

University of New Mexico

## UNM Digital Repository

---

American Studies ETDs

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

Fall 11-23-2020

### Health and Revolution: Anarchist Biopolitics in the Borderlands

Benjamin H. Abbott

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst\\_etds](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_etds)



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Abbott, Benjamin H.. "Health and Revolution: Anarchist Biopolitics in the Borderlands." (2020).  
[https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst\\_etds/119](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_etds/119)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Studies ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

Benjamin H. Abbott

*Candidate*

---

American Studies

*Department*

---

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Dissertation Committee:*

Alyosha Goldstein , Chairperson

---

Amy L. Brandzel

---

Irene Vásquez

---

Bárbara O. Reyes

---

**HEATH AND REVOLUTION: ANARCHIST BIOPOLITICS IN THE BORDERLANDS**

by

**BENJAMIN H. ABBOTT**

B.A., History and Creative Writing, North Carolina State University, 2007  
M.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2011

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**American Studies**

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May, 2021**

## Acknowledgements

As scholarship and revolution are necessarily collective endeavors, this section cannot be comprehensive. Beyond the individuals and institutions mentioned here, so many others have provided a foundation for this project and shaped my analysis. I begin by offering thanks to the countless comrades and colleagues whose names I have forgotten or never knew, but who contributed to the intellectual currents I rely on.

I wrote this dissertation while living in the occupied Tiwa territory commonly known as Albuquerque, New Mexico and in active solidarity with revolutionaries pushing for Native liberation. Supporting organizations such as the Red Nation and Pueblo Action Alliance has deepened my understanding of settler colonialism as well as my commitment to dismantling it. I am very grateful to be in community with Melissa Tso, Hope Alvarado, Jennifer Marley, Justine Teba, and other Red Nation members. Indigenous revolutionary organizing and scholarship inform how I interpret classical anarchism and how I envision future possibilities.

Without also engaging in radical struggle alongside comrades, studying historical anarchism would have been too bleak. I profoundly appreciate the various revolutionary groups and individuals that have sustained me while writing this dissertation, from Food Not Bombs to Black and Pink. (un)Occupy Albuquerque and the broader Occupy Wall Street movements kindled the hope that mass mobilization was not only a thing of the past and taught me much about operating collectively. Over the last few years, FAM – Free Access to Movements Childcare Collective has been crucial to me as an organizational home. FAM’s emphasis on care and reproductive justice has heightened my attention to these dynamics. I feel immeasurable gratitude to my FAM comrades Elena Yen Suffling, Juliette Nolan, and Asenath Lizárraga. Likewise, I am so grateful to Mario Casillas and Anni Leming for the friendship and connection. Anni gave me the example of persevering to finish a PhD in spite of how awful everything is. Idris Robinson helped me stay grounded in my values, kept me company in the streets, and inspires me with analysis of the summer 2020 rebellion. May that movement continue and may all of us remain firm in the revolutionary path.

My academic trajectory started when Nancy Mitchell encouraged me to pursue to history as an undergraduate student at North Carolina State University and then Richard W. Slatta introduced me to the Partido Liberal Mexicano. I thank Linda Hall, Elizabeth Hutchison, Kimberly Gauderman, and Samuel Truett for assisting me in developing this dissertation project as a Master’s student in the Department of History here at the University of New Mexico. Once I joined the American Studies PhD program, Melanie K. Yazzie—then a fellow graduate student—provided the mentorship I needed to prepare for teaching. I am grateful to Melanie for that as well as for her radical organizing in the Red Nation. Teaching in American Studies, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and Peace and Justice studies supported me during much of the time I was working on this dissertation. I learned a great deal from professors such as Jennifer Nez Denetdale, Adriana Ramirez de Arellano, and Michael Trujillo. I similarly learned much from the students who took my courses.

I thank my committee of Alyosha Goldstein, Bárbara O. Reyes, Amy L. Brandzel, and Irene Vásquez for their seemingly infinite patience and constructive feedback. Dr. Reyes generously provided line-by-line editing before my defense. It was a pleasure teaching in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies (then Women Studies) when Dr. Reyes was the director. Dr. Vásquez facilitated the creation and maintenance of the Transnational Research Collective (TRC), which benefited me considerably both academically and personally. I am grateful for

TRC colleagues Natalia Torres, Moises Santos, María Eugenia López, Trisha Martinez, Alexandro Jara, Froilan Orozco, Rafael A. Martínez, and Claudia L. Mitchell.

The Feminist Research Institute provided me with funding to visit the Moncaleano/Lawson archive at the University of Houston's Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. I thank the FRI for the support, Carolina A. Villarroel for guiding me through the archive, and Lina Marcela DeVito for finding and processing that collection. The Archivo Electrónico Ricardo Flores Magón at [archivomagon.net](http://archivomagon.net), which host scans of all PLM periodicals as well as other materials, was an invaluable resource to me throughout my writing. I am grateful for this and other free, easily accessible digital archives.

Some of the numerous scholars who have made this work possible appear in my notes and bibliography; for the sake of brevity, I avoid repeating them here. However, I wish to highlight Juan Gómez-Quiñones to mourn his recent passing and honor his legacy. His book *Sembradores: Ricardo Flores Magón y El Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique* was one of the first I read on the PLM and inspired me to continue studying the Party. I treasured the copy I had until I passed it on to comrade who was interested in learning more about Ricardo Flores Magón and company.

# **HEATH AND REVOLUTION: ANARCHIST BIOPOLITICS IN THE BORDERLANDS**

by

**Benjamin H. Abbott**

**B.A., HISTORY AND CREATIVE WRITING, NORTH CAROLINA STATE  
UNIVERSITY, 2007**

**M.A., HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2011**

**PhD, AMERICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2021**

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines classical anarchist discourse on gender, race, and sexuality via the lenses of disability justice, reproductive justice, and queer Indigenous feminism. I argue that eugenics was key to how anarchists in the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and their comrades conceived of political collectivity. Popular notions of scarcity and survival of the fittest, imbued with scientific authority, structured thought at the time. Anarchists, like other anticapitalist radicals, advocated for their cause within this framework, frequently asserting how revolution would lead to a stronger society and denigrating those imagined as weak. I attend especially to the contrast between how PLM writers valorized Native peoples as vigorous members of the working class and inspiring figures of resistance in Mexico while characterizing queerness as degenerate bourgeois decadence. In conclusion, I point to utopian dreams of a world where all can thrive as a possible path through the tensions and contradictions.

## Contents

<b>Introduction: The Specter of Anarchism and the Open Grave of Eugenics</b>	1
<b>1 <i>Regeneración</i> against Degeneracy: Ableism and Antiqueness</b>	32
<b>2 Feminist Anarchism and Forgetting across Generations</b>	61
<b>3 “To Fight against Their Liberators”: Anarchism, Transnationalism, and White Supremacy in Revolutionary Baja California</b>	96
<b>4 “Ancient Usage and Primal Instinct”: Discourses of the Indian in the Partido Liberal Mexicano</b>	135
<b>Conclusion: Imagining Abundance and Choosing Hope</b>	161
<b>References</b>	196

## Introduction: The Specter of Anarchism and the Open Grave of Eugenics

At a campaign rally in Bemidji, Minnesota in September 2020, U.S. President Donald J. Trump emphasized the importance of genetic endowment, repeatedly praising the “good genes” of his audience and their “tough” and “strong” forebears. “A lot of it is about the genes, isn’t it, don’t you believe?” he said. “The racehorse theory. You think we’re so different?”<sup>1</sup> This came in the same week as news broke of whistleblower Dawn Wooten’s report of forced sterilizations of immigrant women in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody in Georgia.<sup>2</sup> These two major stories prompted a proliferation of attention to the historical eugenics movement in U.S., Mexican, and global media.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, as a reaction to the ongoing rebellion against police initiated by Black youth in Minneapolis, Trump and others in his administration railed against the anarchist menace and went so far as to declare New York City, Portland, and Seattle “anarchist jurisdictions,” threatening to deny federal funds to those cities until they take harsher law-and-order measures.<sup>4</sup> In early October 2020, police and anarchists fought on Avenida

---

<sup>1</sup> Aaron Rugar, Twitter, September 18, 2020, 7:09 PM, <https://twitter.com/atrupar/status/1307124621389463553> (accessed September 18, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Angelina Chapin, “Women in ICE Custody Are Being Coerced Into Hysterectomies, Whistleblower Claims,” *New York: The Cut* (New York, NY), September 14, 2020 (updated September 16, 2020), <https://www.thecut.com/2020/09/women-in-ice-custody-allegedly-coerced-into-hysterectomies.html> (accessed September 16, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> “El horror de la eugenesia contra mujeres migrantes en EU,” *La Jornada* (Mexico City), September 22, 2020 <https://www.jornada.com.mx/sin-fronteras/2020/09/22/el-horror-de-la-eugenesia-persigue-a-mujeres-migrantes-en-eu-3248.html> (accessed September 22, 2020); “En EU les están quitando el ÚTERO a las migrantes; es ‘un campo de concentración experimental,’” *El Heraldo de México* (Mexico City), September 22, 2020, <https://heraldodemexico.com.mx/usa/2020/9/22/en-eu-les-estan-quitando-el-utero-las-migrantes-es-un-campo-de-concentracion-experimental-3653.html> (accessed September 22, 2020); Moira Donegan, “Ice Hysterectomy Allegations in Line with US’s Long and Racist History of Eugenics,” *The Guardian* (London), September 17, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/17/ice-hysterectomy-allegations-us-eugenics-history> (accessed September 17, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Mark Bray, “Trump Fuels March Toward Fascism With ‘Anarchist Jurisdictions’ Edict,” *Truthout* (Sacramento, CA), September 22, 2020, <https://truthout.org/articles/trump-fuels-march-toward-fascism-with-anarchist-jurisdictions-edict/> (accessed September 22, 2020). On the Minneapolis rebellion, see Idris Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done,” *Ill Will Editions*, July 20, 2020, <https://illwilleditions.com/how-it-might-should-be-done/> (accessed August 17, 2020).



Ricardo Flores Magón in Mexico City, near the site of the Mexican government's 1968 massacre of student protesters.<sup>5</sup> With eugenics and anarchists both making headlines, it was as if the world had turned back a century or more to the time of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti's famous trial, the Wall Street bombing, and the push to restrict immigration on eugenicist grounds.

Brandon Tensley outlines the “dark subtext” of praising genes in a CNN piece a few days after Trump's Bemidji remarks and documents how Trump has a long history of similar comments.<sup>6</sup> Tensley notes how white Bemidji is and Trump's audience was as well as local policies there against refugees. Showing the popular awareness of the eugenics movement, Tensley quotes Carin Mrotz of Jewish Community action on how Trump's language resonates with the “race science” of the Nazi era and lauded “the supposed genetic superiority of European immigrants” to Minnesota. Mrotz describes and condemns Trump's aim as “to sow division and hatred between us.”<sup>7</sup> Many analyses across news services and social media express roughly this same position on Trump's comments and the history of eugenics.<sup>8</sup> On Twitter, to much acclaim, historian Steve Silberman writes that Trump's comments are “indistinguishable from the Nazi rhetoric that led to Jews, disabled people, LGBTQ, Romani and others being exterminated.”<sup>9</sup> If only in the context of criticizing Trump, knowledge of eugenics and its

---

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Ruiz y Eduardo Hernández, “Frenan paso de anarquistas al Zócalo durante marcha del 2 de octubre,” *El Universal* (Mexico City), October 3, 2020, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/metropoli/frenan-paso-de-anarquistas-al-zocalo-durante-marcha-del-2-de-octubre> (accessed October 3, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Brandon Tensley, “The Dark Subtext of Trump's ‘Good Genes’ Compliment,” *CNN* (Atlanta, GA), September 22, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/22/politics/donald-trump-genes-historical-context-eugenics/index.html> (accessed September 22, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Carin Mrotz, quoted in Tensley, “Dark Subtext.”

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Maya Rao, “Trump's ‘Good Genes’ Comment at Bemidji Rally Draws Condemnation: Bemidji Remarks about ‘Good Genes’ Compared to ‘Race Science,’” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), September 21, 2020, <https://www.startribune.com/trump-s-good-genes-comment-at-bemidji-rally-draws-condemnation/572486371/> (accessed September 21, 2020). Also see John Haltiwanger, “Trump Told a Crowd of Nearly All White Supporters that They Have ‘Good Genes,’” *Business Insider* (New York, NY), September 21, 2020 (<https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-told-crowd-of-white-supporters-they-have-good-genes-2020-9>) (accessed September 21, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Steve Silberman, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/stevesilberman/status/1307784059167227904> (accessed September 22, 2020).

unconscionable atrocities appears widespread in the United States at this time. While occasionally acknowledging eugenic policies like forced sterilization that continued past 1945, this discourse primarily situates eugenics as an old, discredited idea returning during an abnormal period.

I interpret the eugenic mentality as foundational rather than exceptional, unpinning action across ideological lines. This project looks back at eugenics and anarchism around the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing on the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and its supporters. I argue that degeneracy discourse and eugenics was integral to anarchist thought in the period and key to understanding the PLM and company.<sup>10</sup> Biopolitical notions of fostering fitness and wiping out weakness in order to forge the strongest society possible sculpted anarchist positions on political collectivity. This determined who was part of the oppressed masses they fought for and for whom, and whom they excluded from this category. The broad biopolitical discourse let Voltairine de Cleyre dismiss full-service sex workers as already lost, Ricardo Flores Magón charge rivals with the unnatural vice of homosexuality, William C. Owen marvel at the Mexican Indian's inborn propensity to anarchist communism, and Emma Goldman rail about runaway working-class reproduction producing people too feeble to free themselves. As these examples illustrate, numerous topics cluster with eugenics, from gender and sexuality to race and colonialism. The anarchists in question assembled and articulated their mission in relation to the dominant values and knowledges of the time, remixing them liberally at the surface level yet leaving their depths largely untroubled.

---

<sup>10</sup> The bulk of the material I cover falls into the 1890-1920 range. I think of this the age of classical anarchism and classical eugenics. Carl Levy defines as the classical period of anarchism as "1860/70-1939." See Levy, "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, no. 3 (2004), 330.

In *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues that “a discourse of development captured the imagination of [post-World War II] revolutionary movements, often to the detriment of the constituencies these movements sought to liberate through their anti-imperialist struggle.”<sup>11</sup> I make a kindred claim about circa-1900 anarchism and eugenics, albeit with less confidence regarding detriment. Harming despised minority groups can potentially benefit majorities. As Jason Oliver Chang writes in *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*, “hating the Chinese people was good for everyone except the Chinese people.”<sup>12</sup> Classical anarchist entanglement with ableism and eugenics may well have broadened that movement’s appeal, rendering it more robust and vigorous than it otherwise would have been. Regardless of practicalities and counterfactual speculation, ableism clashes with anarchism’s stated aim of universal liberation. I follow Nicole Guidotti-Hernández in taking seriously the violence of history and dispersed complicity, in not simply reiterating a glorious resistance narrative that elides oppression and complexity.<sup>13</sup>

Simultaneously, however, I decline to abandon the project of revolutionary insight and inspiration. As Clare Hemmings shows in *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive*, we need not face a binary opposition between the critique and celebration of historical radicals: the tensions and contradictions can prove illuminating and encouraging.<sup>14</sup> Though they never entirely escaped eugenics, PLM-associated anarchists contested and reinscribed value in remarkable and generative ways. At grave risk of

---

<sup>11</sup> María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Clare Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2018).

harm or death via persecution, anarchists rejected pillars of hegemonic power in their period, from the nation-state to the church to the patriarchal family. They dreamed up novel modes of relating and belonging. In particular, attending to the PLM's unwavering support for Indigenous self-determination and at times piercing analysis of white supremacy informs the Eurocentric historiography of anarchism as well as speaks to contemporary interest in decolonial theory and practice. Anarchist antinationalist ideology and transnational lived experience likewise deserves additional scholarly engagement, as difficult as negotiating nationalisms on the ground was for the PLM during the 1911 Baja California insurrection. In an imagined revolutionary future, Omar Ramírez leaves a resurrected Ricardo Flores Magón a to receive "the praise and criticism he never had the chance to experience after his death so long ago."<sup>15</sup> I strive for the same combination in my treatment of the PLM.

### **Ableism, Eugenics, Meritocracy**

Eugenics is not gone in the here and now. Nor is it limited to Donald Trump, to conservatives and fascists. As Ansgar Allen argues in *Benign Violence: Education in and beyond the Age of Reason*, the "eugenic religion" of "fluid meritocracy" stands out as the ascendent technology of government in the twenty-first century.<sup>16</sup> If eugenics fell as a casualty of World War II, as the story often goes, then its grave lies open. Allen emphasizes the need to "rehabilitate eugenics" in order "to explore its continuing influence."<sup>17</sup> The over-the-top horrors of Nazi Germany, that union of biopower and disciplinary power, and the harsh proclamations of

---

<sup>15</sup> Omar Ramírez, "Black Flag, Red Heart: A Study of Chicano and Chicana Anarchy," (master's thesis, California State University, Northridge, 2008), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Ansgar Allen, *Benign Violence: Education in and beyond the Age of Reason* (Kindle Edition: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 132.

<sup>17</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 98.

eugenicists like Herbert Spencer can conceal “the saccharine fact that eugenics was a positive science.”<sup>18</sup> Our revulsion can obscure how, for its proponents, eugenics was an ethos of cultivating life and excellence. Prominent as it was in the late nineteenth century, Spencer’s thought had a definite influence on the PLM and on many other anarchists. William C. Owen, who served as *Regeneración*’s English-language editor in the 1910s, earlier wrote an entire book on Spencer. I discern a line of continuity between the “progressive” eugenicists adjacent to anarchism like Havelock Ellis—so admired by Emma Goldman—and the status-quo contemporary approach to sorting people and improving society. Allen mentions in passing how eugenics appealed to radicals; given his refrain that power molds us into who we are, how could this be otherwise? In various ways and to varying degrees, the historical anarchists I examine developed and declared their values infused with the burgeoning eugenics mentality of their era.

A Foucauldian critical of others for their caution around sweeping pronouncements and political struggle, Allen hones and extends Michel Foucault’s analysis of shifting modes of powers. Allen charts the development of disciplinary power, biopower, traditional meritocracy, and finally fluid meritocracy. Disciplinary power acts on the individual body, identifying it, analyzing it, partitioning it, and instructing its movements. During this process, “another, more complex, aggregate body began to emerge.”<sup>19</sup> Biopower focuses on the population rather than the individual. Allen defines it as “a regime of calculation and force that seeks to nurture each mass of bodies that comes within its purview,” highlighting biopower’s light touch relative to disciplinary power.<sup>20</sup> Biopower works with the population’s supposedly natural characteristics

---

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 99. On the Third Reich as the extreme example of combined disciplinary power and biopower, see 131 and Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2003 [1976]), 259.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 54.

<sup>20</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 54. As noted with the example of Nazi Germany, disciplinary power and biopower can operate together.

and tendencies, fostering life and vigor. Meritocracy, in Allen's conception, harkens back to the first half of the nineteenth century but blossomed in the early twentieth century alongside the interplay of disciplinary and biopolitical techniques key for eugenics.<sup>21</sup> Allen uses Henry Herbert Goddard's 1914 *Feeble-Mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences* as an instance of traditional meritocracy melded with biopower. Goddard classified the so-called feeble-minded into a vocational hierarchy of ability, graded through schools or other institutions and assigned to appropriate labor for their good and the benefit of society. Other extended this sort of grading and matching to the entire population. Thus, the dream of traditional meritocracy as Allen articulates it was a rigid rational distribution of ability, labor, and reward in order to make the nation or the human species as a whole as rich, powerful, and stable as possible.

After World War II and the defeat and discrediting of fascism as well as increasing recognition of social complexity, meritocracy started to morph into relatively freer forms with reduced focus on disciplinary power—albeit still with plenty of overt coercion and control in certain contexts, such as in prisons and at borders. Allen describes this as the “process of collapse of that alliance between biopolitical and disciplinary techniques” that “occupied much of the latter half of the twentieth century.”<sup>22</sup> Allen acknowledges how certain eugenicists—such as Francis Galton himself—recommended the liberal approach of “public self-regulation” from the beginning but downplays this as a marginal tendency until the later collapse.<sup>23</sup> Fluid meritocracy coalesced during this time, assimilating elements of the liberal strand of eugenics that looked to religious sentiment as a model for promoting eugenic consciousness as well as elements of ancient pastoral techniques of spiritually managing flocks of humans. With fluidity

---

<sup>21</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 145, 147. Allen writes that Jeremy Bentham “stood of at the dawn of a traditional conception of meritocracy” in 1830, imagining mighty social machines composed of perfectly disciplined bodies.

<sup>22</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 136.

<sup>23</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 120.

comes lesser attention to truth or order, but an emphasis on appearances: “To be favoured are those individual and collective actions that merely *look as though* they promote economic vitality.”<sup>24</sup> *Benign Violence* underscores the irrationality of twenty-first-century fluid meritocracy with a series of vignettes about the daily absurdities of life both inside and outside academia. Frenzied and overwhelmingly pointless competition exemplifies fluid meritocracy, propelled by the dream of a perfectly arranged and “justly unequal” society that governments have long since abandoned.<sup>25</sup> The chaos and/or cultivated hope of reward keeps the masses from rebelling.

As Allen indicates, challenging meritocracy seems beyond the pale of reason even in radical circles:

We ask with bewilderment: How could we ever live without science? How could advanced democratic societies not be meritocratic? How could they not assess, classify and allocate according to a regrettable, though necessary, vocational hierarchy? How could a perfected democracy avoid this necessity that people of ability are assigned to positions of responsibility and influence, positions that are appropriate to their talents?<sup>26</sup>

Meritocracy thus functions like Lee Edelman’s related concept of “reproductive futurism,” which presents the cherished figure of the Child as beyond politics and in doing so “shapes the logic within which the political itself must be thought.”<sup>27</sup> *Benign Violence* does not answer the above queries with any detail or finality. The book terminates with a nod to Karl Marx and the communist slogan “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”<sup>28</sup> Allen instead stresses that opposing the fluid meritocracy “an *excoriating experience*, where those that rebel feel ill at ease in their skin.”<sup>29</sup> Akin Edelman’s *No Future* but with a

---

<sup>24</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 145.

<sup>25</sup> Alen, *Benign Violence*, 195.

<sup>26</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 152.

<sup>27</sup> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 248.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 249. Italics original.

Foucauldian rather than Lacanian framework, *Benign Violence* centers refusal and negation of the oppressive structure over manufacturing an alternative.

Allen does not directly mention ableism at all in his analysis and mostly takes socially desirable attributes like intelligence for granted despite probing the contingencies of their codification via examination. The framing of disability as a social construction offers insight about the mechanics of meritocracy.<sup>30</sup> In the big picture, physical and social environments favor some traits and disfavor others. When people create things, they decide, consciously or not, whom to enable and whom to disable. As the iconic example goes, installing stairs rather than ramps makes place inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs and similar mobility devices. This is not a fact of nature, but political decisions humans make. Meritocracy assumes objective measures of ability, the legitimacy of subjective valuations, or some combination of the two. By its own logic, meritocracy dispenses deeply unequal rewards to people according to the accidents of their birth and life circumstances. Nothing beyond genes and environment, nature and nurture, exist in the scientific worldview. The best meritocracy can do is assert that it is inescapable, that the alternatives are worse. Classical eugenicists took scarcity as the baseline, worrying over limited resources and conceptualizing eugenics as the only way to for humanity to avoid regression and perhaps doom. “To the eugenicist,” C. B. Davenport wrote in 1911 and Havelock Ellis cited approving the following year in *The Task of Social Hygiene*, “heredity stands as the

---

<sup>30</sup> For an early instance of this approach, see Claire H. Liachowitz, *Disability as a Social Construct: Legislative Roots* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). As Elizabeth Barnes writes in *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016), 1, viewing “being disabled as a primarily social phenomenon” has become commonplace in “academic disability studies.” People within the disability community continue to debate the utility and validity of this perspective. As Barnes acknowledges and many others point out, experiences such as chronic pain have a material reality that defies reduction to a social dynamic. Disability always operates as an interplay of the material and social. However, even in cases of those with chronic pain who hope for a cure, how society engages with them can dramatically affect their experience of disability.



one great hope of the human race; its savior from imbecility, poverty, disease, immorality.”<sup>31</sup>

Ellis ended *The Task of Social Hygiene* by declaring socialism’s care for the unfit well-meaning but misguided, with the result that “Sisyphean task is imposed on society” via the reproduction of undesirables.<sup>32</sup> Ellis recommended an enlightened eugenic synthesis of individualism and socialism instead, free of coercion but aimed at elimination of the unfit to maximum extent possible.

In my extensive experience in both academic and community spaces aligned with radical or at least progressive politics, the ableist and eugenicist mentality suffuses almost everything. I can hardly spend a moment on left Twitter without witnessing anarchists and other radicals calling their foes the same words Henry Goddard used to classify his feeble-minded: “idiot,” “imbecile,” “moron.” On social media, in classrooms, and at community meetings, radicals take pains to present themselves as intelligent and their adversaries or rivals as unintelligent. Intelligence operates as a key status currency, virtually synonymous with value itself and rarely questioned in the slightest. Intelligence is perhaps the most accepted desirable trait, but in myriad other ways, radicals embrace norms of social value based on fitness in approximately eugenicist terms. They frequently portray enemies as losers and failures, as weak, incompetent, antiquated, ugly, unpopular, insane, and so on. While the exact meaning of these categories of value and its absence shifts continuously, a surprisingly broad agreement exists across ideological lines about what is desirable and what is undesirable. Anarchists and fascists alike volley many of the same insults. They operate in a shared discursive field and employ venerable notions of value. Academics may generally avoid pejoratives they think crude, instead penning pages and pages

---

<sup>31</sup> C. B. Davenport, “Euthenics and Eugenics,” *Popular Science Monthly*, January 1911, 20; Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912), 44.

<sup>32</sup> Ellis, *Social Hygiene*, 402.

that amount to the same as an angry tweet, but even this depends on the individual and the context. One of the first teaching-associate meetings I attended opened with a fellow graduate student ranting about how “stupid” the undergraduates in their classes were. Academia revolves around ideals of brilliance, originality, and productivity.

A growing group of disability activists contests the employment of slurs like “idiot” and sometimes the framework of ableism, eugenics, and meritocracy as a whole. As the list compiled and maintained by Lydia X. Y. Brown shows, a vast number of pejorative English words and phrases rely on ableism.<sup>33</sup> Disabled people and others vigorously debate which terms to eschew and whether the focus on language genuinely helps dismantle ableism. While disability activism has gained considerable prominence over the last decade in radical circles, responses remain largely symbolic, superficial, and uneven. Basic steps are scarce: Plenty of anarchists and other radicals keep on gathering at locations inaccessible to mobility devices, ignoring image descriptions on online posts, wearing perfume and other fragrances to community events, and on and on. At universities, legal requirements and greater resources make codified accommodations more available but these measures are still tenuous and minimal, excluding or poorly suiting even many with intelligible disabilities. In this context, the project of undoing ableism in expansive terms seems outlandish, extravagantly ambitious, and potentially counter to the interests of many disabled people. The dominant logic of accessibility and accommodation follows the pattern of the dominant paradigm, nominally allowing disabled individuals to compete for personal and social benefit, to demonstrate that they otherwise conform to norms and to claim rewards for their productivity. As in all cases, this opportunity to compete and conform has real material advantages. If we cannot escape the eugenic religion of fluid

---

<sup>33</sup> Lydia X. Z. Brown, “Glossary of Ableist Phrases,” *Autistic Hoya*, <https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html> (accessed February 1, 2019).

meritocracy, attaching respectable disability activism to that quixotic cause can only hinder inclusion and assimilation. So goes the classic antiradical argument.

The recent rise in visibility of disability activism and of the disability justice movement has a specific history that Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha enjoins us to remember, “because our work and terminology are in danger, now and always, of having the fact that they were invented by Black, Indigenous, and people of color erased and their politics watered down.”<sup>34</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha highlights how much attention her work and disability justice overall has received recently, noting the stark difference between 2010 and 2015.<sup>35</sup> Disability justice politics stress how systems of oppression mutually reinforce each other and the imperative of collective struggle against them. As Patty Berne of Sins Invalid writes, “One cannot look at the history of US slavery, the stealing of Indigenous lands, and US imperialism without seeing the way that white supremacy uses ableism to create a lesser/‘other’ group of people that is deemed less worthy/abled/smart/capable.”<sup>36</sup> Disability justice has a radical orientation toward “liberation that understands that the state was built of racist, colonialist ableism and will not save us, because it was created to kill us.”<sup>37</sup> This methodology of attending to how multiple system of oppression intertwine, which we can trace back to the women of color feminism of the 1980s among other intellectual currents, holds an key place in my study of turn-of-the-century anarchism.<sup>38</sup> In the chapter “Care Webs: Experiments in Creating Collective Access,” Piepzna-Samarasinha says the way to make new worlds “is by being fucking real, by not papering over the places where our

---

<sup>34</sup> Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), 20.

<sup>35</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 18-19. Piepzna-Samarasinha expresses concern that history may erase this period of flourishing and hopes to archive it to prevent that from happening.

<sup>36</sup> Patty Berne, “What Is Disability Justice?” *Sins Invalid: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice> (accessed July 7, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Disability justice directly draws on Gloria Anzaldúa. See Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 23.

rhetoric falls flat, where we ran out of steam, or where this shit is genuinely fucking hard.”<sup>39</sup> I write in a similar spirit, committed to revolution and in relationship to various contemporary radical communities.

This project is in part a genealogy of the casual and strident ableism I continually observe among revolutionaries and critical scholars. I have read many classical eugenicists in their own words, at length. The eugenic echoes I hear from comrades as well as from myself haunt me, unsettling my understanding of what anarchism means and what I believe in. Like Allen in *Benign Violence*, I intend to discomfort and disturb.<sup>40</sup> Following Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, Allen describes the genealogist as one who “sets out to challenge what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, and present this given as it sits upon a complex history of contending forces” for the purpose of “confrontation” and transformation.<sup>41</sup>

## **Anarchism**

In its classical period, as in the Trump era, anarchism enraged and terrified nation-states and capitalists across the world. The bourgeois press routinely vilified anarchists and called for state and popular violence against them. Some anarchists engaged in targeted violence against those they believed oppressors—politicians, aristocrats, industrialists, Pinkertons, and sundry—as well as occasionally in less discriminating attacks such as Émile Henry’s bombing of Café Terminus in 1894. With characteristic overstatement, Theodore L. Flood of *The Chautauquan* exclaimed that same year that the “series of anarchist outbreaks which culminated in the assassination of [French] President [Marie François Sadi] Carnot have seldom been equaled in

---

<sup>39</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 167

<sup>41</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 67-68.

the history of modern civilization.”<sup>42</sup> Flood lumped labor activist Eugene V. Debs, who later became a socialist, in with the anarchists and advocated “exterminating anarchy at once.”<sup>43</sup> As Nathaniel Hong writes, “the first Red scare was directed at anarchism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century” and the “anarchist was the constructed devil of the American civic religion” during that era.<sup>44</sup> The U.S. mainstream has a remarkably consistent record of depicting anarchism as an irrational criminal threat to society, placing leftist dissidents in general under anarchy’s umbrella, and demanding brutality to suppress this amorphous group. In July 2020, confronted with a sustained insurrection against the police and for Black lives, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said that “arsonists and anarchists should be prosecuted.”<sup>45</sup> In the established U.S. fashion, Biden associated anarchists with criminality and asked the state to clamp down.

While, as Ricardo Flores Magón described, the United States stands out for its over-the-top patriotism and willful ignorance, dominant discourse on anarchism looked and looks similar in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> Flores Magón held anarchists convictions well before he publicly proclaimed them; he and other anarchists close to him in the PLM concealed their ideals for years out of fear of negative responses from their supporters.<sup>47</sup> In the minds of participants themselves as well as of adversarial commentators, considerable overlap and

---

<sup>42</sup> Theodore L. Flood, “Editor’s Outlook: Anarchists and Anarchism,” *The Chautauquan* (Meadville, PA) 19:5 (August 1894), 630.

<sup>43</sup> Flood, “Anarchists and Anarchism,” 632.

<sup>44</sup> Nathaniel Hong, “Constructing the Anarchist Beast in American Periodical Literature,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 9 (1992), 110, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Zachary Stieber, “Biden: Arsonists and Anarchists Should Be Prosecuted,” *The Epoch Times* (New York, NY), July 29, 2020, [https://www.theepochtimes.com/biden-arsonists-and-anarchists-should-be-prosecuted\\_3442586.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/biden-arsonists-and-anarchists-should-be-prosecuted_3442586.html) (accessed July 29, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón, “La barbarie en los Estados Unidos,” *Regeneración* 49, August 5, 1991, 3; Flores Magón, “Entre barbaros,” *Regeneración* 57, September 30, 1911, 3.

<sup>47</sup> “Si desde un principio nos hubiéramos llamado anarquistas, nadie, a no ser unos cuantos, nos habría escuchado.” (“If we had called ourselves anarchists from the beginning, no one, unless a few, would have listened to us.”) Ricardo Flores Magón, Letter to Enrique Flores Magón and Práxedes G. Guerrero, June 13, 1908, <http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1908/cor265/> (accessed Aug 3, 2020).

ambiguity existed around radical anticapitalist ideologies. As articulated by Albert R. Parsons in a book published by his wife the same year he was executed, anarchism was a “Scientific” answer to capitalism that drew on Karl Marx as much as Pyotr Kropotkin.<sup>48</sup> Both Marx and Kropotkin claimed science and nature as the grounds for anticapitalist revolution and the objective of a stateless, classless society; they differed on the optimal way to get there. While Marx and Mikhail Bakunin butted heads over these differences in the International Working Men’s Association and that group eventually split over the conflict in 1872, this distinction did not always carry great weight for radicals on the ground. Likewise, the individualist and communist variations of anarchism frequently intermingled. Even the most adamant individualists like Benjamin Tucker still recognized the injustice of existing property arrangements and the necessity of at least an initial redistribution. Dyer D. Lum, a close comrade of Albert Parsons and the other Chicago anarchists charged in the Haymarket affair, features in Parsons’s text on anarchism. Lum’s thought and practice combined laissez-faire economics with militant syndicalism; as with the PLM’s William C Owen, Herbert Spencer’s corpus inspired and guided Lum.<sup>49</sup> Anarchism was and remains a term that aggregates disparate movements and philosophies.

As the title to C. Alexander McKinley’s 2008 book indicates, one interpretation of anarchism as an illegitimate and unfaithful offshoot of Enlightenment thought.<sup>50</sup> Classical anarchists like Voltairine de Cleyre, herself named after the Enlightenment icon Voltaire, sometimes articulated anarchism as liberalism taken to its logical conclusions. The PLM’s

---

<sup>48</sup> A. R. Parsons, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis; As Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (Chicago: Mrs. A. R. Parsons, Publisher, 1887), 9.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin Carson, “May Day Thoughts: Individualist Anarchism and the Labor Movement,” *Mutualist Blog: Free Market Anticapitalism*, <http://mutualist.blogspot.com/2005/04/may-day-thoughts-individualist.html> (accessed January 7, 2020).

<sup>50</sup> C. Alexander McKinley, *Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment: Anarchists and the French Revolution, 1880-1914* (New York, NY: P. Lang, 2008).

name—the Mexican Liberal Party—likewise attests to its genesis in classical liberalism, in defending the 1857 Mexican Constitution and the tradition of Benito Juárez.<sup>51</sup> Juan Francisco Moncaleano and Blanca de Moncaleano participated in liberal causes in Colombia before becoming anarchists. While today many anarchists and other radicals hurl “liberal” as an insult and would recoil at inclusion in any genealogy of liberalism, the lines were not necessarily as clear at the turn of the twentieth century. Classical liberalism sought to abolish arbitrary privilege, secure the rights of the self-possessed individual in relation to the state, and organize society according to reason. Classical anarchists pushed these ideas to extremes, demanding the abolition of more privilege than classical liberals could accept. Individualist anarchists in the United States were especially prone to embrace and emphasize their Enlightenment heritage.

Classical anarchists converged on opposing the status quo and striving for liberty, though not on the exact strategies and tactics to get there. In varying proportions, anarchists at the turn of the twentieth century combined reasoned analysis of material conditions with passion for freedom. Voltairine de Cleyre exemplified the romantic aspect of anarchism as a personal conviction and ideal, a creed based on emotion and aesthetics rather than understanding of objective reality.<sup>52</sup> Yet de Cleyre nonetheless accepted scientific truth as an unavoidable anchor for political theory and public persuasion. To be intelligible and sensible in the age of biopower, anarchism had to trumpet its ability to encourage life. This meant swallowing hard facts about scarcity and promoting production and productivity. It was, after all, a movement about, by, and for workers. “If a man won’t work nature makes him starve,” Lucy Parsons said in an interview

---

<sup>51</sup> Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2014), xvii-xxxiii.

<sup>52</sup> V, de Cleyre [Voltairine de Cleyre], “Priestly Control over Woman,” *Lucifer, the Light Bearer* 705 (April 6, 1898), 110.

with *New York World*, “so in our state, you must work or starve.”<sup>53</sup> Kropotkin’s iconic book *The Conquest of Bread*, originally published in French in 1892, takes essentially the same position, albeit with the author’s typical nuance and compassion. Throughout the text, Kropotkin invoked idleness as a pejorative, figuring the bourgeoisie as parasites who live off the labor of workers. *The Conquest of Bread* provides a script for “what could be done in a communal society in order to turn away sluggards if they became too numerous,” involving a contract to work “four or five hours a day” for full inclusion in the commune.<sup>54</sup> “If we are rich enough to give you the necessaries of life we shall be delighted to give them to you,” Kropotkin wrote in this hypothetical contract about those unable or unwilling to work, alluding to the possibility of scarcity and rationing based on productivity.<sup>55</sup> In this circumstance of consuming without producing, the sluggard would face social sanction, “looked upon as a ghost of bourgeois society.”<sup>56</sup>

The PLM adopted approximately the same stance on labor and productivity as Lucy Parsons and Kropotkin, centering workers and necessary work.<sup>57</sup> Kropotkin’s brand of anarchist communist profoundly influenced the PLM, as it did so many anarchists of the day. In 1912, Ricardo Flores Magón described him as “[o]ur dear teacher, the old comrade Pedro Kropotkine.”<sup>58</sup> Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza’s Mexico City periodical *Vesper* published *The Conquest of Bread* in serialized form in 1902, early in the opposition movement to President

---

<sup>53</sup> Parsons, *Anarchism*, 110.

<sup>54</sup> Pyotr Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (Arden Press), [https://libcom.org/files/Peter%20Kropotkin%20-%20The%20Conquest%20of%20Bread\\_0.pdf](https://libcom.org/files/Peter%20Kropotkin%20-%20The%20Conquest%20of%20Bread_0.pdf) (accessed June 1, 2020), 220-221.

<sup>55</sup> Kropotkin, *Conquest of Bread*, 220-221.

<sup>56</sup> Kropotkin, *Conquest of Bread*, 221.

<sup>57</sup> For example, see Ricardo Flores Magón, “¡Muera el Orden!”, *Regeneración* 37, May 13, 1911, 2.

<sup>58</sup> “[n]uestro querido maestro, el viejo camarada Pedro Kropotkine” Ricardo Flores Magón, “Para los que ‘Dudan,’” *Regeneración* 90, May 18, 1912, 1.



Porfirio Díaz; various Mexican revolutionaries took inspiration from the text.<sup>59</sup> Kropotkin attended to upheaval in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution and communication with and about PLM. This underscores the international aspirations and transnational dynamics of classical anarchism. In line with other anticapitalists but even more so, anarchists sought global revolution, believing borders and patriotism to be but devices to distract workers from class struggle. As period anarchist papers demonstrate, they followed radical social movements across the planet and cultivated connection with comrades far and wide. David M. Struthers's *World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in the Early Twentieth Los Angeles* explores and promotes this transnational aspect of anarchist history with vivid detail and discerning analysis. Struthers underlines the importance of early twentieth-century multiethnic radicalism while simultaneously noting its contradictions and limitations: "Interracial organizing in a settler colonial society and the racism it entailed, of course, produced contested and uneven results."<sup>60</sup> As with all radicals past and present, anarchists organized against capitalism, racism, and other systems of oppression while implicated in them and preserving elements unquestioned.

## **Biographical Sketches**

Here I provide brief biographical sketches for five key classical anarchists instrumental to this project, engaging in historical narrative by selecting what strikes me as most relevant for my purposes from the available archive. Apart from Blanca de Moncaleano, each of these figures has received considerable attention from scholars and others. The PLM links them together, as they all supported and collaborated with the Party at some point during their lives.

---

<sup>59</sup> Mitchell Cowen Verter, "Biographical Sketch," in Chaz Bufe and Michael Cowen Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2011), 38.

<sup>60</sup> David M. Struthers, *The World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 6.

Lucy Parsons was the oldest and rose to prominence the earliest. While the details of her ancestry and identity remain confused and controversial, Jacqueline Jones in the 2017 book *Goddess of Anarchy* places Parsons's birth to an enslaved mother in Virginia in 1851, with the name of Lucia Carter. Jones does this in part through a September 1886 *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* piece that she calls "the Rossetta Stone of Lucy Parsons's early life"; Jones verified the article's details via census, military, and other historical records.<sup>61</sup> Lucia Carter's family moved to Waco, Texas and in 1872 she married Albert Parsons, a former Confederate soldier turned Radical Republican. Facing hostility for their interracial union and their organizing activities, the couple fled to Chicago. Involvement in labor struggle led to their becoming dedicated anarchists and immortalized via the Haymarket affair of May 1886. A deadly confrontation with police at a labor event led to the arrest and capital trial of eight anarchists, Albert Parsons among them. In the face of widespread demonization of anarchists and her husband's eventual execution, Lucy Parsons remained resolute and defiant. The press coverage around the Haymarket trial catapulted Parsons into international fame. Years later, she supported PLM writers like Ricardo Flores Magón in their legal troubles in the United States, donated to the Party, and occasionally published pieces in *Regeneración*. Despite being born the earliest of the five, Parsons died the latest, in 1942. In her later years, she organized with the Communist Party.

Fifteen years younger than Parsons, Voltairine de Cleyre became an anarchist through the media fervor around the Haymarket affair and trial. Born to working-class family in Michigan in 1866, de Cleyre had her father's French freethinking and communist as well as her mother's

---

<sup>61</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017), 3, 361; "Mrs. Lucy Parsons," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 118 (September 18, 1886), 3; Jones, "The Former Slave Who Became a Radical Agitator (but Never Admitted She'd Been a Slave)," *History News Network*, February 4, 2018 (<http://www.hnn.org/article/167965>).

Anglo-American abolitionist tradition to draw on. After the deeply traumatic experience of attending Catholic convent school, de Cleyre was an enthusiastic member of the freethought movement in 1886 and 1887 when Haymarket made headlines. She quickly gained fame as a radical speaker and writer, early on professing individualist anarchism. De Cleyre's most forceful feminist pieces date from 1890-1891. In 1893, her version of individualism meant support for the right of property and for competition. She later adopted anarchism without adjectives, a middle road between individualist and communist anarchist positions. In this mode, she prompted an economic pluralism that envisioned different economic arrangements operating simultaneously in the revolutionary future without the state. Like Lucy Parsons, in the era of the Mexican Revolution, de Cleyre did fundraising for PLM and raised awareness about the situation in Mexico. Right before her untimely death in 1912 at age 45, de Cleyre planned to travel to Mexico to support the situation on the ground, specifically among the Yaqui people.<sup>62</sup>

Born in 1869 in the Russian empire to Jewish family of declining class status, Emma Goldman experienced small-scale authoritarianism while growing up and resisted it at every turn, whether from her father, instructors, or the czarist government. Refusing the domestic role her parents assigned to her, at age sixteen Goldman crossed the Atlantic to Rochester, New York. The realities of capitalism and immigration dash her hopes of freedom and opportunity in the United States. As with Lucy Parsons and Voltairine de Cleyre, Haymarket proved pivotal for Goldman. Determined to become a revolutionary, Goldman divorced her husband and moved to New York City. She gained renown as orator and labor organizer. Following radical practice, in 1892 Goldman participated in a failed plot to assassinate a powerful industrialist who had

---

<sup>62</sup> Eugenia C. DeLamotte, *Gates of Freedom: Voltairine de Cleyre and the Revolution of the Mind* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 4-6, 25; Shelley Streeby, *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 91-92; Emma Goldman, *Voltairine De Cleyre* (Berkeley Heights, NJ: The Oriole Press, 1932), 19.

recently crushed a strike. Alexander Berkman, Goldman's comrade and lover, ended up with a lengthy prison sentence for the assassination attempt. Authorities arrested and incarcerated Goldman herself for allegedly inciting a riot the next year, cementing her reputation as a fiery anarchist. In addition to her feminist anarchism, Goldman notably developed an interest in the progressive sexology of the time and campaigned for the social acceptance of homosexuality. Goldman met Ricardo Flores Magón and other PLM leaders in 1907 and collaborated with them from then on, reporting on the Party and on Mexico through her publication *Mother Earth*. Deported to Russia in 1919 for her radicalism, Goldman remained active until her death in 1940.<sup>63</sup>

Four years younger than Goldman, Ricardo Flores Magón came from a relatively well-off family in a poor region of Oaxaca, their limited comfort thanks to his father's military service under the de-facto dictator Porfirio Díaz. Ricardo Flores Magón's brother Enrique described their father as Aztec; their mother appears to have been mestiza, with a Spanish father. Both of Ricardo Flores Magón's parents were educated and wrote in Spanish well, a key marker of class status in Mexico in the period. Flores Magón and his brothers studied law in Mexico City, though only Jesús Flores Magón finished. All of them began organizing against the oppressive Díaz regime through the 1892 student movement and in 1901 the periodical *Regeneración*. After extended persecution by the government, including imprisonment, Ricardo Flores Magón and other members of the PLM decided to flee the United States in 1904. Flores Magón continued to oppose Díaz in exile, becoming an eloquent proponent of anarchist communism. Arrested in

---

<sup>63</sup> Alix Kates Shulman, "Biographical Introduction," in Shuman, ed., *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1998 [1972]), 20-24.

1918 for criticizing the U.S. war effort, Flores Magón died in prison in 1922, either from medical neglect or direct murder by a guard.<sup>64</sup>

Blanca de Moncaleano is the most obscure of the five; uncertainty remains about even her basic biographical details. Based on her stepson John Francisco Moncaleano Lawson's *In the Wave of Time*, which purports to be historically accurate but with inventions to fill gaps in the record as well as with embellishments, Blanca de Moncaleano (or Blanche Lawson) came from a Scottish-American background in Boston but grew up mostly in Colombia. John Lawson portrayed his stepmother as a member of Colombia's elite, known as an "American" on her family's "finca" (ranch). By Lawson's account, de Moncaleano and her partner Juan Francisco Moncaleano, also from Colombia's upper class, fought on the losing liberal side during the Thousand Days' War 1899-1902. They both become increasingly radical from this experience and the years that followed; in 1910, Juan Moncaleano began publishing the periodical *Ravachol*, named after the infamous French anarchist whom the French state executed in 1892. After facing state persecution, both Moncaleanos left Colombia in 1911, making their way to Cuba and then briefly Mexico during the Mexican Revolution before being expelled by for their politics by Francisco Madero's government. That was how Blanca de Moncaleano ended up in Los Angeles and the radical community there. The Moncaleanos collaborated with the PLM until a dispute over money and Juan Francisco Moncaleano's alleged sexual abuse of girls. This rift never healed; a piece in *Regeneración* expressed disdain for Moncaleano after his death from appendicitis surgery in 1916 at age 33. Blanca de Moncaleano died twelve years later, at that point using the name Blanche Lawson, which may well have been her birth name.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> For a fuller discussion of the class status of Ricardo Flores Magón's family, see Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 39-51.

<sup>65</sup> John F. M. Lawson, *In the Wave of Time: Book I "Seres"* (Venice, California: The Academy Publishers, 1975), 13-18. The draft finding aid for the Moncaleano/Lawson collection at the University of Houston lists 1879 as the

## Queering Value, Valuing Queers

In the conclusion to *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, Lisa Marie Cacho grapples with how to remember and represent her cousin, Brandon Jesse Martinez, given that he did not fit into widely recognized categories of social value. This chapter of *Social Death* elucidates the confounding and pernicious dynamics of dominant regimes of worth. Martinez's untimely death combined disorientation with tragedy for his family, because of the difficulty of articulating their care and affection for him in normative terms. "Brandon was profoundly valued," Cacho writes, "but we could not tell you why."<sup>66</sup> Martinez failed to conform well-known models of worth, including oppositional ones, making his life unintelligible even to those closest to him. The question of social value that Cacho explores in this intimate and intense example provides insight for my study and shapes my attention to the people discursively excluded from worth. In addition to detailing the vexing problem of how society attributes merit and common complicity in this, Cacho's ruminations trace a potential path forward critical scholars who wish to refuse to further oppressive norms. Cacho points to the impossible politics beyond ableism, eugenics, and meritocracy that I embrace.

Because Martinez declined to follow familial advice and displayed no ambition to advance himself economically, intellectually, or socially—according to enshrined standards—some in his family opt to invoke his life and death as lesson of what not to do. "When he died," Cacho writes, "if he did not hold the attitudes, values, desires, or work ethics that would have

---

date of birth for Blanche Lawson Moncaleano (aka Blanca de Moncaleano) and Boston, Massachusetts as the location.

<sup>66</sup> Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 149.

eventually enabled him to have a decent paying job that could take care of a future wife and future children in a nice suburban neighborhood.” These were the things Martinez’s family cared about and strived toward. Drawing on Lindon Barrett, Cacho emphasizes the relational character of assessing worth: “The act of ascribing legible, intelligible, and normative value is inherently violent and relationally devaluing.”<sup>67</sup> Given Martinez’s difference from his family, value became a zero-sum game. If they lauded the teenager who lived contrary to their admonitions, they would implicitly knock themselves down a peg, undermining their beliefs about proper conduct. Conversely, for Cacho and her family, Martinez’s death “validated the rightness of our choices and the righteousness of our behaviors,” as they survived while he did not.<sup>68</sup> This is the logic of natural selection, so crucial to eugenics and other movements inspired by evolution. Continuance constitutes the ultimate standard of value in this framework. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in August 2018, “The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong, for good or for ill, survive.”<sup>69</sup> By this logic, the process of who lives and who dies, who thrives and who languishes, reveals what is good or least what is necessary and inexorable.

This bind does not satisfy Cacho and neither do her initial responses. She attempts to interpret Martinez as constrained “racialized economical hierarchies” and profiled by law enforcement as a “potential criminal,” but finds that story about her cousin unconvincing because of the opportunity to conform he had as well as how it erases his agency.<sup>70</sup> Cacho likewise tries to make Martinez into a figure of resistance, citing Robin D. G. Kelley on “everyday forms of

---

<sup>67</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 149.

<sup>68</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 149.

<sup>69</sup> JTA and Marcy Oster, “‘Erased From History:’ Twitter Mocks Hawkish Netanyahu Speech Excerpts,” *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), September 3, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/twitter-mocks-a-hawkish-speech-by-netanyahu-1.6445020> (accessed June 17, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 159-160.

resistance.”<sup>71</sup> Yet Cacho determines this narrative is no more appropriate, only functioning if she envisioned “that he would have become, or at least could have become, a vital and valuable actor in the struggle for social justice.”<sup>72</sup> Instead, Martinez’s behavior and apparent intentions matched neither dominant neoliberal nor revolutionary norms. Based on her experience with him, Cacho interprets that Martinez “wanted to be unremarkable and live his life a little on the lazy side.”<sup>73</sup> He refused to be hailed, to be interpellated, confounding both those who believed in the American Dream and those who believed in resistance. Remembering him highlights “the importance of redistributing dignity”<sup>74</sup> as well as the “responsibility to reckon with those deemed dangerous, underserving, and unintelligible.”<sup>75</sup> This responsibility entails profound transformation at the personal and societal level, a thorough reworking of norms of social value—or perhaps their abolition. Cacho does not offer a precise outline of what changing the world in this direction looks like, but ends with the expectation to “suspend judgment of those who choose to drive down fatal roads because there is value as well as apprehension in taking risks and living differently.”<sup>76</sup>

The struggle for value and the self-evident desirability of intelligence extends to critical scholars like Ansgar Allen and texts on disability radicalism. *Benign Violence* extols Michel Foucault’s “genius” and includes repeated oblique nods to conventional merit, lamenting how fluid meritocracy rewards appearances of excellence rather than implied realities.<sup>77</sup> In slamming “academic ‘superstars,’” Allen writes that they are “are celebrated not so much for the quality of their work, or for the depth of their insights, but for their successes in attracting revenue and

---

<sup>71</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 162.

<sup>72</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 162.

<sup>73</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 167.

<sup>74</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 165.

<sup>75</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 168. Cacho turns to Cathy Cohen’s “politics of deviance” in this regard.

<sup>76</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 168.

<sup>77</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 59.



prestige.”<sup>78</sup> In his conclusion, Allen notes traditional meritocracy’s relative compatibility with communism because it could be “retuned” to separately manage ability and need.<sup>79</sup> Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha’s *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* likewise praises intelligence, albeit by centering “collective disabled genius, science, and labor” and “the hotness, smarts, and value of our sick and disabled bodies.”<sup>80</sup> Even the most extreme and uncompromising critics and revolutionaries can but venture so far beyond what they know. I do not imagine myself any different. Cacho underscores how we are all implicated and complicit to varying degrees. Irrespective of whether we uphold the norms that structure society and subjectivity—even if we accept some as absolutely necessary—the principles of honesty and transparency demand that we acknowledge and account for how these norms determine who thrives and who languishes.

The poignant conclusion to *Social Death* resonates with the radical disability politics that inform and animate my anarchist genealogy. The process of suspending judgment, respecting life regardless of understanding, and confronting the norms of value that exclude people we love (sometimes including ourselves) points to paths through the bind Cacho sketches. Cacho describes her cousin as potentially a “queer subject” in the expansive sense of differing from the norm, of having lived against the grain of reproductive futurity and its enshrined chronology.<sup>81</sup> This promiscuous lens of queerness provides an ethics and methodology of difference and deviance based on skepticism and compassion. Because we queers in the stricter definition of sexual and gender deviants know the business end of normativity, we doubt claims about the evil others we are told to despise and instead extend compassion to them. I take Gloria Anzaldúa as a

---

<sup>78</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 232.

<sup>79</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 249.

<sup>80</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work*, 9, 22.

<sup>81</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 166.

guide to this methodological practice. When she watched the 1979 movie *Alien*, Gloria Anzaldúa identified with the monstrous creature that burst forth from a human chest: “My sympathies were not with the people at all; they were with the alien.”<sup>82</sup> Anzaldúa interpreted the alien as a figure the humans projected their fear and hatred onto, as society does with oppressed groups. This approach of attending to the dynamic of othering meant Anzaldúa’s empathy assumed speculative proportions. “Today our scapegoats are the faggots, lesbians, and third world people,” she said, “but in the future it will be people from other planets or even artificial humans—androids, people born in a test tube rather than the uterus.”<sup>83</sup> This is the radical possibility of queer theory.

## Overview

Chapter one delves into how the PLM’s antagonistic position toward queerness reflected prevalent intellectual paradigms of the period, especially the discourse of degeneracy. Degeneracy theory imagines a world of people in physical, mental, and moral decline imperiling civilization. In its extreme form, as expounded by high-status settler men like James Weir, Jr., this discourse presented even reformist movements such as women’s suffrage as atavistic reversion to primitive communism. Weir thought leftists of all stripes to be savages and recommended treating them with the same violence the U.S. empire meted out to colonized Native peoples. Despite being the opposite of Weir in most respects, PLM writers and many other anarchists relied on shared conceptual underpinnings regarding the biopolitical imperative to cultivate life. Reactionary and radicals each assert ownership over renown thinkers like

---

<sup>82</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, “Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Body: An Interview with Linda Smucker,” in AnaLouise Keating, ed., *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press 2009), 87.

<sup>83</sup> Anzaldúa, “Interview with Linda Smucker,” 88.

Herbert Spencer. PLM luminaries denigrated homosexual relationships as sterile and against nature in addition to as shameful and monstrous. They conceived of queerness as a decadent bourgeois perversion, formulating the emasculated queer as treacherous foil to their idealized manly worker who fought for freedom and to feed his family. However, none of this was ever completely frozen in place. PLM rhetoric on degeneracy contains gaps, absences, and ambivalence. It was ever in motion. Masculinist ideology made gender transgression in women praiseworthy under the right circumstances.

The second chapter explores how five classical anarchists articulated feminism and how their gender politics have been remembered, attending especially to narratives of reproduction and eugenic entanglements. Consistent with biopower, these figures articulated women's liberation as part of the revolutionary project of forging a fitter society. They emphasized motherhood's crucial place in making the future and situated feminism within the class struggle against capitalism. While they all acknowledged men's oppression of women, only Voltairine de Cleyre and Blanca de Moncaleano zeroed in on radical men's complicity in this dynamic. In the late nineteenth century, de Cleyre issued an uncompromised call for feminist revolt that expected scant help from men and instead demand militancy from women. However, while de Cleyre came the closest to resisting biopolitical logics by envisioning freedom as a transcendent ideal, she nonetheless mirrored degeneracy discourse when addressing the question of what radicals should do with full-service sex workers, whom she framed as abject victims of structural forces beyond salvation. This indicates the boundaries of intelligibility in the period and how the eugenic mentality permeated thought and expression. The chapter likewise investigates these five anarchists in historical memory, probing what they mean to us and what we want from them. Radicals and liberals alike desire a political lineage to ground, orient, and inspire them. Lucy

Parsons in particular continues to command considerable representation status, with seemingly interminable conflicts even over the basics of her life and identity. By contrast, Blanca de Moncaleano has been mostly forgotten and her feminism elided in her stepson's account. Following Clare Hemmings, I suggest that the ambivalence and contradictions of Emma Goldman and the others can animate interest in their lives and stories. We need not recoil from the complexity and shove classical anarchists into neat little boxes. As I contend in this dissertation as a whole, many of classical anarchism's tensions persist in contemporary radical movements.

Chapter three looks at the ongoing historiographical controversy about the PLM-associated 1911 insurrection in Baja California, which briefly raised the red flag over Tijuana. Various anarchists cite as the campaign as a stirring victory, evidence of anarchism's historical importance and that it can succeed in practice. Formal historians have fixated on the filibustering charges against the PLM that initially appeared during the events of 1911 and codified by a decade later. The ideal that anarchist communists conspired with big business in an attempt to steal Baja California for the United States is of course wrong and the historiography shows this, yet Marco Antonio Samaniego López's scholarship demonstrates how the filibustering narrative originated in part because of precedent of Anglo-American adventurism in Texas and the U.S. business interests eyeing Baja California. While Mitchell Cowen Verter describes the Baja Californians who resisted the insurrectionary forces as dupes of Mexican government propaganda and at least one state official penned a letter against the armed bands under an invented working-class persona, Samaniego López details the complexity of the situation and highlights the anti-Mexican racism of many of the Anglo-American troops involved. The settler working class of the time was simultaneously sympathetic to socialism and brazen white

supremacy, of which the PLM organizing core in Los Angeles was thoroughly aware but curiously omitted in their public pronouncements about the glorious workers' struggle in Baja California. Concealed in the background, anti-Chinese racism existed an element of continuity between the PLM and racist Anglo-American mass culture in the U.S. West. My analysis of the events of 1911 explores the challenges of transnational revolutionary action in the context of settler chauvinism and the unequal relationship between the U.S. and Mexico.

The fourth chapter turns to anarchist discourse on the Indian as well as the PLM's practice of material solidarity with Indigenous struggles for self-determination, specifically the Yaqui people's war against the Mexican government. Dominant scientific theories of racial difference along with notions of civilizational progress shaped how both Mexican and other anarchists conceptualized Mexican Indian and other Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Anglo comrades such as Voltairine de Cleyre and William C. Owen placed greater focus on race science, with Owen going so far as describe Mexican Indians as biologically driven to anarchist communism. Owen took the established trope on Indian savagery and simply flipped the valuations, rendering the Indian innately predisposed to what anarchists thought good. Ricardo Flores Magón, who sometimes claimed to be mestizo and other times to be a full-blooded Indian, dabbled in biologist rhetoric but assigned more weight to history and custom when articulating the Mexican people as suited for communism. The Yaqui traditionalist leader Luis Espinosa, by contrast, expressed the specificity of the Yaqui struggle for self-determination with no recourse to race science or assertions about Indians in general; as he wrote in a statement published in the PLM's paper *Regeneración*, the Yaqui aim to live free and equal on their ancestral lands aligned with the overall battle against the rich and all governments. The PLM presented the Yaqui freedom fighter as a key model of resistance, the man who refused to submit to domination

despite seemingly impossible odds and hinted at the possibility of regeneration for the Mexican people. As Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado argues and contemporary invocations of Flores Magón attest, the PLM's theorization and practice of decolonial solidarity stands out regardless of its entanglement in oppressive discourse. We can hold these contradictory aspects together.

In the conclusion, I contemplate intellectual authority and its persuasive power as the impetus for radical attachment to ableism and eugenics. Classical anarchist took their cause gravely seriously and wanted to win at almost any cost; they conceived of the class war as a life-or-death contest. Many indeed died young because of direct state repression or the indirect violence of poverty. Traversing norms of social value to convince the masses of anarchism's worth must have appeared obvious. Though the specifics of who qualifies as fit varied during that era and have shifted significantly since then, the quandary of selection and reproduction runs deep. What alternative exists to picking what is good and discarding the rest? At each moment we create the future by choosing from myriad possible actions. I find refusal alone unsatisfying. While queer negativity and nihilism entice me, I know how easily that can slip into familiar patterns of masculine recklessness. Influenced by disability justice and revolutionary mothering in their theoretical and applied forms, I propose the paradigm of abundance coupled with uncertainty as a tentative answer. With its emphasis on mutual aid as well as on freedom, classical anarchist theory contains the seeds of this synthesis. What if there is enough to go around and everyone gets to flourish, even those we cannot understand and do not like? Such is the society Pyotr Kropotkin imagined if stripped of its concerns over scarcity. Putting the absence of the PLM's empathy for queers in conversations with the presence of the Party's decolonial praxis resonates with radical organizations such as the Red Nation and K'é Infoshop who center queer feminism alongside Indigenous liberation.

## 1. *Regeneración* against Degeneracy: Ableism and Antiqueerness

In 1906, amid an acrimonious split with journalist and revolutionary Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza, the Partido Liberal Mexicano Junta charged her with having a sexual relationship with her coeditor Elisa Acuña y Rosete. The long and dramatic article concludes with the following condemnation of Gutiérrez de Mendoza: “We 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>84</sup> This rhetoric of monstrosity and inhumanity functions as a point of departure for analyzing PLM conceptions of queerness in both its narrow and expansive senses. By the narrow definition, queerness refers to people and practices that do not conform to the historically dominant norms of gender and sexuality. By the broader meaning, queerness includes potentially any deviation from the normal. The PLM Junta presented Gutiérrez de Mendoza as overwhelming queer in their denunciation. Why and how did PLM leaders link sapphic relationships with shame, treachery, and the grotesque? Where did they draw the line for the category of the human? What sort of bodies and minds fell outside of this circle?

---

<sup>84</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.” Unattributed, “Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza,” *Regeneración* 10, June 15, 1906, 3-4. In *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*, Claudio Lomnitz attributes this piece to Ricardo Flores Magón. I do not see such attribution in the text, though it seems likely he wrote most or all of it.

Exploring these questions entails attending to a number of different but often interwoven discourses that were prevalent around the turn of the twentieth century. In *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*, Claudio Lomnitz writes that the PLM Junta accused Gutiérrez de Mendoza of lesbianism in order to portray her as “a degenerate who was unworthy of being associated with the elevated morality of the cause.”<sup>85</sup> The term “degenerate” remains a pejorative applied to queer and transgender people—among others— here in the twenty-first century, as one can observe across social media. Where does this notion of degeneration, degenerates, and degeneracy come from? In *The Unfit*, a monograph on degeneracy theory, geneticist and historian of science Elof Axel Carlson provides a chronology that begins with the 1710 publication of the anonymous anti-masturbation treatise *Onania* and terminates abruptly in 1945 with the Third Reich’s horrors.<sup>86</sup> Carlson ties degeneracy theory to eugenics, that infamous field of inquiry and social movement focused on increasing the fitness of the human race. Eugenics had considerable influence across circa-1900 society. As Laura Briggs stresses in *Reproducing Empire*, “eugenics is all over the political map” and “does not always fit into a teleological account that ends with the Nazis and the Holocaust.”<sup>87</sup> She continues as follows: “While the connections and echoes between North American, Latin American, and Nazi eugenics are real, to take them to be the whole of the movement underestimates the banality of eugenics, masks its wide appeal, and renders it so radically different from contemporary culture as to make its continued survival and ongoing influence invisible.”<sup>88</sup> I concur with Briggs that the story of eugenics does not conclude in 1945.

---

<sup>85</sup> Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2014), 203.

<sup>86</sup> Elof Axel Carlson, *The Unfit: The History of a Bad Idea* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001), xi-xv.

<sup>87</sup> Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 99.

<sup>88</sup> Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, 99.



Informed by disability radicalism and its identification of ableism as a core system of oppression, I interpret eugenics around the turn of the twentieth century not as an aberration but rather as a specific development in a venerable and enduring line of ableist logic, practice, and rhetoric. This line stretches back at least as far back as antiquity, and almost certainly farther.<sup>89</sup> As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes, “the ideology and practice of controlling who reproduces, how they reproduce, and what they reproduce in the interest of shaping the composition of a particular population group long predate the industrial age.”<sup>90</sup> I utilize a multilayered and expansive conception of ableism, like I do with queerness. On the one hand, ableism can refer to discrimination against those socially recognized as disabled, with established and intelligible medical diagnoses.<sup>91</sup> This narrower definition remains as important as ever and does apply to some of my analysis. The expansive understanding of ableism places the full range of dynamics that determine which bodies and minds thrive and which languish. In this conception, any given environment—whether physical or social—favors certain characteristics while disfavoring others. For both physical and social environments, this is a political matter: individuals, organizations, institutions, and societies decide which bodies and minds to enable and which to disable. The vast majority of the time, because of the ascendancy of the ableist mentality, these decisions pass quickly and unremarked. The preexisting environmental parameters are taken for granted as normal and natural, and ability assessed according to them. Ableism thus connects to Michel Foucault’s theorization of biopower and biopolitics as well as of power in general, in its profound diffusion across society. Within this framework, the rise of

---

<sup>89</sup> For the long history of eugenics in even its narrow definition as the formal and intentional control of human reproduction for purpose of human improvement, see Robert A. Wilson, *The Eugenic Mind Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 46-49. As various eugenicists from the late nineteenth century and on have noted, Plato’s *The Republic* describes eugenicist schemes.

<sup>90</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Eugenics,” in Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and Benjamin Serlin, eds., *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 74-79.

<sup>91</sup> Fiona Kumari Campbell, “Ability,” in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 12-14.

eugenics after renowned polymath Francis Galton coined the term in 1883 constituted the formalization and intensification of the ableist worldview, not a completely novel development. Eugenics combined long-prevalent notions about mate selection and reproductive desirability, typically practiced at the familial or individual level, with the experience of livestock husbandry and the burgeoning scientific fields of the time.

The work of James Weir, Jr., a medical doctor turned evolutionary psychologist from Owensboro, Kentucky, provides a vivid window into the period's narrative of degeneration. I choose Weir both because of the starkness of his prose as well as his overbearing antiradicalism. Weir was about as reactionary as a person could be in the late nineteenth century, dismissing all anticapitalists and women's suffragists as psychic atavists hell-bent on replacing civilization with primitive savagery. He expressed full-throated Anglo-Saxon supremacy and support for the U.S. settler-colonial project.<sup>92</sup> On the surface, his values appear completely opposite those of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. The convergences between Weir's thought and the PLM's point to where this pseudoscientific degeneration discourse held broad sway in the period.

Weir's 1894 letter entitled "The Methods of the Rioting Striker an Evidence of Degeneration," published in *The Century Magazine*, succinctly articulates his worldview while simultaneously exposing its tensions and contradictions. In this letter, in order to advocate the violent suppression of immigrant radicals, Weir made the case that humanity began with communism, that individualism defines civilization, and that thus any movement toward communism constitutes a return to a state of "savage irresponsibility." Weir lumped anarchism, communism, nihilism, and even socialism together as atavistic. Curiously and tellingly, he opted to cite the ethnographer Élie Reclus on the communalism of human ancestors and early

---

<sup>92</sup> "James Weir, Jr, M. D.," *The Medical Progress* 94, no.141, October 1897, Louisville, KY, 288; "Index to Volume IX," *The Engineering Magazine: Devoted to Industrial Progress*, Volume IX (April to September 1895), xx.

humans.<sup>93</sup> Weir presented Reclus as a simple scholarly authority, but Élie Reclus was an anarchist like his more famous brother Élisée, both of whom supported and participated in the Paris Commune. Whether Weir knew this and chose to elide it or was unaware, the citation illustrates the interconnectedness of the circa-1900 intellectual world and the respectability certain prestigious anarchists possessed. After citing an anarchist, Weir went on to argue for the degeneracy of European immigrant radicals, specifically “the Italians, Germans, Huns, Poles, Frenchmen, and Austrians who are to be found among rioting laborers,” because he dismissed the “Russian and Bohemian laborers who immigrate to America” as perpetually “semi-civilized.”<sup>94</sup>

As Weir described it, degeneration was the phenomenon of reversion to an earlier type, a form of psychological atavism, though this regression had obviously physical indicators on the degenerate body as well. Individuals from groups that had never achieved full civilization were not proper degenerates but merely people who had inherited their primitive traits “from ancestors who have always been of low types.”<sup>95</sup> Degeneration, by contrast, required backwards motion on the continuum of human progress. Weir identified “insufficient food, intemperance, and a disregard for the bars of consanguinity” as “the prime factors in the production of degenerate beings.”<sup>96</sup> Weir highlighted how a difficult environment, such as experienced by the European lower classes, could lead to degeneration, noting that the “phenomenon of atavism occurs in feeble types, not in strong, healthy, well-developed types” and only a minority of people were degenerate.<sup>97</sup> Degeneracy as imagined by Weir, in accordance with Italian criminologist Cesare

---

<sup>93</sup> Weir’s quotation of Élie Reclus comes from *Primitive Folk: Studies in Comparative Ethnology* (London: Walter Scott, 1891), 57.

<sup>94</sup> James Weir, Jr., “The Methods of the Rioting Striker an Evidence of Degeneration,” *The Century Magazine* 6 (Vol XLVIII), October 1894, 952-953.

<sup>95</sup> Weir, “Rioting Striker,” 953.

<sup>96</sup> Weir, “Rioting Striker,” 953.

<sup>97</sup> Weir, “Rioting Striker,” 953.

Lombroso, appeared on the body, particularly the head and face: “The anthropologist can detect the physical signs of degeneration in these people at a glance.”<sup>98</sup> Weir conceived of degeneration as a complex interaction of genes and environment that typically had clear physical markers, at least for the connected categories of the anarchist and the congenital criminal.

For Weir, this sort of riotous degeneracy mainly affected the poor, while he thought that “among the wealthy the atavistic abnormalities are generally psycho-sexual in character” and that this made those so afflicted “effeminate, weak, and immoral.”<sup>99</sup> He wrote about this in more detail in an 1893 piece in *Medical Record* entitled “Viraginity and Effemination.” There he told an aligned tale of “hermaphroditism” as a primitive evolutionary stage, a trait going back to the amoeba.<sup>100</sup> Weir wrote that “effemination” was “directly traceable to the enervation produced by the habits of the wealthy and unemployed” and that it developed as follows: “Wealth begets luxury, luxury begets debauchery and consequent enervation.”<sup>101</sup> This narrative of emasculation via decadence traces back to Roman antiquity if not earlier and was repeated with concern across subsequent European history, including in Europe’s colonies. It is this very same narrative, updated with degeneracy discourse as in Weir’s version, that fascinated PLM luminaries like Práxedes Guerrero and Ricardo Flores Magón as well as countless other radicals in the period. In all cases, the anxiety around deviance is intense. According to Weir, strict conformity to gender norms amounted to a national emergency: “Effemination has occasioned the downfall of many nations; let us guard against it with all our power. Let us train up our boys to be manly men, and

---

<sup>98</sup> Weir, “Rioting Striker,” 953.

<sup>99</sup> Weir, “Rioting Striker,” 953.

<sup>100</sup> Weir, “Viraginity and Effemination,” *Medical Record* 12 (Vol 44), September 16, 1893, 359.

<sup>101</sup> Weir, “Viraginity and Effemination,” 359-360.

our girls to be womanly women.”<sup>102</sup> He counseled parents to vigilantly watch their children for signs of deviance and immediately intervene if they detected it.

In contrast with certain other anthropological accounts that present colonized peoples as queer in their gender, sexual, and familial arrangements, Weir flatly stated that “[p]sychic hermaphroditism does not occur in uncivilized or half-civilized races” because “[a]tivism finds among them no weakened and enervated subjects on whom to perpetrate this strange travesty on nature.”<sup>103</sup> Gender and sexual nonconformity, for Weir, was exclusively an ill of civilization and most associated with the high bourgeoisie. Weir positioned himself as representative of the enlightened middle classes, upon whom civilization relied, who struck the perfect balance between effeminate extravagance of the rich and the violent virility of the poor. In another 1894 article, Weir prophesied a cataclysmic struggle between “the great middle class” and an “army of degenerates, composed of anarchists, socialists, nihilists, sexual perverts, and congenital criminals.”<sup>104</sup> The middle classes, that force of civilization, would win, Weir claimed, but at monumental cost in both blood and treasure.

Though I know of no evidence that PLM writers encountered Weir’s work, they mirrored its discourse of the effeminate elite degenerate to an uncanny degree. I argue that Práxedes Guerrero, Ricardo Flores Magón, and other leaders in the PLM as well as Party allies operated within the same broad intellectual context as James Weir, Jr. They engaged with existing circa-1900 knowledge production from fields such as anthropology, geography, and psychology, synthesizing these disciplines with other sources, discarding certain elements they didn’t want, and accepting others with little or no modification. With regard to the big questions of human

---

<sup>102</sup> Weir, “Viraginity,” 360.

<sup>103</sup> Weir, “Viraginity,” 359.

<sup>104</sup> Weir, “Is It the Beginning of the End?”, *Texas Medical Journal* X, no. 8 (February 1895), 415. Reprinted from “*N. Y. Medical Record, Dec. 29, 1894*” (italics original).

nature and civilization, and in conversation with prominent anarchists such as the Reclus brother and Piotr Kropotkin, PLM thinkers remixed ideas of “primitive” communism ways that positioned Indigenous peoples and lifeways as aligned with the universal project of progress and betterment. I explore PLM theorization of the Indian, which varied markedly, in my fourth chapter. William C. Owen’s writings on the supposed Indian predisposition for communist anarchism approximate a mirror image of Weir’s theorization. For Weir, Indians were innately communist and this was bad; for Owen, Indians were innately communist and this was good. Owen flipped the script by changing the valuation of communism but kept the structure of inborn racial difference and tropes about the Indian essence intact. On the matter of queerness, PLM thinkers concurred almost entirely with Weir and with degeneracy theory as a whole.

For a more direct line of influence, Herbert Spencer’s thought held an important place in positivist education in Mexico City that the Flores Magón brothers experienced; various references to Spencer appear in early issues of *Regeneración*.<sup>105</sup> Spencer’s name commonly calls to mind social Darwinism, that unrestrained celebration of the powerful and utter contempt for the powerless.<sup>106</sup> This constitutes an uncharitable and perhaps unfair simplification of Spencer’s values, which, as Elof Axel Carlson notes, “are difficult to classify” and that “[m]any of his views fit conservative philosophy, many more are pacifist, liberal, and radical.”<sup>107</sup> Spencer drew from the deep European liberal tradition, including its radical edges such as French anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Numerous commentators and critics accused him of going too radical. Akin to eugenics and degeneracy theory in general, Spencer’s thought was so popular in the

---

<sup>105</sup> *Regeneración* 5, September 7, 1900; *Regeneración* 37, May 7, 1901.

<sup>106</sup> Robert C. Bannister argues that “social Darwinism” was exclusively an epithet. See *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), xi. Scholars continued to debate the merits of the term.

<sup>107</sup> Carlson, *The Unfit*, 121.

period and so malleable that people of opposed political positions attempt to claim it for their purposes. In the late nineteenth century, Spencer was intellectual authority and audacity personified, a Renaissance man who combined the study of human society with the study of natural world.<sup>108</sup> William C. Owen, an English-born anarchist who served as the *Regeneración*'s English-language editor from April 1911 to November 1916, held a profound interest in Spencer. Like the Flores Magón brothers, he studied law and may have encountered Spencer's work in that context. In 1891, a couple decades before his involvement in the PLM, Owen published a book on Spencer's work entitled *The Economics of Herbert Spencer*.<sup>109</sup> In this tome, Owen expressed absolute agreement with Spencer's emphasis on survival of the fittest and argued for socialism on the grounds that would produce a more fit society.

Owen's book on Spencer makes a coherent case for alignment of Spencer's philosophy with socialism, with particular emphasis on land redistribution, a central theme for the PLM and for the Mexican Revolution. Two selections from *The Economics of Herbert Spencer* hint at how he applied Spencer's principles to sexual questions. First, consider his description of the clergy, one of the factors he and innumerable other radicals identified as a force of oppression, an impediment to social progress: "Here is a priest who, vowed to a form of life so unnatural that, if generally adopted, the whole race must perish, passes his days in urging the masses not to look."<sup>110</sup> Owen here presented priestly celibacy as a profoundly negative, an unnatural and potentially catastrophic lifestyle. If, as in Spencer's worldview and in the generalized eugenicist one, reproduction is nature's absolute and objective measure of worth, meaning, and success, the

---

<sup>108</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1944]); Robert J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 260-266.

<sup>109</sup> William C. Owen, *The Economics of Herbert Spencer* (New York City: The Humboldt Publishing Co., 1891).

<sup>110</sup> Owen, *Economics*, 245.

celibate cleric is indeed an unnatural and backwards creature. An identical logic applies to the lesbian or other queer who refuses to procreate, refuses to submit to compulsory heterosexuality. If the game of life and of nature is Spencer's survival of the fittest through selection and reproduction, then priests and queer decline to even play. By this logic, they irrationally choose death over life.

An especially ominous and illustrative passage appears in the middle of Owen's text:

Turning again to the moral side, I touch but a moment upon the question of prostitution, since the comforting doctrine is apparently held that it is only the mentally or morally incapable who take to so shameful an occupation. It is, of course, inevitable that such should be driven to the wall, since *they* are entirely unfitted to survive; and the pleasure of watching the infallible working of this beneficent law may be properly regarded as one of the legitimate enjoyments of the elect.<sup>111</sup>

The wording here is cryptic and difficult to decipher, but Owen seemed to have evinced glee at the prospect of natural selection and survival of the fittest somehow eliminating "mentally or morally incapable" sex workers. He did not elaborate on this point but proceeded to suggest that "economic conditions" have caused "the growth of prostitution."<sup>112</sup> This paragraph on sex work comes after one on increasing suicide and "insanity."<sup>113</sup> Cheering the "inevitable" extermination of the unfit matches the ghastly stereotype of social Darwinism impeccably. While the logic of individual freedom, nominally championed by Spencer and by anarchists, easily allows for sex work and for celibacy, Owen imagined that the biopolitical logic of survival of the fittest applied to society does not. He considered unacceptable both the absence and abundance of sexual intercourse, condemning the prostitute and the priest alike as unnatural.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Owen, *Economics*, 122-123. Italics original.

<sup>112</sup> Owen, *Economics*, 123.

<sup>113</sup> Owen, *Economics*, 122.

<sup>114</sup> Note that the PLM, consistent with many anarchists of the era, generally considered sex work a social ill caused for economic reasons and expressed compassion for sex workers. I do not know of any echo in *Regeneración* of the exterminationist position Owen briefly expressed in *The Economics of Herbert Spencer*, though writers in the PLM periodical did at times employ the trope of the disgusting whore.



Naturalistic philosophy and political theory like Herbert Spencer's provided novel ways to reinscribe bigotry against queered sexual practices, appealing to science in place of Christianity, which the PLM and most other radicals stridently reject as oppressive. These discourses of degeneracy, of the unfit, had puissant social effects. In *Chino*, Jason Oliver Chang argues that anti-Chinese sentiment played a key role in forging the modern Mexican nation-state and its relationship with the rural masses during and after the Mexican Revolution. The specter of the "so-called yellow octopus of Chinese racial degeneracy" facilitated consent to state governance by figuring the state as vigilant protector of mestizo majority.<sup>115</sup> As a blunt gloss on this dynamic, Chang writes that "hating the Chinese people was good for everyone except for the Chinese people."<sup>116</sup> In like fashion, we can say that hating queers was good for everyone except for queers and that hating degenerates was good for everyone except degenerates.

Many of the best-known anarchists of the era engaged explicitly with eugenics, including Moses Harman, Emma Goldman, and Piotr Kropotkin himself. As a rule, they supported the aim of human bettering and eradicating degeneracy but opposed at least state coercion in accordance with their principles. Kropotkin's 1912 "The Sterilization of the Unfit" in *Mother Earth* encapsulates this engagement. Kropotkin questioned the maturity of eugenics as a science, advised caution in ascribing degeneracy to biological causes, and advocated public health over sterilization. He concluded the article by asking just who the unfit really are: "Those who produce degenerates in the slums, or those who produce degenerates in palaces?"<sup>117</sup> In *Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics in the Struggle over Meaning in the Spanish Anarchist Press, 1900-1936*, authors Jorge Molero-Mesa, Isabel Jiménez-Lucena, and Carlos Taberno-Holgado

---

<sup>115</sup> Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 15.

<sup>116</sup> Chang, *Chino*, 16.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Kropotkin, "The Sterilization of the Unfit," *Mother Earth* VII, no. 10 (December 1912), 357.

distinguish between neo-Malthusianism and eugenics. They argue that eugenics itself came into being in relationship to neo-Malthusianism, with the twin goals: “to discredit neo-Malthusianism by using the very same scientific and technological terrain to regain the biopolitical initiative on management of the body and human sexuality, and, at the same time, to legitimize the existence of social inequality politically, using scientific models, in a liberal and supposedly egalitarian society in which all citizens had the same rights and duties.”<sup>118</sup> Molero-Mesa, Jiménez-Lucena, and Taberno-Holgado describe neo-Malthusianism as a decentralized, bottom-up movement for bodily autonomy and eugenics as a push for the state management of bodies and reproduction. As evidence, they quote a 1914 piece by anarchist José Chueca that asserts exactly this distinction between neo-Malthusianism and eugenics. While dismissing eugenics as bourgeois and false science in contrast with properly scientific and proletarian neo-Malthusianism, Chueca took essentially the same position as Kropotkin: anarchism fights degeneration through positive freedom. Chueca stressed education about contraception and conscious reproduction, as the neo-Malthusians practiced; Kropotkin stressed public-health measures.

Molero-Mesa, Jiménez-Lucena, and Taberno-Holgado find that, while the term “eugenics” (“eugenesia”) did catch on in Spain to some degree, much of it remain neo-Malthusian in orientation and shaped policy in the Spanish Civil War. Their analysis of anarchist neo-Malthusianism in Spain attests to how eugenics and degeneracy discourse, in the broad sense, permeated the thought of the era. For my context looking at the PLM, I find it more useful to conceptualize eugenics as all over the map, an arena of political struggle, rather than to draw a hard line between eugenics and neo-Malthusianism as Chueca did and as Molero-Mesa, Jiménez-

---

<sup>118</sup> Jorge Molero-Mesa, Isabel Jiménez-Lucena, and Carlos Taberno-Holgado, “Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics in the Struggle over Meaning in the Spanish Anarchist Press, 1900-1936,” *História, Ciências, Saúde* 25, supl. (August 2018), translated by Catherine Jagoe, 9.

Lucena, and Taberno-Holgado echo. For my purposes, the universal embrace of degeneracy theory stands across the anarchist movement in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Everybody agreed on the existence of degenerates and the need to eliminate at least degeneration and degeneracy, even if they debated how precisely to define these categories and especially who counted as a degenerate, as unfit. Everybody agreed that degeneration was a pressing social, political, and scientific question of the time.

Because my analysis relies heavily on pieces from the PLM periodical *Regeneración*, a brief discussion of that paper and the context it operated within 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's influence on it increased. This prompted the repression, 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 Porfirio Díaz's regime. 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.<sup>119</sup> 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

---

<sup>119</sup> Ethel Duffy Turner, *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon* (Detroit, MI: Blaine Ethridge Books, 1981), 22-61; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores: Ricardo Flores Magón y El Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique* (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Los Angeles Chicano Studies Center and Aztlán Publications, 1973), 23-52.

countless nationalities and economic backgrounds.<sup>120</sup> 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 Flores Magón's insistence that he was a bourgeois oppressor who would resist rather than enact revolutionary social transformation. This process accelerated as rivals effectively if inaccurately presented the Party's campaign in Baja California as treasonous filibustering. 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.

The November 1910 article “La Mujer” (Woman) by prominent PLM member Práxedes G. Guerrero offers a window into the Party's understanding of gender, sexuality, and deviance. Son of wealthy landowners, Guerrero renounced his inheritance because of his convictions and devoted himself to the radical cause. He died in action in Janos, Chihuahua little over a month after the publication of “La Mujer,” in the context of mass military mobilization across Mexico against Porfirio Díaz's regime, and the PLM remembered him as a revered martyr. In the forward to *Sex in Revolution*, Carlos Monsiváis quoted Guerrero as a simple—and rare—supporter of women's liberation in the period.<sup>121</sup> On the surface, Guerrero and PLM, like the anarchist movement overall, did support women's liberation and wrote extensively on the subject. In “La Mujer,” Guerrero reviewed the history of the oppression of women across

---

<sup>120</sup> William D. Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Spaces* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 143-4.

<sup>121</sup> Carlos Monsiváis, “Forward: When Gender Can't Be Seen amid the Symbols: Women and the Mexican Revolution,” in Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

cultures, which he described as slavery, and presents the demand for the equality of men and women as an essential revolutionary position. The notion of a natural order between the sexes in which each has proper roles emerges as central from this text, themes that permeate the PLM and broader radical discourse, in line with the era's scientific literature. 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 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>122</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>123</sup> The terms here are not quite so harsh, but the logic of gender and sexual transgression at play resembles that of the PLM Junta's earlier denunciation of Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza. Guerrero asserted

---

<sup>122</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 G. Guerrero, "La Mujer," *Regeneración* 11, November 12, 1910, 2. For biographical information about Guerrero, see Ricardo Flores Magón, "Práxedes G. Guerrero ha muerto," *Regeneración* 20, January 14, 1911, 1.

<sup>123</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.'" Guerrero, "La Mujer," 2.

women's participation in traditionally masculine roles in the state apparatus, such as by serving as police officers, was unattractive both because of how oppressive these roles are and because of the gender deviance involved. In this fashion, Guerrero masterfully synthesized anarchist values with longstanding patriarchal notions of separate and complementary gender roles. Having dispensed with religion a pernicious force contrary to freedom, Guerrero grounded these claims about innate sex difference in a strictly secular worldview.

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, or "homosexual misconduct" (los extravíos homo-sexuales) as he called it. He condemned "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>124</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. Guerrero's "intimate dance of aristocrats" in Mexico refers to "the famous 41." Nine years earlier, in 1901, Mexico City police raided a fancy party and arrested forty-one people, identified as men, half of whom wore elegant dresses. The police incarcerated these dancers in Belén prison "for attacks on morality," eventually sending

---

<sup>124</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 G. Guerrero, "La Mujer," *Regeneración* 11, November 12, 1910, 2.

nineteen of them off to forced labor in Yucatán as part of the Mexican government's military campaign against Mayan Indians.<sup>125</sup> The example of the 41 serves to shame men as a whole and to disprove claims of men's superiority.

As a conclusion, Guerrero reiterated that he wanted women's emancipation to come without queering of the 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 has in nature."<sup>126</sup> The alternative he described was perpetual tyranny, slavery, and unhappiness. This narrative of a natural place for men and for women constitutes a key aspect of PLM gender ideology and aligns with the wider period discourse on gender and sexuality from a supposedly naturalistic, rational, and scientific perspective. The women's liberation that Guerrero and other PLM leaders preached endeavors to uphold the binary distinction between women and men as well as to unite women and men, assumed to be straight and cisgender, against gender and sexual deviance.

In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma 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 but highlights how Ricardo Flores Magón and the other PLM men 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 PLM 1910 address to women exhorted them to demand that the men in their lives take up the gun against

---

<sup>125</sup> "El Baile de los 41: 19 de los Consignados Remitidos a Yucatán," *El Popular*, November 23, 1901; Robert McKee Irwin, *Mexican Masculinities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 66-9; Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican Representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3-4.

<sup>126</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." Guerrero, "La Mujer," 2.

the Díaz regime 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>127</sup> Pérez demonstrates how women within the PLM scene, most notably Blanca de 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 sum, PLM men talked the talk but frequently failed to walk the walk.

This brings us back to Regeneracion's 1906 attack on former ally Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza in terms of gender and sexuality. This attack echoes Guerrero's views about the importance of allegedly natural gender roles in PLM thought. A notable critic of Díaz, Gutiérrez de Mendoza suffered imprisonment along with the Flores Magón brothers and went 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 begin the article with extensive posturing as long-suffering gallants reluctant to fight back against a feminine aggressor out of chivalrous compunctions but finally forced to defend their honor. In a classic technique used within broken alliances, they claim Gutiérrez de Mendoza did not separate with them but they rejected her because of “political mercantilism” (*mercantilismo político*) and “disgusting vices” (*repugnantes vicios*). After elaborating on their financial and organizational grievances, the authors condemn Gutiérrez de Mendoza on the basis of sexual transgression after

---

<sup>127</sup> Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 57.



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 sexual relationship between Gutiérrez de Mendoza and her close friend and coeditor 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>128</sup>

The piece holds this note for some paragraphs, providing a salacious account of how the authors saw proof with their “own eyes” (“propios ojos”) of the alleged misbehavior and how a 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”). In order to reinforce the narrative of heterosexuality as natural and queerness as a threat, the authors charge the two women with not loving or respecting their parents and excoriate Gutiérrez de Mendoza for dishonoring her excessively tolerant husband.

Homosexuality then implies the destruction of the familial order at the heart of society, an order most of the period's intellectuals imagined ordained by nature. Like myriad other radicals of that era, informed by dominant educated opinion from men of science, the PLM Junta envisioned a post-revolutionary world where the degeneration of queerness would disappear and the allegedly natural arrangement of child-rearing man-woman pairs would reign forever, a regenerated and vigorous humanity. The article concludes with a vicious denunciation of Gutiérrez de Mendoza

---

<sup>128</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.” Unattributed, “Juana B. Gutiérrez de Mendoza,” *Regeneración* 10, June 15, 1906, 4.

that unambiguously expels her from the cause as well as from the human species, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Though it lacks the same class element, this analysis mirrors Guerrero's perspective. Gutiérrez de Mendoza's lesbianism, real or invented, formed a central component of her treacherous character in the PLM Junta's account; betraying nature in this fashion matched her political and economic opportunism and duplicity.<sup>129</sup> Within this framework, political and sexual propriety had an inherent connection; deviation in either area implied deviation in the other. As described by Italian anarchist Pietro Gori in posthumous 1912 *Regeneración* article, belief in the naturalness of reproductive heterosexual coupling established the limits of 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.<sup>130</sup> Queerness constituted rejection of the dreamed-for heterosexual utopia and thus immediately suggested bourgeois subversion, simple criminality, and biological degeneration.

Ricardo Flores Magón's pen-and-ink warfare with former comrade Antonio I. Villarreal after the latter left the PLM and began publishing a rival paper entitled *Regeneración* offers further evidence 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. Flores Magón described various members of the opposing *Regeneración* as well as other foes as “castrates” (“castrados”) and “eunuchs” (“eunucos”), but he fixated on Villarreal's alleged gender deviation at great length. Flores Magón repeatedly wrote that

---

<sup>129</sup> After briefly supporting Madero, Gutiérrez de Mendoza traveled to Morelos and became a Zapatista colonel. For more information on her life, see Susie S. Porter, “Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza: Woman of Words, Woman of Actions,” in Jeffery M. Pilcher, ed., *The Human Tradition in Mexico* (Wilmington, Delaware; SR Books, 2003), 103-117. For a further discussion of period anarchist narratives of gender that rely on appeals to nature, see Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, “From ‘La Mujer Esclava’ to ‘La Mujer Limón’: Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality in Early-Twentieth-Century Chile,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3-4 (2001), 519-553.

<sup>130</sup> Pedro [Pietro] Gori, “Lo que Nosotros Queremos,” *Regeneración*, June 8, 1912, 1.

Villarreal had a homosexual relationship with 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, 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. In a relatively early piece on the subject of the new *Regeneración*, Flores Magón concluded with the following threat: “For 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 Marquis de Sade.”<sup>131</sup>

Tellingly, Flores Magón 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 Flores Magón excoriated Villarreal in an article called “El Coronel de Los 41” (The Colonel of the 41) in which he described Villarreal as a “pederast” (*pederasta*) and a “queer” (*maricón*).<sup>132</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. Flores Magón asked the question, “Are love affairs between one macho and another macho not something shameful?”<sup>133</sup> He went on to make Villarreal's alleged pederasty to a negation of his status as a man. The brief article finishes on this dramatic note: “Villareal does not have the right to face any man. He

---

<sup>131</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, “‘Defensores’ del Poletariado,” *Regeneración* 50, August 12, 1911, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón, “El Coronel del Los 41,” *Regeneración* 55, September 16, 1911, 2.

<sup>133</sup> “¿No es algo de averguenza [sic] el amorío de un macho con un otro macho?” Ricardo Flores Magón, “Que Hable el Maricón,” *Regeneración* 56, September 23, 1911, 3.

should be spat upon by all men and by all women.”<sup>134</sup> In an echo of Práxedes Guerrero’s approach to feminism and PLM condemnation of *Gutiérrez de Mendoza*, Ricardo here assumed a unity between gender conformers against deviancy.

With both Ricardo and Guerrero, gender transgression was fundamentally entangled with notions of honor and of class as well as naturalness and degeneracy. Guerrero presented masculinization as the characteristic of bourgeois feminists while 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 they constructed gender transgression as example of the depravity of the ruling class and implicitly constructed proletarian gender norms in opposition to this bourgeois degeneracy. In the same issue discussed above, a letter purportedly from the Burkett, Texas *Regeneración* group castigates Villarreal specifically for his betrayal of the PLM and follows this with a string of gendered slurs. The group wrote, “That is the shame that you have, effeminate one, sodomite; because of that you have become number 42 of the group of 41.”<sup>135</sup> For these PLM supporters and the Party in general, 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>136</sup>

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

---

<sup>134</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.” Flores Magón, “Que Hable,” 3.

<sup>135</sup> “Esta es la vergüenza [sic] que tú gastas, afeminado, sodomo; por eso has ido á ser el 42 del grupo de los 41.” R. G. Ortiz, “Para Ejemplo,” *Regeneración* 56, September 23, 1911, 3.

<sup>136</sup> Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds., *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (New York, NY: The Hayworth Press, Inc., 1995), 7-8, 41, 71, 117, 259.

the period. The revolutionary left at the time had deep connections across the world; even relatively obscure publications such as Blanca de 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.<sup>137</sup> 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.<sup>138</sup> "Male Inverts and Homosexuals" by Richard Cleminson shows similar dynamics at play within the Spanish anarchist periodical *Revista Blanca* between 1898 and the 1930s.<sup>139</sup> 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.<sup>140</sup> The book shows the left in the era of the PLM held conflicts about gender and sexuality alongside the master narrative of heterosexuality as natural and correct.

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

---

<sup>137</sup> Hekma, Oosterhuis, and Steakley, "Leftist Sexual Politics and Homosexuality: A Historical Overview," in *Sexual History*, 1-40.

<sup>138</sup> Hubert Kennedy, "Johann Baptist von Schweitzer: The Queer Marx Loved to Hate," in *Sexual History*, 69-96.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Cleminson, "Male Inverts and Homosexuals: Sex Disorder in the Anarchist *Revista Blanca*," in *Sexual History*, 259-272.

<sup>140</sup> Saskia Poldervaart, "Theories about Sex and Sexuality in Utopian Socialism," in *Sexual History*, 41-68; Walter Fähnders, "Anarchism and Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany: Senna Hoy, Eric Mühsam, John Henry Mackay," in *Sexual History*, 117-154.

political slogan that discouraged agitation, the unattributed author wrote, “The 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>141</sup> This underlines Robert Irwin's description of gender existing on a continuum in the period. 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 contestational masculinity, that masculinity focuses on endless competition and jockeying for status between men. However, within PLM revolutionary thought the notion of universal brotherhood and radical egalitarianism temper these 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>142</sup>

The idea of violent resistance of the only acceptable masculine response to domination comes into clarity with a close 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

---

<sup>141</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.” Unattributed, “La abstención política es la abyección: La política sana y el servilismo,” *Regeneración*, December 3, 1904, 1.

<sup>142</sup> Irwin, *Mexican Masculinities*, 59-71.

unattributed piece in *Revolución* (a *Regeneración* analogue that published in Los Angeles in 1907 and 1908) entitled “El Deber de la Mujer” (Woman’s Duty) included the following passage: “It’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>143</sup> Whether written by Flores Magón or one of the many other men involved with paper, the piece conveys a widespread and regular position within the PLM. In the extended address to women in 1910 Flores Magón similarly wrote, “Make your husbands, your brothers, your fathers, your sons, and your male friends take up a rifle.”<sup>144</sup>

In a later fictional piece entitled “El Triunfo de la Revolución Social” (The Triumph of the Social Revolution), Flores Magón 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, Flores Magón describes the division of labor as follows: “The women dig ditches; the men clean their rifles; the children distribute outfits to those champions of the proletariat.” Despite the wife’s greater militancy and understanding in this story, only her husband levels a weapon against the oppressors. From these sources we see a pattern of idealized gender roles as an important revolutionary goal for the Party.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>143</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.” *Revolución*, July 6, 1907.

<sup>144</sup> “Haced que vuestros esposos, vuestros hermanos, vuestros padres, vuestros hijos y vuestros amigos tomen el fusil.” *Regeneración*, September 24, 1910; translated by Mitchell Cowen Verter in Chaz Bufe and Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2011), 236.

<sup>145</sup> “Las mujeres hacen hilas; los hombres limpian sus rifles; los niños reparten parque [sic] a aquellos campeones del proletariado.” *Regeneración*, October 23, 1915; translated by Mitchell Verter in Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 326.

In stark contrast, Ricardo'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 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, Ricardo reported that Ortega said to the notorious Mexican official who held her, "they will take me to Ensenada and shoot me on foot, as a man; but you, traitor, they will shoot you from behind, as a coward."<sup>146</sup>

Ortega survived that dangerous situation but fell at the hands of Victoriano Huerta's soldiers approximately two years later. In a stirring eulogy Ricardo 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>147</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. According to Ricardo, 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

---

<sup>146</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" *Regeneración*, December 9, 1911.

<sup>147</sup> "Hábil ginete y experta en el manejo de las armas del fuego, Margarita atravezaba las lineas 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 las fuerzas 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 podíase verla 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." *Regeneración*, June 13, 1914; translated by Verter in Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 228.



conservatism. Ricardo had Ortega express 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>148</sup> In a fashion Ortega followed Ricardo’s 1910 appeal to women to pressure the men in their lives to fight, but on terms of equality in the labor of violence rather than any natural or traditional notion of separate aptitudes and duties. The fact that Ricardo 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.

Writers within PLM 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

---

<sup>148</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, olvídame, pues yo no quiero ser la compañera de un cobarde.” *Regeneración*, June 13, 1914; translated by Verter in Bufo and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 229.

gender transgression. While PLM authors consistently employed the image of the effeminate homosexual 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.

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 cases other than Ortega's, Ricardo Flores Magón positively described women or their work as "virile" (*viril*). For instance, he or his brother Jesús did so with Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza's periodical *Vésper* in 1901.<sup>149</sup> This exposes the complexity of gender ideology within the PLM and possible difference between Guerrero and 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. Ricardo 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, Ortega's eulogy suggests a level of fluidity in gender constructions and the acceptability of women adopting traditionally masculine roles as part of the revolutionary project.

---

<sup>149</sup> Unattributed but presumably Jesús or Ricardo Flores Magón, "Vésper," *Regeneración* 51, August 23, 1901, 4.

Taken as a whole, these PLM positions on gender identity and expression combined emancipatory rhetoric with a restrictive narrative of naturalness that pathologized deviation from the imagined normal. Neither of these narratives completely dominated the discourse; instead, they interlaced, sometimes with notable tension and contradiction. PLM writers consistently brought up both the oppression of women and their need for liberation but couched this vision with set gender roles they believed came from nature, which science and reason discovered and affirmed. 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. They wanted a mass movement in which the exploited majority, the working class, would throw off the yoke of the oppressive minority, the bourgeoisie. Like Pyotr Kropotkin, PLM leaders conceived of eugenics and of degeneracy theory as an arena of contestation between workers and bosses. They made the case that workers were the manifest fit by virtue of their productive ability while they characterized bourgeoisie as decadent, incapable idlers. For the propagandizing revolutionaries of the PLM, discursively employing the popular trope of passive homosexual transvestites as the antithesis of the rebellious farmers and workers turned warriors that they wanted to inspire must have seemed obvious and unproblematic.

## 2. Feminist Anarchism and Forgetting across Generations

This chapter investigates how anarchists within the Partido PLM and its orbit theorized gender, gendered oppression, reproduction, and routes to liberation. I engage primarily with the work of Voltairine de Cleyre, Blanca de Moncaleano (aka Blanche Lawson), Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, and Ricardo Flores Magón. I explore how historians and company have remembered and forgotten these figures in relation to feminism. The study highlights the tensions, contradictions, and gaps in both period discourse and in the historiography, of the interplay between imagining transformative change and of reaffirming cherished values. Eugenic concerns with the vitality of future generations, vigorous propagation, and success in selection dynamics profoundly shaped how these PLM-aligned radicals thought about gender. Even Voltairine de Cleyre, whose corpus displays the most affinity for liberal individualism and romantic idealism, conceded the importance of big-picture questions about human survival and excellence. She and the others navigated these questions through the established (pseudo)scientific knowledge production of the day, which emphasized evolutionary fitness and its cultivation. Passionate personal commitment to freedom as a practice both clashed with and complemented what these five figures believed best for society. They struggled to articulate women's liberation, like anarchism overall, as at once beneficial to the individual and to the species. This need for this collective strength and vitality, for a movement that could claim to represent the mass of humanity, pushed anarchists away from framing women's oppression in stark terms, with most or all men as oppressors. Only de Cleyre took this approach, in "The Gates of Freedom," and she did not consistently reiterate it. Instead, anarchists tended to

conceptualize women's liberation as a part of the grand project of forging a freer and fitter human race.

For each individual in question, this analysis attends to the question of historical memory: how and why later writers describe and invoke them in relation to anarchism and to feminism. In the 1910s, all five of these figures operated within a shared anarchist milieu, both because of their physical location in the United States and their engagement with anarchists across the world via print media. Each considered gender equality and opposition to women's oppression a core value and talked and wrote about this, but with different inflections. With Lucy Parsons in particular, people within and outside academia continue to debate the meaning of these figures and who can rightfully claim their legacy. This debate centers on politics of identity and representation as well as on the desire for inspiring historical narrative. People in a variety of ideological positions, from progressive to libertarian to anarchist, endeavor to enlist the enduring power of Parsons, Ricardo Flores Magón, Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Blanca de Moncaleano in their projects. Here I engage the historiography to explore this ongoing afterlife, unpacking the stakes involved and probing the process of selection and omission integral to telling any story of the past. As the discipline of history has overwhelmingly recognized, no simple formula exists for what to elide and what to emphasize; the profession's "noble dream" of objectivity foundered decades ago, as Peter Novick's 1988 text overviews. Rather than embrace the nihilistic view, often unfairly attributed to Hayden White, of history as merely fiction, I aim to balance the discursive and material, an approach in accordance with Kuisma Korhonen's interpretation of White.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Kuisma Korhonen, "General Introduction," in *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History / Literature Debate* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), edited by Kuisma Korhonen, 9-20. On balancing the discursive and the material, see Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in*

## Feminist Theories, Eugenicist Resonances

Broadly, appeals for women's revolt in the PLM orbit relied on two distinct logics: either feminism as a matter of justice for women or as requirement for overall social good because of women's social importance via reproductive labor. The former, stressing justice, most aligned with classic liberalism's attention to individual liberty and self-ownership, while the latter, stressing motherhood, most aligned with conventional Christian norms as well as with eugenic concerns about the quality of future humans. These two rationales are not all mutually exclusive and anarchists often combined them, but the differences in emphasis are revealing. Of the five figures in question, Voltairine de Cleyre most consistently and passionately advocated feminist revolution for its own sake, for the inherent value of freedom. The other four more commonly leaned on the narrative of how anarchism needs women to possibly triumph. In an April 1898 letter published in *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*, de Cleyre succinctly expressed her perspective, complete with its tensions: "I believe in freedom, and would personally believe in it if I saw it moving straight to racial extinction, though I believe also that racial salvation is the foundation of every great racial tendency, and that sooner than commit suicide Man would turn all slave if Life lay that way."<sup>151</sup> De Cleyre declared that her own individual affection for liberty surpassed concern for the continuance of the human species while at the same time acknowledging reproduction's supreme importance for the big picture. She gestured toward the impossible politics Lee Edelman advocates but declined to fully embrace them.

---

*Northern New Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23-24. For a notable argument in favor of scientific objectivity in relation to postmodernism, see Meera Nanda, "The Epistemic Charity of Constructivist Critics of Science and Why the Third World Should Refuse the Offer," in Noretta Koertge, ed., *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286-305.

<sup>151</sup> V, de Cleyre [Voltairine de Cleyre], "Priestly Control over Woman," *Lucifer, the Light Bearer* 705 (April 6, 1898), 110.

The crowning articulation of de Cleyre's feminism is "The Gates of Freedom," the March 1891 address she delivered to the Liberal Convention in Topeka, Kansas. Guided by the pragmatic principle of "[t]hey have rights who dare maintain them," this text makes a materialist argument for women's liberation, engaging directly with the period's scientific corpus on women by way of Edward Drinker Cope in order to determine the "status of woman in relation to society as a whole."<sup>152</sup> It is this unwavering demand for women's insurrection, grounded in an allegedly objective understanding of society, that calls to mind Shulamith's Firestone's 1970 *The Dialectic of Sex*, which took the work of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Sigmund Freud as a starting point for formulating the demand for feminist revolution. Eugenia DeLamotte notes this resonance, describing de Cleyre's "feminist rhetoric and analysis" as "often eerily prophetic of Shulamith Firestone."<sup>153</sup> Consistent with its case, "The Gates of Freedom" takes for granted that women must free themselves: "I say right here, candidly, that *as a class* I have nothing to hope from men."<sup>154</sup>

Voltairine de Cleyre and Blanca de Moncaleano together stand out for calling attention to patriarchal views and behavior from radical men. They identified how even anarchist men held views that clashes with their claimed values and how they oppressed women with their own families and communities. Perhaps most illustratively, in an 1890 article, de Cleyre wrote the following:

No longer than a week since an Anarchist (?) said to me, "I will be boss in my own house"—a "Communist-Anarchist," if you please, who doesn't believe in "*my* house." About a year ago a noted libertarian speaker said, in my presence, that his sister, who possessed a fine voice and had joined a concert troupe, should "stay at home with her children; that is *her place*." The old Church idea! This man was a Socialist, and since an Anarchist; yet his highest idea for woman was serfhood to husband and children, in the

---

<sup>152</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Gates of Freedom," in *Gates of Freedom*, 235.

<sup>153</sup> Eugenia C. DeLamotte, "Introduction," in DeLamotte, ed., *Gates of Freedom: Voltairine de Cleyre and the Revolution of the Mind*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>154</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Gates of Freedom," in *Gates of Freedom*, 239.

present mockery called “home.” Stay at home, ye malcontents! Be patient, obedient, submissive! Darn our socks, mend our shirts, wash our dishes, get our meals, wait on us and *mind the children!* Your fine voices are not to delight the public nor yourselves; your inventive genius is not to work, your fine art taste is not to be cultivated, your business facilities are not to be developed; you made the great mistake of being born with them, suffer for your folly! You are *women!* therefore housekeepers, servants, waiters, and child’s nurses!<sup>155</sup>

This piece has no qualms about excoriating “anarchist” (note the quotation marks) men who practiced sexism and remained committed to patriarchal social arrangements, specifically of women’s relegation to the domestic sphere and men’s supremacy in their families. De Cleyre stressed the hypocrisy and inconsistency of men in the radical community who neglected to apply their political values to their personal lives. She tied this to customary Christian values, suggesting patriarchal values based in religion persisted among anarchists and socialists. In articulating the sexist social norms of the late-nineteenth-century United States, the above passage effectively conveys how oppressive and absurd they are. De Cleyre underscored how women had abilities mainstream society valued—fine singing voices, artists taste, business acumen—yet discouraged women from developing them because of the arbitrary prejudice of birth. In this fashion she operated within the liberal discourse of discrimination, where aristocratic privilege and racial slavery existed as the iconic models of unjust and inefficient social placement according to birth rather than ability.

Similarly, in a February 1913 article in *Regeneración*, Blanca de Moncaleano wrote the following to the assumed and probably accurate audience of radical men: “Don’t forget that woman has her rights equal with men, that you have not arrived in the world only to blow on the stove, multiply humanity, wash cloths, scrub dishes, maintain and dress the priest and tolerate the

---

<sup>155</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, “Sex Slavery,” in DeLamotte, *Gates of Freedom*, 227-228. Italics original.



outrages that a thoughtless husband makes against you in the name of his false authority.”<sup>156</sup> As with de Cleyre and in contrast to standard PLM position articulated by Ricardo Flores Magón and Práxedes Guerrero, we see a clear refusal to consign women to traditional domestic duties in this piece. As Emma Pérez writes, de Moncaleano “exhibited a formidable feminist stance, one that none of the male writers on the staff had ever expressed.”<sup>157</sup> Similarly, de Moncaleano’s own *Pluma Roja* featured this slogan in the top left: “Want to fight for freedom? Start by emancipating yourself from vices and give freedom to the slaves of your home.”<sup>158</sup> You see this emphasis on the home as a site of oppression from de Cleyre and de Moncaleano alike; it appears as well in the writings of the other three figures, but with attenuated frequency and greater ambivalence.

Another slogan appears on the front pages of *Pluma Roja*, which seems stridently feminist but is more ambiguous: “Before me, the star of my ideal. Behind me, men. I do not look back.”<sup>159</sup> It’s attributed only to “Moncaleano,” so it could be from Blanca de Moncaleano’s partner, Juan Francisco Moncaleano, and might refer more to men in general’s ambivalence about radicalism in general rather than being stridently feminist. And of course the double meaning may have been intentional. A feminist interpretation of the slogan is consistent with Blanca de Moncaleano’s thought as a whole. In the June 1915 in *Pluma roja*, she wrote: “Lost in the supposition of their superiority, stupefied by their ignorance, men have believed that, without the assistance of women, they can reach the goal of human emancipation, as if this were not the

---

<sup>156</sup> “No olvidéis que la mujer tiene sus derechos al igual que los hombres, que habéis llegado al mundo tan sólo para multiplicar la humanidad, soplar el fogón, lavar ropa, fregar platos, mantener y vestir al Cura y aguantar que un inconsciente marido os hace en nombre de su mentira autoridad.” Blanca de Moncaleano, “Mujeres, Eduquemos Nuestros Hijos en la Escuela Racionalista.” *Regeneración* 129, February 22, 1913, 3.

<sup>157</sup> Pérez, *Decolonial Imaginary*, 69.

<sup>158</sup> “Quieres luchar por libertad? Empieza por emanciparte de los vicios y da libertad á los esclavos de tu casa.” Blanca de Moncaleano, *Pluma Roja* 1, November 5, 1913, 1.

<sup>159</sup> “Ante mí la estrella del ideal. Tras de mí los hombres. No miro atrás.” Moncaleano, *Pluma Roja* 1, November 5, 1913, 1.

progenitor of LIFE.”<sup>160</sup> This passage, with its appeal to men to recognize the importance of women in the revolutionary project, both constitutes another instance of criticizing radical men and highlights a key difference between de Moncaleano’s and de Cleyre’s feminist thought. Here and elsewhere, de Moncaleano stressed women’s reproductive role and its profound importance to society overall.

Like much of Emma Goldman’s writing, some of Blanca de Moncaleano’s centered on the necessity of women’s emancipation as part of the anarchist struggle. In her 1915 piece “Por la Mujer y la Anarquía” (“For Woman and Anarchy”), Moncaleano focused on women’s role as mothers and their ability to shape future society through rearing children. “The secret for defeating our enemy,” Moncaleano wrote, “is in explaining to woman the sublime significance of the word motherhood. And she can so understand the highness of her mission; and move away from those prejudices that are the cause of her pain and misery; and then her humility and obedience will turn into rebellion and desires for revenge.”<sup>161</sup> Moncaleano outlined how the system of social control by state and capital relied on women’s cooperation in promulgating militarist, nationalist, and capitalist values. She neatly summed up the argument as follows: “And women obey, and while women obey, their children will obey; and while woman does not rebel, man will be a slave.”<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> “Engolfados los hombres en su supuesta superioridad, fatuos por su ignorancia, han creído que sin la ayuda de la mujer pueden llegar a la meta de la emancipación humana, como si ésta no fuera la progenitora de la VIDA.” Blanca de Moncaleano, “Por la mujer y la anarquía,” *Pluma Roja* 13 (June 27, 1915), 1.

<sup>161</sup> “El secreto para vencer a nuestro enemigo, está en explicarle a la mujer la sublime significación que entraña la palabra maternidad. Y pueda así comprender la alteza de su misión; y se aleje de aquellos prejuicios que son la causa de su dolor y su miseria; y entonces su humildad y obediencia, se tornarán en rebeldía y ansias de venganza.” Blanca de Moncaleano, “Por la Mujer y la Anarquía,” *Pluma Roja* 13 (June 27, 1915), 1.

<sup>162</sup> “Y las mujeres obedecen, y mientras las mujeres obedezcan, obedecerán sus hijos; y mientras la mujer no se rebele, el hombre será esclavo.” Blanca de Moncaleano, “Por la Mujer y la Anarquía,” *Pluma Roja* 13 (June 27, 1915), 1.

Unlike Emma Goldman and almost all other feminists of her era, de Cleyre never employed this argument. Instead, she focused on women's individual freedom and fulfillment, at times going so far as specifically mock the stereotypical women's role of having and raising children. An example of this appears in the above passage from "Sex Slavery," in which de Cleyre uses "*mind the children!*" one of the outrageous and oppressive things sexists say to women.<sup>163</sup>

In *Radical Sensations*, Shelley Streeby contrasts Voltairine de Cleyre's views on marriage with those of Lucy Parsons, presenting de Cleyre as insisting on connection between sexual and economic freedom. Streeby proceeds to connect her "anarchism without adjectives" to the PLM via Fernando Tarrido del Mármol, describing this conception of anarchism as "more inclusive" and "less prescriptive," presumably in comparison with Parsons' interpretation.<sup>164</sup> While the PLM in general and Ricardo Flores Magón specifically certainly respected and valued Tarrido del Mármol, and Streeby is not alone ascribing anarchism without adjectives to the PLM, the Party consistently described itself as both communist and anarchist in its later years. In fact, far from Tarrida del Mármol's anarchism without adjectives ("anarquismo sin adjetivos"), Ricardo Flores Magón typically wrote of anarchist communism ("comunismo anarquista"), using anarchism as the adjective. De Cleyre, on the other hand, had earlier been individualist anarchist and at least privately expressed revulsion at communism. In 1907, some years after she had left individualist anarchism, de Cleyre made a point of denying communism: "I am not now, and never have been at any time, a Communist."<sup>165</sup> Despite her support for the PLM and the Mexican Revolution near the end of her life, de Cleyre never explicitly embraced

---

<sup>163</sup> De Cleyre, "Sex Slavery," 228. Italics original.

<sup>164</sup> Streeby, *Radical Sensations*, 94.

<sup>165</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "A Correction," *Mother Earth* 10 (December 1907), 473.

communism. In like fashion, Streeby quotes James Sandos's *Rebellion in the Borderlands* on how the PLM's "emphasis upon sex equality, Modern Schools, the opposition to every form of tyranny, and direct action" especially appealed to de Cleyre.<sup>166</sup> Streeby leaves for an endnote the contradictions between the Party's stated support for gender equality and the pervasive masculinism of its leadership, as well as the tensions between PLM gender ideology and de Cleyre's thoroughgoing feminism.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, in many ways, the PLM's position on women, gender, and sexuality resembles that of the sexist "radicals" de Cleyre mocked in 1890 in "Sex Slavery."

In the previous chapter, I detail how prominent PLM men like Ricardo Flores Magón and Práxedes G. Guerrero articulated distinct gender roles for the revolution. Guerrero explicitly condemned gender transgression and the feminism he perceived as making women into men. While always avowing completely equality, the PLM indicated that natural differences meant women should shame men into picking up the rifle and support them when they did, rather than take up arms themselves. Idealized gender roles were an important revolutionary goal for the Party. By contrast, years earlier in 1891, Voltairine de Cleyre highlighted the ability of women like Sophia Perovskaya, part of the plot that assassinated Alexander II in 1881, to do effectively wage violence thanks to technological changes: "A single figure in the darkness, a flash, a blast—and the work of an army is done! Was the figure man or woman?"<sup>168</sup>

While wonderfully nuanced and complex, Emma Goldman's writings on gender resemble the PLM to the extent that they emphasized the shared interest working-class men and women had in dismantling capitalism and at times stressed women's supposedly innate desire for

---

<sup>166</sup> Streeby, *Radical Sensations*, 94; James Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan de San Diego, 1904-1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 41.

<sup>167</sup> Streeby, *Radical Sensations*, 283.

<sup>168</sup> De Cleyre, "The Gates of Freedom," 247.

intimacy with men and for motherhood. Consider, for instance, the stark contrast between Goldman's 1906 "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" and Voltairine de Cleyre's "The Gates of Freedom." In the former, Goldman criticized the suffragists of her time as being hollow, repressed, and artificial, lacking something essential. "Our highly praised independence is, after all," Goldman wrote, "but a slow process of dulling and stifling woman's nature, her love instinct and her mother instinct."<sup>169</sup> Goldman repeated this claim through the piece, calling on women "to insist upon her own unrestricted freedom, to listen to the voice of her nature, whether it call for life's greatest treasure, love for a man, or her most glorious privilege, the right to give birth to a child."<sup>170</sup> In this piece, as in others, Goldman bought into enshrined notions about the purpose of life, despite all her attacks on Puritanism and internal oppression. While the details of her articulation differ dramatically, Goldman's position in "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" resonates with core elements of the PLM stance as put forth by Ricardo Flores Magón and Práxedes Guerrero. Circa 1900, there was broad anarchist interest in freeing "natural" heterosexuality from repression caused by state, capital, and church. The fact that Goldman campaigned for acceptance of homosexuality while Ricardo Flores Magón denounced political opponents with antiqueer slurs does not change this kernel of similarity. De Cleyre seems to be the only one of the five who had little or no interest in that project; she delivered no such grandiose praise of heterosexual romantic love or of motherhood.

Goldman's "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" both begins and ends with a call for "understanding" between the men and women.<sup>171</sup> "Pettiness separates, breadth unites,"

---

<sup>169</sup> Goldman, "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation," in Candace Falk, ed., *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, vol. 2 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 181.

<sup>170</sup> Goldman, "Woman's Emancipation," 184.

<sup>171</sup> Goldman, "Woman's Emancipation," 181.

Goldman wrote in the concluding paragraph. “Let us be broad and big.”<sup>172</sup> On the opposite of the spectrum, de Cleyre’s “The Gates of Freedom” maintains a cry for women’s rebellion throughout and terminates with an embrace of the separation and isolation that concerned Goldman:

And then, in my dreams, I see the figure of a giantess, a lonely figure out in the desolate prairie with nothing over her but the gray sky, and no light upon her face but the chill pallor of the morning. And I see her looking upward and whispering: “How broad it is! It is cold and dark and frowning; but it is broad—and high!” Such will be your figure, O Woman, such your words in the day of your emancipation. In the day when you break from your cell, this warmed, round cell, whose horizon-wall is your children’s life, whose light is your husband’s eyes, whose zenith is your husband’s smile. Better the pitiless gray of the clouds than the white ceiling of a prison; better the loneliness of the prairie than the caress of a slave-born child; better the cold biting of the wind than a Master’s kiss. “Better the war of freedom than the peace of slavery.”<sup>173</sup>

Note how de Cleyre specifically cast as oppressive the notion of a man’s love (“husband’s smile”) as the pinnacle of a woman’s experience, or, to use Goldman’s phrasing, “life’s greatest treasure.” Romantic love and reproductive labor overwhelmingly appear as a hindrance to women in “The Gates of Freedom,” which contains a sustained critique of childrearing as harmful to the mother and breeding resentment in her, as well as a proposal to break up the traditional nuclear family in favor of the “socialist nursery” of skilled educators and caretakers that includes both women and men.<sup>174</sup>

Voltairine de Cleyre additionally wrote against gender norms:

Look how your children grow up. Taught from their earliest infancy to curb their love natures—restrained at every turn! Your blasting lies would even blacken a child's kiss. Little girls must not be tomboyish, must not go barefoot, must not climb trees, must not learn to swim, must not do anything they desire to do which Madame Grundy has decreed "improper." Little boys are laughed at as effeminate, silly girl-boys if they want to make patchwork or play with a doll. Then when they grow up, "Oh! Men don't care for home or children as women do!" Why should they, when the deliberate effort of your life has been to crush that nature out of them. "Women can't rough it like men." Train any animal, or any plant, as you train your girls, and it won't be able to rough it either. Now will

---

<sup>172</sup> Goldman, “Woman’s Emancipation,” 185.

<sup>173</sup> De Cleyre, “The Gates of Freedom,” in *Gates of Freedom*, 249-250.

<sup>174</sup> De Cleyre, “The Gates of Freedom,” in *Gates of Freedom*, 248

somebody tell me why either sex should hold a corner on athletic sports? Why any child should not have free use of its limbs?<sup>175</sup>

De Cleyre advocated approximately the opposite of the era's puritanical moralists and evolutionary psychologists, such as James Weir, Jr., who insisted on rigid parental enforcement of gendered behavior for children. She was more prone to write about children in this fashion, as individuals oppressed by social strictures and worthy of freedom, than to invoke them in the abstract as a political imperative.

Lucy Parsons and Emma Goldman prominently disagreed regarding free love and its place in the anarchist movement.<sup>176</sup> In an 1896 debate in the pages of *Firebrand*, an anarchist periodical based in Portland, Oregon, Parsons harshly condemned the sexual practices some of the paper's articles encouraged: "Mr. Rotter attempts to dig up the hideous, 'Variety' grub and bind it to the beautiful unfolding blossom of labor's emancipation from wage-slavery, and call them one and the same. Variety in sex relations and economic freedom have nothing in common. Nor has it anything in common with Anarchism, as I understand Anarchism; if it has, then I am not an Anarchist."<sup>177</sup> Parsons issued this denunciation on the basis that free-love advocates neglected "family life, child life" and their system would harm these important aspects of sexual relationships.<sup>178</sup> She likewise highlighted how many men promoted sexual variety and suggested that it would be worse for women. Parsons's position against free love simultaneously echoes the dominant conventions of her day and aligns with numerous feminist critiques of how shifting sexual norms away from commitment can benefit men over women. For instance, along with a

---

<sup>175</sup> De Cleyre, "Sex Slavery," in *Gates of Freedom*, 231.

<sup>176</sup> Jessica Moran, "The *Firebrand* and the Forging of a New Anarchism: Anarchist Communism and Free Love" (Fall 2004), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/jessica-moran-the-firebrand-and-the-forging-of-a-new-anarchism-anarchist-communism-and-free-lov> (accessed January 30, 2020).

<sup>177</sup> Lucy Parsons, quoted in Carlos A. Schwantes, "Free Love and Free Speech on the Pacific Northwest Frontier: Proper Victorians vs. Portland's Filthy *Firebrand*," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 82:3 (Fall 1981), 282.

<sup>178</sup> Parsons, quoted in Schwantes, "Free Love," 283.

number of her comrades, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* analyzes the sexual revolution of the 1960s in this frame. Despite espousing a long-term vision of extreme sexual freedom, Firestone saw monogamy as the best immediate option for women.

The discussion of free love in the pages of *Firebrand* ended up attracting the ire of the authorities, who arrested three of its staff on obscenity charges. This was during the infamous era of Anthony Comstock as U.S. postal inspector and his zealous persecution of anything that conflicted with his rigid Christian morality. By Goldman's account, at a fundraiser for the *Firebrand* staff members in Chicago, Parsons "took a stand against the editor of *Firebrand*, H. Addis, because he tolerated articles about free love" and that Parson's remarks created an "unpleasant mood" among the audience.<sup>179</sup> Goldman additionally alluded to Parsons's lack of conformity to the day's respectability standards: "in social and sexual life, L. Parsons has the least cause to object to treatises on free love."<sup>180</sup> Goldman considered Parsons a hypocrite in this respect and in others. Differences in social status between the two anarchist women likely influenced this disagreement, as various writers point out. Parsons' notoriety came significantly from her husband's martyrdom; as a widow and as a target of anti-Black racism, Parsons's relationship to conventional sexual norms was distinct from Goldman's. Parsons and Goldman were also practical rivals to some extent, competitors on the radical touring circuit with material stakes in terms of cash payment.<sup>181</sup>

However, I am equally interested in the ideological differences here as the social ones. Goldman and Parsons both articulated coherent interpretations of the place of sexual freedom in the anarchist struggle. In *Goddess of Anarchy*, Jacqueline Jones dismisses Parsons's opposition

---

<sup>179</sup> Emma Goldman, "Letters from a Tour," in *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, ed. Candace Falk, vol. 1, *Made for America, 1890-1901* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 312.

<sup>180</sup> Goldman, "Letters from a Tour," 313.

<sup>181</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 246-249.



to free love as a calculated move to keep up appearances rather than as a principled stance. Public pressure may well partially or even primarily explain why Parsons rejected sexual variety, but, as mentioned above, Parsons's critique of free love has weight as one that feminists have come to over the years and underlines the centrality of reproduction in anarchist debates about sex. Goldman and others pushed free love in part because they believed women's sexual liberty would produce better children and improve mankind. Parsons worried it would do the reverse, facilitating men's ease and entitlement while reducing care and support for children. The debate contained genuine concerns about the future, concerns that animated so much of period discourse.<sup>182</sup>

The thought of each of these five figures on gender and sex relates to eugenics, given that movement's profound importance in the period. As an example of this association that closely ties to Emma Goldman, in 1897 the famous eugenicist and progressive sexologist Havelock Ellis wrote that "the question of sex—with the racial questions that rest on it—stands before coming generations as the chief problem for solution."<sup>183</sup> While the direct context of this passage provides, as Siobhan Somerville notes, little clarity about exactly what Ellis meant by "racial questions," his overall corpus gives ample guidance, especially his 1912 book *The Task of Social Hygiene*, which he noted took him almost twenty-five years to write and reflects his thought as a whole.<sup>184</sup> In that text, Ellis made the case for eugenics by as liberal—that is, not overtly coercive—means as possible. Ellis defined "Eugenics" as "the scientific study of all the agencies by which the human race may be improved, and the effort to give practical effect to those

---

<sup>182</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 246-247.

<sup>183</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* vol 1 (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1910), vi.

<sup>184</sup> Siobhan Somerville, "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (October 1994), 246.

agencies by conscious and deliberate action in favour of better breeding.”<sup>185</sup> It is these eugenic concerns that Ellis encompassed under the term “racial questions” in 1897. From the contemporary perspective, we can say that he lumped ableism and white supremacy together in this framework, as eugenics did generally. The racial questions they imagined entangled with the question of sex centered on who reproduced and therefore what sort of people would exist in the future. Ellis and other eugenicists wanted to encourage those they considered superior to breed and discourage those they imagined inferior. These assessments stood out as unanimously and unapologetically ableist in the period, associated superiority with ability, and marked anyone with a recognized disability, such as “the feeble-minded,” as undesirable in the extreme, “an absolute dead-weight on the race” and “an evil that is unmitigated.”<sup>186</sup> While not always as explicitly, Ellis and his fellows likewise employed a Eurocentric framework for determining genetic fitness that privileged whiteness and specifically the Northern European. For example, Ellis focused a portion of *The Task of Social Hygiene* on the declining Anglo-Saxon birth rate across the world, noting how Southern and Eastern European immigration was transforming “[t]he racial, and, it is probable, the psychological characteristics” of the population of the United States, and that “the influence of the original North-European racial elements” could only continue as “a small aristocracy, maintained by intellect and character.”<sup>187</sup>

In sum, Havelock Ellis embodied the liberal, progressive wing in the eugenics movements, which held an essentially similar value structure to its most horrific incarnations but rejected state violence as a way to achieve its objectives. Emma Goldman was especially influenced by and close to the eugenics movement. As Clare Hemmings assesses, “Goldman

---

<sup>185</sup> Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912), vii.

<sup>186</sup> Ellis, *Social Hygiene*, 43.

<sup>187</sup> Ellis, *Social Hygiene*, 29, 31.

endorsed an early eugenics movement's focus on the quality of offspring, in what makes for quite uncomfortable reading from a contemporary feminist point of view."<sup>188</sup> Goldman greatly admired Ellis and corresponded with him at length over the years.<sup>189</sup> Goldman cited Ellis's works frequently; he had a profound effect on her thought, as she repeatedly declared. In her autobiography *Living My Life*, Goldman described her brief meeting with Ellis in London in 1925 as "the fulfilment of a wish cherished for a quarter of a century" as well as praised Ellis's "lofty vision" and "liberating work."<sup>190</sup> This influence, from Ellis specifically and from eugenics more broadly, appears directly in Goldman's analysis of birth control and its importance, among other places. In her advocacy for birth control, Goldman often articulated eugenic concerns and employed eugenics discourse.

This worldview appears in starkest relief in Goldman's famous 1911 essay "Marriage and Love," where she wrote the following in the context of advocating for "free motherhood": "Woman no longer wants to be a party to the production of a race of sickly, feeble, decrepit, wretched human beings, who have neither the strength nor moral courage to throw off the yoke of poverty and slavery."<sup>191</sup> The portrayal of disability as an utterly abject condition stands out from the text. While she avoided the hard genetic determinism of Ellis and other eugenicists who argued that "feeble-mindedness" was overwhelming hereditary, Goldman channeled prevalent period narrative that dysgenic conditions created physically and mentally degenerate people who constituted a key social problem.<sup>192</sup> Hemmings analyzes Goldman's language in this regard as

---

<sup>188</sup> Clare Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 53.

<sup>189</sup> Terrence Kissack, *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States, 1895-1917* (Oakland: AK Press, 2008), 133-135.

<sup>190</sup> Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc., 1931), 834.

<sup>191</sup> Goldman, "Marriage and Love," in Susan Ostrov Weisser, ed., *Women and Romance: A Reader* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 56.

<sup>192</sup> Ellis, *Social Hygiene*, 43.

“so familiar from a more general eugenics discourse, in which a nation’s human ‘stock’ is depleted by careless reproduction that values quantity above all else and that risks moral and physical degeneracy over refinement and improvement.”<sup>193</sup> The fundamental tale of women’s runaway reproduction threatening society via a flood of inferior offspring of course is a perennial feature of at least U.S. politics, as debates about welfare attest to. Goldman’s version presents the disabled, degenerate masses as dangerous because they perpetuated rather than imperiled the status quo of domination and exploitation. How can we interpret this? Did Goldman deftly wield degeneracy discourse to drum up support for her anarchist agenda, shifting the negative valuation of disability by articulating it as necessary to continue capitalism? Or does her rhetoric use of disability point to universal appeal of intense ableism in the era?

Emma Goldman’s longstanding connection with Havelock Ellis as well as with Margaret Sanger placed her in curiously close proximity to the strident white supremacist, eugenicist, and Ku Klux Klan member Lothrop Stoddard, who eventually visited Germany under the Nazi regime and provided sympathetic press coverage of the Third Reich to U.S. audiences. Stoddard’s 1920 book *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* remains an inspiration to self-described white nationalists here in the early twenty-first century. Ellis reviewed this work in *Birth Control Review* in the year it was published. Although critical at points, Ellis’s review overall shows considerable respect to Stoddard and his views. Ellis questioned Stoddard’s insistence on championing “the white Nordic man” and maintaining “white supremacy” as long as possible, but proceeded to grant that “by the prejudice of color, we must mostly be on his side in this matter.”<sup>194</sup> Ellis concluded the review by railing against the “dysgenic” conditions of “urban and industrial life” and the “diminishing value of our racial

---

<sup>193</sup> Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman*, 91.

<sup>194</sup> Havelock Ellis, “The World’s Racial Problem,” *Birth Control Review* 10, Vol IV (October 1920), 16.

stocks.”<sup>195</sup> Stoddard was one of the founders of the American Birth Control League shortly after this in 1921, and served on the board of directors in that organization for some time.<sup>196</sup>

As a Jew born under the Russian Empire and as an anarchist, Goldman seems like the last person one would expect to have operated in the same circles as the pro-Nazi Stoddard. This incongruence highlights the divergent array of ideologies that clustered around birth control in the early twentieth century. Eugenics permeated the intellectual environment. The desire to eliminate the disabled and disability to the maximum degree possible transcended the gulf between anarchism and fascism. Though Pyotr Kropotkin disdained sexologists like Ellis out of sexual puritanism and counseled Goldman and other anarchists to avoid them, he nonetheless employed degeneracy discourse and accepted eugenics with the common liberal and anarchist caveats of refraining from state coercion. Anarchists and other eugenicists debated the details who counted as one of the unfit while concurring on, as Kropotkin put it, “the prevention of the deterioration and the improvement of the human race by maintaining in purity the common stock of inheritance of mankind.”<sup>197</sup>

Voltaireine de Cleyre operated within many of the same networks, most notably around Moses Harman’s freethought, sex-radical, and eugenics periodical *Lucifer, The Light Bearer*.<sup>198</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> Ellis, “Racial Problem,” 16.

<sup>196</sup> Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 61-63. The American Birth Control League rebranded as Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1942. The politics of abortion in the United States in recent decades have made Planned Parenthood’s ties to eugenics and white supremacy a subject of considerable and ongoing controversy, with anti-abortion activists invoking Lothrop Stoddard to condemn Planned Parenthood entirely and the organization taking pains to Stoddard’s role and views. Planned Parenthood’s 2016 piece “Opposition Claims about Margaret Sanger” asserts that “Ellis’s review was critical of the Stoddard book and of distinctions based on race or ethnicity alone.” See Planned Parenthood, “Opposition Claims about Margaret Sanger,” 7 ([https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer\\_public/37/fd/37fdc7b6-de5f-4d22-8c05-9568268e92d8/sanger\\_opposition\\_claims\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2016.pdf](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/37/fd/37fdc7b6-de5f-4d22-8c05-9568268e92d8/sanger_opposition_claims_fact_sheet_2016.pdf), accessed December 20, 2019).

<sup>197</sup> Peter Kropotkin, “The Sterilization of the Unfit,” *Mother Earth* Vol. VII, No. 10 (December 1912), 354, 357; Anne Finger, “The Left Hand of Stalin: Eugenics in the Soviet Union,” in Ravi Malhotra, ed., *Disability Politics in a Global Economy: Essays in Honour of Marta Russell* (Routledge, 2018), 203.

<sup>198</sup> DeLamotte, *Gates of Freedom*, 90-96; William Lemore West, “The Moses Harman Story,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1971), 41-63.

Founded in 1883 in Valley Falls, Kansas, this publication rebranded as *The American Journal of Eugenics* in 1907. Under obscenity laws, Harman faced legal prosecution for *Lucifer's* content, particularly the description of sexual abuse such as marital rape; de Cleyre's 1890 lecture "Sex Slavery" expresses support for Harman and outrage at the charges. In 1895, Harman was sentenced to serve time in Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1895, the prison where Ricardo Flores Magón died over two decades later. Harman described his life's work in decidedly eugenic terms in a 1905 retrospective, writing of his core belief "that woman, through prenatal impression, could make her child strong or weak, could make it symmetrical or deformed, could make it a philosopher or an idiot, could make it a 'degenerate' of the lowest type or build it so well that it would need no regeneration."<sup>199</sup> He went so far as to say these eugenic concerns, this desire to have philosophers rather than idiots and strong offspring rather than weak ones, necessitate support for women's freedom "even more emphatically than as a matter of justice or humanity to woman herself."<sup>200</sup> Harman was at once an anarchist, a feminist, an enemy of the state, and a strident eugenicist. Like Emma Goldman and Pyotr Kropotkin, Harman advocated against state coercion to improve *Homo sapiens*.

Despite her criticisms of *Lucifer's* focus on that eugenic cluster of sex, reproduction, and heredity in an 1898 letter and elsewhere, Voltairine de Cleyre's own writings contain elements of degeneracy discourse, which classifies certain people as undesirable to society and perhaps not really people at all in any relevant sense.<sup>201</sup> De Cleyre's 1902 piece "The Hopelessly Fallen" articulates a deeply dehumanizing position on sex workers. This letter, published in *Lucifer*, came as a response to one from Kate Austin that advocated engaging with full-service sex

---

<sup>199</sup> M. H. [Moses Harman], "The Supposed Prenatal Influence," *Lucifer, the Light Bearer* 1038, April 27, 1905, 290.

<sup>200</sup> Harman, "Prenatal Influence," 290.

<sup>201</sup> De Cleyre, "Priestly Control over Woman," 109-110.

workers (“prostitutes”) as respected equals rather regarding them as fallen creatures in need of salvation.<sup>202</sup> The approach Austin advocated broadly resembles the attitude toward sex work and sex workers common on the radical left here in the twenty-first century, influenced by decades of sex-work organizing and sex-positive feminism. De Cleyre would have none of it at the start of the twentieth century. Claiming to write from extensive experience and reflection, she argued that sex workers were in fact fallen by any reasonable standard, stating that if Austin had “seen prostitutes at their trade,” she “would be compelled to admit either that their native morality was of such a low type that they never could fall, or that they had certainly fallen.”<sup>203</sup>

De Cleyre illustrated her point by recounting an incident she had personally witnessed, which warrants reproducing in its entirety because of the tensions and contradictions that de Cleyre’s thought reveals:

A week ago, at the corner of two busy streets not far from where I write, a woman in a most shocking state of intoxication, her face bleeding from a fisticuff fight with other inmates of the house, with no clothing but a long dragged torn chemise, rushed into the street, and commenced shouting abuse at everything and everybody; a policeman arrested her; he was as decent about it as the case allowed, did no clubbing, used no bad language; the crowd that always collects at such a scene gathered rapidly; at the patrol box, the woman jeered and mocked the policeman, and finally taking in her fingers the mass of corrupt matter, blood, etc., streaming from her nostrils smeared it on the policeman’s back. “——— you,” he growled “stop that!” She laughed with the satisfaction of one who has done something “smart,” and winked at the crowd. When the patrol wagon came she got in lightly and gaily as her drunken reel permitted, and calling to the crowd: “Ta—ta: see you again,” was driven away.<sup>204</sup>

This scene of urban intoxication and policing from more than a century ago remains thoroughly familiar regardless of its temporal distance. De Cleyre believed it an example of the “infinite degradation” of “the very ordinary type of the prostitute”; by contrast, I could easily imagine a later-period queer anarchist, going back at least as far as Valerie Solanas in the 1960s,

---

<sup>202</sup> Kate Austin, “Who Are the Fallen?” *Lucifer* 3d ser., 6.17, May 8, 1902, 130.

<sup>203</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, “The Hopelessly Fallen,” *Lucifer* 3d ser., 6.21 June 5, 1902, 161.

<sup>204</sup> De Cleyre, “Hopelessly Fallen,” 161.

celebrating the same as an instance of everyday revolt against the capitalist patriarchy, against state domination and bourgeois decency.<sup>205</sup> De Cleyre emphasized how “the prostitute,” doomed to soon end up as one of the many “hideous, diseased, beggars,” is “light-hearted” about her “fallen” status: “*she does not care.*”<sup>206</sup> This playfulness, refusal of shame, and lack of concern about the future likewise aligns with queer and feminist anarchisms over the last few decades as well as with more widespread queer and trans aesthetics from the same period, as scholars such as Lee Edelman and Jack Halberstam explore. De Cleyre’s abject depiction of the sex worker in the above excerpt and in “The Hopelessly Fallen” overall tells us a great deal about what sort of society she wanted to create, whose lives she wanted to foster, and where she drew boundary lines for the category of the human and the empathy it entails. She presented sex workers as beings wholly unsusceptible to reason, people who “understand nothing but how to get a drink and how to ‘make something,’”<sup>207</sup> Attributing their existence to social and economic factors as well as to “bad heredity,” de Cleyre concluded that radicals should leave “confirmed prostitutes” alone “to die upon the wheel whose revolutions hurt you far more to look upon than them who are bound upon it.”<sup>208</sup>

This notion of sex workers as fated to perish is also found in William C. Owen’s book *The Economics of Herbert Spencer*. Eugenia DeLamotte situates de Cleyre’s mention of “bad heredity” in the context of the periodical *Lucifer* and its anarchist eugenics, writing that “the implication is probably that prostitutes themselves were the children of oppressive sexual relationships.”<sup>209</sup> De Cleyre and Emma Goldman both stressed social factors to explain the

---

<sup>205</sup> De Cleyre, “Hopelessly Fallen,” 161. For queer nihilism, see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and *Bædan 1: Journal of Queer Nihilism* (<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/baedan-baedan>, accessed January 17, 2020).

<sup>206</sup> De Cleyre, “Hopelessly Fallen,” 161. Italics original.

<sup>207</sup> De Cleyre, “Hopelessly Fallen,” 161.

<sup>208</sup> De Cleyre, “Hopelessly Fallen,” 161.

<sup>209</sup> DeLamotte, *Gates of Freedom*, 216.



existence of the people they considered unwanted and beyond salvation, whether de Cleyre's degraded prostitutes or Goldman's sickly and wretched offspring of the working class. They differed from Havelock Ellis and other prominent eugenicists in this emphasis, but de Cleyre and Goldman nonetheless exhibited key elements of the overall eugenics worldview, specifically degeneracy discourse.

Despite Owen's stance prior to joining the PLM, the Party's texts typically exhibit more compassion than he or de Cleyre did during the nineteenth century. PLM texts assign an economic explanation to sex work, characterizing it as the feminine equivalent of larceny, the violation of social norms women made in desperate circumstances. Ricardo Flores Magón expressed this succinctly when he wrote, "Ask the prostitute why she sells her body and she will answer you: because I am hungry."<sup>210</sup> The robber—the masculine response to starvation in this construction—provided the same explanation. Flores Magón identified sexual exploitation as a key element of oppression that motivated his revolutionary action against the existing social order. In 1909 letter that described his temptation by a Díaz official to betray the revolution in exchange for personal gain, he wrote that 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>211</sup> Near the end of his life, Flores Magón wrote to another friend from another prison cell. For the purpose of constructing himself a victim of political repression he made a list of the

---

<sup>210</sup> "Preguntad á la prostituta por qué vende su cuerpo y os contestará: porque tengo hambre." *Regeneración*, April 22, 1911.

<sup>211</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, 2000), 511-512.

crimes he was innocent of that included “I have not exploited women’s prostitution.” Though not above employing—metaphorically and otherwise—the trope of the repulsive whore, Flores Magón in particular and the PLM in general put forth a view of sex work dramatically different from the mainstream Díaz-era position of blaming vice and closer to the postrevolutionary reformers of the 1920s Katherine Elaine Bliss describes in *Compromised Positions*. The cult of masculinity Bliss shows as endemic among revolutionary soldiers that lauded or at least tolerated acquiring sex through economic power makes no appearance in PLM literature.<sup>212</sup>

Emma Goldman’s stance on sex work was more sympathetic still. Goldman once attempted walking the streets as a full-service sex worker in order to raise money for her comrade and lover Alexander Berkman’s planned assassination of the union-busting industrialist Henry Clay Frick. A mysterious older man insisted she lacked the knack for the job and gave her ten dollars. Goldman expressed revulsion toward sex work, preached its elimination, and, like Voltairine de Cleyre, described full-service sex workers (“prostitutes”) as “degraded.”<sup>213</sup> However, unlike de Cleyre, Goldman had social connections with sex workers and at times in her life relied on their generosity. “I had had considerable opportunity to come into contact with prostitution,” Goldman wrote in her autobiography.<sup>214</sup> It was in part this personal experience that inspired Goldman to write the 1910 piece on the subject “The White Slave Traffic,” expanded and republished the same year as “The Traffic in Women” in *Anarchism and Other Essays*.<sup>215</sup> Goldman stressed the continuity between the exploitation in sex work and in other types of labor as well as between sex work as women’s status as sex objects across society. She unambiguously

---

<sup>212</sup> Katherine Elaine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 23-46.

<sup>213</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, 83-86, 321

<sup>214</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, 321.

<sup>215</sup> Goldman, “The White Slave Traffic,” *Mother Earth* 4:11 (January 1910), 344-351.

condemned state persecution of sex workers, underscoring their corruption and oppression. The “helpless victim,” Goldman wrote, “is not only preyed upon by those who use her, but she is also absolutely at the mercy of every policeman and miserable detective on the beat, the officials at the station house, and the authorities in every prison.”<sup>216</sup>

## **Historical Memory**

Numerous different forces have attempted to claim these five figures during their afterlives, especially Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman, and Ricardo Flores Magón. This enduring interest and attention attest to the influence and appeal of their thought and their lives. This section traces key ways the five figures’ feminist positions appear, and disappear, in the formal historiography and in other sources that cover them.

I begin with the most fascinating, vexing, and intimate example of historical memory: John Francisco Moncaleano Lawson’s sweeping multivolume work *In the Wave of Time*. As mentioned previously, *In the Wave of Time* confounds conventions by purporting to history mixed with a dash of fiction. The first volume contains the following description: “Material for the books is biographically and historically correct; Except: When recorded history is not to be found.” Combined with how Lawson changed the names of all or at least most of the people who appear in text, this makes *In the Wave of Time* difficult to use as a historical source and immediately invites suspicion. However, regardless of its biographical or historical accuracy, the work at a minimum provides a window to how Lawson choose to represent his stepmother and her legacy. Notably, from the volumes I have been able to find, John Lawson refrained from any mention of Blanca de Moncaleano’s feminism or feminism in general. To the contrary, Lawson

---

<sup>216</sup> Goldman, “The Traffic in Women,” *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York, New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910), 194.

attributed stridently patriarchal attitudes to Seres, his character in the work and its protagonist. The absence of explicit engagement with feminism comes in stark contrast to *In the Wave of Time*'s intentional, extensive, and complex treatment of socialism and revolution in relation to Juan Francisco Moncaleano.<sup>217</sup>

On the whole, *In the Wave of Time* advocates for some form of global socialism. In the introduction to the first book, Lawson laid out his vision as follows: "All mankind working and sharing abundance and leisure as one is the correct answer."<sup>218</sup> *In the Wave of Time* portrays Moncaleano, John Lawson's father, as an idealist who went too far via anarchism but gave his life for a noble cause.<sup>219</sup> Across the work, Lawson emphasized Moncaleano's untimely demise from a botched appendectomy, how he lost everything in abandoning his fortune and status to pursue his revolutionary values. The model makes Lawson (Seres) cautious and cynical: "Seres is moved by immediate necessities not by sacrifices for a people who would be the first to crucify him. What did the colonel [Moncaleano] get for his years of planning and his solitary torturing cell beneath the panoptico? More hardships. A lonely, forgotten grave."<sup>220</sup> While Seres recognizes the merit of fighting against capitalism, he focuses on his literary career instead of socialist organizing, though he engages at length with political radicals at various points throughout *In the Wave of Time*. Grappling with enduring effects of Moncaleano's anarchism, what it means for Lawson, is a major theme in the text, as are broad questions of economic justice.

---

<sup>217</sup> John F. M. Lawson Sr., *In the Wave of Time: Book I, "Seres"; The One Thousand Days* (Venice, CA: The Academy Publishers, 1975), U. I have not yet been able to locate copies of all of the volumes of *In the Wave of Time*, assuming they were ever completed, so it is possible Lawson engaged with feminism explicitly in one of those missing books, such as the second book.

<sup>218</sup> Lawson, "Seres," X.

<sup>219</sup> Lawson, "Seres," 173-174.

<sup>220</sup> Lawson, *In the Wave of Time: Book IV, "Beatrice"* (unpublished and undated), 19.

Blanca de Moncaleano appears under the name Barbara in John Lawson's opus. In the first book of *In the Wave of Time*, she features as a daring participant in the liberal struggle who comforts Juan Francisco Moncaleano after he is devastated by learning about his wife's infidelity with a priest. In this fashion Blanca de Moncaleano has a strained and ambivalent relationship with Lawson, as she spirits him away from his birth mother and takes her role. By the fifth volume, this ambivalence is gone. There Moncaleano, although briefly acknowledged as Lawson's stepmother, fulfills iconic maternal and feminine ideals: "Up to now Seres has never consciously felt the particular need of his mother. She has always been there. Ready with sympathy. Advise. Service. Absolute loyalty. Now with her gone he must rely on Mattie. But will she ever be as self-sacrificing as his mother? This Seres does not expect."<sup>221</sup> Mattie is Lawson's (Seres's) romantic partner in book five and where that book gets its name. In this passage we see the trope of the self-abnegating woman who places the needs and desires of the men and boys in her life above her own. Lawson valorized this rigid gender norm. The text reiterates this description of Blanca de Moncaleano: "Yes, once he had a mother, then there was an angel named Barbara he called 'mother'. Now it is Mattie who serves him, tries to guide him. And how long is he and Mattie to last?"<sup>222</sup>

Through his analogue in the text, Lawson expressed the most stereotypical sort of patriarchal views:

Seres has definite ideas about women working. Women who work he believes become independent—they lose their helpless feminine charm and being feminine is what a man most appreciates. To him working women belittle a man because they no longer depend [sic] on their partner for their shelter and security but must fight a grasping world that men are supposed [sic] to protect them from. Seres knows that when wisdom enters innocence vanishes. The freedom women seek becomes a trap of slavery to a job away

---

<sup>221</sup> Lawson, *In the Wave of Time*, vol. 5, "Mattie" (Venice, CA: The Academy Publishers, undated), 5-6.

<sup>222</sup> Lawson, "Mattie," 98.

from their natural element, home and keeping the house cheerful and restful and raising children and cooking decent meals is their natural domain.<sup>223</sup>

Lawson, at least as a young man in the 1920s, held precisely the oppressive opinions of women that Blanca de Moncaleano endeavored to disabuse anarchists of over a decade earlier; she specifically wrote against relegating women to the domestic sphere. While Lawson describes her as an inspiring freedom fighter in the first book, by the fifth Moncaleano ends up merely the good mother to a man who positively cannot take care of himself and requires feminine assistance. *In the Wave of Time* shows this incapacity when economic realities override wounded masculine pride and Mattie does get a job: “Seres knows nothing about housekeeping. The house is a mess of books and manuscripts, dirty dishes, and the bedroom in neglect. He doesn’t sweep or make the bed or any of the things a woman would do. In the evening Mattie helps with the cleaning and they eat their meals out.”<sup>224</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre noted how men curiously brag that they rely on the woman or women in their lives for domestic chores. Beyond this representation within the family, Blanca appears in historical narratives mainly as a feminist, as an anarchist, as an anticapitalist radical, and as a woman who wrote in Spanish in the United States.<sup>225</sup>

Jacqueline Jones’s *Goddess of Anarchy* has reinvigorated decades-old debates about Lucy Parsons’ identity and the meaning of her life, work, and thought. So many elements of Lucy Parsons’s biography continue to inspire controversy. Even how to refer to Parsons—as I choose to refer to her—is contested. As Steve J. Shone writes, the various names various authors use for

---

<sup>223</sup> Lawson, “Mattie,” 70.

<sup>224</sup> Lawson, “Mattie,” 75.

<sup>225</sup> Pérez, *Decolonial Imaginary*; Nicolás Kanellos, “An Early Feminist Call to Action: ‘Manifiesto a la Mujer,’ by Blanca de Moncaleano,” *Latino Studies* 11:4 (2013), 587-597; Ignacio López-Calvo and Victor M. Valle, eds., *Latinx Writing Los Angeles: Nonfiction Dispatches from a Decolonial Rebellion* (University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

Parsons “expose writers’ concern to pay tribute to their own ethnic and ideological priorities.” Chicana/o-identified writers seeking to include her in the Chicana/o or Latina/o tradition often refer to Parsons as Lucía, González/Gonzáles/Gonzales, or González/Gonzáles/Gonzales Parsons. Parsons gave González/Gonzáles/Gonzales, Diaz, Waller, Carter, and Hull as her birth surname at different times. In Chicago, Parsons’s official commemoration is Lucy Ella Gonzales Parsons Park. This variety of names allows authors to signal their aims and affiliations by choice of reference.<sup>226</sup>

Jones focuses considerably on how Parsons hid her “formative years in slavery,” the deception involved in this, and the psychological effects Jones speculates the dynamic had on Parsons.<sup>227</sup> Jones writes that Parsons would “pick and choose among ways of being in the world, always calculating, at times dissembling: just being Lucy Parsons must have been exhausting.”<sup>228</sup> Because Jones argues that Parsons fictionalized her background in variety of sometimes contradictory ways, Jones goes so far as to deny that Parsons knew Spanish: “She no doubt assumed that the absence of a Mexican American community in Chicago would allow her to ‘pass’ as a Latina, albeit one who did not speak Spanish.”<sup>229</sup> Presumably based solely on Jones’s claim, Tera W. Hunter writes in a January 2018 *The Washington Post* piece that Parsons “spoke no Spanish, which made her claims to a Chicana heritage even less persuasive.”<sup>230</sup> By contrast,

---

<sup>226</sup> Steve J. Shone, *American Anarchism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 72; <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/Lucy-Ella-Gonzales-Parsons/> (accessed December 11, 2013). I use “Parsons” according to the academic norm of surname reference because “Lucy Eldine Parsons” and “Lucy E. Parsons” is the main way Parsons gave her name in published writings during her life.

<sup>227</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 160, 247, 348.

<sup>228</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 160, 247, 348.

<sup>229</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 160, 247, 348.

<sup>230</sup> Tera W. Hunter, “Latina Heroine or Black Radical? The Complicated Story of Lucy Parsons,” *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/latina-heroine-or-black-radical-the-complicated-story-of-lucy-parsons/2018/01/10/2126da90-dead-11e7-8679-a9728984779c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/latina-heroine-or-black-radical-the-complicated-story-of-lucy-parsons/2018/01/10/2126da90-dead-11e7-8679-a9728984779c_story.html) (accessed January 29, 2020).

Laura Lomas describes Parsons as “Spanish-speaking,”<sup>231</sup> based on José Martí’s November 1886 account of attending a talk by Parsons in New York City: “She knows of evolution and of revolution, and of middle forces, all of which she speaks about with the capacity of an economist, the same in English as in Spanish.”<sup>232</sup> In January 1916, Enrique Flores Magón noted that *Regeneración* readers could write Lucy Parsons in Spanish, “a language she understands” (“idioma que ella entiende”).<sup>233</sup> By Jones’s interpretation, Parsons went to great lengths to obscure her background in Virginia and to support the tale of Mexican origins, but the notion that she somehow enlisted both Martí and Flores Magón in the conspiracy, across nearly three decades, seems highly implausible. Instead, if indeed Parsons asserted Mexican and Indian identity in order to avoid the stigma of being marked as Black, her Spanish ability facilitated this reinvention.

Laura Lomas, who examines José Martí’s glowing description of Parsons, additionally provides a useful if incomplete sketch of how she gets remembered in academic texts over recent decades: “Martí’s admiration for Lucy Parsons anticipates contemporary attempts by Rodolfo Acuna to reclaim her for a Chicano/a labor movement, by Robin D. G. Kelly and Paul Gilroy for a black radical internationalist tradition, and by Shelley Streeby for a transamerican cultural history in which women played a leadership role.”<sup>234</sup> Lomas omits the tensions between these

---

<sup>231</sup> Laura Lomas, “The City Unmakes Empire,” in *Syncing the Americas: José Martí and the Shaping of National Identity* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2018), edited by Ryan Anthony Spangler and Georg Michael Schwarzmann, 157.

<sup>232</sup> “Sabe de evolución y de revolución, y de fuerzas medias, de todo lo cual habla con capacidad de economista lo mismo en inglés que en castellano.” José Martí, “Correspondencia particular para El Partido Liberal,” *El Partido Liberal*, México, November 7, 1886, reprinted in Roberto Fernández Retamar and Pedro Pablo Rodríguez, eds., *En los Estados Unidos: Periodismo de 1881 a 1892* (La Habana, Cuba, 2003), 738-739. Martí described Parsons’s ancestry as Indian and Mexican (“mestiza de indio y mexicano”), which is at least approximately in line with how Parsons identified herself at the time in other public accounts.

<sup>233</sup> Enrique Flores Magón, “Parsons,” *Regeneración* 220 (January 8, 1916), 3.

<sup>234</sup> Laura Lomas, *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 253.



varying attempts to claim or reclaim Parsons. As Shone writes, “the question of Lucy Parsons’ precise racial identity” has “occupied a significant amount of scholars’ attention.”<sup>235</sup> The passage below from *La Chicana* by Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, published in 1979, provides perhaps starkest and most intense articulation of the stakes involved in describing Parsons’s ethnic and racial identity. Mirandé and Enríquez take exception to biographer Carolyn Ashbaugh’s claims that Parsons was black, was born into slavery, and fabricated her Mexican and Native American identity as a result of internalized white supremacy and fear of miscegenation laws because of her marriage to Albert Parsons.

Mirandé and Enríquez write the following:

While Lucía’s true origins are indeterminable and most probably racially mixed, it appears highly improbable that a person wishing to pass as white in nineteenth-century Texas would assume a Mexican-Indian identity. Why Ashbaugh should hold steadfastly to the view that Lucy González was black despite the implausibility and internal contradictions of argument is intriguing indeed. Is it that the liaison between an ex-Confederate soldier turned abolitionist and a black slave girl makes for a more seductive and enticing tale? Or is this characterization simply consistent with that of other feminist ‘herstorians’ who have generally proven insensitive to Chicanas?<sup>236</sup>

Analysis of this passage reveals a whole host of identity-based tensions as well as how identity definition can function within such tensions. Within a few sentences, Mirandé and Enríquez describe Parsons as “probably racially mixed,” chide Ashbaugh for making an implausible argument that Parsons “was black,” and describe Parsons as a Chicana, implying racially mixed, black, and Chicana as conflicting if not mutually exclusive identity categories. Mirandé and Enríquez marshal the reverberating historical trauma of Chicana/os as colonized and oppressed people against Ashbaugh’s thesis that Parsons assumed “Mexican-Indian identity” out of a desire to “pass as white”—or, to be more fair to Ashbaugh, to avoid the legal and social

---

<sup>235</sup> Shone, *American Anarchism*, 63.

<sup>236</sup> Alfredo Mirandé and Evangelina Enríquez, *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 91.

stigma of Blackness. This discourse of Chicana/o historical injury and marginalization comes alongside and merges with claims that the focus in critical literature and in the media on white-Black racial dynamics and Black civil rights and revolutionary struggles elides Chicana/o history, oppression, and resistance. Mirandé and Enríquez suggest Ashbaugh may be succumbing to the romantic media appeal of the Confederate-soldier-former-slave relationship as well as reiterating the racial exclusion of implicitly white—or perhaps white and Black—feminism. By stressing Parsons as an exceptional Chicana, writing that the “importance of Lucía González Parsons to contemporary Chicanas cannot be overstated” and that Parsons “was the first in a long list of Chicanas such as María Hernández, Luisa Moreno, Emma Tenayuca” who “have struggled to end the exploitation of labor in the United States and to obtain civil rights for Chicanos,” Mirandé and Enríquez construct Ashbaugh and company as denying Chicana/os their history.<sup>237</sup>

Ashbaugh’s 1976 *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary*, most recently reprinted in 2013, indeed presents Parsons as fundamentally a Black woman and argues that “Lucy identified herself as Native American and Chicana in an effort to cover up her black heritage.”<sup>238</sup> Angela Y. Davis and Robin D. G. Kelly similarly cast Parsons as Black and do not even mention the possibility of considering her a Chicana.<sup>239</sup> They each give an account of Parsons as a prominent Black woman and an inspiring class-struggle revolutionary who unfortunately subsumed antiracism and antisexism into the fight against capitalism; Davis reiterates the idea that Parsons concealed her Blackness because of miscegenation laws. Many other authors cite and echo Ashbaugh’s thesis, including the historian Paul Avrich. In these narratives, Parsons figures as radical Black woman sadly turned somewhat self-hating and self-denying by white supremacy,

---

<sup>237</sup> Mirandé and Enríquez, *La Chicana*, 95.

<sup>238</sup> Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1976), 268.

<sup>239</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books 1983, c1981), 152; Robin D. G. Kelly, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 41-42.

thus operating as a sign of Black historical trauma, centering Black identity and experience. By contrast, Marta Cotera's work from the late 1970s and early 1980s identifies Parsons as a Chicana without even mentioning the possibility that she had African ancestry. As with Mirandé and Enríquez, Cotera uses Parsons in order to establish a Chicana feminist tradition—specifically one in contrast with Anglo feminist tradition. Cotera writes that Parsons was “[o]ne of the first Chicanas to come into contact with the suffragist movements in the 1880s” and “was involved in organizing women garment workers.”<sup>240</sup> These stark claims of belonging position Black and Chicana/o scholars and activists as competing over the past in order to build a genealogy of resistance to white domination.

In the 2011 *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South*, Jonathan Daniel Wells describes Parsons as an outstanding Black woman committed to “racial, gender, economic justice” without any uncertainty or criticism.<sup>241</sup> He goes so far as to write that Parsons “became one of the best known black radicals of her era,” neglecting to mention that she never identified as Black and in fact explicitly denied having African ancestry.<sup>242</sup> This differs from many twenty-first-century accounts, which typically either list Parsons as racially mixed or note the controversy. Indeed, in the politics of ethnic and racial recognition, claiming Parsons for as many groups as possible is its advantage; for example, the official website for Lucy Ella Gonzales Parsons Park describes Parsons as of “mixed Native American, African American, and possibly Hispanic heritage,” while Lomas similarly describes Parsons as “African-, Mexican-, and Amerindian-descended.”<sup>243</sup> Many of these recent accounts also fit Parsons in progressive

---

<sup>240</sup> Marta Cotera, “Feminism: The Chicano and Anglo Versions – A Historical Analysis,” in Alma M. García, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2014 [1997]), 224-225.

<sup>241</sup> Jonathan Daniel Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 186.

<sup>242</sup> Wells, *Women Writers*, 186.

<sup>243</sup> <http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/Lucy-Ella-Gonzales-Parsons/> (accessed December 11, 2013); Lomas, *Translating Empire*, 251.

narratives that combine liberal and radical sensibilities. In the encyclopedia *American Dissidents*, Margaret Gay writes the following: “Not only was Parsons one of the first minority activists to associate openly with leftist, radical social movements, but she was also a leader in those same organizations, ones that were almost exclusively composed of white males.”<sup>244</sup> Though it contains considerable truth, this articulation codes Parsons as a “minority activist”—a term she never used for herself—as well as assumes the whiteness of European immigrants in the nineteenth-century United States as unambiguous and invisibilizes earlier and contemporary radical social movements by so-called minorities. “Minority” apparently functions as a synonym for “people of color” in the above quotation, as German immigrants certainly counted as minorities in the demographic sense in the period. This move situates both Parsons and radical social movements with the dominant narrative of progressive inclusion: institutions in the United States started out as overwhelmingly white but courageous minorities gradually fought for and won inclusion. This speaks to one of the main ways Parsons appears in academic knowledge production, especially in the more shallow and casual depictions: as an exceptional Black and/or mixed-race and/or Chicana and/or minority woman who became prominent in a labor movement composed primarily of white men. This portrayal can recuperate Parsons for the U.S. progressive tradition, as an inspiring precursor of liberal inclusion with an edgy and subversive socialist bent.

Perhaps even more than Lucy Parsons albeit with less uncertainty and controversy, Emma Goldman mesmerizes scholars, feminists, radicals, progressives, and so on here in the twenty-first century. On social media platforms such as Twitter, progressives and radicals claim and contest Goldman in relation to the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign, with some invoking Goldman in support of Bernie Sanders, much to most anarchists’ dismay. For example, a tweet

---

<sup>244</sup> Margaret Gay, “Parsons, Lucy (1853-1942),” in *American Dissidents: An Encyclopedia of Activists, Subversives, and Prisoners of Conscience*, vol. 1, ed. Kathlyn Gay (ABC-CLIO, 2012), 477.

from *Current Affairs* that paraphrased Goldman on dancing and revolution along with a video of Sanders dancing garnered two thousand likes.<sup>245</sup> As Clare Hemmings writes, Goldman “continues to generate a hyperbolic critical response.” Hemmings identifies three main responses to engagement with Goldman, which involve considerable emotional investment: “it is by turns concerned to rescue Goldman from obscurity, delighted to have found the perfect heroine, and disparaging of her own myopia and inconsistency.”<sup>246</sup> Akin to Lucy Parsons, Goldman’s remarkable life and corpus gives a number of us what we want, satisfying the desire for inspiring historical figures that can form political genealogy and provide some measure of temporal bearing. The overlapping categories Goldman appeals to seek to possess a history, and one they can be proud of and learn from.

## Conclusion

Careful examination of anarchist articulations of women’s liberation at the turn of the twentieth century reveals much about the intellectual influences at play in the period and how anarchists imagined their cause overall. As others before and after driven by the desire for a dramatically better world, they negotiated fraught ambivalences such as around individual freedom and the collective good, around class struggle and feminist revolution, and around lived experience and scientific authority. The imperative to ground values in respected understandings of shared reality largely explains the prevalence of broadly eugenic concerns in PLM-associated thought, centering on reproduction and its role in determining the future. Some version of natural

---

<sup>245</sup> Current Affairs (@curaffairs), “it matters that pete buttigieg won't do the high hopes dance. as emma goldman said, if there's no dancing it's a shitty revolution. a willingness to dance is a willingness to let yourself be human, vulnerable, free. bernie leads by example,” Twitter, November 23, 2019, 7:00 p.m., <https://twitter.com/curaffairs/status/1198421196984987649> (accessed October 1, 2020).

<sup>246</sup> Hemmings, *Considering Emma Goldman*, 1.

selection, of survival of the fittest, of evolutionary dynamics, was the order of the day: the law of nature and science, which anarchists invoked against the church and state. This lay behind the seemingly curious alliances between anarchists and academic eugenicists like Havelock Ellis that put Emma Goldman in startling proximity to vehement white supremacists such as a Lothrop Stoddard. Voltairine de Cleyre avowed personal commitment to freedom regardless of the “racial” consequences yet still nodded to the supreme importance of survival and continuity. Thus, anarchists tended to argue for women’s liberty as beneficial and necessary to their cause and to human progress. Moses Harman wrote explicitly that he cared more about women’s freedom as eugenic matter—for producing better offspring—than as a matter of justice to women. As threatening as they were to the patriarchal status quo of the time, anarchists envisioned themselves as carrying forward the best of civilization, guided by reason and science.

Lucy Parsons, Voltairine de Cleyre, Emma Goldman, Blanca de Moncaleano, and Ricardo Flores Magón continue to fascinate progressives and radicals inside and outside academia in part because of the tensions, contradictions, and ambiguity they contain as symbols and as historical figures. People want a past they can turn to as compass, to locate them in the waves of time and perhaps direct how to proceed. They desire the familial embrace of a genealogy, to be able to look back and revere the great deeds of their political ancestors. The mere fact that Parsons, de Cleyre, Goldman, de Moncaleano, and Flores Magón existed makes anarchism feel more real and makes some sort of feminist and anticapitalist revolution feel more possible. The controversies over these figures, both in terms of basic biographical information and of expansive meaning, may well endure indefinitely.

### **3. “To Fight against Their Liberators”: Anarchism, Transnationalism, and White Supremacy in Revolutionary Baja California**

Over a century later, the 1911 insurrection in Baja California initiated by the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) remains a site of historiographical contention despite general agreement on the basic facts. Interpretations range from exalting the Baja California campaign as the PLM’s greatest triumph and an example of anarchist internationalism, to portraying it as a chaotic movement, rife with racism and personal strife, that terrorized the peninsula’s population. Through close reading, this chapter explores the controversy in relation to anarchist theory and practice, to critical regionalism and transnationalism, and to the broad question of how coalitional movements against oppression operate, a question that continues to animate so much humanities scholarship. I find the simultaneous tension between, and interdependence of, the local and the global crucial in conceptualizing the dynamics at play in the literature under review. I argue that the regional history of the events of 1911 demands a reconsideration of anarchist transnationalism and class-centric analysis in a world also stratified by hierarchies of nation, race, and ethnicity. Like Nicole Guidotti-Hernández’s *Unspeakable Violence* and Emma Pérez’s *The Decolonial Imaginary*, this chapter examines the elisions and erasures involved in a heroic resistance narrative, taking seriously the potential harm caused by PLM-aligned forces while at the same time honoring the ideals that motivated the Party. I emphasize how the historiographical debate centers on stereotypically masculine matters of martial valor and public recognition, a gendered dynamic that was likewise key to how period participants in the insurrection thought of themselves and moved in the world. The corpus on the 1911 rebellion

demonstrates the personal and community stakes involved in knowledge production, and how history echoes.<sup>247</sup>

To set the scene, I offer a brief and necessarily reductive sketch of the events of 1911. As Claudio Lomnitz writes, the Baja California campaign “was so complex and, above all, so chaotic that even after the publication of a number of in-depth studies, it is still not easy to summarize, let alone to comprehend.”<sup>248</sup> I begin with the PLM. Founded in 1905 by a group of Mexicans in exile in the United States—that most notably included Ricardo Flores Magón—the PLM emerged from the Partido Liberal and the struggle against the dictatorial government of Porfirio Díaz. The periodical *Regeneración*, with many thousands of subscribers at its height, constituted the core of the Party’s efforts for social transformation in Mexico and across the world. The famous 1906 PLM platform articulated a vision of republican government and social responsibility within the Mexican liberal tradition exemplified by Benito Juárez. However, Flores Magón and others in the Party likely already held anarchist convictions. After a few years of mobilization and supporting various uprisings across Mexico, the PLM organizing junta prepared an armed expedition to Baja California in the hopes of making the sparsely populated and poorly defended state a base for revolutionary action throughout the country. At this time, Mexico was witnessing the inception of Francisco I. Madero’s military movement against Díaz in the north, and waxing local rebellions across the country. Flores Magón had denounced Madero, hacendado that he was, as a bourgeois oppressor, and the more properly liberal members of the PLM, such as Antonio Villarreal, had left the Party to support Madero. However,

---

<sup>247</sup> Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>248</sup> Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 319.



the PLM did not unambiguously declare for anarchism until September 1911, months after the military defeat in Baja California.<sup>249</sup>

PLM-affiliated forces crossed the border and took the town of Mexicali in late January of 1911. Though Mexican and Indigenous participants initially made up the bulk of the insurgents, Anglo-Americans and European nationals soon joined in abundance, to the point of eventually outnumbering their Mexican and Indigenous counterparts on the Western (Tijuana) front. Members of these armed bands clashed over personal, political, and ethnic differences but continued to battle against Mexican government forces and captured cities in Baja California, including Los Algodones, El Álamo, Tecate, and Tijuana. Madero's ascendance in May, following his victory at Ciudad Juárez and Díaz's exodus, heightened divisions among insurgents in Baja California. Concurrently, the spectacular if short-lived antics of Richard "Dick" Ferris, rebel commander and Welsh soldier of fortune Carl Ap Rhys Pryce, and others at the Tijuana camp gave further credence to simmering notions that insurgents were part of the established filibustering tradition and so sought to annex Baja California to the United States. Baja Californians, including refugees from insurgent-occupied towns, organized to resist what they saw as a filibustering invasion. After negotiations between Madero and the PLM junta broke down, Madero sent the federal army against the rebels who refused to agree to his peace terms. The army overwhelmed the beleaguered and divided insurgents, thus terminating large-scale PLM military activities in the region.<sup>250</sup>

In the aftermath, the PLM lost much of the influence it once held across Mexico, significantly because of the perception of the filibustering and collusion with U.S. business

---

<sup>249</sup> Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 342; Mitchell Cowen Verter, "Biographical Sketch," in Chaz Bufe and Michael Cowen Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2011), 33-43.

<sup>250</sup> Lomnitz, *Return of Comrade Ricardo*, 319-348, 564.

interests to seize Baja California. Despite this loss and repeated legal troubles, the Party remained a vibrant part of the global anarchist movement and the local Los Angeles radical community until government repression climaxed in 1918 with a twenty-year prison sentence for Ricardo Flores Magón. He died of a heart attack while incarcerated at Fort Leavenworth four years later, his frequent health complaints dismissed by the prison doctor. His 1923 funeral procession to Mexico attracted massive public attention and even unwanted Mexican government support. Using the narrative of Flores Magón and the PLM as precursor to the Mexican Revolution proper, the Mexican state manages to claim as its own—always incompletely—this anarchist who hated all governments. Against and sometimes as part of the state-sponsored nationalist story, Flores Magón lives posthumously as inspiration and symbol for the overlapping Chicana/o, Mexican radical, and worldwide anarchist communities.<sup>251</sup>

The historiographical controversy surrounding the 1911 insurrection has to date focused on the charge of filibustering leveled at Flores Magón. A minor body of regional literature revolves around the 1920 book *¿Se apoderará Estados Unidos de América de Baja California?*, in which Rómulo Velasco Ceballos concluded that Flores Magón collaborated with U.S. capitalists in a gambit to conquer the peninsula. This line of inquiry often asks the curious question of whether a man who passionately denounced all nationalism, including Mexican nationalism, was a patriot or a traitor. Like so many historical treatments of Flores Magón and the PLM, Velasco Ceballos's text engages in the discursive space of the liberalism and patriotism that Flores Magón and the PLM left behind. So went the war of words in the 1950s and 1960s between Pablo L. Martínez and Enrique Aldrete, both born in and deeply tied to Baja

---

<sup>251</sup> Lomnitz, *Return of Comrade Ricardo*, 335-342, 489-511; Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado, "Introduction," *Dreams of Freedom*, 11.

California. Martínez and Aldrete each endeavored to win via overwhelming display of period evidence in the form of reproduced documents.

Representing the extreme of animus for Flores Magón, Aldrete expressed outrage at the growing popularity—including in state schools—of the thesis that Flores Magón led a socialist revolution rather than a filibustering attack in 1911. The repetition of “INVASION FILIBUSTERA MAGONISTA ANARQUISTA” in *Baja California heroica* illustrates Aldrete’s sensationalism and unmitigated contempt for anarchism, which he described as opposed to order of any kind and thus to socialism.<sup>252</sup> Aldrete presented Flores Magón’s ideology as consistent with a filibustering conspiracy to annex Baja California, opportunism, and the wanton destruction he portrayed PLM-affiliated forces as causing. Martínez, whom Claudio Lomnitz describes as “rather conservative,” countered by invoking historical truth and unbiased investigation, but his writings nevertheless display marked distaste for porfirismo and porfiristas alongside abiding sympathy for Flores Magón’s egalitarian ideals.<sup>253</sup>

In addition to Flores Magón’s place in Mexican history, and by extension the status of his supporters, this regional literature involves the prestige or shame of Baja Californians who opposed the insurgents and by extension their descendants. The narrative of filibustering portrays these Baja Californians as unambiguous heroes; the narrative of the PLM campaign as a socialist revolution portrays them as dupes of dictator Díaz. Much scholarship, especially by authors with some distance from Baja California, makes roughly the latter case. Lowell L. Blaisdell’s 1962 *The Desert Revolution*, for example, defends the valor of Flores Magón, the PLM, and the

---

<sup>252</sup> Enrique Aldrete, *Baja California heroica: episodios de la Invasión Filibustera-Magonista de 1911* (México: Frumentum, 1958), 20-21, 448. 452-453.

<sup>253</sup> Aldrete, *Baja California*, 20-21, 448. 452-453; Pablo L. Martínez, “Sobre el libro Baja California heroica. Contra la defensa de una falsedad histórica,” in Aidé Grijalva, Max Calvillo, and Leticia Landín, eds., *Pablo L. Martínez: Sergas californianas* (Tijuana: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2006) 269; Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 331.

radical union the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), whose members participated in numbers in the armed contingent. Note how the martial logic of gaining esteem through fighting the good fight permeates the discourse on all sides. Alongside and connected with its political importance, writing history can distribute pride and embarrassment in the historian's present and future.<sup>254</sup>

The historiography of anarchism reveals related investments in commanding respect. A compelling recent instance of this, the 2010 collection *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, edited by Steven Hirsch and Lucien Van der Walt, argues for the importance and relevance of anarchism and syndicalism in anti-imperialist struggles, as well as presenting anarchism as an outstanding example of transnational dynamics. Hirsch and Van der Walt insist that it “is a vital history that has often been ignored, or dismissed, in many texts.”<sup>255</sup> While anarchism, particularly in the United States and Europe, has received significant scholarly interest, it lags far behind Marxism and socialism in this regard. Hirsch and Van der Walt, in accord with other analysts since the collapse of the Soviet Union, suggest that anarchism's time has come again, citing “a remarkable resurgence of anarchist and syndicalist ideology, organisation, and methods of struggle.”<sup>256</sup> They tie their academic knowledge production explicitly to contemporary anarchist and anarchist-inspired political mobilization, recommending the study of “classical anarchism and syndicalism,” because these movements “bequeathed a legacy of struggles for holistic human emancipation and dignity.”<sup>257</sup> Apropos the 1911 insurrection and questions of interpretation involved, Hirsch and Van der Walt declare that

---

<sup>254</sup> Lowell L. Blaisdell, *The Desert Revolution: Baja California, 1911* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 42.

<sup>255</sup> Steven Hirsch and Lucien Van der Walt, in Hirsch and Van der Walt, eds., *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution* (Brill, 2010), xxxii.

<sup>256</sup> Hirsch and Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*, 395.

<sup>257</sup> Hirsch and Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*, 410.

“the history of anarchism and syndicalism must be a global one,” with any given manifestation examined in light of the larger international context. As a synthesis, they describe anarchism as part of the fight “against imperialism, national oppression and racial domination” and as “an interconnected subaltern resistance movement that spanned the continents in a struggle to remake the world.”<sup>258</sup>

Hirsch and Van der Walt’s call for studying anarchism with attention to the big picture and emphasis on ties that cross borders underscores their connection to transnational studies, which has been popularized in humanities disciplines over the last two decades. Hirsch and Van der Walt, as well as various authors included in *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, explicitly describe anarchist movements as “transnational” in addition to being “international.”<sup>259</sup> For Hirsch and Van der Walt, transnationalism, when studying anarchist movements, means focusing “not only on national and local contexts but on supranational connections and multidirectional flows of the ideas, people, finances, and organizational structures that gave rise to these movements.”<sup>260</sup>

The transnational turn has its discontents, notably José E. Limón, whose discerning criticism provides insight about the conflicts in the historiography of the 1911 insurrection in Baja California. Through critiques of José David Saldívar and Ramón Saldívar, Limón contends that excessive focus on finding high-level patterns constitute an intellectual trap that prevents comprehension of regional difference. The following line regarding José Saldívar and his book *Border Matters* encapsulates Limón’s critique: “Once again, in encompassing so much and in his abiding concern with ‘resistance,’ [Saldívar] hurriedly misreads and sometimes overlooks the

---

<sup>258</sup> Hirsch and Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*, 410.

<sup>259</sup> Hirsch and Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*, xxxii, xxxvii. Italics original.

<sup>260</sup> Hirsch and Van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*, xxxii.

specificities of the local sites and texts, and the varying complexity of their interaction with the global.”<sup>261</sup> Limón’s critical regionalism, drawn from Kenneth Frampton and Cheryl Temple Herr, requires careful and nuanced analysis of the local, the global, and their mutual interaction. Limón in particular, lauds Herr’s method as containing “an abiding and fulsome respect for and rendering of the complexity of local cultures in comparison to others in the world, while recognizing that all are in constant but critical interaction with the global.”<sup>262</sup> I write informed by, and appreciative of, both transnationalism and critical regionalism, but I consider Limón’s criticism of the two Saldívars especially pertinent here. The local-global tension, alongside and as part of political agendas and status claims, defines the historiographical controversy about the events of 1911 in Baja California.

Limón’s critique of excessive attention to resistance aligns with Nicole Guidotti-Hernández’s rejection of the resistance narrative in *Unspeakable Violence*. That book looks at four specific episodes of bloodshed in the borderlands in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, attending particularly to how inspiring stories of resistance within any nationalist framing (including Chicana/o nationalism) omit and ignore colonial, gendered, and racialized violence. Guidotti-Hernández emphasizes the complexity of identity and subjectivity in a region characterized by foundational and ongoing horrors, as well as the complicity in this violence of various groups, such as Mexicans and Chicana/os, who are often portrayed only or primarily as victims of Anglo-American domination. “Constructing narratives of victimization is intrinsic to the ways in which the historical subject is manipulated to reflect the desires of the critic,” Guidotti-Hernández writes, “and to some extent all researchers are

---

<sup>261</sup> José Eduardo Limón, “Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism,” *American Literary History* 20:1-2 (Spring/Summer 2008), 164.

<sup>262</sup> Limón, “Border Literary Histories,” 167-168.

implicated in this project.”<sup>263</sup> Both Guidotti-Hernández and Limón, in line with a long tradition in the discipline of history and especially in poststructuralist/postmodernist-influenced scholarship, make the case for nuance and context over grand narratives that simplify and homogenize. The tension between the stories we want to tell and the evidence we find before us—whether in terms of the chaotic complexity of the data and our desire for coherence or terms of conforming to ideological imperatives like the resistance narrative—stands out as a fundamental challenge for any sort of historical scholarship.<sup>264</sup>

I begin exploring these issues in detail by looking at Mitchell Cowen Verter’s portrayal of the Baja California campaign in *Dreams of Freedom* (2005), a translated collection of Ricardo Flores Magón’s writings. Verter, one of the editors, provides an eighty-one-page “Biographical Sketch” that summarizes the history of Flores Magón and the PLM. As the most substantial English-language reader of Flores Magón’s work, *Dreams of Freedom* has presumably introduced the Mexican anarchist’s ideas to many who don’t read Spanish; I’ve often recommended it myself, and shared my copy on occasion. The volume explicitly adopts anarchists and sympathizers as its target audience, situating Flores Magón and PLM in their historical transnational radical community and as inspiration for twenty-first-century radicals. Like Hirsch and Van der Walt, albeit with unrestrained political commitment and religious aesthetics, Verter recommends anarchist history as worthwhile in the contemporary moment. “We further hope,” he writes at the end of the biographical sketch, “that our translations of the poetic words of the great anarchist prophet Ricardo Flores Magón will inspire the English-speaking world to continue his struggle for the liberation of humanity.”<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 27-28.

<sup>264</sup> Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 3-10.

<sup>265</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 102.

Verter notably introduces the 1911 insurrection as one of the PLM's few victories: "Amidst its long history of failures, the PLM achieved one major success in the Mexican Revolution. It inaugurated a significant military campaign in the Mexican state of Baja California."<sup>266</sup> The Baja California campaign thus functions as proof of the PLM's relevance in the historiography of the Mexican Revolution as a whole, and constitutes a crowning achievement for the Party. After explaining how the PLM organizing junta selected Baja California because of geographical proximity to Los Angeles and weak defenses, Verter assesses the recruitment of non-Mexican allies as indicative of Flores Magón's wisdom: "Ricardo Flores Magón demonstrated his understanding of the international struggle against exploitation by inviting non-Mexican fighters to join in the Baja campaign. Lacking sufficient Mexican troops, especially ones with much military experience, the PLM turned to U.S. radicals for help."<sup>267</sup> Highlighting the international character of anarchism in the early twentieth century, Verter mentions that "several Italian and Spanish anarchists came to fight for Mexican liberation." In sharp contrast with narratives of filibustering and treason, for Verter the presence of foreigners in Baja California reflects positively on the PLM leadership.<sup>268</sup>

So why then the backlash? Verter explains as follows: "Unable to tolerate the international thrust of Flores Magón's mission, various individuals used nationalistic arguments to discredit the struggle. U.S. And [sic] Mexican officials and newspapers spread the rumor that the motley crew of fighters was composed of mere 'filibusters' (foreign mercenaries), fighting in Mexico to seize territory for the U.S."<sup>269</sup> This narrative of a libelous plot against Flores Magón and the PLM—whether by U.S. and Mexican officials, the press, or both—amounts to an

---

<sup>266</sup> Verter, "Biographical Sketch," 77.

<sup>267</sup> Verter, "Biographical Sketch," 78.

<sup>268</sup> Verter, "Biographical Sketch," 78.

<sup>269</sup> Verter, "Biographical Sketch," 78.



established scholarly tradition, which I address at greater length further on. In Verter, the notion of self-serving government deception leads to a straightforward if derogatory appraisal of those who armed themselves against the PLM-affiliated forces: “Using such propaganda, the Mexican Counsel in Los Angeles organized reactionary Mexicans to fight against PLM supporters.”<sup>270</sup> At the end of the next paragraph, he uses even stronger language: “Impelled by the propaganda of the Mexican government and suspicious of the odd assortment of individuals in the PLM army, some of Baja’s local population began to fight against their liberators in June 1911.” The last clause—“some of Baja’s local population began to fight against their liberators”—conveys with masterful intensity and brevity the thesis that the false consciousness of nationalism drove Mexicans who according their class position should have embraced the PLM to instead defend the Díaz government.<sup>271</sup> This was indeed the PLM line in the period, articulated in issues of *Regeneración*.

The insurgent force, on the other hand, was a group of committed revolutionaries sullied by the actions of a tiny minority: “Although Flores Magón definitely did not want to seize Baja for Yankee capitalists or for the U.S. government, his struggle was embarrassed by the few who did. The Baja campaign attracted combatants with a variety of motives. Radicals who wanted to bring justice to the Mexican people or to foment worldwide anarchist revolution composed the vast majority of the PLM army. However, the struggle also attracted a few opportunists whose desires were not so noble.”<sup>272</sup> As I show below, the question of the rebel forces’ composition appears throughout the historiography; Verter’s interpretation is more generous than most. In sum, Verter describes the Baja California campaign as a heroic attempt by Flores Magón to

---

<sup>270</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 78.

<sup>271</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 78.

<sup>272</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 78.

create social revolution in Mexico that attracted brave idealists regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or race as well as a handful of troublemakers. The rebellion, by this account, ultimately fell to Madero's federal troops because the U.S. and Mexican governments—including Madero—invoked nationalism to trick Baja Californians into fighting against their liberators. “More insidiously,” Verter writes, “Madero published and distributed a manifesto listing him as president and Flores Magón as vice-president. Many PLM members were fooled and enlisted as his soldiers.”<sup>273</sup> Finally, many leftists—unionists, socialists, classical liberals, and so on—betrayed and abandoned the PLM because they were “too reformist to dare to dream the anarchist vision of Ricardo Flores Magón.”<sup>274</sup> Calumny, deception, and treachery stand out as the causes of anarchist failure.

The Baja Californian regional scholarship of Marco Antonio Samaniego López develops a decidedly different discourse on the events of 1911. In his 2008 monograph *Nacionalismo y revolución*, Samaniego López makes numerous interventions into the historiography that contradict, confuse, and complicate the story Verter tells. I interpret these interventions as a challenge to the PLM-centric narrative reminiscent of Limón's critique of the two Saldívars. While Samaniego López doesn't engage with *Dreams of Freedom* and Verter doesn't cite any of Samaniego López's earlier work, I find reading these two authors side by side underscores the tensions between the local and global simmering in the scholarship on the 1911 insurrection in Baja California. Samaniego López starts his book with the assertion that all the oldest residents of the state agree that the Flores Magón brothers attempted to annex Baja California to the United States. Acknowledging the inconsistency of anarchists conspiring with the U.S. government and concurring with near historical consensus that the PLM organizing junta had no

---

<sup>273</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 80.

<sup>274</sup> Verter, “Biographical Sketch,” 82.

annexation plans, Samaniego López asks why older Baja Californians hold steadfastly to the idea of filibustering. As a striking conceptual shift compared with other scholarship, Samaniego López argues that “it is not possible to refer to the armed movement in Baja California as ‘magonista,’”<sup>275</sup> and that the “leadership of the Flores Magón brothers over the men in arms was not real.”<sup>276</sup> In this fashion, Samaniego López moves away from the question of Ricardo Flores Magón’s complicity or innocence, which he considers resolved in favor of the latter, in order to reconsider the matter of filibustering.<sup>277</sup>

Pushing aside Flores Magón and the associated baggage of his place in the historiography of the Mexican Revolution, Samaniego López centers instead the history of filibustering in Baja California specifically. This context, typically muted if not absent in other treatments of the events of 1911, facilitates Samaniego López’s historical revision. He compellingly argues that filibustering amounted to a credible threat in the period because of a confluence of factors that ranged from the avowed interest in annexation from certain sectors of the Imperial Valley to the marshaling of U.S. troops at the border and the involvement of uniformed army deserters with the rebel forces.<sup>278</sup>

In an intervention that undermines celebration of the transnational nature of the PLM-affiliated forces, Samaniego López writes that “nationality and skin color were core elements” in the “intense conflicts between the members of the movement.”<sup>279</sup> He indicates that the racial

---

<sup>275</sup> “No es posible denominar al movimiento armado en Baja California como ‘magonista,’” Marco Antonio Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución: los acontecimientos de 1911 en Baja California* (Tijuana: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2008), 8.

<sup>276</sup> “El liderazgo de los hermanos Flores Magón sobre los hombres en armas no fue real.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 9.

<sup>277</sup> I know of no historical work published within the last few decades that claims Flores Magón had filibustering designs.

<sup>278</sup> On filibustering in this period, see Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>279</sup> “Los intensos conflictos entre los integrantes del movimiento, en el que la nacionalidad y el color de piel fueron elementos torales” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 10-11.

prejudice practiced by some or many of the Anglo-American participants furthered the perception that the movement was about conquering land for the United States. And even the IWW, commonly cited as the exception to white-supremacist union organizing in the period, is implicated: “The famous writer Jack London, who sympathized with the armed movement in Baja California and delivered a talk in Los Angeles in its favor, also claimed that he was a socialist, but before being socialist, he was white. This racial idea was shared by members of the IWW and in little time the theme of skin color became an obstacle to the formation of a genuine group.”<sup>280</sup> This takes us far from Verter’s account of cross-border worker unity against capitalism.

“As we will see,” Samaniego López continues, “in key moments of dispute, from the view of the participants, the racial question surpassed the interests of whatever ideology, be it socialist, anarchist, or of the [classical] liberal type.”<sup>281</sup> His extensive and meticulously researched narrative indeed contains repeated examples of racial conflict. Amid accounts of gun duels, arguments, separation, and segregation, Miguel Bravo’s testimony stands out. Samaniego López describes Bravo as a young PLM member who had personal experience with the organizing junta. However, going to the armed camp left him disillusioned and prompted a defection to maderismo: “I saw, in place of love and brotherhood, hatred, egotism, envy, personal quarrels.”<sup>282</sup> Another PLM defector told Bravo “that his separation came because it was

---

<sup>280</sup> “El famoso escritor Jack London, quien simpatizó con el movimiento armado en Baja California y proclamó un discurso en Los Angeles en su favor, también aseguró que era socialista, pero primero que ser socialista, era blanco. Esta idea racial era compartida por miembros de la IWW y en poco tiempo el tema del color de la piel se convirtió en un obstáculo para la conformación de un verdadero grupo.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 362.

<sup>281</sup> “Como veremos, en momentos claves de la contienda, desde la visión de los participantes, la cuestión racial sobrepasó los intereses de cualquier ideología, ya fuera la socialista, anarquista, o la de tipo liberal, no en el sentido del PLM, sino a la referente a la Constitución de 1857, que como vimos, hubo quienes estaban en la lucha porque se respetara la forma de sociedad que allí se planteaba” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 362.

<sup>282</sup> “vi, en vez del amor y la fraternidad, el odio, el egoísmo, la envidia, las rencillas personales” Miguel Bravo, *Diario del Hogar*, August 1, 1911.

not possible for him to continue supporting those people, almost in their entirety Americans that didn't obey any order and committed abuses, depredations, in a frenzied manner.”<sup>283</sup> Samaniego López writes that “Bravo claimed that it was about men without conscience, without feelings of honesty or altruism, they were adventurers, tramps, soldiers of fortune.”<sup>284</sup> About the composition of the rebel force in late February, Samaniego López writes that it was “a third part Mexican, another part more or less equal of IWW members and the remaining part soldiers of fortune, adventurers, U.S. army deserters, ex-combatants of the war in the Philippines and Cuba, as well as veterans of the Boer Wars in South Africa.”<sup>285</sup> Especially when combined with Bravo’s words, this contradicts Verter’s assessment that committed revolutionaries made up the vast majority of the PLM-affiliated army.

As another critical scholarly intervention and historical revision, Samaniego López rejects the notion that the characterization of the armed contingent as filibusters existed solely or primarily to defame the PLM. He argues that even many Mexican government claims of filibustering appeared out of concern that Baja California would go the way of Texas rather than a cynical attempt to discredit Flores Magón. In Samaniego’s narrative, speculation about filibustering started in late February after insurgent leader and Socialist Party member Simón Berthold announced the intent to create a socialist republic. Alongside the context of filibustering mentioned above, Berthold’s statement incited speculation that he was planning to seize land for the United States. After all, Texas’s separation from Mexico began with the state succession as a

---

<sup>283</sup> “que su separación obedeció a que no le fue posible soportar más a aquella gente, casi en su totalidad americanos que no obedecían ninguna orden y que cometían abusos, depredaciones, de una manera desenfadada” Bravo, *Diario del Hogar*, August 1, 1911.

<sup>284</sup> “Bravo aseguró que se trataba de hombres sin conciencia, sin sentimientos de honradez ni altruismo, eran aventureros, *tramps* [sic], soldados de fortuna.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 381-382.

<sup>285</sup> “una tercera parte de mexicanos, otra más o menos igual de miembros de la IWW y la parte restante de soldados de fortuna, aventureros, desertores del ejército estadounidense, excombatientes de la guerra de Filipinas y Cuba, así como veteranos de la guerra de los boers en Sudáfrica” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 362.

nominally independent republic. While Samaniego acknowledges specific propaganda efforts against the PLM by the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles, he argues that the pro-Díaz papers that used the term “filibustero” initially employed it generically against foreigners who took part on the revolutionary side and made no distinction between Flores Magón and Madero in this regard.<sup>286</sup>

The signs of filibustering accumulated and intensified as month passed. For Mexican refugees in the United States in the first days of June, during which Richard Ferris and company briefly and ineffectually declared Baja California a new republic with its own flag—burned by Mexican and Indigenous members of the armed contingent—Samaniego writes the following: “It was about a filibustering movement, in their moment. And it was not any trick, a tall tale from Vega, or a historical falsehood invented by Rómulo Velasco Ceballos in 1919. For the refugees, it was a reality emerging from the events themselves.”<sup>287</sup> This constitutes a powerful articulation of one of the main theses in *Nacionalismo y revolución*: Baja Californians acted reasonably in interpreting the armed contingent as a filibustering expedition and organizing to resist the invasion militarily. “The idea of a filibustering movement was not gratuitous,” Samaniego López writes, “and much less that, as we show, a group of Mexican residents in San Diego, and therefore without having anything to do with Díaz’s government, volunteered in order to defend the national territory from an invasion that, for all the elements that came into play, seemed to have as its end the separation of the peninsula.”<sup>288</sup>

---

<sup>286</sup> Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 236, 238-295.

<sup>287</sup> “Se trató de un movimiento filibustero para ellos, en su momento. Y no fue ningún engaño, una patraña de Vega, o una falsedad histórica inventada por Rómulo Velasco Ceballos en 1919. Para los refugiados, fue una realidad surgida de los propios acontecimientos.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 527. Celso Vega was the military and political head of Baja California in 1911.

<sup>288</sup> “La concepción de movimiento filibustero no era gratuita y tampoco que, como señalamos, un grupo de mexicanos residentes en San Diego, y por tanto sin tener nada que ver con el gobierno de Díaz, se prestara para defender el territorio nacional de una invasión que, por todos los elementos que entraron en juego, parecía tener como fin la separación de la península.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 544.

Samaniego López directly engages the historiography by criticizing the way various historians have dismissed Ferris as a clown, a humorous if embarrassing interlude in the drama of the 1911 PLM campaign. “Simplifying the events to being about a comic opera planned by Dick Ferris to gain publicity,” Samaniego writes, “is to limit understanding of the process.”<sup>289</sup> To the contrary, he argues that we should take as authentic rather than farcical the speech insurgent captain Louis James made June 3 declaring the new republic in honor of the blood spilled by white men. Though newly elected insurgent leader Jack Mosby released a statement against Ferris that same day and the new republic came to naught, Samaniego presents the proposal as having considerable support from the Anglo-Americans involved. In place of Verter’s clear lines between true revolutionaries and unprincipled opportunists, Samaniego López’s narrative suggests a heterogeneous force that contained many Anglo-Americans apparently sympathetic both to the PLM’s internationalist class struggle and to white supremacy. Samaniego López’s mention of how Mosby himself offered the presidency of the hypothetical new republic to a U.S. rancher mere weeks before becoming a PLM loyalist underscores the contradictions and shifting political alignments at play.

While opposing the discourse of conspiracy against Flores Magón, as noted above, Samaniego López grants that the Mexican consulate in Los Angeles under Arturo M. Elías wielded intentionally falsified propaganda against the PLM.<sup>290</sup> Elías’s own words make this incontestable, as he described how Guillermo Prieto Yeme—an employee of the consulate—penned a fictional letter under a pseudonym that emulated the “humble, incoherent, faulty and

---

<sup>289</sup> “Simplificar los acontecimientos a que todo se trató de una ópera bufa planeada por Dick Ferris para obtener publicidad es limitar el entendimiento del proceso.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 515.

<sup>290</sup> Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 533-536.

aggressive style” he and Elías attributed to the Mexican worker.<sup>291</sup> This letter, addressed directly to Ricardo Flores Magón, accused him of treasonously advancing a filibustering campaign that would end in territorial losses like those of 1848. It additionally stresses Anglo racism against Mexicans. Mexican government officials and anti-filibuster leagues produced and distributed thousands of copies of the letter, which apparently served its purpose well, inspiring patriotic fury against Flores Magón and the PLM.

Samaniego López appropriately analyzes the document as indicative of the depth of sentiment racial discrimination aroused in the Mexican population, particularly those residing in the United States; Elías and company appealed to Mexican workers’ routine experience with white supremacy. “Unfortunately for Flores Magón and in spite of the internationalism that has subsequently been argued to defend his figure with respect to the events in Baja California,” Samaniego López writes, “the problem of cultural differences was acting against him from the interior of the armed group.”<sup>292</sup> *Nacionalismo y revolución* overall attests to this. However, Samaniego López refrains from exploring in depth the deceptive letter’s implications in relation to the discourse of conspiracy against Flores Magón. Here we have firm evidence for a stereotypical case of officials at once manipulating the masses and expressing utter contempt for them; one could hardly imagine clearer confirmation of Flores Magón’s radical understanding of the Mexican government as an institution of class domination in favor of the elite and nationalism as their self-serving ruse. A single case doesn’t make the rule, but it does invite contemplation about what else was in fact a plot against Flores Magón and the PLM.

---

<sup>291</sup> “estilo humilde, incoherente, defectuoso y agresivo” Arturo M. Elias, Telegram to Secretary of Foreign Relations in Mexico City, May 24, 1911, in Grijalva, Calvillo, and Landín, *Pablo L. Martínez*, 199

<sup>292</sup> “Por desgracia para Flores Magón y a pesar del internacionalismo que se ha argumentado para defender posteriormente su figura respecto de los sucesos en Baja California, el problema por diferencias culturales estaba actuando en su contra desde el interior del grupo armado.” Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 535.



In relation to anarchism, consistent with Alan Knight's synthesis of the Mexican Revolution, Samaniego López portrays radical ideology as relatively unimportant. Rather than exploring the details of the world the PLM wanted to create, as various other historians do, Samaniego López emphasizes Madero's influence while keeping the attention always squarely on Baja California. *Nacionalismo y revolución* shows how the PLM's internationalist anticapitalism insufficiently attended to local specificities. Most tellingly, Samaniego López starts the final chapter by quoting a letter Ricardo Flores Magón wrote to Tirso de la Toba, a Baja Californian who was trying to reignite the revolution in late June of 1911. In this letter, Flores Magón advises de la Toba to head to southern Baja California in order to find "rich towns" (pueblos ricos) from which to obtain provisions. From there, Flores Magón thought, the movement could attract Indigenous support by promising land redistribution and expropriating the necessities of life from the rich. Samaniego López writes that de la Toba ignored this counsel because his regional knowledge told him that rich towns didn't exist in the southern part of the peninsula and that the Indigenous peoples in the area weren't joining the movement in significant numbers.<sup>293</sup>

As illustrated above, Samaniego López paints a dramatically different picture from Verter. In its white supremacy, disorganization, and personal grudges overshadow egalitarian internationalist ideals. The notion that Baja Californians fought against their liberators seems patronizing and reductive in the historical regional circumstances that *Nacionalismo y revolución* articulates. For analyzing the matter of the white working class and its sympathies, I find utility in J. Sakai's classic and still controversial book *Settlers*. Sakai's polemical style provides impact and clarity. In relation to mid-nineteenth century class dynamics among Euro-Americans, he

---

<sup>293</sup> Samaniego López, *Nacionalismo y revolución*, 576, 601-602.

writes the following: “What we find is that this new class of white workers was indeed angry and militant, but so completely dominated by petit-bourgeois consciousness that they always ended up as the pawns of various bourgeois political factions. Because they clung to and hungered after the petty privileges derived from the loot of Empire, they *as a stratum* became rabid and reactionary supporters of conquest and the annexation of oppressed nations.”<sup>294</sup> While addressing an earlier period, this passage seamlessly applies to 1911. As Samaniego López’s account argues, a notable number of the Anglo-Americans involved, and some of the Europeans as well, held similar levels of fondness toward socialism as toward white supremacy. Their primary interest appears to have been in, as Sakai writes of immigrant European workers in the IWW overall, “militant struggle to reach some ‘social justice’ for themselves.”<sup>295</sup> Sakai’s core thesis about settler radicalism and its investment in the heroic white radical subject finds support in how so much of the historiography of 1911 Baja California ignores or downplays the profound importance of white supremacy and the U.S. settler mentality. Even the committed and principled Euro-American IWW members in the Baja California campaign, if we can distinguish them from the less ideologically motivated participants, still likely held internalized white-supremacist sentiments and gave little or no attention to the dynamics of colonialism and racism that shaped borderlands society and the unequal relationship between the USA and Mexico as nation-states. “If the IWW had fought colonialism and national oppression,” Sakai writes, “it would have lost most of its white support.”<sup>296</sup> Grand narratives are dangerous, but Sakai’s

---

<sup>294</sup> J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 58.

<sup>295</sup> Sakai, *Settlers*, 156.

<sup>296</sup> Sakai, *Settlers*, 158. Note that *Settlers* downplays the level of IWW involvement in the PLM’s Baja California campaign (166).

relentless focus on European colonialism, shared by many scholars and revolutionaries, has much to recommend it.

Evidence for the prevalence of white supremacy among at least the English-speaking division that occupied Mexicali appears most starkly in Peter B. Kyne's article "The Gringo as Insurrecto," published in the September 1911 issue of *Sunset* magazine. Kyne would go on to be successful and prolific novelist who had a considerable impact on the film industry. His work stands out for its unabashed racism, consistent with the popular pseudoscientific racial discourses of the period.<sup>297</sup> "The Gringo as Insurrecto" evinces strident Anglo-Saxonism. Kyne described crossing the U.S.-Mexico border to visit the "insurrecto" camp in Mexicali at some point in April 1911, purportedly motivated by disbelief that "saddle-colored soldiers" could have inflicted heavy losses on Americans.<sup>298</sup> According to his account, Kyne used his military experience and gifts of tobacco to befriend the Anglo Americans, Europeans, and African Americans in the English-speaking branch of the PLM-associated forces. Kyne wrote that he fraternized happily with this Second Division, especially General Carl Ap Rhys Pryce, whom Kyne characterized as a "British gentleman."<sup>299</sup> Kyne claimed there were intense tensions between "the First Division (the Mexicans under Salinas) and "the Second Division (the whites, under Pryce)": "The foreign legion kept to its own end, for Anglo-Saxon and Latin do not mix well, more particularly when there are a few Irish and negroes and Indians mixed up in the herd."<sup>300</sup> Kyne had nothing but racist and colonial contempt for the First Division and its leader Francisco Vázquez Salinas, explaining Salinas's opposition to his camera as follows: "This dislike of being photographed is

---

<sup>297</sup> For the racism of Peter Kyne's later work, see Matthias Beck and Beth Kewell, *Risk: A Study of Its Origins, History and Politics* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2014), 98.

<sup>298</sup> Peter B. Kyne, "The Gringo as Insurrecto," *Sunset* 27 (September 1911), 257.

<sup>299</sup> Kyne, "Gringo as Insurrecto," 262.

<sup>300</sup> Kyne, "Gringo as Insurrecto," 262.

aboriginal with Salinas and his men. It is the Indian coming out, for in all Mexicali they have nothing to conceal.”<sup>301</sup> Kyne attributed the same anti-Indian bigotry to Pryce, composing a racist rant for what Pryce wanted to say in response to how Salinas snubbed Kyne by refusing to offer a cigarette.

Kyne expressed special fondness for Shorty O’Donnell of the Second Division, portraying him as a born fighter in conformity with Irish stereotypes: “He is very honest and, unless I greatly err, will die, just heroically as his father at the Little Big Horn. After all, how can he help it? His name is O’Donnell.”<sup>302</sup> On the whole, Kyne depicted the white insurrectos of the Second Division as charming, capable rogues—“genial outlaws”—aiming to live free off of other people’s property and benefit themselves.<sup>303</sup> “He was there for what he could get,” Kyne wrote of O’Donnell, “and he was indifferent whether it was a million-acre ranch or a Mauser bullet.”<sup>304</sup> The First Division, by contrast, Kyne presented in racist tropes as cowardly, incompetent, and brutal. He claimed O’Donnell had killed two members of the First Division after they accused him of being a liar and reached for their guns, and indicated that O’Donnell alone would have routed an entire platoon from the First Division. In June, Kyne wrote, he met up with Pryce and discussed the campaign, which Pryce acknowledged as a mistake. Kyne’s unambiguous white supremacy and writer’s imperative for an engaging story encourage skepticism about the accuracy of his account, but in broad strokes much of it aligns with other period sources on the PLM-associated armed contingent in Baja California. A considerable share of the Anglo-Americans involved had no commitment to the Mexican people or to anarchist values.

---

<sup>301</sup> Kyne, “Gringo as Insurrecto,” 265.

<sup>302</sup> Kyne, “Gringo as Insurrecto,” 263.

<sup>303</sup> Kyne, “Gringo as Insurrecto,” 263.

<sup>304</sup> Kyne, “Gringo as Insurrecto,” 266-267.

Anti-Chinese racism is one of the obscure and complex ways white supremacy played out in the events of 1911 in Baja California. While this dynamic has received scant attention within the specific historiography of the PLM-associated insurrection, Jason Oliver Chang's book *Chino* shows how pervasive and important anti-Chinese racism was in the Mexican Revolution overall and to the state that formed in the aftermath. Racism against Chinese people was a powerful social force in Mexico as well as in the United States in 1911. A letter from April of that year from Francisco Vázquez Salinas, then still a commander of one of the armed contingents, offers a telling window into how insurgents interacted with Chinese Baja Californians: "last night three Americans from Pryce's force entered a house of Chinese with pistol in hand firing a shot at them in the feet and then devoting themselves to searching the bags of those Chinese unfortunates until they cleaned them out of their little money."<sup>305</sup> Vázquez Salinas began the letter by stating his disapproval of the PLM-associated combatants, writing that they were committing "terrible robberies and outrages" ("robos tremendos y ultrajes"). He indicated he would leave his command if this behavior did not cease, and he indeed left soon after. The incident Vázquez Salinas recounted was consistent with decades-old U.S. anti-Chinese practice; Anglo-American gold prospectors terrorized their Chinese counterparts at various occasions during the 1850s. Formal Chinese exclusion, in California in 1879 and the United States overall in 1882, came out of a context of earlier and ongoing popular white violence against Chinese people. Such widespread targeting of Chinese immigrants by white mobs

---

<sup>305</sup> "Anoche han entrado tres americanos de los de su fuerza de Pryce a una casa de chinos con pistola en mano disparándoles un tiro en los pies y luego se entregaron a catear las bolsas de los infelices chinos hasta limpiarles todo el poco dinero." Francisco Vázquez Salinas to Ricardo Flores Magón, April 22, 1911 (<http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1911/cor320/>, accessed February 18, 2020).

remained prominent in the western United States until at least the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>306</sup>

Collective anti-Chinese violence constituted a well-established script for Anglos and burgeoning one for Mexicans in this period. The infamous massacre of Chinese people by anti-Díaz soldiers and city residents at Torreón, Coahuila took place but a few weeks after Francisco Vázquez Salinas's letter, in the middle of May 1911. Combatants and civilians collaborated in killing over three hundred Chinese people, often in spectacularly gruesome fashion, and seized their possessions. Robert Chao Romero assesses that Mexican "anti-Chinese violence eclipsed that experienced by the Chinese diasporic communities of the United States and the rest of the Americans during the twentieth century."<sup>307</sup> Anti-Chinese violence in Mexico, while it drew on some of the same tropes as the U.S. version, had distinct elements. The employment of Chinese immigrants in Mexico with development schemes that amounted to internal colonization associated the Chinese with the Díaz regime. In *Chino*, Chang argues that anti-Chinese sentiment and practice was key for the formation of mestizo nationalism. He describes the brutality at Torreón in 1911 and in various parts of Mexico during following years as an experimental social practice and bonding experience: "When eyes were transfixed on the spectacle of anti-Chinese violence, men and women stood shoulder to shoulder, class divisions evaporated, and interethnic tensions dissolved."<sup>308</sup>

Chang presents the PLM as "staunchly anti-Chinese" as of February 1914, noting the Party's influence in Cananea, Sonora.<sup>309</sup> The PLM indeed did officially call for the prohibition of

---

<sup>306</sup> Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 11-16, 287-288.

<sup>307</sup> Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010), 147

<sup>308</sup> Chang, *Chino*, 11.

<sup>309</sup> Chang, *Chino*, 110.

Chinese immigration in its 1906 platform. In June of that year, Ricardo Flores Magón, under the pen name of Anacreón, published a piece that inveighed against Chinese immigration in customary terms: that Chinese laborers worked for less than Mexicans, the former depriving the latter of employment and thus food.<sup>310</sup> Even at that time, the call to ban Chinese immigration provoked opposition. The PLM Junta noted on June 1, when overviewing criticism from supporters, that this proposal “is considered antihumanitarian and opposed to the liberal spirit.”<sup>311</sup> However, the Party doubled down on their position a month later, declaring that Chinese labor competition was devastating to Mexican workers and that Chinese immigration did not benefit the country.<sup>312</sup> While the PLM had changed considerably by 1911, embracing anarchism completely, they still nominally fought for the 1906 Platform in the early months of the Baja California campaign, and neither their April 1911 nor September 1911 manifesto gave explicit indication that their position on Chinese immigration had changed. Tellingly, a February 1911 piece in *Regeneración* to the American people that explicitly includes the Chinese in its description of how capitalism harms all workers appears on the same page as a summary of the PLM that claims the July 1906 platform. In May 1912, Enrique Flores Magón recounted how two Chinese people (“chinitos”) had perished fighting for the revolution in Ixhuatán, Oaxaca. He acknowledged that the Chinese were “a universally despised race” (“una raza despreciada universalmente”) but praised their valor and commitment, writing that they were far more radical than Luigi Galleani, a prominent Italian anarchist who had clashed with the PLM. Flores Magón

---

<sup>310</sup> Anacreón (Ricardo Flores Magón), “Competencia China,” *El Colmillo Público* 143 (June 3, 1906), 334-335 (<http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/art-periodisticos-1900-1918/1906/art858/>, accessed February 19, 2020)

<sup>311</sup> “Se considera esta prohibición antihumanitaria y opuesta al espíritu liberal.” Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano, “Adiciones y reformas al proyecto de programa del Partido Liberal que han sido propuestas a esta Junta: Que se someten a la consideración de los correligionarios,” *Regeneración* 4:9 (June 1, 1906), 2.

<sup>312</sup> Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano, “Programa del Partido Liberal y Manifiesto a la Nación. Mexicanos: La Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano, en nombre del Partido que representa, proclama solemnemente el siguiente Programa del Partido Liberal.,” *Regeneración* 4:11 (July 1, 1906), 2.

concluded with the following invocation: “Discover, brothers, that these Chinese proletarians deserve our appreciation and respect.”<sup>313</sup>

David M. Struthers takes the sanguine view that in this era of increasing animus against the Chinese, “the PLM articulated a distinct vision of revolutionary interracial antistatism.”<sup>314</sup> However, the Party paper continued issuing anti-Chinese material at times. In August 1913, Antonio de Pío Araujo, who was directly involved in the events of 1911 in Baja California, published a piece in *Regeneración* entitled “The Yellow Peril” (“El Peligro Amarillo”) that defended the massacre of over three hundred Chinese people in Torreón two years prior. “The work of those revolutionaries who took Torreón in the spring of 1911 against the Chinese bourgeois,” Araujo wrote, “was righteous: The bourgeois Chinese bandits nearly owned Torreón.”<sup>315</sup> He made sure to avoid ambiguity about exactly what he endorsed by continuing as follows: “The Chinese blood that ran in Torreón when Mexican revolutionaries put to the slaughter Chinese bandits, bankers, and merchants, must demonstrate to the oriental capitalists that Mexico is not favorable land for their exploitation.”<sup>316</sup> Contrary to Araujo’s narrative, the massacre of Chinese people included a mixture of bosses and workers as well as adults and children. Revolutionaries under Francisco Madero’s banner targeted the Chinese specifically and as a whole while sparing foreign capitalists from Europe or the United States. It is unclear whether Araujo knew the details of what happened at Torreón in May 1911; if so, he was

---

<sup>313</sup> “Descubríos, hermanos, que esos proletarios chinos merecen nuestro aprecio y respeto.” Enrique Flores Magón, “Notas de la Rebelion,” *Regeneración* 89 (May 11, 1912), 2.

<sup>314</sup> David M. Struthers, *The World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 97.

<sup>315</sup> “La obra de aquellos revolucionarios que tomaron Torreón en la primavera de 1911 contra los burgueses chinos, fué justiciera: Los bandidos burgueses chinos casi poseían Torreón.” Antonio de Pío Araujo, “El Peligro Amarillo,” *Regeneración* 154, August 16, 1913, 1.

<sup>316</sup> “La sangre china que corrió en Torreón cuando los revolucionarios mexicanos pasaron á degüello á los chinos bandoleros, banqueros y comerciantes, debe mostrar á los capitalistas orientales que México no es tierra propicia para su explotación.” Araujo, “Peligro Amarillo,” 1.



intentionally misleading. “Mexican workers fraternize with the Chinese day laborer or Japanese laborer,” Araujo went on, “as they fraternize with all the exploited of whatever race they be, but they are resolved to continue combating the Chinese and Japanese bourgeoisie in the same way as in the past.”<sup>317</sup>

In this fashion, the PLM rhetoric on the Chinese people in the pages of *Regeneración* was infrequent and contradictory. Araujo nodded to the principle of working-class solidarity while celebrating an incident that killed many Chinese workers and while pushing yellow-peril discourse that he claimed was only about Chinese and Japanese capital. A year earlier, in August 1912, Araujo described how a Mexican worker on a misadventure to Alaska had to endure harassment from “some disgusting Chinese” (“unos asquerosos chinos”).<sup>318</sup> The PLM at this point stressed anarchist internationalism yet still printed the occasional piece or few words that indicated anti-Chinese sentiment. Given Francisco Vázquez Salinas’s account of American troops robbing and terrorizing poor Chinese people and the PLM published views as well as the broader phenomenon of waxing ant-Chinese violence in Mexico in 1911, this may have been an area of alignment between some Anglo and Mexican members of the armed contingents. Araujo hinted at this affinity in his 1913 article, which he began by citing Kaiser Wilhelm II’s yellow-peril concerns for “the Caucasian world” (“el mundo caucásico”) and affirming that “the German clown was right” (“el clown alemán tenía razón”).<sup>319</sup>

I now turn to Ethel Duffy Turner’s *Revolution in Baja California* in order to explore the genealogy that underlies Mitchell Verter’s heroic interpretation of the 1911 PLM campaign.

---

<sup>317</sup> “Los mexicanos trabajadores fraternizan con el jornalero chino y con el laborero japonés, como fraternizan con todos los explotados de cualquiera raza que sean, pero están resueltos á seguir combatiendo á los burgueses chinos y japoneses de la misma manera que en el pasado.” Araujo, “Peligro Amarillo,” 1.

<sup>318</sup> Antonio de P. Araujo, “En Defensa de los Mexicanos,” *Regeneración* 105, August 31, 1912, 3.

<sup>319</sup> Araujo, “Peligro Amarillo,” 1.

Verter draws heavily on Turner's longer work concerning the PLM for the biographical sketch in *Dreams of Freedom*. Turner, who edited the English-language section of *Regeneración* into April of 1911, had personal experience with the PLM junta during the period in question and remained deeply sympathetic to Flores Magón even after his anarchism caused her and other U.S. socialists to step away from the Party. Turner's narrative resembles Verter's yet at the same time contains elements that hint toward Samaniego López's less sanguine take.

*Revolution in Baja California* comes to us thanks to the efforts of Rey Devis, who unearthed a copy of the manuscript after Turner's death. Devis published this "stranger-than-fiction tale of intrigue, conflict, and heartbreak" involving the "action-filled life" of the "freedom hero" Ricardo Flores Magón in order to inspire "Chicano kids" in Los Angeles.<sup>320</sup> While Devis makes no mention of anarchism, he displays a similar level of admiration for Flores Magón as Verter. Turner herself barely lived into the age of the Chicano movement, but *Revolution in Baja California* lauds Flores Magón as a principled visionary who struggled for everyone to live "the good life."<sup>321</sup> Turner composed the manuscript to defend Flores Magón against the charge of filibustering and to bolster his place as a Mexican national hero; she described the "phony but effective filibuster issue" as "spearheaded by the *Los Angeles Times*."<sup>322</sup> The desire for status and respect thus again operates as a core motive for knowledge production. Whether a matter of Chicana/o cultural nationalism, Mexican nationalism, big-tent socialism, or anarchism, so much of the historiography on Flores Magón involves presenting him as an inspirational figure. Turner concluded *Revolution in Baja California* with the following sentence: "Ricardo Flores Magón

---

<sup>320</sup> Rey Devis, "Editor's Forward," in Ethel Duffy Turner, *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon* (Detroit: Blaine Ethridge Books, 1981), iii.

<sup>321</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 35.

<sup>322</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 35.

lives on, inspiring from his Rotonda tomb all who believe that liberty and the good life for every being is neither luxury nor pipe dream.”<sup>323</sup>

Though she noted in passing the racism of Louis James’s June proclamation in Tijuana, prejudice against Mexicans constitutes a minor theme of Turner’s work at best. She, like Verter after her, considered the majority of the PLM force as moved by high ideals. However, her description contains some of complexity and confusion emphasized by Samaniego López: “Among the true adherents to the Liberal cause were found followers of many ideologies— Socialism, Anarchism, independent free-thinking, Constitutional Republicanism. In the minds of many was confusion as to the ultimate aims of the Partido Liberal, even though Ricardo Flores Magón was constantly emphasizing these aims.”<sup>324</sup> While the PLM was always doing the right thing in Turner’s assessment, according to her some within the PLM-affiliated force still didn’t grasp the Party’s revolutionary ideals: “At this time *Regeneración*’s circulation was 25,000 a week, but numbers of recruits in Baja California either did not read the paper or did not digest its contents. This was particularly true of the Anglo-Americans. The *comisión de gobierno* did its best to indoctrinate volunteers and to weed out crackpots and the suspect, but perfection is unattainable in such a fluid, fast-breaking situation.”<sup>325</sup> Turner’s comment about Anglo-Americans resonates obliquely with the white supremacy and colonial mentality Samaniego López details.

About the situation after Francisco Madero’s victory at Juárez, Chihuahua, Turner wrote: “Opportunists and traitors within the Liberal camp tried subtly to disaffect some men over these issues, but the majority remained loyal to the Partido Liberal.”<sup>326</sup> Samaniego López’s narrative

---

<sup>323</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 86.

<sup>324</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 37.

<sup>325</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 37.

<sup>326</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 38.

of conflict within the Tijuana camp and endless defections to maderismo conflicts with Turner's claim here. Likewise, Turner stressed the upright conduct of PLM troops following the capture of El Álamo: "But their fighting spirit was strong, and they took no advantage of the inhabitants, who were treated considerately, per the Junta's standing order that no looting or mistreatment of non-combatants was to be tolerated."<sup>327</sup> Samaniego López, by contrast, focuses on the suffering of Baja Californians in occupied areas, some of whom—and not just the rich—lost possessions or even their lives to the armed contingent. Many fled across the border to the United States. Read beside Samaniego López, Turner's citation of the PLM organizing junta's directives highlights the tension between how Flores Magón and company wanted the campaign to go and what happened on the ground Baja California. This constitutes an example of the broader tension between the global and the local.<sup>328</sup>

Another important text in the historiography, Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen's 1992 *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California* constitutes a source for both Verter and Samaniego López. Employing the aesthetics of scholarly distance and the pursuit of historical truth, Taylor Hansen typifies the academic side of the school of thought that situates the events of 1911 within their international context first and foremost. Taylor Hansen devotes a chapter to PLM allies in the United States and multiple chapters to the shifting ideology of the PLM. He analyzes the participation of non-Mexicans in Baja California with the same in Madero's forces elsewhere on Mexico's northern frontier, assessing in the former as unique only numerically. His final chapter covers what he describes as "a propaganda campaign from the Porfirian

---

<sup>327</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 38.

<sup>328</sup> Turner, *Revolution in Baja California*, 38.

government to brand the Liberals as ‘filibusters.’”<sup>329</sup> *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California* is one of the many texts in this historiographical tradition that Samaniego López makes a point of contesting.

At the same time, Taylor Hansen includes the failures and contradictions of the PLM’s internationalist ideology. Regarding the composition of the armed force, he writes the following: “As will be seen ahead, the ‘Wobblies’ would come to constitute only a third of the total number of foreigners who fought in Baja California, the principal theater of combat of the Liberal military campaign of 1910 to 1911. The other two thirds would be made up of soldiers of fortune, army veterans, cowboys, students, vagabonds, etc.”<sup>330</sup> Of these two thirds, he writes that “a good proportion of these men were without doubt attracted by the opportunity to earn money and acquire lands in Mexico.”<sup>331</sup> However, although he presents this heterogeneous force as falling short of the PLM’s goal of universal workers’ revolution without regard for national borders, Taylor does not engage with the theme of Anglo discrimination against Mexicans. To the contrary, he portrays the IWW as one of the few U.S. labor organizations of that period to include members regardless of their “color or sex” and that, unlike the Socialist Party, was not segregated by race. Tellingly, Taylor Hansen spends two paragraphs on Jack London’s friendship with John Kenneth Turner and support for revolutionary action in Mexico without

---

<sup>329</sup> “una campaña propagandística del gobierno porfirista para tachar a los liberales como ‘filibusteros’” Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California: El apogeo de la lucha revolucionaria del Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1992), 84.

<sup>330</sup> “Como se verá más adelante, los ‘wobblies’ llegarían a constituir únicamente un tercio del número total de los extranjeros que lucharon en Baja California, el teatro de combate principal de la campaña militar liberal de 1910 a 1911. Los otros dos tercios se formarían de soldados de fortuna, veteranos del ejército, vaqueros, estudiantes, vagabundos, etc.” Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 34.

<sup>331</sup> “una buena proporción de estos hombres fueron sin duda atraídos por la oportunidad de ganar dinero y adquirir tierras en México” Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 42.

discussing London's pronounced white supremacy and later call for U.S. military occupation of Mexico.<sup>332</sup>

As many academic authors treating anticapitalist movements in general and anarchism specifically, Taylor Hansen suggests that the PLM's sympathizers "wanted to reach more immediate goals, like improvements in wages and working conditions, more than a radical transformation of society and the distribution of wealth."<sup>333</sup> He criticizes the lack of organization and leadership in the PLM, though without making the claim—as Samaniego López does—that the PLM junta had no meaningful control over troops in the field. In sum, *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California* is centrally concerned with the filibustering question in relation to Flores Magón's reputation and explains his internationalist anarchist ideology in order to show why so many non-Mexicans participated in the Baja California campaign.<sup>334</sup>

Taylor Hansen's piece in the 2011 edited collection *Baja California a cien años de la Revolución Mexicana* indicates that his views have shifted but not changed dramatically since writing *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California*. In his chapter, Taylor consistently focuses on the matter of filibustering and the importance of global context. He does note, citing *Nacionalismo y revolución*, that the filibuster thesis did not originate with Rómulo Velasco Ceballos but emerged years earlier; Taylor also pays somewhat more attention to the history of filibustering in Baja California. On the other hand, the notion of a conspiracy to defame the PLM remains key. After a curious section arguing that most every faction during the revolution technically included filibusters according to U.S. law, Taylor begins his conclusion as follows:

---

<sup>332</sup> Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 56, 80-82. The English section of *Regeneración* condemned Jack London after he publicly advocated U.S. invasion and imperial pacification of Mexico. See "Jack London Again.," *Regeneración* 194, July 4, 1914, 4. This piece is unattributed but was probably written by William C. Own, the English-page editor.

<sup>333</sup> Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 80.

<sup>334</sup> Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 80, 124.

The magonista revolt in Baja California had the misfortune of happening in a region where the collective memory of the filibustering expeditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had left a profound impact on the consciousness of the inhabitants. Additionally, even though magonismo represented the culmination of a rebel movement that had originated in Mexico and that included the most radical aspirations of the political plans proposed by the different groups that participated in the armed struggle 1910-1920, it also found itself inserted, in a somewhat ironic manner, within the general context of U.S. expansionism that was found in its stage of full development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>335</sup>

Here, regional specificity combines with internationalist radical ideology to produce strange and tragic results. While recognizing the genuine threat of annexation, Taylor Hansen frames Mexican suspicion of the PLM army as basically a matter of misunderstanding; the history of filibustering made a revolution look like an annexation attempt. Taylor Hansen's penultimate paragraph contains a strong endorsement of transnational analysis: "Limiting the discussion of the events of 1911 in Baja California to the national determining factors to the exclusion of consideration of the significance of the international in which it was located, is to deny a reality, as well as to restrict the possibility of reaching a deeper and more correct understanding on the subject."<sup>336</sup> On a simplistic but useful local-global continuum, Samaniego López leans toward the local whereas Taylor Hansen favors the global in a manner that echoes the two opposed grand syntheses of the Mexican Revolution: Alan Knight's *The Mexican Revolution* and John Mason Hart's *Revolutionary Mexico*. Neither Samaniego López nor Taylor Hansen employs critical regionalism as such; I am not convinced that either of the

---

<sup>335</sup> "La revuelta magonista en Baja California tuvo el infortunio de ocurrir en una region en donde la memoria colectiva de las expediciones filibusteras del siglo XIX había dejado un profundo impacto sobre la conciencia de sus habitantes. Asimismo, si bien el magonismo representaba la culminación de un movimiento rebelde que se había originado en México y que abarcaba las aspiraciones más radicales de los planes políticos propuestos por los distintos grupos que participaron en la lucha armada de 1910-1920, también se encontró insertado, de manera algo irónica, dentro del contexto general del expansionismo estadounidense que se encontraba en su etapa de pleno desarrollo a finales del siglo XIX y las primeras décadas del XX." Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 48-49.

<sup>336</sup> "Limitar la discusión de una consideración del significado del contexto internacional en que se ubicaban, es negar una realidad, así como coartar la posibilidad de llegar a una comprensión más profunda y acertada al respecto." Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 49.

historiographies meet José Limón's ideal of interweaving the local with the global. As Taylor Hansen writes, "it's probable that the study of the campaign in Baja California will continue arousing interest among professional historians and writers in general for many years in the future."<sup>337</sup>

This has held so far. In 2017, Marco Antonio Samaniego López published a long article on the relationship between the PLM and Italian and other European anarchists in the aftermath of the 1911 campaign in Baja California. A number of Italian anarchists joined the PLM-associated armed contingent, mostly at Tijuana in May. They found conditions on the ground disillusioning and many proceeded to make the case that the PLM had misled them about revolution in Mexico, that it was concocted to benefit the PLM and sell copies of *Regeneración*. In arguing against this, Ludovico Caminita and other Italian anarchists aligned with the PLM characterized the forces who took Tijuana in 1911 as bandits, American cowboys, and filibusters; they argued that Tijuana was a sideshow and the real Mexican Revolution was happening elsewhere, most notably with Emiliano Zapata. Samaniego López cites his previous work on the subject and emphasizes this shared understanding of band under Carl Ap Rhys Pryce that took Tijuana in May 1911: "they were in agreement, as much *Regeneración* in Italian as *Cronaca Sovversiva*, that the men who occupied Tijuana were bandits, cowboys without ideology."<sup>338</sup> This supports the case of *Nacionalismo y revolución* that Baja Californians acted reasonably by opposing the armed bands as filibusters and Anglo invaders. The article also

---

<sup>337</sup> "es probable que el estudio de la campaña en Baja California continuará despertando interés entre los historiadores profesionales y escritores en general durante muchos años en el futuro" Taylor Hansen, *La campaña magonista*, 49.

<sup>338</sup> "estuvieron de acuerdo, tanto *Regeneración* en italiano como *Cronaca Sovversiva*, en que los que ocuparon Tijuana eran bandoleros, *cowboys* sin ideología." Samaniego López, "El poblado fronterizo de Tijuana. Emiliano Zapata y la *rivoluzione da tavolo*," *HMex* 66, no. 3 (2017), 1172. This piece additionally analyzes *Regeneración* in Italian's portrayal of Emiliano Zapata's movement as aligned with anarchism and reason for anarchists across the world to support, which Samaniego López writes was an inaccurate presentation of Zapata. The relationship between zapatismo and anarchism goes beyond the scope of this chapter.



highlights the amount of effort the PLM put into attracting Italian and other European anarchists, which was frustrated in part by the racist notion from prominent anarchists like Luigi Galleani that Mexico's relatively low population of white Europeans meant that anarchism could not take hold there.

In the 2018 book *Radicals in the Barrio*, Justin Akers Chacón covers the 1911 insurrection over a number of pages, centering Indigenous participation and big-picture structural factors such as the PLM's base of support, the economic conditions in Baja California at the time, and how U.S. and Mexican authorities collaborated to quash the PLM-associated forces "to prevent a socialistic revolution."<sup>339</sup> Chacón mentions tensions within the armed contingents only vaguely: "Internal conflicts led the rebel force to divide, leading to many desertions."<sup>340</sup> He likewise noted the problems the "appearance of more norteamericanos with no left-wing affiliation" who were "opportunists, spies, and other shady figures with ulterior motives" caused in June 1911 but gives scant details.<sup>341</sup> As a final assessment, Chacón criticized the PLM's strategy of armed struggle by small bands instead of focusing "revolutionary efforts at the point of production" and writes that "the PLM ceased to be a coherent political force within the Mexican revolutionary process" after its defeat in Baja California and further state repression against the Party's leadership.<sup>342</sup>

David Struthers's *The World in a City* devotes an entire chapter to what he terms "The Baja Raids," providing nuanced treatment informed by the earlier work and indicating an encouraging trend in recent scholarship on the subject. Consistent with his book's overall theme,

---

<sup>339</sup> Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 268.

<sup>340</sup> Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio*, 268.

<sup>341</sup> Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio*, 268.

<sup>342</sup> Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio*, 269.

Struthers highlights “international” and “interracial” composition of the PLM-associated revolutionary coalition in Baja California in 1911 and the importance this “diversity.”<sup>343</sup> However, he swiftly centers the complications involved in this international and interracial campaign: “Though this moment offered great promise to radicals, it ended in military failure, bitter disputes among contemporaries, and a complex historiography.”<sup>344</sup> Diverging somewhat from Samaniego López’s interpretation, Struthers suggests that the majority of the PLM-associated armed contingents fought because of at least approximately ideological commitment while acknowledging the presence of “a number of adventurers and others not drawn to the fight for the cause of liberty.”<sup>345</sup> Struthers covers same vitriolic exchanges between the PLM, Luigi Galleani’s orbit, and other anarchists in the pages of *Regeneración* and *Cronaca Sovversiva* as Samaniego López’s 2017 article, likewise noting the anti-Indian racism of some of the European anarchists involved. The chapter concludes on an optimistic note: “The lack of military or political success of the cosmopolitan army should not constrain the historical legacy of the PLM-led insurgency in Baja California.”<sup>346</sup> Struthers reiterates that the events of 1911 offer both inspiration and a “cautionary tale” of the challenges of internationalism across “distinct cultural and ideological differences.”<sup>347</sup>

Struthers valuably underlines the participation of military veterans in the 1911 insurrection and implications of this background: “By pointing their guns at the Mexican state—most for the cause of liberty—using skills acquired in the racist conflicts of colonial states, they created a moment of imperial contradiction in Baja California.”<sup>348</sup> In Peter Kyne’s account, it is

---

<sup>343</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 128.

<sup>344</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 128.

<sup>345</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 145.

<sup>346</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 156.

<sup>347</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 156.

<sup>348</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 128.

that shared military culture that dominates the narrative and binds together men from various European-settler and European backgrounds. Struthers additionally introduces a novel interpretation of the venerable historiographical controversy around the question of filibustering. After noting how the PLM-associated troops were an “outside force” in Tijuana whatever “their intentions or the justness of their cause,” Struthers writes the following: “The PLM’s anarchist goals of using Baja California to put its ideals into action by seizing and collectively cultivating land could be viewed as an anarchist filibuster.”<sup>349</sup> Resonant with Lawrence Taylor Hansen’s and Mitchell Verter’s perspectives, Struthers highlights how nationalism and dominant nation-state framework made the PLM’s anarchist internationalism almost unintelligible.

The participation of veterans of imperial wars in the 1911 insurrection invites further inquiry and analysis. If we accept the other scholarship and period accounts that call in question that idea that most of the veterans in the armed bands in Baja California fought for the cause of liberty, then the moment appears as much one of imperial consistency as contradiction. Especially in the United States but also in the British Empire and across Europe, imperialism exceeded the bounds of centralized control and clear state sponsorship. As in Peter Kyne’s narrative, soldiering for glory, thrill, and personal gain was something white men did from sheer exuberance—out of an “excess of red blood,” as Kyne wrote of Shorty O’Donnell.<sup>350</sup> The profound discord within the forces nominally under the PLM in Baja California came in part from the enduring imperial scripts many of the veterans involved followed. In 1911, the trope of the filibuster was firmly established in the Anglo-American and broader European consciousness. Even if the leadership structure of imperial militaries at times endeavored to restrain it, banditry and wanton cruelty were fundamental elements of imperial military

---

<sup>349</sup> Struthers, *World in a City*, 146.

<sup>350</sup> Kyne, “Gringo as Insurrecto,” 263.

practice. The model of the daring white adventurer who conquered (stole) Indigenous land and wealth was of course the origin of the United States and moreover Texas and the entire U.S. West.

Despite the fact that Lawrence Taylor Hansen and Marco Antonio Samaniego López reference the same source documents and same basic narrative of events, their interpretations stand far from one another conceptually and affectively. The latter author's focus on Anglo racism against Mexicans and authentic annexationist sympathies among the armed contingent as well as the plight of Baja Californian residents and refugees produces a divergent understanding of the events of 1911. While Taylor Hansen's internationalist reading is approximately compatible with the celebratory accounts from Verter and Turner, *Nacionalismo y revolución* prompts piercing questions about what contradictions involved mean for anarchist theory and practice. Given my personal experience with the present-day radical community and my observations of the racism and colonialism within it, I find the conflicts between Anglos and Mexicans in the Baja California campaign uncannily familiar. I worry that glorifying the Anglo-American members of the PLM-affiliated armed contingent without acknowledging how pervasively white supremacy and settlerism circulated among them furthers white supremacy here in the twenty-first century. The sanguine narrative simultaneously constitutes a missed opportunity to interrogate the complexities of working-class white masculinity in the early twentieth century. That Anglos—IWW members included—in Baja California could go for explicitly white-supremacist schemes one day and back to global class war the next speaks volumes about their conflicting interests and sympathies in the period. I write this chapter in part to invite further analysis of the PLM Baja California campaign that attends in depth to questions of race, white supremacy, and nationalism in relation to the global anarchist movement.

Samaniego López's corpus suggests the need to qualify and complicate the meaning of anarchist transnationalism. I like to think the classical anarchist period gives us both a wealth of examples to emulate and terrifying traps to avoid.

In relation to the status stakes at play in this historical controversy, Samaniego López's careful attempt to recuperate the honor of the Mexicans who organized to defend the national territory from U.S. invasion and to remember the suffering of those driven from their homes lead to high-level questions about agency in history as well as about the place of the region in national and international history. Presumably because it unsettles the celebratory narrative, few other accounts of the events of 1911 dwell on how the PLM-affiliated army caused harm to the civilian population. The patriotic volunteers appear strictly as dupes of the elite in this discourse, a stance Samaniego López firmly rejects, as refuted by, and infeasible because of, the presence of family members of the volunteers in Baja California. In this way Baja California appears as a sort of historiographical sacrifice, with these local interests in respect ignored with the ends of creating a more inspiring and coherent story about the PLM and the revolutionary prophet Ricardo Flores Magón. I remain optimistic that we can produce knowledge that avoids this diminution of the local in favor of the global and that exhibits a wide-ranging if not completely indiscriminate empathy for the historical actors and contemporary interests involved. For Baja California in 1911, the scholarship of Marco Antonio Samaniego López, Claudio Lomnitz, and David Struthers begins to take us in that direction.

## 4. “Ancient Usage and Primal Instinct”: Discourses of the Indian in the Partido Liberal Mexicano

### Introduction

The independence struggles of Indigenous peoples, such as the Yaquis, as well as the Indian heritage and traditions of the majority of the Mexican population, occupied a central position in the thought of Partido Liberal Mexicano. Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón identified with the real or imagined Aztec side of their ancestry and synthesized Mesoamerican custom with European-derived anarchist communism. Numerous Indigenous people across Mexico—including the Yaqui traditionalist Luis Espinosa—participated in or sympathized with the PLM cause. Notably, Ricardo Flores Magón vehemently rejected José Spagnoli’s attempts to characterize Indigenous peoples as ignorant nomadic savages who could do nothing to advance anarchist revolution. European and Euro-American PLM members and allies likewise celebrated the Indian as a figure of resistance, but they drew explicitly on popular ideas about inherent racial difference. This paper compares and contrasts theorizations of the Indian by Indigenous and mestizo thinkers with those from Anglo anarchists William C. Owen and Voltairine de Cleyre. I argue that Owen and de Cleyre articulated a deeply problematic narrative of the Indian as inexorably driven to anarchist communism via biology. While they never explicitly disputed this essentialism and occasionally channeled elements of it, the Flores Magón brothers emphasized social rather biological forces in their conceptualizations of the Indigenous roots of revolution. Although I criticize the troubling racial discourse employed by Owen and de Cleyre, I concur with Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado that the PLM offers an inspiring example of multiethnic revolutionary solidarity and an invaluable alternative to the Mexican nationalist canon embodied by José Vasconcelos.

The PLM opposed government oppression of Indigenous Mexicans even from its early days when it operated within the Mexican liberal tradition exemplified by Benito Juárez. Porfirio Díaz's war against the Yaquis constituted an important PLM grievance against the dictator during this period. As the Party and its primary periodical, *Regeneración*, moved toward anarchist communism, the Mexican Indian became a heroic figure of rebellion. Instead of demanding better state policy toward Indigenous peoples and stressing their rights as Mexican citizens, as they had previously, the openly anarchist PLM viewed the Mesoamerican communal tradition as a precedent and inspiration for anticapitalist revolution. They formed alliances with groups such as the Yaqui traditionalists who took up arms to reclaim their ancestral lands for the common use. The PLM of this era both cited Indigenous communism as a basis for revolutionary forms of social organization across Mexico and the world and enthusiastically supported specific tribal struggles for autonomy. PLM eagerly reported on Indigenous communities across Mexico, entreating all Indigenous peoples to follow the example of the Yaquis, taking possession of their lands and defending them with force. It is crucial to understand this support was material as well as rhetorical and ideological. PLM intellectuals promiscuously and inconsistently invoked and merged discourses of indigeneity drawn from a variety of sources: direct experience with existing Indigenous communities, narratives of mestizaje and thus Indian ancestry as Mexican national identity, universalist yet Eurocentric anarchist ideology, anthropological primitivism, and positivist conceptions racial difference based on evolution.<sup>351</sup>

## **Historiographical Controversy**

---

<sup>351</sup> Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado, *La utopía de Ricardo Flores Magón: revolución, anarquía y comunalidad india* (Oaxaca, Oax.: Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, Secretaría Académica, 1994), 11-12. My list of discourses here is not intended to be exhaustive.

Because of these dense and diverse discourses at play within the PLM, contemporary scholarship produces varying interpretations of the Party's racial politics that range from mainstream mestizo Mexican nationalism to radical Indigenous self-determination. Mexican anthropologist Maldonado Alvarado has devoted much ink to the latter perspective, exploring and promoting the PLM as site of decolonial thought. In an especially effective essay, Maldonado Alvarado juxtaposes excerpts from Flores Magón and three other famous Mexican figures to show how Flores Magón offers an alternative to patronizing theorizations of Indigenous identity prevalent among government officials both before and after the Mexican Revolution. Maldonado Alvarado reads the PLM as not indulging the colonialist discourse of mestizo Mexican nationalism that consigns the Indian to the past but instead grasping Indigenous self-determination as contemporary to and part of the global anarchist struggle. He stresses that PLM rhetoric conceptualized Indigenous community as a contemporary part of the revolution and as models for future modes of living. "Indians existed as such in that epoch as now," Maldonado writes, "and the magonistas knew how to see and value this better than many academics of yesterday and today."<sup>352</sup> Thus, he situates the PLM as distinct from the deeply colonialist narratives of Indigenous identity prevalent throughout Mexican nationalism and the discipline of anthropology. Scholars in critical Indigenous studies and Native studies theorize temporal displacement and disappearance—the vanished or vanished Indian—as a core component of colonialist discourse that denies agency and self-determination to Indigenous peoples. As a counter to such discourse, decolonial writers assert Native presence, survivance,

---

<sup>352</sup> "Los indios existían como tales en esa época como ahora, y esto lo supieron ver y valorar los magonistas mejor que muchos académicos de ayer y hoy." Maldonado Alvarado, "El indio y lo idio en el anarquismo magonista," in Maldonado Alvarado, *Ante el centenario de la Revolución Mexicana: Magonismo y vida communal mesoamericana* (Oaxaca de Juárez: Oaxaca, Secretaría de Cultura, 2010), 27.



and modernity. In this fashion, PLM thought and Maldonado Alvarado's analysis of it speaks to contemporary Indigenous Anglophone as well as Spanish-language scholarship and literature.<sup>353</sup>

By contrast, in "On the Origin of the 'Mexican Race,'" Claudio Lomnitz cites the PLM and Flores Magón as examples of the mestizo Mexican nationalism so iconic for the Mexican Revolution and ties the construction of the Mexican race to the "ideological-scientific matrix" of "Spencerism, eugenics, and a positivist discourse of adaptation and progress."<sup>354</sup> This reflects the PLM's inception as a liberal nationalist party and a recurring theme across its existence but ignores the PLM's internationalist anarchism, theorization of Indigenous culture, and on-the-ground connection with tribal groups. Lomnitz's elaborates on this analysis of Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's claims to indigeneity in *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. He writes that "it is always worth being skeptical of any claim of Indian identity in the case of the Flores Magóns" and describes Teodoro Flores, father of Ricardo and Enrique, as not an Indian by the standard of the day because of education, particularly command of the Spanish language.<sup>355</sup> I appreciate Lomnitz's contributions to our understanding of racial Mexican nationalism and consider his work useful exploring this aspect of PLM thought even as I find his classification of the Party incomplete and potentially misleading. Casting Flores Magón as a nationalist conforms to longstanding historiographical tradition based in the post-revolutionary Mexican government's desire to appropriate his mass appeal and obscure his radicalism. Maldonado Alvarado mocks this canonical tale of the PLM as precursor to the revolution

---

<sup>353</sup> Maldonado Alvarado, "Los indios y la revolución: Cuatro pensadores mexicanos a principios de siglo," *La utopía de Ricardo Flores Magón*, 41-47; Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 52-53.

<sup>354</sup> Claudio Lomnitz, "On the Origin of the 'Mexican Race,'" in Laura Gotkowitz, ed., *Histories of Race and Racism: The Andes and Mesoamerica from Colonial Times to the Present* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 214-215

<sup>355</sup> Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 46.

Francisco Madero lead. In my analysis, I acknowledge the complicity of PLM thinkers with oppressive discourses such as scientific racism and eugenics while simultaneously exploring their piercing critique of colonial capitalist society and honoring their commitment to create a world without domination or exploitation.

As Lomnitz notes, accounts of Teodoro Flores's identity vary. Enrique Flores Magón said that his father claimed Aztec ancestry as a descendant of military expedition to Oaxaca long before the Spanish came.<sup>356</sup> Lomnitz dismisses this a "fanciful story" and a "fantasy" that allowed Flores Magón to conceive of "his lineage as an alternate source of national authority" and obfuscate the relatively privileged class position his family experienced in Mazatlán.<sup>357</sup> Other historians, such as Genaro Amezcua, have affirmed Flores Magón's description of his father as Nahua while additionally presenting his mother, Margarita Magón, as mestiza. Others still portray Teodoro Flores as Zapotec, Mazatec, or simply Indian, while Hilario Topete Lara asserts that he was a mestizo who lived in a Mazatec community.<sup>358</sup> In his 2018 book *Radicals in the Barrio*, Justin Akers Chacón writes that Teodoro Flores "was a Mazatec indigenous cacique and defender of the traditional collectivism that was deeply rooted in the Oaxacan highlands from the pre-Hispanic era."<sup>359</sup> As with most claims about Teodoro Flores, Chacón does not provide a reference, but this account appears based on Enrique Flores Magón's description, albeit without the story of Aztec ancestry. Unlike Lomnitz, Chacón follows in Amezcua's footsteps and presents the Flores Magón brothers' Indigenous origins as a matter of fact and does not question them.

---

<sup>356</sup> Enrique Flores Magón, *Combatimos la tiranía: Un Pionero Revolucionario Mexicano Cuenta su Historia a Samuel Kaplan* (Mexico City: 1958 ), trans. Jesús Amaya Topete, 10-11

<sup>357</sup> Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 40-41.

<sup>358</sup> Hilario Topete Lara, "Los Flores Magón y sus circunstancias," *Contribuciones desde Coatepec*, no. 8 (January-June 2005), 73.

<sup>359</sup> Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 116.

What can we make of this confusion? Why does the identity of Flores Magón family matter? The interpretation promoted by Amezcua and Chacón, in line with Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's own articulations, position their Indigenous heritage as matter of authenticity, connection, and history. In this narrative, Teodoro Flores's status as an Indigenous leader in his agricultural community, the communalist values he held, and the grievances against Porfirio Díaz he expressed, grant weight to Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's political trajectory. Claudio Lomnitz focuses on unraveling this tale by highlighting conflicting information, instead portraying the Flores Magón family as thoroughly culturally mestizo and part of the local elite. Ricardo Flores Magón generally positioned himself as mestizo in his writings, though Ralph Chaplin wrote that Flores Magón claimed to be a "full-blooded Indian" shortly before his death at Leavenworth Penitentiary in 1922.<sup>360</sup> Shawn England's essay "*Magonismo*, the Revolution, and the Anarchist Appropriation of an Imagined Mexican Indigenous Identity" exemplifies the conflicting scholarly interpretations of Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's assertions of indigeneity and its place in PLM thought overall. Despite the title and the piece's mention of how the PLM drew on "an idealized—or imagined—conceptualization of indigenous cultural patterns characteristic of agrarian Mexico," England concludes on a similar note to Benjamín Maldonado Alvarado.<sup>361</sup> The essay ends by arguing that "more than ample evidence exists to show an ideological congruence between PLM doctrine and the long-neglected aspirations of

---

<sup>360</sup> Ralph Chaplin, *Wobbly: The Rough-and-Tumble Story of an American Radical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 278. Chaplin, a prominent member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), claimed to have spent considerable time with Ricardo Flores Magón and treated him with reverence. Chaplin described other "full-blooded" Indians in the text, so that may have been a pet term of his or simply reflective of the time. Chaplin may have interpreted Flores Magón statements through his own Anglo-American lens or Flores Magón may have presented himself differently depending on the context. Claudio Lomnitz notes how Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara claimed to be almost pure Aztec to U.S. audiences but would have struggled to pass off such an assertion in Mexico City. See Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 126-130.

<sup>361</sup> Shawn England, "*Magonismo*, the Revolution, and the Anarchist Appropriation of an Imagined Mexican Indigenous Identity," in Geoffroy de Laforcade and Kirwin R Shaffer, eds., *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 244.

Mexico's rural indigenous people."<sup>362</sup> Ultimately, the question of Flores Magón family's relationship with indigeneity relates to broad quandaries about the overall experience of mestizaje in Mexico and across the Americas, as well as to specific discourses prominent in the early twentieth century.

As Linnete Manrique writes, Mexican eugenics developed in the revolutionary period and in conjunction with mestizo nationalism; it addressed longstanding questions about the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Mexican state. The indigenista movement operated alongside eugenics and mestizo nationalism, with each partially overlapping and intertwined. Liberalism and its radical edges likewise intersected with these discourses at times. Manrique, Claudio Lomnitz, and various other scholars underscore indigenismo and mestizo nationalism as projects of control and regulation that remained, to use Manrique's words, "steeped in racist ideology."<sup>363</sup> The PLM operated within this framework on occasion, especially in the Party's earlier years as a big-tent liberal organization. As late as September 1911, Ricardo Flores Magón cited Andrés Molina Enríquez's critique of Francisco Madero as a criollo, hacendado, and conservative whose class interests conflicted with Mexico's mestizo and Indigenous laboring masses.<sup>364</sup> Molina Enríquez would become a key figure in the postrevolutionary Mexican state's articulation of indigenismo and mestizo nationalism; he had already published his grand study of Mexican society in 1909, which served as an inspiration and guide.

## **Anarchist Communism with Deep Roots**

---

<sup>362</sup> England, "Magonismo," 256.

<sup>363</sup> Linnete Manrique, "Dreaming of a Cosmic Race: José Vasconcelos and the Politics of Race in Mexico, 1920s-1930s," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3:1 (2016), 2-5; Manrique, "Making the Nation: The Myth of Mestizajes," *Anthropology* 5:3 (2017), 4.

<sup>364</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón, "Notas al vuelo," *Regeneración* 55, September 16, 1911.

Flores Magón's two 1911 articles "The Right of Property" ("El derecho de propiedad") and "The Mexican People Are Suited to Communism" ("El pueblo mexicano es apto para el comunismo") provide a point of departure for examining in detail PLM theorizations of the Mesoamerican communal tradition as a historical and enduring foundation for transformation. In the first, Flores Magón performed the double move of assigning the right of property to the "stupidity" ("la estupidez") of the past and describing the state of nature as communal landholding. Likewise, "primitive tribes" ("tribus primitivas") continued these practices, as had Indigenous groups such as the Yaquis and Mayas until recently dispossessed by the Díaz regime.<sup>365</sup> Indigenous primitivity here exists alongside abiding respect for the described tribal way of life and condemnation of the contemporary colonial campaign by the Mexican government. The next piece, written nearly five months later, explicitly articulates Indigenous communal practices as amounting to or at least resonating with anarchist communism. Essentialism makes a brief appearance when the articles assert that "[t]he Mexican people hate, instinctively, authority and the bourgeoisie" but then fades before the focus on historically grounded social organization.<sup>366</sup> Flores Magón described Mexico's roughly four million Indigenous people as living in egalitarian agricultural villages and then proceeded to write that rural mestizos lived the same way. The article concludes that the Mexican people—Indigenous and mestizo alike—are ready for communism because of their centuries of communal practice.

The PLM expressed interest in and support for Indigenous struggles & specifically the Yaqui struggle starting at an early date. Ricardo Flores Magón's piece "¡Pobres indios!" ("Poor Indians!") from January 1906 shows how he articulated this subject at that time and how he

---

<sup>365</sup> Flores Magón, "El derecho de propiedad," *Regeneración*, March 18, 1911, 2.

<sup>366</sup> "El pueblo mexicano odia, por instinto, á la Autoridad y á la burguesía." Flores Magón, "El pueblo mexicano es apto para el comunismo," *Regeneración*, September 2, 1911, 1.

positioned himself in relation to Mexico's Indigenous peoples. Writing under the pen name Anakreón in *El Colmillo Público*, Flores Magón centered hope in the context of widespread oppression: "In all the republic and despite the prejudice that there is against the indigenous race that is gratuitously considered inferior to the mestizo and to the white, a spirit of justice starts to sprout in favor of the race that Netzahualcōyotl and Cuauhtémoc, Altamirano and Juárez knew how to make glorious."<sup>367</sup> As this early passage suggests, the article does frame Indigenous issues in part through the lens of Mexican nationalism, of the importance of Indigenous people to Mexico as a whole. Flores Magón wrote how he and others opposed to Porfirio Díaz saw "the motherland's salvation in that stoic race when we have nourished its spirit and we have put it in conditions for nourishing its body."<sup>368</sup> He stressed the contrast between revolutionary desires to uplift the Indian and the Díaz regime's horrific brutality against the Yaqui and Maya peoples. Flores Magón described the government's horrors as "the barbarism of the civilized" ("la barbarie de los civilizados"), directly engaging with and challenging the continuum-of-human-progress narrative.

The following exclamation comes close to the piece's conclusion, which speaks to how Ricardo Flores Magón articulated his own social position in 1906: "Poor Indians! We have the same blood and how far are we from them, those of us who call ourselves rational! Sad to come from a race when it itself forms the abyss that must divide it perhaps forever!"<sup>369</sup> The Spanish

---

<sup>367</sup> "En toda la república y a pesar del prejuicio que hay contra la raza indígena a la que gratuitamente se considera inferior a la mestiza y a la blanca, comienza a brotar un espíritu de justicia en favor de la raza que supieron hacer gloriosa Netzahualcōyotl y Cuauhtémoc, Altamirano y Juárez." Anakreón (Ricardo Flores Magón), "¡Pobres Indios!" *El Colmillo Público* 123, January 14, 1906, 18, <http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/art-periodisticos-1900-1918/1906/art824/> (accessed June 12, 2019).

<sup>368</sup> "en esa raza estóica la salvación de la patria cuando hayamos alimentado su espíritu y la hayamos puesto en condiciones de alimentar su cuerpo" Flores Magón, "¡Pobres Indios!", 18.

<sup>369</sup> "¡Pobres indios! ¡Tenemos la misma sangre y qué distantes estamos de ellos los que nos llamamos de razón! ¡Triste provenir el de una raza cuando ella misma forma el abismo que le ha de dividir tal vez para siempre!" Flores Magón, "¡Pobres Indios!" 18. It is possible "provenir" (to come from) here was intended to be "porvenir" (future), as "triste porvenir" is a much more common construction than "triste provenir."

wording here—“de razón” —refers to the category *gente de razón*, which excluded Native peoples on the basis of supposed rationality and degree of civilization. In the context of 1849 Oaxaca, Karen D. Caplan translates the “de razón” simply as “nonindigenous”; I interpret the meaning as similar in Flores Magón’s article, though the term carries with it claims of Indigenous inferiority and the weight of colonial history.<sup>370</sup> In the lines above, Flores Magón appears to be comparing mestizo and Indigenous communities specifically, given the invocation of shared blood. The article ends by calling for both education and land return for Indians, emphasizing how the Mexican state under Díaz dispossessed and waged wars of extermination against Indigenous peoples. Flores Magón hoped for new leaders like Benito Juárez to emerge and “invigorate our decrepit society,” claiming this was what Díaz feared. In this fashion, Flores Magón advocated for Indigenous liberation and self-determination while still at least rhetorically appealing to Mexican nationalism and presenting Indians as Mexico’s salvation.<sup>371</sup> The concern over incorporating Indigenous people into mainstream Mexican society and the notion of the Indian as Mexico’s potential redeemer, displayed by Ricardo Flores Magón in 1906, features prominently in indigenista and mestizo nationalist thought. “¡Pobres Indios!” contains a combination of discourses and lends itself to multiple interpretations, potentially consistent with either portraying Flores Magón as imbricated in mestizo nationalism or as a potent example of decolonial solidarity. It does not, however, support the notion that Flores Magón considered himself Indigenous.

## Permutations

---

<sup>370</sup> Karen D. Caplan, *Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatán* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 154, 22.

<sup>371</sup> “vigoricen nuestra sociedad decrepita” Flores Magón, “¡Pobres Indios!” 18.

Anglo PLM allies Owen and de Cleyre embraced the narrative the Mexican Indian as suited for anarchist communism and augmented them with notions of biological racial difference so popular in the Anglophone world and the United States in particular. As with other white radicals nominally opposed to racism and colonialism, they kept the hegemonic framework of racial taxonomy intact and invoked extant racial tropes while they unsettled dominant hierarchies. Owen and de Cleyre positioned the Indigenous people of the Americas as naturally primed for anarchist revolution via their innate characteristics. These narratives connected with and deviated from those of the Flores Magón brothers, portraying Mexican Indians as having a history of communal life but first and foremost as compelled by, in Owen's word, the "primal, uncontrollable instinct for Anarchism and Communism" to revolt against the hierarchy of "modern 'civilization.'"<sup>372</sup> In employing the rhetoric of the wild Indian who loves freedom and the land in favor of Indigenous insurrection, Owen and de Cleyre both turned colonial discourses of savagery upside down and marshaled the myth of the Noble Savage that positions Native peoples as a cultural resource for non-Natives. My analysis of their rhetoric criticizes its colonial origins and implications while also attending to its immediate functions in encouraging English speakers to politically and materially support the Mexican Revolution.

The following passage from Owen's December, 1911 article entitled "Zapata Represents Aspirations of the Mass: Fight for Land is based on Ancient Usage and Primal Instinct" merits quoting at length to illustrate the intense biologism he applied to comprehend the Mexican Indian and the revolutionary struggle in Mexico:

These all-powerful, primary instincts are the forces in revolt throughout the nation; for it must be understood that from 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 of the Mexican nation are practically pure Indian, and that everywhere the strain of Indian blood is much in evidence. It hates commercialism; loathes the factory, the plantation chaingang and the

---

<sup>372</sup> William C. Owen, "Zapata Represents Aspirations of the Mass: Fight for Land is based on Ancient Usage and Primal Instinct," *Regeneración*, December 2, 1911, 4.



discipline of the mine; cares nothing about the gaudy pleasures that unfortunately appeal so strongly to our city proletariat; wants to live its own simple life, on its own land, practising [sic] its Russian Mir-like communism its own way. Quite naturally, with all the indomitable power of racial instinct, it is in revolt.<sup>373</sup>

Compared with Flores Magón's earlier "The Right of Property," instinct has swelled to become a dominant theme rather than a passing mention and resides in the blood. Instinct has similarly turned into an overwhelming compulsion. Owen went so far as to credit the legal troubles of Jesús Flores Magón, brother of Ricardo and Enrique and a successful lawyer who sided with Madero's reformism, to irrepressible Indian blood rather than political convictions that opposed both the Díaz government and anarchism.<sup>374</sup> For Owen, brute force was the only reliable way to suppress the Indian's desire for autonomy; he cited Díaz as recognizing this dynamic. Owen, a "child of England," additionally distinguished his own commitment to and passion for anarchism as inferior in intensity to the Indian's relentless impulse toward liberty.<sup>375</sup> This discourse forms almost a perfect other side of the coin of the extreme colonialist narratives of Indigenous people in the Americas as constitutionally incompatible with civilization and therefore marked for extermination. Even as Owen reversed the normative framework by presenting Indians as inherently prone to the ideal manner of living and naturally horrified by the nightmare of industrial capitalism, the governing logic remains identical: Indians act according to their timeless racial traits rather than as complex agents navigating discreet historical scenarios in various ways.

---

<sup>373</sup> Owen, "Zapata Represents," 4. Owen later amended his population figures to match Flores Magón's. Mexican demographics in this period remain uncertain; significant evidence suggests Owen's estimate here may be more accurate. See Maldonado, "El indio y lo idio," *Ante el centenario*, 21 and Jorge G. Castañeda, *Mañana Forever?: Mexico and the Mexicans* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 74-77.

<sup>374</sup> Jesús Flores Magón was in fact a socialist who believed in gradually dismantling capitalism. See Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 275-278.

<sup>375</sup> Owen, "Zapata Represents," 4.

Biologicistic conceptions of Indigenous peoples have facilitated vast harm over the centuries since the first European invasion of the Americas. I historicize Owen's racial ideology in the hopes that enhancing our understanding of it can aid twenty-first-century revolutionaries in avoiding colonialist traps. In context of what Owen wanted to achieve and the audience he addressed, his strident appeal to biology held definite advantages and likely felt intuitive. Fixed racial taxonomy resonated with literate Anglophone discourse even if valorizing Indians as the inherently revolutionary violated widespread prejudices. The broad discourse of human biological difference appealed across the world and especially resonated with Anglo-Americans. Fear of U.S. intervention in Mexico marked the context in late 1911, with some of the U.S. mainstream press beating the drums of war. As Owen sought to convince English-speaking workers to support the PLM and the Mexican Revolution and to oppose U.S. military intervention in Mexico, characterizing Mexicans as driven by their very blood to overthrow capitalism and resist foreign invasion made for a dramatic rhetorical strategy. Committed revolutionaries stimulate confidence and thus support; dedicated defenders dissuade military occupation.

This is not to suggest that Owen took up racial taxonomy and innate difference as cynically calculated persuasive technique; his own words profess deep belief in essential hereditary traits for all people including himself. "In my judgment we all try," Owen wrote, "by an unconquerable law of our being, to do what pleases us; being, at bottom, the playthings of convictions, our tastes, our passions and our uncontrollable instincts."<sup>376</sup> Owen interpreted Mexican and Indian identity within a matrix of anarchist ideology and scientific racism, supposedly authoritative knowledge about human biological difference. In 1911, the year of the

---

<sup>376</sup> Owen, "Zapata Represents," 4.

article in question's publication, the notions of essential racial behavior and psychological traits remained an orthodox position within the scientific establishment; the anthropologist Franz Boas had only begun to mount a sustained challenge to this theory, at that point with limited impact. Like so many formally educated men of his generation, Owen personally had great interest in Herbert Spencer's thought. He went as far as publish a book on it in 1891, arguing for a socialist interpretation of Spencer.<sup>377</sup>

William C. Owen's remixing of evolutionist and eugenicist discourse resembles that of erstwhile PLM member Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara's thesis on Spanish inferiority put forth in his 1914 book, *The Mexican People*. Gutiérrez de Lara's calculated (and temporary) support for Francisco Madero based on socialist principles incurred Ricardo Flores Magón's ire and a stinging denunciation, but Gutiérrez de Lara remained a leftist troublemaker until his untimely death by firing squad in January 1918 on the orders of Plutarco Elías Calles. Claudio Lomnitz writes that Gutiérrez de Lara in *The Mexican People* "echoed eugenicist thinking of the day and made it his own while inverting its valuation of Spanish and Indian races." Gutiérrez de Lara went so far as to attribute everything good about Mexico to the Indigenous "races" and everything bad to the Spanish: a stark binary that categorizes the Spanish as the dregs of Europe, as ignorant brutes. The details of Gutiérrez de Lara's racial framework differ from Owen's while the core idea of exalting rather than denigrating the Indigenous peoples of Mexico constitutes a shared thread. The concept of hardwired racial difference based on evolution, so popular and

---

<sup>377</sup> David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 102-105; Erik March Zissu, *Blood Matters: Five Civilized Tribes and the Search of Unity in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31-34.

authoritative in the period, provided a structure of thought that radicals could modify to suit their aims and advance their agendas.<sup>378</sup>

U.S.-born anarchist and PLM ally Voltairine de Cleyre's treatise on the Mexican Revolution, which Owen cited approvingly in the pages of *Regeneración*, attests to the prominence of rigidly biological conceptions of human variation. She sketched the supposed tendencies of the Indian, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon races, wielding the same established structure as Owen. Though stating uncertainty about the origins of racial instinct, de Cleyre gave "the difference in the amount of sunlight received in the native countries inhabited of the various races" as a common explanation.<sup>379</sup> De Cleyre reproduced popular Anglo racial stereotypes but adjusted them to the end of separate-but-equal parity by explaining or revaluing seeming negative characteristics. The Indian wants "to be his own master," wants "to work when he pleases and stop when he pleases," "feels himself more a part of nature than a white man does," and so on.<sup>380</sup> The Latin "likes music and song and dance, picture-making, carving, and decorating."<sup>381</sup> Like the Indian, the Latin "does not want to work, except as is requisite to maintain himself in a position to do those things that he likes better."<sup>382</sup> The Anglo-Saxon, on the other hand, labors "to create the useful and the profitable—whether he has any use or profit out it or not—and to keep busy, busy."<sup>383</sup> The same as Owen, de Cleyre positions herself as conveying knowledge about worthy yet misunderstood instincts of other races to Anglos to induce them into supporting or at least sympathizing with the protagonists of the Mexican Revolution. This sort of

---

<sup>378</sup> Lomnitz, *Comrade Ricardo*, 129, 498-500; L. Gutiérrez de Lara and Edgcumb Pinchon, *The Mexican People: Their Struggle for Freedom* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1914), 3-6. Lomnitz displays considerable respect for Gutiérrez de Lara.

<sup>379</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Mexican Revolution," in *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914), 271.

<sup>380</sup> De Cleyre, "The Mexican Revolution," 270-271.

<sup>381</sup> De Cleyre, "The Mexican Revolution," 270-271.

<sup>382</sup> De Cleyre, "The Mexican Revolution," 270-271.

<sup>383</sup> De Cleyre, "The Mexican Revolution," 270-271.

solidarity carries with it vast danger. However, for all their manifest racism by the twenty-first-century standards I fully endorse, Owen and de Cleyre spilled ink and sweat to marshal financial and political assistance for Indigenous people struggling against colonial oppression with rifles in hand.<sup>384</sup>

Flores Magón at times assigned behavioral and psychological meaning to his biology, but inconsistently and never with as much emphasis as his Anglo comrades. In a letter to Elizabeth Trowbridge Sarabia dated February 21, 1909, Flores Magón recounted being visited by Mexican consul Antonio Lozano while incarcerated and wrote the following: “My Indian blood gave me in those moments the calm necessary to listen, containing the rebellions of my other blood, the Spanish, that invited me to spit on my strange visitor.”<sup>385</sup> This racial discourse—that of the Indian as stoic—appears sporadically in the pages of *Regeneración* but notably conflicts with the description of Indians as driven to revolt by primal urges against authority. Over a decade later, Flores Magón channeled elements of this latter discourse in a letter to Ellen White, albeit with the stress placed on environment over biology: “I am a wild man, I am a son of Nature, thus I resent any attack made on my freedom. My soul is animated yet with the breath of the mountains which saw my advent into life—a healthy breath, an unpolluted breath. This is why I love Justice and Beauty; this is why I would everybody loved Beauty and Justice.”<sup>386</sup>

---

<sup>384</sup> De Cleyre, “The Mexican Revolution,” 270-271.

<sup>385</sup> “Mi sangre de indio me dio en esos momentos la calma necesaria para escuchar conteniendo las rebeliones de mi otra sangre, la española, que me invitaba a escupir a mi extraño visitante.” Flores Magón to Elizabeth Trowbridge Sarabia, February 21, 1909, in *Obras Completas de Ricardo Flores Magón, Correspondencia 1 (1899-1918)* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2000), 511-512. Available at <http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1909/cor288/> (accessed January 21, 2020).

<sup>386</sup> Flores Magón to Ellen White, March 8, 1921, in *Obras Completas de Ricardo Flores Magón. Correspondencia 2 (1919-1922)* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2000), 124-129. Available at <http://archivomagon.net/obras-completas/correspondencia-1899-1922/c-1921/cor38-2/> (Access January 21, 2020).

## A Yaqui Voice

Luis Espinosa's 1914 statement from an armed Yaqui camp published in *Regeneración* articulates Indigenous resistance and community markedly differently from Owen, de Cleyre, and to an extent Flores Magón, even as it matches anarchist ideology by advocating uncompromising struggle against state and capital. Espinosa grounds Yaqui resistance and autonomy in the tribe's egalitarian communal practice and historical connection to the land rather than in racial instinct. The following passage illustrates this tribal grounding as well as anarchist thought:

We want the Mexican people to know that this disposition of ours is seen with disgust by many officials and heads of the Constitutionalist Party, because they possess our lands and, naturally, try to exterminate us, the legitimate owners of this region that saw the birth of our fathers, our grandfathers, our more distant ancestors, and those lands have been watered with our sweat and that of our fathers. They, the Constitutionlists, have corrupted many of our brothers so that they fight against us because we have never accepted any form of government, and because of that fact they call us savages, without seeing that without government we live in peace, without ambition, without anyone wanting to be above another. With their swindling, the Constitutionlists have formed factions among our race, one of them is ours, that doesn't want government, that keeps intact the traditions that our fathers have handed down to us, and for those who know that all government is bad and that man must be free and governed by his own conscience.<sup>387</sup>

For Espinosa, Yaqui tradition meant the rejection of capitalism, outside authority, and hierarchy in general. Espinosa situates the fight for Yaqui freedom as part of the overall class

---

<sup>387</sup> “Queremos que el pueblo mexicano sepa que esta disposición nuestra es vista con disgusto por muchos oficiales y jefes del Partido Constitucionalista, porque ellos poseen nuestras tierras y, naturalmente, tratan de exterminarnos a nosotros, los dueños legítimos de esta región que vió nacer a nuestros padres, a nuestros abuelos, a nuestros más remotos antepasados, y cuyas tierras han sido regadas con el sudor nuestro y de nuestros padres. Ellos, los constitucionalistas, han corrompido a muchos de nuestros hermanos para que peleen contra nosotros porque nunca hemos aceptado ninguna forma de gobierno, y por ese hecho nos llaman salvajes, sin ver que sin gobierno vivimos en paz, sin ambiciones, sin querer ser unos más que los otros. Con sus embaucamientos, los constitucionalistas han formado facciones entre nuestra raza, una de ellas es la nuestra, la que no quiere gobierno, la que conserva intacta las tradiciones que nuestros padres nos han legado, y por las que sabemos que todo gobierno es malo y que el hombre debe ser libre y tener por gobierno su propia conciencia.” Luis Espinosa, “La voz del yaqui,” *Regeneración*, September 12, 1914, 3.

war in Mexico yet as also distinct. The statement exhorts Yaquis to decline Constitutionalist cooption and join the military effort to regain ancestral lands and Yaqui autonomy. While Espinosa described the state and the bourgeoisie as oppressors without exception, writing that “we the poor must be with the poor in this struggle against the rich and governments,” the piece seeks to convince Yaquis specifically throughout.<sup>388</sup> The long excerpt quoted above implies the desire for the Mexican people as a whole to oppose the Constitutionlists, but Espinosa’s direct requests for assistance target only Yaquis. Tellingly, Espinosa recounted deceitful Constitutionalist emissaries as recommending that Yaquis and *yoris* (non-Yaquis) unite against their shared enemies but never made a parallel call himself. I read the statement as expressing that the Yaqui struggle is uniquely located in Yaqui cultural identity, communal belonging, historical experience, and tribal land even as it forms a facet of the universal anarchist campaign for human liberation. The global contest against domination includes Yaqui resistance but Yaqui resistance cannot be reduced to this contest.

According to my interpretation, Espinosa’s article resonates with so much thought from both Native Studies and nonacademic Indigenous revolutionaries in its centering of specific tribal experience. Espinosa implicitly complicated narrations of Indigenous communalism that extended to much, most, or all of Mexico by stressing the local Yaqui circumstances. Unlike Owen and de Cleyre, Espinosa attributed Yaqui resistance to the longstanding Yaqui custom of egalitarian living, not to some generic Indian racial compulsion. The appeals to Yaquis siding with the Constitutionlists and hoping to receive justice after their triumph preclude the biological inevitability of revolt posited by Owen. By blending a singular tribal perspective and anarchist communism, Espinosa’s statement resonates with the syncretic ideology of the present-

---

<sup>388</sup> “Los pobres debemos estar con los pobres en esta guerra contra los ricos y los gobiernos.” Espinosa, “La voz del yaqui,” 1, 3.

day Zapatista movement, a movement itself influenced by the reverberating legacies of PLM thought.

### **Defending Indians from Anarchist Racism**

The PLM found itself in various controversies within the international anarchist community over the character of the Mexican Revolution. Was it a genuine revolution? Were anarchists involved? A number of European and Euro-American anarchists dismissed the struggle in Mexico, often invoking anti-Indigenous and anti-Mexican tropes in the process. PLM endeavored to defend the radical reality and potential of the Mexican people, particularly Indigenous people. The debates on the subject in the pages of *Regeneración* are instructive about how Ricardo Flores Magón thought of Mexico's Indigenous present and past. At an anarchist meeting on the Mexican question in Boston in 1911, in the context of the widespread armed struggle across Mexico and the PLM's involvement in Baja California, the infamous Luigi Galleani criticized the Mexican Revolution as insufficiently proletarian while simultaneously casting outrageously false aspersions at Mexican radicals in general and the PLM specifically.<sup>389</sup> Another anarchist in Galleani's orbit, Raffaele Guzzardi went so far as to suggest that illiterate Mexicans couldn't really be subscribing to *Regeneración* in such high numbers and that the PLM was conspiring to deceive radicals: "The whole thing is produced, not for Mexico, but to create the impression among subversives around the world that there is a social revolution under way when in fact there is not and there cannot be."<sup>390</sup> The conflict involved anarchist periodicals in Europe as well, such as Jean Grave's *Le Temps Nouveaux*.

---

<sup>389</sup> David M. Struthers, *The World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 146-153.

<sup>390</sup> Raffaele Guzzardi, quoted in Struthers, *World in a City*, 149.



The controversy continued for years as the Mexican Revolution raged. José Spagnoli, an anarchist of Italian origin who lived in both Mexico and the United States, penned an especially derisive column in the New York periodical *Voluntad* in late 1915 that provoked an extended response from Flores Magón and others. Among a number of objectionable passages, Spagnoli approvingly quoted A. Dolero's description of the prevalence in revolutionary forces in Mexico of "Indians happy to surrender themselves to the atavistic instincts of their race, to the nomadic life and to robbery."<sup>391</sup>

Flores Magón responded as follows, after charging Spagnoli and Dolero with being ignorant of basic Mexican history based on this assertion of Mexican Indians as drawn to the nomadic life. Flores Magón affirmed the sedentary character of Mexico's Indigenous people and presenting them as more civilized than the European invaders:

And those sedentary customs that the Spaniards found in Mexico, dated from centuries earlier, as pre-Cortés history proves, customs that we can reconstruct with only reading those magnificent stone documents from Uxmal, from Palenque, from Mitla, from Cuernavaca, from Teotihuacan and from so many other places, without making mention of the superb Tenoxtitlán that European barbarism destroyed, as it destroyed so many other monuments, work of an industrious people that is far beyond their little detractors.

So, then, when the Mexican Indian rises up in arms, he doesn't do it pushed by atavistic instincts of robbery and of love for the nomadic life, since History tells us that he doesn't possess those instincts, but rather that he rises up driven by the most noble and greatest of motives that a man can have to rebel: the one of conquering the right to live, the one of achieving economic independence, that for the Indian, although he's not as wise as Spagnoli nor has he heard mention of Kropotkin nor of Grave, must be founded on that right of living and that economic independence, on this pure and simple fact: free access to the land for everyone who wants to cultivate it or extract its riches.<sup>392</sup>

---

<sup>391</sup> "indios felices de entregarse a los instintos atávicos de su raza, a la vida nómada y a la rapiña" Ricardo Flores Magón, "¡Alto Ahí!" *Regeneración* 221 (January 15, 1916), 1.

<sup>392</sup> "Y esas costumbres sedentarias que los españoles encontraron en México, databan de siglos atrás, como lo demuestra la historia precortesiana, costumbres que podemos reconstruir con solo [sic] leer esos magníficos [sic] documentos de piedra de Uxmal, de Palenque, de Mitla, de Cuernavaca, de Teotihuacan [sic] y de tantos otros lugares, sin hacer mención de la soberbia Tenoxtitlán que la barbarie europea destruyó, como destruyó tantos otros monumentos, obra de un pueblo laborioso que está muy por encima de sus pequeños detractores.

"Así, pues, cuando el indio mexicano se levanta en armas, no lo hace empujado por instintos atávicos de rapiña y de amor a la vida nómada, pues la Historia nos dice que no posee esos instintos, sino que se levanta impulsado por el más noble y más grande de los motivos que puede tener el hombre para rebelarse: el de conquistar

While Flores Magón played into the dominant norms of value that exalts the sedentary life over the nomadic and fixates on displays of greatness such as monuments, here he notably rejected the eugenicist and scientific-racist discourse of Mexican Indian as compelled by their racial nature. He took pains to portray the Indigenous people of Mexico as dignified in both this own time and in centuries earlier, countering claims of undesirable primal instincts based on this evidence but declining to assign any defined racial traits to Mexican Indians. Instead of being subject to crude biological determinism, Flores Magón's Mexican Indian actively recognizes the universal principle of economic independence despite lacking familiarity with famous anarchist authors like P Kropotkin or Jean Grave. In this fashion, Flores Magón contested the classic colonial trope of Indigenous people as incapable of rationality, of being gente sin razón. His response challenged Spagnoli and Dolero's anti-Indigenous bigotry on multiple levels, arguing for the essential humanity and worth of Mexican Indians based on shared ideals of civilization and social justice.

Flores Magón's stress on civilization calls to mind Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara's 1914 *The Mexican People*. Gutiérrez de Lara likewise valorized civilization, writing that the vast majority of Mexico Indigenous peoples are "not Indians at all, but highly civilized peoples of Aryan origin" wholly unrelated to "the wild nomads of North America."<sup>393</sup> He noted that the "real Indians" of Mexico "reside for the most part in the hills and mountains and are entirely outside the main currents of Mexican politics."<sup>394</sup> While Flores Magón made no such curious claims of

---

el derecho de vivir, el de conseguir la independencia económica, que para el indio, aunque no sea tan sabio como Spagnoli ni haya oída mentar Kropotkine [sic] ni a Grave, deben fundarse ese derecho de vivir y esa independencia económica, en este hecho puro y simple: el libre acceso a la tierra para todo aquel que quiera cultivarla o arrancarla sus riquezas." Ricardo Flores Magón, "¡Alto Ahi!", *Regeneración* 221 (January 15, 1916), 1.

<sup>393</sup> Gutiérrez de Lara and Pinchon, *Mexican People*, 3.

<sup>394</sup> Gutiérrez de Lara and Pinchon, *Mexican People*, 12.

Aryan status nor as vehemently distinguished Mexico's Indigenous people from their northern relatives, he did assign value to civilization, the sedentary life, agriculture, and industry in a way that at least implicitly devalues the opposite. The tropes of nomadic savagery invoked by Spagnoli and Dolero against Mexican Indians have so often been applied against Native peoples in lands occupied by the United States. In this sense, Flores Magón performed the same broad maneuver as Gutiérrez de Lara: lauding Mexican Indigenous groups as highly civilized in order to refute iconic colonial stereotypes. In both these rhetorical moves, the normative structure of value remains intact. Gutiérrez de Lara and Flores Magón alike challenged notions of who fit into the desirable category of the civilized rather than questioning that category itself.

The contrast of this rhetorical maneuver with William C. Owen's and, to a lesser extent, Voltairine de Cleyre's embrace of the language of hardwired racial difference merits highlighting. Owen eagerly turned to biology at most any opportunity. As mentioned above, Ricardo Flores Magón and other mestizo/a PLM members did operate within the discourse of racial difference on occasion, they showed far more reticence than Owen, de Cleyre, and countless other Euro-American and European anarchists. Confronted by a dominant worldview that sorted human beings according to ancestry, attributed defined characteristics to different groups, and nearly always assigned higher value to Europeans, Owen opted to studiously maintain this framework but fiddle with details of whom it favored. He took the colonial claim of Indigenous people as inherently opposed to government and capitalism but transformed it into a positive, retaining much of the paternalism and condescension involved. He sought to convince other Europeans and Euro-Americans of this position. On the other hand, Flores Magón displayed a pattern of stressing human universals over group differences. Though he was grounded in the Mexican experience and his own complex and contradictory relationship to

indigeneity, Flores Magón predominantly situated the Mexican Indians and the Mexican people overall within the worldwide project of liberation. This universalism differed markedly from the discourse of racial difference and biological determinism.

### **Broad Solidarities**

One of the few examples of PLM discourse on Native peoples within the United States comes from *Regeneración*'s coverage the Navajo uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913. "The armed uprising of the Navajo Indians of New Mexico refusing the authority of the United States," Antonio de Pío Araujo wrote, "has all our praise."<sup>395</sup> In this case, far from taking pains to separate the Indigenous peoples of the U.S. and Mexico, the PLM interpreted the Navajo according to the Yaqui model of tenacious military resistance that they knew intimately and admired intensely. Pío Araujo reiterated the exaggerated account from the mainstream English-language press of fifteen hundred well-armed Navajo combatants determined to fight to the death against the U.S. government. In describing Diné history, Araujo emphasized U.S. domination and consequent armed struggle against these invading "barbarians" ("*los bárbaros*") and "white-skinned bandits, the minions of Wall Street who want to subjugate every man who they reckon is of an 'inferior' race."<sup>396</sup> Araujo likewise positioned the Navajos as legitimate and authentic while undermining U.S. claims of settler belonging: "The true Americans of the continent are right, because the Indians of pure race are the true Americans."<sup>397</sup> In line with other PLM members,

---

<sup>395</sup> "El lavamiento armado de los indios navajos del Nuévo México negando la autoridad de los Estados Unidos, tiene todo nuestro aplauso." Antonio de P. Araujo, "La Hora Se Acerca," *Regeneración* 170, December 27, 1913, 3.

<sup>396</sup> "los bandidos de piel blanca, los esbirros del Wall Street que quieren subyugar á todo hombre que calculan que es de razas 'inferiores'" Araujo, "La Hora," 3.

<sup>397</sup> "Tienen razón los verdaderos americanos del continente, porque los indios de raza pura son los verdaderos americanos." Araujo, "La Hora," 3.

Araujo turned the tables on the standard colonial narrative by portraying Euro-Americans as the barbaric outsiders.<sup>398</sup>

However, contrary to the PLM's hopes, the Big Mountain uprising did not prove the start of mass Navajo or broader Indigenous armed struggle in the United States. As Jennifer Nez Denetdale writes, white fears drove and continue to drive historical accounts of the so-called uprising: "Even though Navajo military might have been destroyed by the end of 1863 and more than ten thousand Navajos were subjected to U.S. violence so thoroughly that the experience remains in the collective Navajo memory to the present, in the early twentieth century federal officials and New Mexican settlers continued to raise the specter of violent Navajos who could rampage at any moment."<sup>399</sup> The Diné people in 1913 were not in the same material and social conditions as the Yaquis, and though they resisted colonialism by various methods then as now, the revolutionary reckoning the PLM desired has yet to come to pass. The PLM's aspirations converged with settler nightmares. In part, sheer force and terror from the U.S. government prevented extensive armed conflict; Denetdale notes how a U.S. official specifically threatened Navajo women and children. Five months later, in late May 1914, Ricardo Flores Magón mentioned how Woodrow Wilson sent troops to suppress the rebellion as one item on the long list of charges against the U.S. president.

The very same December 1913 *Regeneración* issue wherein Antonio de Pío Araujo expressed support, however uninformed, for the Navajo uprising includes a piece attributed to five individuals each from a different tribe: Pima, Papago, Maricopa, Yaqui, and Apache. It

---

<sup>398</sup> Araujo mentioned propaganda efforts that New Mexican PLM-aligned comrades had made among the Navajo people. I have not found any other source for this beyond basic evidence of PLM groups that operated in New Mexico during this period.

<sup>399</sup> Jennifer Nez Denetdale, "Return to 'The Uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913': Marriage and Sexuality in the Making of the Modern Navajo Nation," in Joanne Barker, ed., *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 79.

details political struggles within Indigenous communities in the Gila and Salt River area about their efforts to promote anarchism and reaffirms their commitment to the PLM's values. This one instance among many underscores the participation of Indigenous individuals in the Party as well as its profound and sustained interest in Indigenous liberation. While at times disconnected from reality, predetermined by an ideological agenda, and entangled with colonial authoritative knowledge, PLM rhetoric on Indigenous self-determination simultaneously reflected a coherent theory and living practice of revolutionary solidarity against colonialism and capitalism.<sup>400</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The larger PLM relationship with Indigenous peoples such as the Yaquis provides an inspiring example of revolutionary collaboration across the boundaries of social identity if we center decolonial perspectives like Luis Espinosa's, attentively engage Flores Magón dissonant navigations of Mexican mestizo indigeneity, and challenge the white supremacy of William Owen and Voltairine de Cleyre while acknowledging their support for Native autonomy. Investigation of PLM ideology guided by the insights of critical Indigenous studies forms a basis to theorize and promote modes of alliance that dismantle ingrained colonialist tropes and practice meaningful material solidarity with an absolute commitment to self-determination for Indigenous peoples and all of humanity.

The overwhelming longing for strength and success is the thread that unites the disparate evolutionist and nationalist articulations of Indigenous peoples by thinkers in the PLM orbit. Established intellectual authorities who claimed the mantle of science and reason, such as Herbert Spencer, set a path that the formally educated felt compelled to traverse. In this

---

<sup>400</sup> Un indio pima, un indio papago, un indio maricopa, un indio yaqui, un indio apache, "En Nuestro Deber," *Regeneración* 170 (December 27, 1913), 3.

framework, through evolution, nature offers no alternative: flourish or perish. Operating in context that enshrined racial difference as real, the authors covered in this chapter did their best to mesh this framework with their revolutionary convictions. In Porfirian Mexico, Ricardo Flores Magón and many others saw the nation as degenerated, debased, and disabled by tyranny. As the title of the main PLM periodical indicates, the Party initially yearned for national regeneration and turned to the Indigenous past as well as present with that goal in mind. In the Yaqui people in particular, the PLM saw outstanding valor and vigor. The Yaqui freedom fighter, real and idealized, features prominently in PLM material as a figure of strength and endurance in the face of horrific oppression and impossible odds. Radicals of all stripes in this era desperately wanted to win, to be correct, to persuade; they gravitated to exhilarating symbols that resonated with at least some popular values. Appeals to nature allowed PLM-aligned radicals to present revolution as inevitable and thus powerful.

As Maldonado Alvarado and Natives Studies scholars always repeat, in spite of hegemonic colonial temporalities, Indigenous communities exist in the present and will continue into the indefinite future. Any radical program for transformation must engage in decolonial struggle—as the PLM did—or reiterate colonial oppression. I explore these historical constructions of the revolution and the Indian to throw fuel on the fires of revolution today raging and smoldering across a planet permeated with (neo)colonial capitalism. Of both outstanding achievements to emulate and ruinous traps to avoid, the PLM offers so much to contemporary revolutionaries.

## Conclusion: Imagining Abundance and Choosing Hope

In the September 1910 polemic “Predicar la Paz es un Crimen” (“Preaching Peace Is a Crime”), published on the eve of widespread armed uprisings against Porfirio Díaz’s government, Ricardo Flores Magón abruptly shifted from condemning cowards to exalting science and reason as radically transformative. He recommended going after the cowards before the tyrants:

First the cowards, because they are the most certain support for all despotisms and the most dangerous enemies of all progress. "Blasphemy!" cry the cowards. Yes, blessed blasphemy replies the revolutionary; creative blasphemy; farseeing blasphemy; wise blasphemy; just blasphemy. This blasphemy puts its hands on all the altars and thrones of the earth and smashes them into pieces. This blasphemy elevates itself to heaven where another court, the celestial, rules, and breaks it into pieces through reason and leaves in its place bodily souls whose chemical composition is known; this blasphemy removes the brake of ignorance which made the Earth a fixed point in space and allows it to assume its glorious ellipse around the sun; and this blasphemy seizes the lightning of Jove and reduces it to electricity in Leyden's jars. And this tireless and audacious blasphemy, after reaching into the heavens and dethroning gods; after unchaining the blind forces of nature; after having exposed the fraud of "divine right" of the kings of Earth; after having searched the seas to find the original protoplasm, or the tiniest root of the zoological tree whose most attractive fruit is the human being, rises calmly, with the august serenity of science, to ask of Capital this simple question: "Why do you rule?"<sup>401</sup>

---

<sup>401</sup> “Primero á los cobardes, porque ellos son el más seguro apoyo de todo despotismo y los enemigos más peligrosos de todo progreso. Blasfemia, gritan ls [sic] cobardes. Sí, bendita blasfemia, responde el revolucionario; blasfemia creadora; blasfemia vidente; blasfemia sabia; blasfemia justa. La blasfemia puso sus manos en los altares y los tronos de la tierra y los hizo pedazos; la blasfemia se elevó al cielo donde otra corte, la celestial, Imperaba y la hizo añicos con la razón dejando en su\* lugar soles magníficos cuya composición química nos dio á conocer; la blasfemia rompió el freno con que la ignorancia tenía fija á la Tierra en un punto del espacio y echó á rodar en su elipse gloriosa al rededor del sol; la blasfemia arrancó el rayo de las manos de Júpiter y lo redujo á prisión en la botella de Leyden, é Infatigable y audaz la blasfemia, después de haber llegado al cielo y derribado dioses; después de haber encadenado las fuerzas ciegas de la naturaleza; después de haber descubierto la Impostura del derecho divino do los llamados señores de la Tierra; después de haber escudriñado los mares hasta encontrar el protoplasma ó sea la más pequeña raíz del árbol zoológico cuyo más bello fruto es el hombre, se levanta serena, con la serenidad augusta da la Ciencia, para formular ante el Capital esta sencilla pregunta: ¿por qué reinas?” Ricardo Flores Magón, “Predicar la Paz es un Crimen,” *Regeneración* 3, September 17, 1910, 1. Translated by Chaz Bufe in Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter, eds., *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 154.



Though they occasionally expressed ambivalence, Flores Magón and other classical anarchists overwhelmingly saw science as a liberatory force that removed the irrational pretexts state, clergy, and capital used to justify their dominance. Understood as the most accurate information available about shared material reality, anarchists took science as the foundation of their ideology. Science simultaneously offered truth, persuasive power, and newfound purpose to replace the religious cosmologies it obliterated. As I have explored throughout this dissertation and emphasize here, classical anarchists' investment in the scientific knowledge of the day is key to comprehending their embrace of eugenics. Period scientific discourse both oriented classical anarchists and circumscribed their aspirations. Because of the prevalence of eugenicist views among the learned inside and outside formal academia, as well as because of the biopolitical logic involved, anarchists could hardly escape entanglement in eugenics. What possible alternative is there to acting according to natural law and fostering the most vigorous life? Survival of the fittest and natural selection allow no compromises: that which is unfit disappears. Within such a schema, reproductive futurism constitutes the only basis for positive and generative politics, for a coherent worldview.

In *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo traces the “disturbing resemblance between the discourse of development and the revolutionary imagination in the Americas” on the point of pushing for “a similar transformation in consciousness and mode of being.”<sup>402</sup> Radical leaders like Ernesto “Che” Guevara depicted “revolutionary consciousness as unitary and universal, and collective agency as willful, masterful, and finally masculine” in contrast with the feminized objects they sought to transform who were “trapped in precapitalist formations, steeped in the false

---

<sup>402</sup> María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 259.

consciousness of ethnic particularity and peasant custom.”<sup>403</sup> My argument takes a kindred structure in highlighting the congruences between classical anarchist thought and the broad eugenicist mentality. Anarchists emphatically opposed social Darwinism yet shared many of its core principles and assumptions. The material I and Saldaña-Portillo cover also directly resonates, as classical anarchism parallels mid-twentieth-century Marxism in its imbrication with colonial Enlightenment notions of civilization, progress, and development as well as with masculinism. Saldaña-Portillo explores the ongoing Zapatista movement in Chiapas as an example of “an alternative modernity” that comes out and works through the revolutionary imagination and development discourse in compelling fashion.<sup>404</sup> Through the PLM’s theorizations of Mexican communism and practice of solidarity with Native nations, I likewise turn to Indigenous radicalism as offering insight about the quandary posed by classical anarchism’s tensions and contradictions. Black rebellion and Native revolutionary organizing stand out as profound and portentous here in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

This conclusion elaborates my central contention that biopower structured whom the Partido Liberal Mexicano and other classical anarchists imagined as revolutionary subjects and whom they characterized as beyond the bounds of solidarity. I attend particularly to how the PLM characterized Native peoples as an integral part of the working class while denigrating queers as bourgeois degenerates without a future. The opening section interrogates the classical anarchist relationship to science and the seeming impossibility of alternatives to the broad eugenicist mentality. I point to disability justice, reproductive justice, and queer Indigenous feminism as hopeful prospects. As Ansgar Allen writes in *Benign Violence*, the theoretical communist approach of to each according to their needs and the practice of encouraging all

---

<sup>403</sup> Saldaña-Portillo, *Revolutionary Imagination*, 259.

<sup>404</sup> Saldaña-Portillo, *Revolutionary Imagination*, 256.

life—weak and strong alike—profoundly clash with eugenics and meritocracy.<sup>405</sup> The above frameworks do so even more thoroughly and expansively, especially Autumn Brown’s “Abundance thinking.”<sup>406</sup> Communist principles always already contain an element of this orientation against ableism, eugenics, and meritocracy. The Red Nation’s articulation of Indigenous communism, which I analyze in the second section, shows the possibility that comes from combining anticapitalism with Native liberation and queer feminism. While this twenty-first-century organizations is not directly connected to the PLM, reading the Red Nation’s work together with Ricardo Flores Magón’s sheds light on the PLM’s contrasting support for Native self-determination and rejection of queers. I finish with a reflection on what attracts us to studying historical radical figures and on commitment to ongoing revolutionary projects.

### **Science, the Anarchist Christ**

The position Ricardo Flores Magón and company took on science and reason was thoughtful and nuanced, far from some crude scientism. Classical anarchists treated science with particular respect while always retaining freedom of interpretation, as prominent anarchist philosopher Mikhail Bakunin described explicitly in *God and the State*, initially published in French in 1882. “We recognise the absolute authority of science,” Bakunin wrote, “but we reject the infallibility and universality of the *savant*.”<sup>407</sup> Noting his discomfort with the terminology, Bakunin referred to science as the “invisible Christ” of the anarchist “church,” a guiding principle that could never be completely realized or perfectly practiced.<sup>408</sup> Science as a

---

<sup>405</sup> Ansgar Allen, *Benign Violence*, 139, 248.

<sup>406</sup> Autumn Brown, “Scarcity and Abundance,” in Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai’a Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), 98.

<sup>407</sup> Bakunin, *God and the State*, 21.

<sup>408</sup> Bakunin, *God and the State*, 21.

perpetually imperfect project ensures liberty in Bakunin's formulation, with individual assessment and discernment performing the essential function of preventing the corruption inevitable with unquestioning support. Regarding the technical authority of experts, Bakunin articulated his process as follows: "I consult several; I compare their opinions, and choose that which seems to me the soundest."<sup>409</sup> Bakunin considered formal hierarchy devastating to science and reason, writing that the certified academic "inevitably lapses into sluggishness."<sup>410</sup> Science, in Bakunin's conception, relied on equality and feedback to operate.

It is telling that Bakunin reluctantly employed Christian language to explain anarchism's grounding in science. As the above passage from Ricardo Flores Magón shows, classical anarchists frequently presented science as religion's foe and successor. Flores Magón made the blasphemy of radical reason sublime. Anarchists who hated the church threw themselves into their grand cause with zeal. Like Bakunin, they found themselves at a loss to communicate it without resorting to the religious tropes they and their audiences knew. An inherent tension existed between fervor for classical anarchism's righteous mission and its core principle of freedom, a tension that remains with us today. Likewise, the passionate religious mode could conflict with objective study of the material world and advocacy for the greatest good for the greatest number according to this knowledge. Anarchists at the turn of the twentieth century at times openly struggled with these tensions and contradictions.

Voltaire de Cleyre's 1891 address to the Topeka, Kansas Liberal Convention, published in *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*, provides an example of how radicals engaged with science and negotiating the difficulties involved. As outlined in the first chapter, anarchists loved science far more than the scientists of the day loved anarchists. Doctors like James Weir, Jr. marshaled

---

<sup>409</sup> Bakunin, *God and the State*, 20.

<sup>410</sup> Bakunin, *God and the State*, 18-19.

medical authority to characterize any opposition to the Anglo-Saxon settler cisheteropatriarchy as an atavistic reversion to savagery. Weir painted anyone from trade unionists to women's suffragists with this brush. In claiming science, anarchists and other anticapitalist radicals faced an uphill battle. In "The Gates of Freedom," de Cleyre began by flatly declaring that "woman *is* property" and pushing back on anyone would "clothe hard facts with sentimental fancies."<sup>411</sup> She elaborated as follows:

[F]acts are facts and stubborn things; and it is better to face a fact, staring it in the teeth, than to shield your eyes until you run against it unaware. Certainly there is no one to whom this truth is more unpalatable than to me—a woman. I remember well the lingering indignation that I felt when I read in the first issue of a scientific quarterly, *The Monist*, an article on "The Material Relations of Sex," by no less a person than the noted evolutionist, Prof. E. D. Cope, proving the existence of property in woman beyond the possibility of cavil, and, what was worse, held up this condition of hers as an ideal in perpetuity, to cease following after which was for the race to virtually commit suicide.<sup>412</sup>

This paragraph indicates common contours of thought in late-nineteenth-century social discourse, especially in the United States but also elsewhere. The prospects of race suicide loomed large and marked the limits of the conceivable. Whether the race meant the human or some specific branch thereof, the logic of selection was the same: people who go against natural law die out. Men like Edward Drinker Cope invoked the fear of extinction against women's liberation. Theodore Roosevelt, both before and during his presidency, absorbed and promoted fears of race suicide by people of Northern European stock as he variously defined them.<sup>413</sup> De Cleyre accepted the dominant terms of debate, revolving around what produces vigorous life and what leads to a people or species to disappear. She presented facing facts that seem to support systems of oppression head on as a harrowing experience, prompting an emotional reaction that

---

<sup>411</sup> Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Gates of Freedom," in *Gates of Freedom*, 235.

<sup>412</sup> De Cleyre, "Gate of Freedom," 235-6.

<sup>413</sup> Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1992 [1980]).

opponents could use against her via sexist tropes. This reaction stemmed from her respect for science:

It is very aggravating, (though perhaps I had better not admit it or the Cope's [*sic*] will sneer "emotional sensibility—to be aggravated by a fact, womanish") in other words it is mildly annoying, after one has successfully disposed of a mumbling theologian, or an artful doctor of laws, to then have a scientific man appear upon the scene, and, with all the dispassionate gravity of intellect, proceed to prove that the theologian and the lawyer were right. The worst is, that while priest and law draw their arguments from faith and prejudice, the scientist always backs his up with facts. This was what most chagrined me in the article to which I refer. There is no denying Prof. Cope's facts, the only thing which is left is to dispute his conclusions.

Many classical anarchists and other anticapitalist radicals of the day liked to envision themselves as partisans of science and reason against benighted forces of faith and prejudice. De Cleyre described how it was especially disconcerting when prominent scientists gainsaid anarchism, as they so often did. Cope's analysis of women's place in society was hardly a blessed blasphemy that threatened the status quo; rather, he bolstered established gendered power relations by assessing them as natural and inevitable. De Cleyre took this challenge more seriously than those from the likes of lawyers and theologians who operated within a different epistemological framework. De Cleyre was transparent about how Cope's thesis undermined her feminist anarchism, foregrounding the tension and aggravation. She resolved to contend with Cope within the prescribed perimeter of scientific reason and the assumed competition for scarce resources, for survival itself.

Illustratively, Cope's piece begins with man's toil to satisfy his basic physical needs while having "his fellow-man" as "his antagonist."<sup>414</sup> Cope judged woman as struck by "disabilities" both "physical and mental," on which basis he proclaimed "that were woman of the same sex as man, that is, were she simply another kind of man, she would be eliminated from the

---

<sup>414</sup> Prof. E. D. Cope, "On the Material Relations of Sex in Human Society," *The Monist* 1:1 (October 1890), 39.

earth under the operation of the ordinary law of the survival of the fittest.”<sup>415</sup> This dynamic of selection through inexorable competition was the essence of how men of science thought of nature at the turn of the twentieth century. Survival of the fittest was a basic principle educated people invoked at the time. From our vantagepoint here in the first quarter of twenty-first century and especially in the humanities, it is all too easy to dismiss Cope and company’s survival of the fittest as an antiquated notion from a less enlightened age. Scientists today tend to maintain the core claim while disavowing connotations they consider undesirable. In the introduction to *Survival of the Friendliest*, evolutionary anthropologist Brian Hare and science journalist Vanessa Woods rein in the concept, counseling against applying it human society in the stereotypical social Darwinist fashion. “[T]o Darwin and modern biologist,” Hare and Wood write, “‘survival of the fittest’ refers to something very specific—the ability to survive and leave behind viable offspring.”<sup>416</sup> They say the idea of the survival of the fittest “is not meant to go beyond that” and that the notion as it crudely appears in the popular imagination “can make for a terrible survival strategy.”<sup>417</sup> In criticizing the brutal and vulgar take on survival of the fittest they assert is popular, Hare and Vanessa reaffirm the fundamental logic of selection.

Neither Cope nor de Cleyre appear to have envisioned survival of the fittest among humans in narrow terms that focused on direct violence or physical strength. Cope specified that women’s elimination from being treated as men could happen “under the circumstances of peaceful trade,” as “such is often the actual history of male men who possess marked feminine characteristics.”<sup>418</sup> De Cleyre engaged with Cope’s argument on employment, “taking Prof. Cope

---

<sup>415</sup> Cope, “Material Relations,” 39.

<sup>416</sup> Brian Hare and Vanessa Wood, *Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity* (New York: Random House, 2020), xvi.

<sup>417</sup> Hare and Woods, *Survival of the Friendliest*, xvi, xvii.

<sup>418</sup> Cope, “Material Relations,” 39.

on his own ground” and refuting his assertions with evidence of women successfully competing with men in various industries.<sup>419</sup> De Cleyre answered Cope’s claims of women’s disability with the unassailable observation that “in certain things, men are inferior to crocodiles.”<sup>420</sup> She contended with Cope within an overlapping scientific worldview, effectively countering his conclusions as well as some of his purposed facts. While Cope ignored and obscured the coercion involved in the ordinary conditions of peaceful trade, de Cleyre highlighted it. Where Cope cited capital furnished by men to explain examples of women thriving in the existing economy, de Cleyre conceived of capital as stolen from workers. “I don’t think we owe them any particular acknowledgement of inferiority on that account,” she wrote, “unless, perhaps, an inferiority of rascality.”<sup>421</sup>

Like Shulamith Firestone many decades later, de Cleyre in “The Gates of Freedom” situated the possibility for women’s liberation in novel material conditions that made the old objections obsolete. De Cleyre appealed to the then incipient field of sociology to argue for progressive justice. As Eugenia C. DeLamotte notes, this idea relates to “popular misconceptions that Darwinian evolution implied progress” —though of course one can defend progressive justice on other grounds.<sup>422</sup> De Cleyre did not hide why she choose this approach and her desire for intellectual respect, of not wanting to be thought “a metaphysical dreamer” who believed in some incoherent concept of static rights.<sup>423</sup> “[H]owever fierce my denunciation of present injustice may be,” she wrote, “I none the less recognize it to have been the justice of the past, the

---

<sup>419</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 245.

<sup>420</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 246.

<sup>421</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 246.

<sup>422</sup> Eugenia C. DeLamotte, note 33 in de Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 240. Martin Luther King, Jr. succinctly expressed a notion of progressive justice with his famous paraphrase of the abolitionist Theodore Parker: “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” Parker published the original version in 1853; de Cleyre made have read it. See Joshua Cohen, *The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>423</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 240.



highest possible condition so long as the aspirations of the general mind rose no farther—a part of invincible Necessity.”<sup>424</sup> For de Cleyre, progressive justice was a way accept claims from scientific authorities like Cope that women’s subordination had an objective material basis while at simultaneously rejecting the continuation of these formerly necessary oppressions. At the rhetorical level, this strategy at least gives the impression of an argument girded by scientific reason and informed by established knowledge. It is likewise consistent with Mikhail Bakunin’s articulation of the classical anarchist worldview as described above. De Cleyre stated the alignment unambiguously. “Science applauds the Red Flag,” she wrote, “and carries as its banner the motto of the Commune: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”<sup>425</sup> De Cleyre portrayed anarchism as consistent with the recent history of waxing overall enlightenment and radical movements like the 1871 Paris Commune.

“The Gates of Freedom” revolves around the thesis of “They have rights who dare maintain them,” a proposition in harmony with even the harshest and crudest interpretations of survival of the fittest.<sup>426</sup> De Cleyre aimed to inspire women to rise up and insist on equality. She expressed this in stark terms of value: “Mind you, I never expect men to *give* us liberty. No, Women, we are not *worth* it, until we *take* it.”<sup>427</sup> At various points in the text, de Cleyre heaped shame upon women for tolerating the status quo of masculine domination. By centering a power struggle and by ascribing value according to successful participation in this struggle, “The Gates of Freedom” accomplishes what it sets out to: arguing for women’s revolution within the confines of period scientific thought. De Cleyre foregrounded her intentions, concerns, and the tensions she felt. Despite displaying ambivalence around certain respectability norms like that of

---

<sup>424</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 241.

<sup>425</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 241.

<sup>426</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 235.

<sup>427</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 249. Italics original.

dispassionate reason, de Cleyre settled on accepting Edward Cope's selectionist logic and going from there to make her case for women's liberation. She disputed Cope's facts perhaps more than she claimed she would, highlighting women's ability to compete with men in the labor market as well as the exploitative character of the existing capitalist system. She did not simply fold women into the establish order, as liberal feminism does, but presented a particular interpretation of natural selection and power politics ubiquitous among the radicals of her era. De Cleyre promoted anarchism on the grounds of the common good and universal justice, castigating those who could not or would not recognize and fight for this lofty ideal.

Shaming submission was a core technique for classical anarchists, from de Cleyre's "The Gates of Freedom" to Ricardo Flores Magón's "Predicar la Paz es un Crimen" and countless others. PLM invocations to rebellion specified shamed men for not taking up the rifle against their oppressors and encouraged women to do the same. The pages of *Regeneración* are replete with examples. The PLM's famous 1906 program, back when the Party still publicly operated within the discourse of Mexican nationalism, puts it bluntly: "Those who refuse to support the cause of liberty deserve to be slaves."<sup>428</sup> Revolutionaries at the turn of the twentieth century had scant patience for indecisiveness, cowardice, and meekness. *Regeneración* promoted the vindication of a humiliated people, about awakening the laboring masses to their might. At the advent of the First World War, Ricardo Flores Magón celebrated the deaths of soldiers who fought for bourgeois nation-states: "That such lambs die is good."<sup>429</sup> Classical anarchists combined extensive empathy for the oppressed masses with blaming them for submitting to that

---

<sup>428</sup> "Los que neguéis vuestro apoyo á la causa de libertad, mereceréis ser esclavos." Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano, "Programa del Partido Liberal Mexicano y Manifiesto a la Nacion," *Regeneración* 11 (July 1, 1906), 3. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 129.

<sup>429</sup> "Que mueran borregos de esa naturaleza, está bien." Ricardo Flores Magón, "La Guerra Mundial," *Regeneración* 202 (November 14, 1914), 2. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 295.

oppression. As Ricardo Flores Magón wrote in April 1914 to the soldiers of Venustiano Carranza and Victoriano Huerta, “to command is bad; to obey is worse.”<sup>430</sup> While anarchists explicitly employed blame and shame as a motivational trick, the logic likewise adheres to their scientific foundations. Revolution in this formulation comes through material struggle, not sentiment or idealism. In October 1910, Ricardo Flores Magón told them that “you have consented through your submission to the idle hands which have taken possession of that which belongs to you.”<sup>431</sup> The remedy was to fight strength with strength: “Be strong yourselves; let all be strong and become the masters of the Earth.”<sup>432</sup>

Ricardo Flores Magón’s above-mentioned 1914 article “La Guerra Mundial” (“The World War”) shows in stark relief the callousness the biopolitical mentality and cold revolutionary rationality could prompt. Flores Magón evinced contempt for soldiers who foolishly fought for bourgeois interests, describing their elimination as serving the greater good: “To cry because such men die is stupid; to lament that thousands and thousands of families are without protection because their kinsmen have perished in this clash of bandits is a weakness. Humanity needs this type of bloodletting, this discarding of the bad so that the healthy part can prosper.”<sup>433</sup> The choice of stupidity and weakness as condemnations is telling, as is the framing of the eradication of undesirable life giving space for desirable life to flourish. Flores Magón unequivocally othered these dead European soldiers, presenting them as enemies of anarchism

---

<sup>430</sup> “mandar, es malo; obedecer, es peor” Ricardo Flores Magón, “A los soldados,” *Regeneración* 185 (April 18, 1914), 1. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 294.

<sup>431</sup> “habéis consentido con vuestra sumisión que manos ociosas se apoderaron de lo que os pertenece” Ricardo Flores Magón, “Tierra,” *Regeneración* 5 (October 1, 1910), 1. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 287.

<sup>432</sup> “Sed fuertes vosotros, sed fuertes todos y ricos haciendooos [sic] dueños de la Tierra” Flores Magón, “Tierra,” 1. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 287.

<sup>433</sup> “Llorar porque mueran tantos hombres, es estúpido; lamentarse que miles y más miles de familias se encuentran sin amparo porque sus deudos han perecido en esta contienda de bandidos, es una debilidad. La humanidad necesita esa clase de sangrias, arrojar lo malo que tiene, para que la parte sana pueda prosperar.” Flores Magón, “Guerra Mundial,” 2. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 296.

whom revolutionaries would have to kill sooner or later to triumph. In this fashion, their death on the battlefield was a boon to the radical cause. This harshness in the name of pragmatism and biopolitics calls to mind Antonio Pio de Araujo's support for the May 1911 massacre of Chinese people in Torreón on the dubious grounds that they were all bourgeois.<sup>434</sup> It likewise evokes William C. Owen's glee at elimination of full-service sex workers via selection and Voltairine de Cleyre's case for the inevitability of the same.<sup>435</sup> Flores Magón did not sustain that tone in his writing about World War I; various later pieces sympathize more with European soldiers as working-class brothers rather depicting them as hopelessly lost class traitors and portrayal the war as "a necessary evil" ("un mal necesario").<sup>436</sup> This demonstrates both the cruelty associated with the eugenic worldview and the tensions it provoked.

Ricardo Flores Magón and company were well aware of how the rich and powerful marshaled Darwinism to their defense around the turn of the twentieth century. They resolutely rejected this interpretation. In October 1910, he articulated the dynamic as follows, emphasizing solidarity as a rational stance to promote the common good for human beings in general.

Anarchism remained within the logic of biopower, the narrative of reproductive futurity, and discourse of progress:

And in this implacable struggle, the victorious are always the same: the clever and the wicked. The only difference is that yesterday they justified their triumph as a result of divine will, and today, embarrassed, they justify their depredations with science. Darwin's theory of natural selection, which explains how individuals better endowed for the struggle of life are the ones who triumph, is the rationalization that the rich and the despotic brandish against those who question their appropriation of the right to exploit and to oppress, even though they are forgetting to say, because this benefits them, that animals of the same species do not destroy each other, nor do some declare themselves the masters of the others. The struggle of species is directed against other species, but a single species works together in its process of adapting to the environment. Only the human species displays the repugnant spectacle of some individuals devouring the others,

---

<sup>434</sup> They were not, in fact, all bourgeois. See chapter three.

<sup>435</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>436</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón, "La Patria Burguesa y la Patria Universal," *Regeneración* 207 (October 9, 1915), 2.

producing through this an obvious retardation of progress, when, by acting in solidarity thousands of years ago it would have been able to control nature and obtain across-the-board progress.<sup>437</sup>

Blasphemous science challenged the religious basis of established power, yet authorities adapted and coopted science for their own ends. Flores Magón posed humanity unity against other animals and against nature as an answer to capitalist appropriation of Charles Darwin. Nature in this sense appears to reference to everything not human, particularly the material environment. Definitions of nature other than the totality of the natural world—everything that exists—are always fraught and invented for specific purposes, as Langdon Winner reminds us.<sup>438</sup> Like other thinkers in their era, classical anarchists frequently employed the notion of mankind's toil to survive and to thrive in the conditions of scarcity found in the so-called state of nature. Kropotkin stressed the needs of modern, civilized people in contrast with the “savages” he imagined needed neither homes nor clothing.<sup>439</sup> Anarchists intended, like the title of Kropotkin's famous book indicates, to conquer bread for the entire working class: as Flores Magón put it, to “unite the human species into a single intelligent and active force and place nature at man's service.”<sup>440</sup> The conceptual relationship between nature and anarchism was complex, with Flores Magón and other classical anarchists at times contradicting themselves and each other.

---

<sup>437</sup> “Y en esta lucha implacable los vencedores son siempre los mismos: los inteligentes y los malvados, con la única diferencia de que ayer justificaban su triunfo como un resultado de la voluntad divina, y hoy, avergoncémonos, justifican sus depredaciones con la Ciencia. La teoría de Darwin sobre la selección que explica cómo los individuos mejor dotados para la lucha por vida son los que triunfan, es el razonamiento que esgrimen los ricos y los déspotas contra los que tartan de poner en duda el derecho que se apropian para explotar y oprimir, aunque olvidando decir, porque así les conviene, que los animals de una misma especie no se destruyen unos á los otros, ni se declaran unos los amos de los otros. La de las especies va dirigida contra otras especies, á la vez que se opera un proceso de adaptación al medio. Sólo la especie humana ofrece la repugnante espectáculo de devorarse unos individuos á los otros, produciéndose con eso un retardo evidente del progreso, cuando por la solidaridad hace muchos miles de años que habría esclavizado á la naturaleza y obtenido su progreso integral.” Ricardo Flores Magón, “Solidaridad,” *Regeneración* 9 (October 29, 1910), 1.

<sup>438</sup> Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 121-137.

<sup>439</sup> Kropotkin, *Conquest of Bread*, 68, 69.

<sup>440</sup> “unir á la especie humana en una sola fuerza inteligente y activa que pusiera á la naturaleza al servicio del hombre” Flores Magón, “Solidaridad,” 1. Translated by Mitchell Verter in *Dreams of Freedom*, 279.

Depending on exact context, anarchists invoked nature as an obstacle to subdue or as the source of knowledge or as an example of harmony and evidence of anarchism's inevitable adoption.<sup>441</sup>

In the above 1910 piece "Solidaridad," Flores Magón treated the principle of solidarity as human innovation akin to wondrous new technologies like the telegraph and airplane. Solidarity countered the scientific pretensions of oppressors by showing a superior path to progress, to nourishing the human species in general and maximizing overall utility.

Classical anarchists like de Cleyre and Flores Magón committed completely to their cause. Both died young after lives subject to the oppressions they opposed, with Flores Magón's death directly tied to medical neglect in prison. He experienced state violence throughout his life, from cops and from assassins sent by Porfirio Díaz. Lucy Parsons lost her husband to the gallows in Chicago; Blanca de Moncaleano lost hers to a botched appendectomy when he was thirty-three.<sup>442</sup> They each witnessed the overall conditions of the period: long hours of labor around machines that could rip workers apart if they made a single mistake, meager compensation, many out of work and starving, harsh repression by states, commonplace sexual violence in the home, and so on. Classical anarchists had profound stakes in revolution and desperately wanted to win. Science and biopolitical discourse offered the combination of conceptual and persuasive potency. In relation to evolving scientific knowledge production, anarchists argued that their ideology was the best for fostering vibrant and dignified life. They debated the most expedient and practical paths to achieve their ideal, valuing the behavior and the people they imagined aligned with their

---

<sup>441</sup> Kropotkin was renowned for using nature as an example of harmony and solidarity, to the point that Errico Malatesta criticized him on these grounds and instead argued for anarchism as a contingent human project. See Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010 [1992]), 358-359. Yet Kropotkin nonetheless at times wrote of nature as something for humanity to overcome.

<sup>442</sup> According to John Francisco Moncaleano Lawson's *In the Wave of Time*, both Juan Francisco Moncaleano and Blanca de Moncaleano came from elite Colombian families but became personally impoverished through the liberal and then anarchist cause. In the text, Lawson attributed his father's death to poverty and indicated it discouraged him from following his father's anarchist path.

objective and scorning the rest—sometimes extravagantly so as above. This potentially follows the consequentialist rationality at play and matches the modern mentality as Mahmood Mamdani describes it. “What horrifies our modern sensibility is violence that appears senseless,” Mamdani writes, “that cannot be justified by progress.”<sup>443</sup> Classical anarchists viewed nationalist violence as irrational and counterproductive—though a boon to anarchism to the extent that it harmed nation-states and nationalists—but they conformed to Mamdani’s modern trope of being willing to die and to kill in the name of progress and their “civic religion.”<sup>444</sup> They viewed sacrifices, whether their own or of others, as a small price to pay for the magnificent future in store for humanity if their cause were victorious.

De Cleyre’s mention of the danger of stumbling upon facts by surprise at the start of “The Gates of Freedom” calls to mind science fiction writer Philip K. Dick’s famous definition of reality: “Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away.”<sup>445</sup> Much of what Edward Drinker Cope and company believed about human society we now know came from their own prejudices, yet the broad problem of selection—natural or otherwise—lingers. Just as Cope wrote, actually existing markets tend to disfavor effeminate men and other queers. Distributed across society, systems of power able and disable, pushing relentlessly for the elimination of those disabled. How can the reckoning with and transformation of the norms of value that Lisa Marie Cacho calls for in the conclusion to *Social Death* happen under the conditions of pervasive selection dynamics? It is strictly a matter, as social justice so often seems to be, of shifting which individuals and characteristics society rewards and punishes? This feels

---

<sup>443</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York, NY: Double Day Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>444</sup> Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, 3.

<sup>445</sup> Philip K. Dick, *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 5; Umbero Rossi, *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick: A Reading of Twenty Ontologically Uncertain Novels* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2011), 11.

superficial. As Ansgar Allen writes in *Benign Violence* regarding complaints of bias in assessment, “Their criticisms issue from, circulate through and are deposited back within the same system of meritocratic assumptions.”<sup>446</sup> To the extent that there must be selection that chooses some to languish while others flourish, of course reshaping the norms of social value to favor those it has disfavored comes much recommended. Disability justice itself frequently matches this pattern, with Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha in *Care Work* celebrating the public recognition she and the disability justice movement have achieved over the last decade.<sup>447</sup> Valuing specific intelligible groups who have historically been devalued constitutes manifestly unfinished and ambitious project to begin with. Countless critical scholars and revolutionaries would say it is plenty for the moment.

Yet that still leaves us with the conundrum Cacho confronts in *Social Death*: what about the people who fall outside of both dominant and oppositional norms of social value? Critical scholars, Marxists, anarchists, and even disability radicals consistently converge on effort and achievement as the singular path to a worthy life. The types of success vary, from academic publications to spectacular riots to enduring organizations. The basic structure runs parallel. Almost all these notions of the worthy life rely on some manner of popular approval to certify progress and development that surpasses the individual: acclaim from peers that one’s research has advanced the field, participation in mass insurrection, impressive and growing membership rolls, and so on. These value systems expect people contribute to society and assign status on that basis. Merely staying the course of ever-expanding additions to the ledger of intelligible achievement—whether in the conventional liberal mode or anything along the lines of Judith

---

<sup>446</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 5.

<sup>447</sup> Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), 18-19.



Butler's radical inclusivity—strikes me as an insufficient response to this dilemma.<sup>448</sup> Reckoning with the violence of value norms and meritocracy requires soul-searching and a deeper challenge to the status quo. I do not presume to have definitive answers to the questions that proliferate in this line of inquiry but neither do I wish to end by only posing the problem. Instead, I survey options and suggest promising possibilities.

Sheer refusal to participate in reproductive futurity and embrace of queer negativity in Lee Edelman's antirelational terms leave me feeling hollow, as alluring as this orientations is. Queer anarchism was my initiation into both queer and radical community; I have the customary fascination with the conversations Edelman's *No Future* provoked among queer anarchists. Scholars such as José Esteban Muñoz have noted the implicit whiteness of Edelman's figure of the Child, highlighting how race and colonialism affect a person's relationship to reproductive futurism.<sup>449</sup> Large swathes of U.S. society may condemn certain white queers for the supposed selfishness of neglecting the responsibility to have children, but at the same time see other groups' reproduction as a threat to the nation. For example, classical eugenicists fixated on the danger posed by the procreation of those they thought unfit. Refusing the future we were railroaded into can be liberatory for some queers but this approach does not apply universally. From its scenes of "shattering orgasmic ruptures often associated with gay male sexual abandon or self-styled risky behavior," queer negativity can fall into familiar masculine patterns of carelessness.<sup>450</sup> Concern for the future and care labor are conventionally gendered as feminine. Edelman notes that the figure of the Child is distinction from actually existing children, but his

---

<sup>448</sup> On Judith Butler's radical inclusivity and its critics, see "The Anti-Social Turn," *baedan* – a journal of queer nihilism 1 (Summer 2012), <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/baedan-baedan> (access Jul 5, 2018).

<sup>449</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 95; Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 24-25.

<sup>450</sup> Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 14.

framework elides the different relationships to futurity children have as well as situating nurturing as aligned with the heteronormative and otherwise oppressive status quo. I share Muñoz's interest in the utopian possibilities of queerness and find reproductive justice especially promising in this regard.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs underscores the queerness of reproduction for oppressed people in “m/other ourselves: a Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering,” a piece in the collection *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*. “The queer thing,” she writes, “is that we *were* born; our young and/or deviant and/or brown and/or broke and/or single mamas did the wrong thing.”<sup>451</sup> This understanding of queerness dovetails with Muñoz's utopian vision, informed by the experience of being targeted for restriction or elimination by state and dominant society: “a population out of control,” as Gumbs proudly declares.<sup>452</sup> She notes how some academics, including queer theorists, have reacted in shock to the way she weaves mothering and queerness together. For one of the “Out (of) Line” section of *Revolutionary Mothering*, Gumbs conceptualizes queerness as follows: “Our definition of queer is that which fundamentally transforms our state of being and the possibilities for life. That which is queer is that which does not reproduce the status quo.”<sup>453</sup> In *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*, Mark Rifkin makes a related argument about the existence of Native nations and their kinship practices have always been viewed as queer in U.S. colonial gaze.<sup>454</sup> Indigenous self-determination decidedly does not reproduce the status quo in settler societies. As Qwo-Li Driskill describes, Native Two Spirit and queer belonging in their own

---

<sup>451</sup> Alexis Pauline Gumbs, “m/othering ourselves: a Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering,” in Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), 13. Italics original.

<sup>452</sup> Gumbs, “m/othering ourselves,” 13.

<sup>453</sup> Gumbs, “Introduction,” in Gumbs, Martens, and Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering*, 109.

<sup>454</sup> Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

communities itself constitutes an oppositional stances against colonial assimilation.<sup>455</sup>

Reproductive futurism hits differently depending on a person's location in systems of domination; for some, claiming the future at all goes against norms of erasure and elimination.

*Revolutionary Mothering's* emphasis on nurturing—on “the practice of affirming growing, unpredictable people who deserve a world that is better than what we can even imagine”—hints at paths through the quandary of social value and selection.<sup>456</sup> In “Scarcity and Abundance,” Autumn Brown contrasts the two ideas as mindsets and encourages the latter. “Scarcity thinking,” she writes, “says that there will never be enough of anything—love, food, energy, or power—so we must horde, or conditionally offer and withdraw, what we have.”<sup>457</sup> This encapsulates the iconic social-Darwinist worldview around the turn of the twentieth century, with mankind and civilization understood as struggling against nature. According to eugenicists like Havelock Ellis, everyone needed to pull their own weight or they would imperil the entire human enterprise; hence his fixation on the danger the “feeble-minded” and their propagation created.<sup>458</sup> On the other hand, “Abundance thinking says that together, we have enough of what we need, that there is enough for all of us if we recognize our essential interdependence.”<sup>459</sup> This is the utopian dream of disability justice as well as of reproductive justice, even if those movements at times settle for negotiating status and compensation within established structures. One might easily deride Abundance thinking as a wishful, idealistic fantasy out of step with reality and accessible only to a lucky few. Indeed, Brown's account of her own experience in “Scarcity and Abundance” calls to mind the trope of the blessed life

---

<sup>455</sup> Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee), “Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16:1-2 (2010), 77, 83.

<sup>456</sup> Gumbs, “Introduction,” 109.

<sup>457</sup> Autumn Brown, “Scarcity and Abundance,” in Gumbs, Martens, and Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering*, 98.

<sup>458</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912), 42.

<sup>459</sup> Brown, “Scarcity and Abundance,” 98.

despite how she mentions the vulnerability and emotional range involved. I recommend refraining from such an obvious dismissal. I perceive great hope in abundance and interdependence as frameworks. Especially here in well into the age of automation, abundance need not go against science.

Disability and reproductive justice are at their most queer and most radical when they completely break with meritocracy and eugenics by taking universal flourishing as their goal as opposed to the selective cultivation of desirable life. I quibble with both these justice frameworks for the ways their adherents sometimes perpetuate the meritocratic pattern of vying for resources via displays of worth.<sup>460</sup> Alongside such critiques, I underline the overflowing potential in reproductive and disability justice to explode the idea of value itself by valuing promiscuously and exalting the care work of unconditional love exemplified by mothering as a practice. This gestures toward worlds beyond notions of earning and deserving, where people can go their own way as they please but nobody is left behind. The communist principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their need has always contained the seeds of this approach. Ansgar Allen nods to it at the end of *Benign Violence* for good reason. As he writes, the communist principle “seeks to generate a *total* rupture between questions of ability and reward,” thus clashing with “the core principles of both traditional and fluid meritocracies.”<sup>461</sup> Revolution remains a monumental and daunting task

I now shift to examining how the specific history of the PLM ties to radical utopian possibilities by juxtaposing the Party’s negative theorizations of queerness and positive theorizations of Native self-determination.

---

<sup>460</sup> I object to such status competition as a theoretical orientation and when it provides ideological support to meritocracy, not as a necessary and contingent survival strategy for the time being. Of course we presently all navigate existing social structures and regimes of value to meet our needs as best we can.

<sup>461</sup> Allen, *Benign Violence*, 248.

## **Queer Monsters and Indigenous Futures**

My study revolves around the PLM, animated by the absence of solidarity with queers and the abiding presence of decolonial praxis. Putting this absence and presence in conversation reveals much about how the PLM envisioned political collectivity, with queers figured as a degenerate minority group associated with bourgeois decadence and the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island—especially but not only in Mexico—figured as stalwart members of the working class. As exemplified by the Yaquis, PLM rhetoric constructed Native peoples as vigorous life worthy of preservation and cultivation. No other group gave Porfirio Díaz hell like the Yaquis did; they persisted, fighting on despite all odds. In their earlier nationalist phase, the PLM presented the Yaquis and other Native nations as Mexico’s soul and the prime hope of the country’s salvation from its degraded condition. The theme of Indigenous futurity carried through in the PLM’s openly anarchist days, with Ricardo Flores Magón defending Mexican Indians against racist attacks from other anarchists. This was not mere talk; the PLM was in direct relationship with the Yaqui liberation struggles, as problematic as their discourse about the Indian could be—particularly from William C. Owen. By contrast, the Party presented queers as traitorous beings who turned their backs on the working class and on nature itself to indulge in sterile pleasures. They conflated effeminacy with the cowardice and passivity they believed harmed the revolutionary causes. To the PLM, queers were an impediment, a danger, and people without a future.

The tension between this absence and presence can be insightful and generative. This section read sketches what might come from radicalism committed to queer and trans liberation as well as decolonization, attending to recent manifestations. In “Black Flag, Red Heart: A Study

of Chicana and Chicano Anarchy,” Omar Ramírez employs speculative fiction to remember and “redress” Ricardo Flores Magón.<sup>462</sup> This is one Flores Magón’s many afterlives, an example of how he lingers as a influential and vexing figure. Ramírez’s piece opens by introducing readers to a setting of declining U.S. empire, where California has become the “Califa autonomous zone” after a series of wars including the “Chi-Mex Black Bloc rebellion.”<sup>463</sup> Conflict continues, but “an ancient indigenous woman only known as the maize oracle, a clairvoyant and mystic counselor to the circle of the Mega Mex Mujeres has predicted a vision of peace” that somehow involves resurrecting Flores Magón.<sup>464</sup> The narrator embarks on that quest in his “pro-solar ranfla.,” dazzling Flores Magón with telepathy and other technological wizardry. This utopian future is explicitly feminist and indigenous—at least in fraught Chicana/o terms—as well as implicitly queer, with the text noting Emma Pérez’s criticism of Flores Magón’s masculinism and drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa’s corpus.<sup>465</sup> The narrator takes Flores Magón to Nepantla, the seat of the Mega Mex Mujeres temple, which “stands in the shape of vagina” (presumably as a feminist statement).<sup>466</sup> Flores Magón relates this to Emma Goldman teaching him about free love. At Nepantla, the “Maize Oracle” welcomes him and he cries, recognizing “his dream really was a reality.”<sup>467</sup> The narrator leaves “as Flores Magón received the praise and the criticism he never had the chance to experience after his death so long ago.”<sup>468</sup>

The narrator describes their experience, presumably related to Califa autonomous zone, as follows:

I remember reading how some of us were handed down the tenets of anarchy, others with indigenous sensibilities, then others with both; how we started to take on small things and

---

<sup>462</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart: A Study of Chicana and Chicano Anarchy,” 39.

<sup>463</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 41, 40.

<sup>464</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 40.

<sup>465</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 46.

<sup>466</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 50.

<sup>467</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 51.

<sup>468</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 51.

suddenly it started to take on unexpected proportions of grandeur. What was not accomplished in the Revolution, we achieved through ourselves. We took direct action that, we believed, could not be repeated, thus it increased the possibilities of expression considerably. We were able to explore our very beings and our limitations. Our mistakes would make us lean on each other for support and we grew to understand ourselves. Our minds synced to the realization of anarchist revolution causing millions to join us in the struggle.<sup>469</sup>

“Black Flag, Red Heart” dreams of a revolution guided by “indigenous sensibilities” alongside anarchism. This revolution centers Indigenous women and feminism. This revolution dismantles the United States and its colonial borders. The narrator’s account highlights how the revolutionary process incorporates militant direct action, art, care work, and introspection. Ramírez’s short piece of science fiction about Flores Magón leaves many questions unanswered, as the narrator makes unambiguous, but I interpret this attempt at redressing Flores Magón in the twenty-first century as grappling with many of the same issues of the PLM’s legacy as my dissertation does. It is a glimmer of the possibilities of ongoing commitment to Flores Magón’s decolonial anarchism without the overbearing masculinism, of looking at his life and work with a revised emphasis. Ramírez’s text likewise reflects the broad currents of the Chicano/a movement and radical thought in the borderlands, with feminist and queer critiques morphing earlier radicalisms without abandoning the aim of social transformation.

The Red Nation is an example of a contemporary organization that synthesizes communism and queer Indigenous feminism.<sup>470</sup> Founded in 2014 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Red Nation “formed to address the marginalization and invisibility of Native struggles within

---

<sup>469</sup> Ramírez, “Black Flag, Red Heart,” 49.

<sup>470</sup> For transparency, I should note that I know many Red Nation members personally and consider them comrades. I have attended and supported numerous Red Nation events. Additionally, while it is not immediately pertinent to my purposes here, I want to acknowledge the Red Nation has come into increasing public conflicts with anarchists on social media over the last few years. These ideological tensions have prompted me to distance myself from the Red Nation somewhat, though I have not so enough to prevent anarchists from criticizing me for my proximity to the group. My enthusiastic analysis of aspects of the Red Nation’s theory does not entail a full endorsement of their political stances.

mainstream social justice organizing, and to foreground the targeted destruction and violence towards Native life and land.”<sup>471</sup> Their revolutionary theory speaks to many of the issues analyzed in my project, providing an answer to what radical politics grounded in both Native and queer liberation can look like. The Red Nation’s manifesto “Communism Is the Horizon, Queer Indigenous Feminism Is the Way,” adopted August 9, 2020, elaborates the group’s perspective. Their stress on kinship and relationality connects to the aspirations of disability and reproductive justice, which inform the Red Nation’s theory even though they are not directly mentioned in the manifesto. Similarly, overlapping with and often collaborating with the Red Nation, the K’é Infoshop combines Diné feminism and decolonial anarchism.<sup>472</sup> Alongside the Red Nation’s manifesto, I examine the zine “Settler Sexuality: Resistance to State-Sanctioned Violence, Reclamation of Anti-Colonial Knowledges, and Liberation for All” that appears on the K’é Infoshop’s website and was “[c]reated with the knowledge shared at the K’é Infoshop in Tségháhoodzání, Dinétah (Window Rock, AZ) and among the indigenous students living in Quinnipiac, Mashpee Wampanoag, Pokonoket Wampanoag, and Narragansett territories.”<sup>473</sup> These two documents illuminate much when read in relation to my study of the PLM, classical anarchism, and the eugenicist mentality.

“Communism Is the Horizon, Queer Indigenous Feminism Is the Way” opens with the familiar anticapitalist theme of survival, albeit with a markedly different inflection from the circa-1900 versions this dissertation examines. The Red Nation articulates socialism as a transitional phase on the road to communism, necessary “to weather the already-present

---

<sup>471</sup> The Red Nation, “About,” *The Red Nation*, <https://therednation.org/about/> (accessed August 29, 2020).

<sup>472</sup> K’é Infoshop, <https://twitter.com/KeInfoshop> (accessed October 1, 2020).

<sup>473</sup> “Settler Sexuality: Resistance to State-Sanctioned Violence, Reclamation of Anti-Colonial Knowledges, and Liberation for All; An Indigenous Feminist Zine,” K’é Infoshop, <http://www.keinfoshop.org/zines/settler-sexuality.htm> (accessed October 1, 2020).



ecological crisis.”<sup>474</sup> Whereas anarchism and other radical tendencies at the turn of the twentieth century tended to center mankind’s struggle to live decently in the context of natural scarcity, today both material conditions and common conceptualizations have changed. Like Ricardo Flores Magón and others in the PLM did in haphazard and sometimes colonial fashion, the manifesto situates communism as “our past and our horizon.”<sup>475</sup> This temporal framing unravels the conventional Enlightenment narrative of progress that anticapitalists have so often invoked. It simultaneously expresses a nuanced mode of interaction with the past: “we are intentional in learning from history and not simply replicating that which has come before” and “we do not claim that our ancestors lived in a perfect world.”<sup>476</sup> The Red Nation similarly puts forth a notion of connection with and respect for “other-than-human relations, the Earth, and life itself” that moves quite differently from leftist orientations that imagine nature—in the sense of the not human—as something to conquer in order to benefit people.<sup>477</sup> It comes closer to how classical anarchists like Flores Magón and Pyotr Kropotkin asserted anarchist communism as natural harmony.

“Settler Sexuality” underscores “universal relations,” that “[e]veryone is connected to everything and everyone.”<sup>478</sup> The Red Nation’s manifesto revolves around kinship, which the organization uses as “shorthand” for the terms for “generosity and collectivity” in various Indigenous languages.<sup>479</sup> It centers communism in care and abundance, as the stirringly utopian sketch of transformation in the following passage illustrates:

---

<sup>474</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon, Queer Indigenous Feminism Is the Way,” The Red Nation, <http://therednation.org/communism-is-the-horizon-queer-indigenous-feminism-is-the-way/> (accessed September 16, 2020); PDF version, <http://therednation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TRN-pamphlet-final.pdf> (accessed September 16, 2020), 3.

<sup>475</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 5.

<sup>476</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 5.

<sup>477</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 4.

<sup>478</sup> “Settler Sexuality.”

<sup>479</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 6.

We love communism because we love ourselves. When we speak of Indigenous communism, we speak of caretaking and liberation. We speak of a world based on social wellbeing and abundance where all relatives have their needs met and live with dignity and joy. Where social relations are based on cooperation, reciprocity, consent, mutual respect, support, and care, and other-than-human relatives have equal standing with human beings. This is a world of self-determination, autonomy, and the agency of all life to live free from violence and coercion, specifically carcerality. A world where equality abounds and class disappears. A world filled with creativity and happiness.<sup>480</sup>

Aligned with reproductive and disability justice, the Red Nation's description of the revolutionary future explicitly commits to nurturing *all* life rather than positioning some living beings as a drag on the collective and selecting for those with desirable traits. According to the manifesto, the focus on care comes through the lens of queer Indigenous feminism. "The communist world we build will come not only from street revolts and guerilla actions against the settler state," the Red Nation writes, "but the previously obscured work that women, queers, and trans people of all genders have done in the realms of care."<sup>481</sup> Along with so many historical radical organizations, the PLM falls into this categories of ignoring and minimizing care labor performed by women.<sup>482</sup> What the Red Nation describes in this vein marks a significant shift in revolutionary rhetoric, which has customarily glorified aggressive militancy and masculine leadership above all else. "As the Red Nation's manifesto says, "Cismen continue to dominate left spaces in the Global North" and "are the talking heads of our organizations, Twitter accounts, books, and podcasts."<sup>483</sup> The "pissing contest" between prominent men takes so much energy in today's left politics.<sup>484</sup> Disability and reproductive justice are some of the intellectual current encouraging this shift toward care as a framework. I see care discourse as having such potential to eat away at the neo-eugenicist meritocratic worldview so prevalent on the left as

---

<sup>480</sup> The Red Nation, "Communism Is the Horizon," 7.

<sup>481</sup> The Red Nation, "Communism Is the Horizon," 10.

<sup>482</sup> Emma Pérez, *Decolonial Imaginary*, 67, 149.

<sup>483</sup> The Red Nation, "Communism Is the Horizon," 13.

<sup>484</sup> The Red Nation, "Communism Is the Horizon," 13.

across the rest of contemporary society. Noting the importance of mutual aid in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the Red Nation makes care a key principle: “The economies of our socialist transition and communist future will be premised on care.”<sup>485</sup>

The Red Nation anchors care in “Indigenous traditions of kinship that embrace multiple genders, fluid sexualities, and other-than-human relationships.”<sup>486</sup> The group writes that “kinship is about care” that “does not discriminate.”<sup>487</sup> Likewise, the K’é Infoshop’s “Settler Sexuality” affirms that “Indigenous people, all throughout North America, have their own creation stories that acknowledge and celebrate trans/non-binary community members.”<sup>488</sup> In situating queerness as Indigenous and the violence against queers as a colonial imposition, “Settler Sexuality” and the Red Nation’s manifesto puts a distinct understanding on collectivity from the PLM and many other historical radicals. The idea of opposition between queers and the community at large, including oppressed communities, has taken up a great deal of space over the years. For example, in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa linked Chicano patriarchy to “[t]ribal rights over those of the individual” that “insured the survival of the tribe” and were “still necessary” for “all indigenous peoples in the world who are still fighting off intentional, premediated murder (genocide).”<sup>489</sup> She went on to assert that the “Chicano, mexicano, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance.”<sup>490</sup> Even while criticizing such oppression as queer rebel herself, Anzaldúa confirmed the narrative of queers as a threat to the “tribe” that it must at times suppress or face annihilation. By contrast, the Red Nation both presents queers as an integral part of Indigenous communities and presents caretaking “that does not discriminate”

---

<sup>485</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 10.

<sup>486</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 11.

<sup>487</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 11.

<sup>488</sup> “Settler Sexuality.”

<sup>489</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 18.

<sup>490</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 18.

as the essence of kinship. The lack of discrimination in the broadest sense is the antithesis of eugenicist and meritocratic mindset of selection. While certainly collectivist, the Red Nation completely avoids the classic characterization of queerness as incompatible with and a danger to the collective.

“Communism Is the Horizon, Queer Indigenous Feminism Is the Way” and “Settler Sexuality” each hold the theme of nurturing “all life” throughout.<sup>491</sup> “Settler Sexuality” places “interconnectedness” at the forefront in articulating this: “One can never be alone as we are all part of the same life and we have a responsibility to take care of one another.”<sup>492</sup> The Red Nation situates their abolitionism in “[e]nsuring that all human and otherthan-human life have what they need to thrive” and remembering “that all human and other-than-human life is worthy of care.”<sup>493</sup> In this fashion, the Red Nation detonates the normative understanding of value, dispersing it indiscriminately by assigning across all life. They simultaneously express what is arguably a new standard, writing “that value is not determined by class, but by how we love, caretake, and respect one another’s dignity; in other words, how we act as relatives.”<sup>494</sup> This connects with the concept of “reciprocity” that the manifesto mentions repeatedly. In the same vein, “Settler Sexuality” highlights “responsibility” as well as “compassion, attention, and labor.”<sup>495</sup> Conceivably, the policy of determining value based on reciprocity and acting as relatives could construct its own oppressive and exclusionary hierarchy that would leave out people like Lisa Marie Cacho’s cousin.<sup>496</sup> We can trivially concoct scenarios where the norm of reciprocity and being a good relative shames and terrorizes people who supposedly do not

---

<sup>491</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 22.

<sup>492</sup> “Settler Sexuality.”

<sup>493</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 22, 23.

<sup>494</sup> The Red Nation, “Communism Is the Horizon,” 23.

<sup>495</sup> “Settler Sexuality.”

<sup>496</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 147-168.

contribute or behave. Like classical anarchism, today's radical discourse contains tensions and contradictions. A critical scholar like Lee Edelman or Ansgar Allen might critique this entire enterprise as reiterating of reproductive futurism guided by the fantasy of social collectivity or a biopolitical innovation for the twenty-first century that remains fixated on fostering life. While keeping such pitfalls in mind can help traverse them, I recommend only a moderate dose of cynicism and skepticism for my purposes here. On the whole, the Red Nation and K'é Infoshop demonstrate the insight and promise that comes from joining revolutionary anticapitalism, Indigenous lifeways, feminism, and queer and trans liberation.

Putting PLM's presence of Native self-determination and absence of queer liberation in conversation tends toward a radical perspective that incorporates reproductive and disability justice. The Red Nation, K'é Infoshop, and various other revolutionary Native groups exemplify the potential of tracing these connections. Their articulation of kinship, universal interconnectedness, and care provides an alternative to the meritocratic worldview and dominant schemes of social value.

## **Historical Memory and Deferred Dreams**

Everything strongly indicates that the death of bourgeois society won't be long in coming. The citizen looks grimly upon the policeman, who yesterday he considered his protector and a source of aid; the assiduous reader of the bourgeois press shrugs his shoulders and contemptuously throws down the prostituted sheets in which appear the declarations of the heads of state; the worker goes on strike without it mattering to him that his attitude harms "the national interest," conscious now that the nation isn't his property, but the property of the rich; in the streets one sees faces that clearly betray inner discontent, and there are arms that appear to be itching to construct barricades.<sup>497</sup>

---

<sup>497</sup> "Todo indica, con fuerza de evidencia, que la muerte de la sociedad burguesa no tarda en sobrevenir. El ciudadano ve con torva mirada al polizonte, a quien todavía ayer consideraba su protector y su apoyo; el lector asiduo de la prensa burguesa encoje los hombros y deja caer con desprecio la hoja prostituída en que aparecen las declaraciones de los jefes de Estado; el trabajador se pone e j huelga sin importarle que con su actitud se perjudiquen los patrios intereses, consciente ya de que la patria no es su propiedad, sino la propiedad del rico; en la calle se ven rostros que alas claras delatan la tormenta interior del descontento, y hay brazos que parece que se agitan para construir la barricada." Ricardo Flores Magón and Librado Rivera, "Manifiesto La Junta Organizadora del Partido

Ricardo Flores Magón and Librado Rivera penned this passage in the spring of 1918. There was a deadly pandemic back then too; the convergences with the present are uncanny. 2020, little over a century later, saw a massive revolt against the cops and the status quo overall across the United States, with Black youth at the forefront. Though it sometimes seems invisible, radical history is not gone; it is not even past. Insurgents in the here and now frequently evince profound bonds to what has come before them, whether as revered ancestors or as the dead crying out for vengeance or as the thread of reality that binds us to our impossible desires for transformation. In “How It Might Should Be Done,” Idris Robinson foregrounds the case that a “militant nationwide uprising did in fact occur” in response to the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020.<sup>498</sup> The “largely multi-ethnic rebellion” was “spearheaded by a Black avant-garde” while not led or controlled by anyone, despite what counterinsurgency narratives claim.<sup>499</sup> The riots have “opened the window to insurrection and even a full-blown revolution.”<sup>500</sup> Robinson’s analysis of the rebellion and recommendation of steps forward concludes by invoking those who have come before: “And the fight is not only for the living, but also for the dead. We owe the revolution to the millions of slaves who never knew a second of freedom. What the long list of martyrs who have fallen during this uprising deserve from us is nothing other than the completion of the revolution.”<sup>501</sup> For a number of us radicals, classical anticapitalism and the vastly longer record of resistance is an unfinished and ongoing project.

---

Liberal Mexicano: A los Miembros del Partido, a los Anarquistas, y los Trabajadores en General,” *Regeneración* 262, March 16, 1918, 1. Translated by Chaz Bufe in *Dreams of Freedom*, 145.

<sup>498</sup> Idris Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done,” *Ill Will Editions*, July 20, 2020, <https://illwilleditions.com/how-it-might-should-be-done/> (access August 29, 2020).

<sup>499</sup> Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done.”

<sup>500</sup> Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done.”

<sup>501</sup> Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done.”

Back in 1891, Voltairine de Cleyre articulated women’s liberation as a dream deferred over and over: “O Woman! When I think of all the ages you have waited—waited!”<sup>502</sup> Contemplating the extent of women’s suffering over time, how men exploited women to advance themselves, left de Cleyre feeling like her heart had become frozen tears. This description of despair resolves into one of resolute aspiration, as de Cleyre then envisioned woman as a solitary “giantess, a lonely figure out in the desolate prairie with nothing over her but the gray sky.”<sup>503</sup> The revolutionary imagination holds the pain of oppression across history close and takes as it as motivation for maintaining motion toward freedom. Radical empathy extends into the past, with the possibility of change staving off hopelessness. As at the turn of the twentieth century, participating in revolutionary struggle today constitutes a transcendent and transformative experience: “it is entirely impossible for anyone to have participated in the current uprising without having the fundamental core of their being unalterably changed.”<sup>504</sup> While radical history can appear arcane, this passion and commitment always at least lurks around the edges. “As for myself, and I know for many of you,” Robinson writes, “we feel the revolution deeply within our souls, and it changes our very outlook, the approach to how we live our lives.”<sup>505</sup> I echo this sentiment. My scholarship intertwines with my ideals and my involvement in radical causes, from doing childcare at meetings to staring down riot police in the streets. Like Robinson, I look to historical revolutionary movements for guidance on how to proceed as well as to understand them in their own terms and context. This is a common orientation for anarchist and other radical historians, but important to make explicit—particularly in this portentous period of renewed unrest. Those who study radical history inevitably come with emotional and

---

<sup>502</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 249.

<sup>503</sup> De Cleyre, “Gates of Freedom,” 249.

<sup>504</sup> Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done.”

<sup>505</sup> Robinson, “How It Might Should Be Done.”

ideological aims, though not necessarily radical ones. We turn to figures like Ricardo Flores Magón or Emma Goldman or Lucy Parsons because we want something from them.

As chapter two explores, scholars rally Parsons especially for a wide range of objectives beyond the above mode of ongoing revolutionary commitment. Some conjure her primarily as a token and prop, a woman of color or Black woman or Chicana to make anarchism, communism, socialism, or even progressive U.S. liberalism seem more diverse and inclusive. Jacqueline Jones's *Goddess of Anarchy* almost makes Parsons a case study for duplicity, hypocrisy, and radical excess. Historians more aligned with liberalism typically portray anarchists as a useful source of inspiration for more practical political pursuits or as an example of taking principles too far—sometimes as both. Through the precursor narrative, Flores Magón and other anarchists in the later PLM have been folded into Mexican nationalism. Mutualists, market anarchists, and capitalist anarchists claim Voltairine de Cleyre. In all or nearly all cases, the drive to tell a story that locates us in the wave of time and attributes meaning to past events in relation to our present appears inexorable. As an anarchist and as a critical scholar, I embrace this drive, fascinated by its tensions and contradictions.

Regarding the 2020 rebellion, Kandist Mallett stresses the important of inspiration and the motivation it provides. She uses the police tactic of kettling protesters—trapping and terrifying them, perhaps arresting them—as a model for the psychological dynamics of domination. “That mental kettle,” Mallett writes, “the one that surrounds you with fear and despair, is also a barrier we must break through.”<sup>506</sup> After the state repression of the Occupy Wall Street movements in 2011-2012 and the 2014 uprising in Ferguson, Missouri as well as arrest and abortive prosecution of dozens of people who protested Donald Trump inauguration in

---

<sup>506</sup> Kandist Mallett, “Push It to No Limits: How to Escape the Cop Kettles on the Streets and in Our Spirits,” *The New Inquiry*, July 7, 2020, <https://thenewinquiry.com/push-it-to-no-limits/> (accessed October 3, 2020).



January 2017, Mallett felt discouraged. She feared this state violence would scare people into submission. Suddenly, everything changed:

But sitting at home seeing on Twitter that protesters had burned down Minneapolis's third precinct building was the most amazing and shocking feeling. The despair I've felt for the last few years began to dissolve. Inspiration is one of the most powerful tools for revolution. It's so rare, and can't be inorganically reproduced. It's so rare that, when it happens, we try to hold on to it as long as we can and fight against anyone who tries to destroy it.<sup>507</sup>

Though more distant, knowledge of historical radical movements can impart the same sublime and seductive sensations. This was what initially attracted me to the PLM and classical anarchism. Learning there had been widespread and influential radical organizing not so long ago nor so far away mesmerized me. The trajectory of studying radicalism can match that of many activists: euphoric enthusiasm followed by abject disappointment. This dissertation arguably falls into the latter category, stereotypical of scholarly critique, in its emphasis on how classical anarchists operated within an ableist and eugenicist worldview. My reading of the PLM's involvement in the 1911 insurrection in Baja California conforms to this rise-and-fall trajectory, with an internationalist radical uprising confounded by nationalisms, colonialism, and white supremacy. While I take seriously Nicole Guidotti-Hernández's call to refuse to elide violent complicity in the name of heroic resistance narrative, I simultaneously write from a position of absolute commitment to the anarchist cause and active engagement in various contemporary radical struggles.<sup>508</sup> Like Mallett, "I choose hope."<sup>509</sup> This refusal to despair is a recurring theme across the twenty-first-century radical texts I examine here, from Omar Ramírez's thesis to the Red Nation and the K'é Infoshop to Robinson and Mallet. I believe in

---

<sup>507</sup> Mallett, "No Limits."

<sup>508</sup> Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011), 17-24.

<sup>509</sup> Mallett, "No Limits."

being at once critical and caring toward revolutionary movements past and present. As Mallett says, “for a revolution to happen, we will all have to break out of own mental kettles.”<sup>510</sup>

---

<sup>510</sup> Mallett, “No Limits.”

## References

### Books and Articles

- Adams, Rachel, Benjamin Reiss, and Benjamin Serlin, eds. *Keywords for Disability Studies*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Aldrete, Enrique. *Baja California heroica: episodios de la Invasión Filibustera-Magonista de 1911*. México: Frumentum, 1958.
- Allen, Ansgar. *Benign Violence: Education in and beyond the Age of Reason*. Kindle Edition: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
- Ashbaugh, Carolyn. *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1976.
- Bannister, Robert C. *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979.
- Barker, Joanne, ed. *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- Barnes, Elizabeth. *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016.
- Beck, Matthias, and Beth Kewell. *Risk: A Study of Its Origins, History and Politics*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2014.
- Blaisdell, Lowell L. *The Desert Revolution: Baja California, 1911*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1962.
- Bliss, Katherine Elaine. *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.
- Briggs, Laura. *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Bufe, Chaz, and Michael Cowen Verter eds. *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*. Edited by Oakland, California: AK Press, 2011.
- Cacho, Lisa Marre. *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Caplan, Karen D. *Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatán*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Carlson, Elof Axel. *The Unfit: The History of a Bad Idea*. Cold Spring Harbor, New York: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001.

Castañeda, Jorge G. *Mañana Forever?: Mexico and the Mexicans*. New York: Knopf, 2011.

Chacón, Justin Akers. *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018.

Chaplin, Ralph. *Wobbly: The Rough-and-Tumble Story of an American Radical*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

Chang, Jason Oliver. *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017.

Cohen, Joshua. *The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race & Class*. New York: Vintage Books 1983 [1981].

De Cleyre, Voltairine. *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre*. New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914.

Laforcade, Geoffroy, and Kirwin R Shaffer, eds. *In Defiance of Boundaries: Anarchism in Latin American History*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015.

DeLamotte, Eugenia C. *Gates of Freedom: Voltairine de Cleyre and the Revolution of the Mind*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Deloria, Phillip J. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Dick, Philip K. *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon*. New York: Doubleday, 1985.

Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, Héctor. *Modernity and the Nation in Mexican Representations of Masculinity: From Sensuality to Bloodshed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Driskill, Qwo-Li. "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16:1-2 (2010).

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. Two vols. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1910.

- Ellis, Havelock. *The Task of Social Hygiene*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912.
- Estrada, William D. *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Spaces*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Falk, Candace, ed. *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*. Two vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
- Fernández Retamar, Roberto, and Pedro Pablo Rodríguez, eds. *En los Estados Unidos: Periodismo de 1881 a 1892*. La Habana, Cuba: 2003.
- Flores Magón, Ricardo. *Correspondencia*. Two vols. Edited by Jacinto Barrera Bassols. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–76*. Translated by David Macey. London: Penguin, 2003 [1976].
- García, Alma M., ed. *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*. New York: Routledge, 2014 [1997].
- Gay, Kathlyn, ed. *American Dissidents: An Encyclopedia of Activists, Subversives, and Prisoners of Conscience*, vol. 1. ABC-CLIO, 2012.
- Goldman, Emma. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910.
- Goldman, Emma. *Living My Life*. New York: Alfred Knopf Inc., 1931.
- Goldman, Emma. *Voltairine De Cleyre*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: The Oriole Press, 1932.
- Gómez-Quiñones, Juan. *Sembradores: Ricardo Flores Magón y El Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*. Los Angeles: University of California Press at Los Angeles Chicano Studies Center and Aztlán Publications, 1973.
- Gotkowitz, Laura, ed. *Histories of Race and Racism: The Andes and Mesoamerica from Colonial Times to the Present*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Grijalva, Aidé, Max Calvillo, and Leticia Landín, eds. *Pablo L. Martínez: Sergas californianas*. Tijuana: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2006.
- Guidotti-Hernández, Nicole. *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Alexis Pauline, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, eds. *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*. Oakland: PM Press, 2016.

Gutiérrez de Lara, L., and Edgcumb Pinchon. *The Mexican People: Their Struggle for Freedom*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1914.

Hare, Brian, and Vanessa Wood, *Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity*. New York: Random House, 2020.

Hekma, Gert, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds. *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left*. New York, NY: The Hayworth Press, Inc., 1995.

Hemmings, Clare. *Considering Emma Goldman: Feminist Political Ambivalence and the Imaginative Archive*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2018.

Hirsch, Steven, and Lucien Van der Walt, in Hirsch and Van der Walt, eds. *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution*. Brill, 2010.

Hofstadter, Richard. *Social Darwinism in American Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1944].

Hong, Nathaniel. "Constructing the Anarchist Beast in American Periodical Literature." *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 9 (1992): 110-130.

Hutchison, Elizabeth Quay. "From 'La Mujer Esclava' to 'La Mujer Limón': Anarchism and the Politics of Sexuality in Early-Twentieth-Century Chile." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3-4 (2001), 519-553.

Irwin, Robert McKee. *Mexican Masculinities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Jones, Jacqueline. *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017.

Kanellos, Nicolás. "An Early Feminist Call to Action: 'Manifiesto a la Mujer,' by Blanca de Moncaleano." *Latino Studies* 11:4 (2013): 587-597.

Keating, AnaLouise, ed. *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press 2009.

Kelly, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

Kissack, Terrence. *Free Comrades: Anarchism and Homosexuality in the United States, 1895-1917*. Oakland: AK Press, 2008.

Koertge, Noretta, ed. *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- Korhonen, Kuisma. *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History / Literature Debate*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
- Kosek, Jake. *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Kropotkin, Pyotr. *The Conquest of Bread*. Ardent Press, [https://libcom.org/files/Peter%20Kropotkin%20-%20The%20Conquest%20of%20Bread\\_0.pdf](https://libcom.org/files/Peter%20Kropotkin%20-%20The%20Conquest%20of%20Bread_0.pdf) (accessed June 1, 2020).
- Kuhl, Stefan. *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Lawson, John F. M. Sr. *In the Wave of Time: Book I "Seres."; The One Thousand Days*. Venice, California: The Academy Publishers, 1975.
- Lawson, John F. M. Sr. *In the Wave of Time: Book V, "Mattie."* Venice, CA: The Academy Publishers, undated.
- Lawson, John F. M. Sr. *In the Wave of Time: Book IV, "Beatrice."* Unpublished and undated.
- Levy, Carl. "Anarchism, Internationalism and Nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50:3 (2004): 330-342.
- Liachowitz, Claire H. *Disability as a Social Construct: Legislative Roots*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.
- Limón, José Eduardo. "Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism," *American Literary History* 20:1-2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 160-182.
- Lomas, Laura. *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Lomnitz, Claudio. *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. New York, NY: Zone Books, 2014.
- López-Calvo, Ignacio, and Victor M. Valle, eds. *Latinx Writing Los Angeles: Nonfiction Dispatches from a Decolonial Rebellion*. University of Nebraska Press, 2018.
- Maldonado Alvarado, Benjamín. *Ante el centenario de la Revolución Mexicana: Magonismo y vida communal mesoamericana*. Oaxaca de Juárez: Oaxaca, Secretaría de Cultura, 2010.
- Maldonado Alvarado, Benjamín. *La utopía de Ricardo Flores Magón: revolución, anarquía y comunidad india*. Oaxaca: Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, Secretaría Académica, 1994.

Malhotra, Ravi, ed. *Disability Politics in a Global Economy: Essays in Honour of Marta Russell*. Routledge, 2018.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Double Day Press, 2004.

Manrique, Linnete. "Dreaming of a Cosmic Race: José Vasconcelos and the Politics of Race in Mexico, 1920s-1930s." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 3:1 (2016).

Manrique, Linnete. "Making the Nation: The Myth of Mestizajes." *Anthropology* 5:3 (2017).

Marshall, Peter. *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. Oakland: AK Press, 2010 [1992].

McKinley, C. Alexander. *Illegitimate Children of the Enlightenment: Anarchists and the French Revolution, 1880-1914*. New York, NY: P. Lang, 2008.

Mirandé, Alfredo, and Evangelina Enríquez. *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Woman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Molero-Mesa, Jorge, Isabel Jiménez-Lucena, and Carlos Taberno-Holgado. "Neo-Malthusianism and Eugenics in the Struggle over Meaning in the Spanish Anarchist Press, 1900-1936." *História, Ciências, Saúde* 25, supl. (August 2018). Translated by Catherine Jagoe.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Olcott, Jocelyn, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano, eds., *Sex in Revolution: Gender Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Owen, William C. *The Economics of Herbert Spencer*. New York City: The Humboldt Publishing Co., 1891.

Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Parsons, A. R. *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis; As Defined by Some of Its Apostles*. Chicago: Mrs. A. R. Parsons, Publisher, 1887.



Pfaelzer, Jean. *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.

Pilcher, Jeffery, M., ed. *The Human Tradition in Mexico*. Wilmington, Delaware; SR Books, 2003.

Ramírez, Omar. "Black Flag, Red Heart: A Study of Chicano and Chicana Anarchy." Master's thesis, California State University, Northridge, 2008.

Reclus, Élie. *Primitive Folk: Studies in Comparative Ethnology*. London: Walter Scott, 1891.

Richards, Robert J. *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Rifkin, Mark. *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Romero, Robert Chao. *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010.

Sakai, J. *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern*. Oakland: PM Press, 2014.

Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Samaniego López, Marco Antonio. "El poblado fronterizo de Tijuana. Emiliano Zapata y la *rivoluzione da tavolo*." *HMex* 66, no. 3 (2017).

Samaniego López, Marco Antonio. *Nacionalismo y revolución: los acontecimientos de 1911 en Baja California*. Tijuana: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2008.

Sandos, James. *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan de San Diego, 1904-1923*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.

Schwantes, Carlos A. "Free Love and Free Speech on the Pacific Northwest Frontier: Proper Victorians vs. Portland's Filthy *Firebrand*." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 82:3 (Fall 1981): 271-293.

Shone, Steve J. *American Anarchism*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Shulman, Alix Kates, ed. *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1998 [1972].

Somerville, Siobhan. "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (October 1994): 243-266.

Spangler, Ryan Anthony, and Georg Michael Schwarzmann. *Syncing the Americas: José Martí and the Shaping of National Identity*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2018.

St. John, Rachel. *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Streeby, Shelley. *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Struthers, David M. *The World in a City: Multiethnic Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Taylor Hansen, Lawrence Douglas. *La campaña magonista de 1911 en Baja California: El apogeo de la lucha revolucionaria del Partido Liberal Mexicano*. Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1992.

Thomas, David Hurst. *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Topete Lara, Hilario. "Los Flores Magón y sus circunstancias." *Contribuciones desde Coatepec*, no. 8 (January-June 2005): 71-133.

Turner, Ethel Duffy. *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon*. Detroit, Michigan: Blaine Ethridge Books, 1981.

Weisser, Susan Ostrov, ed. *Women and Romance: A Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Wells, Jonathan Daniel. *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

West, William Lemoore. "The Moses Harman Story," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 41-63.

Wilson, Robert A. *The Eugenic Mind Project*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018.

Winner, Langdon. *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Zissu, Erik March. *Blood Matters: Five Civilized Tribes and the Search of Unity in the 20th Century*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

### **Periodicals**

*The Chautauquan* (Meadville, PA)

*The Century Magazine*

*El Colmillo Público* (Mexico City)

*The Engineering Magazine: Devoted to Industrial Progress*

*Los Angeles Times*

*Lucifer, the Light Bearer*

*The Medical Progress*

*Medical Record*

*The Monist*

*Mother Earth*

*Popular Science Monthly*

*Regeneración* (Mexico City; San Antonio, TX; St. Louis, MO; Los Angeles, CA)

*Revolución* (Los Angeles, CA)

*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*

*Star Tribune* (Minneapolis)

*Sunset*

*Texas Medical Journal*