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“That Monster Cannot Be a Woman:”  
Queerness and Treason in the Partido Liberal Mexicano

Benjamin H. Abbott\*

The year 1901 marked a turning point for Mexican dialogues on gender and sexuality as well as on national politics. At the first Congreso Liberal in San Luis Potosí early in the year, journalist Ricardo Flores Magón fiercely denounced the administration of Porfirio Díaz as a “den of thieves.”<sup>1</sup> Díaz cracked down, throwing Ricardo Flores Magón and other troublemakers into the infamous Belén prison in Mexico City. Despite this, Ricardo Flores Magón continued to write for the dissident newspaper *Regeneración* from his cell until Díaz shut the paper down in October. Just one month later, Mexico City police raided a party and arrested forty-one people identified as men half of whom wore elegant dresses. The city incarcerated these dancers in *Belén* “for attacks on morality,”<sup>2</sup> eventually sending nineteen of them off to forced labor in Yucatán as part of the Mexican government’s military campaign against Mayan Indians. Both the political transgression of rebels like Ricardo Flores Magón and the gender transgression of “the famous 41” invoked the wrath of the state and attracted considerable public attention. Open discussion on the previously taboo subjects of Díaz opposition and male homosexuality proliferated. Newspapers covered the 41 with a mixture of fascination, celebration, and condemnation; the group became an enduring symbol for the Mexican queer community. Ricardo Flores Magón’s “Partido Liberal Mexicano” served as the first coordinated movement against the dictator.<sup>3</sup>

A few years earlier, the consummate anti-radical Dr. James Weir, Jr. expressed the fear that soon some “professional anarchist” would lead an “army of degenerates, composed of anarchists, nihilists, sexual perverts, and congenital criminals, against

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\* Benjamin H. Abbott is a PhD student, anarchist, and science fiction author. Eir interest in radical politics and the humanities began with reading Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* as a teenager. Learning about the Plan de San Diego uprising and working with Ricard Slatta convinced em to pursue an MA in History at the University of New Mexico. In that program, Benjamin developed a focus on the international anarchist movement in the era of Mexican Revolution. Ey joined American Studies on the advice of friends and professors. Eir current research looks at narratives of the body—gender, sexuality, race—across the Partido Liberal Mexicano and its allies. Contact Benjamin at [benjamin.abbott@gmail.com](mailto:benjamin.abbott@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> Spanish “una madriguera de bandidos” in Ethel Duffy Turner. (2003) [1984] *Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional Editorial del C.E.N., p. 32. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Robert McKee Irwin. (2003) *Mexican Masculinities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 66-9.

<sup>3</sup> Chaz Bufe & Mitchell Cowen Vetter, Eds. (2005) *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Oakland, California: AK Press, p. 33; “El Baile de los 41: 19 de los Consignados Remitidos a Yucatán,” *El Popular*, November 23, 1901.

society.”<sup>4</sup> No such alliance between queers and anarchists emerged in Ricardo Flores Magón's Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), which became a vibrant part of the international anarchist movement in exile in the United States. To the contrary, Ricardo Flores Magón and others PLM members denounced political opponents with masculinist anti-queer slurs and made appeals to natural heterosexuality. PLM rhetoric on gender and sexual transgression often mirrors the eugenicist discourse of degeneracy that Weir's writings exemplify. While Weir worried groups he despised as unfit and atavistic would band together, the anarchist PLM operated within a partially shared conceptual framework that denigrated queerness. Instead of finding commonality in the state and social persecution the 41 and other queers faced, the PLM used queerness in general and the 41 specifically as signs bourgeois degeneracy counter to the party's revolutionary message.<sup>5</sup>

Weir's nightmares are my dreams. His apocalyptic vision of anarchists and sexual perverts waging war on civilization illustrates a possibility unfulfilled in the PLM. I lament the historical and sometimes present lack of solidarity between anti-capitalist radicals and queers, two categories that of course overlapped then and overlap today. My study comes out of this absence, this alliance that could have been but wasn't. I want to take the contradictions and violence of history seriously rather than papering them over in the service a heroic narrative (as much as I enjoy anarchist heroic narratives). My analysis speaks to how systems of oppressions are intricately connected, mutually reinforcing, and remarkably malleable. In conversation with Nicole Guidotti-Hernández's *Unspeakable Violence* (2011), I argue for the critical study of historical revolutionary movements as part of the continuing radical project. I echo Guidotti-Hernández's skepticism of heroic resistance narratives but without the desire to discard them entirely.<sup>6</sup> The passionate and uncompromising social-justice rhetoric of Ricardo Flores Magón in particular continues to inspire Mexicans, Chicanos, and leftists of all nationalities even in the present day. A re-examination of gender relations in the form of women's liberation constituted a key element of the party's ideology. Historians have long recognized the PLM for this body of thought and for the participation of women within the party. As Emma Pérez writes, the PLM provided a space for women to articulate their critiques of male supremacy and support the radical cause in their own terms.<sup>7</sup> In an imagined revolutionary future, Omar Ramírez leaves a resurrected Ricardo Flores Magón to receive “the praise and

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<sup>4</sup> James Weir, Jr. (1897) *The Psychological Correlation of Religious Emotion and Sexual Desire*. Louisville, KY: Courier-Journal Job Printing Co., p. 337.

<sup>5</sup> I use “queers” to refer to those constructed as gender and/or sexually deviant and abnormal. In addition to decrying anti-capitalism as degenerate, Weir denounced the women's suffrage movement in similar terms.

<sup>6</sup> Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernandez. (2011) *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping US and Mexican National Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Emma Pérez. (1999) *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, pp. 55-6.

criticism he never had the chance to experience after his death so long ago.”<sup>8</sup> I strive for the same combination in my treatment of the PLM.

This essay centers on the intersection of these two themes of egalitarian social revolution and gender definition embodied by the simultaneous incarceration of political and sexual deviants. PLM notables such as Ricardo Flores Magón articulated a vision of gender based on the biological binary of men and women, but rife with ambiguities and contradictions. This vision exalted a revolutionary masculinity characterized by productive labor and violent defense of independence, while denigrating effeminacy and homosexuality as its antithesis. Consistent with the grand trend of period revolutionary discourse on the subject, various PLM writers employed the 41 as the epitome of aristocratic degeneracy, indulgence, and treason to the nation and people. These PLM writers rhetorically constructed this form of gender transgression as worthy of scorn and shunning from the mass of allegedly normal working-class men and women. Correct masculine behavior existed in contrast with these cowardly, treacherous deviants. Thus, the elite transvestite homosexual functioned as a key symbol for defining class struggle. The PLM produced the ideal of popular manhood in conjunction with shadow of the queer. This matches common attitudes and persuasive techniques in European circles as well as contrasting with those of other anarchists—particularly Germans and the Russian-American Emma Goldman—who promoted acceptance of homosexuality as a component of social transformation.<sup>9</sup>

I argue that writers within PLM’s orbit employed contradictory and contested narratives of gender, drawn from different sources and varying both by author and circumstances. Anarchist theories about individual freedom as well as proletarian women as slaves suffering a double oppression interacted with scientific and traditional notions of natural roles for each gender. Masculine concepts such as fraternity and status competition took on particular revolutionary permutations. Practical experience at times came into conflict with gender tropes. Regardless of what the men in the movement may have wanted, PLM practice showed that sometimes women proved superior warriors and attempts at patriarchal control sometimes failed. The ambiguities and contradictions of the party’s sexual narrative stand out in stark relief on the subject of feminine gender transgression. While PLM authors consistently employed the image of effeminate homosexuality derogatively, as described above, their portrayal of gender transgression from women varied from pejorative to celebratory. *Regeneración* articles condemned bourgeois feminists for wanting to become men at the same time they extolled virile revolutionary women; they assigned the martial labor of combat exclusively to men in theory, yet simultaneously praised individual women who excelled as warriors. This matches the best current literature on gender articulation both in Mexico and elsewhere that

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<sup>8</sup> Omar Ramírez. (2008) “Black Flag, Red Heart: A Study of Chicano and Chicana Anarchy,” M.A. Thesis California State University, Northridge, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Terence Kissack. (2008) *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States 1895-1917*. Oakland: AK Press; Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, & James Steakley, Eds. (1995) *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left*. New York: The Hayworth Press, Inc..

stresses complexity, contingency, and the necessity of transcending simplistic stereotypes. None of this nuance diminishes the intensity and horror of gender inequality or discrimination in either the past or present.<sup>10</sup>

Because my analysis relies heavily on pieces from the PLM periodical *Regeneración*, a brief discussion of that paper and its context is in order. It began in 1900 as a relatively innocuous Mexico City publication on legal procedure. Ricardo Flores Magón's more academically and financially successful brother Jesús served as one of the original editors. The paper started to attack the government more openly as the Liberal movement grew and particularly as Ricardo Flores Magón's influence on it increased. This prompted the repression mentioned above, which terminated the periodical at the end of 1901. *Regeneración* reappeared in San Antonio, Texas in 1904 after various PLM members came to the United States to escape death or imprisonment at the hands of Díaz. From this point on, Ricardo Flores Magón's importance to the paper as well as the influence of anarchism steadily grew. During this period, the PLM shifted from a mixed coalition united under the wide banner of liberal reform to an unabashedly anarchist group advocating the complete abolition of economic, political, and spiritual hierarchy.

At its height, *Regeneración* could boast of tens of thousands of subscribers. By the time the paper moved to Los Angeles, California, subscribers constituted a diverse group: local railroad workers and other laborers, Mexican exiles from various classes, and ideological allies of countless nationalities and economic backgrounds. Francisco Madero's rise to preeminence in the anti-Díaz movement in 1910 marked a pivotal time for both the party and *Regeneración*. Many former PLM supporters turned to Madero, despite Ricardo Flores Magón's insistence that he was a bourgeois oppressor who would resist rather than enact revolutionary social transformation. These defections to Madero increased as opponents persuasively, though inaccurately, presented the PLM's campaign in Baja California as treasonous filibustering. Ricardo Flores Magón considered each defection a personal betrayal and the traditional PLM core dwindled. At the same time, however, a vibrant PLM and larger radical community existed in Los Angeles. Associated periodicals such as the Colombian anarchist Blanca de Moncaleano's *Pluma roja* published alongside *Regeneración*. This paralleled the earlier explosion of PLM-related papers along the Texas border. These are the spaces that Pérez identifies as enabling PLM women to articulate their own voices and positions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba. (2007) *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-7; Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, & Michelle Rocío Nasser (2003) "Introduction" in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, c. 1901*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 12; Robert McKee Irwin. (2003) *Mexican Masculinities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 66-9.

<sup>11</sup> Ethel Duffy Turner. (2003) [1984] *Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional Editorial del C.E.N., pp. 22-61; William D. Estrada. (2008) *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Spaces*. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 143-4; Juan Gómez-Quíñones. (1973) *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*. Los Angeles: Aztlán Publications, pp. 23-52; James A. Sandos. (1992) *Rebellion in the Borderlands*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 130.

This project responds to historian Joan Wallach Scott famous call for history that engages gender as a meaningful category of analysis. *The Decolonial Imaginary* (1999) by Emma Pérez and the article “Transborder Discourse” (2003) by Clara Lomas serve as my chief inspirations as well the closest scholarship both in subject matter and theoretical approach. In the aforementioned book, Pérez employs Foucault’s discursive method that takes nothing for granted and encourages questioning assumptions. Foucault, by Pérez’s description, treated everything as a product of language, thus making meaning a matter of continual renegotiation. In particular, Pérez draws on Scott’s interpretation and use of Foucault crafted specifically for the purpose of exploring how and why gender has been linguistically constructed and utilized in various periods. Pérez answers Scott’s request for historiography that looks deeply and critically at gender. She wields this method in order to recover lost Chicana stories, which she defines broadly, that were previously hidden or neglected.<sup>12</sup>

Pérez identifies the PLM as one of the few examples of revolutionary fervor and intellectual opening that enabled Chicana feminist voices to emerge during the period. In this section of the book she explicates how Ricardo and the other male PLM members argued for women’s liberation while simultaneously maintaining patriarchal notions about a woman’s place in the struggle and her essential characteristics. For instance, the 1910 *Regeneración* address to women exhorted them to demand that the men in their lives take up the gun against Díaz rather than do so themselves. Beyond the analysis of PLM rhetoric, Pérez conducted an interview with a PLM supporter who noted the gendered division of labor at the party’s communal farm in the Silver Lake area of Los Angeles. She attributes these apparent contradictions to the “historical moment” that “ascribed to a particular politics and knowledge about women, their rights and inherent biological traits.”<sup>13</sup> Pérez demonstrates how women within the PLM scene, most notably Moncaleano with her lucid criticism against sexism from revolutionary men, furthered the radical cause while challenging, both subtly and explicitly, the dominant gender ideology of tacit male supremacy.

In her article, Lomas expands upon this research by focusing specifically on the rhetoric about gender used by female writers such as Moncaleano in leftist periodicals in the borderlands. Like Pérez, she explicates the ways by which politically active women rejected androcentric narratives of revolution and developed their own instead. More than Pérez, Lomas zeroes in on Moncaleano and the periodical *Pluma roja* as the strongest dissident voice against patriarchal practices within the PLM. These two works form a firm practical and theoretical foundation for this project.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pérez, pp. xiii-xvii.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Clara Lomas, “Transborder Discourse: The Articulation of Gender in the Borderlands in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 24, Nos. 2 & 3 (2003): pp. 51-74.

As the bulk of the research on gender and the PLM has dealt with conceptions of women and femininity, I have a particular interest in also critically investigating representations of men and masculinity. While pioneering scholars have explicated the PLM's contradictory ideology on women, which embraced liberation and equality alongside the acceptance of natural female roles, the way the PLM's understanding on masculinity interacted with these views has gone largely unexplored. I seek a fuller understanding of the "masculinist revolutionary rhetoric" that Pérez identifies as the party default.<sup>15</sup>

Pérez briefly refers to gender ideology of European radicals like Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin as influential within the PLM. The collection *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* provides fuller international context for anarchist and socialist perspectives on sexuality before, during, and after the period. The revolutionary left at the time had deep connections across the world; even relatively obscure publications such as Moncaleano's *Pluma roja* might find their way into the hands of anarchist readers in Spain. The book's introductory overview highlights the prevalence of then-scientific gender essentialism among leftists and the common construction of homosexuality as an aristocratic or bourgeois vice contrasted with the masculine purity of the working class. Hubert Kennedy's piece "Johann Baptist von Schweitzer: The Queer Marx Loved to Hate" shows how Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels disdained homosexuality as an unnatural elite corruption in their personal communications. "Male Inverts and Homosexuals" by Richard Cleminson shows similar dynamics at play within the Spanish anarchist periodical *Revista Blanca* between 1898 and the 1930s. On the other hand, Saskia Poldervaart's essay demonstrates the nuanced views on sexuality of early utopian socialists and "Anarchism and Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany" by Walter Fähnders details pro-queer advocacy by German anarchists around the turn of the century. The book shows the left in era of the PLM held conflicts about gender and sexuality alongside the master narrative of heterosexuality as natural and correct.<sup>16</sup>

While the study of gender and labor in Latin America as a whole has massive body of scholarship, works that apply directly to Mexico in the era of the Mexican Revolution are relatively scarce. The literature on anarchism and gender across Latin America supports the above picture of revolutionary groups opening space for feminist critiques while simultaneously retaining the ideology of masculine supremacy. In *Imposing Decency* (1999), Eileen J. Suárez Findlay shows the limits of the Puerto Rican male left's interest in challenging sexual norms. Her exploration of anarchist-feminist Luisa Capetillo's thought reveals how much it resembles Moncaleano's and in this way connects with Lomas's work. Maxine Molyneux's article "No God, No Boss, No Husband" (1986) provides similar resonances through a discussion of the short-lived Argentine anarchist-feminist publication *La Voz de la Muje*. Molyneux notes the lack of solidarity from anarchist men in *La Voz's* feminist struggle as well as how Argentine anarchist-feminist continued to impose appropriate sexuality on the traditional heterosexual reproductive model. Finally,

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<sup>15</sup> Pérez, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Hekma et al., pp. 7-8, 41, 71, 117, 259.

Elizabeth Quay Hutchison's article "From 'Mujer Esclava' to 'Mujer Limón'" demonstrates how the Chilean anarchist discourse on women in the early part of the twentieth century existed within a patriarchal framework. This scholarship suggests a masculine-supremacist dynamic of constrained women's emancipation that stretched across the Spanish-language anarchist community around the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

On Mexican masculinity specifically, the ethnography and theoretical contribution of Matthew C. Gutmann and Robert McKee Irwin's historically minded literary analysis is most relevant. Gutmann wrote the path-breaking 1996 field study of men as men in Colonia Santo Domingo in Mexico. Gutmann emphasizes the "ambiguity, confusion, and contradiction in male identities."<sup>18</sup> He criticizes scholars for blithely accepting the rigid stereotype of the Mexican macho and a unitary, universal Mexican masculinity. While we must exercise caution in using the 1990s to say anything about the 1900s and 1910s, his concept of the "contradictory consciousness" produced by the tension of "consciousness inherited uncritically from the past and consciousness developed in the course of practically transforming the world" perhaps has its parallels for the PLM.<sup>19</sup> Gutmann also offers a long and thoughtful introduction to the collection *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America* that makes many of the same points as well as underlines the acknowledgment of gender inequality as foundational to studying masculinity in Latin America.<sup>20</sup>

Irwin provides a kindred theoretical framework in *Mexican Masculinities* (2003). Drawing on both period sources and cutting-edge gender scholarship, he introduces the concept of gender as a continuum that ranges from very masculine to very feminine and shows the notion of masculinity as performance has a long history in the literature. Echoing Gutmann but going further, he describes Mexican masculinity as a "messy web of contradictions."<sup>21</sup> Irwin details a complex historical progression centering on 1901 and the famous 41, when Mexican discourse on gender and sexuality began to shift from earlier often erotic upper-class narratives of homosocial bonding to the exaltation of lower-class masculinity that had before been characterized as barbaric. Irwin's scholarship provides understanding of the context and intricacies behind PLM expressions of masculinity.

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<sup>17</sup> Eileen J. Suárez Findlay. (1999) *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 135-66; Maxine Molyneux. (1986) "No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 13 No. 1 (Winter), pp. 119-145; Elizabeth Quay Hutchison. (2001) "From 'La Mujer Esclava' to 'La Mujer Limón': Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality in Early-Twentieth-Century Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 81 No. 3-4 (August-November), pp. 519-553.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew C. Gutmann. (2007) *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 243.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew C. Gutmann. (2003) *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*. Duke University Press. pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Robert McKee Irwin. (2003) *Mexican Masculinities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. xix-xxii.

With regards to the rest of the scholarship on gender related to the Mexican Revolution, the collection *Sex in Revolution* (2006) stands out. In the forward, Carlos Monsiváis writes in support of the Pérez thesis of the PLM as a locus of gender radicalism within the period. Gabriela Cano's chapter entitled "Unconcealable Realities of Desire: Amelio Robles's (Transgender) Masculinity in the Mexican Revolution" (2006) provides both a compelling story and rich detail on conceptions of gender during the period. Her insights on the aggressive character of revolutionary masculinity, the acceptance of masculinized females coupled with disdain for effeminate males, and the conflation of masculinity with national identity resonate with the earlier work such as Irwin as well as my own research here. In *Compromised Positions* (2001), another outstanding recent book, Katherine Elaine Bliss analyzes prostitution in Mexico City from the Porfiriato into the 1940s. In particular relevance with this project, she studies masculinity as it related to prostitution and ultimately blames the acceptance of the dominant masculinist ideology as critical in explaining the failure of government campaigns to end the practice. Acceptance of and inability to confront masculine sexual entitlement and privilege prevented these campaigns from being successful. Taking *Compromised Positions* together with *Sex in Revolution*, recent gender research on the Mexican Revolution stresses its failure to fulfill the promise of women's emancipation as well as the value of seriously investigating gender ideologies that lead to this predicament.<sup>22</sup>

Widely recognized as influential precursors to the Mexican Revolution, Ricardo Flores Magón and the PLM in general have generated a considerable body of work in both Spanish and English. Though the famous historian and Chicano activist Juan Gómez-Quiñones notes the "role of women"<sup>23</sup> within the PLM as one of the three "historically interesting"<sup>24</sup> things about the party, the scholarship devotes the lion's share of the attention to the men without any investigation of their construction of masculinity. Gómez-Quiñones himself does not depart from this model. It reflects the greater power and prominence of the male PLM leadership at the time as well as the interests of academia. Historically, gender analysis is a relatively recent phenomenon. I maintain that gender ideologies and conceptions of masculinity and femininity are critically important in understanding both the course of PLM history as well as that of the Mexican Revolution as a whole. Gender plays a fundamental part in human social organization; the PLM heavily employed gendered appeals to incite revolutionary action.

Past his key position in the disputed precursor movement, Ricardo Flores Magón personally tends to be treated as either a heroic liberator or an earnest but unrealistic dreamer. The work of Ethel Duffy Turner, a one-time supporter and close associate, typifies the former view. She portrayed him as a driven and unbending visionary

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<sup>22</sup> Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, & Gabriela Cano, Eds. (2006) *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics and Power in Modern Mexico*. Duke University Press, pp. 2-4.

<sup>23</sup> Juan Gómez-Quiñones. (1973) *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magon y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*. Los Angeles: Aztlan Publications, p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

almost beyond reproach, a sort of revolutionary saint or prophet. At the same time, she emphasized his communistic goal of universally extending the good life, she downplayed his anarchist opposition to all governments. This aligns with her political persuasion as a socialist more accepting of the state; she left a job as English-language editor of *Regeneración* in the climate of American socialist criticism of the PLM's increasingly open anarchist views. Consistent with Pérez's description of Turner as uninterested in analyzing gender while on the PLM staff, she gave little space to either the party's ideas on the subject or the women involved with the PLM. Authors such as Colin M. MacLachlan and Ward S. Albro, on the other hand, stress the impracticality of Magón's anarchism rather than the party's aims and operations.<sup>25</sup>

This absence of gender conforms to the two major syntheses of the Mexican Revolution, by John Mason Hart and Alan Knight respectively. Women and gender analysis play next to no role. Hart neglects textual sources on female revolutionaries and simply provides photographs. Knight suggests scholars look to elite women materially involved in the fighting rather than marginal female intellectuals. This matches his overall dismissal of ideology in the Mexican Revolution. He rejects the traditional conceptualization of the PLM as a meaningful precursor to Madero's rise. Instead, they only attracted initial support because of their early monopoly on opposition politics. Hart likewise throws out the notion of distinct precursor movement, but for antithetical reasons. He sees the PLM as setting off the Mexican Revolution proper even before Madero. All of this demonstrates the novelty of Pérez's scholarship. It is telling how she engages with the work of Gómez-Quiñones; he at least made mention of the importance of women within the PLM. Much subsequent scholarship did not.

As a gateway into exploring these constructions, I begin with the mainstream PLM position on gender that comes out most clearly in two articles from 1910 published respectively by Ricardo Flores Magón and Práxedes Guerrero, a prominent theorist and combatant in the field who became revered as martyr after he died in action at the end of the year. The Guerrero piece goes into greater detail about the thought underlying PLM views. The notion of a natural order between the sexes in which each has proper roles emerges as central in this text, a theme that permeates the PLM's and broader anarchist discourse. Like Magón, Guerrero reviewed the history of the oppression of women across cultures and presented the demand for the equality of men and women as an essential revolutionary position. In the forward to *Sex in Revolution*, Monsiváis quotes Guerrero as a simple—and rare—supporter of women's liberation in the period. We should remember that Guerrero went on to dismiss feminism as a gender-bending bourgeois distraction: "Not being able to be a woman[,] the woman wants to be a man; she throws herself with the dignified enthusiasm of a more rational feminism in pursuit of all the ugly things men can be

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<sup>25</sup> Turner (2003) [1984] *Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano*. Mexico City: Comisión Nacional Editorial del C.E.N.; Ethel Duffy Turner. (1981) *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon*. Detroit: Blaine Ethridge Books; Colin M. MacLachlan. (1991) *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 5, 22, 31-2, 39, 42, 52, 54, 62, 72, 85, 90-1, 111, 118-9; Ward S. Albro. (1992) *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, pp. 30, 133, 137.

and do: she wants to carry out the functions of the police, of lawyers, of the tyrannical politician and to elect along with men the masters of the human race.”<sup>26</sup>

While the critique of liberal feminism as reactionary reformism opposed to authentic social revolution was shared by PLM ally Emma Goldman and other radicals, Guerrero’s allegation of gender deviancy and masculinization employed in the effort to discredit feminists speak volumes about his conceptions of the subject. He emphasized the point by continuing as follows: “‘Feminism’ serves as a base of opposition for the enemies of the emancipation of women. Certainly there’s nothing attractive in a policewoman, in a woman far from the sweet mission of her sex in order to brandish the whip of oppression, in a woman avoiding her graceful feminine individuality in order to wear the hybridity of ‘masculinization.’”<sup>27</sup>

To reinforce the undesirability of upsetting gender norms, Guerrero presented male homosexuality and effeminacy as the prime example of the degeneracy of the upper class. As a counter to claims of the moral fragility of women, Guerrero invoked this narrative of homosexuality. He condemned it as “that infamous prostitution of men, so extended in all countries of the world and practiced scandalously by representatives of the so-called educated classes, between the men of the State and the refined nobility, as the irreverent pen of Maximilian Harden has made it known in Germany, as was discovered in Mexico in an intimate dance of aristocrats.”<sup>28</sup> In this fashion, non-conformist gender expressions—whether they involve feminists who want to be men or men who wear dresses and have sex with other men—become a symbol of bourgeois decadency and the antithesis of the revolutionary enterprise. The example of the 41 serves to shame men as a whole.<sup>29</sup>

As a conclusion, Guerrero reiterated that he wanted women’s emancipation to come without disrupting ‘natural’ gender roles and identity. “Libertarian equality,” he wrote, “does not try to make men out of women; it gives the same opportunities to the two fractions of the human species in order that both are developed without obstacles, mutually supporting each other, without disturbing the place that each one

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<sup>26</sup> “No pudiendo ser mujer la mujer quiere ser hombre; se lanza con un entusiasmo digno de un feminismo más racional en pos de todas las cosas feas que un hombre puede ser y hacer: quiere desempeñar funciones de policía, de pica-pleitos, de tirano político y elegir con los hombres los amos del género humano.” Práxedes Guerrero. (1910) “La Mujer.” *Regeneración*, November 12, 1910, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> “El ‘feminismo’ sirve de base á la oposición de los enemigos de la emancipación de la mujer. Ciertamente no hay nada atractivo en una mujer gendarme, en una mujer alejada de la dulce misión de su sexo para empuñar el látigo de la opresión, en una mujer huyendo de su graciosa individualidad femenina para vestir la hibridez del ‘honbrunamiento.’” Práxedes Guerrero. (1910) “La Mujer.” *Regeneración*, November 12, 1910, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> “Esa prostitución infame de los hombres, tan extendida en todos los países del mundo y practicada escandalosamente por representantes de las clases llamadas cultas, entre los hombres de Estado y la refinada nobleza, como lo hizo saber la pluma irreverente de Maximiliano Harden, en Alemania, como se descubrió ruidosamente en México en un baile íntimo de aristócratas.” Práxedes Guerrero. (1910) “La Mujer.” *Regeneración*, November 12, 1910, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba. (2007) *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican representations of Masculinity: from Sensuality to Bloodshed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3-4.

has in nature.”<sup>30</sup> The alternative he described was perpetual tyranny, slavery, and unhappiness.

*Regeneración*'s earlier attack on former ally Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza in terms of gender and sexuality after she left the party echoes Guerrero's views about the importance of allegedly natural gender roles in PLM thought. A prominent critic of Díaz, Gutiérrez de Mendoza suffered imprisonment along with Ricardo Flores Magón and his brother Enrique and fled with them across the border into the United States in 1904. Roughly a year later she returned to Mexico and subsequently critiqued PLM operations in Texas. The party core responded in 1906 with a lengthy piece refuting her charges in detail and countering with their own. They began the article with extensive posturing as long-suffering gallants reluctant to fight back against a feminine aggressor out of chivalrous compunctions, who were finally forced to defend their honor. Following a classic technique used when breaking alliances, they claimed Gutiérrez de Mendoza had not rejected them; they had rejected because of “political mercantilism” (*mercantilismo político*) and “disgusting vices” (*repugnantes vicios*).<sup>31</sup> After elaborating on their financial and organizational grievances, the authors condemned Gutiérrez de Mendoza on the basis of sexual morality after a warning to the reader. The slow pace and palpable melodrama in the article continues with a description of how the authors balked when comrades first alerted them of a physical relationship between Gutiérrez de Mendoza and her close friend Elisa Acuña y Rosete:

We could not conceive that the aforementioned ladies were capable of betraying nature by mutually turning to monstrous and hedonistic delights. We could not believe that Doña Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza, who preaches morality, who styles herself redeemer of peoples, who makes a display of working for the good of the human species, who wants to redeem the Mexican woman, quarrels with nature that so wisely has created the two sexes, in order to turn with her companion Elisa to the sterile and stupid pleasures of Sappho.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “La igualdad libertaria no trata de hacer hombre á la mujer; da las mismas oportunidades á las dos fracciones de la especie humana para que ambas se desarrollen sin obstáculos, sirviéndose mutuamente de apoyo, sin estorbarse en el lugar que cada uno tiene en la naturaleza.” Práxedes Guerrero. (1910) “La Mujer.” *Regeneración*, November 12, 1910, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> PLM Junta. (1906) “Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza.” *Regeneración*, June 15, 1906, pp. 3.

<sup>32</sup> “No podíamos concebir que las mencionadas señoras fueran capaces de traicionar a la naturaleza entregándose mutuamente á deleites monstruosos y hediondos. No podíamos creer que Doña Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza, la que predica moralidad, la que se dice á sí misma redentora de pueblos, la que hace alarde de trabajar por el bien de la especie humana, la que quiere redimir á la mujer mexicana, riñera con la naturaleza que tan sabiamente ha creado los dos sexos, para entregarse con su compañera Elisa á los estériles y estúpidos placeres de Safo.” PLM Junta. (1906) “Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza.” *Regeneración*, June 15, 1906, pp. 3-4.

The piece holds this note for some paragraphs, providing a salacious account of how the authors saw proof with their “own eyes” (*PROPIOS OJOS*)<sup>33</sup> of the alleged misbehavior and how an in-law of Gutiérrez de Mendoza’s who briefly lived in her house had to abruptly flee after he stumbled upon her and Acuña y Rosete engaged in their “favorite pastimes” (*pasatiempos favoritos*).<sup>34</sup> In order to reinforce the narrative of heterosexuality as natural and queerness as a threat, the authors charged the two women with not loving or respecting their parents and excoriated Gutiérrez de Mendoza for dishonoring her excessively tolerant husband. Homosexuality then implies the destruction of the familial order at the heart of society. Like Marx and Engels, the PLM Junta envisioned a post-revolutionary world where queerness would disappear and the supposed natural arrangement of child-rearing man-woman pairs would reign forever. The article concludes with a vicious denunciation of Gutiérrez de Mendoza that unambiguously expels her from the cause if not from the species: “[w]e have sketched the entire body of that hairy being that has lost her sex, who has profaned it and to whom it disgusts us to give the name woman, sacred name that we men all adore, because that monster cannot be a woman, that seedbed of evils, of treacheries, of calumnies, of the blackest betrayals, of ingratitude and meanness, must not have been produced by a human womb.”<sup>35</sup>

Though presented more in terms of nature and science than class, this analysis mirrors Guerrero’s perspective. Gutiérrez de Mendoza’s alleged lesbianism formed a central component of her treacherous character; betraying nature in this fashion matched her political and economic opportunism and duplicity. Within this framework, political and sexual propriety had an inherent connection. Deviation in either area implied deviation in the other. Pietro Gori in a posthumous 1912 *Regeneración* article, belief in the naturalness of reproductive heterosexual coupling established the revolutionary gender order. Gori articulated a vision of a world free from any legal restrictions and moral compunctions that hindered family-oriented and organically evolving man-woman pairings. Queerness constituted rejection of the dreamed-for heterosexual utopia and thus immediately suggested bourgeois subversion, simple criminality, or a combination of the two.<sup>36</sup>

Ricardo Flores Magón’s pen-and-ink warfare with former comrade Antonio I. Villareal after the latter left the PLM and began publishing a rival paper entitled

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> “Hemos pintado de cuerpo entero á ese hirsuto sér que ha perdido su sexo, que lo ha profanado y á la que nos repugna dar el nombre de mujer, nombre sagrado que todos los hombres adoramos, porque ese monstruo no puede ser mujer, ese almácigo de maldades, de perfidias, de calumnias, de traiciones las más negras, de ingratitudes y de mezquindades, no debe haber sido producido por vientre humano.” *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Susie S. Porter. (2003) “Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza: Woman of Words, Woman of Actions” in *The Human Tradition in Mexico* (Jeffery M. Pilcher, Ed.) Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, pp. 103-117; *Regeneración*, June 8, 1912. After briefly supporting Madero, Gutiérrez de Mendoza traveled to Morelos and became a Zapatista colonel. For a further discussion of anarchist narratives of gender that gender on ideas about nature, see Elizabeth Quay Hutchison. (2001) “From ‘La Mujer Esclava’ to ‘La Mujer Limón’: Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality in Early-Twentieth-Century Chile,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 81 No. 3-4 (August-November), pp. 519-553.

*Regeneración* corroborates the suspicion that gender transgression in the form of homosexuality (and this time specifically the effeminacy of the 41) operated as a potent symbol and rhetorical tool for members of the party. Magón described various members of the opposing *Regeneración* as well as other foes as “castrates” (*castrados*)<sup>37</sup> and “eunuchs” (*eunucos*),<sup>38</sup> but he fixated on Villarreal’s alleged gender deviation at great length. He repeatedly wrote that Villarreal had a homosexual relationship with a barber in Lampazos. In a parallel with the attack on Gutiérrez de Mendoza the Junta made five years prior when Villarreal himself was a respected member and editor of the paper, Ricardo Flores Magón presented this as a damning indictment that he would progressively elaborate on if Villarreal did not relent in his treachery to the proletariat. Earlier, he concluded with the following threat: “[f]or lack of space, I don’t talk today about that effeminate barber patron of Antonio I. Villarreal in Lampazos, State of Nuevo León, and, really, not as much for lack of space as for the filthiness of the matter; but if Villarreal wants it, I will publish all that and much more, fitting to appear in the dirty history of the famous Marqués de Sade.”<sup>39</sup>

Illustratively, he put this charge of specific same-sex romance alongside that of murder. He apparently thought that this allegation would resonate with his audience because of a shared loathing of male homosexuality. A few issues later Ricardo excoriated Villarreal in an article called “El Coronel de Los 41” in which he described Villarreal as a “pederast” (*pederasta*) and a “queer” (*maricón*).<sup>40</sup> He reiterated the threat of having proof of Villarreal’s affair with the effeminate barber. The very next week Ricardo followed up with a piece entitled “Que Hable el Maricón” (Let the Queer Speak) that asked why Villarreal had not responded to the “specific charges” (*cargos concretos*) he had made. Magón rhetorically asked, “[a]re love affairs between one macho and another macho not something shameful?”<sup>41</sup> He went on to equate Villarreal’s alleged pederasty with a negation of his status as a man. The brief article finishes on this dramatic note: “Villarreal does not have the right to face any man. He should be spat upon by all men and by all women.”<sup>42</sup> In an echo of the Guerrero approach to feminism and PLM condemnation of Gutiérrez de Mendoza, Ricardo Flores Magón here assumed a unity between gender conformers against deviancy.

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<sup>37</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón (1911). “Degeneración.” *Regeneración*, August 12, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón (1911). “Notas Al Vuelo.” *Regeneración*, November 18, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> “Por falta de espacio, no hablo hoy de aquel barbero afeminado protector de Antonio I. Villarreal en Lampazos, Estado de Nuevo León, y, realmente, no tanto por la falta de espacio, cuanto por lo sucio del asunto; pero si Villarreal lo quiere, publicaré todo eso y mucho más, digno de figurar en la historia de cieno del famoso Marqués de Sade.” Ricardo Flores Magón (1911). “Degeneración,” p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) “El Coronel de Los 41.” *Regeneración*, September 16, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> “¿No es algo de averguenza el amorío de un macho con un otro macho?” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) “Que Hable el Maricón.” *Regeneración*, September 23, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> “Villarreal no tiene derecho á ver á ningún hombre de frente; Villarreal debe ser escupido por todos los hombres y por todas las mujeres.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) “Que Hable el Maricón.” *Regeneración*, September 23, 1911, p. 3.

For both Ricardo Flores Magón and Guerrero, gender transgression was fundamentally entangled with notions of honor and of class as well as naturalness. Guerrero presented masculinization as the characteristic of bourgeois feminists while Ricardo Flores Magón emphasized the queerness of Villarreal, whom he identified as a key traitor who abandoned the cause of the working class in order to gain favor with the capitalist bosses. Thus, both presented gender transgression as an example of the perversity of the ruling class and implicitly constructed proletarian gender norms in opposition to this bourgeois degeneracy. A letter from *Regeneración* readers in the same issue discussed above castigated Villarreal specifically for his betrayal of the PLM and followed this with a string of gendered slurs. They wrote, “[t]hat is the shame that you have, effeminate one, sodomite; because of that you have become number 42 of the group of 41.”<sup>43</sup> For these PLM supporters, treachery and duplicity went hand in hand with queerness and all three aspects characterized the capitalist in contrast with the workers. The disdain for bourgeois, effeminate, and unnatural homosexuals expressed by Ricardo, Guerrero, and other party members mirrors similar narratives encountered across leftist history.<sup>44</sup>

Conceptions of the honor the transvestite violates form the foundation for PLM articulations of revolutionary masculinity. The exaltation of aggression and bravery—an obviously useful traditional aspect of masculinity to foster when waging a war—served to construct passivity as an affront to all true men. A 1904 *Regeneración* article about a new political slogan that discouraged agitation states: “[t]he eunuchs, the fainthearted, those who in order to insult the virile sex take masculine names, brandish as evidence of impunity the damned phrase with enthusiasm equivalent to their cowardice.”<sup>45</sup> This underlines Irwin’s description of gender existing on a continuum in men had to perform properly or lose their masculine status.

Within PLM ideology, hard physical labor and exploitation by the bosses characterized the life the working-class man—the kind of man PLM intellectuals wrote about. His identity was wound up within this status as a primary producer of wealth unjustly deprived of the fruits of his labor. According to PLM discourse, this condition of subjugation and servitude inhibited masculinity; a proper man should not accept anyone above him. Picking up the gun and rebelling against all masters typify the PLM manly ideal; countless PLM appeals demand this course. To an extent this channels the notion of aggressive masculinity, that masculinity focuses on endless competition and jockeying for status between men. Octavio Paz popularized a version of this idea based on the verb *chingar*. However, within PLM revolutionary thought the notion of universal brotherhood and radical egalitarianism temper these

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<sup>43</sup> “Esta es la vergüenza que tú gastas, afeminado, sodomo; por eso has ido á ser el 42 del grupo de los 41.” Roberto Rodríguez. (1911) “Para Ejemplo.” *Regeneración*, September 23, 1911, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> “Esta es la vergüenza que tú gastas, afeminado, sodomo; por eso has ido á ser el 42 del grupo de los 41.” *Regeneración*, September 23, 1911; Hekma et al., pp. 7-8, 41, 71, 117, 259.

<sup>45</sup> “Los eunucos, los pusilánimes, los que para afrenta del sexo viril llevan nombres masculinos, enarbolaron como patente de impunidad la frase maldita con entusiasmo equivalente á su cobardía.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1904) La abstención política es la abyección: La política sana y el servilismo.” *Regeneración*, December 3, 1904, p. 1.

competitive, combative aspects of masculinity. Ricardo Flores Magón and others advocated not only shooting bosses but working in absolute harmony with comrades and peers. In this way peace, equality, and cooperation formed the natural state with hierarchy existing as the aberration.<sup>46</sup>

The idea of violent resistance as the only acceptable masculine response to domination becomes clear through examination of the gendered character of revolutionary labor described in the PLM press. The PLM called for everyone from elders to children to become involved in the struggle but consistently reserved the role of combatants for men. A 1907 unattributed piece in *Revolución* (a *Regeneración* analogue published in Los Angeles during 1907-1908) entitled “El Deber de la Mujer” (Woman’s Duty) included the following passage: “[i]t’s necessary, then, to fight against despotism, and each person has to fight according to their sex and age: strong men, with weapon in hand; women and elders, encouraging the brave that march to the battlefield.”<sup>47</sup> The piece conveys a widespread position within the LM. In the extended address to women in 1910 Ricardo Flores Magón similarly wrote, “[m]ake your husbands, your brothers, your fathers, your sons, and your male friends take up a rifle.”<sup>48</sup>

In a later fictional piece entitled “El Triunfo de la Revolución Social” (The Triumph of the Social Revolution), He presented his vision of revolutionary success through a Mexican couple’s responses to broader events. The husband foolishly expects improvements from Carranza while the wife holds to the PLM line that meaningful change cannot come through political reshuffling. Eventually they both actively join the anarchist army. At the barricades, Magón describes the division of labor as follows: “[t]he women dig ditches; the men clean their rifles; the children distribute outfits to those champions of the proletariat.”<sup>49</sup> Despite the wife’s greater militancy and understanding in this story, only her husband levels a weapon against the oppressors. Such idealized gender roles were an important revolutionary goal for the party.

In stark contrast, Ricardo Flores Magón’s rhetorical treatment of Margarita Ortega presents an almost opposite view of appropriate women’s labor in conducting the revolution. Ortega’s story turns the notion of women convincing men to pick up the

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<sup>46</sup> Robert McKee Irwin. (2003) *Mexican Masculinities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 59-71.

<sup>47</sup> “Hay, pues, que luchar contra el depostimo, y cada quien tiene que luchar según su sexo y edad: los hombres fuertes, con el arma al brazo; las mujeres y los ancianos, animando á los bravos á que marchen al campo de batalla.” Unattributed. (1907) “El Deber de la Mujer.” *Revolución*, July 6, 1907, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> “Haced que vuestros esposos, vuestros hermanos, vuestros padres, vuestros hijos y vuestros amigos tomen el fusil.” Ricardo Flores Magón (1910). “A La Mujer.” *Regeneración*, September 24, 1910; translated by Mitchell Cowen Verter in Chaz Bufe & Mitchell Cowen Veter, Eds. (2005) *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Oakland, California: AK Press, p. 236.

<sup>49</sup> “Las mujeres hacen hilas; los hombres limpian sus rifles; los niños reparten parque [sic] a aquellos campeones del proletariado.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1915) “El Triunfo de la Revolución Social.” *Regeneración*, October 23, 1915; translated by Mitchell Cowen Verter in Chaz Bufe & Mitchell Cowen Veter, Eds. (2005) *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Oakland, California: AK Press, p. 326.

rifle on its head. Together with her daughter Rosaura Gortari, Ortega fought in Baja California against the forces of Díaz, Madero, and Huerta with gun in hand. At the end of 1911 after capture by government forces, Magón reported that Ortega said to the notorious Mexican official who held her, “[t]hey will take me Ensenada and shoot me on foot, as a man; but you, traitor, they will shoot you from behind, as a coward.”<sup>50</sup>

Ortega survived that dangerous situation but fell at the hands of Victoriano Huerta’s soldiers approximately two years later. In a stirring eulogy, Magón described her impressive martial qualities as follows:

An able horsewoman and an expert in the use of firearms, Margarita crossed the enemy lines and smuggled arms, munitions, dynamite, whatever was needed, to the comrades on the field of action. More than once her boldness and coolness saved her from falling into the clutches of the forces of tyranny. Margarita Ortega had a great heart: from her horse, or from behind a rock, she could shoot down a government soldier, and a little later once could see her caring for the wounded, feeding the convalescents, or providing words of consolation to the widows and orphans. Apostle, warrior, nurse – this exceptional woman was all of these simultaneously.<sup>51</sup>

When compared with other PLM expressions the proper place of women in the struggle—many earlier, some later—this account represents a decided queering of gender roles. Ortega was not just a combatant but an outstanding one. The reversal becomes even more obvious when the article recounts Ortega’s break with her husband’s conservatism. Ricardo Ortega expresses the matter in explicitly gendered terms: “I’m resolved to continue fighting for the cause of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and if you’re a man, come with me to the battle. If that’s not the case, forget me; I don’t want to be the partner of a coward.”<sup>52</sup> Ortega followed Magón’s

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<sup>50</sup> “[...] me llevarán á Ensenada y me fusilarán de pie, como á un hombre; pero á tí, traidor, te matarán por la espalda, como á un cobarde.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) “¡Basta!” *Regeneración*, September 9, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> “Hábil ginete y experta en el manejo de las armas del fuego, Margarita atravezaba las líneas enemigas y conducía armas, parque, dinamita, lo que se necesitaba, a los compañeros en el campo de la acción. Más de una vez, su arrojo y su sangre fría la salvaron de caer en las garras de la tiranía. Margarita Ortega tenía un gran corazón: desde su caballo, o detrás de un peñasco, podía tener a raya a los soldados del gobierno, y poco después podía verse cuidando a los heridos, alimentando a los convalecientes o prodigando palabras de consuelo a las viudas y a los huérfanos. Apóstol, guerrera, enfermera, todo a la vez era esta mujer excepcional.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1914) “Margarita Ortega.” *Regeneración*, June 13, 1914, p. 6; translated by Mitchell Cowen Verter in Chaz Bufe & Mitchell Cowen Verter, Eds. (2005) *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Oakland, California: AK Press, p. 228.

<sup>52</sup> “Estoy resuelta a seguir luchando por la causa del Partido Liberal Mexicano, y si eres hombre, vente conmigo a la campaña; de lo contrario, olvídate, pues yo no quiero ser la compañera de un cobarde.” Ricardo Flores Magón. (1914) “Margarita Ortega.” *Regeneración*, June 13, 1914, p. 6; translated by Mitchell Cowen Verter in Chaz Bufe & Mitchell Cowen Verter, Eds. (2005) *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Oakland, California: AK Press, p. 229.

1910 appeal to women to pressure the men in their lives to fight, but on terms of equality rather than any natural or traditional notion of separate aptitudes and duties. The fact that Magón himself never personally took up the rifle as he urged other men to do and instead served the revolutionary enterprise through his writing further heightens the sense that the idealized gender roles he embraced rhetorically did not necessarily reflect how members of the PLM actually conducted themselves in practice. Various observers—particularly an anarchist paper in France—made a point of criticizing him for not taking to the field in Baja California. This element enhances the internal contradiction.

While the narrative of women as military heroes sharply conflicts with Guerrero's disgust for masculinized women and advocacy of distinct spheres for each sex, it accords with the broader revolutionary artistic and literary trend of exalting manly woman under certain circumstances. A picture emerges of a gender ideology that considered reasonable levels of masculinity laudable in either gender but considered femininity only desirable for women and abhorrent for men. In other cases, Ricardo Flores Magón positively described women as "virile" (*viril*).<sup>53</sup> This exposes the complexity of gender ideology within the PLM and possible differences between Guerrero and Ricardo Flores Magón on the matter. It can also be read as an effort to heighten the sense of shame PLM propagandists believed was an effective motivating tool. Magón likely hoped readers would react to the cowardice of Ortega's husband and her bravery by hoisting a rifle themselves to prove they were in fact true men. In any case, his eulogy suggests a level of fluidity in gender constructions and the acceptability of women adopting traditionally masculine roles as part of the revolutionary project.

A second example of an important distinction in gendered labor emerges in the case of nonexistent or insufficient regular employment. PLM texts consistently refer to larceny as the arena of desperate men, and prostitution as the occupation of desperate women. Like so many anarchist, communist, and socialist groups, the PLM wished to assure everyone the necessities of life with dignified and healthful employment. As such, the party took a firm stance against prostitution, describing it as more of an economic than a moral ill and even attacking marriage as a form of prostitution if contracted for support rather than love. Ricardo Flores Magón expressed this succinctly when he wrote, "[a]sk the prostitute why she sells her body and she will answer you: because I am hungry."<sup>54</sup> The robber—the masculine response to starvation in this construction—provided the same explanation. This contrasts with the condemnatory and dehumanizing attitude expressed by experts and government

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<sup>53</sup> For example, see Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) "Sigue su Curso Natural la Revolucion Economica de Mexico." *Regeneración*, September 16, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> "Preguntad á la prostituta por qué vende su cuerpo y os contestará: porque tengo hambre." Ricardo Flores Magón. (1911) "Franciso I. Madero Escupe a la Faz del Proletariado." *Regeneración*, April 22, 1911, p. 1.

official who studied and wrote about prostitution in the same period. The motivations they ascribed to prostituted women center on vice rather than need.<sup>55</sup>

Magón identified sexual exploitation as a key element of oppression that motivated his revolutionary action against the existing social order. In a 1909 letter, he described how a Díaz official offered to pay him off to betray the revolution. During this process, the following called him back to the cause: “I thought about the laborers stooped in their work, about the women of the people prostituted by the masters; I thought about the nakedness of those who worked, about the neglect of humble families, about the desperation of the women raped by the soldiery of the Caesar [Porfirio Díaz].”<sup>56</sup> Near the end of his life, Magón wrote to a friend from prison. For the purpose of constructing himself a victim of political repression he made a list of the crimes he was innocent of that included “I have not exploited women’s prostitution.”<sup>57</sup> Though not above employing—metaphorically and otherwise—the trope of the repulsive whore, Magón and the PLM in general put forth a view of sex work that was dramatically different from the mainstream Díaz-era position and closer to the post-revolutionary reformers of the 1920s Bliss describes in *Compromised Positions*. Among revolutionary soldiers, Bliss shows a prevalent cult of masculinity that lauded or at least tolerated acquiring sex through economic power. This model of masculinity makes no appearance whatsoever in PLM literature. The ideal party man pursued reproductive heterosexual partnership on the nominal basis of equality.<sup>58</sup>

Taken as a whole, these PLM positions on gender identity and expression combined emancipatory rhetoric with a restrictive narrative of naturalness that pathologized deviation. Neither the emancipatory rhetoric nor the narrative of naturalness completely dominated the discourse. PLM writers consistently brought up both the oppression of women and their need for liberation but couched this vision with set gender roles. Assertive masculinity came to be the desired national and/or revolutionary performance, thus allowing positive masculinization for women in certain cases but casting effeminacy in men with all the worst traits of the old regime and of capitalism as well. For PLM writers, discursively employing the popular trope of the passive homosexual transvestite as the antithesis of revolutionary masculinity must have seemed obvious and unproblematic.

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<sup>55</sup> Katherine Elaine Bliss. (2001) *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City*. University Park: Penn State Press, pp. 23-46.

<sup>56</sup> “Pensé en los peones encorvados en su trabajo, en las mujeres del pueblo prostituidas por los amos; pensé en la desnudez de los que trabajan, en el desamparo de las familias humildes, en la desesperación de las mujeres violadas por la soldadecza del César.” Letter to Elizabeth Trowbridge Sarabia, February 21, 1909 in Ricardo Flores Magón. *Correspondencia*, vol 1. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, pp. 511-512.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Erma Barsky, March 16, 1922 in Ricardo Flores Magón. *Correspondencia, Vol 1*. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, pp. 348.

<sup>58</sup> Katherine Elaine Bliss. (2001) *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City*. University Park: Penn State Press, pp. 23-46.

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