


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Gender, Power, and Female Revolutionaries

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This essay reviews the following works:

Women and the Cuban Insurrection: How Gender Shaped Castro's Victory. By Lorraine Bayard de Volo. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xi + 304. \$25.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781316630846.

Buenas al pleito: Mujeres en la rebelión de Sandino. By Alejandro Bendaña. Managua: Anamá Ediciones, 2019. Pp. 302. \$25.00 paperback. ISBN: 9789992475652.

Beatriz Allende: A Revolutionary Life in Cold War Latin America. By Tanya Harmer. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. x + 384. \$34.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9781469654294.

Laboring for the State: Women, Family, and Work in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959–1971. By Rachel Hynson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xvii + 332. \$34.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9781107188679.

Students of Revolution: Youth, Protest, and Coalition Building in Somoza-Era Nicaragua. By Claudia Rueda. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 304. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781477319307.

Sandinistas: A Moral History. By Robert J. Sierakowski. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. Pp. 356. \$35.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780268106898.

Celia Sánchez Manduley: The Life and Legacy of a Cuban Revolutionary. By Tiffany A. Sippial. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. xxi + 288. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781469654607.

Revolution and Reaction: The Diffusion of Authoritarianism in Latin America. By Kurt Weyland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. x + 310. \$34.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781108728836.

How did women and gender shape left-wing insurrection and revolutionary state formation during Latin America's Cold War? William Booth recently proposed six layers of conflict that defined Latin America's Cold War: between landowner and peasant; state

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and citizen; US hegemony and national sovereignty; capital and labor; capitalism and socialism; and between a US-led bloc and USSR-led bloc.¹ Yet the role of gender in this schema is unclear. Is it merely a contextual factor inherent in each layer, as Booth seems to suggest, or does it merit its own axis as a geological layer of conflict?² How and when did conflicting ideas about manhood and womanhood, and the power dynamics produced by relations between men and women, become central to Cold War conflicts?

One approach to these questions has been to uncover the stories of women who participated in traditional political negotiations and military conflicts. Yet, as recent historiography makes clear, the Latin American Cold War has never been easily reducible to such narratives. New histories have reconceptualized Cold War dynamics, drawing from local, everyday experiences to recast larger events.³ If, as Greg Grandin and Gil Joseph suggest, “the internationalization and politicization of everyday life” is the key to understanding Latin America’s Cold War, then uncovering women’s everyday lives and participation becomes an essential component.⁴ Local and familial dynamics mattered, and women and gender actively shaped how movements developed and conflicts unfolded. How, then, does accounting for gender change Booth’s framework?

Eight recent books on gender, revolution, and reaction yield new insights about the quintessentially Cold War conflicts that were the Cuban and Sandinista revolutions. A gendered axis of conflict reshapes narratives of revolution by first assessing how quotidian work functioned to build insurrectionary movements and revolutionary states in Nicaragua and Cuba. Authors’ concerns with everyday politics reveal gender dynamics to be at the heart of conflicts. Alejandro Bendaña’s *Buenas al pleito*, Claudia Rueda’s *Students of Revolution*, Robert Sierakowski’s *Sandinistas*, and Lorraine Bayard de Volo’s *Women and the Cuban Insurrection* consider women’s participation in the Sandinista and Cuban insurrections. They establish how women’s everyday politics propelled insurrection, as well as how the movements leveraged gender. Then, Rachel Hynson’s *Laboring for the State*, Tiffany Sippial’s *Celia Sánchez Manduley*, and Tanya Harmer’s *Beatriz Allende* examine how gender functioned and women lived within revolutionary societies. By making gender a primary category of conflict, these authors reveal dimensions of activism, military action, management, life under revolution, and revolutionary state making that cannot be seen from other angles.

The Cuban Revolution was a watershed moment in the Latin American Cold War. Kurt Weyland’s *Revolution and Reaction* frames the era by considering the brutal series of counterrevolutionary responses to it. His work bridges the temporal juncture of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions by assessing several South American countries’ turns to dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. Using interdisciplinary methodologies from political science, history, and psychology, this study seeks to illuminate what accounted for the reactionary wave that followed 1959. Weyland assigns primary importance to the Cuban Revolution as the event that spurred guerrilla movements across the hemisphere, which the Right reacted against. He argues that “aroused by the Cuban Revolution, the fear of communism became so intense that it provoked disproportionate, excessive

¹ William Booth, “Rethinking Latin America’s Cold War,” *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 4 (2021): 1137.

² Booth, “Rethinking Latin America’s Cold War,” 1146.

³ For a review of recent studies of leftist movements “from below,” see Kevin A. Young, “Beyond the Comandantes: Revolutions and Revolutionaries since 1959,” *Latin American Research Review* 57, no. 2 (2022): 504–514.

⁴ Grandin, quoted in Joseph, “What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies,” in *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 4.

responses” (43). According to Weyland, autocratic rule unfolded in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil in bounded rationality, rather than standard rationality. Bounded rationality relies on the key idea of asymmetrical loss aversion, which means that people attach more importance to losses than to gains (7). Weyland contends that this loss aversion explains why the right wing reacted to leftist movements the way it did: outsized fear of revolution and political change triggers loss aversion, which “prompts an urge to adopt strong countermeasures” (8).

Weyland’s turn to psychology is suggestive—though whether elites and institutions operated outside the realm of rational behavior can be debated, especially if we consider that their goal might not have been exclusively to prevent revolution. Preserving the status quo, which meant denying social, political, and economic power to poor and peasant classes, was also part of counterrevolution and dictatorship. (The Guatemalan coup of 1954 also complicates his chronology.) It seems well within rational action that those with the means to prevent loss of historic status would do so, and that violence would be part of their strategy.

Yet insights via a lens of gender and sexuality highlight new dimensions to the right-wing overreactions to perceived leftist threats that Weyland persuasively identifies. For example, historians of gender and sexuality have shown how subversion—the elements and enemies reactionaries sought to eliminate—meant more than armed revolution. In the case of Brazil, Benjamin Cowan demonstrates how Conservative reactions against “perceived threats to tradition, family, gender, and moral standards, and conventional sexuality” unfolded within a period of upheaval. Anxieties over leftist movements were not unfounded, but they were amplified by underlying fears of a breakdown in gender hierarchies.⁵ Weyland broadens the geographical stakes of the Cuban Revolution by emphasizing the revolutionary projects it sparked throughout the hemisphere and the right-wing counterresponses it produced. A gendered lens adds critical nuance to this framework.

Women in Insurrection

The Sandino Rebellion in Nicaragua (1927–1933) prefaced later revolutions that came to power during the Cold War. Augusto Sandino launched a rebellion in the Segovias of Nicaragua against the US Marine invasion that became a symbol of anti-imperial resistance to future guerrilla leaders such as Fidel Castro and Carlos Fonseca. *Buenas al pleito* by Alejandro Bendaña investigates the gendered dynamics of the Sandino Rebellion and the women involved in the movement. Bendaña argues that without women, insurrection would not have been possible. They formed the basis of the movement’s social legitimacy by carrying out logistical work: without logistics, there is no war, and without women, there are no logistics (53). Logistics included buying, transporting, cooking, and serving food, organizing supplies, washing clothes, and serving as sexual partners to the male guerrillas. Bendaña shows that logistics also meant growing food for the Sandinistas, running safe houses, and spying. Women farmers filled these instrumental roles. For example, Pastora Blandón was a respected producer and merchant who lived in Marine-occupied territory along an important supply route. She used her land and business to hide supplies for the guerrillas and send cattle and money to a “business contact” near the guerrilla camps in the north (122). The Marines eventually arrested her, but Blandón used gendered logic to claim that as a “single and defenseless woman,” she could not have a party or

⁵ Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 8.

political opinions and therefore could not be a Sandinista (124). Women like Blandón provided key ground support for the guerrillas to operate within Nicaragua.

Bendaña relies on sources from the extensive archive compiled by Michael J. Schroeder (<http://www.sandinorebellion.com/>). This is an underutilized compilation, and Bendaña does an admirable job reading against the grain to compile evidence of women's activities. His study also foregrounds interviews conducted in the early 1980s with surviving members of Sandino's army. He excerpts large chunks from the primary sources, which allow the reader a more intimate sense of the women protagonists he features but can become tedious. The book is organized thematically, with chapters such as "The First Sandinistas" and "Sex Workers and Smugglers." The last third of the book dedicates chapters to individual women, which chronicle their individual contributions and involvement in the movement.

Bendaña intervenes in the historiography of the Sandino Rebellion to center the "invisible" women who participated to expand who should be considered guerrillas, regardless of whether they carried weapons. Yet, in the 1920s and 1930s, the fundamental power relations between men and women and gendered norms did not change in the camps, just as they would not change during the future Cuban and Sandinista insurrections in the 1950s and 1970s (68). Male guerrillas certainly did not wash their own clothes or make their own tortillas; gendered divisions of labor remained intact. Sandino mostly prevented women from fighting alongside men: to be a guerrilla was to be a man. He also maintained patriarchal ideas that included a father's permission to marry, and that the only education women needed was how to iron, cook, and wash—not the ability to read (223).

Even so, Bendaña demonstrates that women weaponized the assumptions that were inherent within gendered divisions of labor and sexist ideas about women. Women *finqueras* (farm owners) who resisted the guerrilla tax and collaboration reveal the importance of others (such as Blandón) who used their agricultural clout to support the guerrillas. Sex workers in Puerto Cabezas, leveraging the Marines' gendered attitudes that protected them from suspicion, smuggled weapons and passed information to the guerrillas that they gathered through brothels. Women in the camps performed the daily care work that enabled survival, including nursing injuries. Sandino's partners, first Teresa Villatorra and then his wife, Blanca Aráuz Pineda, served as confidantes, organizers, leaders, and diplomats. Women were essential to Sandino's success, but their contributions went unacknowledged and did not translate into political power or equality.

In 1933, the Marines left Nicaragua, having failed to defeat the Sandino Rebellion but leaving in their place the US-trained Guardia Nacional (GN) led by Anastasio Somoza García. Claudia Rueda's *Students of Revolution* reveals that military logistics were not the only place where women's participation was apparent, nor the only field through which revolutionary activism mattered. The study shifts focus from guerrilla resistance to examine the multidecade and multigenerational student movement in Nicaragua under the Somozas (1937–1979). Rueda's study decenters 1968 and the "long sixties" privileged in student movement literature and moves beyond the 1970s (the decade leading up to the triumph of the Sandinista revolution) to demonstrate that students had been organizing against the various iterations of the Somoza regime for much longer than generally credited. The longevity of student action—which began in the 1930s with the onset of Somoza García's rise to power—is important because students accumulated moral authority over time, which "meant people paid attention when they protested" (4). Students raised support first for their university-based demands, and then, by the 1970s, for revolution. In 1944 they began agitating for autonomy for the National University in León, and in 1958 they won. Creating a space beyond the state's reach was essential for organizing purposes, and it also "institutionalized" student exceptionalism (40).

Rueda probes how the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) garnered widespread support and why vast swaths of Nicaraguan society rose up against Somoza, often

in the face of death and extreme violence. Moving beyond the guerrillas, she examines more ordinary people and their everyday tactics, because the guerrillas could not bring about revolution through armed insurrection on their own. Rueda points out that only mass organization of a “fighting mad” population could bring down the Somoza dictatorship, but that first the nation had to become conscious and mad enough to fight (176). Students were key to creating this culture of insurrection and to helping the Sandinistas build a base in the 1970s. Autonomy for the National University in León meant that the Sandinistas could ally with students on an “island of democracy,” protected from the Guardia, to organize broader support as they rebuilt their movement. Students brought their families into the protest fold, and their connections to various sectors of society, including secondary school students, allowed them to mobilize for their causes—which were increasingly linked to the FSLN. Students ultimately forged cross-class alliances that they leveraged in concert with the Sandinista guerrillas.

Perhaps one reason why students’ involvement in the success of toppling Somoza has been overlooked is that their role in the insurrection was “quotidian” and often gendered as “women’s work” (207). Bendaña demonstrates that women’s omission from Sandino Rebellion historiography was partially due to the type of work they performed. Here, we see that students, both men and women, contributed to work auxiliary to armed confrontation, such as logistics, organizing, communication, building inroads into the barrios, and creating propaganda (181–195). Yet Rueda shows that students “had the special ability to spark wider mobilization in Nicaragua” because they were one of the few groups to organize against and challenge the Somoza regime. They had been the most visible group since the 1940s. Importantly, students also held a special status within society that protected them (partially) from state violence, which derived from their symbolic place within the nation as Nicaragua’s future professionals.

While Rueda charts women’s presence in the student movement, who these women were is often fuzzy. In the male-dominated university setting there were some women leaders, including Vilma Núñez, who was elected to represent students on the law school faculty board for the 1958–1959 school year (96). Núñez, along with other female students, led protest marches, believing gendered perceptions would make them less vulnerable to retaliation than their male peers. Women were also instrumental in organizing the public to support student protests and actions (110). By 1966, two women, Michele Najlis and Brenda Ortega, competed for the presidency of the student government at the National University. Rueda interviewed Najlis, Núñez, Flor de María Monterrey (a Catholic student organizer), and Dora María Téllez. The interviews with Najlis and Núñez appeared especially rich. It would have been interesting to hear more about these women, their positionality, and the oral history process, rather than just the details mined from their interviews.

Like *Students of Revolution*, Robert Sierakowski’s *Sandinistas: A Moral History* also examines the roots of revolution and how revolutionary ideas and actions “were embraced and transformed at the level of everyday politics” (12). *Sandinistas* takes the Segovias, and Estelí in particular, as its case study of the insurrection’s trajectory. Estelí became a bastion of Sandinista support, but this was not an “inevitable” legacy of Augusto Sandino’s anti-imperial campaign from the 1930s. Rather, Sierakowski argues that “the key to the rebel’s subsequent success was the manner in which they framed their struggle as a way to extirpate vice, violence, corruption, and glaring inequality from everyday life” (6). The Sandinista movement’s emphasis on moral regeneration sprung from Nicaraguans’ struggle to improve their families’ lives, which were threatened by Somoza’s violence and family degeneration. A new moral order required revising the gendered dimensions of family: activists shifted the meaning of manhood away from drinking and vice, and women assumed leadership roles in grassroots organizations. Sandinistas inserted gendered ideas about morality as a crucial dimension to insurrection.

Sierakowski relies on an impressive range of sources, including oral histories produced by the national literacy crusade in 1980, court documents from the Guardia Nacional, government documents, and his own archive of two hundred oral histories carried out during extensive fieldwork in northern Nicaragua. This history of Sandinista mobilization is particular to the Segovias, but its specificity should not discount the study's excellent research. Sierakowski delves into how the Somoza dictatorship operated at the grassroots level to show how the FSLN cracked the regime's structures through grassroots organizing. The Somoza regime fostered illicit businesses run by "cantina caciques," such as brothels, cantinas, and gambling halls. They connected the state to the community. The Guardia was supposed to regulate "vice"-driven business, but in reality, soldiers profited from them via bribes and kickbacks. Thus, Guardia involvement in such schemes contributed to an "atmosphere of illicit behavior and social chaos" (54).

In the 1960s, trade unionists in the Segovias were the first to organize, linking their struggle for better wages and conditions to improved neighborhoods and social services. They organized alongside students and the FSLN but were repressed in 1965 by the Guardia. Thereafter, the FSLN took over clandestine organizing in Estelí. It turned to high school students, whose activism in the late 1960s grew out of, and was connected to, the university student movements Rueda describes. These students provided the FSLN a foothold in the middle-class, urban center of Estelí, which differed from the more peripheral, working-class trade unionists. Building on organizational momentum, Catholic activists took up and merged with the trade unionists and students' critiques of vice, inequality, and family breakdown in the 1970s. They spread ideas of liberation theology through *cur-sillos*, or Bible study seminars, which brought community members together and served as a venue for political awakening. Catholic activists centered issues of alcohol abuse and "link[ed] the eradication of vice to both individual transformation and the broader social structure" (99). The Somoza regime's dependence on vice, coupled with violent repression, pushed popular sectors to ally with the burgeoning guerrilla movement.

From different angles, Sierakowski and Rueda highlight the multigenerational, familial nature of organizing against the Somoza regime. The September 1978 insurrection relied on an alliance between young, male guerrilla combatants and mothers who provided food, water, and protection in the battle against the GN. Sierakowski argues that "the dynamic interactions between both 'the kids' and 'the mothers' as part of the nascent emerging family-oriented vision of revolution . . . made the Sandinista insurrection possible" (163). Mobilization created a "family" out of guerrillas and their (female) ground support in Estelí. Similarly, Rueda shows that connections between parents and students fueled student mobilizations' reach. Parents protested alongside their children, and as student activism merged with the revolutionary activity of the FLSN, parents lent critical logical support such as safe houses and transportation (186). Both studies demonstrate how the family unit operated at the heart of organizing and insurrection.

Sierakowski's and Rueda's studies also illustrate how state violence became personal and shaped Nicaraguans' everyday politics, which transformed into resistance to the Somoza dictatorship. For the student movement in the 1950s, the Somoza regime's brutal repression of the guerrilla invasion of June 1959, in what became known as the El Chaparral Massacre, was one inflection point. Crucially, the former student organizer Carlos Fonseca was part of the guerrilla force, and the regime's violent response to one whom the students considered their own radicalized them in support of Fonseca and against the dictatorship (107). The regime continued beating and murdering students during the 1960s and 1970s, which demonstrated its brutality and convinced young people to join opposition movements (155). In the Segovias, state violence in late 1978 and throughout 1979 "fostered a robust Sandinista identity, linking together resistance and sacrifice as part of the insurgent morality" (195). Sierakowski charts how a series of massacres perpetrated by the GN throughout Estelí earned the FSLN recruits for the insurgency.

The Guardia killed civilians, and as a result survivors became “more deeply wedded” to the Sandinistas’ social and political project that they believed their family members had been sacrificed for (222).

Finally, Lorraine Bayard de Volo’s *Women and the Cuban Insurrection* argues that, beyond everyday politics, gender could also be used explicitly to resonate with mass politics. She seeks to uncover how gender structured understandings of the Cuban insurrection and the experiences of gendered actors. She makes three main arguments: women of all ages participated in the insurrection in various ways and performed crucial work in the *llano* (the plains, or urban areas); Fidel Castro and rebel leaders emphasized the war of ideas, and guerrilla success cannot be understood without attention to this theater; and rebels used gender as a tactical weapon in their war arsenal. The Cuban war story, or the official version of the insurrection, centers men and guerrilla warfare in the mountains. However, this study demonstrates the crucial work performed by women beyond the mountains, both in the “incremental”—or quotidian—work necessary to sustain and build legitimacy for a movement, and also by deliberately working “as women.”

Bayard de Volo makes a compelling case that Castro’s 26th of July Movement (M-26-7) strategically deployed gender to win converts to the rebellion, discredit the Batista government, and involve women in rebel activities when it furthered the rebellion’s goals. For example, during the rebels’ trials after the failed Moncada attack, Fidel molded what might have been a “feminizing” defeat into public support by “contrasting honorable rebel masculinity with the debased, assaultive masculinity of the regime” (47). He also used the testimonies of Haydée Santamaría and Melba Hernández, the only two women who participated in the Moncada attack, to provide emotional weight to the trials, stand in as victims, and bear witness to the regime’s brutality (53). The Batista regime’s gendered assumptions meant that women were given lighter prison sentences when caught and thus could maintain the movement when men were in jail. They were less likely to be suspected of rebel activity in the field, and women capitalized on an idealized femininity to deploy tactics, such as thick skirts and pregnant bellies, to smuggle communication and weapons. And a small number of women (fourteen) fought as armed guerrillas in the Mariana Grajales Platoon in the final months of the insurrection.

The richest aspect of Bayard de Volo’s analysis are the portraits of women who were involved with the M-26-7. Eva Jiménez’s trajectory illustrated that women participated in activism across generations. She joined the Directorio Estudiantil Universitario in the 1930s to protest against Machado. In the 1950s, she was a founding member of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), and after being jailed for involvement in an anti-Batista coup, she went into exile in Mexico, where she eventually joined up with Fidel (32). Lidia Ester Doce Sánchez and Clodomira Acosta Ferrales worked as trusted couriers, traveling between the guerrillas in the mountains and urban contacts. Clodomira served as Fidel’s envoy to meet with the Directorio Revolucionario, another anti-Batista revolutionary group, in February 1958 as they set up a guerrilla base in the Escambray. Fidel intended Clodomira to lead the Mariana Platoon, but Batista police captured and killed her and Lidia while they were carrying out a mission in Havana (199–201). Aleida March, Oniria Gitiérrez, and Zobeida “Mimí” Rodríguez sought to join combat with the guerrillas outside of the Marianas, but only Mimí eventually captured a gun and integrated with her husband’s platoon (212–216). There are also portraits of women who came forward with stories of sexual assault by Batista forces, such as Ángela González and Esterlina Milanés. These women are but a few of the “rank-and-file” women that populate *Women and the Cuban Insurrection*, illustrating a wide range of experiences and involvement in the M-26-7.

Through different approaches, these studies reveal a compelling picture of the importance of women and gender during insurrectionary phases of revolution. Bayard de Volo explores explicit gender politics. Bendaña demonstrates that attention to gender reveals

women's everyday politics, while Rueda and Sierakowski show how gendered, everyday politics built insurrectionary movements. Together, these four books represent the possibilities of new scholarship on Central America; Rueda's and Sierakowski's contributions to the history of the Sandinista revolution are particularly exciting.⁶ Women drove everyday politics of insurrection, and revolutionary movements contained and exploited gendered politics. Yet how did gender politics play out in revolutionary societies once the fighting was done?

Women in Revolution

In *Laboring for the State*, Rachel Hynson approaches this question for the first decade of the Cuban Revolution by looking at what she terms the New Family, which "was led by a male head of household who worked outside the home in a state-approved job and resided with his legal wife who deferred to the state control over the regulation of her reproduction and any (paid or unpaid) labor outside the home" (2). Hynson argues that the revolutionary state engaged in social engineering via projects that redefined the family to better capture citizens' labor. *Laboring for the State* considers four campaigns to craft the New Family that unfolded over the 1960s: controlling women's reproduction, promoting marriage, ending prostitution, and directing men to jobs that did not rely on women's earnings.

Hynson's study demonstrates the importance of the nuclear family unit to the Cuban revolutionary state's ideology and programs during its first decade. While Hynson concludes that these efforts to create the New Family failed, *Laboring for the State* prompts us to ask why old ways of organizing family still worked during the revolution. The New Family continued to rely on extended family or multigenerational households because laboring for the state required childcare and domestic labor that could not always be performed by the wife. Establishing independent nuclear families might have also been difficult because of housing shortages; in other words, the architecture of the revolution necessitated "old" ways of organizing family. The campaigns say more about the state and how it envisioned the revolutionary family than about how changing economic situations and the state's shifting emphasis on women's work, education, and opportunities abroad affected the revolutionary family's structure. The family is an interesting lens with which to study revolutionary state making because it reveals leaders' gendered, patriarchal, and conservative visions of the family. But family also shows that the revolutionary state was not all-powerful, and ideas about women's economic autonomy, state-sponsored childcare, and collectivizing domestic labor (such as washing and shopping) existed alongside the state's peddling of "traditional" family structures.

The mixed results of the programs to reform the family and capture labor might not demonstrate the state's authoritarianism so much as it illustrates the uneven reach of the state. In terms of the birth control and marriage chapters, I wondered about the difference between coercion, consent, and taking advantage of state programs for self-interest. For example, in the case of *hogares maternos* (maternity homes), Hynson recognizes that it is unclear when or if women experienced coercion to reside in maternal homes before giving birth under the gaze of state doctors (58). Did women want to participate in these programs? What benefits might there have been for compliance? What were their experiences? Similarly, I wondered about the administrative teeth behind Operation Matrimony. Aside from the urban-based Cuban youth canvassing the homes of the counterrevolutionary provinces of Las Villas and Matanzas, what pressures, coercion, or consequences for not marrying were residents subjected to? Based on Hynson's

⁶ For a recent review essay that casts doubt on the merits of recent books on Central America, see Robert Holden, "After the Deluge: Central American Historiography at Low Tide," *Latin American Research Review* 55, no. 3 (2020): 574–585.

evidence, it seems that couples responded more to incentives than to coercion: marriage rates increased when there were no fees for weddings or registration and when there were clear material incentives for marrying. No doubt many married to buy into the state's definition of morality and maintain their classification as "good" citizens—which is certainly a form of coercion—but it is also clear that others used the state's emphasis on marriage to their own benefit. Getting married, sometimes multiple times, to acquire goods motivated many couples. The state's often haphazard implementation of abortion laws and wedding operations meant there was space for people to maneuver within these projects, and their choices might not always fall under the "resistance" umbrella but rather were strategies of survival.

The coercive and authoritarian nature of the state is better translated through the government's campaigns against prostitution and *chulos*—men who relied on women's labor for money—as well as vagrants. The revolutionary government's program to detain through raids men who were not appropriately employed by the state and send them to work camps, writes Hynson, "was part of a broader attempt, over the Revolution's first decade of consolidated power, to enhance its control over Cubans' bodies and labor" (203). Refashioning the gendered dynamics of the New Family whereby men served as the head and primary earner constituted a key outcome of this strategy. Hynson uses the "Night of the Three P's," which began on October 11, 1961, to examine how the state targeted people for rehabilitation. The "three P's" stood for *prostitutatas* (prostitutes), *pederastas* (homosexuals), and *proxenetas* (pimps or *chulos*) (202). But these categories were squishy, and this ambiguity allowed the state to arrest vagrants or anyone who appeared suspicious (203). Hynson traces changes in the law directly after the Night of the Three P's, specifically the passing of Law 993, to show how MININT (Ministerio del Interior) could determine a "state of dangerousness" (*estado peligro*) in the absence of due process and sentence *chulos* outside of the judicial system (223).

Hynson's study succeeds in demonstrating how the revolutionary state sought control over its citizens via women's and men's bodies. It provocatively centers struggles over family organization as a means to analyze processes of state formation and people's everyday choices. In this way it offers an important contribution to the historiography of the Cuban Revolution and how revolution intersects with ideas about gender, family, and women.

Tiffany Sippial and Tanya Harmer take Bayard de Volo's and Hynson's breadth about women and family in the Cuban insurrection and revolution and focus on specific, if elite, lives. Sippial profiles Celia Sánchez Manduley, "the first female guerrilla of the Sierra Maestra," secretary to the president and Council of Ministers (1962), secretary of the Council of State (1976), the Cuban Revolution's highest-ranking female leader, and one of Fidel's closest confidantes until her death in 1980. Sánchez looms large as one of the Cuban Revolution's heroes, but Sippial pushes past her memorialization as a self-effacing, steadfast, maternal woman who worked behind the scenes "to interrogate the meanings assigned to Sánchez's experiences within official discourse, popular memory, and sites of memorialization" (5).

Sippial approaches writing Sánchez's biography as a feminist biographer who uses cultural evidence, recognizes subjectivity, and considers the "complexities, contradictions, and tensions in stories told about a person's life" (6). One of Sippial's interventions is to acknowledge her own presence within the history she produces. For example, Sippial visits Sánchez's childhood home in Media Luna, a remote sugar town in Oriente where her father worked as a doctor, and uses the artifacts in the museum to examine how Sánchez grew up. By charting Sánchez's coming of age, Sippial argues that Sánchez was "a rebel who found her movement, more than a rebel made by a movement" (47). Sánchez honed her famed charisma, organization, generosity, caretaking, and local connections prior to joining the M-26-7.

Sánchez strategically avoided the press and the limelight, and it was for this paradoxical reason she rose so high in the revolutionary leadership. In her study, Bayard de Volo notes that the success of the M-26-7 rested on the work of women leaders who did not challenge Castro or other male leaders for power, maintaining the movement's unity. Sánchez was one such leader, and Sippial suggests that she genuinely crafted the role she desired: slightly in the background, a caretaker, an organizer, a doer. Sánchez operated both within and beyond traditional gender roles. For example, Sánchez directed numerous large-scale projects, including Parque Lenin, Coppelia, and Parque Nacional La Demajagua, among others. These were "social projects" that were unthreatening and coded as feminine—even though they required the same project management skills as masculine-coded projects.

What does Sánchez's life and role within the Cuban Revolution tell us about revolutionary womanhood? Sánchez wielded power from the background, and her power also came from her close relationship with Fidel. She was the ideal "New Woman," "rooted in national history and tradition and pushing forward for change" (117). She demonstrated that the New Woman used her unthreatening, gendered position to respond to Cubans' social problems. Sánchez embodied the ideal Cuban woman "as someone who was capable of balancing physical labor with caretaking, strength with femininity, and leadership with modesty" (179). But her circumstances—single, having no biological children, elite, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba—did not reflect the reality of most Cuban women. Like the state's attempt to construct the New Family, which Hynson examined, Sánchez's ideal revolutionary womanhood might have been implausible and out of touch for everyday women. The state's vision of family and womanhood was one thing, and reality, another.

The last three chapters move from Sánchez's life and role within the revolution to her portrayals in the press, memorialization, and legacy. Sippial examines how the US press's portrayal of Sánchez shifted from positive (revolutionary hero) to negative—Sánchez as a dangerous, manipulative influence on Castro and Cuban policy—as relations between the United States and Cuba deteriorated after 1960. Journalists grasped at similar questions as this biography: Who was Sánchez? What was the source of her influence, if it was not based in sexuality or physical appearances? She rarely appeared in the Cuban press, yet she exercised a level of influence that might not ever be fully understood. Sánchez died in January 1980 from lung cancer, and leaders and the press transformed her into the first woman revolutionary icon. Sippial argues that in death, Sánchez provided the "blueprint" for the New Woman at a moment when the Cuban Revolution sought remobilization. Moreover, "as an abstracted symbol of the New Woman, Sánchez has helped shape imaginings of the Cuban Revolution as a historical experience and as an idea" (193). Her life and biography take on new layers as they intersect with the Cuban revolutionary state's own narrative and memory making. The conflicting portraits of Sánchez reflect the conflicting visions of revolutionary womanhood and family we saw between the state and citizens in Hynson's *Laboring for the State*. The shifting meanings of Sánchez's story are as important as the story itself, for they tell us how gender and power were understood and shaped by the revolution at different points.

Sippial analyzes how Sánchez's life story has been imagined and reimagined over time, while Harmer, in *Beatriz Allende*, focuses more on uncovering and then charting the details of Beatriz Allende's life within the broader Cold War, because she has not been memorialized or mythologized like Sánchez. Beatriz was Salvador Allende's second daughter, who studied medicine, became a doctor, and served as Allende's private secretary after he was elected in 1970. Beatriz worked with the Chilean Left, including the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), lived exiled in Cuba after Pinochet's coup, and organized a global solidarity movement against the Chilean dictatorship in the 1970s. She committed suicide at thirty-five. Yet her life gives insight into several layers of the Cold War years she

lived through, including the influence of the Cuban Revolution on youth; Chile's road to socialism; the long 1960s; and global solidary movements. Beatriz navigated these layers as a female militant who "challenged gendered conventions prevalent in society even while remaining constrained by them" (3).

Beatriz Allende unfolds in chronological order, according to three main periods: the long 1960s, the Chilean revolution under Allende, and exile in Cuba. Harmer begins the narrative with Beatriz's middle-class, politically adjacent upbringing. As a teenager, Beatriz experienced the 1957 protests, her father's 1958 presidential loss, and the Cuban Revolution—all of which combined to initiate her into the unrest and serve as her political awakening and mobilization. She moved to Concepción to study medicine at university, where she got involved in politics on her own terms. After the 1960 earthquake, Beatriz traveled to Cuba for the first time as part of a leftist solidarity tour. The visit marked her, and thereafter she, along with her father, served as local contacts for visiting Cubans (55). Beatriz continued to radicalize through her involvement in the *Brigada Universitaria Socialista* and a Marxist theory study group. As a political actor in her own right, Beatriz played a central role in Allende's presidential campaign in 1964 by organizing and mobilizing women and youth. After Allende lost, Beatriz returned to her medical studies, but continued to radicalize along with the Chilean youth as Frei's government failed to enact political change fast enough. Her politics shifted left, and she sympathized with the MIR (103). She became involved with the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN, Che Guevara's guerrilla column formed in 1966 in Bolivia) in early 1968, helping survivors escape from Bolivia via Chile (121).

By the end of the 1960s, Beatriz's identification with Cuba was all-consuming. She had a Cuban lover, Luis Fernández Oña (an intelligence officer responsible for Cuba's relations with Chile since 1963), and served as the connection between Cuba and Chile's various leftist groups, as well as the ELN. Beatriz's longing for Cuba revolved around armed struggle for a socialist future, rather than women's liberation. Yet her role in the guerrilla movement meant conforming to Cuban gender norms, which relegated her to "supplementary" tasks like intelligence and communications (128)—not combat, which she desired. Nevertheless, Cuba had become more than politics, the source of "a new, personalized loyalty, heaped with emotional significance" (153). Beatriz's letters to Luis—which make up some of Harmer's most fascinating sources—evidence her emotional ties to him and to Cuba. Harmer demonstrates how Beatriz's affinity for and connections to Cuba blossomed over the years, and how it was Beatriz who linked the Allende government and Cuba, keeping the Cubans informed and bolstering Allende's security detail with Cuban-trained militants. Harmer's triangulation between geopolitics, internationalism, Chile's ascendant Left, and Beatriz's personal emotions and loyalties is the great strength of this book.

Beatriz's life ended in tragedy. By 1977, Beatriz felt she could no longer "effect what she regarded as meaningful change" (263). Harmer illustrates that being a woman and the period's gendered ideas hampered Beatriz's ambitions and prevented her from becoming who she wanted to be. In 1967, she wanted guerrilla training in Cuba in order to "be like Che," but Cuba leaders did not extend the opportunity to women. As a member of the ELN, she wanted to partake in the Bolivian insurgency but was relegated to intelligence, communication, and coordination roles. Beatriz wanted to remain with Allende in La Moneda (and die) during the coup, but she was seven months pregnant, and Allende forced her to leave the palace. Allende excluded her from the revolutionary confrontation she had prepared for as a MIR and Cuban Revolution sympathizer. When Beatriz wanted to leave her solidarity work in the late 1970s and return to Chile as a clandestine guerrilla fighter, the Cubans again said no. For Beatriz, the essential, everyday politics women revolutionaries performed ultimately did not matter if she was not able to fight. These feelings, along with physical and mental illness, the collapse of Chile's revolutionary project, entrenched

dictatorship, apathy toward motherhood, disillusionment with the international solidarity movement, and being denied opportunity for guerrilla insurgency, drove her to suicide.

Booth posits that the Cold War was made up of layers of conflict. Beatriz traversed these layers in her life, demonstrating their importance. Yet, ultimately, they fall short of revealing a central dynamic in her own experience of revolution, and the experiences of many others. Her life marked the limitations revolutionary society placed on women. Beatriz embodied the gendered and everyday politics of insurrection examined by Bendaña, Rueda, Sierakowski, and Bayard de Volo. But she ultimately rejected being relegated to these forms of politics and the ideal of the New Woman.

The story of Beatriz suggests the potential of gender as a principal organizing factor defining the Cold War conflict in Latin America. A gender axis helps capture her individual battles within the Cold War and can hold other axes of conflict within it. Gender defined the parameters of Beatriz's life and the circumstances by which she engaged with leftist guerrilla movements, the Cuban Revolution, and the Chilean revolution. It was the principal conflict of her life. While Booth's axes cannot be reduced to gender, they also cannot be fully understood without considering conflicts over perceived sexual difference. The books reviewed here demonstrate how employing gender as a primary category of conflict reveals the individual, everyday level of insurrection and revolutionary life that made up Cold War conflicts. They also illuminate how gender drove the broader structures and possibilities of insurrection, revolution, and state making in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Chile during Latin America's Cold War.

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