Republican Friendship: Manuela Sáenz Writes Women into the Nation, 1835–1856

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Manuela Sáenz has not suffered the fate of many women throughout history: she has not been forgotten. But the image of her that has lived on, for all its vivid color, is strangely flat. She is remembered as the lover of Simón Bolívar, the renowned leader of South America's independence from Spain.[1] Novels and biographies alike depict her as the passionate beauty to whom Bolívar wrote, "I also want to see you, and examine you and touch you and feel you and savor you and unite you to me through all my senses."[2] Her passions extended into the public sphere, where she dramatically defended the image of

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1. For an overview of how Sáenz has been depicted in various periods, see María Mogollón Cobo and Ximena Narváez Yar, *Manuela Sáenz: Presencia y polémica en la historia* (Quito: Corporación Ed. Nacional, 1997). For biographies, see Alfonso Rumazo González, *Manuela Sáenz: La libertadora del libertador*, 3d ed. (Bogotá: Ed. Mundial Bogotá, 1944); Alberto Miramon, *La vida ardiente de Manuela Sáenz*, 3d ed. (Bogotá: Librería Sudamérica, 1946); Víctor W. Von Hagen, *La amante inmortal* (Barcelona: Ed. AHR, 1958); Mercedes Ballesteros, ed., *Manuela Sáenz, el último amor de Bolívar* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1976); Blanca Gaitán de París, ed., *La mujer en la vida del libertador* (Bogotá: Cooperativa Nacional de Artes Gráficas, 1980); Arturo Valero Martínez, ed., *En defensa de Manuela Sáenz, la libertadora del libertador* (Guayaquil: Ed. del Pacífico, 1988); José Rivas Rivas, *Carta de Manuela Sáenz a su porno detractor* (Caracas: Univ. Central de Venezuela, 1990); Martha Gil-Montero, "Manuela and Simón," *Américas* 42, no. 2 (1990); and Ligia Elena Rojas, *Manuela, mujer republicana* (Caracas: Ed. Los Heraldos Negros, 1994).

2. Simón Bolívar, *Cartas del libertador*, 8 vols. (Caracas: Banco de Venezuela y Fundación Vicente Lecuna, 1964), 5: 184.

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Bolívar. When his political protégé, Francisco de Paula Santander, turned rival and displayed satiric statues of Bolívar and Sáenz in a 1830 procession, Sáenz and her servants, dressed as men, charged the parade to remove the effigies.[3] Yet, such political actions primarily enhanced her romantic rather than political image. Sáenz undoubtedly would have liked to be remembered as both the lover and defender of Bolívar. After the latter's death in 1830, she exclaimed in a letter, "I loved the liberator; dead, I venerate him."[4] But Sáenz had already begun participating in the movements for independence from Spain before she met Bolívar in 1822 and her activism continued after his death in 1830 and her exile from Colombia and Ecuador by his political opponents. By shifting the focus to the writing of Sáenz in exile in Peru, which has been ignored by her biographers, it becomes clear that she not only continued her political activities but also developed a discourse of friendship to justify the influence of women in the new nations. A role for elite women as friends, rather than primarily wives and mothers, provides an alternative to both the dominant ideology of that period as well as to the central emphasis in the historiography on "republican motherhood."

The dramatic actions of Sáenz earned her a place among the pantheon of heroines of Spanish America. Although much analysis remains to be done, historians have compiled the stories of numerous women who were active in the wars of independence.[5] The assumption of women's apolitical nature, at least in the early years, allowed many the cover to act as smugglers, spies, and seducers who convinced soldiers to switch sides. In addition, elite women donated money and jewels to the cause and participated in *tertulias* (salons) where politics were discussed and conspiracies planned. Those of a more humble background followed their husbands, fathers, and brothers on the battlefields, providing essential support services and occasionally picking up arms themselves

3. For the transcripts of her trial, see Archivo de la Academia Colombiana de Historia, "Documentos inéditos," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* [Bogotá] 47 (1960): 373–402.

4. Manuela Sáenz, *Manuela Sáenz: Epistolario*, ed. Jorge Villalba (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1986), 96.

5. For examples, see José Dolores Monsalve, *Mujeres de la independencia* (Bogotá: Imp. Nacional, 1926); Carmen Clemente Travieso, *Mujeres de la independencia: Seis biografías de mujeres venezolanas* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de México, 1964); Elvia Gutiérrez Isaza, *Historia heróica de las mujeres próceres de Colombia* (Medellin: n.p., 1972); Judith Prieto de Zegarra, *Mujer, poder y desarrollo en el Perú*, 2 vols. (Callao: Ed. DORHCA Representaciones, 1980), vol. 2; Armila Troconis de Veracoechea, *Indias, esclavas, mantuanas y primeras damas* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1990), 132–52; and Carmen Perdomo Escalona, *Heroínas y mártires venezolanas* (Caracas: Ed. Librería Destino, 1994).

when necessary.[6] Though we know what women did, however, we know much less about what they thought. Most evidence indicates that women had chosen the patriot (or royalist) cause for the same reasons as men—rather than from a female consciousness—and made no claims for suffrage or citizenship. The lack of either a social or intellectual history of women after independence is even more glaring. Some of the ideas proposed in this essay, therefore, are of necessity tentative but offered in the hope of stimulating discussion and further research.

In contrast to the French and North American revolutions, there are few studies that analyze even dominant gender ideologies in the early nineteenth century, particularly the ideas of the leaders of the independence movements in Latin America. No prominent officials or intellectuals of the new nations advocated granting women full citizenship rights, although their attitudes ranged from harshly criticizing political active women to praising those who fostered domestic virtues. Vicente Rocafuerte justified his order to exile Sáenz from Ecuador by asserting that "It is the women who most promote the spirit of anarchy in these countries."[7] Bolívar, on the other hand, acknowledged the contributions of women to the independence struggles and relied upon the astute advice of his sister Manuela Antonia. Yet, in a 1826 letter to the latter, he also warned her not to participate in politics: "A woman should be neutral in public matters. Her family and domestic duties are her first obligations."[8] This postwar effort to return women to the home is also reflected in the drama of early republican Spanish America. Plays, such as *Las convulsiones* by Luis Vargas Tejada (Colombia, 1828) and *Frutos de la educación* by Felipe Pardo y Aliaga (Peru, 1829), both ridiculed intellectual women and emphasized the dangers of female passions.[9]

6. Evelyn Cherpak, "Women and the Independence of Gran Colombia, 1780–1830" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973); idem, "The Participation of Women in the Independence Movement in Gran Colombia, 1780–1830," in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); and Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790–1857* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985).

7. Vicente Rocafuerte to Juan José Flores, 14 Oct. 1835, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 100.

8. Bolívar, *Cartas del libertador*, 5:241. For her letters, see Aníbal Noguera Mendoza, ed., *Epistolarios: Bolívar y las damas, las damas y Bolívar* (Caracas: Ed. de la Presidencia de la República, 1983).

9. Susan Isabel Stein, "A Woman's Place: Nineteenth-Century Bourgeois Morality and the Spanish American Domestic Comedy," *Latin American Theatre Review* 26, no. 1 (1992). See also Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991); and Francine Masiello, *Between Civilization and*

A less openly misogynist line of thought, influenced by the European enlightenment but also rooted in the Spanish American experience, asserted that proper education could channel female emotions for the good of the republics.[10] Two years before Sáenz was exiled to northern Peru, a newspaper in the southern city of Arequipa enthusiastically covered an examination of school girls before an audience of local officials. "[U]nder your auspices, the fair sex will not be, no, a group contemptible for its ignorance," proclaimed pupil Juliana Sanches, "but rather, adorned with knowledge and virtues, it will be the compass that guides the domestic ship along the path of honor, inspiring in the family sentiments of justice and religion."[11] In early republican Venezuela, women based judicial petitions upon the social utility of motherhood, and the sentence to execute a pregnant women in 1836 galvanized 27 "mothers of Caracas" to issue a public plea for mercy.[12] By the second half of the nineteenth century, "virtuous daughters and sainted mothers" (in the words of Peruvian novelist Luis Benjamín Cisneros) had become the dominant images for women throughout Spanish America.[13]

It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of the first feminine periodicals and the rise of literary romanticism in Spanish America, that women entered the public discussion about their role in the new

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Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1992).

10. Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City*, 15–26; and Sarah C. Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1999). In Argentina, Sarmiento established schools for women, but restricted the curriculum to matters appropriate for mothers. See Elizabeth Garrels, "Sarmiento and the Woman Question: From 1839 to the *Facundo*," in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994); and idem, "La nueva Eloisa en América, o el ideal de la mujer de la generación de 1837," *Nuevo Texto Crítico* 2, no. 4 (1989).

11. "Colegio de Educandas," *El Republicano* 8, no. 37 (1833), 4.

12. Arlene J. Díaz, "'Vicenta Ochoa muchas veces muerta': Male Arguments and Female Strategies for Searching Political Legitimacy in Early Republican Caracas, Venezuela" (paper presented at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, University of Rochester, 3–6 June 1999).

13. Cisneros quoted in Francesca Denegri, *El Abanico y la cigarrera: La primera generación de mujeres ilustradas en el Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1996), 36. For an example from Ecuador, the birthplace of Sáenz, see essays "La mujer" and "La madre" in *Cartas y lecturas de Juan Montalvo*, ed. Galo Martínez Acosta (Quito: Ed. Industrias Gráficas, 1964), 279–80 and 287–89. For an analysis of Montalvo's writings on women, see Janine Potelet, "Imagenes de la mujer en la obra de Montalvo," in *Coloquio internacional sobre Juan Montalvo*, ed. Coloquio Internacional (Quito: Fundación Friedrich Naumann, 1989).

nations.[14] The ability of women to publish their work was a significant advance, but these first female writers were often limited to expressing their opinions on the "woman question" and in exclusively feminine journals. Moreover, in their published work, many women embraced their primary role as mothers.[15] Teresa González de Fanning, for example, called for educating Peruvian women on the grounds that "As long as there are mothers who do not understand the magnitude of their mission, you will not have citizens who will be able to lift the motherland from the cruel prostration to which it has been reduced by its maladies."[16] Commenting upon two female journalists in Argentina, Nancy Saporta Sternbach highlights their contradictory position: "Both of them struggled incessantly for women's rights through their activism and their writing while simultaneously insisting that women not make a profession of writing."[17] An ideology of domesticity affirmed women's capacities and raised the value placed upon their traditional roles, but simultaneously restricted the kind and extent of their activism.[18] This role, moreover, was not

14. For reprints from the feminine press in Argentina, see Francine Masiello, ed., *La mujer y el espacio público: El periodismo femenino en la Argentina del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Feminaria Ed., 1994). For analyses, see Nestor Tomás Auza, *Periodismo y feminismo en la Argentina, 1830–1930* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Ed., 1988); and June Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1990).

15. Later, feminists would use the ideology of their moral superiority to push for a greater role in the public sphere. See Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890–1940* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1995).

16. Teresa González de Fanning, "Concerning the Education of Women," [1876] in *Confronting Change, Challenging Tradition: Women in Latin American History*, ed. Gertrude M. Yeager (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994), 31.

17. Nancy Saporta Sternbach, "'Mejorar la condición de mi secso': The Essays of Rosa Guerra," in *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women's Writing of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Doris Meyer (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1995), 47. In addition to the other essays in this anthology, see Montserrat Ordóñez, "Soledad Acosta de Samper: Una nueva lectura," *Neuvo Texto Crítico* 2, no. 4 (1989); and essays in Lea Fletcher, ed., *Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Feminaria Ed., 1994). For both the openings for female writers created by the romantic movement and the constraints placed upon them in Peru and Spain, see Denegri, *El Abanico y la cigarrera*, 120–49; and Susan Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain, 1835–1850* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 62–96.

18. For the limits of an ideology of domesticity in Mexico, see Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City*, 259–68. For a comparison to the United States, see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980); and Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13, no. 1 (1987). In France, some women did call directly for

equally accessible to all women. Poor women, who had to work for a living and often lived outside legal marriage, had a hard time living up to the proper domestic image.[19] And it was a role unsuited even to some women of means. Manuela Sáenz was clearly among this latter group.

Sáenz, childless and scandalously separated from her husband, could not serve even as a symbolic mother. Peruvian writer Ricardo Palma, who met her when she was mature and he young, contrasted her with the lover of General José de San Martín, Rosa Campusano. Both had worked for the cause of independence, but "[i]n the heart of Rosa was a reservoir of tears and tender affections," while "Doña Manuela was a mistake of Nature," who "did not know how to cry, but instead became angry like men of hard character."[20] The portrait was not, however, completely unflattering. While Campusano inspired platonic love in Palma, Sáenz commanded his respect.

Sáenz, therefore, would have to develop an alternative justification to domestic virtue for her ongoing political influence in the new republics. What she implied, in letters to Ecuadorian general and president Juan José Flores, was a subtle inversion and reconfiguration of public and private spheres. She accepted women's exclusion from the public domain as represented by the state, but her private sphere was not a purely domestic space. Instead she proposed a politics based upon friendship, staking out a middle ground of sociability among both women and men through salons and correspondence. Such a space shares many characteristics with Jürgen Habermas's definition of civil society as a middle ground between the state and family, an arena where feminist critics have called for greater attention to the presence of women.[21] Many

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full rights of citizenship, but for images of republican motherhood, see Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992).

19. Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens*; and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1982).

20. Ricardo Palma, *Bolívar en las tradiciones peruanas* (Madrid, Barcelona, and Buenos Aires: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), 115–16.

21. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); and Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History & Theory* 31, no. 1 (1992); Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *Public and Private in Social Life*, ed. S. I. Benn and G. F. Gaus (London: Croom Helm, 1983); and the following articles from *Habermas and The Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989): Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America"; Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas"; and Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: Models and Boundaries."

historians have shared Rousseau's negative depiction of salon women as aristocratic *précieuses* whose feminizing influence on male philosophers was akin to the role of "power behind the throne" in court politics. More recently, however, feminist scholars have highlighted the *salonierres*' credentials as serious thinkers and opponents of monarchy.[22] Women like Sáenz, who had enjoyed the respect of prominent men before the revolutions in the Atlantic world, attempted to continue their advisory role despite the rising ideology of domesticity and the expansion of exclusively masculine fora for intellectual discussion such as clubs and cafes. In order to do so they had to defend female influence as legitimate rather than dangerous within a republic. Sáenz did not protest women's exclusion from formal politics (as indeed no Spanish American woman did in this period), but she turned that exclusion and thus their alleged lack of personal interest into an affirmation of their greater reliability and trustworthiness. This trait was particularly valuable during the period of civil strife and instability that followed independence in Spanish America.

Historical Context

From her birth in 1797, the illegitimate daughter of a Spanish military officer and a woman from one of Quito's moderately wealthy families, Sáenz's life reflected a period of turbulent change and shifting borders. As an adult she moved back and forth across the territory of what would become the nations of Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia. Though raised in a convent, she became a rebel, escaping, according to some accounts, in an attempt to elope with a lover. Her father, however, arranged her marriage in 1819 to an English merchant, with whom she moved to Lima, Peru. During the time in which Sáenz grew to maturity, some Spanish Americans became increasingly dissatisfied with the tightening of colonial rule and rising taxation. Napoleon's invasion of Spain and seizure of the king in 1808 gave them an opportunity to act. Governing councils (juntas) were formed in most capitals of South America, initially with the expressed intention to rule during the monarch's absence. In 1811, however, the juntas of first Venezuela and then other provinces of the Viceroyalty of New Granada openly declared their independence from Spain.[23] From 1819 to 1821, before she had met Bolívar, Sáenz collaborated

22. Dena Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (1989).

23. For overviews of the independence movements, see John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808–1826*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986); and David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993).

with the patriots in Peru, where they struggled for hegemony over the large number of royalists.

After first internal opposition and subsequently a fierce royalist counterinsurgency brought down the early republics of the northern Andes, Simón Bolívar emerged as a strong military leader who would gradually regain independence on the battlefield. By 1821 the patriots were in control of the provinces around both Caracas and Bogotá, and a unified congress of "Colombia," as the viceroyalty was renamed, elected Bolívar president and his protégé Santander as vice president. Bolívar left Santander in charge of administrative matters, while he continued the military struggle. After leading the military liberation of Quito and Guayaquil and incorporating them into Colombia in 1822, Bolívar set his sights upon the Viceroyalty of Peru, the last bastion of Spanish royalist forces in South America.

The patriot general of Argentina, José de San Martín, had arrived earlier to aid those Peruvians who desired independence. He recognized the participation of Manuela Sáenz and other women in conspiracies against Spanish rule by establishing a Society of Patriotic Ladies and decorating the members with a special medal inscribed with the slogan "To the patriotism of the most sensitive."[24] In 1822, after receiving her medal, Sáenz left her husband to travel to Quito, probably to attend to her maternal inheritance, and there she met the triumphant Bolívar. She returned to Peru by his side, never to return to her husband, as Bolívar continued his struggle for South American independence. There, in addition to hosting political salons, by some accounts she sallied forth to battle on horseback dressed in a colonel's uniform. By 1825 Colombian and Peruvian forces definitively defeated the royalist army in Upper Peru, renamed Bolivia in honor of their commander.

This final victory marked the height of Bolívar's power and influence. Increasingly concerned with maintaining order in the nascent republics, he established a life-term presidency in the Bolivian constitution. He also hoped to strengthen independent Spanish America through further unification of nations. Both efforts, however, would fail by the time of his death five years later. In 1826 he returned to a fractionalized Colombia in order to resume his presidency and attempt to restore stability, and Sáenz joined him in Bogotá a year later. Bolívar's promotion of the life-term presidency during the constitutional convention of 1828 led to a split with Santander and other liberals. During a brief period in which he seized dictatorial powers, opposition to Bolívar grew, and Sáenz engaged in a symbolic battle with his political enemies. Even

24. Prieto de Zegarra, *Mujer, poder y desarrollo*, 2:203–7.

before Bolívar openly acknowledged the split from his rival, Sáenz executed Santander in effigy. She also earned the nickname "La libertadora del libertador" for saving Bolívar from several assassination attempts. By 1830, however, his days were numbered. The leaders of Venezuela, who had been discontented with the central government in Bogotá for several years, declared independence. In the same year, Bolívar resigned from power and died shortly after. Three years later, Santander accused Sáenz of participation in a plot to overthrow his administration (charges she denied) and forced her to leave Colombia. She sought temporary refuge in Jamaica.

Although some in the southern provinces had also been pushing for secession from Colombia, Bolívar's handpicked governor in Quito, Venezuelan General Juan José Flores, had remained loyal to his mentor. Once it became clear that Bolívar was stepping down, however, Flores allowed for the declaration of an independent Ecuador and became the nation's first president. Building a new nation in a country with a racially diverse population, geographical obstacles to communication, and frequent conflicts between the liberal elites from the port of Guayaquil and the more conservative oligarchy of Quito, would be no easy task. Flores faced liberal opposition expressed first through the press, which he repressed, and subsequently in an 1833 revolt by a group known as "Chihuahuas," which included Manuela's half-brother José María Sáenz. Despite such conflict, however, Ecuador avoided the frequency of civil war and government turnover experienced by many Spanish American nations in this period through a pact between Flores and the opposition leader Vicente Rocafuerte to alternate in power. In return for his support in repressing the rebels, Flores released the imprisoned Rocafuerte and then stepped down at the end of his term to allow for the election of the latter in 1835. During Rocafuerte's presidency, Flores led the loyal opposition, rejecting suggestions that he lead a revolt and waiting instead to be reelected in 1839. Nevertheless, the apparent agreement between the two rivals to alternate in power was broken in 1843 when Flores sponsored changes to the constitution that would allow him to be reelected to an extended term. Proclaiming that the government had become a tyranny, Rocafuerte joined the opposition in exile and returned to power after an uprising against Flores in 1845.[25]

Although Manuela Sáenz never lived in independent Ecuador, she spent the second half of her life attempting to influence the politics of the new

25. For an overview of the political history of Ecuador in this period, see Jorge Villalba Freire, "Manuela Sáenz y la política del Ecuador, 1832 a 1845," in Sáenz, *Epistolario*; and Mark J. Van Aken, *King of the Night: Juan José Flores and Ecuador, 1824–1864* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989).

nation. In 1833, from her exile in Jamaica, Sáenz had written to Flores, whom she knew from their days as collaborators of Bolívar, asking his assistance in recovering the income from an hacienda. In October 1835, she decided to return to Ecuador to manage the accounts herself. Flores, as commander of the armed forces, granted her a safe conduct to travel from the port of Guayaquil to Quito, but President Rocafuerte cancelled Sáenz's passport and ordered her to leave the country. Comparing her to Madame de Staël, he accused her of coming to avenge the recent death of her half-brother José María Sáenz, who had participated in the Chihuahua revolt. Based upon her "character, talents, vices, ambition and prostitution," he explained to Flores, "she has been called to reignite the revolutionary flame."[26] Although Sáenz denied these specific charges, her later actions demonstrate that she had not abandoned politics. Rocafuerte, therefore, may have been correct to fear her.

The Experience of Exile

Although Sáenz would have enjoyed the romantic image created of her relationship with Bolívar, there would be little for her to savor in the depiction of her later years. Historians mark the demise of her political activism with her lover's death in 1830. Although Sáenz lived for almost another 30 years, her biographers usually treat this period briefly as a tragic epilogue.[27] In exile in a tiny dusty port in northern Peru, she grew old in poverty, losing her beauty and increasingly confined to a wheelchair by infirmities and obesity. From time to time, visitors including Ricardo Palma, Herman Melville, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, briefly brightened her sad existence. But primarily, according to these accounts, she was accompanied by memories of the past. She died during a yellow fever epidemic in 1859, her body cast into a common grave and all her possessions burned to prevent contagion. Such a story makes marvelous melodrama, but does not do justice to this complex and active woman. Instead, she continued her political activities in exile, though increasingly carried them out through correspondence. Moreover, the experience of exile intensified her concern over the dangers of political instability and partisanship, and led her to place ever greater emphasis upon friendship.

Sáenz had been exiled from Colombia and Ecuador precisely because she was seen as a political threat. Protesting Rocafuerte's 1835 order for her expul-

26. Rocafuerte to Flores, 14 Oct. 1835, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 100.

27. Even Victor W. von Hagen, who had access to her correspondence with Flores, never mentions her political activity; see his *The Four Seasons of Manuela* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1952). The exception is Villalba, "Manuela Sáenz y la política."

sion, issued without a trial or the approval of Congress, as unconstitutional, Sáenz took refuge in Paita close to the border between Ecuador and Peru. This small town in the desert posed a stark contrast to the capitals of Quito, Lima, and Bogotá where Sáenz had been at the center of social and political events. She would later write that "eight years in Paita dull, debase and impoverish one."[28] Nevertheless, the port, a frequent stop for whalers, was not as isolated as it might seem. In the wake of independence, the border between Ecuador and Peru was hotly contested. Paita was central not only to such international controversies, but its large exile community also played a role in the internal politics of Ecuador.

Sáenz did not abandon her political activism, therefore, but exile did restrict its geographical reach. Years earlier, she had defended herself from the label of foreigner in Bogotá by declaring "my country is the whole of the American continent."[29] Increasingly, however, Sáenz identified herself as an Ecuadorian, or even a Quiteña. Such a change reflected both the hardening of national borders after 1830 and her own limited mobility. Indeed it was common in this period for men as well as women to identify as strongly with their home region, where local economic circuits and administrative units had deep roots in the colonial period, as with the more recently formed nations.[30] Her growing political focus on Ecuador also may have pragmatically taken advantage of her relationship to Flores. In 1841 she justified an offer of political support to General Flores by demurring, "Please pardon any foolishness I may propose to you as I have no interest in it except as a Quiteña, your friend and your faithful servant."[31] But it was also a personal identity closely tied to a direct experience of homeland and an affective relationship to a real, as opposed to imagined, community of friends.

But Sáenz's identification with Quito was not without ambivalence. She felt discouraged that she could find no one there who could effectively look after her financial affairs: "I am from Quito and I have relatives there; I had friends;" she lamented, "and it is as if I never had them; I believe that even for a foreigner there would be someone to handle her matters and collect her rents."[32] Furthermore, despite repeated expressions of love for her homeland,

28. Sáenz to Flores, 12 June 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 140.

29. Letter of 1830, reprinted in Eduardo Posada, "La libertadora," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* [Bogota] 15 (1925), 32.

30. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 54–59.

31. Sáenz to Flores, 12 Dec. 1841, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 114.

32. Sáenz to Flores, 10 Aug. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 164.

Sáenz never returned to Ecuador even when her exile was lifted after two years. In 1837 she wrote to thank Flores for his influence in securing her a safe conduct to return to Ecuador, but swore she would not do so as long as Rocafuerte remained president because his past injustices toward her made her fearful.[33] From 1839 to 1845 Flores returned to power, but Sáenz remained in Paita. Financial problems limited her options, but her presence in Quito might have improved her chances of recovering her inheritance. By 1842 she told Flores she never intended to return as the climate was bad for her health, and that if she received her money she might move to Lima. Moreover, she insisted that she had not intended to stay in Ecuador even in 1835, but simply hoped to recover her property and leave again.[34] Nevertheless, a year and a half later, she expressed anger and regret at her exile, highlighting once again the importance of friends:

> A terrible anathema from hell delivered by Rocafuerte has me far from my fatherland and from my friends like you, and the worst is that I have been sentenced to never return to my homeland, since as you know, my friend, it is easier to destroy something than to make it anew. An order exiled me, but the safe conduct has not been able to reunite me with my dearest affections: my fatherland and my friends.[35]

Apparently she had never intended to make Quito her permanent home, yet to have had that option denied to her at a critical point deepened rather than weakened her feelings of nationalism. It also strengthened her resolve to bridge distances, and thereby maintain her community of friends, through her correspondence. With a touch of humor, she warned Flores that he would never be free of her letters, whether she moved to Lima or even China.[36]

Sáenz's experiences in and image of Peru further deepened her identification with Ecuador. Her arrival coincided with a period of border conflict between the two countries, and she took personally insults to Ecuador. In particular, she resented Peruvians who boasted of greater national wealth (based on guano fertilizer) than neighboring countries. In 1842 she sent a copy of a satirical poem, which depicted Ecuador and Bolivia as poor, envious neighbors, to Flores, urging him to find a Quiteño to respond in kind in order to defend the national honor. In Sáenz's opinion, moreover, republican leaders in

33. Sáenz to Flores, 18 May 1837 and 20 Oct. 1837, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 107–8.
34. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Jan. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 115.
35. Sáenz to Flores, 7 Sept. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 144.
36. Ibid; and Sáenz to Flores, 12 June 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 140.

Peru had given early signs of their political inconstancy by rejecting Bolívar's continuing intervention in national affairs after his troops had helped defeat the royalist army. She was disdainful of the country's ongoing instability and civil wars, a fate she hoped Ecuador could avoid under the strong leadership of Flores. "I am a patriot," she declared, "and I do not wish my country to imitate Peru."[37] Sáenz based her alliance with Flores on their friendship and her confidence in his ability to maintain order. The two poles of sociability and partisan conflict, which marked her experience of exile, would influence her discourse of republican friendship.

The Politics of Writing

In exile, Sáenz was no longer at the center of the political scene, and her actions became less open and dramatic. There were no reports of her sallying forth in uniform to burn her enemies in effigy. She did not, however, abandon her political activism. From a woman of action, she became a woman of letters. While she never traveled again, she maintained her connections with important political figures across South America through correspondence. Her letters to General Flores, which form the primary source for this essay, likely made up just a fraction of her missives.[38] She referred in them to her correspondence with General Andrés de Santa Cruz, onetime president of Bolivia and chief of the Peru-Bolivian confederation from 1836 to 1839, during the initial years of Sáenz's residence in Peru.[39] She also mentioned letters to Chilean politicians.[40]

In Europe, beginning in the seventeenth century, the letters of women were praised for their style and linked to the art of conversation developing in salons. Nevertheless, some feminist literary critics have emphasized that by identifying such talents as natural rather than learned, the male authors of letter-writing manuals simultaneously restricted women's writing. Elizabeth Goldsmith summed up the essays in a collection she edited as suggesting "that

37. Sáenz to Flores, 23 Jan. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 152.

38. I did not use letters and diaries published in Manuela Sáenz, *Patriota y amante de usted: Manuela Sáenz y el libertador, diarios inéditos* (Mexico City: Ed. Diana, 1993), because questions have been raised about their authenticity. See Gustavo Vargas Martínez, "Bolívar y Manuelita: Con los puntos sobre las íes," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 80, no. 782 (1993); and Pilar Moreno de Angel, "Sobre el libro 'Patriota y amante de usted': Manuela Sáenz y el libertador," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* 81, no. 784 (1994).

39. Sáenz to Flores, 30 Jan. 1843 and 28 Nov. 1843, Sáenz, in *Epistolario*, 126, 149.

40. Sáenz to Flores, 30 Jan. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 96.

female epistolary voices tend to describe confinement more than liberation, isolation more than interaction."[41] Dena Goodman, on the other hand, asserts a more empowering role for women as participants in a reciprocal "epistolary exchange" in eighteenth-century France: "the letter moved the Enlightenment out of the private world of the salon into the public world beyond it."[42] After revolutionary leaders made clear that women would be excluded from direct political action, writing continued, according to Whitney Walton, as "the only means (along with sociability and conversation) for these women to be involved in political affairs."[43] David Shields asserts that in the early republican United States the letter was often preferred to the press: "Every social interaction in which trust, personal connection, and privacy were crucial made use of the manuscript letter as its principal medium of contact."[44]

The correspondence of Sáenz, fits within this tradition. Although Sáenz filled her letters with disclaimers and apologies and never expressed a desire to have them published, her intention was clearly political. Indeed, the significance of letters had deep roots in Spanish America, where the educated elite (*letrados*) governed and attempted to assert cultural hegemony over first colonies and then nations through copious manuscript correspondence.[45] During the period of independence, male military and political leaders relied upon letters to communicate ideas and coordinate their actions, as attested by the numerous published volumes which later filled library shelves.[46] Sáenz, whose political correspondence dated at least from her years as a collaborator of Bolívar, recognized early on the power of the written word. When she joined Bolívar in Lima in 1823, she was appointed his official secretary and would hold on to much of the general's archive throughout her life. In her letter to Flores from Jamaica in 1834, she complained of Santander's exile order,

41. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, ed., *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1989), xii. See also the essays in Domna C. Stanton, ed., *The Female Autograph* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1984).

42. Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons," 340. See also Janet Gurkin Altman, "Women's Letters in the Public Sphere," in *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, ed. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995).

43. Whitney Walton, "Writing the 1848 Revolution: Politics, Gender, and Feminism in the Works of French Women of Letters," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1994): 1007.

44. David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1997), 317.

45. Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. and ed. John C. Chasteen (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996).

46. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 62.

claiming that "a poor woman like myself can do nothing." Yet in the next line, she hinted that she did in fact have political influence: "there exists in my hands his [Santander's] personal correspondence with the Liberator and I am making good use of it. I had to work hard to save all the papers from 1830 and this is my property, mine."[47] From exile in Peru, she continued to try to get the papers she had left in Bogotá.[48]

Sáenz had always recognized the importance of letters, but in exile they became her lifeline. Though she acknowledged the receipt of letters from Flores, her insistent entreaties for replies indicate her dependent position in their relationship as well as her urgency to overcome isolation. Her letter to Flores of 20 November 1837, begins, "Why do you not wish to write me?" and closes, "Show me compassion and write once in a while to console me."[49] Five years later, she scolds, "I no longer feel like writing to you, because you do not answer me."[50] Because she did not trust the public postal system, Sáenz took advantage of numerous personal contacts to send her letters with travelers, merchants and diplomats, and provided detailed instructions on the best way to respond:

> When you deign to write me, do not do so through the mail, because here there is no security. Recently they robbed the post eleven leagues from Piura, in order to say it was supporters of Santa Cruz, but it was the work of the government. One who steals the voting box, why not a mail pouch? Send your letters to Señor Luzarraga, who will send them under the cover of señor don Alexander Ruden, Consul of the United States, an intimate friend of mine, and very affectionate toward you.[51]

As elsewhere in the Atlantic world, the lack of legal privacy rights and secure postal systems contributed to the public nature of correspondence.[52] Friends,

47. Sáenz to Flores, 6 May 1834, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 96.

48. Daniel F. O'Leary, *Memorias del General O'Leary* (Caracas: Ministerio de la Defensa, 1981), 376n.

49. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Nov. 1837, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 108–9. Such entreaties are typical of Spanish American women's letters in this period, even among spouses; see Noguera Mendoza, *Epistolarios: Bolívar y las damas, las damas y Bolívar*; and Sergio Vergara Quiroz, ed., *Cartas de mujeres en Chile, 1630–1885* (Santiago: Ed. Andrés Bello, 1987).

50. Sáenz to Flores, 9 Aug. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 124.

51. Sáenz to Flores, 12 July 1840, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 112.

52. Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons," 348–49; Altman, "Women's Letters in the Public Sphere," 100; and Edith B. Geles, "A Virtuous Affair: The Correspondence between Abigail Adams and James Lovell," *American Quarterly* 39 (1987), 260.

therefore, were the critical carriers as well as recipients of her correspondence.

Many of her missives also end with an order to destroy the same letters. Her correspondence was precious to her, but she knew the dangers of having it fall into the wrong hands, just as she had threatened to expose Santander by making public his letters to Bolivar. In 1844 she warned Flores:

> The Governor of Piura has had the custom of tearing his letters and throwing them away; and now with this change [of government] they have put together the pieces and read them in order to acquaint themselves with the people who sent him warnings and now they are persecuting them to death. For a thousand and one reasons secret things should be burned.[53]

Fortunately for historians, her warnings were not heeded, but she did suffer the consequences. In 1843 she intercepted and forwarded to Flores a letter from one of his enemies; when he had it published in Ecuador, exiles in Peru concluded that Sáenz had been the source of the leak and proceeded to harass her.[54]

Sáenz's respect for the power—both positive and negative—of the written word extended from correspondence to the press. In her letters, she pleaded not only for personal replies but also copies of printed documents. One of her earliest requests to Flores was for a copy of Bolívar's proposed constitution for Colombia.[55] A month later, she asked him to send any printed materials because few made it to Paita.[56] Such requests continued throughout her correspondence, and she reciprocated by sending Flores copies of Ecuadorian opposition newspapers printed in Peru.[57] Although the copies of Flores's replies are missing (and likely destroyed), he probably shared her concern. In his first term as president, the liberal opposition had launched a fierce attack on his government through the press, which he subsequently shut down. During his second term, which coincided with Sáenz's residence in Paita, he employed a professional writer to publicly dispute the printed charges of the opposition.[58]

53. Sáenz to Flores, n.d., in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 169.
54. Editor's note, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 153.
55. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Oct. 1837, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 108.
56. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Nov. 1837, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 109.
57. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Jan. 1843 and 24 July 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 126, 142.
58. Van Aken, *King of the Night*, 46, 78–86, 138–40.

Oddly, given her prolific correspondence, Sáenz urged Flores to find writers to refute the "libels" which she forwarded to him rather than penning the responses herself: "I regret infinitely, señor, that I cannot write . . . if I had money, I would buy [the press] to take away the source of diversion of that sarcastic man from Cauca. He has made me very, very indignant; I would like to be a man this once and never more."[59] In a few other letters, Sáenz comments on the limits of what a woman could do—usually in the realm of direct action—but it must have been particularly painful to her that even in the world of letters, she could write but not be published in the press. Nonetheless, the correspondence of Sáenz forces us to reconsider the boundaries of public and private as overlapping rather than clearly demarcated. Women like her were excluded from some fora within the civil society of early republican Spanish America, such as the press, but active in the world of letters and political salons.

Writing of Politics

Sáenz accepted that as a woman she could not publish her writings, but she did not limit her correspondence to private matters. Certainly she wrote personal news, and in particular requested help in managing her financial assets from a distance. But her letters to Flores both discussed political issues and served as a strategy of political activism. Rocafuerte's actions against Sáenz had been technically illegal, but his fears about her opposition to his presidency were probably well founded. Two years after her exile, Sáenz encouraged Flores, then commander-in-chief, to allow Rocafuerte's enemies to overthrow his presidency. "Watch out for he is very evil," she warned, "when you least expect it he will play a trick on you. You should know him well as intriguing, cowardly and treasonous; do not trust him."[60] Flores chose to wait, however, for the end of Rocafuerte's term in order to be reelected to the presidency in 1839.

Sáenz by contrast could not resign herself to inaction. Most of her early letters to Flores end with a plea that he give her a job to do: "with pleasure I would make any kind of sacrifice for you and call it my duty."[61] By 1841, as the border conflict between Peru and Ecuador was heating up, she apparently decided—most likely on her own initiative—to be useful by providing information on Peruvian diplomatic and military maneuvers. On 12 December, she

59. Sáenz to Flores, 11 Sept. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 146.

60. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Nov. 1837, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 109.

61. Ibid.; see also her letters of 25 Dec. 1837, 21 May 1840, and 12 July 1840, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 109–13.

sent him a warning labeled "confidential" (*reservado*) about Peru's envoy to the negotiations: "I know positively that Señor León has been sent with the purpose of keeping you tied up until they are better situated."[62] From January through June of 1842, she wrote him with news of Peruvian troop movements and her evaluation of Peruvian recruits.[63] Yet, she seemed to sense that her information was not particularly valuable: "Although others will tell you the same thing, I have also wanted to forewarn you, just in case."[64] After all, Ecuador had a consulate in nearby Piura.

Gradually, Sáenz realized that she could provide better information on Ecuador's internal politics than on international affairs. In June 1842, in addition to reporting on Peruvian troops, she warned Flores that an exiled opponent, staying in the home of her friends, was planning to cross back into Ecuador by land.[65] Because Sáenz had been expelled to Paita, other exiles assumed she was sympathetic to their cause. Even when she made public her friendship with Flores, it was assumed to be a personal relationship dating from their common alliance with Bolívar in the 1820s. This ambiguous position within the exile community allowed Sáenz to communicate with the opponents of Flores. As late as 1844, when the opposition to Flores and his new constitution was growing, Sáenz confided to him that "until now all of them consider me in the opposition party to you, though devoted to you personally, and therefore they talk without caution and sometimes even tell me to tell you something, and I answer them that I will be so bold as to give you advice."[66]

Through such connections, she gained access to both oral and written information which she passed on to Flores. For a time, those plotting against Flores even recruited Sáenz to be a courier: "I agreed to this," she explained, "with the intention of sending to you those letters that came to my hands, so that you would be informed of the state of things among these gentlemen and could be on guard."[67] Though she asked Flores to keep such letters secret, he published one to expose his enemies. In so doing, he also exposed his source. Nevertheless, Sáenz did not give up. Shortly after her cover was exposed, she began to work on a new informant, joking that she was "catechizing" a priest who served as a courier for letters between Ecuador and the exile community in Peru.[68]

62. Sáenz to Flores, 12 Dec. 1841, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 113.
63. Sáenz to Flores, Jan.–June 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 114–22.
64. Sáenz to Flores, 4 Feb. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 116.
65. Sáenz to Flores, June 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 120.
66. Sáenz to Flores, 23 Jan. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 151.
67. Ibid.
68. Sáenz to Flores, 12 Feb. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 155.

Although Sáenz had trouble regaining the confidence of the opposition, she was still able to get information through her careful cultivation of numerous friends. As she explained to Flores in one case, "By coincidence in Lima, among their club, there is a friend of an intimate friend of mine and in this way we know their matters."[69] Sáenz's biographers have noted that her house in Paita attracted numerous visitors, but unlike their depiction of simple social occasions, she considered these political opportunities. She received visits from Ecuadorian consuls and Peruvian civil and military officials alike, and she built a network of connections among both men and women. Ecuadorian consul Joaquín Monsalve wrote to Flores in 1843 of his excellent relations with Sáenz, praising her as an "influential and important woman."[70] She apparently recruited as fellow "spies" several other women, including the future in-laws of one of Flores' enemies. In February 1844, she wrote that the Señoras Godoy were investigating to find out who was sending money to the rebels to buy arms.[71]

It is difficult to judge whether Sáenz's efforts as a political informant, possibly a self-appointed role, were effective. Her pleas for replies indicate that Flores was not as active a correspondent as she would have wished, but she does acknowledge letters from him frequently enough to indicate that their communication went both ways. Unfortunately, his responses probably were burned along with the rest of Sáenz's belongings after her death. Nonetheless, in June 1842, Sáenz did make oblique reference to some plan proposed by Flores to her in a letter dated May 11: "Informed of its content I am ready for everything; but so that they do not suspect me, you must write a letter in which you call me urgently to return to Ecuador, something so that I can show this letter around, and you should send it through the mail." Remaining in Peru despite such an alleged order, made public by sending it through the corrupt postal system as well as her own circulation of it, would reinforce her cover within the exile community. After filling him in on the situation in Peru, she reminded him again to send the requested letter, adding "I am quite well-connected in this country so we shall see if something can be done for the homeland."[72] Moreover, there is little doubt that her advice was sound. Throughout 1844 and into early 1845, her warnings about conspiracies among the exiles increased in frequency, specificity, and insistence. In March 1845,

69. Sáenz to Flores, 6 Dec. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 171. See also her letter of 11 June 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 138.

70. Quoted in footnote 41, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 145.

71. Sáenz to Flores, 7 Feb. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 154–55.

72. Sáenz to Flores, 3 June 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 121–22.

the opposition erupted into open revolt in Guayaquil and by June Flores was forced from power and into exile in Europe.[73]

We do not know the degree to which Flores heeded such warnings, or even whether such information could have prevented the rebels' plans. What is clear from Sáenz's letters is her frustration at Flores's slowness to recognize the betrayal of his own appointees. Her early warning that he should not trust Rocafuerte may have reflected her personal animosity toward the man who had exiled her, but it did prove prescient. In January 1842, she warned Flores that the assistant to the Ecuadorian consul in Piura, Juan Otoya, was diverting official correspondence to the opposition.[74] Later her suspicions correctly extended to the consul himself, Pedro Moncayo, yet Flores kept him on in the post. When someone told Sáenz that the anonymous editor of the exiles' opposition newspaper still enjoyed Flores's favor, she exclaimed: "General you always raise ravens who then scratch out your eyes."[75] In October 1843, Sáenz complained that Otoya, still employed as vice consul, was spreading rumors of Flores's imminent fall from power: "But what is this señor? It seems that you have studied how to look for wicked ones to employ. . . . You make me so angry; sometimes I wish you were my son so that I could scold you well!"[76] Her urgent tone (leading her to appropriate a mother's voice) was surely rooted in recollections of similar warnings she had made to Bolívar, as when she had ceased to trust Santander before he became an open rival of his former mentor. In other letters, she would develop further this contrast between steadfast friends, who were often women, and ambitious men who put self-interest above political loyalty.

Friendship above Interest

Sáenz took pride in her ability to judge a person's character. Her warnings to Flores are one indication that for her, friendship was both a political practice and a discourse that justified the ongoing political influence of women under republicanism. Crucial to her claim was linking female friendship with loyalty, and contrasting these values with the dangers inherent in male partisanship and self-interest. Positing women as advisors to male friends limited her ability to argue for a more direct political role and bolstered personalism. Never-

73. Van Aken, *King of the Night*, 198–206.
74. Sáenz to Flores, 30 Jan. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 114–15.
75. Sáenz to Flores, 30 Jan. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 126.
76. Sáenz to Flores, 22 Oct. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 147.

theless, it was a role that was less confining than virtuous wife and mother, the only real alternative in this period.

It is difficult to pin down the multiple possible meanings of friendship in this period. In the eighteenth-century Anglo world, the term could carry overtones of patronage. Jan Lewis defines it as the "obligation to render assistance," so that a person "without friends" might have social acquaintances, but none in a position to provide favors. After the American revolution, such personal connections were called into question and as a result women lost influence.[77] Nevertheless, in practice friendship continued to serve as a foundation, one broader than kinship or employment, for sociability and open discussion grounded in trust.[78] Most likely there was a similar ambivalence in Spanish America. Relations of patronage had knit together much of colonial society and continued to be important in the new republics despite frequent denials by government leaders of their influence on politics. The Royal Spanish Academy did not mention patronage in its definition of friendship (*amistad*) as "love, benevolence and reciprocal trust" in the edition of its dictionary published between 1726 and 1739, and as "reciprocal affection among two or more persons, based upon good treatment and honest interchange" in 1852.[79] Later in the nineteenth century, a dictionary explicitly identified frienship as a "pure and disinterested affection."[80] Nevertheless, friendship may have been used among political actors who were close in social status to suggest a relationship in which loyalty and mutual favors were assumed but without the negative connotations of clientage. In 1820, for example, Bolívar wrote to Santander in anticipation of their reunion:

77. Jan Lewis, "'Those Scenes for Which Alone My Heart Was Made': Affection and Politics in the Age of Jefferson and Hamilton," in *An Emotional History of the United States*, ed. Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1998), 60. For a similar definition in England, see Naomi Tadmore, "'Family' and 'Friend' in *Pamela*: A Case Study in the History of the Family in Eighteenth-Century England," *Social History* 14 (1989). By contrast, Edith Geles asserts that despite the inequality between men and women, Abigail Adams was able to achieve a sincere epistolary friendship with congressman James Lovell. Geles, "A Virtuous Affair."

78. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters*, xx, 31.

79. The original quotations are "amor, benevolencia y confianza recíproca" and "afecto recíproco entre dos ó mas personas, fundado en un trato y correspondencia honesta." See Real Academía Española, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* (Madrid: Imp. de F. del Hierro, 1726–39); and *Diccionario de la lengua castellana por la Academía española*, 10th ed. (Madrid: Imp. Real, 1852). The term for a female friend (*amiga*) also referred to a concubine; Sáenz never addressed Bolívar as "amigo," but sometimes as lover (*amante*).

80. "Afecto puro y desinteresado." Eduardo de Echegaray, *Diccionario general etimológico de la lengua española* (Madrid: J. M. Faquineto, 1887–89).

> There we shall embrace, and though neither of us is of an affectionate nature, we shall nonetheless experience keen pleasure. We shall not utter fine phrases, but we shall think them, for great passions are ever sublime, and friendship above all others.[81]

While in theory, political actors of this period were beginning abstractly to imagine their connection to other members of the nation they had never met, their experience of fraternity was still grounded in their relationships to friends.

For women, the status of "friend" was perhaps even more ambiguous. Occasionally Sáenz appealed to patronage; some of her letters to Roberto Ascásubi, who managed her financial affairs in Quito in the 1840s, address him as "friend and benefactor."[82] And she was sensitive to the risks of asking Bolívar for favors; in one letter to him in which she provided a personal recommendation for a male friend, she demurred that "I know well how much I can do for a friend, and certainly it is to not compromise the man I most idolize."[83] However, in letters written to Bolívar by women, those requesting favors, pensions, and appointments for male relatives more often referred to him as a "protector" or "father" than a "friend."[84] Instead its use by both men and women in their correspondence, suggests a relationship of mutual respect and affection among peers if not equals. Sáenz, for example, defined her ties to Bolívar's secretary Juan Santana as "without sentiments as these are good for lovers but not for two friends who are both sure that there exists between them a sincere friendship."[85] While much of Sáenz's influence rested upon her relationship to Bolívar, she was not legally or even completely financially dependent upon him, and her friendships were numerous and freely chosen. Throughout her life, Sáenz enjoyed the respect of many prominent political leaders and foreign diplomats. Friendship, therefore, was both an attractive relationship for independent women like Sáenz and one that likely gave them a degree of influence greater, or at least wider, than female relatives.

81. Bolívar to Santander, 24 Feb. 1820, *Cartas del libertador*, 2:281.

82. Luis Felipe Borja, "Espistolario de Manuela Sáenz," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* 29 (1946).

83. Vergara Quiroz, "Cartas de Mujeres," 335.

84. See Noguera Mendoza, *Epitolarios*, and "Cartas de Mujeres," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* 16 (1933).

85. Vergara Quiroz, "Cartas de Mujeres," 333. Female writers in the Spanish Romantic movement referred to their male mentors as "amigos." See Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas*, 90–91.

By linking friendship with female disinterestedness, as we shall see, Sáenz clearly, if subtly, refuted justifications for barring women from the republican public sphere, an ideology with which she was undoubtedly familiar.[86] Women's association with the private sphere was used to justify their exclusion from formal politics during the Age of Revolution on several, sometimes contradictory, grounds. On the one hand, all women were assumed to be dependent upon either fathers or husbands and therefore incapable of making the autonomous decisions that guaranteed that citizens would be able to act in the public good.[87] On the other hand, as politicians and philosophers increasingly recognized the informal influence that women did yield over their male family members, they asserted that mothers had to be properly educated so that they would foster virtue and patriotism in their children. The praise of republican motherhood, therefore, reflected an underlying fear that women, if left to their own devices, might exercise their influence to undermine the state. President Rocafuerte explicitly cited such fears in his justification for exiling Sáenz. He assumed her loyalty to the cause of her rebel half-brother, and expressed his conviction "that the principal ladies are the declared enemy of all order and have much influence on the weak souls of their brothers, husbands and relatives."[88]

The classical belief that only men could sacrifice private loyalties for the public good was vividly revived in revolutionary France in David's painting *The Oath of the Horatii*. As Joan Landes has pointed out, the active stance of sons willing to sacrifice their lives to fulfill an oath to their father is contrasted with the passive grief of women who will suffer personal loss—of either brothers or husbands—regardless of the outcome of battle.[89] According to the dominant

86. On the reading tastes of Sáenz, see Palma, *Bolívar en las tradiciones peruanas*, 119.

87. In the United States, where coverture legally deprived women of control over property, the courts often cleared women of charges of treason on the grounds that they could not oppose the will of their husbands. See Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 119–36; and Joan R. Gundersen, "Independence, Citizenship, and the American Revolution," *Signs* 13, no. 1 (1987). Women's property rights in Spanish America were somewhat stronger. See Asunción Lavrin, "In Search of the Colonial Woman in Mexico: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Latin American Women*, 30–31.

88. Rocafuerte to Flores, 14 Oct. 1835, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 99. Similarly, in the case of the United States, Lewis notes concerns that if women's emotions "were too intense, men would carry their private attachments into the public realm and put them ahead of the needs of the nation." Lewis, "'Those Scenes for Which Alone,'" 62.

89. Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in The Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), 152–58.

strands of republican philosophy as it had developed from the classical world through the Florentine republics to the European enlightenment, then, only men had the independence to sacrifice their familial interests for the good of the republic. Santander repeatedly affirmed the importance of such sacrifices, as when he defended his opposition to Bolívar by declaring, "My duties and obligations toward the fatherland came and will continue to come before my father, my friends, and all else."[90] Positing herself as a friend, rather than a relative, Sáenz did not completely erase such concerns, but moved herself into the more disinterested sphere of society rather than family.

The concept of self-interest also had an ambivalent place in republican as opposed to liberal ideology.[91] Self-interest, if it spurred men on to glorious deeds, was compatible with the pursuit of the public good. Conversely, as Linda Kerber points out, "[b]ecause women were excluded from honors and offices, the usual methods of attaching subjects' self-interest to the outcome of national policy, women's relationship to their nation seemed to be vicarious."[92] But even masculine civic virtue rested on a fragile foundation, because as Rousseau observed, honor could lead to ambition and threaten the republic.[93] Bolívar attempted to lessen this contradiction by praising the masculine pursuit of glory and public acclaim, but denouncing "vulgar ambition" as rooted in the "feminine" passions of jealously and revenge. Commenting on Sucre's victory in the decisive battle of Peruvian independence, he confessed: "At Ayacucho he took from me the finest sprig of all my laurels." Yet he asked Santander, then vice-president of Colombia, to confirm the honors bestowed upon Sucre by the Peruvian Congress. "Were I envious," Bolívar explained, "I should scarcely deserve the name of man, for envy is a petty and contemptible

90. As quoted in Gilberto Salazar Parada, *El Pensamiento político de Santander* (Bogotá: Ed. Voluntad, 1969), 51.

91. Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (1992). Ruth Bloch proposes that with the ascendance of liberalism in the United States, men could pursue self-interest, leaving women to be the guardians of virtue within the republic; Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue."

92. Kerber, "May All Our Citizens be Soldiers and all Our Soldiers Citizens: The Ambiguity of Female Citizenship in the New Nation," in *Women, Militarism, and War: Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990), 93.

93. Jean Jacques Rousseau, "A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind," in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1973), 101. On the problems created by honor in a republic, see Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner, 1949), 25.

passion that belongs to woman." Unchecked, such "feminine" passions, whether expressed by women or men, led to civil discord and bloodshed.[94] Like interest, even the notion of political parties was suspect in the early years of the republics. As Santander, who was known as the "Man of Laws," declared "I am not a political boss [jefe], nor do I belong to any party."[95]

Sáenz took advantage of the ambivalence attached to interest and partisanship and their gendered connotations. She asserted that she chose allies based upon three interrelated factors: friendship, loyalty to Bolívar, and constancy, which she saw as the key to political stability. She expressed such a sentiment in a letter to Flores from her first exile in Jamaica. Denying involvement in the plot against Santander, the cause of her exile, she claimed perhaps in part disingenuously that "Some friends would visit me; I did not think it necessary to ask them if they were content or discontented." She went on to demur that Santander was granting her an influence she did not have, but added, "What I am, with a formidable character, is a friend to my friends, and an enemy to my enemies, and toward no one with the intensity as toward that ungrateful man."[96] Upon arriving in Ecuador in 1835, she protested her exile order in similar terms, insisting to the minister of the interior "I am a friend to my friends of both parties."[97] Like her male contemporaries, Sáenz may not have been as nonpartisan as she claimed; nevertheless, the gendered discourse she used to assert such claims is significant. Salon women in France similarly positioned themselves as above factional conflict and, therefore, as potential mediators.

According to Sáenz, this foundation of friendship rather than partisanship would foster constancy and stability. In later letters, she revealed to Flores that her support for him was based upon his own loyalty to Bolívar: "Since [18]30 I have no party, I am only the friend of the friends of the Liberator, and since you are one of those, I am yours."[98] Flores had risen to power in Ecuador as an appointee of Bolívar, and while he did support Ecuador's secession from

94. Such an idea may have been influenced by Rousseau who identified the origin of passions in self-esteem and jealousy and their result as discord and bloodshed. See Rousseau, "On the Origin of Inequality," in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 55; and idem, *The Emile of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, ed. and trans. William Boyd (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963), 106. Lewis notes similar concerns about passions in Hamilton's Federalist Papers. See her "'Those Scenes for Which Alone,'" 61.

95. Salazar Parada, *El Pensamiento político de Santander*, 52.

96. Sáenz to Flores, 6 May 1834, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 96.

97. Sáenz to Flores, 20 Oct. 1835, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 105.

98. Sáenz to Flores, 23 Jan. 1844, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 152.

Colombia (in contradiction to Bolívar's efforts to maintain unity), he waited until it was clear that Bolívar had retired from politics.[99] Moreover, Sáenz emphasized that such friendship guaranteed her loyalty, a loyalty that had been tested:

> Since a thousand and one events, almost, almost prepared me to take the contrary position, but I thought deeply and an imperious voice shouted to me, 'General Flores is not responsible for your misfortunes, and he has been and will be the friend and admirer of Bolívar'. So for you I am pure and without a stain, having lived for eight years in the midst of the club of your enemies.[100]

It is noteworthy that Sáenz, while not fulfilling societal expectations of marital fidelity, used similar terms to claim her political constancy.

Like Bolívar and other political leaders, Sáenz recognized civil war as the greatest threat to the stability of the early republican states in Latin America, but strikingly she attributed it to masculine ambition rather than feminine jealousy. Sáenz aimed her harshest criticism against those who played both sides of the fence. For example, in the midst of the border conflict between Ecuador and Peru, she maintained cordial relations with Peruvian General Juan Crisóstomo Torrico because in contrast to other Peruvian officials he did not insult his enemies. As she explained to Flores:

> I tell him that I wish for peace, but that if there is war, it is only natural that I hope Ecuador is victorious; he says that is fair, and that those are his wishes vice versa. He never speaks of you except with respect, he says you are a fearsome enemy; and since he is not foolish he does not talk nonsense like the others.[101]

Torrico was one of the few Peruvians she admired. More characteristic was her indictment of Vice President Domingo Elías, who was left in charge of the capital while President Manuel Ignacio Vivanco attempted to put down a rebellion against his regime in 1844, only to betray his chief. "As for the action taken by Elias," Sáenz declared, "it has been exceedingly dishonorable since it cannot be characterized except by the just title of treason."[102] She made a similar critique of Ecuadorians Rocafuerte and Moncayo, once enemies of each

99. Van Aken, *King of the Night*, 30–33.
100. Sáenz to Flores, 11 June 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 138.
101. Sáenz to Flores, 3 June 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 121–22.
102. Sáenz to Flores, n.d., in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 168.

other and allies of Flores, but by 1845 united in opposition to Flores. "How Protean revolution makes men," she exclaimed in a letter to Flores, turning on its head the frequent charge against women for being fickle.[103]

From Sáenz's perspective, politics based upon masculine interest and ambition could only lead to disorder, as she witnessed in Peru where there was a new president "every six months," as she observed only half in jest:[104]

> It is amusing to live here, since today it is one thing and tomorrow another, the variety of opinions in the same person swing back and forth according to the circumstances. Poor country! Here there is no political faith that inspires the heart with purity, everything is done out of fear or interest.[105]

Her concern with instability could lead to undemocratic positions; like Bolívar, she believed that the presidency should be held by strong leaders for long, if not life, terms. Therefore, she congratulated Flores on his reelection to an eight-year term in 1843, made possible by his changes to the constitution, as the only means to avoid revolution.[106] Her desire for order and personalist philosophy also led her to equate her friends, in this case General Flores, with the nation. Commending him on a military victory in 1841, Sáenz explained "you know that your triumphs make me congratulate myself, both as an Ecuadorian and as your friend."[107] Complaining of the opposition press, Sáenz reported that she had tried to convince other Ecuadorians in exile that the newspaper "was not just against General Flores but against all of Ecuador."[108] She closely tied her concern for internal stability to the very existence of the nation when she feared that the assassination of Flores "would cover us in blood and make us hostage to neighboring republics."[109]

Nevertheless, by positing loyalty based upon friendship in contrast to a politics of partisan interest, Sáenz did claim a positive role for women in the republic:

103. Sáenz to Flores, 1 Jan. 1845, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 173.

104. Sáenz to Flores, 22 Mar. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 128.

105. Sáenz to Flores, 22 Sept. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 125.

106. Sáenz to Flores, 22 Mar. 1842, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 128. She probably did not know that Flores was secretly seeking support among European governments to establish a monarchy in Ecuador. See Van Aken, *King of the Night*, 157–82.

107. Sáenz to Flores, 12 Dec. 1841, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 113.

108. Sáenz to Flores, 11 Sept. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 146.

109. Sáenz to Flores, 22 Oct. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 147.

> If I am interested in the politics of a foreign country it is only for the relation it has with the politics of my own and for my friends; the rest has little or no importance for me. When I say I take an interest, you should understand that this interest does not go beyond wishes and good intentions, since you must already know that a poor woman can neither take up arms, nor buy them, much less influence anything. But it is better to have friends, whether they be male or female; don't you think?[110]

Her actions throughout her life, if not her words in this passage, indicate clearly that she did think women could influence political affairs. She implied, however, that they could not take action in the hope of concrete rewards such as political appointments and, therefore, could not easily be swayed to switch sides. By rooting stability in friendship and associating it with women, in contrast to the disorder created by masculine ambition and partisanship, Sáenz subtly inverted the gendered symbols within republican ideology.

Sáenz in Comparative Perspective

Rocafuerte's comparison of Sáenz to Madame de Staël, while meant as an indictment of her sexual and political transgressions, may have been more apt than he intended. The two women shared a life history of salons, political activities, exile, and extramarital affairs, although Staël was also a prolific and published writer. Both supported moderate versions of republicanism that abolished monarchy but provided safeguards for the maintenance of social order, and neither called for women's direct representation in the state. Most interesting for our analysis of friendship, moreover, both homed in on the same contradiction about the gendered nature of interest within republican ideology. Staël, like many salonierres, made it a point to welcome guests from diverse political factions and believed she could play a mediating role among them.[111] She explicitly cited women's disinterestedness, owing to their exclusion from formal politics, as a reason to value rather than demean their opinions. "As for myself," Staël wrote in *Des circonstances actuelles*, "who have nothing either to fear to or hope for from a political career, thought that

110. Sáenz to Flores, 7 Sept. 1843, in Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 145.

111. Gretchen Rous Besser, *Germaine de Staël Revisted* (New York: Twayne, 1994), 36–39; Charlotte Hogsett, "Generative Factors in *Considerations on the French Revolution*," in *Germaine de Staël: Crossing Borders*, ed. Madelyn Gutwirth, Avriel Goldberger, and Kayna Szmurlo (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1991), 36; and Madame de Staël, *An Extraordinary Woman: Selected Writings of Germaine de Staël*, ed. and trans. Vivian Folkenflik (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), 204.

this independence gave me the duty of expressing the opinions I deemed useful."[112]

Within the context of Spanish America, especially when we focus attention primarily upon her relationship to Bolívar and her dramatic actions, Sáenz appears more exceptional. As scholars continue to uncover the intellectual history of women in the first half of the nineteenth century, however, Sáenz may prove less unusual than we might expect. Even before the expansion of female literacy and the growth of a feminine press later in the century, middling to elite women were active correspondents and displayed a keen interest in politics.[113] Whether or not literate women in Spanish America had access to writings by Staël and other women, they were familiar with the classics of the enlightenment and could have arrived at similar interpretations of female disinterestedness. Leona Vicario, one of the heroines of the independence war in Mexico, defended women's political opinions in 1831 by asserting that "they tend to work more vigorously for their goals, because as always, the sacrifices of women . . . are more disinterested than men's, women seeking no more reward than that they be accepted."[114] A brief and preliminary examination of the letters of two other women, Mariquita Sánchez of Argentina and the less prominent Carmen Arriagada of Chile, will reveal similar emphases on female friendship and nonpartisanship in civil society as opposed to an idealization of women's domestic virtues in the home.

Mariquita Sánchez, born in 1786, was the daughter of a Spanish merchant and a member of the creole oligarchy of Buenos Aires.[115] Despite her traditional upbringing, she sought legal dispensation in 1804 to marry her second cousin, Martín Thompson, over the objections of her parents. In 1819, widowed only a few months, she wed Jean-Baptiste de Mendeville, the French consul and several years her junior. Ultimately she lived independently of Mendeville, who was transferred to Guayaquil, and by some indications had at least one sexual affair. In any case, she complained bitterly to her daughter

112. As quoted in Susan Tenebaum, "Staël: Political Thinker," in *Germaine de Staël: Crossing Borders*, 162. George Sand expressed similar opinions; see Walton, "Writing the 1848 Revolution," 110–18.

113. For examples of Chilean women addressing political topics in their correspondence, see Vergara Quiroz, *Cartas de mujeres*.

114. As quoted in Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City*, 41.

115. For biographies of Sánchez, see Jorge A. Zavalía Lagos, *Mariquita Sánchez y su tiempo* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1986); and María Sáenz Quesada, *Mariquita Sánchez: Vida política y sentimental* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1995).

about the loss of liberty women suffered upon marriage.[116] Although Sánchez (unlike Sáenz) maintained her public reputation, she did not promote the ideology of respectable domesticity for women, dominant in nineteenth-century Argentina:

> A woman with passions has merit, and of whatever class she may be, she has heart and that is what I admire. Before impeccable women I tremble: they are perverse; but do not say this, daughter, because they will take me for a renegade [*bandolera*], but it is simply that I understand virtue differently.[117]

Like Sáenz, Sánchez also played an influential role in politics. She supported independence from Spain in 1810, was a member and later president of the charitable Society of Beneficence, hosted for decades one of the most renowned political and cultural salons in Buenos Aires, and patronized the young intellectuals who would later rise to national influence. Despite her strong opinions and support for particular leaders, Sánchez simultaneously lamented the chronic civil strife in Argentina and, through her social connections, tried to serve as a mediator. Although she supported the political opponents of strongman Juan Manuel de Rosas, for example, she never severed her social ties to the Federalist leader. "They call progress the disuniting of spirits and peoples," Sánchez wrote to Juan Bautista Alberdi in 1856, "They stir up party hatreds and close the door to all conciliation."[118] Such criticisms of partisanship echoed the frustrations of Sáenz.

Born in 1808, the daughter of a militia officer who supported independence, Chilean Carmen Arriagada was the youngest and least politically active of the three women. At age seventeen, she married, against her parents' wishes, a Prussian military officer, but grew bored of the life of a provincial housewife. She is remembered, like Sáenz, primarily for a love affair with Austrian painter Juan Mauricio Rugendas, vividly evoked in her numerous letters.[119] Arriagada, however, was active in the cultural life of her country: reading voraciously, hosting salons, and, though she did not publish her own writing, helping to

116. Sánchez to Florencia Thompson, in *Cartas de Mariquita Sánchez*, ed. Clara Vilaseca (Buenos Aires: Ed. Peuser, 1952), 157.

117. Sánchez to Florencia Thompson, quoted in *Mariquita Sánchez*, 263.

118. Vilaseca, *Cartas de Mariquita Sánchez*, 349–50.

119. Also like biographies of Sáenz, her life after this affair is depicted as a tragic epilogue: a slow degeneration into mental illness. See Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, *El gran amor de Rugendas* (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1987).

establish a newspaper in Talca to which she contributed translations of European works.

Cristián Gazmuri, in a psychological analysis of her correspondence, suggests that she must have been frustrated by her apparent inability to bear children.[120] Yet Arriagada herself rarely mentioned motherhood, despite the dominant ideology of her time, emphasizing instead the importance of friendship with both men and women. "To have a friend was always my ambition," she wrote to Rugendas in 1840, "friendship, true friendship, is a delight in the springtime of life, and a consolation in advanced age."[121] Finally, Arriagada frequently commented upon politics in her letters, even denouncing Chile's war with Peru and criticizing male ambition:

> One is ashamed to be American. Since it is certain that from our unfortunate soil scruples, consistency, honor are completely exiled! There is nothing more than vices, such ignoble passions! The man whom we publicly call great, valiant and generous no sooner falls from the place in which he can be useful to us, when those who have praised him change these noble epithets to insults and, what is worse, among us reign treason and bad faith.[122]

As with Sáenz, the importance Arriaga placed upon sociability led her to denounce partisan conflict and political inconstancy.

The parallels among Sáenz, Sánchez and Arriagada, who never knew each other although they shared some male acquaintances and undoubtedly reading tastes, are striking and call for a reassessment of women's unpublished writing in the early republican period. All were born in the late colonial period before the expansion of schools for women, but wrote numerous letters in which, in addition to personal news, they expressed their opinions on the politics and culture of their day. Indeed their very lack of formal education may help explain their unconformity with the rising ideology of female domesticity, which became the core of the curricula in girl's schools in the nineteenth century. All three had unhappy marriages and were not completely faithful to their husbands. Moreover, they were able to express their iconoclastic sentiments more freely in semi-private letters than would the next generation of

120. Cristián Gazmuri, "Carmen Arriagada, romanticismo, angustia y correspondencia," *Historia* [Chile] 23 (1988).

121. Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, ed., *Carmen Arriagada: Cartas de una mujer apasionada* (Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1989), 247.

122. Ibid., 195.

female writers, who in order to publish their work had to adhere to the tropes of domestic virtue. Finally, rather than dwelling upon motherhood or even the "woman problem," these women sought the respect of prominent politicians and intellectuals as individuals rather than as representatives of their sex. Sánchez and Arriagada, and doubtless numerous other middling to elite women who participated in salons and wrote letters, would have agreed with Sáenz that in politics "it is better to have friends, whether they be male or female."[123]

Conclusion

Throughout her period of exile, Manuela Sáenz continued her activism by both maintaining her former political networks and creating new ones. Some of these contacts were forged through direct personal contacts with Peruvians, other Ecuadorians in exile, and occasional international visitors, but given political and financial restrictions on her movement her correspondence took on even greater importance. As writing became her link to the world beyond Paita, she insistently requested replies to her letters, copies of newspapers and other printed materials, and developed a complex system of couriers to avoid the inefficient and corrupt postal system. Through the written word she defined a discursive space within civil society similar to the salon. Her visits and letters also created both a practice and a discourse of politics based upon friendship. On the one hand, it was through her friends that she gained access to information on the activities of the Ecuadorian opposition which she could then pass on to General Flores. But loyal friendship was also her guiding principle, one which she asserted could help ensure political stability threatened by masculine interest and inconstancy.

Of course the ideas of Sáenz, like those of most historical actors, also had limits and internal contradictions. To place loyalty to friends above particular political ideals buttressed personalist rule. Cultivating a network among the exile community also put Sáenz in the position of betraying one group of "friends" for political purposes. Finally, to assert women's greater loyalty on the basis of their lack of personal ambition foreclosed the option of arguing in favor of suffrage and direct political rights.

Whatever the limits of this discourse, the correspondence of Sáenz demonstrates that in addition to their actions on behalf of independence, some women in early republican Spanish America were developing their own politi-

123. Sáenz, *Epistolario*, 99.

cal ideas, including alternatives to republican motherhood. Her repeated affirmations of friendship above interest significantly, if implicitly, challenged the gender conventions within republican ideology. Rocafuerte explicitly identified women as agents of disorder, who put their family ahead of the nation. Bolívar was more amenable to the society and advice of women, but he was influenced by a line of thinkers from Aristotle through Machiavelli to the French philosophes, who identified women with fickleness and jealousy, traits which made them unable to put aside private interests for the public good. Men who also showed such characteristics were thereby effeminate. Although Sáenz spoke only with the greatest admiration for her companion, she linked constancy with the relations forged by women and criticized men for their ambition and consequent lack of loyalty. Such an inversion justified the ongoing influence of women, as friends rather than wives or mothers, within the political life of the young republics.