American politics and state-society relations that have resulted from the application of a gendered lens. Overall, they lay out how particular state projects were gendered, whether or not gender reform per se was an explicit aim of state policy.

In the second introductory essay that frames *Hidden Histories*, Maxine Molyneux provides an elegant and conceptually rich overview of state-gender relations in twentieth-century Latin America. Molyneux argues that—in place of teleologies that describe women's progressive emancipation from antiquated patriarchal mores—the bulk of recent studies have documented the contingent and variable nature of the relationship between particular states and the gender regimes over which they have presided. Further, drawing on recent theories of the state, Molyneux asserts that gendered studies of the state are necessary to arrive at a more accurate understanding of what states *are*: "States and society are deeply entwined. While states necessarily exert some influence over society, they are also permeated *by* it through the absorption of prevailing discourses, practices, and social relations" (38). It follows from this assertion that gender relations are constituted on the basis of available notions of gender right in ways that shape both state policy and its effects, but *not* necessarily that particular state forms are essentially patriarchal or, conversely, emancipating. Molyneux's essay persuasively argues that, although scholars might concur that Latin American states have done more to undermine than to perpetuate gender inequality over the course of

11. Sandra McGee Deutsch, "Gender and Sociopolitical Change in Twentieth-Century Latin America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 71, no. 2 (1991): 259–306.

12. Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 227–54; *ibid.*, "The Politics of Abortion in Nicaragua: Revolutionary Pragmatism—or Feminism in the Realm of Necessity?," *Feminist Review* 29 (May 1988): 114–32; Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

the twentieth century, such gains in women's status have always been contingent on political and economic contexts, variable in degree, and subject to reversal. More important, Molyneux argues, is the fact that states have rarely promoted gender equality for the sake of women's emancipation, and that only the rising tide of feminist mobilization has pushed states in this general direction.

In the second half of her essay, Molyneux tackles the difficult task of producing a periodization adequate to the task of registering meaningful shifts in gender relations with respect to specific state forms. Molyneux's review of ideal typical state forms provides a useful framework for further discussion of Latin American state-gender relations. Here she examines the legal and political changes and continuities in gender relations that each signified, and the response of social actors and organizations to change by reform, revolution, and repression. Giving closer attention to the specific cases of Mexican revolution, populist authoritarianism, and Cuban socialism—in which attention to gender relations and the family were explicitly central to state policies—Molyneux nevertheless incorporates contrasting cases as part of her conceptual project, referencing, for example, the nuances of gendered policies implemented in Chile's Popular Front and Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution. Without diminishing the importance of historical specificity of the Mexican and Cuban cases, for example, Molyneux's treatment of state-gender relations builds on and advances the perspectives evident in recent scholarship: to appreciate and demonstrate with a high level of historical specificity the contingent and variable nature of state-gender relations in Latin American history. This conceptual advance, grounded in a variety of local contexts by the valuable essays contained in this volume, affirms the significance of studies of gender relations in the modern period, particularly in relation to political movements, state policy, and their interaction with civil society.

Building on a similar conceptualization of the state, Karin Roseblatt's *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920–1950* gives us a complex rendering of state-society relations in Chile before and then under the popular fronts (1936–49). Beyond the task of deconstructing the gendered ideological constructions implied in popular front policies, Roseblatt has delivered something much greater: her study clearly illustrates how the popular fronts cultivated the consent of the ruled not only through the promotion of class and political alliances (long recognized in the literature on Chile's "compromise state"), but also through gendered policies aimed at working men and their families. While Roseblatt's assertion that the popular front rule was "hegemonic rather than simply dominant" might seem self-evident, gender analysis here provides the essential conceptual tool for

demonstrating how both agents and subjects of popular front policies continually contested and negotiated that hegemony.¹³ Roseblatt thus provides not only a vision of change and continuity in gender relations in this period, but also an important contribution to scholarly debates on the nature of the state and democratization in Latin America.

Two of the most important developments explored in this work are Chilean state links to subaltern actors through the provision of social welfare and the evolution of leftist morality as expressed in notions of individual and family respectability. The popular fronts' cultivation of working-class support relied crucially on a discourse of national progress through the consolidation of healthy families, which the state pursued through bifurcated forms of assistance to male workers and their families: on the one hand, the *Caja de Seguro Obligatorio* provided entitlements to workers out of joint funds sustained by workers and their employers, while on the other, piecemeal programs of social assistance to the indigent underwent significant reform and professionalization, creating a network of social assistance primarily for women and families. While such forms of assistance provided key support for poor families and opened the private sphere to state oversight of wayward husbands and fathers, Roseblatt shows how this two-tiered system of "rights" versus social assistance marginalized and delegitimized claims that family dependents (especially women) might make on the state. Popular front models of state welfare also implied costs for working-class men: critical of male irresponsibility, social workers sought to "domesticate men" by punishing recalcitrant male workers for domestic abuse, alcoholism, and misuse of income, and by creating alternative arenas for healthy male recreation and leisure. However, and despite evidence that working-class women made use of state policies to correct male behavior toward families, Roseblatt argues that enough inconsistencies and vacillations persisted within state gender norms to allow male and female clients to manipulate state resources to their own ends, persisting in extra-marital sexual relations, single motherhood, and other non-sanctioned family arrangements. This flexibility, Roseblatt argues, was crucial to the popular fronts' cultivation of consent, since it gave social workers entrée into working-class homes,

13. Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, 14. Thomas Klubock's recent study of the El Teniente mining community draws similar conclusions about the importance of gender to the popular front project; his micro-level analysis of community relations and local politics complements Roseblatt's national-level discussion of the popular fronts, illuminating the relative consensus between corporate and state policies, as well as popular actors' ability to reshape and appropriate elite family norms for their own ends. Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904–1951* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

coincided with leftist morality and gendered norms, and permitted men's sexual impropriety to continue (disapproved but unsanctioned).

Evidence of strong continuities between popular front family ideology and those operating at other levels of leftist party propaganda and discipline, then, should hardly come as a surprise: party morality as it operated at the grassroots, Roseblatt argues, was crucial to the popular front's hegemonic project. Building on scholarship that has explored the tendency of the Left to ascribe to "traditional" notions of patriarchal privilege and working-class morality since the early twentieth century, Roseblatt argues that popular-front family policies found their parallel in Socialist and Communist efforts to build working-class solidarity and party membership by strengthening working-class families. In order to counter popular stereotypes of leftist militants as anti-family and encourage female participation, leftist parties promoted male self-control and the collective protection of female virtue, positions that reproduced dominant notions of gender difference and hierarchy. Whether enforced by the Communist party's *comisión de control de cuadros* or propagated through Socialist periodicals, Roseblatt argues, such exercises in "gendered honorableness" attracted participants, strengthened the Left's collective identity, and smoothed over partisan differences within the coalition. Still, leftist consensus on gender relations was continually disrupted by party aspirations to increase women's participation in leftist organizations. As other studies of working-class women's militancy have shown, the contradictory aspects of women's activism were often resolved through the notion of women's contributions to "the family of labor" and the gender exceptionalism of women militants.¹⁴

Another key narrative thread running through Roseblatt's work—and one indebted to the earlier focus of women's history on political women—emerges in a continued emphasis on feminist contributions to national debates on women's work, the family, and democratization in Chile. Roseblatt carefully traces the ins and outs of alliances between MEMCh—Chile's principle feminist organization—and the political parties involved in popular front governance. Here Roseblatt

14. Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905–1960* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900–1930* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); Deborah Levenson-Estrada, "The Loneliness of Working-Class Feminism: Women in the 'Male World' of Labor Unions, Guatemala City, 1970s," in John D. French and Daniel James, eds., *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997): 208–31; Heidi Elizabeth Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

documents how progressive feminists allied with the popular fronts battled pressures from the Left—particularly the Communist party—to postpone more radical feminist demands and bourgeois-democratic alliances in favor of working-class notions of essentialized femininity, which eventually marginalized and then drove radical feminists out of the organization altogether. By analyzing in detail how party militants shut down democratizing alternatives within the women's movement, Roseblatt goes beyond the story of MEMCh to explain the popular fronts' failure to realize its democratic promise. Perhaps more importantly, her reading shows how such outcomes were conditioned by overt misogyny and the conservative gender and family norms promoted in leftist discourse.

In sum, *Gendered Compromises* succeeds because of its ability to address gendered reform not as an isolated object of study, but rather as one crucial component not always self-evident in the construction of state hegemony, from the grassroots to the level of public policy. Such an analysis contributes to a nuanced reading of how male domination is (sometimes inadvertently and indirectly) constructed and reproduced within particular political discourses, an analysis that at once acknowledges popular ascription to elite notions and dissent from them. At the same time, "the state" appears in Roseblatt's analysis not as a monolithic force for imposing reform, but rather as a multivalent entity that is continually contested from within, as popular front constituencies and state professionals pursue competing agendas within the operations of the state. Further, Roseblatt's analysis shows how the Chilean state—even in the short space of two decades—was not static, but rather subject to specific and ongoing historical forces, including the mobilization of feminist challenges, reform of social service professions, and the (very Chilean) impulse toward political coalition, all of which converged in the popular front experience. This sweeping narrative—with its insistence on multi-level analysis and empirical rigor—moves us away from any neat characterization of oligarchic, populist, or socialist regimes in terms of their gendered political projects, to embrace the ambivalence and contestation that inheres in state-building projects.

Katherine Bliss's account of prostitution and health reform in revolutionary Mexico City provides yet another opportunity to examine how gender shapes the relationship between state and society in Latin America, this time in the uniquely progressive political context of post-revolutionary Mexico. Drawing on an especially strong set of official sources generated through the regulation of prostitution and public health campaigns in Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s, Bliss incorporates the voices of prostitutes themselves through the use of their letters to public officials and court testimony. Like attention to prostitution in recent gender history, Bliss's approach to the subject signals a change

in historical approaches to the study of prostitution in Latin America.¹⁵ Shifting from—but not ignoring—more state-centered studies of how legal and police regulation shaped the practice, urban geography, and public discourse on prostitution, Bliss turns our attention to how women who engaged in sexual commerce themselves ascribed to notions of working-class respectability and legitimate motherhood, appropriating nationalist revolutionary discourse in support of their claims. Further, and going beyond the almost universal observation that contemporaries naturalized male access to prostitutes as a physiological necessity, Bliss shows how the “cult of masculinity” that drove such presumptions itself came under serious attack from reformers concerned with the spread of syphilis in the 1930s. Reformist critiques and the anti-pimping laws that resulted, Bliss argues, in turn served as weapons in the hands of prostitutes seeking to control the sexual promiscuity of pimps and lovers. In this way, like the other works examined here, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* addresses an established topic from a fresh perspective, bringing to it new questions, sources and conceptual moorings that illuminate the gendered terrain of revolutionary reform in Mexico.

In addition to the important light Bliss’s study sheds on prostitutes’ own perspective on sexual commerce, medical inspections, and legitimate motherhood, this work provides a case study of how the revolutionary state—unique in its political trajectory if not its regulatory practices—justified and implemented increased intervention of public authorities in the private transactions of sexual commerce. Through the writings of health and social work professionals and propaganda used in campaigns against venereal disease, Bliss documents how the social upheaval of revolutionary conflict, combined with subsequent efforts to consolidate a revolutionary state, provided openings, resources, and impetus for anxious urban reformers by the late 1920s. While the regulatory apparatus installed by the Mexican state in this period was hardly unique—mandating the legal registration of prostitutes, regular medical exams, and taxation of brothels—the rhetoric of revolutionary nationalism that infused reformist debates and prostitutes’ protests

15. Guy, *Sex and Danger*; William E. French, “Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (November 1992): 529–53. Several recent and in-press works have shifted the emphasis on prostitution even further away from its categorization as a discreet occupation and instead examined its ties to the structure of the labor force; normative sexuality and popular practice; and its imbrication with the structure of the family. Representative works include Findlay, *Imposing Decency*, chapters 3 and 6; Klubock, *Contested Communities*, chapter 7; Lara Putnam, *Public Women and One-Pant Men: Gender and Labor Migration in Caribbean Costa Rica* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming).

certainly was. Perhaps predictably enough, reformers portrayed the scourge of prostitution and resulting public health crises as a legacy of the Porfirian dictatorship, and represented their own work to regulate and redeem prostitutes as revolutionary science, consigning “bourgeois mentalities” of private assistance to the Porfirian past. As in Chile, in their zeal to correct working-class family relations, social workers criticized working-class men for their failures and asserted the state as a more suitable guardian of Mexican family interests.¹⁶

Bliss’s study thus describes the Mexican case as one “uniquely conducive to full-scale evaluations of sexual behavior, morality, and gender relations,” explaining how debates over prostitution demonstrated—like other, better-documented revolutionary reforms—an ongoing tension in the revolutionary project between individual rights and collective welfare (12). Referencing the title of *Compromised Positions*, Bliss argues that the eventual abolition of prostitution in 1940 “represented compromises among the revolutionary imperatives of commerce, public health, and gender equality,” resolving this long-standing tension by deregulating sexual commerce and criminalizing the transmission of disease in 1940 (7). Of particular significance in terms of Mexican gender relations was the creation of the “crime of contagion,” which finally placed prostitutes and their clients on equal ground, legally affirming that both could transmit disease. At the same time, however, the deregulation of sexual commerce reportedly dispersed prostitution throughout residential neighborhoods, eliminated incentives toward safer sex, and hid the abuses of pimps and madams from public view. Although Bliss does not take an explicit position on whether regulation or abolition better advanced the position of women in Mexican society, her explication of how sex-workers’ daily lives changed compliments recent scholarship on the political and economic rights of women and how those were advanced (or not) by the Mexican revolutionary project.¹⁷ Bliss’s study is one illustration of how Mexican gender history has moved in recent years beyond rights-based analyses of women’s status in revolutionary Mexico to examine the social impact of revolutionary reforms.

16. The rise of professional social work as an arena of class relations and mechanism for increased state intervention is also examined in Ann Shelby Blum, “Children Without Parents: Law, Charity and Social Practice, Mexico City, 1867–1940,” Ph.D. Diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1998, especially chapter 9; Klubock, *Contested Communities*, chapter 2.

17. Mary Kay Vaughan, “Modernizing Patriarchy: State Policies, Rural Households, and Women in Mexico, 1930–1940,” in Dore and Molyneux, eds., *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State*, 194–214; Florencia Mallon, “Exploring the Origins of Democratic Patriarchy in Mexico: Gender and Popular Resistance in the Puebla Highlands, 1850–1876,” in Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan, eds., *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850–1990* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994): 3–26; “Las Olvidadas.”

The gendered readings of state-society relations described here demonstrate how economic and social policies, in particular, contributed to states' relative success in consolidating control through discipline, coercion, and the cultivation of popular consent. Even as they have stepped away from earlier literature's emphasis on judging regimes in terms of their "track record" on gender equality, these authors demonstrate the utility of gendered discourses for advancing larger state-building projects. This scholarship is responsible, therefore, not only for the re-discovery of women's agency in the history of the state (both as bearers and recipients of state policy), but also for bringing recent theoretical interventions on the nature of the state to bear on Latin American cases. Gendered analysis of the state, in particular, has contributed significantly to "stirring up" overarching historical paradigms in modern Latin American history, moving women's history from the margins firmly to the center of historical scholarship.

UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE: LATIN AMERICAN TESTIMONIAL ON A LITERARY TURN

At another extreme from state-oriented approaches to research and teaching on women's history in Latin America has stood the popular interest in women's subjective experience, which has been transmitted to a U.S. audience primarily through biographical accounts and testimonial literature. Historical subjects for this approach have ranged from recounting the lives of powerful and extraordinary women (such as Eva Perón and Frida Kahlo) to recovering the subaltern voices of Rigoberta Menchú, María Teresa Tula, and Domitila Barrios de Chungara.¹⁸ However, the recovery of individual women's stories has always existed in difficult tension with efforts to elucidate "women's experience" through them. Daniel James's long-awaited study of the meat-packing worker and Peronist activist María Roldán, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity*, succeeds as a work of gender history in part because it does *not* try to do this. Although analysis of Roldán's gender identity is fundamental to James's analysis, his reading of her story does not reduce it to a singular, essentialized, female experience: rather, her life illuminates the creation of political consciousness and the transformation of a working-class community in twentieth-century Argentina. Here James eschews the temptation to tell María Roldán's story as that of an exemplary Argentine working-class

18. Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer, *Let Me Speak!: Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines*, translated by Victoria Ortiz (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978); Rigoberta Menchú, with Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (London: Verso, 1984); María Teresa Tula, *Hear My Testimony: Human Rights Activist of El Salvador*, edited and translated by Lynn Stephen (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

women, instead integrating her female subjectivity—as Roldán herself did—into his exploration of a diverse and equally important set of working-class, Peronist, and *berissense* identities. By presenting María Roldán’s story in this way, James has taken us beyond the naive realism of the testimonial form to challenge the seductive idea of a unitary, Latin American “women’s experience.”

Building on a lifetime of fieldwork in working-class Argentina and the promise of his earlier eponymous contribution to *The Gendered Lives of Latin American Women Workers*, in this monograph James has delivered the goods, making a significant contribution to scholarly debates on work, gender, and identity, while at the same time demonstrating what historians can learn from poststructuralist ethnography and literary criticism. The only monograph in this review produced by a senior scholar, James’s essays in *Doña María’s Story* recount how historical vision can be fundamentally altered through the application of gender analysis, post-structuralist theory, modern ethnography, and testimonial studies, leaving us with James’s own “story” of how his research was transformed. In the chapter “Listening in the Cold,” for example, James relates how, in the midst of collecting Roldán’s oral history, he moved from the quest for empirical data infused with that “something else” of orality to a more critical reading of his own role as interviewer and of her stories as narrative texts. James’s dense theoretical perorations on the epistemological and methodological pitfalls of historical research would seem self-indulgent, were it not for his skillful rendering of how his need for theory grew out of the failures inherent in his own uncritical practice. His richly detailed and sometimes humorous account of success and failure with interviewees presents a cautionary tale for the would-be oral historian, increasingly confronted by ethical, epistemological, and practical concerns.

Building on Alessandro Portelli’s observation that the nature of testimonial as social construction does not illegitimize—but rather enriches—oral testimony, James’s work here makes a fruitful contribution to the debates that have swirled around women’s testimonial in Latin America, most recently in the controversy over *I, Rigoberta Menchú*.¹⁹ The importance of such testimonies to a U.S. academic audience, particularly in the 1980s, cannot be overestimated: testimonial literature provided an opportunity to educate, evaluate, and critically rethink the causes and impact of war, poverty, U.S. intervention, gender inequality, and militarism in that region. At the same time, however, James observes that many

19. Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*; Arturo Arias, ed., *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); “If Truth Be Told: A Forum on David Stoll’s *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*,” *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 6 (November 1999).

U.S. scholars have understood testimony as a privileged form of knowing, particularly about subaltern subjects, viewing testimonial as a transparent and unmediated expression of experience. In telling María Roldán's story, James could easily have written in this tradition, but instead chose to emphasize his subject's agency in telling her own experience, with all the omissions, selection, and interpretation that such retelling entails. By publishing selections of the interview transcript as almost a third of the text, moreover, James has retained the testimonial value of Roldán's account, allowing readers to form their own impressions against which to test the historian's reading of the transcript. The result is a powerful, provocative work that leaves us not only with a clear impression of the community of Berisso and Doña María's activist role within it, but also of the capacity of oral history to both complicate and advance the scholar's search for "what really happened."

Beyond offering a critique of oral history methodology, James's work also makes a vital contribution to gender history; like the other works examined here, *Doña María's Story* succeeds because it elucidates not just female experience, but also the larger context of Argentine and Peronist labor history. In his introduction to the excerpted transcript, James asserts that Doña María's narrative "must be read as one thread within the web of narratives that form Berisso's story" (31). Throughout the accompanying analytical essays, James maintains this historicist position, reading the transcript not just for its literary tropes and forms but also contextualizing it as personal, community, and Peronist history. It is significant that, in the process, James insists on reading María Roldán's experience as a working-class woman in relation to those larger historical moments, even when the text itself remains resistant or "closed" to such readings. It is at this juncture in the text that gender becomes James's primary analytical lens, because it serves to pry open Roldán's account, exposing the complexities and conflicts within her experience, ambiguities that Roldán had good reason to elide or de-emphasize in her conversations with "the English Professor." One of the ways in which James re-genders Roldán's story is to show how, through stories of her childhood rebelliousness, confrontations with male bosses, and activism in male-led unions, Roldán weaves a picture of herself that would seem to contradict dominant gender ideologies' emphasis on female domesticity, passivity, and victimization. That Roldán does not explicitly challenge dominant gender norms—instead interspersing rote deference to them throughout her narrative—makes James's recovery of her gendered subjectivity no less important. For James, the fact that Roldán's storytelling affirms her sexual honor and political activism opens her narrative up to readings of working women's agency normally elided from master narratives of Peronist unionism. When, in James's reading, María Roldán chose to subsume

her experience of work and activism in tales of family and Peronist harmony, she defused the potentially disruptive power of her experience, but left her listener with stories riddled with lifelong tensions between dominant gender norms and her experience as a female activist. In the end, at the heart of *Doña María's Story* lie a series of questions about working women's experience that James is at pains to resolve completely: he is no more able to produce a seamless narrative than was María Roldán in telling her life's story. This lack of narrative control, however, is exactly James's point: although he denies the existence of "pure experience" that can be accessed through individual memory and the tools of historical inquiry, James elucidates nevertheless how partial recoveries of that experience are both possible and instructive. Despite James's repeated cautions about the epistemological limits of historical knowledge, *Doña María's Story* succeeds in reinserting women as historical agents into the larger political and historical narratives that have rendered them invisible. Given the barriers to their visibility—including the elisions performed by Roldán herself—James's recovery of the subjective experience of even one woman is a valuable step forward in the gendered study of Latin American history.

CONCLUSIONS

The six works reviewed here represent just a sampling of the abundant scholarship that has elsewhere been dubbed a "historiographical revolution" in Latin American history.²⁰ This revolution's early proponents predicted the eventual transformation of historical inquiry long ago, as women's history began to transform historical research, university curricula, and graduate training in the United States. Building on the legitimacy of women as historical subjects established in the 1970s, historical scholarship employing gender as a primary category of analysis since the 1980s has reached a level of theoretical sophistication and comparative breadth to permit the debate and self-criticism to flourish in scholarly exchanges. Whereas the central task of early women's history was to "get it right" when stirring women into the historical mix, gender analysis has proven even more disruptive, calling into question paradigms that de-historicize or oversimplify the nature of gender inequality in Latin America. Has political regime change always signaled significant change for women in Latin American nations? Have forces of economic and social modernization really advanced women's social and legal status? If "women's experience" is not a unitary subject for analysis, how do gender identity and sexuality shape the historical

20. Gilbert M. Joseph, "A Historiographical Revolution in our Time," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, nos. 3–4 (August–November 2001): 445–47.

experience of men and women? Further, gender analysis has at different times both contributed to and challenged the legitimacy of existing interpretive frameworks for understanding Latin America in the modern period. Particularly—but not exclusively—in the thematic areas examined here, “adding gender” has opened up important new areas of inquiry; whether this scholarship lives up to the fullest promise of revolution is a question that will require continued scrutiny and critical reflection in the years to come.