Women, Gender and Social Behavior:
Entre tradición y modernidad

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> "y después de todo: si las mujeres por su imbecilidad, escases de talentos, y poca reflecion, no son personas capaces de actibar contra nuestra justa causa, ellas bienen a ser como las ojas de los arboles que un ligero biento, las arrebata y por lo mismo, son acreedores a la piedad, y consideración, no siendo precisa tanta demonstracion para contener y reprimer su orgullo, naturalmente superificial, bastando con otras probidencias que la prudencia dicta para contenerlas y entrarlas en el camino del patriotismo."[1]

In the supposed transition from tradition to modernity in any society, it is clear that change in never even. Certain regions, social groups, or sectors of the economy usually experience change at a different pace from others. This clearly is a most complex topic, related to definitions of both "tradition" and "modernity", theories of development, as well as consideration of economic, social and political change. For the purposes of this paper my analysis will forego definitional questions and instead concentrate on the question of transition, that it the change from one set of social assumptions and expectations to another. I am especially interested in examining that change in the formative period between the colonial and the contemporary periods, that is the nineteenth century.

Clearly women constitute one group in any society that experiences change at a very different rate and in a very different manner. Gender assumptions have often served to modify, distort or delay change with the end result that women's experience of both major and minor social upheavals has often varied greatly from that of men. This paper is an attempt to examine the experience of women during the course of the nineteenth century to see how independence, liberalism and the emergence of the State shaped their experience. Specifically I will look at revolutionary upheaval, increased entry of foreigners, educational opportunities, and the world of charity to understand the contours of the female progress from tradition to modernity.

Research over the past twenty years has greatly increased out knowledge of women's roles and behaviors in late colonial Latin America. It is clear that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, social class intersected with gender to determine the boundaries between what was acceptable and what was not. Thus while, female-headed households, unwed motherhood and concubinage were common among the plebe, elite women and other who aspired to be among the gente decente were enjoined to defend their virginity, combine motherhood with matrimony, and be faithful to their husbands. There were of course the exceptions to this rule, but even in these cases when elite women defied the cultural norms, they did not enjoy social or sexual equality with men.[2] Women only maintained their honor if they engaged in sexual intercourse after having received a formal promise of marriage; those that had not were forced to have private pregnancies to protect their honor and that of their families. In a very real way colonial Latin American elite women suffered from a double standard. Sexual and other behavior was tightly controlled among elite women while all men and plebeian women were allowed comparative freedom.

There is no doubt that the eighteenth century was a century of widespread reform throughout Latin America. Although much has been said about the economic and political dimensions of the Bourbon Reforms, the Reforms also an included an important social dimension. On the one hand the late eighteenth century was a period of increased discussion of the need to education women, primarily because of the growing recognition of the influence of mothers on the moral education of their sons. On the other hand as part of the struggle of the Bourbon state to reclaim power from the Catholic Church, the State became an ever-more active player in the social and moral arena.

Paradoxically the end result of the victory of State over Church was a tightening of moral values accompanied by attempts to increase the Crown's control over colonial social patterns. In 1778 the Real Pragmática on marriage was extended to the American colonies, thus introducing the State directly into questions of matrimony and accepting social, racial and moral inequality as valid reasons to prevent a marriage between a man and woman.[3] Stricter social and legal segregation based on social position, race, and morality was accompanied by Spanish authorities' increasingly negative view of illegitimacy.[4] Still another dimension of the Bourbon campaign to reform colonial society was an attempt to replace the "disorderly" behavior and dissipated customs of the masses with "decency, decorum, order."[5] Spurred on by the Bourbon State, the Church also attempted to cleanse the messy moral behavior of the colonials, encouraging bishops to "normalize" irregular sexual liaisons of parishioners.[6]

In many ways the policies of the Bourbon monarchs from Charles III on reflected a new Puritanism that would last to the final days of the Spanish American colonial empire. Thus, the first decade of the nineteenth century was much like the last decades of the eighteenth century. A dual standard of sexual behavior for women, especially elite women, continued. The tight control which the Church and their menfolk exercised over these women gave them little opportunity to explore their sexuality. But there were limited exceptions as reflected in the legal cases concerning the right to marry (disensos) where we can see women and men defending their right to marry for love.

One can find an early precursor of change in women's status in the ensuing wars of independence. Indeed wartime footing seemed to produce some degree of gender leveling. Whether it was the chaos of civil war, or the resultant breakdown of paternalism, the rules of "correct" social and moral behavior were temporarily suspended.[7] In virtually every country of Latin America, voluntarily or involuntarily, women participated in the Independence movement either as combatants, spies, nurses and supporters. A small group of elite women hosted salons where independence was openly discussed, while other volunteered in hospitals or provided money and supplies to insurgents. Women of lower social standing acted as spies, shouldered arms or were camp followers.[8] Although it is difficult to determine to what degree these women were constructs of late nineteenth-century feminists, heroines such as Policarpa Salavarrieta, executed in Gran Colombia in 1817 for her role in the revolutionary cause, were eventually celebrated in song and story.[9]

Simon Bolívar and his mistress, Manuela Sáenz, exemplified the temporarily relaxed codes of sexual behavior that also accompanied the war. Manuelita, the illegitimate daughter Spanish or mestiza mother and an already married Spanish father, had gained respectability through her marriage to a British doctor. She abandoned her husband to enter in a public adulterous relationship with Simon Bolívar. Instead of being excoriated for defying social conventions and Catholic morality, Sáenz was glorified for her dedication to the revolutionary cause.[10]

But willingness to ignore women who openly flaunted social and moral conventions did not extend to those identified with the opposition camp. Anna Perichon de Vandeuil, wife of an Irish merchant and lover of Viceroy Liniers, was treated harshly by the Revolutionary government of Buenos Aires when she requested permission to return to the city after years of exile in Brazil. She was allowed to disembark only after she promised to go into voluntary internal exile.

One historian has suggested that soon after independence was won, revolutionary leaders, unable to accept that women might be capable of creating a political role for themselves, chose to portray all women who supported the Revolution as beautiful, virtuous, vulnerable, and passive figures.[11] Women who had suffered and sacrificed for the republic were especially lauded, for they had exhibited what were believed to be the most admirable innate female traits. Another stereotypic view of women, that of political innocents, appears at the beginning of this paper. The Jujuy Cabildo, referring to women who continued to support the royalist cause, could easily excuse these women by making reference to the time-honored belief that women were, by nature, less intelligent, less reflective, more capricious and more superficial than men.[12]

What is clear is that the participation of women in the independence movements had little influence in the subsequent discussions of citizenship and rights when the constitutions of the new Latin American states were drawn up. Bolívar expressed a view typical of the fathers of independence when he admonished his sister that "a woman ought to be neutral in public business. Her family and her domestic duties are her first obligations."[13] Bolívar also authored a constitution, not unlike others, which included women when referring to those whom laws applied while excluding them when defining those who might exercise the rights of a free citizen. Although a handful of exceptional elite women emerged as public participants in political and literary salons, these women successful because they underlined their virtue, sacrifice and dedication to family while never threatening the male political sphere.

In the years immediately following independence, an initial decrease in the power of the State and, in certain areas such as Mexico, the economic hardship of the Church probably resulted in a de facto rejection of Bourbon moralizing and return to a looser pre-reform morality. But once wars were over and civil society reestablished, this loosening of behavioral strictures were quickly forgotten. The newly independent nations of Latin America, eager to present themselves to the world as "civilized" states, eagerly embraced a moralism similar, if not more limiting, than that of their Bourbon predecessors. Indeed

Republican authorities throughout Latin America were greatly alarmed by all matters relating to human, especially female, sexuality.

Although men had held the absolute authority to control both their wives and their property in colonial times, women of all social classes were sometimes able to appeal to friends, neighbors and legal authorities. By transferring private matters to a more public sphere, they were able to temper the absolute power of the male within the household. It has recently been suggested that independence governments transformed the code of honor that had been so central to Hispanic society, shifting the emphasis away from equating honor with status toward the more egalitarian concept of honor as virtue.[14] One result was that female sexuality, especially the relative sexual independence that plebeian women had always been allowed, was increasingly seen as a threat to public order.[15]

The early years of independence also brought an influx of foreign visitors to some regions of Latin America. Often lionized by political authorities, these foreigners tended to bring with them a type of moral cultural imperialism which criticized the mores of Latin Americans while suggesting that European behavior had to be adopted for these nations to became truly civilized. These new ideas increasingly reflected the Victorian vision of honor, gender, sexuality and female accomplishment. Unique here was not simply a more austere code of sexual behavior for women, but rather the increasing criticism of European visitors of both the sloth and frivolous nature of upper class women and the loose morality of the masses.[16]

Some of the Europeans who presented a new model for Latin American women were not visitors, but rather newly arrived residents. Among them perhaps Empress Leopoldina, wife of Emperor Pedro I, presented the most dramatic and visible example of an accomplished woman. Leopoldina, daughter of Francis I of Austria was raised in Vienna where she was exposed to the natural sciences, mathematics, history and travel literature. She also read widely, learned ten languages, collected coins and medals and studied flora and fauna. In other words the young princess was given a complete Enlightenment education. In Brazil she collaborated closely with her husband and his advisors in Pedro's leadership of the national independence movement. At the time of her early death in 1826 of puerperal fever, Leopoldina was both hailed as a heroine of the independence movement and a victim of her husband's multiple amorous adventures.[17]

Occasionally European visitors expressed more radical ideas about the role of women. One such visitor who was especially attentive to the situation of women was Flora Tristán (1803-1844), the Parisian-born daughter of a French mother and a Peruvian father.[18] Flora visited Peru in 1833-34 and later argued in her book, The Workers' Union (1843) that an end to the oppression of working-class women was central to the emancipation of the working class and the creation of a just society.[19]

One region that proved exceptionally welcoming of foreigners was the Rio de la Plata, principally the cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. These two cities had a long history of resident foreigners dating back to the colonial period.[20] In 1810, the Buenos Aires revolutionary government explicitly welcomed foreigners, extending the same civil rights to foreigners and natives alike.[21] Three years later the revolutionary government made it easy for British, North American, French, Portuguese, and some Spanish aliens to become citizens.[22] Alexander Caldcleugh, visiting the city in 1820, reported that "I was always forcibly struck with the truth of the remark made to me by a Portuguese, before leaving Rio de Janeiro, that I was going among people who preferred strangers to their own countrymen."[23] A more systematic campaign to attract foreigners, especially those with needed technical and agricultural skills was begun in 1824 during the Rivadavia government. Although Buenos Aires became a less welcoming place under the Rosas regime, foreigners never suffered any specifically targeted discrimination. Immediately after the fall of Rosas the new constitution (1853) granted the same rights to native-born as it did to foreign residents. One result was that the region not only underwent rapid economic growth and urbanization, it also had a relatively large degree of cultural diversification. Paradoxically the Río de la Plata was also an area of continued political unrest that worked to enhance the position of a handful of women, such as Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson.

The influence of foreigners was further heightened by the fact that foreign teachers also found their way to the region from the earliest days of independence in part because native-born men had little interest in this profession. The percentage of foreign-born male teachers accelerated with the arrival of large groups of foreign immigrants in the last decades of the century. For example, in 1876, 54 percent of all teachers in Uruguay were foreign-born, primarily Spaniards, while in Argentina the percentage of foreign-born teachers rose to 41.[24]

The Law

For at least the first fifty years after Independence the laws which governed women changed little from colonial statutes. Only in the last three decades of the nineteenth century did national government, usually influenced by liberal principles, create new civil codes. But even here the overall tendency was to maintain much colonial law while making some modifications. The legal position of women did not begin to change until well into the nineteenth century.

In 1859, for example, a new Mexican Law on Civil Matrimony moved marriage from the ecclesiastical to the civil arena, but left intact the church's definitions of proper gender roles and admissible grounds for legal separation.[25] Likewise the first Mexican Civil Code, written in 1870 and revised in 1884, incorporated the colonial laws that excluded women from politics, applied a double standard of protection and punishment to them and subjected wives and minor children to the control of the paterfamilias.[26] The new law did include some liberal provisions that tended to augment individual freedoms, but greater benefits were given to adult male children than to adult female children.[27]

Indeed, married women were probably hurt by the new legislation, for while patria potestad was now extended to widowed, legally separated and single women, the right was not extended to married women. Furthermore any woman exercising patria potestad could loose this right if she remarried or was guilty of scandalous conduct. The law continued to admonish wives to "recognize the authority of their consorts as heads of the family" so as to "maintain the order and tranquility of families, on which the State in large part depends."[28] Liberal laws also altered the grounds for legal separation, expanding individual freedom for men by limiting those cases in which male adultery justified a separation while leaving all female adultery as grounds for a man's abandoning his wife. Lastly the law limited women's access to property in two important ways. It allowed couples to marry under the system of separate or community property, removing the colonial guarantee that a wife was automatically entitled to one-half of all property earned during a marriage. It also abolished the assurance that all legitimate children would receive an equal inheritance, thus significantly reducing women's economic protection.[29]

Nonetheless, the most dissatisfied women, such as those in Peru who sued their husband for failing to uphold marital agreements, were gradually able to take advantage of liberal forms of thinking that were beginning to influence everyday life. Neighbors increasingly intervened to help women and families in need by restraining abusive husbands.[30] Judges came to side with women's economic arguments, handing over management of family assets to them, saving their dowries in order to guarantee a family's sustenance, and recognizing their ability to engage in business.[31] At the same time church institutions created to protect women, such as shelters for wayward women and beaterios, were secularized and placed under State control. Eventually liberal forms of thinking worked to extend some protection to women and children.

The Press

From late colonial period Latin America had seen the increase in the number of newspapers and magazines as well as a growing public for these publications. Along with the general growth of the press, there was a new interest in articles outlining the ideal attributes and conduct of women and proposing modest improvements in the education of elite women. After independence publications dedicated to a female readership gradually emerged and by the 1870s several periodicals specifically addressed women's concerns. Although typically lasting only one to five years, these journals promoted an active debate among educated women about science and domesticity, the need for emancipation, and the authority of women in public life.[32]

Within two or three decades of independence, women writers of all political persuasions began to emerge in several Latin American nations. Although these women wrote on a wide variety of topics, one constant theme in much of their work was the need to improve female education. In Brazil, one of the earliest female writers worked until the pseudonym Nisia Floresta Brasileira Augusta, publishing articles on female education in the 1840s as well as translating and publishing a Portuguese translation of Mary Wollstonecraft's Rights of Women (1833).[33]

By the middle of the nineteenth century women novelists writing under their own names also began to appear in several Latin American countries. Most famous were a trio of Argentine authors, Rosa Guerra (d. 1894), and Eduarda Mansilla de García (1838-92) Juana Goriti (1819-92).[34] Guerra, a normal-school teacher and essayist spoke out against domestic enslavement of women. Mansilla, the niece of Juan Manuel de Rosas, was an upper class, conservative, cosmopolitan woman whose novels justified the Spanish conquest while being in part concerned with friendship between Indian and Spanish women. Goriti, a liberal writer, was by far the most important figure. Born in Argentina, her family took refuge in Bolivia when she was twelve. She married a military officer who later became president of Bolivia. Gorriti eventually deserted her husband because of his infidelities, moving to Lima where she supported herself and her children by teaching and writing. She also hosted an important literary salon first in Lima and later in Buenos Aires. Her published work, consisting of stories, biographic articles and other pieces as well as a cookbook, was intimately tied to issues of women's rights ranging from education to legal emancipation.

Education

The late colonial period was marked by an increasingly acceptance of Enlightenment belief that girls needed an education to become good mothers. Some primary education had been available to a limited number of middle and upper class women living in urban centers in the colonial period in either convent schools or private "primeras letras" schools run by impoverished "honest" women.

From the earliest days of the independence movement revolutionary leaders were interested in education as a means of socialization. All schools founded during the revolution and the years following spoke of their dedication to "moral and civic education," but the vast majority of educational establishments concentrated on the socialization of elite and middle class men.[35]

Nonetheless schooling for a few elite and middle-class girls continued after independence. Indeed the handful of colonial convent schools and the few private schools increased in number and were joined by some institutions run by local authorities. In a few cases publicly financed schools for girls were actually administered by a private association of elite women. Such was the case of Buenos Aires where the Sociedad de Beneficencia ran girls' schools from 1823 to 1875, when they were turned over to provincial authorities.[36] Private schools run by foreigners, both men and women, also began to appear. Throughout the century, upper class girls also continued to be educated in their homes either by private tutors or by their mothers.[37] Nonetheless data suggests that there was a gradual decline in female illiteracy through the first half of the nineteenth century.[38]

Gradually, as mid-nineteenth century liberal political ideas gained strength, a Latin American variant of "Republican motherhood" emerged. Women were encouraged to put their domestic skills to use of the public good and domesticity was transformed into a feminine civic virtue. Women were deemed to have a natural ability to educate their children. Indeed, during the course of the nineteenth century, child rearing became an increasingly female domain.[39] Men or in their absence, the State, were enjoined to protect both women and children. The State also began to take a greater interest in educating women. Thus it was important to educate women so that their children, especially their sons would be educated. In addition was education seen as the means by which women who were "weak," "victims of perversity" and the "motive of corruption" would be transformed from frivolous colonial women into meritorious "good wives and mothers."[40]

Female education eventually became part of the liberal educational reforms espoused by reformers such as Domingo Sarmiento who saw the position a society afforded its women as the best measure of civilization. As early as 1843, Chile instituted a highly centralized system of nation public education and began to establish free primary schools for boys and girls.[41] As the state began to take a more active role in education, the goals of female education were enlarged from preparation for motherhood to education in social responsibilities and training to be intellectual companions of men.

While continuing to see women primarily as man's "mother, sweetheart and wife," liberals came to believe that if the state did not take an active role in providing educational opportunities for women, they would be pre-empted by the Catholic Church.[42] Indeed convent schools, one of the principal primary educational facilities for young women during the colonial period, had begun to make a comeback by the middle of the century.

Sarmiento, much influenced by the example of the United States, not only stressed the natural teaching ability of women, he also believed that women could be enlisted as "agents of secularization and modernization."[43] Liberals increasingly came to see women not only as having great control over the formative years of their children's lives, but also capable themselves of being weaned from their natural traditionalism, their support of conservative morality, and their devotion to the Catholic Church. Eventually, according to the liberal vision, women could be transformed into standard bearers of a complex social project that included hygienics, eugenics, social inspection, bourgeois morality and patriotism.[44]

Thus, beginning in 1860s, the education of women also became identified with modernization, growth and industrialization. Especially in those countries with a newly emergent middle class, universal education for girls as well as boys becomes a priority and a recipe for progress. Nonetheless throughout the nineteenth century there were always fewer schools for girls than for boys.

The effect of improved schooling for girls can be seen in the increase of female literacy from the middle of the century on. In Chile for example, the number of female literates rose from 9.1 percent of all women in 1854, to 21.2 percent in 1875 to 27 percent in 1885. In Argentina female literacy went from 18.3 percent in 1869 to 41.5 percent in 1895.[45] Nonetheless male literacy continued to outstrip female literacy by approximately seven to eight percent. Both male and female literacy was always higher in the cities than the countryside. In 1895 for example, 64 percent of the women residing in Buenos Aires were judged literate; but male literacy was even proportionately greater (usually by about 9 percent) in the city than female literacy.

The State soon realized that to provide this education, there was a crucial need for a large, well-trained (or at least trained) teaching force. While primary school teaching had never been a viable option for upper class men, teaching had traditionally provided an acceptable way to earn a living for upper class women who had been impoverished by widowhood or their husband's infirmity.[46] Believing that if women were natural teachers of their own children, they could easily use this aptitude to educate other children, Sarmiento established the first normal school for women in Chile in the 1840s. Women were also deemed ideal candidates for the teaching because in addition to their innate ability, they had few other professional possibilities and were thus willing to work for low wages.

Sarmiento's creation of normal schools to train women to be elementary school teachers was a model that would eventually be copied throughout Latin America. Here again the influence of foreign ideas can be clearly seen for Sarmiento hit upon the idea of creating these schools after he returned from an extensive trip to the United States where he viewed the educational experiments of the Manns. Sarmiento would later recruit young women schoolteachers from the United States to teach in Argentina.[47]

Central to the liberal educational project was not only a desire to provide female teachers with the necessary special training and professional supervision, but to insure that progressive, modern, republican values (rather than conservation, traditional, Catholic ones) be inculcated into both teachers and their students. Women, primarily middle-class woman and those whose fathers were artisans or skilled laborers, were transformed into promoters of moral purity, order and progress. Not only did they gain a respectable way in which to earn their livelihood; they also came to see themselves as the privileged agents of social transformation and modernity.[48] (At the same time the State became active in inspecting elementary schools and imposing a uniform curriculum.)—all part of same positivist, centralizing vision.

Nonetheless until the later part of the nineteenth century, liberal social ideology of even the most advanced Latin American countries continued to see elite women primarily as wives and mothers for whom higher education was superfluous.[49] Furthermore, middle-class female teachers were expected to confine their activities within a narrowly defined domain. The reformers little imagined that normal schools would not only educate women for new occupations, it would also give them a “space” in which to rehearse for new public roles.[50] Although not encompassed in the original plan, normal schools eventually also trained women who became public health nurses and home visitors (early social workers), charity workers, school inspectors and occasionally doctors.[51]

Paradoxically vocation education for women from the lower social strata was the next type of education to be made available for women, for by the middle of the nineteenth century there was an increased government recognition that poor women needed to have the requisite skills to support their families. In Chile, for example, courses in midwifery, sewing, dressmaking, tailoring, hat and cigarette making were developed and with the exception of obstetrics were all taught by women.[52]

Even in those Latin American nations such as Chile that had been leaders in the liberal educational reform, women were not admitted to institutions of higher education until the mid 1870s, and this after a lengthy debate over the appropriateness of women's higher education.[53] As late as 1877, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, liberal Chilean Minster of Education, could observe that while the Chinese bound their daughters' feet, his countrymen bound their daughters' minds.[54]

Of course, the pace with which education was extended to women was affected by economic and political conditions. In Mexico, for example, although Benito Juarez publicly championed the extension of education to both sexes, it was Porfirio Díaz who actually established nationally supported schools throughout the country. Díaz, a believer in the positivist idea that educated women would foster the creation of nationhood also set up the first normal schools. Nonetheless, as late as the end of the nineteenth century, conservative thinkers such as Justo Sierra, while supporting education for women, continued to stress that the goal of this education was for women to remain in their homes. According to Sierra women were to serve as "companion and collaborator of man in the formation of the family," and to work to "form souls"…" and "sustain the soul of your husband."[55]

One additional result of improved female access to education was the eventual training of a small group of women professionals. In some cases, such as Costa Rica, these women trained as teachers went on to became important players in reformist civic movements and/or feminist organizations. Thus education and the normal school paved the way for a select, trained few, women to enter the public sphere as professionals.

Charity

In colonial Latin America charitable services were in the main provided by religious brotherhoods although elite women were also enlisted by the brotherhoods to help in the task. Thus in part the role of women in benevolent societies such as orphanages, shelters and women's hospitals created to ameliorate specific social problems related to women and children, was an extension of colonial women's roles. What was different was the removal of male organizations from the arena of female charity as well as the greatly enlarged scope of the charity work and increasing professionalization of the women involved.

The years following independence saw a growing presence of women in the field of public benevolence and charity. In Buenos Aires for example, the aftermath of revolution, war and social chaos produced a new concern for the welfare of the women and children. This concern led the liberal government of Bernardino Rivadavia to create the Sociedad de Beneficencia, an all-female organization dedicated to providing social welfare service, in 1823.[56] Modeled on the colonial male Hermandad de la Caridad that under Church auspices had recruited female participation to support their woman's hospital, the new organization was to be solely in the hands of female leadership. Charged at first with administering schools and an orphanage for girls, by the 1850s the Sociedad had added a charity hospital and an insane asylum for women, as well as a fund to provide monthly stipends to impoverished women. Their role as a provider of social services was further enlarged in 1871 when they opened a new orphans' asylum for both sexes and two years later when they established a woman's prison.

In other countries, such charity continued in the hands of the Catholic Church after independence. But paradoxically the Catholic Church increasingly turned to women to take a more prominent role in welfare services at about the same time as they and the liberal politicians were seeking them out as primary school teachers. Catholic Church actively encouraged female apostolates to both preserve the faith of women and children and to provide social services.[57] Again, as with the liberals, women were not the agents of choice, but rather the agents of necessity, for as men abandoned the Church during the nineteenth century, women were substituted in their place. The net result was the creation of opportunities for both religious and lay women who found themselves increasingly able to assume leadership roles with that part of civil society under Church control.[58]

In other cases, such as that of Chile, public charity was placed in the hands of the state at the time of independence, but the state, strapped for trained personnel, was increasingly forced to turn to the Church for help. As early as 1833, the Chilean constitution recognized the privileged position of the Church in matters pertaining to charity.[59] By 1847, the state, citing “anarchy in the administration of public institutions of charity,” began to contract with congregations of foreign and native-born religious women to take over an orphanage, a hospice, a female correctional facility and seven hospitals.[60] Eventually religious women created additional hospitals, penitential houses, infant care centers, neighborhood dispensaries, insane asylums, homes for widowed women, a school for deaf girls, vocational schools, workshops, elementary schools, and public soup kitchens as well as serving on Indian missions.[61] Moreover when need be, the religious sisterhoods successfully challenged local Church authorities.[62]

Chile, like other Latin American countries, turned to the French model to provide comprehensive social services, a model created in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the Revolution of 1830. They also turned to French and other foreign nuns. Of the eight religious congregations involved in providing charitable services, three were French, one French Canadian, one Argentine and three Chilean. The members of these orders not only provided specialized services, they presented a new vision of upper and middle-class women in general and religious women in particular—that of active rather than passive members of society. While the roles they took on were on one level an extension of traditional female roles of nurturer and moral compass, these women very much extended these roles to a far larger sphere of action. Perhaps even more important, the female apostolates also proved themselves to be competent administrators, cultural mentors and examples of successful public sphere employment. Their example was not limited to Santiago, for at their apogee these religious women were working in both major urban centers (Concepción) and smaller town (Valdivia, Curicó, Chillán, La Serena, Talca, Rancagua, Talcahuano, Puerto Montt). It is interesting to note that women overwhelmingly were the clientele for even those services open to both sexes such as urban dispensaries.

Wherever they went the apostolates established close ties with secular women who were enlisted to help raise money as well as to co-direct and inspect several of the institutions. These women were overwhelming members of the local elite who could provide family connections, personally friendships and wealth to support the work of the female religious.[63] The secular associations they founded eventually became involved in creating the first mutual societies for working women.

Feminism

Church using nineteenth-century version of marianismo tied to the new dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary to attract women to charitable activities.[64] From this vision of women, "conservative feminists," often members of the local elite, would emerge. These women embraced the traditional role of women as obedient wives and mothers but also sought out roles in public benevolence and charities. Their experiences led them to press for welfare and protection of women. Conservative female authors such as the Argentine writer Josefina Pelliza de Sagasta, stressed the primacy of women's traditional roles of wife and mother, while also arguing that women should be free to pursue an education and be free from physical abuse.[65]

Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, liberal feminists, primarily middle-class, normal school educated women, began to press for social and legal acceptance of their right to leave home for an education and an independent life.[66] A second group of feminists, the socialist feminists, were born out of the growing socialist and labor movements in these countries and took a strong interest in the problems confronting women in industrializing societies. These three stands of feminism began to emerge as a political movement at the very end of the nineteenth century.

Working in the capital cities of Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, Southern Cone feminism began to move women's issues into the national political debate.[67] Argentina was clearly the leader, although there was a strong tie between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Among the earliest Argentine feminists were Cecilia Grierson, Gabriela de Coni, and María Abella de Ramírez. Grierson and Coni were active in fight for welfare and legislative reforms for women. Abella, a Uruguayan-born feminist who spent her life in Argentina, worked to remove patria potestad law, divorce legislation, and legal supervision of prostitution.[68]

These pillars of early feminism in the Southern Cone called for the acknowledgment of women's intellectual capacity; their right to work in any occupation for which they had the ability; and their right to participate in civic life and politics.[69] Southern Cone feminists also stressed that they were not simply following Anglo-Saxon models; rather they remained tied to the values of a Catholic culture, especially the strong emphasis put on motherhood. In Latin America feminists continued to stress the role of women as mothers seeking to educate them so that they can be better moral guides for a future generation.

On both sides of the Río de la Plata the foreign-born and the children of immigrants played an important role in the movement, although native-born women were also represented. The strong influence of Rio platense women on the first-wave of feminism is reflected in the fact that they eventually helped to establish feminism in other Latin American countries such as Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Paraguay.

Conclusion

During the course of the nineteenth century Latin American women gradually moved from tradition to modernity. Their progress differed from country to country, and indeed from region to region, and was often closely related to immigration, urbanization, industrialization, and the creation of the liberal state. Even in those countries where women emerged as leaders in changing the patterns of socially acceptable behavior, relatively little progress was made until the last forty years of the nineteenth century. Eventually education, philanthropy, feminism, combined with the direct and indirect influence of foreigners and their new ideas allowed women to take the first steps in becoming participants in the body politic. At the beginning of the century women accepted the traditional roles assigned to them. By the end they had begun to challenge those roles and to demand that attention be paid to issues of concern to them.

NOTES

[1] Ricardo Rojas, comp., Archivo Capitular de Jujuy, Tomo II, 90, Acta capitular, 9 Dic 1813 (Buenos Aires: Coni, 1913).

[2] See, for example, Ann Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999),

[3] Susan M. Socolow, “Acceptable Partners: Marriage Choice in Colonial Argentina, 1778-1810,” in Asunción Lavrin, ed., Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 209-246.

[4] Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets, 276-277.

[5] Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico (Wilmington: SR Books, 1999), 9, 47; Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets, 311.

[6] Kathy Waldron, “The Sinners and the Bishop in Colonial Venezuela: The *Visita* of Bishop Mariano Martí, 1771-1784,” in Asunción Lavrin, ed., Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 156-177.

[7] For a discussion of this phenomenon in the Río de la Plata see Mark D. Szuchman, “From Imperial Hinterland to Growth Pole: Revolution, Change, and Restoration in the Río de la Plata,” in Mark D. Szuchman and Jonathan C. Brown, Revolution and Restoration: The Rearrangement of Power in Argentina, 1776-1860 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 18.

[8] Rebecca Earle, “Rape and the Anxious Republic: Revolutionary Colombia, 1810-1830,” in Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds., Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America(Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 129.

[9] Francesca Miller, Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), 30.

[10] Born in Quito, Manuela was raised in her father’s house. At age 18, she was sent to the Santa Catalina convent, but soon escaped with Fausto d’Ehuyar, a government official who “having promised to marry her, robbed her of her honor.” In 1817, at 23, Manuela was married to Dr. James Thorne. The couple moved to Lima , where Manuela befriended Rosa Campuzano, mistress of General José de San Martín. A convert to the independence movement, Sáenz was one of the 112 women named by San Martín as a member of the newly created Orden del Sol in 1822. She returned to Quito where, at a party given to welcome Bolívar into the city the same year, the star crossed lovers met. Shortly thereafter she abandoned her husband (eventually divorcing him) and went to live with Bolívar. Sáenz not only defied conventions by living openly with the Libertador, she was also an active participant in his military and political decisions. When Bolívar was forced to abandon Colombia in 1830, Manuela stayed behind to defend her lover. Forced to leave after the assassination of Bolívar’s ally, General Sucre, Manuela, now penniless and bereft of allies, was on her way to join Bolívar in Jamaica when she learned that her lover had died. She left Jamaica in 1835, and after failing to be allowed to return to Quito, settled in Paita, Peru where she died in 1856 at the age of 61. Although the butt of gossip in Bogotá about her libertine conduct, Saenz is to this day referred to as “La

Mujer-Gloria Americana," and "La Libertadora del Libertador." Lucía Ortiz, "Genio, figura y ocaso de Manuela Sáenz," in María Mercedes Jaramillo and Betty Osorio, Las Desobedientes: Mujeres de Nuestra América (Bogotá: Panamericana, 1997), 83-130.

[11] Earle, "Rape and the Anxious Republic," 138-140.

11 Women's support of the independence movement could be construed as proof that independence was a natural philosophy and thus accessible to even the simple minded. Earle, "Rape and the Anxious Republic," 138.

[13] Vicente Lecuna, Cartas del Libertador corregidas conforme a los originales, 11 vols. (Caracas: Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio, 1929-48), 6:53 as cited in Evelyn Cherpak, " The Participation of Women in the Independence Movement in Gran Colombia, 1780-1830, in Asunción Lavrin, ed., Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives, 229-230.

[14] Sarah C. Chambers, From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780-1854 (University Park: Pennsylvania Status University Press, 1999), 189.

[15] Chambers, From Subjects to Citizens, 208.

[16] Consider for example the comments of Fanny Calderón de la Barca who in describing the education of Mexican women in 1840 commented that "the Mexican señoras and señoritas write, read, and play a little--sew, and take care of their houses and children. When I say they read, I mean they know how to read; when I say they write, I do not mean that they can always spell; and when I say they play, I do not assert that they have generally a knowledge of music… In fact, if we compare the education of women in Mexico with that of girls in England or in the United States, we should be including to dismiss the subject as nonexistent. It is not a comparison, but a contrast…I do not think there are three married women, or as many girls above fourteen, who, with the exception of the mass-book on Sundays and fete days, ever open a book in the whole course of the year." (Howard T. Fisher and Marion Hall Fisher, eds., Life in Mexico: The Letters of Fanny Calderón de la Barca (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), 286-288.)

[17] Miller, Latin American Women, 41.

[18] Tristán, in spite of her Peruvian ties was a European intellectual whose native language was French.

[19] Miller, Latin American Women, 14.

[20] As early as the seventeenth century there had been a large and influx of foreigners attracted by economic opportunity and the lack of the strict hierarchical traditions of more established regions of Spanish colonial world.

[21] Hans Vogel, "New Citizens for a New Nation: Naturlaization in Early Independent Argentina," HAHR, 71:1, (Feb. 1991), 127-130.

[22] Vogel, "New Citizens," 107-108. Vogel notes that the early use of the word "citizen" was itself a revolutionary idea, for the movement to that term from the colonial term "vecino" brought with it the idea of the state as an association of people with equal rights. See also José Carlos Chiaramonte, Formas de identidad en el Río de la Plata luego de 1810," Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. E. Ravignani", 3rd Series, 1:1 (1989), 71-92.

[23] Alexander Caldcleugh, Travels in South America during the Years 1819-20-21 Containing an Account of the Present State of Brazil, Buenos Ayres, and Chile. 2 vols., (London, 1825), I, 171.

[24] Carlos Newland, "La educación elemental en Hispanoamérica desde la independencia hasta la centralización de los sistemas educativos nacionales, Hispanic American Historial Review [hereafter called HAHR], 71:2 (May 1991), 348.

[25] Silvia Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law in the Nineteenth Century: The Civil Codes of 1870 and 1884," Journal of Family History (Fall 1985), 305.

[26] Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law," 305-306.

[27] For example the age of legal majority was lowered from 25 to 21 years of age, but daughters were not free to leave their family home until age 30. The reason given for this inequality between sons and daughters was that unmarried women had to guard their reputation, i.e., their virginity. Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law," 307-308.

[28] Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law," 310.

[29] This new freedom given to individuals to dispose of their property as they wished was consciously modeled on English law. Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law," 314.

[30] Christine Hünefeldt, Liberalism in the Bedroom: Quarreling Spouses in Nineteenth-Century Peru (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 177.

[31] Hünefeldt, Liberalism in the Bedroom, 365.

[32] Francine Masillo, Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 93.

[33] Miller, Latin American Women, 42.

[34] The work of these three women is discussed in Masillo, Between Civilization and Barbarism, 36-51; 92-

[35] See for example Gertrude M. Yeager, "Elite education in nineteenth-century Chile," HAHR, 71:1, (Feb. 1991), 73-105.

[36] Newland, "La educación elemental," 353, 355.

[37] Newland, "La educación elemental," 360.

[38] Arrom, Women of Mexico City, 22.

[39] Arrom, "Changes in Mexican Family Law," 309. This new vision of women was accompanied by a growing recognition of a woman's competence to raise her children.

[40] Chambers, From Subjects to Citizens, 201.

[41] Gertrude M. Yeager, "Women's role in nineteenth-century Chile: public education records, 1843-1883," Latin American Research Review, 18:3, (1983), 150.

[42] Yeager, "Women's role," 152.

[43] Yaeger, "Women's role," 152.

[44] Steven Palmer and Gladys Rojas Chaves, "Educating *señorita*: teacher training, social mobility, and the birth of Costa Rican feminism, 1885-1925," HAHR, 78:1 (February 1998), 47.

[45] Newland, "La educación elemental," 358.

[46] Newland, "La educación elemental," 353.

[47] Miller, 46. Between 1869 and 1886, sixty-five graduates of normal schools in Minnesota and upstate New York taught in Argentina.

[48] Palmer and Rojas, "Educating señorita…" 72.

[49] Yeager, "Women's role," 151.
[50] Palmer and Rojas, "Educating señorita…" 47.
[51] Palmer and Rojas, "Educating señorita…", 46.
[52] Yeager, "Women's role," 151.
[53] Yeager, "Women's role," 150, 153. [152].
[54] Yeager, "Women's role," (1983), 149.
[55] Mary Kay Vaughan, The State, Education, and Social Crisis in Mexico: 1880-1928 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 204.
[56] Cynthia Jeffress Little, "Education, Philanthropy, and Feminism: Components of Argentine Womanhood, 1860-1926," in Asunción Lavrin, ed., Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives, 236.
[57] Gertrude M. Yeager, "Female apostolates and modernization in mid-nineteenth century Chile," Americas, 55:3, (January, 1999), 425.
[58] Yeager, "Female apostolates," 425.
[59] Yeager, "Female apostolates," 427.
[60] Yeager, "Female apostolates," 428-429.
[61] Yeager, "Female apostolates," 433, 442-448.
[62] Yeager, "Female apostolates," 447.
[63] Yaeger, "Female apostolates," 447-448,
[64] Yaeger, "Female apostolates," 436.
[65] Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism, 213.
[66] Asunción Lavrin, Women, feminism, and social change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 26.
[67] Lavrin, Women, feminism and social change, 15.
[68] Masiello, Between Civilization and Barbarism, 87.
[69] Lavrin, Women, feminism and social change, 21.