

# From Domestic Servant to Working-Class Housewife: Women, Labor, and Family in Chile

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In 1867, Madre Bernarda Morin, Mother Superior of Santiago's foundling home, submitted an extensive report to the Chilean government on the functioning of the institution. Like its counterparts elsewhere in Latin America and Europe, the Casa de Huérfanos of Santiago received legions of needy children each year. The majority were young infants of illegitimate birth, many were ill and they derived overwhelmingly from the most destitute social sectors. The Casa, as it was known, was the country's largest welfare institution; around the time of Madre Bernarda's report, it received some 9% of all children born in Santiago.<sup>1</sup> Madre Bernarda's congregation, the Hermanas de la Providencia, had administered the institution since arriving on Chilean soil from their native Quebec in the early 1850s. They received their mandate from the Chilean government and continued to report to it.

In her report, the Mother Superior offered a harsh critique of the Casa and in particular of the fate of its wards once they left the institution. As was standard practice for such institutions across the continent, once the Casa's wards came of age, they were distributed to the city's households as domestic servants.<sup>2</sup> Madre Bernarda lamented that such a practice destined the children for lives of exploitation and moral degradation. She declared that with very few exceptions, most of the girls had been "lost." Meanwhile, the majority of the boys either fled from their masters or found themselves out on the streets where they became vagrants and criminals. Morin characterized the ultimate fate of the orphans as

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nothing less than a “moral death.” Thus, while the purpose of the orphanage was “to provide useful citizens for the *patria*,” in fact it “had far from attained this important objective.”

In light of this situation, the Mother Superior proposed extensive reforms. She argued that instead of sending the children out to be servants, the Casa should establish educational programs that would equip them to avoid lives of exploitation. The boys could learn an artisan’s trade or receive agricultural training on the Congregation’s extensive uncultivated lands. Meanwhile, the girls could learn to spin or weave wool, linen, and hemp; to sew clothing for the army and hospitals; to raise silkworms and honey bees; and to make shoes, “artificial flowers, communion wafers, paper fasteners, or other objects that women can make.”

But expanded educational and vocational opportunities were just a part of Morin’s vision for the orphans. What she imagined was no less than an entirely different life trajectory. Once they were properly educated and had reached the requisite age, Morin declared, “the boy orphans would marry the girl orphans, establishing model families to whom pieces of land [belonging to the Congregation] would be given for a modest rent.” The land would thus be worked “by intelligent, honorable, and robust laborers” and its produce would support both the families and the Casa itself. When the Congregation ran out of land for new couples, the government could grant them small plots of available land on the southern frontier, the settlement of which had been made a priority by the Chilean government at that period.<sup>3</sup>

Here, then, was a profoundly utopian vision of impoverished, sickly, illegitimate orphan children turned into vibrant, autonomous peasant families bound in holy matrimony. Madre Bernarda’s plan was not only vocational, but also based on familial stability. In her utopia, orphans achieved material independence through the establishment of enduring, legitimate families. Indeed, for the Mother Superior, establishing a family was imbued with a kind of redemptive power. It would bring about the moral regeneration and social enfranchisement of society’s poorest and most “vicious” children – not just as “honorable workers,” “upstanding citizens” and “good Christians,” but also as husbands and wives and mothers and fathers.

Madre Bernarda’s proposal was not only romantic, but was also, perhaps unwittingly, radical, in seeking to turn the Casa’s wards into independent peasants, thus offering an implicit challenge to the prevailing agrarian order in Chile, dominated as it was by *haciendas* worked by dependent laborers who did not own land. Furthermore, in proposing to equip the orphans with vocational skills and material resources to make them self-sufficient, she challenged the widespread

notion that in a rigidly hierarchical society, the inevitable fate of the poor was a life of servitude and dependence.

Her proposal was especially unorthodox regarding poor young women. To be sure, in delineating separate vocations for male and female orphans, Morin carefully respected the gender-based division of labor. Less conventional was her vision of poor women as wives rather than servants. As I will discuss below, notwithstanding their common domestic labors, there was a stark contrast between the roles of wife and servant. In condemning domestic service, Madre Bernarda called into question what was probably the most accepted and widespread female occupation, albeit a controversial one. On the one hand, domestic service in 19<sup>th</sup> century Chile, as elsewhere in Latin America, was stigmatized as a demeaning and lowly station. On the other hand, paternalistic, elitist Chilean society considered domestic service to be especially well suited to poor women, who were in constant need of moral guidance and protection. In other words, and as I will discuss further below, the moral connotations of domestic service reflected cultural beliefs about class, gender, and honor; all these were implicitly challenged by Morin's proposal.

The response to her report was swift and brutal. Members of the Junta de Beneficencia, the government body that supervised welfare institutions, as well as the Casa's civil administrator himself, ridiculed the plan as "analogous to the multiplication of the loaves [and the fishes]." Rather than attempting feats of social engineering, they chided, the nuns would do well to worry about the astronomical mortality rate that plagued the foundlings. They alluded to this and expressed obvious disdain for the social mobility implicit in Morin's plan when they wrote, "Artisans, farmers, and men of science, if you will, cannot be created from cadavers." For these officials, the notion of turning the humble orphans of the Casa into "men of science" was as absurd as bringing cadavers back to life.<sup>4</sup>

The Mother Superior's proposal is of interest since, in spite of – or perhaps because of – its unorthodoxy, it reflects important truths about the 19<sup>th</sup> century Chilean social order. Her proposal suggests that labor, class status, and domestic arrangements were intertwined in inextricable, if complex, ways. More specifically, her prescription for redemption through the formation of peasant households reflects how "an honorable and secure future" had not only vocational and material dimensions, but also a *familial* one. In addition, it implies that domestic servitude entailed a very different familial arrangement: namely, the prospect of living as a dependant in someone else's household rather than presiding over one's own.

Thus, the orphanage's practice of placing its wards, especially its female ones, in domestic service, and the Mother Superior's proposed alternative to

this practice, leads to two observations. First, prevailing wisdom in 19<sup>th</sup> century Chile held that poor women were properly destined for domestic servitude, and second, that domestic service implied a kind of familial dependence on the part of the domestic.

Neither of these two observations is especially surprising. But taken together, they suggest a corollary that is perhaps less obvious, namely that in 19<sup>th</sup> century Chile, poor women were not envisioned exclusively, perhaps not even primarily, as wives and mothers in their own right, but rather as domestic dependants. This is surprising given the preoccupation of society at that period with matrimony as well as with maternity. Members of the ecclesiastical and secular elite worked to promote marriage and improve motherhood. At the same time, Church- and State-supported charitable institutions simultaneously undermined these goals by funneling poor women into labor arrangements associated not with independent family formation – the roles of legitimate wife and mother – but with the domestic dependence of servitude.

The poor-women-as-servants formula is also significant since it contrasts sharply with the ideals of working-class domesticity that were so strongly promoted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as described by scholars in Chile, Mexico, Brazil, and elsewhere. The fact that late 19<sup>th</sup> century Church- and state- sponsored charitable institutions propounded a very different vision of poor women's roles suggests that the image of the working-class housewife and mother so central to 20<sup>th</sup> century disciplinary and modernization projects was anything but traditional or timeless.

On a broader level, the present paper echoes a growing body of scholarship that explores the tensions between elitist doctrines concerning family and gender, on the one hand and the reality of popular practices on the other. Although it deals briefly with popular practice, this paper mainly focuses on elitist doctrines, particularly the tensions and contradictions implicit in these doctrines. My goal is to demonstrate how educational and charitable institutions undermined the stated ideals of the secular and religious elitist groups who sponsored them. Put succinctly, these groups undercut marital conformity even as they preached it. The question remains whether elitist rhetoric or institutional practices had any bearing on popular realities. Did these asylums systematically prevent poor women from becoming wives? Did the shift in rhetorical emphasis from domestic service to domesticity reflect (or foment) actual changes in working-class families or poor women's roles? These are important questions that so far have remained unanswered.

In the pages that follow, I will begin by describing the discourses and policies advocating marriage and motherhood that were espoused by late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chilean authorities. I will then go on to show how myriad charitable and

vocational institutions for poor women sponsored by the elite systematically prepared their wards for domestic service. Next, I will explore how service was understood less as an occupation than as a form of domestic dependence that precluded legitimate marriage and motherhood. In the final section, I will discuss the implications of these observations for our understanding of class, gender, and domesticity.

### **The Nuptial Imperative and Maternal Concerns: Church, State, and Poor Families**

In the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Chile, the moral and material status of the family, in particular the poor family, became a topic that underwent ever more vigorous public scrutiny. In clerical letters and scientific conferences, in congressional debates and in the press, the working-class family recurred time and again as a touchstone of secularization, urbanization, economic change, and social upheaval. One theme of interest to contemporary society was marriage, a concern that arose out of the institutional conflict between the Catholic Church and the Chilean State. Another enduring preoccupation, one marked more by the interventions of *higienistas* – public health experts – than of ecclesiastics, concerned motherhood and child rearing. Thus, it is clear that family, marriage, and motherhood were of interest in several distinct spheres of public discourse. In a period of important philosophical and political conflicts, these discourses surprisingly reveal fundamental ideological conformity. Conservatives and liberals, Church and State represented seemingly diametrically opposed worldviews, yet they shared much common ground on family and gender issues. Specifically, they tended to agree about the significance of women’s roles as wives and mothers and the need to promote and enhance these roles, particularly among the poor.

Public discourse about marriage was further fueled by the controversy surrounding civil marriage, which was established in 1884. Religious and civil authorities debated endlessly about whether marriage was a sacrament or a contract, the exclusive prerogative of the Church or a matter for state supervision. However, if one focuses exclusively on the differences of opinion between these camps, one is liable to overlook the common ground shared by their social visions. Even the most secularly minded liberal legislators never questioned the social significance of marriage or the desirability of promoting it among the populace. That marriage was the bedrock of the social order was considered a self-evident truism by all sides. Conservative and liberal legislators alike characterized matrimony as “the basis of society,”<sup>5</sup> of “transcendental” importance to “social well being and the moral and even material development of the Republic”<sup>6</sup>

because, after all, “society is no more than a grouping of families.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, ecclesiastical officials declared the sanctity of marriage to be “the foundation of all social relations,”<sup>8</sup> though of course they also deemed it to be of divine origin and the “source of special graces given by God.”<sup>9</sup>

There was an additional point of convergence between these otherwise contentious camps: they concurred that low marriage rates especially among the popular classes constituted a grave moral and social problem. Contemporaries fretted that the poor – unencumbered by concerns about inheritance and imperfectly indoctrinated by Catholic teachings about marriage and sexuality – tended to live in consensual unions. Claiming that Chile had one of the lowest nuptial rates in the world,<sup>10</sup> they pursued policies and programs to foment matrimony among poor sectors. Priests exhorted their parishioners to make their unions official.<sup>11</sup> Legislators fretted over the potential impact of civil marriage on nuptial rates among the poor.<sup>12</sup> Catholic laywomen canvassed poor neighborhoods to convince those living in sin of the error of their ways.<sup>13</sup> Congregations of nuns were founded with the express purpose of encouraging matrimony among the poor.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, the nuptial imperative was rooted in the unremitting institutional conflict between Church and State. For the Church and for elite Catholic laywomen, the promotion of (religious) matrimony was part of a larger battle for souls against the spread of secularization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. But marriage was more than just a pawn in an institutional power struggle. The preoccupation with low nuptial rates echoed broader concerns about the “casual” organization of domestic life among the poor. Contemporaries lamented that the popular sectors constituted a “nomadic mass without family, without a home of their own”, characterized by a “lack of familial sentiment.”<sup>15</sup> The “loose constitution” of families meant rampant female headship, illegitimacy, child abandonment, infant mortality, and myriad other problems. Thus, for the elite, non-marrying behavior was but one aspect of a whole spectrum of problems characterizing the domestic life of the poor.

Another problem involved maternity. As historian María Soledad Zárata has noted of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century social question, “the elite’s discovery of the poor and their lives focused growing attention on women as mothers.”<sup>16</sup> A burgeoning body of socio-medical inquiry at this time scrutinized the “problem” of poor mothers and their lack of maternal skills. Plagued by ignorance, poverty, or affective indifference, poor women were held collectively responsible for the astronomical rates of infant mortality that preoccupied contemporary commentators. As early as the 1860s, and particularly after the turn of the century, government task forces, charitable foundations and health clinics sprang up to address problems related to women and children. The premise underlying these

initiatives was that the inability of poor women to assume their proper roles as the competent and loving mothers of the future members of the working class threatened both the demographic prospects of the nation as well as its very social fabric. Upper-class women joined the ranks of those who served as foot soldiers in this social and moral initiative. In this context, particularly complex significance was imparted to motherhood as a strategy for class harmony. Upper-class women were to provide instruction and guidance to their less fortunate sisters, invoking their shared status as mothers as a basis for mutual understanding and goodwill.<sup>17</sup>

In short, the lower-class family was associated with a constellation of social and moral problems and a solution to this was sought in the cultivation of sound maternal practice and sentiment. Such ideologies were, of course, hardly unique to Chile. A growing preoccupation with poor families in general, and poor women and children in particular, are found throughout Latin America, Europe, and North America at this period.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that much public discourse in Chile centered around marriage and motherhood. What is surprising is that in practice many late 19<sup>th</sup> century charitable and vocational institutions promoted a very different set of roles among their poor, female wards – roles that, as I will argue below, were strikingly at odds with upholding the ideals of marriage and motherhood.

## **Institutions**

However, first of all it is necessary to take a look at the institutions themselves. The latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rapid multiplication and expansion of Church- and state- sponsored hospices, orphanages, nurseries, asylums, and workshops in cities large and small across Chile.<sup>19</sup> Their mission was to provide pupils with the means of earning a livelihood and, equally important, to inculcate moral values through Catholic instruction. These institutions ranged from fly-by-night operations established by the endowments of pious *señoras* and housing a handful of youngsters, to the Casa de Huérfanos in Santiago, which from 1853 to 1924 received over 50,000 children.<sup>20</sup> Apparently most of these institutions, especially those founded prior to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were affiliated in some way with the Catholic Church, but many received public funds and consequently fell under public supervision as well. Indeed, in spite of the fervent rivalry between Church and State at this period, charitable institutions tended to be financial and administrative hybrids.<sup>21</sup> Still others were established by private bequests and functioned independently of either Church or State

authority. Finally, some of these institutions were founded and administered by aristocratic Catholic laywomen as well as congregations of nuns.

Individual asylums specialized in different subsets of needy children. According to mission statements, they might variously receive “orphans,” “foundlings,” “children without a home,” “the destitute or indigent,” or “vagrant children.” In the late 1870s, special institutions for the orphans of soldiers killed during the War of the Pacific were established. In the south, several institutions “specialized” in children of Mapuche Indian origin. A few catered to clients who were orphans of more socially elevated families, but the vast majority of charitable institutions devoted their efforts to children of the most destitute sectors (some receiving both wealthier and poorer children and maintaining separate sections for each).

The institutions also showed a clear preference for girls over boys. Many asylums administered by nuns accepted only girls, and those that cared for boys generally did so only till the age of seven or eight. A number of asylums housed adult women as well as girls. The *Hermanas del Buen Pastor*, an order of French nuns that had arrived in Chile in the 1850s, ran institutions in Santiago and a dozen provincial cities for females of all ages. As Sol Serrano has noted in her fascinating analysis of French congregations in Chile, the asylums of the *Buen Pastor* “were probably the best-qualified learning centers for women of the popular sectors” in the country.<sup>22</sup> Her observation points to an important aspect of 19<sup>th</sup> century asylums in general: their emphasis on preparing their wards, who were primarily poor women, for the work market. More specifically, what these myriad institutions – small and large, religious and secular – had in common was the emphasis on preparing and then placing their wards as domestic servants. It is my contention that this practice was diametrically opposed to the discourse advocating marriage and motherhood described above.

Founded in the 1870s, the *Casa de Santa Rosa*, which like the *Casa de Huérfanos*, operated under the auspices of the *Hermanas de la Providencia*, was typical of this pattern. According to an official history, the asylum had been established for poor orphan girls “with the objective of teaching them for free, along with the holy fear of God, domestic tasks, that is, to educate Christian servants: cooks, laundresses, etc, [who are] moral, educated, and capable in their trade.”<sup>23</sup> As the wealthy female founder of the asylum explained when she placed the home under ecclesiastical auspices, “I wanted, in establishing this asylum and school, to better ensure the moral education of the wards and to provide the instruction of these poor girls with a goal more within their reach and very useful to society, where domestic service leaves so much to be desired.”<sup>24</sup> Between 1884 and 1900, over five hundred girls passed through the *Casa de Santa Rosa*.

Another institution run by the *Hermanas de la Providencia*, the *Asilo del*

Salvador, espoused a similar mission. Interestingly, according to the original 1830 charter establishing the asylum, the curriculum embraced “in addition to elementary literacy...Christian doctrine, embroidery, sewing, and other things that a mother of a family should know.” Later, a small printing workshop was opened in order to teach inmates the printing trade, though it was subsequently discontinued, having been adjudged physically and morally inappropriate for women.<sup>25</sup> By the 1860s, when the Hermanas took over, a very different educational model had evolved. Now the institution pledged to impart to its poor, female pupils “all the domestic tasks with the objective of forming moral servants educated in all branches of their service.”<sup>26</sup> The Asilo del Salvador admitted some 1,400 girls over the four decades from the 1860s to the turn of the century. Presumably the majority of them were trained to be domestics.

Such practices were by no means associated exclusively with religious asylums, as some secular, state-funded social welfare institutions pursued a similar mission. The Sociedad Las Creches provided care for girls whose mothers “do not have resources to support their children and who cannot work to support themselves because they have nowhere to leave their children.” The asylum taught the daughters of these working mothers the fundamentals of domestic service, and “once they are old enough to serve, the Institution itself finds them jobs.” In the mid-1920s, the Sociedad housed in their Casa Central some 250 youngsters ranging in age from 2 to 18 years.<sup>27</sup>

And then of course there was the Casa de Huérfanos itself, the oldest, largest and most important welfare institution in the country. The Casa’s population continued to swell through the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 1880s, around a thousand children lived under the asylum’s auspices at any given time; in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that number grew to 2,300.<sup>28</sup> While only a fraction of these children survived infancy, a steady stream of children and youths left the institution each year as domestics. “A great many people affirmed that [the Casa’s] purpose was to prepare servants for the comfortable class of society,” noted Mother Superior Bernarda in a retrospective history.<sup>29</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, the institution functioned as a clearinghouse for the distribution of child and adolescent labor to households in Santiago and its rural environs.<sup>30</sup> This stream of domestics was predominately female, particularly as many male orphans were siphoned off after the founding of the Casa’s artisan workshops in the 1880s.

Charitable asylums that trained poor female servants and placed them in local households were apparently so familiar that they were a familiar feature of everyday social discourse. For example, they formed the backdrop for several fictional dialogues appearing in the satirical newspaper *El Padre Cobos* in the 1870s and 80s. In one dialogue, a woman in need of a cook goes to the Beaterio

de la Verónica in search of an employee. The Beaterio's wily presbyter convinces her to make a hundred-peso donation to the asylum, which the woman grudgingly pays, only to arrive home and discover that her new cook is slow-witted, incapable, and dirty.<sup>31</sup> In another column about the difficulties of finding domestic help, the paper declared, "Try looking for a cook at the Asilo del Salvador, the Buen Pastor, or the Casa de la Hermana Vicenta. The nuns will tell you, 'There are no servants here.' That is, there are no servants except for us [we nuns] who take advantage of their work to make money...."<sup>32</sup>

Such portrayals of chaplains and nuns as grasping and dishonest reflect the typically anti-clerical bent of *El Padre Cobos*. But significantly, while they criticized the motives of the priests and nuns who administered these charitable institutions (and indeed, the motives of priests and nuns in general), the authors did not comment on the fundamental *modus operandi* whereby poor women were trained and placed as servants. According to *El Padre Cobos*, the problem was the fact that presbyters demanded extravagant amounts of money for inadequate servants and that nuns impeded private employers' free access to inmates. The newspaper did not challenge the basic premise of charity serving as a mechanism for training and distributing cheap labor. The nonchalance with which this arrangement is regarded in these fictional dialogues is perhaps the clearest indicator of its familiarity to contemporaries.

At the same time, such practices did not go unchallenged, as shown by the report by Madre Bernarda Morin that was presented at the beginning of this essay. In annual reports in the 1890s, the government-appointed administrator of the Casa. Nathaniel Miers Cox, echoed the concerns raised by the Mother Superior in the 1860s. He condemned the domestic service to which female orphans were subjected as "true slavery." But he also reluctantly concluded, "Placement in domestic service is the best option we have" because it was necessary to remove older inmates to make room for the hundreds of new foundlings who arrived every year.<sup>33</sup> By 1908, there was less of an impetus to alter this reality than to institutionalize it. One government official proposed formalizing the placement of orphans as domestics by establishing a School of Servants within the *Casa* – a school that would "do much good for many girl orphans and for housewives."<sup>34</sup>

The marriage patterns of the orphans are as significant as their vocational trajectories. In 1897, Miers Cox noted that during his eight-year tenure, only seven marriages had taken place among the Casa's wards.<sup>35</sup> In an effort to encourage such unions, he requested and obtained from ecclesiastical authorities a special exemption from the customary fees for Church weddings,<sup>36</sup> but three years later, only one additional union had taken place.<sup>37</sup> Miers Cox did not specify whether those who married were male or female, but elsewhere in his

writings he stated that at least some of them were young men.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, however, he only ever discussed marriage in the context of female orphans. For example, in one report, after noting that girls left either to enter service (“the great majority”) or to marry (“very few”), Miers Cox went on to observe that boys left the Casa when they obtained work (either in a trade acquired in the Casa’s workshops or as servants) or when they simply fled the asylum (the latter according to him being the more common scenario).<sup>39</sup> In other words, marriage was not considered a *destino* for male orphans as it was for female ones and was consequently something of a non-issue for the administrator. This attitude surely attests to the greater social, cultural, economic, and legal significance of marital status for women.

Thus, while Miers Cox, like Madre Bernarda herself, expressed serious reservations about the girls’ fate as domestics and desired to promote marriage among them, the statistics show that in fact the vast majority of young women left the institution as servants, not as wives. Other asylums exhibited parallel patterns – and did so more deliberately and less apologetically than the Casa de Huérfanos. In the 1860s, the Congregation of Santa Verónica de Juliani was established with the express mission of “receiving orphan girls of the poor class to educate them as honest servants.”<sup>40</sup> To this end, the congregation ran at least one asylum for poor girls (the Beaterio mentioned in *El Padre Cobos*). Almost half a century later, in 1913, a congregation of Spanish nuns, the Hijas de María Inmaculada para el Servicio Doméstico, arrived in Santiago. There they inaugurated an Instituto, the purpose of which was “the education and preservation of maids.” Between 1913 and 1928, some 1,800 young women, ranging in age from 15 to 30, passed through it. Of these, “some [unspecified, presumably limited number] have returned to their families,” fifteen had married, eight had become nuns, and all the rest were employed as servants in private households.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the Refugio de la Misericordia, a reformatory for wayward young women founded in 1919, exhibited a similar pattern. In the 1920s, the asylum placed 169 of its 602 wards in service. Only fourteen had married, and the rest had been “reformed or returned home” or placed in other schools or institutions.<sup>42</sup>

Such statistics show that, in keeping with their general mission, the majority of young women who left these charitable, vocational, or reform institutions were channeled into service, not into marriage. But of equal importance to the actual numbers themselves is *how* the figures were expressed in the first place. The record-keeping protocols show that these two destinies, domestic work on the one hand and matrimony on the other, were implicitly diametrically opposed, that they were constructed as mutually exclusive destinies. It is also worth noting that the mutual exclusivity of service and marriage for women was not simply a question of sequencing. In many early modern European societies, domestic

service was a kind of adolescent apprenticeship by means of which young women of limited means could accumulate a dowry and acquire domestic skills prior to marriage. This was not the case in Chile, or elsewhere in Latin America.<sup>43</sup> There, service could be a lifelong occupation. Alternatively, and perhaps more commonly, women moved into and out of service according to the vicissitudes of personal circumstance, often entering into it out of sheer desperation when other opportunities for supporting themselves were closed off.<sup>44</sup> But whether as a lifelong station or a temporary solution, domestic service was never exclusively the province of the young, and it cannot be considered a strategic way-station on the way to some more auspicious situation. It did not, in other words, serve as a preliminary step toward, or preparation for, marriage.

### **The Cultural Meanings of Service**

The fact that late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century charitable, vocational, and educational institutions trained and placed poor women as domestics is not particularly surprising. In a labor market rigidly stratified by gender, domestic service was one of few employment opportunities open to women and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century servants were a considerable and expanding component of the labor force. According to census data, service accounted for almost 26% of female employment in 1854 and some 41% in 1920. Meanwhile, over 80% of those classified as domestics were female.<sup>45</sup> It could be argued that, whatever their faults, purveyors of charity were primarily realists: they recognized the widespread reality of female wage labor, and, ever mindful of the gender-based division of labor, sought to provide women with the vocational skills to cope with those realities.

But the interest of the elite in poor women's labor in general and domestic service in particular cannot be totally attributed to "realism." After all, vocational and charitable institutions could have trained poor women for commerce or as tailor/seamstresses and still remained safely within the bounds of prevailing gender-based norms regarding labor. Or they might simply have trained them to be good wives and mothers, as they subsequently would.<sup>46</sup> Instead, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in those institutions designated for the most destitute of women, the emphasis was placed squarely, even exclusively, on training for service.

To understand why this was so, we need to reconstruct the manner in which the elite groups who founded, administered, financed, and advocated these institutions understood domestic service. First of all, service was not exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, conceived of as an occupation, a form of labor. Around the turn of the century, when public officials began to worry about female labor and its supposedly deleterious effects on home life, female morality, and child

health, they focused almost exclusively on women's industrial labor or, secondarily, on home-based piecework. Female employment in domestic service was completely ignored, even though in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century more than 40% of the female labor force was employed in this sector. Nor were servants protected by the first tentative labor legislation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> In fact, from 1930 on, the census categorized servants as economically inactive dependents rather than as workers. Elite groups were not the only ones who so characterized domestic service. The feminist labor press also largely ignored servants and their plight.<sup>48</sup> And at least for a time, domestics were excluded from late 19<sup>th</sup> century mutual aid societies for working women.<sup>49</sup> Female domestics were ubiquitous; yet they were largely invisible in elite – and sometimes working-class – representations of and responses to female labor.

But if service was not an occupation, then what was it? Perhaps the best way to characterize it is as a social condition associated with particular moral and familial connotations. Elizabeth Quay Hutchison has noted “how difficult it was for contemporaries to conceive of women's labor primarily in economic terms.”<sup>50</sup> There is perhaps no better illustration of this difficulty than their conception of domestic service. For if industrial labor or piecework were seen to threaten the honor of working women, domestic service was seen as safeguarding it. And for elitist groups, this fact defined the very *raison d'être* of service. Residential employment in a respectable household, the *casa de respeto* in common parlance, afforded “protection” to poor women whose sex, class status, and age often rendered them inherently vulnerable to vice. In the dominant discourse, the household of the *patrón* was a haven that preserved vulnerable women from the moral dangers of the world and could even serve as an extra-institutional reformatory. As late as the 1850s, local judicial officials routinely placed women who were single, without a known occupation or suspected of being of a dubious moral character as servants in the households of respectable citizens.<sup>51</sup> Through the salutary effects of hard work, the positive moral example of upright *patrones*, and the protection afforded by their vigilance, women who had strayed might be redeemed by service.

Domestic service was, in turn, contrasted with the condition of living “freely,” or alone, a condition having dubious moral connotations. Thus, a poor woman's morality might be impugned with the observation that she “has always lived freely [*libremente*], without ever having been accompanied by [*al lado de*] a respectable person.”<sup>52</sup> Or even more to the point, “she has been a domestic servant on some occasions and the rest of her life, she has been given over to prostitution.”<sup>53</sup> In turn, a woman might defend her moral probity by noting that she had resided in the household of an honorable master and indeed “had always lived with respectable persons [*personas de respeto*].”<sup>54</sup> Or it might be

noted that “she has always been employed as a servant in decent homes when she was not with her parents.”<sup>55</sup>

This last comment – comparing domestic service to the vigilance of the parental (and more specifically, the paternal) household – is particularly telling. It alerts us to a second characteristic of service as a social condition: the filial idioms that characterized relations of servitude and constituted the language through which these relations were articulated. If domestic service was less an occupation than a social station with moral valences, servants were not workers so much as figurative daughters. Indeed, time and again, in judicial documents, wills, advice manuals for housewives and other sources, we hear female servants described as *hijas* and their masters and mistresses as *padres*. As the writer of an advice manual for mistresses admonished, “Duty demands that [the housewife] watch over the [servants] and protect them with the same solicitude as a mother.”<sup>56</sup> In the absence of fathers, husbands, and brothers – and poor women on their own were a common feature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century social landscape – an employer’s household constituted a surrogate family. This was true not in affective terms but insofar as it provided the patriarchal tutelage of a father-master and a mistress-mother. Such an ideological rendering of service was certainly not unique to Chile and is chronicled throughout Latin America.<sup>57</sup>

Hierarchical relations were, of course, naturalized, legitimated, and consolidated through these familial metaphors. But domestics’ filial status had other consequences as well. Envisaging servants as daughters ruled out the possibility of imagining them as wives and mothers. That is, servitude implied a kind of domestic dependence that contrasted with the “domestic sovereignty” associated with the roles of legitimate wife and mother.<sup>58</sup> This condition of domestic dependence was a defining characteristic of what it meant to be a servant. The practical repercussions of this ideological construct are evident in custody disputes in which mothers employed as domestics attempted to gain custody of their children. Legal opponents, generally fathers, invoked the servant mother’s condition as a domestic dependant to contest custody claims. As one litigating father declared,

While I am poor, I am in a better condition than the plaintiff [the mother, a servant] to provide my son with a good education. Living as I do in an independent home, it is in my power to shape his heart, with good examples and good teachings...Finally, the comforts of my house, the place where I live...cannot but impact favorably on the health and development of the child. Meanwhile, the plaintiff is a domestic servant without resources...living in someone else’s home...<sup>59</sup>

In a similar vein, a man seeking custody of his illegitimate child declared that the child's mother was unfit because, among other things, she was a servant who "does not have a family or a stable home."<sup>60</sup> The allusions to "independent" and "stable" households as contrasted with those "without family" who "lived in someone else's home" alert us to the significance of these categories in defining domestic servitude.

The ideology of domestic dependence could imply the actual proscription of servants' affective, romantic, sexual, or familial autonomy. Masters' and mistresses' vigilance over servants' morals can definitely be interpreted in this vein. Those charged with "breaking and entering" [*allanamiento*] in late 19<sup>th</sup> century courts were often would-be swains who sought clandestine entry into homes "with dishonest motives" *vis-à-vis* servants.<sup>61</sup> It is even more striking that childbearing and motherhood among servants were vigorously proscribed. Prospective employers often specified in want ads that they would only hire servants without children. Classifieds announced, "Live-in cook and without children needed" (1894), "Cook and handmaid without children, for a *señora* by herself. Salary \$20 and \$15" (1906), "I need a cook without children, with recommendations, thirty pesos salary" (1916).<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, domestics who became pregnant were routinely dismissed from their jobs, or alternatively were retained, while their children were discretely removed.<sup>63</sup> When the servant Prosperina Saavedra was accused of drowning her infant daughter in Santiago in 1895, she declared that she had done so after having being fired by her mistress. Faced with the necessity of finding employment in another household, she declared: "...Since I believe that a woman with children cannot please in the house where she serves, I resolved to kill my child." While her actions were surely extreme, her conclusions are fully borne out by the evidence.<sup>64</sup>

Surely part of what motivated masters and mistresses to seek women without an autonomous family life, particularly without children, was the desire for an employee unencumbered by competing demands for her time, energy, or attention. But the conflict was more than simply logistical or practical. It also stemmed from cultural values involving the honor of women, families, and households. Precisely because service did not permit an autonomous family life, most servants were unmarried, and their children were thus illegitimate. If domestics were figurative daughters, then their sexual honor was a reflection on the honor of the household as surely as that of other female family members.

Such dynamics may be informative not only regarding domestic service but also regarding ideologies of motherhood. Internal documentation from the Casa de Huérfanos reveals that an inordinate number of "orphans" were in fact the sons and daughters of servants, placed there so their mothers could continue to work.<sup>65</sup> The documentation further reveals that their internment was routinely

arranged by their mothers' masters and mistresses, as well as by social workers, priests, and charity officials. "I send you this little girl, daughter of Carmen Suárez...since to place her in a *casa de respeto*, it has to be without a child," wrote a welfare authority remitting a child to the Casa. A mistress asked the nuns to accept a little boy whose mother "I need for my service, but I want her without a child." Even Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, historian, urban planner, and statesman, petitioned the nuns to secure placement of the son of his family's wet nurse. Indeed such letters are legion in the archives of the Casa.<sup>66</sup>

The prospect of charitable, religious, and state authorities as well as private elite groups actively orchestrating the abandonment of poor children offers a jarring counter-narrative to the adulation of motherhood being expressed in the public sphere. Even more agitating is the evidence that poor women were not only encouraged to give up their children, but were sometimes coerced into doing so. In remitting a twelve-day-old infant to the Casa, one official from a provincial beneficence agency explained, "I am sending you the baby Rejina del Carmen... it has been necessary to take the baby from her mother, since she is the cause of her perdition, and she [the mother] remains placed in a *casa de respeto*, very carefully looked after [*mui cuidada*]." <sup>67</sup> This is clear evidence that morality could trump maternity, that elite authorities might actively subvert motherhood among poor women. And if the tone of this letter is one of measured regret, in others there were clear expressions of disdain. This was the case in a searing letter written by a chaplain on behalf of a mother seeking to place her illegitimate child in 1899: "This woman is leaving her daughter there in order to dedicate herself perhaps to the same mischief? Because they never understand, it seems that the more one preaches to them, the more illegitimate kids come out. I hope they place this woman in service..." <sup>68</sup>

It is telling that domestic service recurs time and again in these brief scenarios of sin, out-of-wedlock maternity, and redemption. Willingly or not, poor women gave up children so that they could make a living, but also in order that they might be redeemed under the moral protection of the *casa de respeto*. It seems important to point out what these notes reveal about ideologies of motherhood. As stated above, motherhood was a pervasive theme running through late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chilean political and cultural discourse. As practiced by poor women, it was linked to the demographic future of the nation as well as to its social fabric. As an experience shared by rich and poor women, it was a vehicle for social harmony. Yet the dynamics revealed in these letters indicate that in practice there was definitely no equality between all mothers. Maternity tainted by illegitimacy, and hence immorality, was given lower status and might even be actively subverted. And given the close association of illegitimacy and a lower class status, this meant that in actual fact, motherhood was mediated by class.

Ostensibly lofty and universalizing declarations notwithstanding, ideologies of maternity were marked by the hierarchies of the society that produced them.<sup>69</sup>

### **Popular Realities, Elite Doctrines**

To summarize, then, servants' status as domestic dependents might impede their exercise of domestic autonomy. *Patrones* sought to prevent romantic liaisons, and evidence from the Casa de Huérfanos illustrates the proscription of maternity among servants. Still, it would be simplistic to state that domestic employment systematically prevented family formation or childbearing and that consequently servants were never wives or mothers. It is simplistic because domestic service, even if it was not an adolescent apprenticeship, was probably rarely an uninterrupted, life-long occupation either. As Hutchison has noted, women's employment in turn-of-the-century Chile was fluid, as women moved in and out of jobs according to the vicissitudes of wage structures.<sup>70</sup> Employment in domestic service was similarly episodic, perhaps even more so because it was considered undesirable. Anecdotal evidence suggests that service was a temporary alternative that many women fell back on in times of crisis. Indeed, the evidence suggests that employment in domestic service was dynamically related to life cycle events such as coupling and childbearing. Women on their own apparently sought work as servants after having been abandoned by male partners and having found themselves with few wage-earning options. And ironically, given employers' preference for childless servants, they sought domestic employment when the birth of a child required a means to support it. In other words, rather than preventing family formation or childbearing, employment in domestic service interacted dynamically with these life cycle events and the crises of financial insolvency engendered by them.

The experiences of María Antonia Vergara are illustrative of such patterns. Vergara was a poor, semi-literate mother with two children who maintained an "on again, off again" relationship with one Agustín Mardones. In 1859, Vergara was pregnant with her third child when Mardones disappeared. He had never been a steady provider, and this time his inconstancy left her in dire straits. She subsequently recounted her trials to a judge, explaining: "Señor, that man had abandoned me: he didn't help me at all with the subsistence of the children until we conceived this last one, when he gave me the hope that he would give me what was necessary to support them, which he didn't fulfill either; so I was obliged to enter into [domestic] service."<sup>71</sup> Vergara sent her two older children to live with a friend. When the newborn died under suspicious circumstances, she was charged with infanticide. In this and other cases, domestic service was clearly

a last resort and perhaps a holding pattern until better times arrived. Vergara's domestic employment was additionally associated with the at least temporary dissolution of her family, but it was not the cause of that dissolution. Rather, service was in some sense the *result* of it.

Moreover, it is important to note that while aspects of Vergara's life – the consensual union with Mardones, their episodic co-residence, the illegitimate birth, the farming out of the children to other caretakers – would not have qualified as family life in elitist terms, such practices were routine aspects of family life for the poor. Therefore, to suggest that a servant like María Antonia Vergara did not have a family life is to apply a definition of what constitutes a family that she herself would more than likely not have shared.

The point, then, is not that servants were systematically prevented from having autonomous family lives beyond their employer's household, though in some instances *patrones* sought and surely succeeded in ensuring this. What may be learned from all of this concerns the nature of elite norms. The conflict between the domestic dependence of service and the domestic autonomy of a wife and mother was more figurative than literal. Envisaged as daughters, domestics could not be imagined as wives or mothers. This is important because it logically suggests that, in preparing poor girls and women for service, charitable institutions did not envision them as, prepare them to be, or expect them to become wives and mothers in their own right. Such expectations may tell us little in the end about the actual lives, labors, and families of poor women. But they tell us a great deal about elite gender ideologies and the mediation of these ideologies by class.

Perhaps no one articulated these ideologies as clearly as Mariano Casanova, the Archbishop of Santiago and as such the highest ecclesiastical official in the country. In the 1870s, Casanova gave a series of public addresses on behalf of the recently founded Asilo de San José, an asylum in Valparaíso whose mission paralleled that of the institutions described above. It pledged, "to take in poor girls who by way of a religious and practical education are prepared to fulfill the role of servants for families." In his addresses, Casanova expressed the implicit expectation that the asylum's "apprentices" – who by the 1880s would number about eighty at any given time<sup>72</sup> – might never marry or have children of their own. In one speech, for example, he observed that the young woman trained at the Asilo "will easily find a position with a family, and *if she marries*, she will be an effective help to her husband."<sup>73</sup> That is, marriage was a possibility but by no means a certainty. Nor was it necessarily a prescription. In another address, the Archbishop noted the importance of teaching catechism to the pupils of San José "so that later on these girls can carefully fulfill the expectations of families and teach religion to the children who are entrusted to them" – not,

in other words, so that they could teach their own children. The curriculum included making pastries and sweets, washing and ironing “fine clothes,” as well as “everything related to good service.” Again, it was a course of study clearly designed to prepare pupils to serve in wealthy households rather than to preside over poor ones.<sup>74</sup>

Examining the Archbishop’s addresses on the purpose of education for girls from wealthy families further illuminates the life course of poor ones. In a lecture on the exclusive Colegio del Sagrado Corazón for girls, the Archbishop predictably noted the importance of a “good education for those who will one day be *madres de familia*.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly illustrative are the practices of those few charitable institutions that catered to women of a more elevated social stratum. The founding documents of the Congregation of the Casa de María, established in 1866, identified the sisters’ beneficiaries as “poor girls and women, especially those lacking parents to care for and feed them” but “who have a legitimate impediment to domestic service” because of their more elevated social position. Echoing the more elite Colegio del Sagrado Corazón, the asylum pledged to prepare these respectably born but orphaned or impoverished young women to be “true Christian wives and mothers, capable of educating children in a Christian way,” to inculcate in them the “means of subsistence” and “habits of domestic economy” in order to make them “true women of the home.”<sup>76</sup> The repeated references to marriage, motherhood, and enlightened domesticity make even more conspicuous the absence of such references in the rationale for poor women’s education.

It is also interesting to note that two decades later, the Casa de María had begun admitting women of a lower social station. A report on the asylum described how the young women “of humble condition” would “perform the domestic service of the Casa” and would be kept “entirely separated” from the “girls of decent families.” Echoing a now familiar formula, the report noted, “Their education is that of a servant who, knowing the religious duties and tasks of her trade, knows how to please in any Christian home.”<sup>77</sup> Women from a more elevated social milieu would be taught skills necessary for the formation and reproduction of respectable Catholic households. Humble women would in turn be educated for their auxiliary role in this very same process and in those selfsame households.

## Conclusion

The preceding discussion of domestic service is informative in several ways. First, it shows that educational, vocational, and charitable institutions in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Chile were never intended to promote social mobility. Their objective

was instead to reaffirm the social hierarchy. Rather than enhancing occupational opportunities, these institutions developed skills and provided placement services for women destined for the lowest and most stigmatized social positions and the purpose of these institutions was to train and distribute cheap, often free, domestic labor to well-connected households in and around Santiago. That is, charitable and educational initiatives established, funded, and administered by the Catholic Church and the Chilean Government subsidized elite domesticity. And it is my contention they did so at the expense of domestic life among the poor.

Yet, the preceding discussion leaves some important questions unanswered. Perhaps most fundamentally, it is unclear how to evaluate the depth, extent, and scope of the discursive trends and institutional practices described here. On the one hand, we encounter seemingly hegemonic discourses propounding marriage among the poor and the cultivation of poor women as good mothers. On the other, we find charitable and institutional vocations training women as servants. We find religious authorities and social workers placing illegitimate children in foundling homes in order to redeem their mothers in service. We find the Archbishop's portentous description of a life trajectory in which poor women raise other peoples' children but not their own. What do we make of these contradictions? Is it that ideologies of marriage and motherhood, which were broadcast so loud as to drown out alternative discourses, were in fact never hegemonic? Might we then characterize the models of poor womanhood described here as muted but persistent countervailing tendencies? Or might we more fruitfully characterize these contradictions as distinctions between discourse and practice (that is, did authorities say one thing but in fact act differently)?

To address these questions, we need to know the extent to which the practices and ideologies espoused by the charitable asylums described here spilled over into other educational projects. For example, did state-run vocational institutions, which expanded in the early 20th century, promote similar goals with regard to female education? Elizabeth Quay Hutchison has explored how the vocational curriculum emphasized students' cultivation as future wives and mothers. She also notes that vocational pupils tended to derive from more affluent sectors of the working class – while working-class, they were better off than the destitute orphans described above.<sup>78</sup> Does this suggest that educational and charitable initiatives differentiated between different social strata among working-class women, promoting different educational projects – and different social roles – in accordance with these distinctions?

And what, in turn, might be said of public primary schools, which proliferated in this period? What does the public school curriculum reveal about the intended destiny of female pupils and, concomitantly, about women's roles? Here the evidence is preliminary and ambiguous. On the one hand, we have

the claim of one official that primary schools should create good wives and mothers: “From schools...shall come the affectionate daughters and mothers, angels of the home and exemplars of the family... The enlightened woman is the perfect mother.”<sup>79</sup> We also have alternative visions, such as that articulated by a Minister of Education who lamented that primary school graduates considered themselves too good for domestic service and recommended the establishment of workshops to train poor women for this occupation.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, we lack a thorough analysis of the Chilean public school curriculum that would allow us to judge which tendency dominated educational practices.

Clearly at this period, contradictory visions of female education and women’s roles were rife, and perhaps even contradicted one another. Apparently some educational projects prepared poor women to be wives and mothers, while others envisioned them as servants and dependants. The point of this paper has been to establish the distinction between these two statuses and to highlight the social and cultural significance of this distinction. But why and in which contexts one or another trend predominated remains an open question. Another major inquiry that remains is whether this bifurcated vision characterizes ideas about women’s roles elsewhere in Latin America.

If the extent, scope and depth of ideas concerning poor women and domestic service remain to be clarified, how these ideologies gradually changed after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century appears to be somewhat clearer. A 1924 description of a charitable asylum run by the Hermanas de la Providencia in provincial Linares described how pupils “learn that the woman who as a Christian knows good from bad, who respects herself, who knows how to work and organize her home, is the treasure, the happiness, and the peace of her home.”<sup>81</sup> This emphasis on the home, and on women’s pivotal role within it, would become increasingly common after the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It suggests a marked shift in ideologies centering on poor women, labor, and family.

Indeed, recent work by such scholars as Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, Thomas Klubock, Karin Roseblatt, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Barbara Weinstein has illuminated the workings of a veritable cult of working-class domesticity in the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century across diverse Latin American societies.<sup>82</sup> This scholarship has analyzed the image of the working-class housewife – the efficient, thrifty and hygienic *madre/mãe de família* who sustains and reproduces the working-class household with her “modern” maternal skills and her nutritious and economical stews. As these scholars have noted, the hegemonic cult of working-class domesticity, and the ideology of the family wage, prevailed among otherwise very disparate discursive and ideological communities. Feminists, labor leaders, social workers, multinational companies, and state authorities all stressed the importance of educating working-class women as competent

wives and mothers, the helpmates and domesticators of male breadwinners. The contrast between the cult of working-class domesticity and earlier educational, charitable, and vocational initiatives would seem to suggest that a critical shift had taken place in views of the ideal roles of poor women, from servile dependents in others' households in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to working-class housewives by the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

If such a shift did indeed occur, it should prompt us to reevaluate domesticity as a prescriptive ideology. It would indicate that ideologies of marriage and motherhood that we have come to think of as "archetypal" in Latin America are in fact both historical and marked by class. Indeed, the application of these prescriptions to poor women may turn out to be relatively recent, or at least historically discontinuous. In turn, we may need to reevaluate the meanings of these ideologies for the poor women themselves. Scholarly work centering on the 20<sup>th</sup> century cult of working-class domesticity has emphasized the oppressive aspects of discourses that espouse matrimony and maternity as the touchstones of womanhood. Yet the role of housewife has been accorded a degree of legitimacy, respectability, and status to which domestic servants could never aspire. In this regard, it is worth considering the ways in which marriage, motherhood, and domesticity are in fact privileged roles that have only recently become accessible to women of all social ranks. In teasing out alternative valences of domesticity, comparisons with domesticity among socially and racially subordinate groups in other societies may prove fruitful.<sup>83</sup>

It is the fundamental status distinction between mistress and maid that pre-occupied Madre Bernarda Morin in her critique of orphan life trajectories. And this is the distinction she attempted to overcome in her romantic and radical vision of wretched young servants turned into happily married peasant families. Thirty years after she submitted her report, the Mother Superior's vision had not come to pass, but nor had it been forgotten. Instead, it had been transformed. Nathan Miers Cox, the administrator of the orphanage, made reference to Morin's proposal in an annual report in the 1890s. He noted that several years earlier, the Chilean government had awarded the orphanage 12,000 hectares of lands in the south. And without naming Morin, he even made reference to a plan in which the lands "could be populated by...married couples made up of the Casa's own orphans."<sup>84</sup> But he also noted that circumstances had ultimately dictated a different course of action. The pressing financial problems of the Casa, which by this time was caring for over 1,300 children at a time, required that the lands be rented out to provide a quick source of extra income. Ultimately, Madre Bernarda's bold social experiment was sacrificed in the vain struggle to accommodate burgeoning numbers of children – many of them, of course, the sons and daughters of servants.

## NOTES

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1. In succeeding decades, the numbers of children would continue to increase, though the proportion of children born in Santiago who were abandoned at the Casa would fluctuate between 9% and 5.1%. Manuel Delgado Valderrama, *Marginación e integración social en Chile. Los expósitos, 1750-1930*, Tesis de Maestría, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (1986), Chapter 2.
2. Such practices have been documented in other orphanages and children's asylums, from the colonial period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See for example Ann Blum, "Cleaning the Revolutionary Household: Domestic Servants, and Public Welfare in Mexico City, 1900-1935" *Journal of Women's History* 15(4), (2004), 67-90; Christine Ehrick, "Affectionate Mothers and the Colossal Machine: Feminism, Social Assistance, and the State in Uruguay, 1910-1932," *The Americas* 58:1 (2001), 121-139; María Emma Mannarelli, *Pecados públicos. La ilegitimidad en Lima, siglo XVII* (Lima: Ediciones Flora Tristán, 1993), and María Luiza Marcílio, *História social da criança abandonada* (São Paulo: Editora HUCITEC, 1998).
3. The complete report is reproduced in Morin's *Historia de la Congregación de la Providencia de Chile*, Tomo I (Santiago: Imprenta de San José), 250-266.
4. *Informe* signed by Juan Bautista González, Manuel Olavarrieta, and Dr Blest; José Miguel Barriga, José Francisco de la Cerda, and Domingo Correa. Reproduced in Morin, *ibid*, 273. An incomplete original copy of this *informe* is found in the Biblioteca de Historia de la Medicina of the Universidad de Chile: Fondo: Expósitos. Caja 4 (1863-1872). Documento 16. *Informe sobre el escrito de la Superiora de la Casa de Providencia*. Stgo 1868. Reg. 0733; Documento 19. *Solicitud de reforma de la Casa de Expósitos de Providencia*. Stgo 1868. Reg. 0985. Noviembre 25, 1868, Santiago.
5. Zegers, Sesión 30 Ordinaria, 9 de agosto 1883.
6. Novoa, Sesión 26 Ordinaria, 31 julio 1883.
7. Amunátegui, Sesión 34 Ordinaria, 18 de agosto 1883.
8. Casanova, "Pastoral colectiva sobre el matrimonio," *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo IX (1883-7), 127-163; 128.
9. Casanova, "Pastoral sobre el espíritu cristiano en la familia," *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo XII (1892-4), 89-905; 895.
10. See for example, Alberto Cabero, "Una opinión discordante acerca de las causas de la baja nupcialidad y de la alta natalidad ilegítima en Chile," *Revista Chilena* 10 (1920), 225-235.
11. As Robert McCaa notes, ecclesiastical officials issued frequent directives to parish priests telling them to encourage proper family formation, McCaa, *Marriage and Fertility in Chile: Demographic Turning Points in the Petorca Valley, 1840-1976* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 41.

12. Debates about civil marriage legislation in the Chamber of Deputies dwelt on this theme. See for example, Sesión 30 Ordinaria, 9 de agosto; Sesión 31 Ordinaria, 11 de agosto; Sesión 32 Ordinaria, 14 de agosto; and Sesión 34 Ordinaria, 18 de agosto.
13. For example, the Sociedad de San Francisco de Rejis, founded in Valparaíso in the 1860s, mobilized elite women with the objective of procuring marriage for poor individuals living in consensual unions. *Estatutos de la Asociación Caritativa de San Juan Francisco de Rejis y Reglamento de la Casa de Asiladas* (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Universo de G. Helfmann, 1867).
14. For example, the Congregación de la Preciosa Sangre, founded in the 1880s, declared that part of its mission was “to procure with all prudence and charity that those who lived in illicit relations contract religious marriage,” *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo X (1887-1889). Meanwhile, the Congregación del Purísimo Corazón de María, founded in the 1890s, sought to “assist the poor in the celebration of Catholic marriage,” *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo XXII (1892-1894), 735-736, Núm. 1042.
15. Augusto Orrego Luco, “La cuestión social en Chile,” *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* CXIX: 121-2 (1961), 43-55; 50.
16. María Soledad Zárate, “Proteger a las madres: Origen de un debate público, 1870-1920,” *Nomadias* 1, (1999), 163-182; 165.
17. Such sentiments are evident, for example, in the literature of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century private child-welfare organization. “The maternal sentiment itself intensifies the charitable spirit, making it extend not only to one’s children but to orphans whom she encounters...mothers form part of a vast congregation, united by supernatural bonds.” Anon, “La misión de las madres,” *Almanaque del Patronato de la Infancia* Año II (Santiago: Balcells & Co, 1921), 263-265. On the class politics of these maternity campaigns, see María Angélica Illanes, “Hibridización/ Madre Popular” *Nomadias* 1, (1999), 185-211.
18. The literature on 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century maternal concerns and preoccupations with motherhood in Europe and the U.S. is vast. See, for example, Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and Katherine Lynch, *Family, Class, and Ideology in Early Industrial France: Social Policy and the Working-Class Family, 1825-1848* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988). For Latin America, see Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) and Francesca Miller, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991).
19. See Nara Milanich, *The Children of Fate: Family, Class, and the State in Chile, 1857-1930*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (New Haven, 2002), Chapter 5, for a brief overview.
20. Anon. *La Congregación de las Hermanas de la Providencia en Chile* (Santiago, 1924), 45. The Casa de Huérfanos was founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but expanded greatly in this period.
21. See Milanich, *Children of Fate*, Introduction.

22. See the introductory essay of Sol Serrano P., ed. *Virgenes viajeras. Diarios de religiosas francesas en su ruta a Chile, 1837-1874* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2001), 87.
23. Anon, *Historia de la Casa de Santa Rosa* (Santiago: Imprenta de la Revista Católica, 1904), 21.
24. *Ibid*, 31.
25. Anon, *Historia del Asilo del Salvador* (Santiago: Imprenta de la Revista Católica, 1903). According to this retrospective history, printing was inappropriate because of the “sickly and extremely weak constitution of the Chilean woman” which “does not permit her, except for very short periods, to dedicate herself to tasks that require her to be continuously standing.” In addition, “instead of being useful for the girls after leaving the asylum,” the printing trade exposed them “to real dangers for their morality” because the work occurred in “industrial centers” where vice reigned. These considerations convinced the institution to scale back the printing workshop, limiting training to “a few girls with no intention of returning to the world.”
26. *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo 3, (1861-66), 60-1, núm 86.
27. Archivo del Ministerio de Higiene, Asistencia y Previsión Social, Providencias 501 a 600, (1924), “Memoria, Sociedad Asilos Maternales Las Creches, Cocinas Populares... junio 1924,” sin número.
28. Delgado, *Marginación e integración*, Chapter 2.
29. Morin, *Historia de la Congregación*.
30. On the function of the Casa as a distributor of child labor, see Nara Milanich, “The Casa de Huérfanos and Child Circulation in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chile,” *Journal of Social History* (Vol. 38, 2004).
31. “Manga ancha,” *El Padre Cobos* 159 (13 mayo 1882).
32. “La cuestión doméstica,” *El Padre Cobos* 155 (4 mayo 1882).
33. *Memoria de la Casa de Huérfanos* (1897, 1902).
34. *Actas de la Junta de Beneficencia*. Sesiones, mayo 1906-abril 1910. Santiago. 0507. Sesión de 4 de agosto 1908, fj 302-3. For an extended discussion of the role of the Casa as a clearinghouse for child labor, see Milanich, “Casa de Huérfanos.”
35. Of these, five had taken place the previous year. *Memoria de la Casa de Huérfanos* (1897).
36. *Casa de Huérfanos, Libro de Correspondencia*. Letter from Nathan Miers Cox to Ilmo y Rmo Señor Don Mariano Casanova, Arzobispo de Santiago de Chile, 13 mayo 1896; Letter from Nathan Miers Cox. to Sr Cura de Nuñoa, 3 noviembre 1896. Apparently, the Casa itself assumed responsibility for the fees associated with the marriage of its wards.
37. *Memoria de la Casa de Huérfanos* (1900).
38. *Casa de Huérfanos, Libro de Correspondencia*. Letter from Nathan Miers Cox to Ilmo y Rmo Señor Don Mariano Casanova, Arzobispo de Santiago de Chile, 13 mayo 1896.
39. *Memoria de la Casa de Huérfanos* (1899).
40. *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo XXII (1892-4); núm. 11, 10-53.
41. *Actividades Femeninas en Chile* (Santiago: Imprenta y Litografía La Ilustración, 1928); *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo XVIII (1911-13), núm. 1406, 854; *Boletín Eclesiástico* Tomo

- IXX (1914-16), núm. 270, 166. The order was founded in Spain in 1876 by Madre Vicenta María López y Vicuña. López y Vicuña, who died in 1890, was declared venerable in 1943 and was beatified by Pious XII in 1950.
42. *Actividades femeninas*. Meanwhile, charitable institutions not specifically dedicated to the education or moralization of poor women nevertheless participated in these patterns as well. Among other services, the Salvation Army ran a placement office with “excellent benefits, not only for the needy, but also and in many cases for families with trouble finding servants.” The organization’s volunteers, who were familiar with a vast pool of potential domestics through their visits to poor households, could assist in the placement of domestics by providing recommendations.
  43. As Elizabeth Kuznesof has noted, “...in part because of the colonial circumstances of conquest and caste-race relations, domestic service in Spanish America became an aspect of race and class subordination rather than the ‘stage of life’ learning experience it had usually been in pre-industrial Europe.” Elizabeth Kuznesof, “A History of Domestic Service in Spanish America, 1492-1980,” *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean* ed. Elsa Chaney and Mary Garcia Castro (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 31. For an overview of “life-cycle service” in early modern Europe, see Linda Pollock, “Parent-Child Relations,” *The History of the European Family, Vol 1, Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*, eds. David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 191-220.
  44. This point is discussed further below.
  45. Thelma Gálvez Pérez and Rosa Bravo Barja, “Siete décadas de registro del trabajo femenino, 1854-1920”, *Revista de Estadística y Economía* (Santiago) 5 (Diciembre 1992), 1-52; 33, 20-21. On the difficulties of interpreting censal data on women’s labor, see Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, “La historia detrás de las cifras: La evolución del censo chileno y la representación del trabajo femenino, 1895-1930,” *Historia* (Chile) 33 (2000), 417-34, and Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), chapter 2.
  46. Hutchison argues that public vocational institutions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were mostly interested in enhancing the domestic skills of poor women as future wives and mothers. See Hutchison, *Labors*, Chapter 5.
  47. On the blind spots of early Chilean labor legislation, see Hutchison, *Labors*, chapter 7.
  48. Hutchison, *Labors*, 136.
  49. For example, the Sociedad “La Igualdad” of Valparaíso admitted seamstresses, telegraphers, cigarette sellers, typesetters, as well as other women workers, “but in no case domestic workers.” *Estatutos de la Sociedad “La Igualdad” de Obreras de Valparaíso. Fundada el 8 de septiembre de 1891* (Valparaíso: Imprenta Excelsior, 1892). Hutchison notes that mutual aid societies’ discrimination against domestics would later be abolished (pg). A 1929 newspaper announcement advised domestic servants that the newly established labor courts would not hear their employment grievances because the legislation establishing the courts did not apply to them. *El Mercurio* (11 enero 1929), 17.
  50. Hutchison, *Labors*, 169.
  51. See the cases cited in Gabriel Salazar, *Labradores, peones y proletarios* (Santiago: Edi-

- ciones Sur, 1985), 286-7, as well as Contra Filoteo Soto y Carmen Díaz por relaciones ilícitas. 1852. Archivo Judicial de Talca, 11a serie, Leg 727, 15.
52. Petronila Baeza con J.M. Contreras sobre alimentos. 1852. Archivo Judicial de Santiago, Leg 912, 22.
  53. Doña Juana Josefa Madariaga con D. Pedro Antonio Ramires por divorcio perpetuo, 1867-8. Archivo del Arzobispado de Santiago, 1855307 (Legajos 759-816), Legajo 813.
  54. Baeza con Contreras.
  55. Madariaga con Ramires.
  56. Teresa Prats de Saratea, *Educación doméstica de las jóvenes* (Santiago: Imprenta Eyzaguirre, 1909), 136.
  57. See Kuznesof's insightful overview of the domestic service in Latin America, Kuznesof, *History*.
  58. Manuel Vicuña argues that elite women's roles as wives and mothers accorded them increasing power as "agents of the social reproduction of the oligarchy" (56). Manuel Vicuña, *La belle époque chilena* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2001).
  59. Celia Gaspar con Pedro Johnson por entrega de hijo. 1885. Archivo Judicial de Valparaíso, nueva serie Leg 1445, 27.
  60. Clodomira Segura con Justo Terra sobre entrega de hijo. 1895. Primer Juzgado Civil de Valparaíso. Uncatalogued case. See also the statement of a lawyer who observed, "my client is legitimately married, so that his illegitimate children... would become part of a family formed by honorable and worthy ties..." Meanwhile, the children's mother was identified as a servant. Francisco Rojas con Antonia Garcia sobre entrega de hijos. 1884. Archivo Judicial de Valparaíso. Leg 1402, 21.
  61. At least five such cases are mentioned in José Ramón Ravest's *Diccionario de jurisprudencia de las Cortes de Justicia de la República de Chile. Estudio jurídico de la Gaceta de los Tribunales, 1878-1887* (Santiago: Imprenta Barcelona, 1893).
  62. *El Mercurio* (Valparaíso, 12 noviembre 1894), *El Chileno* (5 diciembre 1906), *El Diario Ilustrado* (5 marzo 1916).
  63. For examples of servants who were fired, or who anticipated being fired, because of a pregnancy, see *Por infanticidio contra María Antonia Vergara*. 1859. Archivo Judicial de Linares, Leg 3-14; Causa criminal seguida contra Juana Ibarra por infanticidio. 1841. Archivo Judicial de San Felipe, 2a serie, Leg 14-14; Causa criminal iniciada por el delito de infanticidio contra Josefa Vilchez. 1861. Archivo Judicial de Talca, Leg 773-13; Sumario por la muerte de un párvulo. 1902. Archivo Judicial de la Serena, Leg 13-22.
  64. *Contra Prosperina Saavedra por parricidio*. 1895. Archivo Judicial de Santiago, Leg 1638-6. Mexican employers exhibited a similar preference for childless servants. See Blum, *ibid.*
  65. Blum (*ibid.*) finds a similar dynamic in Mexican asylums.
  66. *Libro de Entradas*, 1899-1901, #553; 1912, #8978; 1874, #57. At the time, Vicuña Mackenna was serving as Intendant of Santiago; his missive was penned on Intendancy letterhead. The correspondence accompanying children placed in the Casa de Huérfanos is discussed in greater detail in Nara Milanich, *Children of Fate*.
  67. *Libros de Entradas*, 1909, #6734. Another letter echoed, "the salvation of the mother

- depends on the placement of these children;" *Libro de Entradas*, 1896-8, #11987-8; also, 1899, #162.
68. *Libros de Entradas*, 1899-1901, #999.
  69. This was by no means a construct of maternity unique to Chile. As David Kertzer has described, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy, officials of the Catholic Church as well as the state actively "confiscated" illegitimate children from their mothers in order to commit them to foundling homes. While their actions were clearly motivated by beliefs about honor, sin, and redemption similar to those operating in Chile, Kertzer does not argue that in Italy these ideologies and practices had class dimensions, as I believe they clearly did in Chile. See David Kertzer, *Sacrificed for Honor: Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
  70. Hutchison, 39-40.
  71. Por infanticidio contra María Antonia Vergara, 1859, Archivo Judicial de Linares, Leg 3-14.
  72. Memoria, Ministerio del Interior (1882).
  73. Mariano Casanova, "Discurso pronunciado en el acto de la distribución de premios a las alumnas del Asilo de San José de Valparaíso, el 15 de septiembre de 1878," *Obras oratorias* (Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1891), 764, italics are mine.
  74. *Ibid*, 763.
  75. Casanova, "Discurso pronunciado en la solemne apertura del Colegio del Sagrado Corazón, de Valparaíso, el 12 de junio de 1870," in *Ibid*, 632.
  76. *La Casa de María. Relato histórico presentado a la Asamblea Católica de 1886 por el pbo Manuel Antonio Román* (Santiago: Imprenta de la Union, 1887), 12-13.
  77. Archivo Ministerio Interior, v. 2690, Informe from Casa de María to Ministerio del Interior, 19 de abril de 1902, sin foja.
  78. See Hutchison, *Labors*, especially chapter 5.
  79. Guillermo Matte, "La educación del pueblo," *Revista de Instrucción Primaria*, Sept. 17, 1866, 15, quoted in Ronda Ward, "Citizenship and Gender: The Formulation of a Feminine Ideal for Republican Chile, 1850-1900," unpublished paper presented at LASA XXII (Miami, Florida, 2000), 3-4. Matte was president of the Sociedad de Instrucción Primaria.
  80. Abdón Cifuentes, "Instrucción pública en Chile," *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* 44 (Santiago, 1873), 320-55; 332. This report is also cited in Gertrude Yeager, "Women's Roles in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chile: Public Education Records, 1843-1883," *Latin American Research Review* 18: 3 (1983), 149-156; 153. Similar criticisms were voiced in the press about vocational workshops, or education in general, that trained "*señoritas*" and not "*sirvientas*." See Hutchison, *Labors*, 166, and Alejandra Brito Peña, "Del rancho al conventillo. Transformaciones en la identidad popular-femenina (Santiago de Chile, 1850-1920)," *Voces femeninas y construcción de identidad* ed. Marcia Rivera (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 1995), 42.
  81. "Casa de la Providencia, Linares" in Anon. *La Congregación de las Hermanas de la Providencia en Chile* (Santiago: Imprenta de San José, 1924).
  82. Hutchison, *ibid*; Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998);

Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-40* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

83. The obvious comparison is to domesticity among African-American women in the U.S.; see Jacqueline Jones' classic *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). In addition, Deborah Gaitskell reaches some remarkably similar conclusions about the ambiguous meaning of domesticity among African Christian women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Johannesburg: "Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903-1939," *Journal of African History* 24: 2 (1983), 241-56.
84. *Memoria de la Casa de Huérfanos* (1897).