

# ENGENDERING LIBERAL REVOLUTION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH AMERICA: *Women, Partisan Politics, and the Federalist War in Colombia, 1859–1863*

**ABSTRACT:** This article traces women’s involvement in Colombia’s mid nineteenth-century Liberal Revolution, particularly the 1860 Liberal-Federalist revolt led by General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera and the two-and-a-half year civil war, or Federalist War, it precipitated. It uses personal correspondence and other archival sources to trace that involvement, highlighting how women both participated in the war, taking sides with one or another of the country’s two rival political parties (Liberals or Conservatives), and shaped the larger partisan contest in which the fighting was embedded. It shows first how Mosquera’s female supporters cooperated with him, offering logistical support and information that proved critical to the Liberal-Federalists’ eventual victory. It also shows how Conservative women opposed or resisted Mosquera and his followers. The article, moreover, examines the efforts of members of both groups of female partisans—pro-Mosquera Liberals or “*Rojas*” and anti-Mosquera “*Godas*”—to influence politics and public opinion, whether through private, behind-the-scenes personal conversation or through the spread of news, and sometimes disinformation. Above all, it reveals how women shaped the wartime public sphere through their active participation in the so-called ‘war of words’—the fierce ideological and rhetorical struggle that defined the very terms and meaning of the conflict.

**KEYWORDS:** Women, Politics, Liberal Revolution, Colombia, nineteenth century

A few months after the Liberal-Federalist Army’s July 18, 1861 victory over government forces in Bogotá and the collapse of the Conservative regime of President Mariano Ospina, one Candelaria de la Torre Pinzón wrote to General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, the army’s formidable commander, now interim Colombian president. The widow reminded Mosquera that her husband had been one of his “most faithful friends” and that he had died while serving under Mosquera’s command 14 years earlier. Since that time, she added, she “had promised to follow in [husband’s] footsteps by contributing in any way possible to your military victory. . . [and]

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to the glory of your name throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> De la Torre then revealed her contributions to the general’s cause: securing the release of one of his imprisoned officers during the last (1854) civil war and recruiting “fourteen brave men” for his army in the current one. For these actions, she continued, Mosquera’s opponents had “persecuted” her. In the case of the officer she had freed from jail—who had returned to Bogotá “at the head of 5,000 men”—they had imprisoned her, fined her 10,000 pesos, and exiled her from the city.<sup>2</sup> De la Torre again had suffered imprisonment when the recent Ospina regime had “punished” her for recruiting soldiers for Mosquera’s rebel forces. She then asked Mosquera for an “indemnity.” She argued that just as he had the “right” to “punish bad behavior,” he also had the “sacred duty” to reward good behavior. “I hope that you will better my lot if only by ordering that I be indemnified for a portion of the assets I lost while helping you triumph over [your] many enemies,” she concluded.<sup>3</sup>

De la Torre’s missive sheds light on an important if mostly overlooked aspect of Colombia’s mid nineteenth-century Liberal Revolution, including Mosquera’s revolt against the Ospina government and the conflict (Federalist War, 1860–62) that ensued: the participation of women. The following essay examines this participation, focusing on women’s roles in a struggle that led to victory for Mosquera and his allies and the start of over two decades of Liberal Party hegemony. It finds that women were central to the struggle, shaping both its nature and its outcome.

Although historians of Latin America now readily acknowledge the contributions of ordinary people (workers and other “subalterns”) to nineteenth-century nation-building, they still tend to overlook women’s role in this process. Scholars of gender history, of course, have shown how the young Spanish American republics formally excluded women from citizenship, sought to restrict them to the private-domestic sphere, and reconfigured colonial patterns of patriarchy or male gender domination. They’ve shown how, in addition to celebrating the virtues of “republican motherhood,” post-independence political leaders, particularly after about 1850, established laws and institutions reinforcing—even expanding—male authority in everything from property

1. Candelaria de la Torre Pinzón to Tomás C. Mosquera [hereafter TCM], Bogotá, October 20, 1861, #40723, Archivo Central del Cauca, Sala Mosquera [hereafter ACC-SM], Popayán.

2. Candelaria de la Torre Pinzón to TCM, Bogotá, October 20, 1861.

3. Candelaria de la Torre Pinzón to TCM, Bogotá, October 20, 1861. Her words in Spanish: “Yo creo que conforme tenéis el derecho de castigar las malas acciones, también tenéis un deber sagrado de premiar las buenas y en tal virtud espero que mejoraréis mi suerte aun que sea mandando que se me indemite alguna parte de mis intereses perdido por ayudar al triunfo sobre muchos enemigos.”

ownership to marriage.<sup>4</sup> Gender, however, was not the only factor determining women's experience or involvement in the nation. As James Sanders has demonstrated for the case of women in mid nineteenth-century Colombia, class, race, and partisan ideology also affected it. Such factors, along with gender, shaped women's political space, including possibilities for participating in Colombia's contentious public sphere.<sup>5</sup>

Partisan identification, moreover, was crucial. While women's involvement in modern Colombian political life may be traced back to the era of the independence wars (c. 1810–1821), when both men and women began to see themselves as part of a new civic community or nation, it assumed a regular pattern only with the rise of Colombia's two historic political parties, Liberal and Conservative.<sup>6</sup> By the late 1840s, women were being incorporated, albeit informally, into a competitive two-party system that came to dominate public life and fuel the country's periodic civil wars. They learned to identify with either Liberals or Conservatives and thus to see themselves as members of what historian Fernán E. González has called a "bifurcated imagined community"—one in which, as González explains, "patriotism is associated not with belonging to the nation but with belonging to a partisan faction that excludes adversaries from the community of true patriots."<sup>7</sup>

4. For a useful interpretive overview of these trends, see Elizabeth Dore, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 3–32. A specific example of the way gender operated to reinforce male authority while punishing women who violated the new republican ideal of female domesticity and respectability appears in Sarah Chambers's excellent "Private Crimes, Public Order: Honor, Gender, and the Law in Early Republican Peru," in *Honor, Status, and the Law in Modern Latin America*, S. Caulfield, S. Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). On Colombia, see Guiomar Dueñas Vargas, "Matrimonio y familia en la legislación liberal del siglo XIX," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 29 (2002): 167–193.

5. James Sanders, "A Mob of Women' Confront Post-Colonial Republican Politics: How Class, Race, and Partisan Ideology Affected Gendered Political Space in Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Colombia," *Journal of Women's History* 20:1 (2008): 64–89.

6. Important studies of women and gender during Colombia's independence era include Evelyn Cherpak, "The Participation of Women in the Independence Movement in Gran Colombia, 1780–1830," in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, Asuncion Lavrin, ed., (Greenwood Press, 1978), 219–234; Rebecca Earle, "Rape and the Anxious Republic: Revolutionary Colombia, 1810–1830," in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, Dore and Molyneux, eds., 127–146; and Marta Lux, *Mujeres patriotas y realistas entre dos órdenes: discursos, estrategias y tácticas en la guerra, la política y el comercio—Nueva Granada, 1790–1830* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2014), 105–125.

7. Fernán González G., SJ, "Guerras civiles y construcción del estado en el siglo XIX colombiano: una propuesta de interpretación sobre su sentido político," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 93:832 (March 2006): 31–80. González sees the two-party system as a hegemonic one that incorporated the lower classes through clientelistic ties to upper-class party leaders. In its original Spanish, the quotation reads: "una suerte de comunidad imaginada escindada donde el patriotismo no se identifica con la pertinencia a la nación sino a una facción partidista, que excluya a los adversarios de la comunidad de los verdaderos patriotas." Standard English-language surveys of Colombia's early national history include David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation In Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), chaps. 3–5; and Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chaps. 7–11.

An early example of this partisan identification pattern may be seen in the case of María Martínez de Nisser (b. 1812, d. 1872). A native of Sonsón in the northwestern department of Antioquia, Martínez participated in the War of the Supremes (1839–41), a civil war sparked by an anti-government rebellion that had arisen in the southern city of Pasto and quickly spread to other parts of the region.<sup>8</sup> As recorded in her diary, she decided to volunteer for the government's or "legitimist" army after careful reflection—having learned that her husband, Swedish-born Pedro Nisser, had been captured by rebel forces. She cut her hair, fashioned a military uniform, and presented herself to Colonel Braulio Henao, the local army commander and recruiter. Henao accepted Martínez's offer, gave her a lance, and incorporated her into the army's ranks. Once the fighting began, he assigned her, along with several other young female volunteers, to clean rifles and load cartridges, safely behind the lines of combat.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to conventional assumptions, Martínez's decision sprang from more than mere wifely love and devotion: it expressed her sense of patriotic duty. As historian Paula Giraldo has noted, Martínez "felt obligated to [defend] the legitimist [or, government] cause." What explains this sense of obligation? The answer lies to some extent in the circumstances that shaped her and her family's view of the conflict. These include Sonsón's location in the generally conservative, pro-government region of Antioquia, a factor that inclined its residents, including the Martínezes, to support the legitimist cause. Familial approval of Martínez de Nisser's action may be seen in the fact that when the 28-year-old woman presented herself to General Henao, she was accompanied by her father and two brothers. Broader community approval may be deduced from her own admission that she had consulted beforehand with Sonsón's parish priest. After the war, enthusiastic local praise for her and national recognition of her role as a legitimist army auxiliary in the Battle of Salamina ensured Martínez's reputation as a Colombian heroine.<sup>10</sup>

Martínez's decision to participate in the 1839–41 civil war, the first in a series of increasingly bitter and violent partisan conflicts, was therefore not just a personal one nor the result solely of solitary reflection. It resulted from consultation with her parents and male guardians, not least of whom was the parish priest, Sonsón's

8. A summary of the War of the Supremes appears in Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 91–92 passim. A more recent study, based on archival research, is Luis Ervin Prado Arellano, *Rebeliones en la provincia: la Guerra de los Supremos en las provincias suroccidentales y nororientales granadinas, 1839–1842* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2007).

9. Paula Andrea Giraldo R., "María Martínez de Nisser y las mujeres en las guerras civiles del siglo XIX," in Giraldo R., *Mujeres antioqueñas en la memoria de la ciudad* (Medellín: Imagen y Estrategia y Cía., 2007), 57, 59–60. See also Martínez de Nisser, *Diario de los sucesos de la revolución en la provincia de Antioquia en los años de 1840 y 1841* (Bogotá: Editorial Benito Gaitan, 1843).

10. Giraldo R., 61–62. Giraldo notes that some Bogotá Liberals criticized Martínez de Nisser's conduct as unbecoming for a woman.

undisputed moral and spiritual leader. Priestly endorsement may have sprung from a larger consensus among town fathers that the young woman's bold gesture would give Sonsón a chance to wave its legitimist colors, that is, its loyalty to the regime of President José I. Márquez, and thus win the sympathy of (and, perhaps, favor from) the latter. Martínez de Nisser's experience, in any case, highlights a basic factor behind women's involvement in nineteenth-century Colombian political life: membership in a family or familial social network aligned with one or another of the country's two political parties.

A broader perspective on this phenomenon may be gleaned from the experience of women in eighteenth-century England. As historian Elaine Chalus has noted, late eighteenth-century English electoral politics was a world still dominated by rival groups of aristocratic families, in which women's political activities were seen mainly as extensions of their familial roles; they reflected England's prevailing "familial political culture."<sup>11</sup> Women of prominent English families, in other words, were expected to do their part in advancing or maintaining familial interests, including a family's political influence or dominance within a given district represented in Parliament by a father, uncle, or other male relative. They thus engaged in a certain amount of "social politics," that is, activities designed to foster the goodwill (and ultimately, political support) of local electors or constituents. Social politicking included visiting, especially among members of the local gentry; attending balls, banquets, breakfasts, races or other special events as guests of honor; displaying hospitality, perhaps by hosting a tea or banquet; practicing charity; securing pardons for the unjustly accused; and dispensing patronage for the deserving. During close electoral contests, it was accompanied by more public and explicitly political activities such as canvassing and electioneering. The dynamic duchess of Devonshire, for example, at one point acted as an adviser and sponsor of Whig Party political campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Roughly similar practices developed among Colombian women as, in the middle of the nineteenth century, they became increasingly involved in their country's politics, its contentious partisan power struggles more particularly.

## WOMEN IN THE ERA OF LIBERAL REVOLUTION, 1850–c. 1860

Partisan contentiousness reached new heights in the late 1840s. Liberal and Conservative party leaders by then had begun articulating their parties'

11. See Chalus, "That Epidemical Madness": Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, E. Chalus and H. Barker eds. (London: Longman, 1997), 151–178.

12. Chalus, "That Epidemical Madness," 156–159; and Amanda Foreman, "A Politician's Politician: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and the Whig Party," in *Gender in Eighteenth Century England*, Chalus and Barker eds., 181–191 passim.

respective ideological positions and platforms, these differing mainly over the proper role of the Catholic Church within society. While Conservatives sought to preserve the Church's traditional status and authority as the moral arbiter of Colombian society, Liberals hoped to create a new order based on religious freedom and tolerance, reflecting the secular Enlightenment values embraced by nations like the United States, France, and Great Britain.<sup>13</sup>

A turning point in the debate came with the hotly contested 1849 presidential election. The election resulted not only in a victory for Liberal Party candidate José Hilario López but in the rise to power of an impatient new generation of radical Liberals. Young Radicals sought to eliminate the remnants of Spanish colonialism and ensure the unfettered reign of republican liberty and equality. Under President López (1849–53), they ushered in the first phase of Colombia's Liberal Revolution, including a series of reforms designed to expand Colombian civil liberties, reduce the powers of the central government and Catholic Church, bolster provincial autonomy (and the shift toward a federal republic), and democratize the country's political system. Among the most significant of these reforms was the exile of the influential Jesuit order, the abolition of slavery, and, as enshrined in the new 1853 constitution, universal male suffrage.<sup>14</sup>

Radicals briefly considered the question of female suffrage, as well. After some debate, their spokesmen rejected the idea. Indeed, in response to a proposal made by a fellow member of the Club Republicano (a prominent Radical political club) that women be granted the same political rights as men, José María Samper argued that such equality clashed with women's true purpose in life. This, according to Samper, was to be an *angel tutelar* (angel of the home) far removed from the world of politics; it was to “guide man on the path of virtue, purify his soul with the dew of love and . . . soften his vehement instincts and passions.”<sup>15</sup> Samper's appeal to a romantic feminine ideal then current in much of the Western world helped justify women's exclusion from full participation in the nation. Like its sister republics in Europe and the Americas, the Colombian republic was a masculine project—a kind of superfraternity that defined itself through exclusion of women and their perceived negative influence. As one historian has noted for Spanish America as

13. On the rise of Colombia's two-party political system, including the origins of and differences between the two parties, see Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 92–100, 115–118; and Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 135–156.

14. For a thorough overview of this first phase of Colombia's Liberal Revolution, see Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 104–113; and Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 197–215.

15. On the women's suffrage debate among Radicals, and Samper's role, see Armando Martínez Garnica, “El debate legislativo por las calidades ciudadanas en el régimen representativo del estado de la Nueva Granada (1821–1853),” *Boletín de Historia y Antiquedades* (separata) 90:821 (2003): 248–249. Although legislators in Vélez province voted to extend suffrage to women in 1853, Colombia's Supreme Court later declared their measure unconstitutional.

a whole, “nineteenth-century republicanism was gendered as male, with other forms of government [such as monarchies] coded as female.”<sup>16</sup>

Radical liberal reforms, nevertheless, raised the possibility of women’s citizenship. They also created new opportunities for women’s political participation. A key factor behind this was the controversy sparked by the Radical challenge to Colombia’s established order. The controversy grew especially fierce in southwestern Colombia where tensions between a small, white, slave-owning aristocracy (or, elite) and a large, black and mixed-race subaltern population, including many former slaves, burst into open class warfare. In Popayán, Cali, and other cities of the Cauca Valley particularly, subalterns and their young Liberal Party allies confronted an elite determined to preserve its traditional socioeconomic privileges and dominance. Their demands for reform—for realization of the Radical promises of liberty and equality—were accompanied by an unprecedented wave of popular political mobilization. Encouraged by Cali’s Democratic Society and other Liberal political clubs, ordinary citizens began claiming a voice in government along with their rights under the 1853 constitution. They used letters, petitions demonstrations and, not least, elections to do so. As historians of Colombia acknowledge such activities fostered a more open and democratic—if also tumultuous and often violent—public sphere along with the rise of a new democratic-republican political culture that would mark the country for the rest of the century.<sup>17</sup>

More important, partisan controversy and competition mobilized women, spurring them to take sides in a thickening debate over the future of the republic. Women’s political activities in these years (1850s–1860s) became increasingly visible, encroaching at the same time on the traditionally masculine public sphere and world of politics. Research by James Sanders has highlighted the visible activism of two main groups of women. One group was poor women of Afro-Colombian origin who, alongside their menfolk, acted in defense of community subsistence rights, that is, rights to common lands or *ejidos*, a matter of special concern to all popular Liberals. The other was white

16. James Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 13. For a broader discussion of the topic, see John Horne, “Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850–1950,” in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 22–40.

17. On the class warfare that marked the first phase of the Liberal Revolution in the Cauca Valley, see Margarita Pacheco’s pioneering study, *La fiesta liberal en Cali* (Cali: Ediciones Universidad del Valle, 1992). On the popular political mobilization of this period generally, see Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 115–117; Safford and Palacios, *Colombia, 197–199*; and, especially, James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), chaps. 3–5 in particular. In its pathbreaking reassessment of nineteenth-century Colombian political history, Sanders’s work stresses the role of lower-class groups in forging a democratic republic with the help of elite Liberal allies.

upper-class ladies who campaigned openly on behalf of Conservative interests, especially those of the Catholic Church with which they long had identified.<sup>18</sup> In short, the era of Colombia's Liberal Revolution saw women mobilizing politically on an unprecedented level. To the extent their mobilization involved transcending established gender boundaries—intervening in the male-dominated public sphere—it helped expand women's political space.

Yet, in mid nineteenth-century Colombia, and Spanish America more generally, women's political space had less to do with the public sphere—the world of petitions, the press, elections, and street protests—than with the private one. This was the world of family, friends, and personal relationships, long-time bonds of clientage included.<sup>19</sup> It encompassed visits and gatherings (*tertulias*), dinners, dances, and other forms of sociability, often organized by women and occurring within a domestic or familial context. It included letter-writing, which allowed literate women to stay in touch with scattered relatives, protect family interests, and maintain social networks that, in at least a few cases, allowed them to participate in broad debates about the nation.<sup>20</sup> Within this sphere, in other words, women (especially members of the creole elite) could exercise a certain authority and influence. Such was the case especially when, in the absence of husbands or male guardians, they assumed roles as heads-of-household—a common phenomenon in nineteenth-century Latin America, including cities such as Popayán.<sup>21</sup> It also was the case when, as historian Alonso Valencia Llano has observed, women faced a world of chronic war, turmoil, and uncertainty, conditions that prompted attention to the world of politics with its potential to determine (both positively and negatively) familial welfare and interests.<sup>22</sup> Such conditions reappeared at the end of the

18. See Sanders, "A Mob of Women' Confront Post-Colonial Republican Politics," 64, 72–75, 66–68. On elite women's public roles in the colonial era, see Isabel Cristina Bermúdez, *Imágenes y representaciones de la mujer en la gobernación de Popayán* (Quito: Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, 2001).

19. For a useful definition of the private sphere and its distinction from the public one in late colonial Spanish America, see Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 27–29. This basic distinction is assumed to have continued into the republican era with few modifications.

20. On letter-writing as an activity that straddled the two spheres, allowing literate women an opportunity to participate in the nation-making process, see Sarah Chambers, "Letters and Salons: Women Reading and Writing the Nation," in *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, Sara Castro-Klaren and John C. Chasteen, eds. (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center and Johns Hopkins University, 2003), 54–83.

21. On the frequency of female household headship in cities across the region, see Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, "Gender Ideology, Race, and Female-Headed Households in Urban Mexico, 1750–1850," in *State and Society in Spanish America during the Age of Revolution*, Victor Uribe-Uran, ed. (Wilmington: SR Books, 2001), 149–170. On Popayán specifically, see María Teresa Pérez Hernández, "Prácticas y representaciones en torno a la familia, el género y la raza: Popayán en 1807," *Convergencia: Revista de Ciencias Sociales* (Mexico) 12:37 (January–April 2005): 217–245.

22. Alonso Valencia Llano, *Mujeres caucanas y sociedad republicana* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2001), 142–147. Valencia notes that while women within the Cauca region already had a tradition of acting as heads of household when their men were away on business, chronic political instability strengthened this tendency in the republican era.



1850s with the resurgence of tensions between the country's two parties and revival of the possibility of civil war.

## ORIGINS OF THE FEDERALIST WAR AND ROLE OF GENERAL TOMÁS C. DE MOSQUERA

The Federalist War arose from a gradual breakdown in the *modus vivendi* that had prevailed between Liberal and Conservative party elites in the mid 1850s, fruit of cooperation in suppressing the popular 1854 Melo uprising and in designing a new decentralized political order based on federalist principles, an order reflected in the country's 1858 constitution.<sup>23</sup> This breakdown accelerated with the rise to power of Conservative Party leader Mariano Ospina. Ospina's 1856 election to the presidency ensured soon thereafter his party's exclusive control of the national (or central) government, marginalizing its Liberal rivals. The Ospina regime's subsequent efforts to centralize power in Bogotá triggered growing alarm among Liberals in general. One such effort was the April 1859 Law of Elections, asserting the central government's prerogative to supervise elections within the Colombian states. Liberals saw this law as a clear violation of the federalist principles enshrined in the constitution with its emphasis on states' rights and autonomy. Radicals especially viewed it not only as exceeding the limits of central government authority but also as a raw partisan power grab—a blatant bid to extend Conservatives' control of the country.<sup>24</sup>

These partisan tensions coincided with a long-brewing personal confrontation between Ospina and General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera y Arboleda (b. 1798, d.1878), governor of the vast (and now autonomous) southwestern state of Cauca. A native of Popayán, son of one of the region's most prominent families and former Colombian president (1845–49), Mosquera initially had been aligned with Conservatism. Following the end of his presidency, however, he had reinvented himself politically. By the time of his 1859 election to Cauca's governorship, he had begun advocating a program of moderate Liberalism and become Colombia's most vocal champion of federalist political principles.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in a series of open letters to President Ospina published in 1858–59, Mosquera boldly challenged the Ospina regime's centralizing measures, characterizing them as a violation of the states' constitutionally

23. For details on the uprising led by General José María Melo and subsequent developments, including the shift toward a more federal republic (in 1858 renamed *Confederación Granadina*), see Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 211–216.

24. Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 221–223.

25. Important studies of Mosquera's life and career include Diego Castrillón Arboleda, *Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera: biografía*, 2nd ed. (Bogotá: Planeta, 2002); and William Lofstrom, *La vida íntima de Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, 1798–1830* (Bogotá: Banco de la República/El Ancora, 1996).

sanctioned right to autonomy (or “sovereignty”) which, as he informed readers, he fully intended to defend. Ospina, for his part, rejected Mosquera’s arguments; in his responses, he portrayed the proud governor as no more than a subversive. The two leaders’ public quarrel came to a head in early May 1860 when Mosquera, having failed to persuade Ospina to negotiate with him, announced his state’s secession from the republic. With military plans underway on both sides, this move marked the start of a new general war pitting Cauca’s governor, his personal followers, and Liberal Party allies against the Ospina government and Conservatives.<sup>26</sup>

Women were among Mosquera’s followers, especially in Cauca. An example was María Pérez de Cordova of the southern highland city of Pasto. Pérez’s extant 1859 correspondence with Mosquera shows her effort to cultivate a personal alliance or “friendship” with him, at the same time offering a glimpse into the nature of the alliance itself. Although Pérez approached Mosquera initially as a petitioner—an early letter asks him to appoint her son as administrator of *aguardiente* taxes for either Pasto or Túquerres—she soon agreed to become his informant.<sup>27</sup> As her missives show, she reported to him on local concerns and grievances. One missive, for example, reports on the travails of a Julian Díaz, a merchant in the territory of Caquetá (and possibly one of Pérez’s kinsmen). It explains that Díaz had been harassed “unjustly and for no reason” by Caquetá’s prefect. It then asks that Mosquera order the prefect to “abstain from proceeding in a manner so contrary [harmful] to the rights of citizens.”<sup>28</sup> In a subsequent letter, Pérez asked the governor to certify the results of an *aguardiente* auction in Pasto, remarking that the matter was of special concern to her family and other local “friends” of his. Her correspondence with Mosquera thus allowed her to become an intermediary between him and some of the inhabitants of one of Cauca’s most strategic provinces.<sup>29</sup>

The intimate tone of Pérez’s letters reveals, furthermore, that she saw herself not just as another favor-seeker or potential client of the powerful governor but also as a “friend” of his, that is, a sympathizer or supporter. One letter thanks him for the “friendship,” “generosity,” and “confidence” he had shown her, explaining that these qualities had “inspired” her trust and willingness to be candid with

26. Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 221–223. On the alliances Mosquera forged in the course of his confrontation with Ospina, see Alonso Valencia Llano, “Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera y la guerra en el Cauca entre 1859 y 1862,” in *Las guerras civiles desde 1830 y su proyección en el siglo xx*, 2nd ed., Juanita Rivera H., coordinator (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2001), 95–99.

27. Pérez de Cordova to TCM, Pasto, February 2, 1859, ACC-SM, #36904. Although Mosquera’s archive contains seven letters from Pérez de Cordova, it does not include his responses to her.

28. Pérez de Cordova to TCM, Pasto, June 8 and August 3, 1859, ACC-SM, #36906-907.

29. Pérez de Cordova to TCM, Pasto, August 17, 1859, ACC-SM, #36903. In a separate note of the same date, Pérez thanks Mosquera for granting her previous requests on behalf of others.

him.<sup>30</sup> Another expresses her personal admiration, along with her sympathy for Mosquera's Federalist cause. After congratulating him on his election to Cauca's permanent governorship, Pérez's September 1859 missive lauds Mosquera as "the [most] illustrious patriot" and "foremost Granadan [Colombian citizen]"; it describes him, above all, as the "strongest defender of [our] cherished liberties, rights, privileges, and constitutional guarantees."<sup>31</sup>

Was this mere rhetoric or empty flattery? Circumstances of the moment suggest something more. That same year (through 1860) saw Mosquera engaged in an unprecedented effort to win new allies and adherents from among his state's citizens, including, as Sanders has observed, Afro-Colombian residents of the Cauca Valley, members of indigenous communities, and residents of small mestizo freeholder towns, like María. These subaltern groups found Mosquera unusually receptive to their requests for assistance and favor, including his help in obtaining relief from abuses suffered at the hands of local notables.<sup>32</sup> They found him willing to "bargain" with them. As Sanders has demonstrated and as extant letters to the caudillo confirm, people from towns and communities across the state pledged their moral and material support to Mosquera in his escalating quarrel with Ospina. At the same time, they expressed the expectation that in exchange for their support, he would assist them with their pressing needs.<sup>33</sup>

Pérez's letters suggest that Mosquera also reached out to members of some of the state's middling families, part of a rising gentry who supported the governor's strong defense of Caucano interests, vision of a prosperous, independent Cauca, and willingness to appoint to office young men from outside Cauca's small Conservative establishment.<sup>34</sup> More important, they show that Pérez spoke for one of these families or family-clans. They show that she behaved as a concerned constituent. In informing Mosquera of abuses committed by provincial officials and requesting his intervention in local matters, Pérez went beyond merely trying to ingratiate herself with Cauca's most powerful man:

30. Pérez de Cordova to TCM, Pasto, April 25, 1859, ACC-SM, #36905. On friendship as the dominant paradigm in early republican political life, see María Teresa Calderón and Clément Thibaud, "La construcción del orden en el paso del antiguo régimen a la república: redes sociales e imaginario político del Nuevo Reino de Granada al espacio Granacolombiano," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 29 (2002): 135–165.

31. Pérez de Cordova to TCM, Pasto, September 6, 1859, ACC-SM, #36910.

32. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*, 112–119.

33. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*, 112–119. Sanders finds "republican bargaining" to be at the heart of the new, more democratic relations between elites and subalterns developing in the era of Liberal Revolution. He defines it as a process in which the latter persuaded the former, that is, politicians like Mosquera, to represent their collective interests in exchange for political and military support. Letters of support for Mosquera from various groups of citizens in 1859–60 appear in ACC-SM, Carpeta 46 –Varios.

34. On Caucano "nationalism" or separatism, see Valencia Llano, "Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera y la guerra en el Cauca entre 1859 y 1862," 95–96.

she helped strengthen his position and reputation as a leader—one concerned with the needs of *all* citizens. Indeed, she helped Mosquera reinforce his political base within a province whose proximity to the Ecuadorian border gave it special strategic importance. Her activities as an informant, liaison, and enthusiast, moreover, foreshadowed some of the roles women, both Liberal-Federalist and Conservative (or Legitimist), would play during the Federalist War.

### WOMEN AS MOSQUERA'S ADHERENTS AND INFORMANTS (1860–62)

Evidence of women's participation in the Federalist War may be gleaned from Mosquera's rich personal correspondence including hundreds of letters from women of diverse social and regional origin. These letters show not only that Mosquera corresponded with a wide cross-section of Colombian society but also that, as seen in the case of Pérez above, women formed part of his extensive sociopolitical network.<sup>35</sup> They show, too, that while the majority of Mosquera's female correspondents were simple petitioners (for example, requesting a small loan or help for a relative), a significant minority of them—about one third of the sample used in this study—were also politically active, at least insofar as they expressed a political position or sentiment. While most of these, in turn, identified themselves as sympathizers or supporters—"friends" of the caudillo—they included a smaller, more notable subset: women whose letters reflect actual cooperation with Mosquera during the war and who thus may be regarded as his followers or adherents ("*mosqueristas*").<sup>36</sup>

An example was Bárbara Usurriaga. Five months after Mosquera's announcement of his revolt, Usurriaga wrote the general from Popayán to report on the challenges she faced in administering a hospital designed for his sick and wounded men. Although her husband had won the contract to operate the hospital, she apparently had assumed responsibility for overseeing it. Her letter describes the lack of adequate lodging for patients, stating that the latter had started "leaving the building and going out to beg for alms in order to expose the inadequacy of their care." She blames the problem on the owner of the hospital building, one Juliana de Caldas (likely affiliated with Mosquera's Conservative opponents) who, according to Usurriaga, had so far refused to

35. The bulk of Mosquera's vast personal correspondence is in the Sala Mosquera of the Archivo Central del Cauca in Popayán. A preliminary analysis of some of the letters written by women appears in Pamela Murray, "Mujeres, género y política en la joven república colombiana: una mirada desde la correspondencia personal del General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, 1859–1862," *Historia Crítica* 37 (Bogotá) (January–April 2009): 54–71.

36. Of the 81 authors of the 109 letters in the sample, 28 expressed a political opinion or sentiment, mostly in support of the general; only ten of these authors, however, clearly cooperated with or assisted him during the war.

vacate the latter. The letter then urges Mosquera to ensure Usurriaga unimpeded access to the building so that the hospital could operate properly and, equally important, not create an embarrassment for him. “Desirous that the general’s good reputation doesn’t suffer at the hands of his antagonists, I implore you to take some measure that will allow me to [gain entrance to the building and thus] fulfill my duty,” the author stated.<sup>37</sup>

Female adherents’ cooperation with Mosquera went beyond the logistical and material matters reflected in Usurriaga’s letter. It included matters of communication on which the caudillo depended. As the following pages will show, adherents acted as informants, advisers, liaisons, and informal spokeswomen. Like their Conservative rivals, they were disseminators of news, hearsay, and gossip, some of it politically motivated, with women becoming de facto propagandists. More broadly, female involvement in communication networks mattered for reasons beyond the benefit that might accrue to leaders like Mosquera who sought to channel it. Such involvement formed part of the Liberal Revolution’s expanding and increasingly democratic public sphere. Along with the male-dominated periodical press, women’s voices influenced this sphere. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, they helped grease the wheels of war by shaping the widening and ever more polarized world of public opinion.

Besides being the longest and most violent of the fratricidal conflicts Colombians had engaged in, the war itself stood out for the fact that its main contenders, overall, were evenly matched. Combat, while fierce, was intermittent, and battles, for the most part, inconclusive—often ending in stalemate and a temporary truce. As Colombian scholars have noted, such circumstances obliged protagonists like Mosquera to seek strategic advantage beyond the battlefield or realm of armed conflict. They encouraged use of diplomacy, negotiation, and public relations campaigns including speeches, pamphlets, and manifestos (or, “why we fight” statements) aimed at rousing supporters and persuading the undecided. Such tactics or methods would prove especially crucial for Mosquera who, throughout the first year of the war—before his army’s July 1861 victory over government forces—struggled to win recognition of his belligerent status.<sup>38</sup>

37. Usurriaga to TCM, Popayán, October 15, 1860, ACC-SM, #37791. In Spanish: “Yo, deseosa de que la reputación del general no sufra a la merced de sus antagonistas, imploro de usted una medida de seguridad para cumplir mi deber.”

38. For a summary of factors distinguishing the Federalist War from preceding civil wars and discussion of Mosquera’s use of diplomacy and public persuasion methods such as speeches, see María Teresa Uribe de Hincapié and Liliana López Lopera, *La guerra por las soberanías: memorias y relatos en la Guerra Civil de 1859–1862 en Colombia* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2008), 9–10, 71–73, 129–141.

Mosquera also contended with the effects of Conservatives' racist propaganda, including sensationalist references to his mostly black Caucaño army as barbaric "African" or "*machetero*" hordes, terms calculated to scare property-owning citizens.<sup>39</sup> The very nature of the war, thus, heightened the importance both of the "long game" of wartime strategy (for example, Mosquera's efforts to win hearts and minds) and of contests waged outside the military arena. This included the arena of politics at the local and neighborhood levels. It encompassed the so-called war of words—the gritty ideological and rhetorical contest between rival parties that paralleled the military one and that often dominated the public sphere, helping to polarize it.<sup>40</sup> Women in both partisan camps were embroiled in this contest and even at the center of it.

A close look at Mosquera's correspondence shows that most of his adherents operated as informants, reporting to the caudillo on local news, opinion, and the conduct of officials in their districts. In 1861, for example, Mosquera received news and intelligence from his daughter-in-law, Isabel Epalzal de Mosquera in Santa Marta; his cousin Juana Sánchez in Villeta, a small town outside the Colombian capital; and his daughter Amalia Mosquera de Herrán, in Bogotá. In her April letter, Epalzal described a situation that surely characterized the war for many Colombians, especially in areas remote from the fighting: conflicting news, rumors, and uncertainty about actual events. "We have heard absolutely nothing about you," Epalzal stated, adding, "even though [some people] say that you have been in [the town of] Ciénega since yesterday." She then reported on other news she had heard, including a story about the assassination of some [Liberal] prisoners who, according to her unmentioned source, had escaped from their Bogotá jail. She wondered about the story's accuracy and about the fact that no one she knew had concrete information on Mosquera, his army, or the "armistice" she had heard about earlier. "It's [pure] chaos here," she lamented. In concluding her missive, Epalzal nevertheless assured the general that "there is much I could tell you about an infinity of things that have happened before my eyes."<sup>41</sup>

Sánchez's June missive, meanwhile, reported on the performance of Villeta's interim mayor (*alcalde*), one Valentín Pallares. It sought to counter criticism of the latter that, according to Sánchez, had already reached the ears of Mosquera. "We have definitive news that a number of people from this place have spoken

39. For a good discussion of Conservatives' use of this propaganda against the armies of both Mosquera and his Caribbean ally, General Juan José Nieto of Cartagena, see Jason McGraw, *The Work of Recognition: Caribbean Colombia and the Postemancipation Struggle for Citizenship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 64–67.

40. In *La guerra por las soberanías*, authors Uribe and López stress this important aspect of the conflict. See especially their analysis in Chapter 3: "El lenguaje de la guerra," and Part Three, "Los textos." The authors omit consideration of either women or gender, however.

41. I. Epalzal [de Mosquera] to TCM, Santa Marta, April 8, 1861, ACC-SM, #39818.

ill of him [to you],” she stated. She dismissed such criticism as mere “speculation” and went on to assure Mosquera that thanks to the mayor’s good leadership, Villeta was in “complete peace”; “everyone” in the district was “quite content” with him. Sánchez also advised against removing Pallares from office, explaining “this doesn’t seem opportune to me in [the present] circumstances.” She strongly recommended that Mosquera instead make the mayor’s appointment permanent through December.<sup>42</sup>

Thanks in part to their greater number, Mosquera de Herrán’s surviving letters are of special significance. Thirty-five years old when the war began, Amalia Mosquera was married to ex-president General Pedro Alcántara Herrán, an old friend of her father’s who was 25 years her senior and whose diplomatic career had led to the couple residing in the United States (New York City and Washington, DC) for over a decade. Her return to Colombia in February 1860, when she and her family landed in Panama, had been prompted by President Ospina’s appointment of Herrán as supreme commander of the Colombian Army. Herrán’s lofty position, however, mattered little to his restless and strong-willed wife. Indeed, Mosquera’s oldest (and only legitimate) daughter hoped to change her husband’s political allegiance: on arriving in Bogotá with her children in March, she took up her father’s side of the brewing conflict.<sup>43</sup>

Amalia’s embrace of the Liberal-Federalist cause arose, in good part, from her close personal bond to Mosquera, including her admiration for and strong sense of loyalty to him. Her marital difficulties with Herrán, these rooted in differences over various family matters, likely sharpened this loyalty. As her surviving correspondence reveals, Amalia resented Herrán for his attempts to control her, including his sometimes heavy-handed use of husbandly authority and tight grip, as she often complained, on the household budget. That Herrán, a career army officer of middle-sector background, also happened to be her social inferior seems only to have increased her resentment and overall disillusionment with him. “Rest assured,” she once stated crisply in response to some advice Mosquera had offered her, “I know perfectly well my rights and position both within my family and the [high] society I belong to, not as

42. Juana Sánchez to TCM, Villeta, June 3, 1861, ACC-SM, #340914. Others who kept Mosquera informed of developments in their respective areas were self-identified cousins Manuela Flor de Bosch of Cali and Inés de Vergara of Bogotá. De Vergara’s correspondence is discussed ahead.

43. The great majority of Amalia’s extant letters to her father are in the Archivo Familiar de Tomás C. Mosquera, Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Sala de Manuscritos [hereafter BLAA-SM] Mss 568, Bogotá. While this collection contains about 118 letters of hers from 1848–75 (found in Carpetas 21.1–21.3), only 14 date from her time in Colombia during the Federalist War, spanning some 22 months between late February 1860 and December 1861.

Herrán's wife but as Mosquera's daughter; I've gained nothing, after all, from [my status as] the former," she added.<sup>44</sup>

Amalia also identified with her father politically, even as this increased tensions with her spouse. "Since our time in New York, he [Herrán] has taken great offense at my telling him that [come what may] I will sink or swim with you," she wrote him some two months after settling in Bogotá. She "would never be a Conservative or Ospinista," she added.<sup>45</sup> In imagining her country's future ideal leader, Amalia cast him in the mold of her beloved progenitor. "The leader we need must be dynamic and relentless [in promoting] material improvements; [and] progressive, liberal, and severe in punishing corrupt elements," she opined. "He [also] should call upon the services of [all] men of merit, regardless of their political banner," she went on, perhaps recalling Mosquera's effort to transcend partisan differences by founding his National Party five years earlier and by his recent success in rallying bipartisan elements under the Federalist banner.<sup>46</sup>

By April 1860, not surprisingly, Amalia was scouring Bogotá newspapers for information to send her father, along with her own opinions and observations. As she remarked in one missive, she was "mortified" by the "many fabrications" about him she found in articles written by sympathizers of the Ospina government. She also expressed regret at not being able to rebut personally such fabrications (that is, lies). Reflecting her awareness of the sensitivity of her position as wife of the Ospina government's top military official (and thus, of established gender expectations), she assured the caudillo that she knew enough, as she put it, to "not meddle in politics."<sup>47</sup>

Amalia nevertheless strove to keep her father informed of the activities of his allies and opponents in the capital. Mosquera's allies included Colombian Radicals, members of the Liberal minority in Congress who, as Amalia reported, sent messengers such as "el joven Nuñez [Rafael Nuñez]" to her home to share news and solicit her cooperation in a last-minute scheme to avert war. "They [Radical politicians] have spoken to me about interceding with Herrán and

44. Amalia Mosquera de Herrán [hereafter AMH] to TCM, New York, December 19, 1858, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #639. Her words in Spanish: "Este ud. seguro que . . . conozco perfectamente mis derechos y la posición que debo conservar tanto en mi familia como en la sociedad a que pertenezco, no como mujer de Herrán sino por [ser] hija de Mosquera, pues nada he ganado con lo primero." For more on Amalia's marriage, which had been arranged by her father, see Lofstrom's excellent *La vida íntima de Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera*, 207–214.

45. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, May 12, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #660. Her original phrase in Spanish: "que con usted me salvaría o me perdería."

46. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, April 24, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #658.

47. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, April 11, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #657. This letter also alludes to a March 28 missive received from Mosquera in Cartago and to circumstances in Cauca.



telling him to eliminate the Conservatives' hope that he will make war on you, since [according to them] this is the only thing fueling their [Conservatives'] bold calls for war in Congress," she stated.<sup>48</sup> While it's unclear whether Amalia went along with this, there is little doubt that her personal contacts among the Radicals allowed her to inform her father of developments in Congress, including the conduct of members of its Conservative, pro-Ospina majority. These contacts allowed her to get around her husband as well, since, as she observed, Herrán sought to keep her from learning about his activities as a member of the Ospina government. "Although he [Herrán] tries to ensure I don't know what he is up to, they [Radical informants] tell me everything," Amalia assured Mosquera.<sup>49</sup>

Almost a year later, the young woman reported on her interaction with another Liberal group—politicians from the northeastern state of Santander who had been captured and imprisoned by the Ospina government and who recently (March 7) had escaped from jail. As she explained to Mosquera, nine of the escapees had found their way to her house and were now under her "care." Only a few trusted friends knew about it, she added. Her husband, she claimed, did not.<sup>50</sup> Likely aware of his stated desire to wage a "civilized" war—one that avoided unnecessary deaths and respected the rights of civilian noncombatants and prisoners-of-war—Amalia also informed her father of her own efforts to stand up for the escapees. "I have asked [government authorities] for a list of [all] the prisoners who escaped and [who] survived, as well as fugitives," she wrote, adding, "I suppose there must be friends or relatives of theirs in your ranks who wish to know the fate of these unfortunates."<sup>51</sup>

Not least, Amalia conveyed news and intelligence concerning Mosquera's opponents, particularly President Ospina and members of his government. In late April 1860, for example, she shared a tip received from an unnamed "friend" regarding Ospina's military preparations. According to the friend, she wrote her father, Ospina had sent one Nelson Bonilla to the United States on a "secret mission" to buy arms that were to be used against Mosquera.<sup>52</sup> Nine

48. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, May 1, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #659.

49. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, May 1, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #659. Her words in Spanish: "Aunque el [Herrán] trate de que yo no sepa lo que hace, a mi me dicen todo."

50. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, March 17, 1861, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #661. On the prisoners and their escape, see Uribe and López, *La guerra por las soberanías*, 157.

51. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, March 17, 1861. On Mosquera's frequent use of moral arguments to justify his fight against the government and claims of adherence to civilized norms of warfare ("*derecho de gentes*"), see Uribe and López, *La guerra por las soberanías*, 71–73.

52. Idem., Bogotá, April 24, 1860, BLAA-Mss-568, #658. The friend almost certainly was the US Minister to Colombia, George W. Jones, whose relationship with Amalia is discussed ahead.

months later, as the Liberal-Federalist Army slowly ground its way toward the capital from the western state of Antioquia, a Conservative stronghold, Amalia sent news or hearsay that Ospina and other Conservative leaders were heading toward him. “They [sources] say General Paris is heading for Antioquia incognito with others and that Don Mariano [Ospina] is accompanying them,” she stated. She also expressed skepticism of this claim. “[Though] it may well be true . . . my reluctance to believe it [lies in] the difficulty they will have in traveling to Antioquia [given the region’s rugged terrain] and, furthermore, in [the fact of ] that province’s public opinion being against this [Ospina’s] government and [Julio] Arboleda’s candidacy,” she added.<sup>53</sup>

As Mosquera’s forces drew closer to the outskirts of Bogotá in the second half of March 1861, Amalia relied on trusted messengers to warn her father of conspiracies against him, including plots against his life. Her March 17 letter alerted him to the future arrival of one such messenger, Juan B. Valeri; it explained that Valeri was due to arrive any day at Mosquera’s camp in order to apprise the general “of the many [assassination] plots that have been and are being hatched [against you].”<sup>54</sup> Other evidence shows that during the Army’s grueling siege of the capital (April–July), Amalia sent Mosquera vital intelligence on his Conservative adversaries. This included detailed reports from one “Cayo,” a Mosquerista spy, on the plans and activities of the Ospina brothers and their supporters. Amalia forwarded the reports to her father, in most cases adding a brief postscript.<sup>55</sup> Her ability to obtain such intelligence no doubt helped Mosquera and his men outmaneuver enemy forces, contributing to the Liberal-Federalists’ July 18 military victory over the government.<sup>56</sup> This victory ensured the Liberal-Federalist forces’ control of the capital and Mosquera’s founding a few days later of a new regime: the United States of Colombia.<sup>57</sup> It also marked a key turning point in the Federalist War.

With Amalia’s return to New York toward the end of 1861, other female Mosqueristas sought to fill the void left by her absence by keeping the caudillo informed of the activities of his allies and opponents in and around Bogotá. Among them was Inés de Vergara, a cousin of Mosquera’s by marriage. De

53. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, January 30, 1861, ACC-SM, #39363.

54. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, Bogotá, March 17, 1861. In Spanish: “de las muchas intrigas que han habido y que hai.”

55. Mosquera’s personal archive includes five letters from “Cayo,” most of them with postscripts from his daughter. See Cayo to Mosquera, June–July 1861, ACC-SM, #39593–97.

56. According to Mosquera’s principal biographer, Amalia’s “almost daily” letters and reports to her father in June and July were “indispensable” in allowing him to outmaneuver his rivals on the eve of the Battle of Bogotá. See Castrillón Arboleda, *Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera: biografía*, 498–499; and Uribe and López, *La guerra por las soberanías*, 160.

57. The United States of Colombia would be consolidated officially the following year at the constitutional convention of Rio Negro in the state of Antioquia (March–May 1863). Mosquera served as interim president until then, when convention delegates reelected him to the Colombian presidency.

Vergara had suffered imprisonment for opposing the old Ospina regime and now sought to assist her kinsman. “I had promised myself to not meddle in politics, but . . . I’m afraid no one will truly tell you what is happening,” she explained in an August 1862 letter to him.<sup>58</sup> She went on to describe the reaction of local Conservatives to some of the caudillo’s recent policies, particularly his controversial September 9, 1861 decree abolishing the special mortmain (in perpetuity) status of ecclesiastical or Church properties. Similar to the Lerdo law issued five years earlier by Liberal reformers in Mexico, the decree also authorized the sale of such properties at public auction, with one of its main goals being to create a free market in real estate that would boost the nation’s general wealth and productivity.<sup>59</sup> “You should know that the assembly of [the town of] Funza has proclaimed ‘down with *manos muertas* [mortmain] decrees!’, ‘Down with auctions!’, and other things of that ilk,” De Vergara warned the caudillo.<sup>60</sup>

De Vergara then highlighted a matter she found even more disturbing: the behavior of, as she put it, Mosquera’s “false friends.” Her letter identifies a few of the latter and reveals what its author had learned about them. It reveals, for instance, that according to some of Mosquera’s closest allies, Bogotá’s Liberal governor, one Briceño, “could not be trusted.” “He is in business with the Goths [Conservatives], favoring them as much as he can,” De Vergara reported. She characterized the Bogotá governors generally as “dangerous,” explaining that this was because of their “many [friendly] relations with your enemies.” She also mentioned a “circle” that was said to be working “secretly” against Mosquera and whose members were “well known,” adding that she would soon identify them for him. De Vergara also named two additional false friends: one Narciso Gonzales and the well-known Liberal politician Ezekiel Rojas. She claimed that the former was enmeshed in “the mortmain business,” while Rojas was known for expressing seditious sentiments; he was overheard saying “that it was necessary to unite with the Goths in order to overthrow you,” she stated. De Vergara continued, “I would like to tell you many [more] things but, for now, it isn’t possible [and so] I’ll wait until I see you, trusting that . . . your [final military] triumph will come soon.”<sup>61</sup>

58. De Vergara to TCM, Bogotá, August 24, 1862, ACC-SM, #43130.

59. For a detailed discussion of this decree (Decreto de Desamortización de Bienes de Manos Muertas) and its impact, see Chapter 4 of Luis Carlos Mantilla’s thorough *La guerra religiosa de Mosquera* (Medellín: Universidad de San Buenaventura, 2010). Scholars also acknowledge Mosquera’s desire to reduce the Church’s power and thus the tendency of the clergy to engage in politics—including aiding his Conservative opposition.

60. De Vergara to TCM, Bogotá, August 24, 1862, ACC-SM, #43130.

61. De Vergara to TCM, Bogotá, August 24, 1862, ACC-SM, #43130.

## ROJAS, GODAS, AND THE WAR OF WORDS

Politically active women in both partisan camps were more than adherents and accessories of male leaders like General Mosquera: they were opinion-makers. Indeed, they helped shape a wartime public sphere that transcended the formal masculine realms of government, the press (especially newspapers), political parties, and fraternal organizations, for example, Masonic lodges, that prevailed normally in peacetime.<sup>62</sup> Thanks to the broadly disruptive and politicizing effects of the Federalist War, this sphere incorporated private, everyday—and mostly female—spaces in the home. It also meant that in terms of advancing one side or another of the larger partisan conflict, a conversation in the parlor of a woman's home had the potential to be as consequential as the clash of soldiers on a battlefield.

An example of this phenomenon may be seen in the activities, once again, of Amalia Mosquera. Although Amalia's experience represented in part a hoary tradition of women acting politically from behind the scenes, it also betrayed the impact of Colombia's new world of politics, more open and hyper-competitive, a world that mobilized all Colombians unlike any before. Amalia, after all, was decisively and unabashedly partisan. As noted earlier, she consciously took sides, not just out of personal or filial loyalty, but for politico-ideological reasons expressed in letters to her father—and this in spite of her husband's high-profile position within the opposing camp. She embraced the Liberal-Federalist cause with enthusiasm. An early May 1860 letter of hers confesses to “dreaming” both of her father's victory and of joining the ranks of his enthusiastic followers. “I already see myself as a ‘daughter of the regiment,’ serving the soldiers,” Amalia confided to Mosquera, adding somewhat impulsively, “I should have been born a man in order to be always at your side, helping you, dear father.”<sup>63</sup>

Amalia operated not only as her father's discreet informant, but also as his agent and mediator, that is, as an informal broker between him and his various allies. As already observed, she mediated between the caudillo and Bogotá-based Radical politicians, some of whom, thanks to their relative youth and inexperience (Rafael Nuñez, for example) likely approached her with the deference of junior partners within the Liberal-Federalist coalition. She interacted with other

62. For a useful examination of these associations and their role in propagating new republican forms of sociability, while reinforcing the Liberal reformism of the period, see Gilberto Loaiza Cano, *Sociabilidad, religión y política en la definición de la nación: Colombia, 1820–1886* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2011).

63. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, May 1, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #659. In Spanish: “ya me he visto de hija del regimiento sirviendo a los soldados . . . [y] yo debí nacer hombre para estar siempre al lado de Ud. y ayudándole, papa mío.”

figures who sympathized with her father and sought her goodwill, assistance, or patronage. One of these was US Minister to New Granada (modern-day Colombia) George W. Jones. Amalia's letters portray Jones as a frequent, even daily, visitor to her home, with one missive describing him as "my only friend in Bogotá."<sup>64</sup> They also reveal Jones's lack of the neutrality normally expected of diplomats. According to Amalia, the American was a Mosquera "enthusiast" who sympathized privately with the rebel leader and expressed only "disgust" for the incumbent Ospina government. He was a useful source of information, as well. "He [Jones] comes every day to see me and share what news he has learned," Amalia observed contentedly.<sup>65</sup>

More important, Amalia's ability to win Jones' trust—enhanced, no doubt, by her English-speaking ability and knowledge of American mores—allowed her to serve as her father's *de facto* liaison to the US government. It allowed her to speak, in effect, for both the Liberal-Federalist movement and its leader. By late April 1860, Amalia had begun supplying Jones with documents designed to inform him of the origins of the conflict between her father and the Ospina administration and of Mosquera's side of it, especially. The documents included copies of a speech (presumably translated into English) the caudillo had sent her, along with copies of his public correspondence with Ospina.<sup>66</sup>

Amalia, not surprisingly, also influenced Jones's reports to authorities in Washington. While this may be inferred from her mention of the American's frequent visits, it is corroborated by the revelation that on one such visit Jones shared the content of a diplomatic dispatch he had written. Indeed, as Amalia reported in March 1861, the minister read his dispatch aloud to her, winning her approval of it. Jones's report to his government, she assured her father, contained an "exact account of events that have occurred in the last weeks [along with] a complete picture of [Colombia] and its leaders." It included mention of Jones's own recent interview with Mosquera in the port city of Honda, an interview that had won his "complete satisfaction," she added.<sup>67</sup>

One sign of Amalia's success as a Mosquerista agent may be discerned in the hostility toward her expressed by some of the caudillo's opponents. By early July 1861, talk of threats against her life had begun circulating in Bogotá; these included rumors of a plot to assassinate or kidnap her that reached her father at

64. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, May 1, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #659. George Wallace Jones (b. 1804, d. 1896), a native of Indiana, was a former Democratic senator from Iowa who was appointed in 1859 by President James Buchanan to serve as US Minister Resident to New Granada/Colombia.

65. AMH to TCM., Bogotá, May 1, 1860,.

66. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, April 24, 1860, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #658. She also reported meeting with a representative of the Panama Railroad Company, one Mr. Sanford.

67. AMH to TCM, Bogotá, Bogotá, March 17, 1861, BLAA-SM, Mss 568, #661.

his army camp.<sup>68</sup> While such rumors likely came from Conservative partisans hoping to intimidate Mosquera and thus goad him into last-minute negotiations that would spare their party another humiliating military defeat, they also hinted at Conservative authorities' frustration regarding Amalia. Author Felipe Pérez (a Liberal-Federalist sympathizer) alluded to this frustration in his well-known chronicle of the Federalist War, describing Amalia as "the object of the deepest antipathy" among officials close to President Ospina. He added that officials had subjected her home to "humiliating" inspections, while stopping short of acting against her personally. "If they [Ospina's police] didn't drag her to a prison . . . as they did with the venerable old Sra Inés Vergara [and other female Mosqueristas], it was because they knew the intrepid daughter of the great leader of the Federation would have fired off a pistol at the first official who dared to confront her; they also feared the anger of her outraged father."<sup>69</sup> Another sign of Amalia's impact on the Liberal-Federalist movement may be seen in the iconic status she seems to have acquired among some of her father's followers, army officers in particular. According to one contemporary observer, by July 1862, General Juan Antonio Gutiérrez de Piñeres was known to carry a miniature photo-portrait of her in his military satchel, regarding it as a potent good-luck charm.<sup>70</sup>

Conservative women who opposed Mosquera (Conservadoras, also known widely as Goths or "*Godas*") were similarly active in shaping their political environment, not least the world of public opinion. As noted earlier, Conservadoras had stood out for their roles in the partisan fray kicked up by the first wave of Radical Liberal reformism. In the Cauca Valley particularly, they had helped organize election campaigns and engaged in partisan propagandizing, sponsoring Conservative *Sociedades Populares* to counteract the effects of the Liberal-sponsored *Sociedades Democráticas*.<sup>71</sup> Matilde Pombo de Arboleda and other elite *payanesas* had embraced a Conservative nation-building project that revolved around Catholic women's education. In the late 1850s, as founders of the *Sociedad para la Educación de las Niñas del Sur*, they envisioned the training of pious young women whose influence as

68. The alleged assassination plot and kidnapping plan are mentioned in Mosquera's July 8, 1861, letter to his friend General Ramón Espina (and in Espina's reply) published in *Archivo epistolar del General Mosquera*, J. León Helguera and Robert Davis, eds. (Bogotá: Editorial Kelly, 1966), 344–345.

69. Felipe Pérez, *Anales de la revolución escritos según sus propios documentos: primera época . . . desde 1 abril 1857 hasta 18 julio 1861* [in PDF] (Bogotá: Imprenta del Estado de Cundinamarca, 1862), 586.

70. Mention of the good-luck charm appears in Ana María Olano, "II Parte del diario en Popayán por la Señorita Ana María Olano," in *Narraciones contemporáneas de la Guerra por la Federación en el Cauca (1859–1863): transcripción, estudio preliminar y notas críticas*, Luis Ervin Prado Arellano and David Fernando Prado Valencia, eds. (Bogotá, 2017), 294.

71. Sanders, "A Mob of Women's Confront Post-Colonial Republican Politics," 67–68. On the Conservadoras' later associational activity under Church auspices, see Gloria Mercedes Arango, *Sociabilidades católicas entre la tradición y la modernidad: Antioquia, 1870–1930* (Medellín, 2004).

mothers—inculcating their children with “gospel principles”—would “restrain” the effects of “antisocial doctrines” [Radical Liberalism] on future generations.<sup>72</sup>

Ana María Rebolledo de Pombo exemplified this tradition of activism among elite Conservative women. In response to Mosquera’s July 26, 1861 decree, exiling (once again) the country’s influential Jesuit order, Rebolledo wrote to ask that he revoke it. She justified her request in the name of the “longtime friendship” her family had shown Mosquera and in the belief that it was best to “speak frankly.” She also explained why, in her view, the decree should be revoked. Adopting a diplomatic tone, Rebolledo first argued that Mosquera’s exile of the Jesuits didn’t “do justice” to his own “elevated ideas” and “vision” of what the country needed. The exile decree conflicted with “[Liberal] principles of tolerance” and goals for improving public education, she added. Rebolledo then asserted that as his countrymen—fellow “Granadinos”—the Colombian-born Jesuits deserved Mosquera’s support and protection. She saw a useful role for them, suggesting that should they be allowed to stay, they would surely encourage the defeated Conservatives to regard the new interim government with sympathy, thereby contributing to postwar partisan reconciliation. Rebolledo also noted that despite their formidable reputation, members of the Society of Jesus no longer wielded the influence they once did and that their existing influence had already been curbed by the recent law (*Ley de Tuición*) subordinating Colombia’s clergy to the civil authorities. She concluded with a warning: that the exile decree would only encourage many Colombians to see the Jesuits as “heroes and martyrs,” thus undermining Mosquera’s own stated mission of abolishing “Jesuit mania (*jesuitismo*).”<sup>73</sup>

While his response to her letter has not survived, it is doubtful Mosquera appreciated Rebolledo’s arguments, much less her bold attempt to persuade him to revoke his decree against the Jesuits. His subsequent treatment of her suggests quite the opposite. In late September 1862, after learning that Rebolledo had arranged to publish letters written by a prominent Conservative opponent of his (her son, poet Rafael Pombo), Mosquera ordered her out of Bogotá. As he later explained to a key Radical ally, his decision to exile her from the capital was justified not only by her role in publishing the letters, but, by her dissemination of what he called “false news [designed] to encourage the

72. Circular from the Sociedad de Educación para las Niñas del Sur (Consejo Directivo), Popayán, February 14, 1857, UNC-Chapel Hill, Wilson Library, Popayán Papers, box 15, folder 206. In Spanish, the circular states: “Cuando una parte de la sociedad va perdiendo la antigua suavidad de las costumbres i cuando las doctrinas antisociales van ganando en los corazones el campo que pierde la dulce religión de nuestros padres, toca a la mujer morigerar las primeras oponiéndoles con inteligencia la práctica fiel e ilustrada de los preceptos evangélicos.”

73. Rebolledo de Pombo to TCM, Bogotá, July 28, 1861, ACC-SM, #39714. Rebolledo was the wife of Conservative statesman Lino de Pombo.

rebels”—an allusion to the Conservative resistance forces that Mosquera’s army recently had been struggling to subdue.<sup>74</sup>

Colombian leaders had long worried about the impact of misleading rumor and gossip—or, false news—during times of political turmoil. Soon after the start of the War of the Supremes, for example, General Herrán, a key defender of the government, had sought to outlaw the spread of such news.<sup>75</sup> Women, moreover, had been closely associated with it. In wartime Popayán specifically, as historian Luis Ervin Prado has shown, they were linked to the spread of alarming or sensationalist (and often partisan-inspired) rumors known as “*chispas*.” Indeed, in 1841, local authorities identified—and in some cases, arrested and indicted without trial—various women alleged to be rumormongers or “*chisperas*.” Fearing their ability to persuade the (Obandista) rebels against surrendering to the forces of the government, they sought to vilify them, calling them “seductresses,” “corrupters” and “demoralizers.”<sup>76</sup>

Authorities’ fears of women’s political activity and powers of persuasion resurfaced during the Federalist War. As various sources show, Governor-General Mosquera and his subordinates in Cauca kept a wary eye on the women of Popayán (*payanesas*), certain upper-class ladies in particular. Conscious of the latter’s Conservative family ties, that is, their connections to the influential Conservative political network of Julio and Sergio Arboleda, they suspected various individuals of aiding or abetting the opposition and sought to monitor them.<sup>77</sup> One of these was the respectable Matilde Pombo, mother of the aforementioned Arboleda brothers and Mosquera’s sister-in-law. As one of Pombo’s extant letters reveals, Mosquera himself had alleged that his relative had been facilitating communication between his opponents (the government and its Arboleda allies) by receiving formal dispatches, or *postas*, from them at her house. Pombo denied the allegation. “I’ve learned that you have said that I am receiving *postas* and [want to] assure you that this is [a]

74. TCM to Manuel Ancizar, September 28, 1862, Fondo Ancizar, Universidad Nacional de Colombia–Bogotá, box 6, carpeta 1, fols. 141–143.

75. Rebecca Earle, “The War of the Supremes: Border Conflict, Religious Crusade or Simply Politics by Other Means?” in *Rumours of Wars: Civil Conflict in Nineteenth Century Latin America*, Rebecca Earle, ed. (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2000), 129.

76. Luis Ervin Prado A., “‘Seductoras,’ ‘corruptoras’ y ‘desmoralizantes’: las representaciones sobre las mujeres rebeldes realizadas por las autoridades provinciales de Popayán (1841–42),” *Memoria y Sociedad* 20:40 (2015): 126–127. In *The Work of Recognition* (Chapter 2 especially), McGraw notes the frequency of partisan-inspired rumors that served as anti-Liberal propaganda during the Federalist War in Colombia’s Caribbean region. He doesn’t examine possible female involvement in the spread of such rumors, however.

77. For a discussion of the Arboleda brothers’ Conservative political network that identifies some of the network’s key members, see the introduction to *Narraciones contemporáneas de la guerra por la Federación en el Cauca, 1859–1863*, Luis Ervin Prado Arellano and David Fernando Prado Valencia, eds. (Bogotá: Ed. El Rosario, 2017), 34–49. The network included prestigious families of Popayán, such as the Arroyos, Pombos, Valencias, and Arboledas.



complete falsehood,” she wrote Mosquera in October 1860.<sup>78</sup> She went on to explain that the only message she had received recently was a personal letter from her son Sergio and that the latter had arrived through a third party with news of her brother Lino and other members of her family. “I’m not in charge of public affairs and, thus, it is not my place to send postas or [other official] announcements,” she added briskly.<sup>79</sup>

Another upper-class payanesa, Carmen de Arroyo, narrowly escaped the consequences of a similar allegation made against her in early December. According to a local observer, when the city’s mayor appeared at her doorstep to formally charge and arrest her (unless she agreed to pay a fine) for the crime of sending postas, Arroyo was nowhere to be found.<sup>80</sup>

While the truth of these allegations remains uncertain, there is no doubt of the distrust and partisan hostility that lay behind them. Nor is there doubt that Popayán’s Conservadoras had scant sympathy for Mosquera and his followers. An example of this appears in the comments of Ana Maria Olano, whose diary chronicled the last few months of the war as she experienced them.<sup>81</sup> In a July 21 diary entry, Olano lamented the Liberal-Federalist Army’s return to Popayán after its recent routing of Conservative forces commanded by Julio Arboleda. “The unfortunate Popayán is again at the mercy of its oppressors,” she wrote. She characterized Mosquera as “the Christian barbarian” and opined that “civilization has been replaced by barbarism.” As proof of the alleged barbarism, she cited the “brutish actions” of the native auxiliaries (soldiers) commanded by General José María Sánchez, Mosquera’s point man in the region; she characterized the soldiers themselves as “wild Indians that have begun occupying the city.”<sup>82</sup>

In a subsequent (July 27) entry, Olano described the arrival of the main body of Sánchez’s troops (mostly men of mixed-race and Afro-Colombian origin)—and the frenetic welcome given them by local female supporters—in words dripping with disdain and sarcasm, along with a thinly disguised racism. “The hurricane is blowing furiously and a thick cloud of dirty dust is rising,” Olano

78. Matilde Pombo de Arboleda to TCM, Popayán, October 11, 1860, ACC-SM, #38706.

79. Matilde Pombo de Arboleda to TCM, Popayán, October 11, 1860, ACC-SM, #38706.

80. Anonymous author, “Hechos principales en la primera época de la revolución en esta ciudad [año 1860]” in *Narraciones contemporáneas de la guerra por la Federación en el Cauca, 1859–1863*, Prado Arellano and Prado Valencia, eds., 221–222.

81. Olano was a daughter of wealthy merchant, judge, and Conservative Caucaño statesman Antonino Olano Olave.

82. Olano, “Segunda parte del diario en Popayán por la Señorita Ana María Olano (21 julio á 27 octubre 1862),” in *Narraciones contemporáneas de la guerra por la Federación en el Cauca (1859–1863)*, Prado Arellano and Prado Valencia, eds., 269. Regarding the native auxiliaries, Olano’s phrase in Spanish was “*indios montaraces*.”

observed. “It’s that the Antoninos, the Patias, and the Crisantos are running through the streets in a shameless bacchanal . . . [while] their female admirers bedeck themselves in the booty brought to them,” she added.<sup>83</sup> She portrayed herself and other Conservadoras, by contrast, as upright and “loyal defenders of the [former Ospina] government.”<sup>84</sup>

Olano’s and other contemporary accounts of wartime Popayán stand out for their descriptions of the tense, often violent relations between Conservadoras and the city’s Mosquerista authorities. They highlight officials’ efforts to confront, threaten, and punish women caught engaging in activities deemed inimical to Mosquera’s cause. Olano’s diary, in particular, depicts the harassment and abuses some women suffered at the hands of men belonging to the occupying forces under General Sánchez.<sup>85</sup> Yet the diary and other accounts also offer a glimpse of something else: Conservadora resistance to Mosquera. This included mocking the general and his subordinates along with the Liberal-Federalist cause as a whole. One example was a Señora de Pombo who, according to an anonymous local observer, found herself threatened with imprisonment for mocking officials’ announcement of the important Liberal-Federalist victory at the November 1860 Battle of Segovia. Such was authorities’ concern over the señora’s conduct, the observer explained, that the state’s governor (Mosquera himself) ordered an alcalde to her home to inform her that “he knew she was making fun of the announcement . . . [and that] she should understand that a jail was waiting for her.”<sup>86</sup>

The case of one Señora de Fernández offers further evidence of women’s use of mockery against the Mosqueristas. According to Olano, in August 1862, just before Mosquera’s arrival, the señora suffered the seizure of her home and its conversion into an army barracks. This misfortune, Olano claimed, represented payback for De Fernández once having extended hospitality—“offered wine”—to some of Mosquera’s opponents (Conservative officers), and for having “mocked the dictator’s [Mosquera’s] arrival,” including the repeated official announcements and postponements of that arrival. While the claim may have been true, the sarcastic tone of Olano’s anecdote, one reflected in her reference to the incident as “quite an amusing thing (*cosa graciosísima*),” hints at an additional factor in the conflict between local women and Mosquerista officials: the real, albeit sotto voce, opposition to Mosquera that had arisen in

83. Olano, “Segunda parte del diario en Popayán,” Prado Arellano and Prado Valencia, eds., 276.

84. Olano, “Segunda parte del diario en Popayán,” Prado Arellano and Prado Valencia, eds., 303.

85. See for example the various incidents recounted in Olano, “Segunda parte del diario en Popayán,” 270–290.

86. Anon., “Hechos principales en la primera época de la revolución en esta ciudad,” Prado Arellano and Prado Valencia, eds., 221–222. The lady alluded to was likely Manuelita Arroyo de Pombo.

private spaces, especially behind the walls of payanesa homes.<sup>87</sup> This opposition found expression in domestic gatherings or *tertulias*, at which, as revealed in the cases mentioned above, elite hostesses sought to ridicule Mosquera and his followers in order to weaken respect for—or, delegitimize—them in the eyes of friends and family and, by extension, public opinion.

Conservadoras' conduct may be roughly compared to that of female partisans in a different national context. It parallels the resistance of US Confederate women in New Orleans who, stunned by news of the Confederate Army's surrender of the city to Union forces in April 1862, refused to accept the city's new military occupiers, shunning them for months and even openly insulting them in the name of Confederate patriotism.<sup>88</sup>

Conservadoras also worked to shape public opinion in Popayán through the spread of false news or disinformation. Available sources attest to their efforts along with official reactions. According to one contemporary observer, on February 26, 1861, Elvira Castrillón and Rafaela Valencia were arrested and sent to jail for spreading the lie (“falsedad”) that Mosquera had been defeated.<sup>89</sup> The women's dissemination of this falsehood may have been part of a larger campaign by Conservative partisans to disconcert and demoralize their rivals, including, in Olano's words, the despised “Rojas [female Liberals or Reds].” It exemplified the larger war of words that both reflected and fueled the city's political polarization.<sup>90</sup>

In the last few months of the Federalist War, tensions flared between Rojas and Godas, becoming visible in the streets. According to Olano, in late July and August 1862, the Rojas started openly celebrating the Liberal-Federalist Army's recent victories—and their cause's imminent triumph—by decorating their homes and neighborhoods in anticipation of General Mosquera's long-awaited homecoming. They started taunting their partisan rivals as well. “The Rojas are running to and fro, preparing to raise the triumphal arches . . . [and] screaming pitilessly ‘tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. . . the Godas will see him here!’” Olano told her diary disgustedly in August. She later added with satisfaction

87. Olano, “Segunda parte del diario en Popayán,” 286.

88. George Rable, “Missing in Action”: Women of the Confederacy,” in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 134–146.

89. Anon., “Hechos principales en la primera época de la revolución en esta ciudad,” 222–223. The account adds that a local sheriff and party of solidiers had to forcibly take Castrillón from her home as she tried to resist arrest, and also, that once she was dragged out to the street, two other men defended her and accompanied her to the prison.

90. Signaling both the extent of Popayan's partisan polarization and the difficulty of distinguishing between factual information and partisan-inspired rumor or hearsay, Olano's diary refers to news circulated by local Liberals as “*chispas rojas* (red rumors).”

that the Rojas' prediction had proved to be premature, a "false alarm."<sup>91</sup> Olano's description of a subsequent incident coinciding with the important Catholic Feast of the Assumption (August 15) sheds light on how antagonism between rival groups of women partisans sometimes erupted in public confrontation. According to Olano, when Conservadoras came out on the streets that day for the annual religious procession honoring the ascent into heaven of Christ's mother, they "were insulted" by the Rojas for their "act of piety."<sup>92</sup>

One of Mosquera's own nieces acknowledged the partisan rivalry among women that had begun to shape Popayán's public sphere and political climate. In an August 21 message to her uncle, Paulina Arboleda remarked that she and other Mosquera supporters in the city were waiting "enthusiastically" for his arrival. They were looking forward to seeing him enter the city through the triumphal arches that had been erected in his honor, she added. She expressed hope that this would be sooner rather than later, so as to avoid furnishing their rivals, "*las Señoras Centralistas*," with, as she delicately put it, "satisfying moments of diversion."<sup>93</sup>

Confrontation between Rojas and Godas reappeared on the day of Mosquera's arrival with his army on August 29, this made more momentous by the repeated delays that had preceded it. According to Olano, as the city welcomed the Liberal-Federalist troops, "45 Rojas" were met—or, in Olano's words, "opposed"—by "170 señoras conservadoras." While Olano's diary avoids elaborating on the nature of this apparent stand-off, it seems reasonable to assume that the Conservadoras had turned out in protest, likely seeking to make a show of their force in numbers.<sup>94</sup>

Although Olano made no mention of her involvement in any of the above-mentioned confrontations (examples of female partisans' political theatre), she denigrated the women who welcomed Mosquera's men to town with flowers and speeches, referring to them dismissively as "*ñapangas*."<sup>95</sup> This was a common, derogatory term for the city's young, independent, working-class women, often assumed to be women of "easy virtue." Its use confirms how the war of words found expression among a privileged elite, members of Popayán's Conservative oligarchy, who never doubted their presumed superiority. It also suggests that on the eve of their side's military

91. Olano, "Segunda parte del diario en Popayán," 289.

92. Olano, "Segunda parte del diario en Popayán," 288. The author made no mention of her own participation, if any.

93. Paulina Arboleda to TCM, August 21, 1862, ACC-SM, #41314.

94. Olano, "Segunda parte del diario en Popayán," 293. The diary also mentions that Mosquera arrived in the city at the head of 800 soldiers and 25 loads of war materiel.

95. Olano, "Segunda parte del diario en Popayán," 293.

defeat, confirmed a month later by the Liberal-Federalist army's September victory at the Battle of Santa Bárbara de Cartago, Conservadoras like Olano remained defiant. In the face of a popular revolt that threatened the traditional order on which their status depended, condescension, it seems, was easier than concession—especially to opponents they regarded as socially and morally inferior.<sup>96</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although the vast majority of studies on nineteenth-century Spanish American women have stressed women's exclusion from political life on the basis of gender (and, to some extent, class), the evidence presented here contradicts or at least, complicates, this picture.<sup>97</sup> It shows that at least in mid nineteenth-century Colombia, women were far from being excluded. They were, in fact, active participants in politics, including the fierce partisan struggles that marked the country's Liberal Revolution through the early 1860s. Even if rarely visible in the public political arena, they were immersed in the world of mid nineteenth-century partisan rivalry—a world that after 1849, was marked by increasing popular participation and an expanding and increasingly open, albeit highly polarized, public sphere. Female Liberals (Rojas) thus assisted Mosquera in his successful overthrow of the Conservative Ospina regime, while their partisan counterparts (Godas) did all they could to oppose or resist him. Both female partisan groups shaped wartime public opinion and the broader political environment in various informal ways, including the spread of news and information, rumor, and gossip.

In an age of increasingly rigid gender norms, in which women's private conduct was, as Sarah Chambers has noted, increasingly subject to public scrutiny and judged against the new female moral ideal of domesticity, how could this be?<sup>98</sup> The cases of elites such as Amalia Mosquera and her Conservative counterparts are illustrative. These women turned their homes into sites of political opposition and resistance, that is, into spaces for intelligence-gathering, strategizing, social politicking, propagandizing, and opinion-making. They learned how to reconcile societal gender expectations—the “angel of the home”

96. Olano's diary also refers to certain Rojas (supporters of Mosquera) as “*la ñapanga Tigre*” and “*la ñapanga Carisucia*,” suggesting that name-calling was a common practice among partisan rivals.

97. A well-known and influential example of such studies is Sarah Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999), especially Chapter 6, “Gender and Republican Morality.” A brief survey of the scholarship that has appeared since then may be found in Chapter 3 of Pamela Murray, ed., *Women and Gender in Modern Latin America: Sources and Interpretations* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

98. Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens*, 214.

ideal—with their political beliefs and activism; these were almost invariably aligned with, and deployed on behalf of, broad familial loyalties and interests. As circumstances permitted, their counterparts of humbler origin likely behaved similarly.

The experiences of Colombia's Rojas and Godas also may be compared to the experiences of other women of the Americas who participated in decisive nineteenth-century nation-making struggles. In her study of women's participation in Mexico's War of the Reform (1857–61), for example, Francie Chassen López found that in the southern state of Oaxaca, a Mexican Liberal Party stronghold, women played an active role in the city's defense against Conservative military forces; and that they ultimately shaped the war's outcome even as male leaders persisted in portraying them mainly as either victims or symbols of opponents' vulnerability—that is, their damaged or dubious masculinity.<sup>99</sup> Studies of women's participation in Argentina's long Federalist-Unitarian conflict including the years of the Rosas dictatorship (1830s to 1840s) also show a pattern of female political agency and activism, one that stood in sharp contrast to official gender ideology.<sup>100</sup>

General Mosquera himself recognized the important role that women of both parties had played in the Federalist War—and, that female Mosqueristas in particular had played in his and his allies' ultimate victory over their rivals. At the 1863 constitutional convention of Rionegro over which he presided, he sought to honor that role in his own way by hosting a special ball for the city's ladies (members of Liberal families). Keen to ingratiate himself with the convention's hosts as well as the inhabitants of a city that was a stronghold of Colombian Liberalism, he knew well from his own experience the value of winning the favor and cooperation of local women.<sup>101</sup>

*University of Alabama at Birmingham*  
*Birmingham, Alabama*  
[pamstories2018@gmail.com](mailto:pamstories2018@gmail.com)

PAMELA S. MURRAY

99. Chassen-López, "Las hijas de Oaxaca: las mujeres liberales en las guerras de Reforma y de Intervención Francesa, 1857–67," in *La ciudad de Oaxaca: pasado, presente y futuro*, 2 vols., Carlos Sánchez Silva, ed. (Monterrey, 2016), 265–295.

100. See for example Jesse Hingson's "Savages into Supplicants: Subversive Women and Restitution Petitions in Córdoba, Argentina during the Rosas Era," *The Americas* 64:1 (July 2007): 59–85; and, especially, Jeffrey M. Shumway's discussion of the role of Encarnación Ezcurra de Rosas in Federalist Party in-fighting in Shumway, *A Woman, A Man, A Nation: Mariquita Sánchez, Juan Manuel de Rosas, and the Beginnings of Argentina* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019), 158–161.

101. Demostración de los gastos hechos para el baile dado por el Sr. Gral Mosquera a las señoras de Rionegro, April 6, 1863, ACC-SM, #45266.