The Radical Muse

Women and Anarchism in Early-Twentieth-Century Cuba

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January 2003

Contents

ABSTRACT

Following independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba's anarchists focused attention on what they regarded as elite hypocrisy regarding the larger social problems besetting Cuba. In the hope of drawing Cuba's popular classes into the global anarchist movement, their critique addressed the manner in which industrial, bourgeois society victimized women, especially those of the working class. Cuban radicals used the image of women and women's issues as foils to analyze and criticize health, workplace, and family issues. They also used women as symbols of obstruction to anarchist-defined notions of progress. Finally, they showed how women could aspire to be female heroines, by promoting an ideal type of ''noble woman'' and the concept of ''revolutionary motherhood'' to which women should strive. Anarchists directed their messages to women and men through the movement's popular cultural forms. Newspapers, novels, short stories, plays, and social gatherings in which plays were performed or revolutionary songs were sung all played a part in anarchist appeals to female followers and functioned as a form of education.

How could it happen? Independence from Spain was supposed to usher in a new Cuba filled with justice, freedom, equality—in short, a social revolution was to have taken place. Yet to anarchists, the most radical leftists on the political spectrum, reality had fallen far short of this revolutionary ideal. In the decades following political independence from Spain in 1898, anarchists claimed that the social goals for which they and others had fought had been abandoned by the elite. This political and social elite promoted patriotism while allowing the island to be carved up by urban and agribusiness industrialists. Anarchists charged that the elite and their industrial partners were turning Cuba into a cesspool of vice and exploitation that differed little from the days of colonial rule.

The island's anarchists repeatedly focused attention on what they regarded as elite hypocrisy and the larger social problems besetting Cuba in the first three decades of independence. Within this critique they regularly addressed women's issues and how industrial, bourgeois society affected women, especially of the working class. Women's victimization moved anarchists to address interlocking gender, race, and class issues as they reflected Cuban reality. By highlighting these issues, in which women played a central role, anarchists hoped to draw Cuba's popular classes into the global anarchist movement. These Cuban radicals employed the image of women in several ways. First, they used women and women's issues as foils to analyze and criticize health, workplace, and family issues. In essence, if women could be treated inhumanely in an increasingly capitalist Cuba, then men and children would also suffer, both at work and at home. Second, anarchists used women as symbols of obstruction to anarchist-defined notions of progress. Many women were members of class and religious groups that opposed anarchism. Other women were portrayed as mothers lacking revolutionary and working-class consciousness. These women and mothers exploited children or aped the bourgeoisie. As such, they became symbols for the type of behavior women should avoid—and what men and women should try to correct. Finally, while anarchists portrayed women as victims and reactionaries, they also showed how women could aspire to be female heroines. Anarchists promoted an ideal type of ''noble woman'' and the concept of ''revolutionary motherhood,'' to which women should strive. Such women and mothers would help lead society to recover a world of mutual aid, cooperation, and harmony, which anarchists believed industrial capitalism, politics, and religion were destroying. Not only did these heroic images offer a vision of how women should act, but also the images reflected how anar-

chists idealized family relationships. Nevertheless, this view of women and motherhood, while challenging bourgeois society, failed to blame the patriarchy for women's problems and in fact tended to incorporate patriarchal notions of women as mothers.

Cuban anarchists directed their messages to women and men through the movement's popular culture, which functioned as a form of education. Thus, anarchist newspapers, novels, short stories, plays and the social gatherings in which plays were performed or revolutionary songs were sung all contributed to anarchist appeals to female followers. Besides trying to attract women to the movement, these cultural forms expressed the very images of women that anarchists used to criticize bourgeois society and to promote revolutionary motherhood. For anarchists, ''woman'' became a radical muse in the tradicional sense of the word. That is, ''woman'' inspired anarchists. They portrayed these different images of women throughout Cuba's public and private spheres, at work, in schools, on the streets, and in the home. Anarchists used ''woman'' as a source of inspiration to illustrate the shortcomings and ''unnatural'' qualities of Cuban bourgeois society, while also showcasing an anarchist idealized future for the island.

Anarchism, Health, and Women

Despite waves of health and sanitation reforms created under the U.S. military occupations of 1898–1902 and 1906–1909, numerous health problems persisted, both in the general populace and within the workplace, with tuberculosis leading the way. Anarchists argued that the only solution for tuberculosis was prevention, but this required large investments from the government and/or factory and tenement owners. All were reluctant to make such investments. Thus, more Cuban adults died from tuberculosis year after year than from any other single disease (see Table 1).

Cause	Number of deaths	Death rate/1,000
Tuberculosis of lungs	833	145.62
Diarrhea/enteritis (under 2 years)	742	129.70
Organic disease of the heart	447	78.14
Affections of the arteries (atheroma, aneurism, etc.)	336	58.74
Diarrhea/enteritis (2 years and older)	304	53.14
Simple meningitis	273	47.72
Bronco-pneumonia	193	33.74
Cerebral congestion/hemorrhage	166	29.02
Tetanus	148	25.87
Intermittent fever and malarial cachexia	135	23.60

Table 1. Ten Leading Causes of Deaths in Havana during 1901

Table adapted from W. C. Gorgas, ''Report of Deaths in the City of Havana during the Year 1901,'' in Leonard Wood, Civil Report of Brigadier General Leonard Wood: Military Governor of Cuba (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), 14–17.

In 1886, 1,187 habaneros died from TB. By the close of the war in 1898, these figures had escalated, due to the hideous sanitary conditions experienced by the great masses of Cubans forced to live in what amounted to refugee camps during the war. In that year, 2,795 people in Havana died of the disease. Over the next two decades, poor living and working conditions facilitated a continued high occurrence of TB, so that even by 1919 TB was a leading cause of death (1,209 deaths in Havana alone).[1]

Anarchists regularly complained about this disease, which they saw as synonymous with the growth of bourgeois industrial society. Besides frequent discussion of the disease in the anarchist press, creators of Cuban popular culture merged TB and gender in a form of social criticism. In his two novels, Cuban anarchist and labor union leader Antonio Penichet wrote about tuberculosis deaths, especially the deaths of working-class women, to illustrate the painful reality experienced by the working class. In Penichet's La vida de un pernicioso, the main character Joaquín is in jail for anarchist activities. While he is imprisoned, his compañera, Natalia, a former prostitute, is forced to live in unsanitary conditions and eat poorly. Ultimately, she becomes ill and dies from tuberculosis.[2] A similar situation befalls the main character, Rodolfo, in Penichet's ¡Alma Rebelde!, Novela histórica. In this novel Rodolfo's girlfriend likewise succumbs to the disease.[3] In both novels, the deaths of women associated with anarchists, and who were themselves anarchist supporters, illustrated several things. First, workingclass readers recognized the common sight of one of their own falling to TB.

By 1920, 61 percent of the total population ten years old and older was literate. Generally, whites had higher literacy rates, with foreign-born white men and women the highest (77.3 percent and 69.3 percent, respectively). Still, despite one's color, sex, and place of origin, over half of the people in all categories in the 1919 census could read. As a result, large numbers of men and women of all colors and classes could receive these anarchist messages and note how the novels' characters reflected the readers' own reality.[4] Second, anarchists characterized women, especially anarchist women, as representations of a noble womanhood to which all women should aspire, but who often fell victim to the elite and conditions in capitalist industries. These women were on the road to being, if not already, in harmony with nature and had developed a workingclass consciousness. That these women could succumb to such a disease as TB illustrated the truly horrendous, antinatural, life-endangering features of contemporary bourgeois Cuban society. Third, in both cases, the deaths prometed Joaquín and Rodolfo to reinvigorate their struggles to fight for improved health conditions, but more importantly, to fight for an anarchist future that would bring society more in line with nature and justice.

Besides using female characters as tools to discuss larger health issues in Cuba, anarchists used the real-life situations of female factory workers to draw attention to what they regarded as antihuman, and especially antifemale, conditions in capitalist Cuba. This was best seen within the female workforce employed in the tobacco industry. Women tobacco factory workers had specific health and economic dilemmas to overcome in addition to the dust and lack of fresh air

[1] Censo de la República de Cuba, Año de 1919 (Havana: Maza, Arroyo y Caso, S. en C., 1919), 253.

[2] Antonio Penichet, La vida de un pernicioso (Havana: Avisador Comercial, 1919), 130.

[3] Antonio Penichet, ¡Alma Rebelde!, Novela histórica (Havana: El Ideal, 1921), 90.

[4] Censo de la República de Cuba, Año de 1919, 366–67.

in the factories. The destemmers (despalilladoras) of tobacco leaf were mostly women, and they suffered some of the lowest wages in the industry.[5] Beyond this economic issue was an important health issue. From six in the morning to five in the afternoon, these women would stoop over a barrel of tobacco leaves with little rest, fresh air, or sunlight. Anarchists charged that due to the combination of poor diet, the necessity of eating in filthy workplace surroundings, and constantly working in a bent over position, women suffered from bad digestion as well as intestinal and uterine problems. Anarchists further alleged that the youngest female stemmers were particularly vulnerable. Quoting an unnamed health practitioner, the writer Adriano Lorenzo noted that the girls ''who have not begun to menstruate, usually find their development retarded, her reproductive system corresponding to the overall development of her body. Her chest narrows, her back contorts, her breasts do not develop, her hips narrow—in a phrase: her whole body stops developing.''[6] Another writer asked what would happen when these girls, whose bodies were not adequately developed, began to have babies—assuming they could become pregnant or carry a fetus to term?[7]

The anarchist concern with female laborers' health had less to do with keeping women out of production, as later labor codes throughout Latin America would do, and more to do with concerns over safety for female workers who might be future mothers. These mothers-to-be would have to be healthy and strong to rear the next generation of enlightened children and future workers. When health and safety standards in the workplace threatened women, they threatened the next generation of the working class. This concern with health, children and working-class motherhood was certainly justified. Infant mortality was a very serious issue in Cuba and one with which anarchists regularly concerned themselves. In 1901 diarrhea and enteritis (inflammation of the intestinal tract) was a leading cause of death among Havana's children. Children under two years old died at a rate of 129.70 per 1,000 population, and children two years old and older died at a rate of 53.14 per 1,000 population. Of 5,720 reported deaths in Havana that year, more than one-fourth (1,453) were children under one year old and more than one-third (1,940) of total deaths were children ten years old and younger.[8] Eighteen years later, the islandwide 1919 census would show a slight worsening of these figures for the youngest children (see table 2).

Age	Population	Number of deaths	Deaths/1,000
Less than 1 year	74,918	11,206	149.6
1–4	335,340	6,400	19.1
5–19	1,110,250	1,705	1.5
20–39	839,666	6,580	7.8
40–59	390,185	6,121	15.7
60+	138,645	8,931	64.4
Total	2,889,004	40,943	14.2

Table 2. Deaths by Age Group (population based on 1919 figures and deaths registered in 1916)

[5] Jean Stubbs, Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 77–78.

[6] El Nuevo Ideal, 25 February 1899, 3.

[7] ¡Tierra! 17 October 1903, 2.

[8] ''Report of Deaths in the City of Havana during the Year 1901,'' in ''Report of W. C. Gorgas,'' Civil Report of Brigadier General Leonard Wood, Military Governor of Cuba, 1901 (Washington, D.C.: War Department), 17.

Censo de la República de Cuba Año de 1919, 249.

Thus, by the late 1910s, more than one-fourth of reported deaths islandwide were of infants under one year old and nearly half of all deaths (47 percent) were of youth under twenty years old. These figures merely give an aggregate overview of something truly dismal occurring in Cuba in the decades after independence. Not only did anarchists blame infant mortality on women's workplace conditions but also on dietary issues related to motherhood. In 1903 one anarchist commentator suggested that high infant mortality and disease were in large part caused by nutritional problems. According to the anonymous author of the column ''Por la raza,'' which appeared in the pages of the anarchist weekly newspaper ¡Tierra!, it was increasingly rare to see mothers nursing their young. Of course, wealthy and middle-class mothers could and did resort to employing wet nurses, but obviously this was not an option for poor families. Poorer families were resorting to bottle feeding. However, ''especially in Havana, the milk that was sold generally was impure,'' and the purest milk available was too expensive. While families living on the outskirts of town were able to get fresh milk from nearby cattle barns, most families, the author argued, were reduced to buying condensed canned milk imported from the United States. The writer concluded that such a practice, besides being expensive and making the poor that much more dependent on imports (and less so on what was available naturally!), was leading to high infant mortality and later childhood diseases, especially tuberculosis.[9]

Childbirth provided a venue for anarchists to address their concerns over the growing use of injections by the Cuban medical community. Anarchists considered injections dangerous to women during childbirth. True to the theories of what later practitioners would label ''natural childbirth,'' one writer criticized doctors for their continual search for pain-relieving substances to inject into birthing mothers. Obstetricians could not safely use ethyl-bromide or ethyl-chloride, and chloroform and ether were too dangerous to use except in the final stages of pushing out the baby. Instead, obstetricians increasingly relied on opiates for pain relief, even though the same doctors acknowledged that these drugs were "inconvenient" because they tended to paralyze the mother's intestines. Instead of so quickly deciding to give injections to deaden the pain of contractions, the writer suggested that doctors should consider a series of hydrotherapy treatments, such as hot water and steam baths, to relax muscles and ease tension. To better prepare for childbirth, mothers should adopt a vegetarian diet, which would cause less stress on the digestive and intestinal organs ''and effectively prepare the mother to better raise the child.''[10] Elsewhere, writers challenged the supposed health-threatening women's fashions of middle-class culture, which anarchists claimed many working-class women were trying to emulate. In 1918 the writer "Apolonio" warned girls and young women of the health dangers associated with fashion, particularly the wearing of corsets, high heels, and makeup. Corsets and heels not only led to disfigurement of the natural human body, but also impeded blood flow, the writer warned. As for makeup, it was worse. Not only did makeup disfigure the natural face, it also caused premature aging of the skin and blocked pores that were necessary ''for the flow of oxygen through the body in order to fortify the blood and enrich our life.''[11]

Anarchists' concerns with women's health issues expanded to a larger concern for all of Cuban society. If women's health was jeopardized, then all of society was jeopardized. Anarchists saw

[9] ¡Tierra! 24 October 1903, 2.

[10] Pro-Vida, February 1915, 1–2.

[11] Pro-Vida, 30 April 1918, 4.

several threats to women's health, especially that of working-class women: the temptations of antinatural bourgeois fashion, the injection-happy state of the professional medical community, the increase in reliance on canned as opposed to breast milk, infant mortality, and poor workplace conditions. Anarchists were generally concerned with the health of working-class women. After all, these were their wives, lovers, daughters, and friends. Some of these women were anarchists themselves. In addition, by focusing on women's health concerns and issues, anarchists used female images as a foil to criticize the larger culture. In so doing, they focused light on the poor conditions facing Cuba's masses after independence and thus illustrated how the goals of independence had been subverted for both men and women alike.

Women, Social Events, Anarchist Theater, and Education

For anarchists, education went beyond schoolhouse walls, extending into public gatherings (veladas) and the home. While anarchists started their own schools in the decades following independence, these schools could only reach a small number of children during the day, as well as an equally small number of male and female workers at night. Anarchists used their popular culture as a form of education to reach a larger audience. By examining the content of anarchist novels, plays, and short stories, one discovers that women and women's issues were constant themes in this literature and, by extension, that women were a primary audience for this education.

Whether they were on a propaganda tour or participating in weekly gatherings, anarchists regularly held veladas. These were social events where workers and their families could come, usually on Sunday evenings, to hear lectures on anarchism, health, education, and family-oriented topics. From a cultural standpoint, the veladas were important acts of revolutionary popular culture where men, women, and children also sang revolutionary hymns, performed libertarian plays, and recited anarchist poetry. All ages and both sexes attended, so that these anarchist cultural events became important educational tools for critiquing Cuban and global politics while suggesting an imaginable anarchist future.

Women were very prominent in the audience at the veladas, and newspaper descriptions usually reported that large numbers of them were seated in the front areas closest to the stage and podium. This was confirmed after 1910 when anarchists began to publish photographs of audiences in their newspapers. U.S. military intelligence also noted the presence of women and their children at these gatherings. For instance in January 1908, a Capt. John Furlong wrote to U.S. Military Governor Charles Magoon that the ''meetings are being attended by women as well as men. The women bring their children and the meetings seem to be part of an educational system established by these anarchists.''[12]

On occasion, noted Cuban female anarchists would appear as speakers at the gatherings. These included anarchist women like Teresa Faro, Emilia Rodríguez, and María Luisa Bustamante.[13] These women had prominent roles in anarchist propaganda illustrating women's revolutionary abilities to women and men alike. They demonstrated their rejection of traditional gender roles and highlighted the capabilities of rationally inspired women. Besides large female attendance

[12] Memo for the Chief of Staff from John W. Furlong, Captain, General Staff, Chief, Military Information Division, 3 January 1908, Records of the Provisional Government, Record Group 199, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[13] ¡Tierra! 12 June 1907, 2; 10 August 1907, 2, 4.

and occasional female participation in the talks, speakers often discussed the role of women and the family.

While the speeches were important elements of the veladas, the truly invigorating cultural work was found in the songs, poetry, and plays. A typical velada began with either an opening speech or a band piece followed by a speech. Speeches then were interspersed with poems with titles like ''Himno al pueblo,'' ''La libertad,'' ''A la anarquía,'' ''Los parías,'' ''Una limosna,'' ''El sol perdido,'' and ''Las dos grandezas.'' Children always recited the poetry. Most often, the children were the sons and daughters of anarchists, such as the son of Miguel Martínez Abello who recited poems at veladas from 1905 to 1907, or Rafael García's daughter Celia who did the same in 1913.[14] In a discussion of his brief stay in 1911 with the family of Havana anarchist Jesús López, the noted labor organizer and later government official and celebrated novelist Carlos Loveira also observed how anarchists employed their children in cultural events. López had seven children, one of whom (Jesuito) was a public speaker; the others (all with good anarchist names: Germinal, Rebeldía, Aurora, Libertad, Igualdad, and Fraternidad) recited poetry and performed songs at meetings and veladas.[15]

Anarchist plays were important cultural ingredients at the veladas and were thus important sources of popular education aimed particularly at women. From 1904 until the 1920s, no other play was performed as frequently as Fin de fiesta, written by the Spanish-born but Cuban-resident anarchist playwright and novelist Palmiro de Lidia (Adrián del Valle). This brief, seven-scene play captured most of anarchism's central themes: worker solidarity, exploitative capitalists, and backward religious or social customs, particularly regarding marriage and its effects on women. In the play, Elena, the daughter of wealthy factory owner Don Pedro, is in love with her poor, struggling, working-class lover Julián. However, Don Pedro wants to marry her off to an old friend. When Elena tells her priest about her predicament, the priest reminds her that she must follow the wishes of her father no matter what. By the end of the play, the audience discovers that Don Pedro intends to close the factory. But workers have gone on strike and set fire to the building, preventing him from liquidating his assets. In the final scene, with his factory in flames, Don Pedro confronts the strikers with pistol in hand. However, Elena charges in and places herself between her father and the workers just as the pistol is fired, killing her. For women audience members the play illustrated the crippling role of traditional marriage and patriarchal authority that anarchists imagined were the lot of women. Yet it also offered women a female martyr—someone who, inspired by love and justice, threw herself between a capitalist and workers to defend the workers, one of whom she loved, and who paid the ultimate price for her sacrifice.[16]

While audience members saw the heroine Elena die for a higher revolutionary cause, they also saw a women who lacked a revolutionary or workingclass consciousness. This is clear in Antonio Penichet's play ¡Salvemos el hogar! in which Matías is the father in an anarchist-defined dysfunctional family. Matías, a worker who regularly attends meetings and talks at the Workers' Center, increasingly becomes convinced of the justness of the workers' revolutionary message.

[14] ¡Tierra! 11 November 1905, 4; 30 November 1907, 1; 8 August 1913, 3; El Dependiente, 20 August 1913, 1; 17 September 1913, 4.

[15] Carlos Loveira, De los 26 a los 35: Lecciones de la experiencia en la lucha obrera (1908–1917) (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1917), 78. The use of children for revolutionary cultural events is still popular in Cuba today. In a public forum with a local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution in Camagüey in 1989, a group of scholars and librarians and myself were treated to several children reciting memorized revolutionary poems.

[16] Palmiro de Lidia, Fin de fiesta, cuadro dramático (New York, 1898).

Meanwhile, his wife and children have completely different interests. The son Daniel is primarily interested in the sporting and gaming scene. Daughter María echoes the bourgeois and religious dogma of the middle classes, whose trappings she and her mother strive to emulate. The entire family views their father with contempt, believing that he is wasting his time at the Workers' Center. In one scene, the mother Magdalena wants Matías to accompany her to the baptism of a friend's child, but Matías declines because he must go to the Center, where an assembly on an upcoming strike is to be held. Matías's friend Domingo arrives to escort Matías to the assembly and berates him for the condition of his family, which is ''like a summary of current Women and Anarchism in Early-Twentieth-Century Cuba : 139 society, all its prejudices, all its errors and all its fanaticisms.'' To top it off, Matías's youngest son has even joined the Boy Scouts —a youth paramilitary organization to prepare soldiers!

In the play's third and final act, the strike has been violently repressed, with fights breaking out between strikers and strikebreakers. Magdalena, María, and Daniel are smugly pleased with themselves for having recognized what they see as the foolishness of working-class actions because there will always be rich and poor. But Magdalena is bitter, too, yelling at Matías and Domingo that because of the strike and the lack of income coming into the home, ''Now I will not be able to buy the ribbons and scalloped lace to adorn my dress for the dance!'' Ultimately, for Matías, it is almost too much to stand, and he threatens to abandon the family, but Domingo convinces him to stay. ''No, don't drive yourself to despair, Matías. Calm down. What is happening to you is happening to the majority of workers.'' Workers, Domingo argues, must educate the family to save it, by bringing home books, pamphlets, and other materials and by taking the family to the Workers' Center to hear talks and see performances. Domingo closes by explaining to Matías, and, by extension, to all workers and especially their wives or compañeras, ''In the harmonious home, there must exist an affinity for ideas so that through a clear explanation all family members come to understand the humanity of our mission.''[17]

Women were the special targets of anarchist educational and popular theater initiatives for two important reasons. First, anarchists regularly commented on the religious inclinations of Cuban women. From this perspective, women were the ones who attended mass and filled the confessionals. Through this interaction, the Church was able to influence the religious, and thus the political, beliefs of Cuban mothers. Operating under this influence, mothers would indoctrinate the children in jesuitismo, with all its mysticism, emphasis on the soul and an afterlife, and antirational dogma. If this was allowed to continue, then children and the family would not be prepared to lay the groundwork for the coming social revolution.

Second, and completely opposite of this first scenario, was the concept of ''woman'' occupying an almost reverential place in anarchist discourse. Women were portrayed as liberated beings who had broken the chains of slavery. Women were likewise shown as leading the light of progress in a social climate full of deception, struggle, and vice. Most importantly, women were valued for their roles as mothers and nurturers of children. It was as a revolutionary mother that a woman could best lay the foundations for not only her children but also for social progress. However, before fully exploring the anarchist notion of the ''noble woman'' and the ''revolutionary mother,'' we should look a bit more at the anarchist-defined negative roles women were to avoid and the ways in which plays dramatize this.

[17] Nueva Luz, 10 April 1925: 4–6.

Prostitutes and Bad Mothers

Prostitution was widespread in Cuba, particularly in the capital city. For instance, from 1912 to 1931, the number of prostitutes in Havana alone rose from 4,000 to 7,400. Historical accounts and travelogues tell of the sexual free-forall that a person with disposable income could enjoy. One such ''treat'' was enjoying the bodies of girls and young women.[18] Anarchists incorporated this reality into their fiction as a critique of the larger culture. The prostitution of girls and young women appears in a particularly disturbing scene in Penichet's ¡Alma Rebelde! In this story, the Cuban-born Rodolfo makes his way to Havana near the end of Cuba's War for Independence. Along his way, Rodolfo confronts the evils caused by the war and its lingering effects, which have been exacerbated by a hypocritical elite. He meets a judge whose daughter sleeps with a priest; a pharmacist's daughter who sleeps with two different men, one of whom was paid by yet another man to sleep with his own wife; the two sons of ''Don Daniel'' and ''Don Domingo,'' who are caught in ''una posición repugnante''; and Petrona, the madam of a whorehouse where, in the last days of the war, business has slowed. Petrona hears about a military encampment nearby, and in order to raise much needed cash, she entices the soldiers to the bordello, where two girls begin to service them. After the tenth pair of soldiers, the girls are unable to continue ''because the girls were spewing forth blood from all over, especially the mouth.'' Both girls die, but there is little scandal because Petrona herself lives with the chief of police. Petrona simply finds new girls as replacements.[19]

In Adrián del Valle's short story ''En el hospital,'' the heroine Marta's mother and father die before she becomes a teenager, so she travels to Havana to live with her poor aunt who works as a laundress. While living at her aunt's house, Marta's cousin rapes her. When the aunt loses her job due to illness, she and her son arrange to prostitute the girl. After several years as a prostitute, Marta leaves the house and enters a bordello, where she contracts syphilis and eventually must go to the hospital. While del Valle's description of events leaves very little sympathy for the aunt and her son, he argues that they are not entirely to blame, having acted out of economic necessity.[20] Consequently, the story is not only about the fall of a pure spirit (Marta) but also the larger social environment that drove family members to exploit a young female relative in order to survive.

As these two examples illustrate, the girl-turned-prostitute either dies or becomes incapacitated. At times, anarchist writers portrayed how turning girls into money-making enterprises often resulted in them committing suicide. In Penichet's La vida de un pernicioso, Joaquín is a Spanish soldier who switches sides to fight with the Cubans in the War for Independence. After independence, he resumes his trade as a shoemaker and begins anarchist agitation. In a strike aimed at the Havana shoe workshop owned by Rosendo, Joaquín is arrested, and while he is in jail his live-in companion Natalia dies from tuberculosis. The noble free-union relationship between Joaquín and Natalia is held up as an ideal. Penichet contrasts Joaquín and Natalia's relationship with that of Rosendo and his young live-in servant, the orphan Rosa María. Rosendo sexually molests Rosa María before arranging her marriage to Rosendo's friend and confidant Gumersindo.

[18] Louis A. Pérez Jr., On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 193. See also Rosalie Schwartz, Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); and T. Philip Terry, Terry's Guide to Cuba (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

[19] Penichet, ¡Alma Rebelde! 25.

[20] Adrián del Valle, ''En el hospital,'' in Por el camino (Barcelona: F. Granada y Comp., 1907).

Appalled at the prospect, Rosa María clips from the newspaper an article titled ''Aburrido de vivir,'' which describes how a girl soaked her clothes in alcohol and then lit them, killing herself. Rosa María believes that suicide is the only way out of the sexual abuse she has already experienced and a future life of misery: ''That was her only means of freeing herself. How sad that she found herself in such a situation! To be born, to live, and then in the prime of her life, to have to end her life before Nature had fulfilled its mission.'' One day, Rosendo returns to his home only to find the girl's charred remains.[21]

Penichet's short story ''La venta de una virgen'' is even more sinister in discussing a mother's exploitation of her first child Lucía. The mother, Jacinta, wants a child but does not care who the father is. What is important is that she give birth to a child so that her breast milk can come in. Then she can sell herself as a wet nurse to a rich couple to nurse their child. She, in fact, succeeds at both of these endeavors after giving birth to Lucía, and then has two sons so that she can continue to make money as a wet nurse. However, after several years of this, Jacinta recognizes that her body is wearing out and she desperately thinks up new schemes to earn a living. As Lucía is approaching puberty, her mother begins to recognize that the young girl's striking blue eyes and blond hair can be used for economic advantage. Jacinta begins to take Lucía to work with her, in the hope that some rich man will lay his eyes upon her and pay handsomely for ''the enjoyment of her angelic, tender body.''[22] Ultimately, Jacinta conspires with Godínez, a wealthy man who apparently has a history of taking the virginity of many young girls. He brings presents to Lucía, who rejects his advances. Frustrated, Jacinta and Godínez entrap Lucía one day, and this culminates with Godínez raping the girl. Fraught with despair, Lucía flees from her mother and leaps to her death into the crashing sea waves along Havana's Malecón sea wall. Jacinta, thoroughly distraught, begins to cry upon hearing the news of her daughter's death. Yet, the tears are not because she has lost her daughter, but because she has lost her ''business.''[23]

Anarchists did not damn prostitutes for their activities. Rather, anarchist blame fell more squarely on the pimps and hustlers who coerced young women or girls to sell or trade their sexual services. Women and girls who fell victim to prostitution and other exploitative sexual situations were more frequently portrayed as innocents caught in a larger world of deceit, vice, and corruption. In this sense, ''prostitutes'' (women exploited for someone else's economic advantage), like the girls at Petrona's, or even Lucía, were held up as noble figures who had been victimized by other women, such as the madame Petrona or the ''bad mother'' Jacinta. Ultimately, fictionalized prostitutes symbolized the suffering of the popular classes under the weight of postindependence bourgeois Cuban society. Their female exploiters (particularly when they were mother figures) represented what women had to avoid but also illustrated how a corrupt, postindependence Cuba could drive women away from their noble mission to be strong, progressive mothers and noble women.

Noble Women, Family, and Revolutionary Mothers

The image of the ''noble woman'' and ''revolutionary mother'' are familiar symbols in the history of twentieth-century Latin American revolutionary struggles. One recalls the famous im-

[21] Penichet, La vida de un pernicioso, 139.

[22] Penichet, ''La venta de una virgen,'' in ibid., 193–210 (quote is on p. 198).

[23] Penichet, ''La venta de una virgen,'' in ibid., 193–210 (quote is on p. 210).

ages of female soldiers with bandoleers slung over their shoulders during the Mexican Revolution. Revolutionary movements in Cuba in the 1950s and in El Salvador in the 1980s also promoted the image of an armed female militia or revolutionary brigade. Likewise, millions of people around the world have seen the famous image of a young Nicaraguan mother with a rifle hanging from her shoulder while an infant suckles at her breast. The antecedents of such twentieth-century images can be found in early-twentiethcentury anarchist images of women. To anarchists, the ideal woman was an enlightened mother who educated her children in the revolutionary ideals of equality, justice, and mutual aid. She also attended and participated in anarchist social gatherings or taught in anarchist schools. She was strong, in tune with the highest ideals of Nature—equality, freedom, and cooperation—and she considered herself an equal partner with her male companion. She struggled against capitalist exploitation and rejected religion as antirational.

On the surface, this ideal of woman as ''noble'' and as ''mother'' in many ways appears to resemble the ideal of the dutiful homebound wife that was essential for the development of a Latin American middle class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Throughout Latin America, such a middle-class ideal sought to reinforce the notion that women should be restricted to the private realm of the home. There, she would educate her children and purify her husband, who daily ventured into the filth and vice of the public sphere.[24] In Cuba, middle-class women both challenged and expanded this construction of motherhood after independence. As Lynn Stoner has illustrated, feminist organizations formed between 1902 and 1940 were primarily composed of middle-class members. These organizations influenced legislation, challenged the U.S. military occupations, and rejected the individualist tendencies of U.S. feminism. In their quest to expand democracy in Cuba, the island's feminists sought to retain their femininity and their roles as mothers. They believed that as Cuban ''matriarchs'' they could bring forth a fuller notion of democracy in Cuba. These feminists, though, were not revolutionaries. They did not seek to end patriarchy or even to achieve complete social equality. Rather, Cuban feminists sought to use their femininity to gain recognition of the importance of motherhood as a divine right. Motherhood would then play a role in creating a ''feminine space'' within the government where women could use their traditional roles as ''mothers and guardians of morality'' to oversee welfare programs for children, women, and families.[25]

The anarchist ideal of motherhood challenged these middle-class notions. The anarchists' ''revolutionary mother'' came from the working class and had nothing but contempt for bourgeois society and values. In addition, anarchists completely rejected the idea of working within the government. Rather, anarchists held up the working-class mother as a symbol to which all women should aspire. As such, the ''revolutionary mother'' was not just a revolutionary alternative to bourgeois values but a condemnation of those values and their effects on Cuban women. In addition, the ''revolutionary mother'' was the guiding force of the family unit. Cuban anarchists, while denouncing the legal and religious institutions of marriage, held the family in high regard.

[24] To understand how this functioned in various parts of the Americas, see, in particular, William French, ''Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work, and the Family in Porfirian Mexico,'' Hispanic American Historical Review 72, no. 4 (November 1992): 529–53; and David McCreery, '''This Life of Misery and Shame': Female Prostitution in Guatemala City, 1880–1920,'' Journal of Latin American Studies 18, no. 2 (November 1986): 333–53. As McCreery states, ''Attempts to regulate prostitution must be understood as a part of a liberal drive to mobilize and control society as a whole in the interest of a class-defined vision of national development'' (334).

[25] See K. Lynn Stoner, From the House to the Streets: The Cuban Women's Movement for Legal Reform, 1898–1940 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).

In fact, anarchists came to argue that the family was the basis for an anarchist form of communism, in which the ''revolutionary mother'' was both the leading caretaker and the leading symbol.

For anarchists, ''marriage'' and ''family'' were not synonymous. While anarchists belittled marriage as an entrapping institution sanctioned by the state and the Church, they emphasized the importance of the family for the development of a communistic society of free, equal, cooperative individuals. One such anarchist was Antonio Penichet. In his widely disseminated pamphlet ''Tácticas en uso y tácticas a seguir'' (1922), Penichet used five of his forty-five pages to outline this idea. ''First, it is necessary to triumph in the home and then triumph in society,'' he advocated.[26] However, the home and family were more than just the first battle zone in the larger social struggle. The home and the family were actually the bases for communism. Penichet saw the basic familial relationship as nothing short of a small-scale form of communism: An individual, who appears to have no obligations toward anyone else, meets someone with whom he wants to enter a conjugal life. And we see that this individual, who did not know this person earlier, comes to share with her all his sadness, all his joy, and the product of his labor. Then from here is born a familiarity with other family members, parents, brothers, uncles, nieces, etc. and a bond forms between all of them —something that indicates the march toward communism… The home, then, is the most pronounced origin of communism and its best field for experimentation.[27] Penichet's idea of communism was anarchist in nature. For Penichet, the roots of communism do not derive from a revolutionary state that imposes communism downward upon the masses. Rather, communism arises out of peoples' everyday lives. The family, then, served as the most basic grouping of people and the site for the development of human sentiment and cooperative actions. The development of this ''natural'' process of cooperative relationships was the seed from which larger forms of communist cooperation would emerge. Ultimately, the family was crucial in this development—a development that required a strong, noble, revolutionary mother to guide it and serve as an example of the virtues of a cooperative, just, and humane Nature.

Noble Women, Revolutionary Mothers, and Cuban Anarchist Fiction

The notion that women could embody the noble sentiments of humanity in a hypocritical social environment occurs throughout anarchist literature.[28] In the novella La eterna lucha Adrián del Valle describes a bar scene where two men, who are getting drunk, persuade a beautiful, artistic woman to sit with them. One man, a poet, continues drinking and eventually falls asleep at the table. His companion, however, listens intently to the woman, who speaks about struggling for ''the ideal.'' Struggling, she argues, is never in vain when it is for an ideal, but struggling for survival is a truly horrible thing. Still, she notes, struggle is part of Nature's law; the problem is that humans have misinterpreted it to mean struggling against each other. The Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin was del Valle's most important intellectual influence, and in this novella del Valle

[26] Antonio Penichet, Tácticas en uso y tácticas a seguir (Havana: El Ideal, 1922), 38.

[27] Ibid., 40–41.

[28] ¡Tierra! 5 June 1925, 4. In fact, the Barcelona-based La Novela Ideal series, which published many of del Valle's short stories in affordable booklet forms, explicitly aimed ''to make the hearts of women and children pulsate.'' Del Valle's Mi amigo Julio was the series' first installment.

is clearly drawing upon Kropotkin's book Mutual Aid, when he has his revolutionary female character describe her ideal: ''My ideal, the ideal of all generous hearts is this: To replace the brutal struggle of man against man with mutual aid, with mutual love and to see that the eternal struggle to which Nature condemns us has as its final goal the conquest of a free, beautiful, happy life.'' With that, the young man joins her and both leave the bar; the drunk poet rises to protest, only to fall forward on the table in front of him.[29]

In La flor marchita, del Valle continued this theme in a conversation between an unnamed man and woman. As the couple walks, she picks up a fallen rose and begins plucking it apart petal by petal. The man asks his female companion, ''What is woman, but the 'flor humana' whom bad and weak men pick for their own adornment and to enjoy the fragrance.'' When a man is done with a woman, our narrator continues, the woman (like the flower) is thrown out. Still, the man notes that women have a special characteristic. Unlike the flower, women can rebel against the brutal hand that picks them and thus against human brutality. It is not that the flower and the woman were born to suffer. To the contrary: ''Woman, like the flower, was born to enjoy life.''[30] While women may have been born to enjoy life, as were all people, the social environment in which they lived often prevented this. Such simple enjoyment of life was difficult to come by in postindependence Cuba, anarchists argued. As noted earlier, women suffered from joblessness or from working long hours as despalilladoras in tobacco factories or as laundresses and seamstresses in homes and shops. They had few educational opportunities, and they lived in an environment that anarchists described as deceptive and antirational. Consequently, when some women found the strength to perform noble acts in such a degenerate setting, anarchists saw them as embodying the noble revolutionary sentiment that would guide humanity into the future.

One such woman appears in del Valle's novella En el mar: Narración de un viaje trágico. Though not set in Cuba, the story is poignant. A ship at sea is engulfed in flames and all but the captain go to the life boats. One passenger, Lord Vilton, who clearly represents the aristocracy and upper classes with his diamond-encrusted tooth and pompous affectations, tries to bribe his way onto a lifeboat ahead of the women and children. Once safely away from the burning ship, one young mother becomes hysterical and jumps overboard with her infant child, but another female passenger, described only as La Rusa, saves the baby. At sea, hunger sets in among the survivors, a fact made unbearable by the continuous cries of the starving infant. In a moment of true noble revolutionary motherhood, La Rusa bares her virgin breasts and offers her milkless nipples to the child. In contrast, Lord Vilton is so hungry that he pays a sailor five thousand pounds sterling so that Vilton can make a gash in the sailor's arm and suck the sailor's blood. After three days at sea, the baby dies from hunger and dehydration. Lord Vilton tries to wrestle the infant from La Rusa's hands in order to eat it. In the ensuing struggle, La Rusa throws Vilton's suitcase full of money into the sea, shouting, ''Get it… Buy some shark's blood with it!'' Then someone hits Vilton over the head and dumps him into the sea. Upon being rescued some time later, La Rusa is still holding the little corpse.[31] La Rusa's actions reflect the anarchist notion of the noble woman struggling against the rich. In addition, her unselfishness regarding the starving infant exemplifies a quality associated with revolutionary motherhood that Cuban anarchists

[29] Adrián del Valle, ''La eterna lucha,'' in Cuentos inverosímiles (Havana: Nuevo Ideal, 1903), 110. Del Valle was a great admirer of Kropotkin's works, even publishing a brief biography of the anarchist intellectual.

[30] Adrián del Valle, ''La flor marchita,'' in Cuentos inverosímiles, 193.

[31] Adrián del Valle, ''En el mar: Narración de un viaje trágico,'' in Cuentos inverosímiles, 163.

praised as an ideal capable of saving society. Society had to stop seeing women as merely furniture, money makers, or playthings. Their gifts of motherhood and a nurturing instinct, bestowed on them by Nature, had to be rescued from the downward spiral of society and the dogma of the Church. Women were not merely fallen flowers tossed aside when their sexual charms wore out. Neither were women the embodiment of original sin and the fallen Eve. Women, when their ''true'' sentiments and proclivities were recognized and employed, were the guiding forces for steering society in accord with the dictates of an anarchist-defined Nature. Women, in fact, had the capacity to be the true revolutionaries in a despoiled age, as well as the standard bearers of what Nature held for humanity. Only by reasserting their true, noble gifts could women then teach their children truth and justice, as anarchists defined these ideals.[32]

While many women practiced what they believed to be their anarchist calling as women, anarchist popular culture sought to convince those who did not practice these beliefs (or whose commitment was shaky) to abandon bourgeois ambitions and actions. Anarchists urged women to look toward more noble sentiments and actions as revolutionaries and mothers. In ¡Alma Rebelde!, Penichet describes Rosa, the mother of the main character Rodolfo's best friend Miguel. Rosa is a widow, a strong woman raising her sons and continuously thwarting the advances of middle-class men. Midway through the novel, Miguel gets his girlfriend pregnant. While the young woman wants to terminate the pregnancy, Miguel says no and Rodolfo agrees. Rosa, too, rejects the idea of an abortion, telling her son that once she too had considered it, but she is now thankful that she had the child, for that child was Miguel. Abortion raises an important issue concerning the anarchist ideal of women's natural role as mother. While anarchists supported birth control, terminating a life was unacceptable, as Penichet clearly expressed through his character Rodolfo. No one had the right, notes Rodolfo, to commit those mysterious murders that frequently occur with impunity. The child ought to be preserved, for nobody knows what its designated mission is on Earth. It seemed to be an abomination to destroy the child brought forth from a woman's vital organs, and the common excuses many used to avoid social gossip were neither reasonable nor humane.

Ultimately, anarchists believed that bourgeois Cuban society used abortion and casas de beneficencias (orphanages) for the same reason: to remove the evidence of ''passionate moments.'' The unborn child became the victim of an immoral society made up of ''traficantes de conciencias'' (traders in consciousness) and ''asesinos autorizados'' (authorized murderers).[33] When we understand that in anarchist thought children have the same rights as adults, even abortion of the unborn child amounts to murder. Abortion also challenged the natural role of mother and nurturer, which anarchists found so fundamental to a woman's true nature. Abortion, then, was more than murder. It destroyed a little bit of Nature and undermined anarchist progress toward reestablishing the natural order of mutual aid.

Perhaps the strongest female character in Cuban anarchist literature, and thus the character that most embodies the noble woman and revolutionary mother, is del Valle's Soledad in his novel La mulata Soledad. Soledad is a working-class mulatta in Havana who comes from an inter-

[32] In Cuban reality, one found this in the work of women like Blanca de Moncaleano, who taught in anarchist schools with her husband while raising her children with anarchist sentiments. Likewise, Emilia Rodríguez, a female anarchist agitator in Matanzas, was a leading anarchist figure; she organized the 1912 Cruces Congress and in 1913 directed a school in Yabucito while raising her four children—all after her partner's deportation (¡Tierra! 12 June 1907, 2; 10 August 1907, 2, 4; 8 June 1912, 3; 14 January 1913, 2).

[33] Penichet, ¡Alma Rebelde! 91–92.

racial anarchist household. The story begins with Carlos, a young medical student, encountering Soledad on the long tram ride from the Vedado section of Havana to the city's old town shops and factories. Carlos is first initiated into anarchist ideas through his mentor Dr. Anaya, who not only devotes time to working with the poor but also urges Carlos to consider the ideas of anarchism, especially those of Kropotkin. Then, because of Soledad's attempt to live according to the anarchist ideal, Carlos embraces anarchism for the first time. When Soledad begins to date the white Carlos, her family expresses a number of different race and class concerns. Her brother sees whites as the enemy, while her sister questions the intentions of a white man toward a darker woman. Soledad's working-class father Jaime also questions his daughter's actions, not because Carlos is white but because he is a doctor-to-be from the bourgeois class. Still, Jaime leaves the decision to his independent, rationally minded daughter. Carlos and Soledad join in free union and establish a home together. However, Carlos represents the ambivalence of someone from the middle class. He struggles between meeting societal expectations and doing what he knows is right. He leaves Soledad so that he can marry a white woman of his own social rank on the very night after Soledad tells him that she is pregnant. Soledad eventually gives birth to a son.

From this point in the story, we see two anarchist views of Cuban women. Carlos's white wife Estela merely wants the legal recognition of a marriage to enjoy social privilege and middle-class materialism, but she does not want children. In essence, Estela rejects her natural calling of motherhood for the hypocritical, unnatural world of bourgeois social graces. Meanwhile, Soledad continues sewing in the home, a common practice for working-class women, while never abandoning her principles. She continues to raise her child in difficult circumstances but with the solid support of her anarchist parents. When Carlos discovers that his wife has cuckolded him, he returns to Soledad. Meanwhile, his family had disinherited him and he suffers the social repudiation of living outside of marriage with a nonwhite woman. With his savings drying up, Dr. Anaya reappears and offers his clinic to Carlos for treating the poor. After an official divorce from Estela, Carlos and Soledad move in together and jointly raise their son.

Ultimately, La mulata Soledad exemplifies how anarchist popular culture could focus on the debilitating social environment that shaped people's behavior, while also illustrating how average people could cooperate and live up to the ideals of anarchism in preparation for the social revolution. As noted previously, anarchists used women as metaphors for both good and ill, and La mulata Soledad reflects this. Through the character of Estela, the novel portrays the type of woman and habits to be avoided. Just as important, the novel offers an example of a woman—a revolutionary mother—living a life full of love for humanity and children while striving for justice in her own and others' lives.

Race, Women, and Free Unions

As noted, La mulata Soledad's heroine was of mixed race. Del Valle characterizes one of her strengths as her ability to reject ''using'' white men for social advancement. Early in the novel, Soledad is seen doing piecework in a shop where her fellow black and mulatta workers discuss how they hope to seize the first white man who will take them away from their working-poor lives. Soledad rejects this sentiment, noting how mulatas have always sold themselves to whites in hopes of social advancement. One of Soledad's colleagues responds by arguing that linking up with whites is preferable. From her viewpoint, she might then have a lighter-skinned child,

which, she believes, would advance the black race. Soledad has been taught by her white father and black mother to reject such discussions of race and racial characteristics. Race merely divides people, whereas anarchism seeks to unite them. Soledad answers her coworker by saying that when she speaks of love she means the love that is in all humans and that the love must be mutual.[34]

In del Valle's novella ''Jubilosa,'' a very light-skinned mulatta female character becomes another venue to address anarchist notions of race and class. ''Jubilosa'' in many ways resembles La mulata Soledad. A young law student, Gonzalo, dreams of giving up his studies in order to take a job and move in with his girlfriend Jubilosa. Jubilosa responds that Gonzalo's parents would never let him marry the seamstress daughter of a mulatta. In time, Jubilosa confesses to Gonzalo that she is pregnant, but when Gonzalo offers marriage, claiming that Jubilosa could ''pass'' as white, the following exchange takes place:

> «Jubilosa: Mulattas who love whites know how rare it is to find themselves standing before a judge or in a church.
>
> Gonzalo: But you're not a mulatta.
>
> Jubilosa: Neither am I white, even though you say that I appear to be. And I am not going to renounce the African blood that runs through my veins. »

Jubilosa makes Gonzalo promise not to marry another woman so that they may at least live together. Breaking his promise to Jubilosa, Gonzalo runs off to marry his wealthy white cousin, but continues to send money for his and Jubilosa's child. She refuses the money. Meanwhile, a black anarchist named Perucho is living in Jubilosa's home, having rented a room there for ten years. Perucho becomes the child's ''grandfather,'' helping out financially as well. Then one evening, as Perucho walks to his room, he passes by Jubilosa's door. He hears a soft voice call his name from inside the room. He walks through the open door, feels two arms wrap around him and lips press against his mouth. The forty-three-yearold anarchist ''grandfather'' becomes the lover of twenty-one-year-old Jubilosa and the new ''father'' of the child.[35] The themes in ''Jubilosa'' echo those of La mulata Soledad. A mulatta meets and has a baby with a white male who is studying to enter a bourgeois profession. In La mulata Soledad, the woman is betrayed but her lover eventually returns to her, inspired by the anarchist influences of both his mentor and his mulatta lover. In ''Jubilosa,'' the woman is betrayed by her white lover, but finds love and redemption in a black male anarchist.

This confluence of race and gender is important for understanding the dynamics of postindependence Cuba. By the time of independence, slavery had formally been abolished on the island for only a generation. People of African descent, as well as increasing numbers of black and mulatto Caribbean laborers, made up a significant portion of the Cuban population. Any social movement hoping to make inroads into the collective consciousness and imagination of such a racially diverse population would have to appeal to the Afro-Cuban and mixed-race peoples on the island. Adrián del Valle, with the publication of La mulata Soledad, clearly recognized this. Yet Soledad represented more than just the black and mixed-race populations playing a role in a future anarchist Cuba. Soledad represented the blending of African and European influences

[34] Adrián del Valle, La mulata Soledad (Barcelona: Impresos Costa, 1929), 50.

[35] Adrián del Valle, ''Jubilosa,'' La Novela Ideal series, no. 10 (Barcelona: La Revista Blanca, n.d.), 6–7.

that by the 1920s increasingly characterized what it meant to be Cuban. This notion of cubanidad, though, is not only associated with a nationalist identity. Instead, del Valle merged Soledad's anarchist principles and revolutionary motherhood with her mixed-race and Cuban female worker status.[36] Soledad, the mulatta heroine, came to represent a female working-class Cuban who was part of a larger international anarchist movement.

In addition, del Valle's focus on women of color allowed him to address directly the importance of free, consensual unions outside of marriage. It is significant that both Soledad and Jubilosa are of mixed race, have anarchist links, and live in free unions. Anarchists rejected the institutionalized slavery, as they saw it, of legal marriages sanctioned by the state and Church. Thus, men and women should be free to live together outside of these institutional encroachments on individual freedom. Since independence, the proportion of all Cubans living in what the government classified as ''illegitimate unions'' had declined. For instance, from 1907 to 1919 the percentage of people living together outside of marriage had fallen from 8.6 percent to 6.1 percent of the island's population, whereas in 1919, 23.1 percent of the population was legally married.[37] However, while the overall percentage of popular free unions (the anarchist term for unions outside legal sanction) may have fallen, the practice was still widespread among the nonwhite population. In 1919, 6.1 percent of the population lived in uniones ilegítimas (the government term). If one breaks this statistic down by racial categories, as the 1919 census did, one sees that a far larger number of nonwhites than whites lived together outside of legal marriage. Among whites, only 3.5 percent, or 73,000 persons, were in consensual unions. In contrast, 13 percent of the nonwhite population (104,310 persons) were in such unions. The 1919 census also reveals the following ratios, which show a more dramatic contrast: whereas there were only 13 consensual unions per every 100 legal marriages among whites, the ratio was 95 per 100 among nonwhites.[38]

Obviously, nonwhite adults more frequently cohabited without legal sanction, or in anarchist terms, they more frequently engaged in free union than their white counterparts. The ratios suggest that there were nearly as many nonwhite illegitimate unions as there were legal unions in 1919. When broken down by province, the census shows that in Pinar del Río and Matanzas more nonwhite couples lived together outside of legal sanction than within legal marriage (112 and 172 illegitimate unions per 100 legal unions, respectively). In Oriente there were 95 illegitimate unions for every 100 legal ones. Consequently, when in the 1920s del Valle wrote these stories of nonwhite women in free unions, he was acknowledging an obvious fact in Cuba's nonwhite population and based his stories in Cuban reality: nonwhite couples lived in anarchist-defined free unions almost as commonly as they lived in formally recognized legal marriages. By blending racial and gender realities explicitly into his stories, del Valle put a Cuban face on the international anarchist movement. Bringing together gender, race, and free-union status was a way to appeal for increased black, mulatto, and female participation in the anarchist movement, because doing so reflected the diversity of Cuban reality. In anarchist fiction, women of color

[36] For more on the anarchist notion of revolutionary motherhood and Soledad's role in it, see Kirwin Shaffer, ''Prostitutes, Bad Seeds, and Revolutionary Mothers: Imagining Women in the Anarchist Fiction of Adrián del Valle and Antonio Penichet, 1898–1930,'' Studies in Latin American Popular Culture 18 (1999): 1–17.

[37] Censo de la República de Cuba, Año de 1919, 348–49.

[38] Ibid., 353. Censuses taken in Cuba combined all nonwhite populations into the category ''de color.'' These included blacks, people of mixed race, and Asians. The ratios concerning legal and nonlegal cohabitation do not delineate unions between people of different races, e.g., a white and black or a black and mulatta—the two examples from del Valle's fiction.

and the relationships they had with men of different colors provided a means by which to celebrate anarchists' preferred relationships, and as a means of propaganda, to attract followers of all races.

Conclusion

Depending on the message they tried to put forth, Cuba's anarchist movement portrayed women either as victims, misguided reactionaries, or noble revolutionaries. Drawing upon Cuban social reality, anarchists showcased how female workers suffered in the capitalist workplace, in exploitative commercial settings, and in the home. Such victimhood existed in all races and in all classes, reflecting how a focus on gender issues mirrored larger exploitation issues revolving around class and race. At the same time, anarchists depicted some women as deceivers and reactionaries. These women's actions, whether as church-going mothers, deceptive parents, or enterprising brothel owners, impeded the march to transform society. Still, at other times, anarchists put forth the ideal of women as revolutionaries. These women joined with men as equals, raised their children in a spirit of rational cooperation at home and ventured into the public realm to teach and speak.

Undoubtedly, these images of women's true destinies as noble partners, and especially as revolutionary mothers, reflected a certain patriarchal bias imbedded in Cuban anarchism. Mostly male authors dominated the Cuban and international movements, and their writings of idealized women sound almost reactionary to the modern ear. In addition, it is difficult to estimate how many women actively joined the movement. Certainly, there were women who rejected the promotion of motherhood as an ultimate destiny, which they had no desire or ability to fulfill. Even more women embraced motherhood and believed in its sacred mission, and they preferred to live it out within the sanctions of formal marriage and traditional sex roles. Other Cuban women, like socialists and feminists, wanted state support for motherhood and saw women's mothering natures as beneficial reasons for why women should be in the government. In addition, anarchists appealed to some of the most marginalized sectors of Cuban society: poor women of all races. Almost by definition, these were some of the least politicized people on the island and quite naturally this would result in limited numbers of female adherents.

In addition, many obstacles blocked the path of women living and working an anarchist ideal. Poor-quality jobs and unsafe working conditions, inappropriate health care, problems surrounding high infant and child mortality, the world of prostitution, and the lack of a working-class consciousness all impeded women's development. Also, anarchists competed with feminists, socialists, and trade unionists, all of whom had their own programs designed to benefit poor women and liberate them from overbearing men. Undoubtedly, women moved in and out of these different groups, and there was little that would prevent a woman from participating in any combination of groups at the same time.

Still, we know from press reports, photographs, and intelligence reports that many women regularly attended meetings and actively took part in plays, readings, and singing at anarchist social gatherings. Periodically, a few would write for the anarchist press. In Cuba during the first three decades following independence, many women actually came to live the anarchist ideal —women like Teresa Faro, Emilia Rodríguez, María Luisa Bustamante, and Blanca Moncaleano. These revolutionary women spoke at rallies, taught in anarchist schools, and raised a brood of free-thinking

children. Ultimately, though, ''woman'' was a radical icon of Cuban anarchism. While anarchists hoped to use their popular culture to attract female followers, the image of woman was primarily used as a muse for anarchist ideals. Readers of anarchist newspapers, novels, and short stories, or viewers of anarchist plays could gain an internationalist, nonracist, working-class consciousness from seeing the way women were treated and victimized in Cuban society and at the workplace. Yet women also inspired anarchists to put forth an ideal for women and the family that could serve as a model for Cuba's popular classes. Those same readers and viewers, who recognized how Cuban reality victimized women, could also observe ideal types of female behavior that could be encouraged in spouses, daughters, and friends. Likewise, men were exposed to strong, noble women whom they would have to respect as intellectual and emotional equals. That was the anarchist agenda for Cuba—equality and freedom in all manifestations, whether racial, gender, or class. When anarchists discussed women in their newspapers, at talks, or in their popular culture, they made a conscious and conscientious choice to use images of women not only to reflect reality but also to inspire social change.

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The Radical Muse
Women and Anarchism in Early-Twentieth-Century Cuba
January 2003

Retrieved on July 6, 2010 from web.archive.org *Cuban Studies* 34(1):130–153 DOI: 10.1353/cub.2004.0026

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